The People's God: Sacrificing Trillions to Ascend

: Chapter 951

Chapter 951 - Elina’s Fate

The Obsidrum Judgment locked onto the Light God King, forcing him to abandon his offense and raise his shield to block. The blow was wrapped in a crushing pressure that could slay Gods. It slammed into the Holy Radiant Shield with a force that left deep cracks across its surface.

The Light God King braced against it with alarm. This mutated Swordwind possessed two abilities capable of massively amplifying attack power. It was a rare find indeed.

Immediately after, the Wrath War Tyrannosprite King hurled another condensed Gaia Force blast at the Light God King, forcing him to raise the shield again. The cracks that had been repairing themselves split wider.

A few more hits at this intensity and the Holy Radiant Shield would shatter entirely. The Light God King had to kill Han Wu before his defense broke.

He surged forward once more, overwhelming pressure bearing down as he thrust the Spear of Victory. Its dazzling flourishes left Han Wu no time to release any slash technique.

Han Wu blocked with Peerless. With the Duel God Physique and the True Martial God Physique boosting him, he managed to hold on, but the Light God King’s centuries of battle experience gave him a clear edge. It wasn’t long before Han Wu was losing ground again.

The Origin of Mutation anxiously watched from behind. Although it wanted to help, it knew its own limits. Research was its forte, not fighting.

At that moment, it noticed a surviving Huang Shengjun from the earlier Formation Might clash. Its eyes lit up. It knew Huang Shengjun’s body inside and out, having burned through at least a hundred of Huang Shengjun’s lives in its research at one point. It had enough data on the man to fill a warehouse.

Now, a prime test subject was practically being served to it on a silver platter. It wasn't about to pass that up. While it couldn't beat the Light God King, it could certainly handle one Huang Shengjun.

It rushed forward, restrained the Huang Shengjun, and went to work. Its body produced the appropriate gene serums and viral worms, which it injected directly into Huang Shengjun, simultaneously guiding the mutations with its targeted mutation ability.

The Huang Shengjun resisted at first, but as the serum and worms took effect, his body stopped responding. A foreign consciousness took over, bringing with it a library of data on how to use this body most efficiently.

Thirty seconds later, a modified Huang Shengjun charged fearlessly at the Light God King under the viral worm's control.

The Light God King was busy overwhelming Han Wu with superior technique when he sensed a life form approaching from behind. A quick scan told him it was one of the masked guards, so he didn't bother raising his defenses.

That was a mistake. The modified Huang Shengjun's fist drove into the Light God King's lower back with pinpoint precision, Microcosm force punching through skin and muscle to strike his kidney.

It was the Origin of Mutation's directive to the viral worm. Huang Shengjun's body was simply the tool carrying it out.

The targeted kidney blow left the Light God King's body buckling. No man could simply shrug off a hit like that completely unfazed. Powering through, he spun around in a fury and drove the Spear of Victory at the Huang Shengjun.

Before the blow could land, the Huang Shengjun self-destructed. The Microcosm explosion inflicted real damage on the Light God King.

"Stellar Rain!" Han Wu shouted, seizing the opening.

Billions of energy blades materialized into a river of cutting steel and slammed into the Light God King.

The Holy Radiant Shield held, but each successive impact cracked and destroyed the Microcosms embedded in its surface. It was slowly breaking down!

By the time the last blade fell, the Light God King was a wreck. His Lumen Aura was dim, his Holy Radiant Shield cracked, the Spear of Victory in pieces, and his body severely injured, with several blades still lodged in him.

But Han Wu hadn't struck a killing blow. The Light God King retreated to Paradise Island, where Light Faction members flooded him with Light Energy. His Jurisdiction effects regenerated rapidly, and his wounds sealed at a visible speed.

Han Wu cursed under his breath. The Light Jurisdiction was absurd. It could endure punishment and regenerate endlessly. Killing the man was nearly impossible.

As the Light God King recovered, Han Wu decisively turned and fled. He had seen enough. Fighting the Light God King was pointless if he couldn't guarantee a killing strike. The man would simply outlast his opponents through sheer regeneration.

The Light God King silently watched as Han Wu escaped, not bothering to pursue. Both of them knew continuing would benefit neither side. Although the Light God King held the advantage, he feared Han Wu would pull out yet another surprise and land a lethal blow while the Holy Radiant Shield was compromised. The odds were low, but Han Wu had the power to do it.

After Han Wu vanished from sight, the Light Faction members approached the Light God King and asked whether they should give chase.

The Light God King rolled his eyes. They're only bringing up pursuit after the man is long gone. Where were they when he was actively fleeing?

If the Light God King had truly wanted to chase, he wouldn't have needed them to do so. He could've done it alone.

"Useless," the Light God King scoffed.

His gaze then drifted to Elina, who had regained consciousness. She was his most accomplished descendant and thus also his favorite. Based on her recent performance, though, she still fell far short of his expectations.

"Elina, you're loyal to me. Are you willing to devote everything you are to the Light?" the Light God King asked abruptly.

"I am willing," she answered without hesitation.

"Good. Then here is your next assignment. You will mate with An Yunian, son of the late God King of Darkness," the Light God King instructed plainly. "I need a child capable of wielding both light and darkness to carry on my will."

Elina's expression wavered, but her faith overpowered her personal feelings. "I will do her best to complete the mission."

She had been born into the Light God King's family, and she accepted the fate that came with it.

The Light God King nodded. Elina hadn’t lived up to his ideal, but as long as she obeyed and continued to serve the Light Faction, she still had value.

He looked back at Paradise Island, large sections of which had caved in. This operation hadn’t eliminated every Dark Faction remnant, but it had dealt with roughly three-quarters of them and captured An Yunian, the next would-be God King of Darkness. The Dark Faction was as good as finished.

The only regrettable part was Han Wu. His interference had derailed the Light Faction’s plans and inflicted considerable losses.

“Han Wu and the Wisdom Faction... Once I’ve fully absorbed what I’ve taken from the Dark Faction, I’ll settle the accounts with you,” the Light God King muttered darkly, tilting his head back to gaze at the sky. “The Divine Civilization’s balance of power is due for a change."

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: Chapter 952

Chapter 952 - Spoils of War

On his way back to the Divine Civilization, Han Wu ran into the unit legion that had been making the long trek to reach him. Linking up with them, he activated his fixed-point coordinates and teleported back to the Blood Coliseum.

He had done the math. Traveling all the way back to the Divine Civilization would take far too long. Teleporting to the Blood Coliseum first and then transferring to the Divine Civilization would save a great deal of time. The Blood Coliseum was his territory, meaning this route was also completely safe.

Word of his return reached Marks, the administrator of the Blood Coliseum, and he hurried over with the compiled account ledgers that spanned the period of Han Wu’s absence. Han Wu took the ledgers but didn’t open them. He trusted Marks completely and saw no reason to double-check.

Marks was a sharp man. He recognized this gesture of trust immediately and was grateful for it. With a clap of his hands, he summoned the elite fighters the Blood Coliseum had produced since Han Wu had last visited for a formal introduction.

The Blood Coliseum's primary race was the Sanguine Combatants. They grew stronger by absorbing blood, which was never in short supply at the coliseum. Battles between units produced rivers of it.

Previously, this method could produce Sanguine Combatants in large numbers but rarely developed them into true elites. Ordinary blood simply didn't contain enough energy for high-ranking growth.

That had changed dramatically after Han Wu took ownership. He had developed methods to extract and purify the Blood Energy, then used the Refiner to enhance it further.

The resulting blood essence crystals were of exceptional quality. This drastic improvement to the Sanguine Combatants' diet allowed them to produce a remarkable number of top-tier fighters in a short amount of time.

There were five Microcosm rank Sanguine Combatants and over 10,000 Heavenrender and Earthsunder ones combined.

The Death Tower had also helped. Marks, acting on Han Wu's behalf, had recruited many powerful fighters. These elites enjoyed the Blood Coliseum's support and, in return, served as its enforcers and maintained order.

Han Wu nodded in satisfaction as he listened to the full report. By his rough estimate, the Blood Coliseum's roster would place it around thirtieth on the Divine Civilization faction rankings. That wasn't especially high, but still remarkable for a growing operation.

After reviewing the Blood Coliseum's progress, Han Wu released the former Dark Faction members from his Microcosm. Tears welled in their eyes when they emerged and realized they were safe. Escaping from the Light God King felt like taking a stroll past the gates of death and making it back alive.

Once their emotions had settled, however, anxiety inevitably crept back in. The Dark Faction had been destroyed, and most of its members wiped out. Only this handful remained. If they returned to the Divine Civilization, the Light Faction would likely hunt them down or retaliate against their families.

They needed a new patron. Han Wu was the obvious choice.

Su Lan, the Goddess of Enchantment, had already decided to help Xu Hai build the Wisdom Faction up, but she also couldn't simply ignore the fate of the former Dark Faction members.

At their urging, she asked Han Wu whether he would take them in. Han Wu agreed without a second thought.

Most of them were seasoned Major Gods. They were high-quality talent by any standard in the Divine Civilization. For them to willingly come under his banner was something Han Wu couldn't have arranged even in his wildest dreams.

A weight lifted from the former Dark Faction members' shoulders. The Light Faction wouldn't dare come after them openly while they were under Han Wu's protection.

As an extra precaution, Han Wu told them to bring their families over as soon as possible. He would cover all expenses. Their gratitude only deepened at this. With their arrangements settled, Han Wu returned to his divine realm to take stock of his gains.

The rescue mission was a resounding success. He had saved Su Lan and recruited sixteen Major Gods. That alone was significant, but it was only part of the haul.

There was also the Slaughter Jurisdiction's passive effect, which made every one of Han Wu's kills count as a Sacrifice. Weak creatures didn't yield much, so he normally paid those yields little mind.

This time, though, he had used the Proclamation of Death to kill over a dozen Huang Shengjun in a single burst. His locust units had also used Formation Might to annihilate the entire thousand-strong Huang Shengjun projection. Both had produced excellent rewards.

The first reward was a Seclusion Space. It was a pocket dimension with adjustable time flow, measuring 1000 cubic kilometers. Its maximum time dilation was a hundred to one, with a hundred days inside equaling a single day outside. The larger the difference in time flow, the more Divine Essence it consumed.

Fortunately, Han Wu was practically rolling in Divine Essence.

He planned to install the Seclusion Space in his divine realm and fill it with over a hundred basic avatars. Their sole task would be to study manuals until the True Martial Jurisdiction's mastery reached 100%.

The second reward was far more substantial. It was a complete Divine Jurisdiction, earned from killing over a thousand Huang Shengjuns in a single attack. Its name was Everchange Jurisdiction.

Although classified as a lesser Jurisdiction, its effect was unique. Absorbing a single drop of a life form's blood would allow the user to unlock a racial transformation matching that creature. It could also adjust physical features for disguise. The transformation's power scaled with the race but couldn't exceed the user's true strength.

It seemed niche, but was actually extraordinarily useful in practice. Han Wu had already decided where to slot it into: the 567 Martial Caste.

He could already picture how well the Everchange Jurisdiction and the 567 Martial Caste would mesh. There was a higher tendency for profound upgrades when compatibility was high.

The exact form that would take remained to be seen, though. He also needed to complete his mastery over the True Martial Jurisdiction before he could absorb the Everchange Jurisdiction.

Beyond those two major rewards, the ordinary resources earned through Sacrifice were distributed as bonuses to the units that had performed well. Just as he finished this allocation, a video call from Jia Gui popped up.

“Brother Han Wu, come out for a drink. My treat!” Jia Gui said, with an almost fawning expression on his wrinkled face.

Han Wu immediately sensed something was up. Jia Gui was legendary for his stinginess. For him to buy drinks meant he wanted no small favor.

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Chapter 953 - Sun Qingnian: That’s My Informant!

Jia Gui had actually performed well this time, so Han Wu accepted his invitation. They agreed to meet at a small tavern just outside the Blood Coliseum.

By the time Han Wu arrived, Jia Gui had already ordered him a drink. It was the cheapest beer on the menu.

Jia Gui grinned, his wrinkled face crumpling like a dried chrysanthemum, and waved Han Wu over.

Han Wu glanced at the cheap beer and tapped the table with a finger. “Whatever you’re about to ask, it’s going to be hard to do.”

“*Huh*? I haven’t even said what it is yet,” Jia Gui said.

“Then go ahead.” Han Wu picked up the beer and took a small sip. The sour, bitter taste mixed with a hint of alcohol made him feel like he was drinking three-day-old dishwater. He discreetly spat it back into the glass.

Jia Gui's attention wasn't on Han Wu at all. He sat with his fingers interlocked, fidgeting in his chair and looking almost shy. "Brother Han Wu, do you believe in love at first sight?"

Han Wu nearly choked. After a violent coughing fit, he looked at Jia Gui's face, which had to belong to someone pushing sixty at least.

"When a handsome guy says it, that's love at first sight. When you say it, that's just being a creep," Han Wu remarked.

"I don't care whether you call it love at first sight or being a creep. All I know is one thing. I'm in love!" Jia Gui said bashfully. His aged face even seemed to flush.

Han Wu felt a chill run down his spine. He remembered how Jia Gui had kept telling him to go easy during the fight with Elina.

"The person you're in love with wouldn't happen to be Elina, would it?" he asked, though he was already ninety percent certain.

Jia Gui's face lit up as if he had just learned something wonderful. "So her name is Elina! What a lovely name."

Han Wu rolled his eyes. "You couldn't even remember her name, and you're calling it love? You just want her body. You're pathetic."

"Brother Han Wu, how could you say that? I have always been upright and honest. Is it wrong to like someone? Is it wrong to love someone?" Jia Gui asked passionately.

"Elina hasn't done anything wrong either! Why should she have to be liked by you?" Han Wu argued.

This was the first time Han Wu had ever spoken in Elina's defense. She was arrogant, stubborn, and more than a little unhinged, but if he had to choose between helping her and helping Jia Gui, he'd side with Elina.

Jia Gui deflated, but he refused to give up. "Brother Han Wu, I know that the Wisdom Faction and the Light Faction don't get along. I still like Elina, though. Ever since I first saw her, she's been in my dreams every night. Please, help me."

Han Wu furrowed his brow and considered the odds. To put it bluntly, the chances were zero, if not negative. Forget Elina herself, Jia Gui couldn't even get past the Light God King. The latter could develop dementia and still never approve of Elina being paired with Jia Gui. If that actually happened, where would he even put his face?

A thought suddenly crossed Han Wu's mind. If Jia Gui and Elina somehow did end up together, what would the scene look like? The Light God King would probably cough up

blood on the spot. It would be a devastating blow to the Light Faction's morale on a spiritual level.

Han Wu pictured Jia Gui and Elina standing side by side in a photo and burst out laughing.

Jia Gui saw him laugh and assumed he had come up with a plan. "Brother Han Wu, if you've got an idea, tell me!"

Han Wu fought to suppress his laughter and waved the question aside. He was capable of murder and arson, but forcing someone into a living nightmare? Even he wouldn't stoop that low.

Nonetheless, he knew the right person for the job. He placed a video call to Sun Qingnian, and the connection went through immediately.

Sun Qingnian appeared on the screen shirtless, sitting in front of a red-lit backdrop with a large circular bed behind him. A woman's figure darted across the frame.

One glance was all Han Wu needed. That wasn't the Blazing Goddess Shi Shan. It wasn't Lina either. It definitely wasn't Jin Tuantuan, who had emigrated to the Divine Civilization.

Han Wu swallowed hard. When it came to being a player, nobody could beat Sun Qingnian.

Sun Qingnian caught the look on Han Wu's face and scrambled to explain. "Han Wu, don't get the wrong idea. She's an informant I've planted inside the Life Faction!"

"What kind of informant? A prostate informant?[1]" Han Wu scoffed. "I've never seen an informant meet her handler at a love hotel."

Sun Qingnian scratched his nose awkwardly. "Quit roasting me and get to the point. Did you need something? You've been stirring up quite the mess lately."

Han Wu reined in his sarcasm. Sun Qingnian was who he was, and Han Wu had long since gotten used to it.

Han Wu spoke bluntly. "I have a friend who wants to learn the art of being a man who... relies on a woman."

Sun Qingnian's expression turned amused. "Han Wu, you and I are brothers who'd lay our lives on the line for each other. Qin Shuang is also a good friend of mine. I'd hate to see you do something you shouldn't. That said, if you did, I'd do my best to keep it from her."

"Get lost. Do you think I'm like you? I'm asking for Jia Gui," Han Wu corrected him.

Jia Gui leaned into the frame. Sun Qingnian took one look at that universally despised face and, for the first time in his life, he felt genuine pressure.

“Look, it’s not that I don’t want to help. In a case like this, I generally wouldn’t recommend trying to be a kept man. He’d starve,” Sun Qingnian said.

“What if his target is Elina?” Han Wu asked.

Sun Qingnian’s face froze. Nearly half a minute passed before it finally clicked, and he exploded with laughter. “Han Wu, you really are devious. The Light Faction has been quietly arranging a wedding between Elina and the Holy Son of Darkness, An Yunian. If you pull this off, the Light God King will absolutely lose his mind. Leave it to me. I’ll do everything I can to help Jia Gui win Elina over.”

Sun Qingnian was already imagining the Light God King’s reaction and the blow it would deal to the entire Light Faction.

Han Wu nodded.

Jia Gui beamed with delight, grinning like a lovesick teenager despite looking every bit like an idiot who had lived for more than 800 months.

Han Wu was about to end the call when Sun Qingnian gestured for him to wait.

After solving Jia Gui’s problem, Han Wu was in a good mood to help Sun Qingnian. “What do you need? Just tell me.”

“There’s a goddess from the former Dark Faction named Fangfang. She’s under your wing now. I need you to look out for her,” Sun Qingnian said.

Han Wu was confused. He knew Fangfang. She was a close companion of the Goddess of Enchantment. She wasn’t as beautiful as Su Lan, but she was still attractive in a mature way.

Why did Sun Qingnian ask me to take care of her? A bold guess surfaced in Han Wu’s head. “Don’t tell me she’s another one of your informants?”

It was phrased as a question, but he already knew the answer.

Sun Qingnian nodded.

Han Wu’s head started to ache. He worried that the Blazing Goddess Shi Shan would snap and boil Sun Qingnian alive one day.

“Can I ask you something? Exactly how many informants do you have?” Han Wu asked with a pained expression.

Sun Qingnian answered without a shred of evasion, “That depends on how many factions there are in the Divine Civilization!”[2]

1. So informant is pronounced as ’Xian’ Ren in Chinese, and prostate is Qian Lie ’Xian’. They sound the same. ☜

2. goated ☜

: Chapter 954

Chapter 954 - The Shengjun Race

Han Wu didn’t get involved in the project to help Jia Gui become a kept man. He left that entirely to Sun Qingnian and Jia Gui to work out between themselves. He was confident that, with Sun Qingnian’s expertise, turning Jia Gui into a functional scoundrel wouldn’t be a problem.

Back in his divine realm, Han Wu opened the Evolution Blueprint and reviewed the breeding progress across the various evolution paths.

Thanks to the locusts’ enormous population, newborn locusts multiplied every day. As ordinary locusts grew stronger, they entered their evolution phase. The fastest one so far had reached the perfect stage, having chosen the recovery enhancement path.

That path was the easiest to evolve along, so a disproportionate number of locusts gravitated toward it. While this accelerated his units’ average strength growth, it didn’t align with Han Wu’s plans. He wanted balanced development across the board. Having too many support units wouldn’t matter much in the early stages, but over time it would weaken his divine realm’s overall combat power.

As such, Han Wu adjusted the evolution path distribution, allocating the ten available paths an equal ten percent. The change would slow initial growth, but once the system matured, it would pay for generations.

As Han Wu immersed himself in his unit breeding research, the Origin of Mutation sent him a telepathic message. “Vessel, I’ve put something incredible together. Come take a look.”

Han Wu knew the Origin of Mutation well. He wouldn’t summon him unless it was something significant. Therefore, he set his work aside and headed to the lab.

When he arrived, the Origin of Mutation's assistant, Yakushi Nan, handed him a bucket. Han Wu didn't understand what it was for. Nonetheless, he accepted it and walked into the lab, where two naked humanoid figures were engaged in something deeply unsettling.

He stepped closer for a closer look. Both of them were Huang Shengjun.

Han Wu vomited on the spot. Every last drop went into the bucket. He swore that if the Origin of Mutation ever made him watch something like that again, he would slap him across the face, even though that face was identical to his own.

After emptying his stomach and storming out of the lab, Han Wu demanded, "What are you doing?"

He had seen mountains of corpses and battlefields soaked in gore and had endured the stench of heavily decomposed corpses, yet none of it had disgusted him as thoroughly as what he had just witnessed.

The Origin of Mutation could barely contain his excitement. "Vessel, didn't you see? I'm creating a miracle of life!"

"A miracle of life? Are you serious?" Han Wu was already fighting the urge to hit him. He had come here with high expectations, and this was what the Origin of Mutation wanted to show him?

The Origin of Mutation finally explained, "Vessel, hear me out. These two test subjects are the ones I captured on Paradise Island. After studying them, I discovered that their bodies have undergone massive structural changes compared to the original Huang Shengjun."

Han Wu focused his attention. "What kind of changes?"

"You know what a mule is, right? It is the offspring of a horse and a donkey, two different species. It inherits advantages from both but can't reproduce."

"Go on." Han Wu didn't fully understand, but he trusted the Origin of Mutation to connect the dots.

The Origin of Mutation continued, "The Huang Shengjuns on Paradise Island are like mules. That's only a metaphor, of course. Each individual is fixed in their current state. They can't reproduce, can't grow stronger, and don't even retain complete memories.

"They have combat strength comparable to the Microcosm rank, but they lack the Divine Ring and Microcosms that a Microcosm life form should have."

The Origin of Mutation grew more animated as he spoke. "Don't you see? This already qualifies as an entirely new species. So I've been researching how to make this species

self-sustaining. I modified two test subjects at the genetic level, designating one as male and the other as female, then used viral worms to induce reproduction.

“Current data indicates that the experiment is successful. If the female successfully gives birth, this race will be capable of perpetuating itself.”

“What traits would the offspring have?” Han Wu asked.

“That hasn’t been fully confirmed yet. According to V’s projections, the probability of a successful birth is seventy-five percent, while the probability of the offspring being a mule is one-hundred percent.

“They will inherit Huang Shengjun’s physical traits, though. Their strength will increase rapidly as they mature, allowing them to reach the Microcosm rank by the age of twenty-two.

“They still won’t develop a Divine Ring or Microcosm, but they’ll be exceptionally powerful individual combatants. They’ll also be able to form a mental link with other members of the same race, achieving perfect synchronization and unleashing devastating Formation Might attacks.”

Han Wu came to understand the Origin of Mutation’s excitement. A unit that only needed twenty-two days of cultivation in the divine realm to reach the Microcosm rank, despite lacking both a Divine Ring and a Microcosm, while still capable of unleashing powerful Formation Might, was a game-changer.

Who else in the entire Divine Civilization could produce a Microcosm life form in twenty-two days? Even Wealth God King Zhao Zihong couldn’t buy something like that with all his wealth.

“What about the mule problem?” Han Wu pressed.

If the offspring couldn’t reproduce, the race would eventually reach a dead end.

The Origin of Mutation confidently thumped his chest. “Easy. I’ve already mastered the necessary techniques. With the right resources, I can mass-produce a gene serum that locks in the offspring’s sex before the age of ten, or even earlier. Reproduction won’t be affected.”

Han Wu nodded. If the Origin of Mutation’s projections proved accurate, the implications would be enormous. He had personally fought a Huang Shengjun legion, so he knew firsthand how dangerous they were.

Sensing that Han Wu had calmed down, the Origin of Mutation continued, “This is a completely new race, unlike any known unit. Vessel, why don’t you name them?”

Han Wu considered it for a moment and decided that the name had to honor Huang Shengjun's role in making it all possible. "Let's call them the Shengjun race."

The Origin of Mutation nodded. "As you say, vessel. The Shengjun race it is."

Han Wu raised one final point. "When you modify the genes, can you make the two sexes visually distinct? Having them look identical is unsettling."

"No problem. That's a minor detail," the Origin of Mutation replied cheerfully, "As long as you provide sufficient resources, anything is worth trying."

Han Wu finally realized what this was really about. The Origin of Mutation hadn't called him there just to show off his results. He wanted funding.

"How much?" Han Wu asked.

"Not much. About 10 million Divine Essence should cover the full study of the Shengjun race's characteristics."

The figure made Han Wu's liver twitch. His income was substantial, but even he couldn't sustain the Origin of Mutation's spending habits forever. Then he pictured a legion of Shengjun soldiers under his command and decided that the investment was worth it.

"You'll get the Divine Essence. Deliver results quickly," Han Wu said through gritted teeth.

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Chapter 955 - Myriad Martial Castes

After leaving the Origin of Mutation's lab, Han Wu's head was still spinning. The former's research was genuinely shocking. It was no wonder that the Divine River Civilization had chosen to seal him away. That decision had been an act of pure self-preservation.

If the Origin of Mutation had been allowed to spread his methods throughout the Divine River Civilization, its military power would have skyrocketed, but its reputation would have cratered. Every known civilization would have united to condemn it.

Han Wu pushed the thought aside and entered the Seclusion Space, devoting himself entirely to mastering his techniques and developing the True Martial Jurisdiction.

Inside the Seclusion Space, Han Wu and a host of avatars studied for thirty years, consuming 1.2 million Divine Essence. At last, he brought the True Martial Jurisdiction to full mastery. From then on, he could freely activate the True Martial Jurisdiction's effect, the True Martial God Physique, which granted him a massive boost in physical attributes in an instant.

The Kunpeng Divine Art also underwent a transformation. With the True Martial Jurisdiction fully mastered and the fusion ability integrating multiple manuals into it, the Kunpeng Divine Art achieved a qualitative leap. It was no longer an incomplete technique. It had become a powerful fusion art, which Han Wu named the Leviathan Art.

When activated, the Leviathan Art could absorb every trace of ambient qi within a 500-kilometer radius. Paired with the Conversion Jurisdiction's Energy Conservation effect, that qi could be directly converted into whatever form of energy Han Wu needed. In essence, it was an extraordinarily efficient method of energy recovery.

Han Wu was very satisfied.

With the True Martial Jurisdiction fully developed and no intention of ascending to become the True Martial God King, Han Wu moved on and absorbed the minor Everchange Jurisdiction he had earned through Life Sacrifice.

He slotted the Everchange Jurisdiction into the 567 Martial Castes ability. They were already similar in function, so once the merge was complete, they displayed the extreme compatibility that Han Wu had predicted.

The Everchange Jurisdiction's mastery shot straight to fifty percent. At the same time, Han Wu sensed the 567 Martial Castes undergo a dramatic evolution into the Myriad Martial Castes.

He stilled his mind and studied the Myriad Martial Castes' properties in detail. The Everchange Jurisdiction could absorb a drop of another race's blood to unlock a transformation into that race. The Myriad Martial Castes could then preserve that transformation permanently and even fuse compatible weapons and equipment into it, ensuring Han Wu wouldn't be left empty-handed or naked after shifting forms.

What could the two abilities accomplish together? Han Wu considered the question for a moment before inspiration struck.

He visited the Origin of Mutation and obtained a drop of Shengjun blood. After consuming it, he unlocked the Huang Shengjun transformation just as expected. He then used his Creation Aspect, spending divine power to fabricate a set of masked guard attire before putting it on.

The result was flawless. Han Wu looked more like Huang Shengjun than Huang Shengjun himself. He even summoned his units to test whether they could detect anything unusual. They nearly attacked him on sight, mistaking him for the real Huang Shengjun.

Although his appearance, aura, and soul frequency had all changed to match, one thing remained constant: the strands of Faith connecting him to his units. They could verify his identity through that bond. Outsiders, however, had no such link. They would never know the difference.

Han Wu realized he could easily pose as a masked guard and stroll right into the Light Faction's territory.

Who knows what I may find? Just as the thought crossed his mind, he received a video call from Jia Gui. He answered and found Jia Gui surrounded by pitch darkness. The sound of dripping water echoed in the background.

Jia Gui was panicking. "Brother Han Wu, you have to come save me! The Light Faction's people have cornered me in a cave. They're pumping smoke inside to suffocate me!"

Han Wu demanded, "Where exactly are you? What did you do to make the Light Faction want to smoke you out?"

Before he could ask more questions, Jia Gui's call abruptly disconnected. The signal had been blocked.

Han Wu immediately called Sun Qingnian for details. The latter told him to wait a moment while he looked into it.

A few minutes later, Sun Qingnian called back. "I got the full picture. Today is the day before the wedding of the Daughter of Light, Elina, and the Holy Son of Darkness, An Yunian. Jia Gui infiltrated the Light Faction, tracked down An Yunian, and ambushed him before he even realized Jia Gui was there. He stabbed him more than a dozen times, with every strike aimed at the groin.

"The blade was coated with some kind of soul toxin. According to our intel, even with the Light Faction's healers treating him, the soul toxin has likely left An Yunian permanently incapable of functioning as a man."

Han Wu sat back, stunned. Love really did drive people insane. Jia Gui, the most cowardly man alive, had charged straight into the Light Faction's headquarters for the sake of love.

One thing puzzled Han Wu, though. If Jia Gui was going to act, why not finish the job and kill An Yunian outright? That would have solved the problem permanently.

After spending a long time looking at the situation from Jia Gui's perspective, he finally understood. Jia Gui wanted An Yunian alive. He wanted him to serve as a warning to

every man who ever thought about marrying Elina. With such an example before them, no one would dare try.

Once Han Wu grasped the reasoning, he clapped in admiration. Jia Gui's thinking was ruthlessly clever. The immediate problem was that the Light Faction was hunting him. It sounded like they had deployed a spatial seal and a signal jammer around his hiding place.

Just as Han Wu was about to set out on a rescue mission, Sun Qingnian sent an update. Jia Gui had escaped. Members of the Light Faction had stormed the cave and found nothing but a freshly dug tunnel leading to an unknown destination. They were currently tracing the tunnel, but they believed that Jia Gui had already fled through it.

Han Wu couldn't help giving a thumbs-up. Jia Gui's survival instincts were on another level. The man always found a way out.

Shortly afterward, Jia Gui sent a message confirming that he was safe and telling Han Wu not to come. He planned to remain hidden within the Light Faction's territory, making his love for the Daughter of Light known at every opportunity until she accepted him.

After ending the call, Han Wu couldn't help but marvel. Jia Gui and the Concealment Jurisdiction were a match made in heaven. He could already picture what would happen. For the foreseeable future, Jia Gui would become a nightmarish stalker that Elina could never shake.

"Elina, being noticed by Jia Gui is going to make your life very difficult," Han Wu muttered with a grin.

After that fiasco, Han Wu shelved his plan to infiltrate the Light Faction for the time being. With Jia Gui already lurking inside, the Light God King had more than enough on his plate.

Chapter 956 - The Death God King's Task

Jia Gui possessed the Concealment Jurisdiction. Although he hadn't fully developed it, Han Wu believed that it was only a matter of time. Under the Concealment Jurisdiction's effects, the Light Faction wouldn't easily discover Jia Gui.

Besides, given Jia Gui's sneaky personality, Han Wu figured that Elina deserved far more concern than Jia Gui did. He was only curious how long it would take Jia Gui to win Elina over now that Sun Qingnian had passed on everything he knew.

For now, Han Wu needed to continue focusing on cultivating his units and strive toward producing a Subcosm Mythic Titan. That was the foundation he truly needed to establish himself in the Divine Civilization and free himself from the threat of any faction.

At the same time, Han Wu had to continue strengthening himself. He couldn't afford to slack off on developing his Divine Jurisdictions for even a moment.

Han Wu currently had two Divine Jurisdictions under development. One was the Slaughter Jurisdiction, which had reached seventy-two percent. The other was the minor Everchange Jurisdiction, which had reached fifty percent.

The Slaughter Jurisdiction advanced by killing numerous living beings. Han Wu needed to find the right timing and targets for that, so there was no rushing it.

On the other hand, the Everchange Jurisdiction was relatively easier to develop. He only needed to absorb the blood of various species to unlock their corresponding transformations and increase its progress.

Han Wu had already placed orders through the Divine Civilization's trade network, and the deliveries wouldn't take long to arrive. For the blood of rarer species that was hard to obtain, he logged into the Wealth Faction's channel and used his authority to purchase it directly. With the Wealth Faction's channels, those should arrive quickly too.

That said, Han Wu's biggest headache was figuring out where to find leads on other Divine Jurisdictions once those two reached full development. He liked both of them, but he had no intention of becoming the God King of either.

He still needed to absorb other Divine Jurisdictions to continue his search and ultimately determine which one suited him best. He possessed plenty of abilities, so exploring as many paths as possible gave him the best chance of finding the right fit.

Just as Han Wu was debating whether to find a civilization to invade, he received a rare communication request from the Death God King. He was instantly excited.

The Death God King was, at least on the surface, the most powerful God King in the Divine Civilization. By all rights, having a connection to someone of his stature should have been a tremendous advantage.

The reality, however, was quite different. Ever since Han Wu joined the Death Faction and became the Holy Son of Death, nothing had changed. He occasionally provided the Death God King with rare materials to maintain their relationship, yet he rarely received any attention in return. The last time, even the Death God King had seemed to feel that his lack of reciprocity was hard to justify. As such, he had taught Han Wu the Stellar Plunder technique and explained the subdivisions of the World rank. After that, they went a long time without any further contact.

Han Wu eagerly accepted the Death God King's communication request.

The Death God King's voice came through from the other end. "Are you free lately? I need you to do something. If you're not free, forget it."

"I'm free! Where are you? I'll come right now!"

Han Wu grabbed the opportunity without hesitation, determined not to let it slip away. After all, the Death God King was, at least publicly, the strongest figure in the Divine Civilization. Helping him with a small favor and gaining even a little guidance in return would benefit Han Wu for quite some time.

The Death God King said nothing more and sent Han Wu a set of coordinates. Han Wu immediately locked onto them and teleported through the Blood Coliseum's portal.

Three minutes later, Han Wu arrived at the target location. It was a dead, silent planet. He spread out his senses across it and found not a single living being. It was as though the planet itself had died.

Just then, a voice called out, "Come here!"

Han Wu immediately followed the voice and quickly found the Death God King, who looked the same as ever. Four figures stood beside him.

Han Wu discreetly probed them with his senses, and the result startled him. Their auras were completely identical to the Death God King's, as if five Death God Kings were standing there.

"Your strength has improved rapidly. You've grown a great deal," the Death God King said.

"Thank you for the compliment, Your Majesty," Han Wu replied, cold sweat forming on his forehead.

The more his own strength increased, the more keenly he understood just how terrifying the Death God King truly was. He even wondered whether the Death God King who had accompanied him to Imperial College to fight the Thirteen Guards had been the true self or merely one of his clones.

"I was concerned whether you were up to the task, but after seeing your strength, you're qualified to accept my assignment," the Death God King remarked.

He then got to the point, "Conflicts have been erupting across the Divine Civilization lately, and I'm fully aware of them. Many factions are restless.

“The War Faction, the Destruction Clan, and the Light Faction have already joined forces in secret. Once they absorb the spoils from the Dark Faction, they will most likely bring the Life Faction into their alliance and come after me.”

Han Wu hadn’t expected the Death God King to see through the Divine Civilization’s political landscape so clearly.

“Through Death Intuition, I’ve already deduced the truth behind the Dark God King’s demise. To avoid meeting the same fate, I need you to go to the White Soul Civilization and find a certain treasure for me,” the Death God King explained.

Han Wu’s expression turned serious. “I will absolutely complete the task, Your Majesty. I’m quite curious, though. The Dark God King was incredibly powerful. How did he fall so suddenly?”

The Death God King didn’t hide anything. “Apart from the Light Faction’s attacks, the key factor in his death was the Destruction Clan. They possess a treasure left behind by the Destruction God King. It has a ninety-nine percent kill rate against any living being. That’s what allowed them to kill the Dark God King in one strike.”

Han Wu was stunned. A ninety-nine percent kill rate was practically a death sentence. His own Destruction Aspect came with the Skull Guillotine Skill, and even that only had a twenty-five percent kill rate. On top of that, it consumed a massive amount of energy, so Han Wu would never use it unless absolutely necessary.

At the same time, one question puzzled him. If the Destruction Clan had something this powerful, why hadn’t they used it sooner? With it, no God Kings in the Divine Civilization would dare defy them.

The Death God King seemed to read Han Wu’s thoughts and added, “That treasure has usage restrictions and can only be activated a limited number of times. Otherwise, the Destruction Clan wouldn’t have kept such a low profile for so long.”

That explanation made sense to Han Wu. It wasn’t that the Destruction Clan didn’t want to flaunt their power. The circumstances simply wouldn’t allow it.

After thinking it through, Han Wu realized that if that treasure could truly be used without restrictions, he would have died the moment he refused the Destruction Clan’s demand to hand over the Giant Crest.

With that understanding, Han Wu steeled his resolve. He had to find the treasure capable of resisting a ninety-nine percent kill rate for the Death God King. If he found more than one, he would keep one for himself, just in case.

Chapter 957 - Arriving at the White Soul Civilization

After agreeing to the Death God King's task, Han Wu received a pass to the White Soul Civilization. One of the four figures standing beside the Death God King was to accompany him on the journey.

Han Wu asked about it and learned that this person was one of the Death God King's Four Dharma Manifestations, Desolation. The Death God King had cultivated the Desolation Manifestation by combining the Desolation Jurisdiction with his own abilities.

Along the way, the Desolation Manifestation shared some knowledge of Divine Jurisdiction advancement with Han Wu.

Upon advancing to Major God, one comprehended a Divine Jurisdiction embryo. This was merely the initial form of a Divine Jurisdiction. It needed development to grow and eventually reach 100%.

The Divine Jurisdiction's initial effect would gradually strengthen as it grew, and this initial effect was only considered complete once the Jurisdiction reached 100%. At that point, the Major God could choose whether they wanted to advance to God King. If one advanced, the Divine Jurisdiction could continue being developed, unlocking a second effect, a third effect, and even more beyond that.

If one chose not to advance, however, the Divine Jurisdiction would lose the possibility of further development. The owner would need to fuse with other Divine Jurisdictions and repeat the development process until they found one that suited them better.

This was the progression path of Divine Jurisdictions.

The Death God King's own journey hadn't been smooth sailing either. It had taken him multiple fusions with other Divine Jurisdictions before he finally discovered the Death Jurisdiction. He then had to go through the long development process before advancing to Death God King.

Han Wu nodded at the Desolation Manifestation's words. Plenty of powerful individuals remained stuck at the peak of the Major God rank, refusing to advance to God King because they sought a more suitable and powerful Divine Jurisdiction, aiming to become far stronger when they eventually ascended.

Han Wu himself walked that same path now.

Beyond that, the Desolation Manifestation also told Han Wu about the White Soul Civilization.

The White Soul Civilization was an ancient civilization, and its Will was known as the Golden Will. At its peak, the White Soul Civilization was said to rival the current Divine Civilization.

Unfortunately, no civilization could last forever.

After the fall of its final king, Lingray, no one had been able to ascend to the Golden Will Throne, and the White Soul Civilization had declined ever since.

Before entering the White Soul Civilization, Han Wu asked the Desolation Manifestation about its laws.

According to the Desolation Manifestation, the White Soul Civilization's laws only accepted free souls. Units were not allowed to enter, which immediately eliminated Han Wu's idea of sending his units in to steamroll everything.

The White Soul Civilization would also seal all of his powers, skills, and other abilities. This wasn't a complete seal, though, and he could follow the Golden Will's guidance to recover their abilities by obtaining the Power of Forms.

The Golden Will also gave every living being a fair chance to become king, regardless of whether they were natives or outsiders. As long as they passed its trials, they could ascend to the Golden Will Throne and become the king of the White Soul Civilization.

With this newfound knowledge under his belt, Han Wu tore the pass apart and entered the White Soul Civilization.

As the Desolation Manifestation had said, all of his powers, skills, Divine Jurisdictions, and everything else had been sealed. Fortunately, the seal wasn't absolute. Han Wu simply needed certain mediums to give his powers something to attach to.

The Desolation Manifestation followed him into the White Soul Civilization. As it was technically a part of the Death God King's soul, it counted as a free soul. However, due to its nature, it didn't have a physical form like Han Wu. It could only transform into a consciousness and serve as Han Wu's guide.

Before Han Wu could even adjust to his sealed state, the Desolation Manifestation was already transmitting information to him. In the short time they had been in the White Soul Civilization, it had communicated with the Golden Will and created a status panel for Han Wu by combining the Golden Law with the Power of Forms.

Opening the panel, Han Wu could see that he was in the Initial State, meaning he had nothing at all. The panel displayed only six empty slots.

Han Wu needed to gather six materials or pieces of equipment to move past the Initial State and activate the Power of Forms. He quickly accepted this rule.

The Desolation Manifestation then explained related information about the White Soul Civilization. The first step for Han Wu to leave the Initial State was to hunt living beings.

Under the Golden Will's law, when any living being died, its life essence would condense into some manner of material, equipment, or the local currency, White Soul Coins.

Han Wu commenced his hunt and soon spotted several weak Slimes. They looked soft like jelly and were as easy a target as they came. As Han Wu was still in the Initial State and had nothing, he figured these Slimes were a good place to start.

Gathering his strength, he charged forward and threw a punch at a Slime. The combined force of his punch and the momentum of his sprint exploded the Slime in one hit. Transparent, sticky fluid splattered all over him.

He didn't bother wiping himself off, continuing to attack the remaining Slimes. A minute later, he had obliterated all eight Slimes in the area.

Their bodies dissolved into light and left behind materials condensed from their life essence. Han Wu gathered everything up, obtaining three White Soul Coins, a Rank 0 wooden club, a Rank 0 tattered cotton shirt, and three thumb-sized Rank 0 Ice Stones.

The Rank 0 wooden club could be equipped into an empty slot to serve as a weapon, granting stat increases of Strength +1 and Attack +1. The Rank 0 cotton coat could go into a slot to provide some warmth and a stat bonus of Defense +1.

Besides that, Rank 0 Ice Stones were used to inscribe ice-attribute skills, though the skill's power couldn't be too strong or they would shatter. The source of the skills was Han Wu's temporarily sealed powers.

Han Wu needed to spend some White Soul Coins to inscribe an ice-attribute skill onto a Rank 0 Ice Stone, then place it into an empty slot. This would allow him to use the skill as normal.

Being new to the White Soul Civilization, he couldn't be too picky. He equipped the Rank 0 wooden club and the Rank 0 tattered cotton coat, then spent the three White Soul Coins to inscribe a technique onto an Ice Stone. It was a skill he had comprehended but never used before, called Frost Aura. Its only effect was to coat his weapon with ice, giving it Attack +1 and Ice +1. Still, with his options as limited as they were, Han Wu had no room to complain.

After finishing his upgrades, he continued his hunt. He needed to find living beings stronger than Slimes if he wanted to increase his strength as quickly as possible.

Chapter 958 - Rank 0 Saber Rabbit King Set

With the Desolation Manifestation's guidance, Han Wu quickly found a new type of living being to target: Little Dwarves. They averaged less than eighty centimeters tall, much shorter than proper dwarves.

Their small bodies meant their physical capabilities were weak, though they were still much stronger than Slimes overall. Han Wu swung his wooden club and went to work on the Little Dwarves.

His strength, greater than that of most adults, was practically divine force to these tiny creatures. Every swing killed one Little Dwarf, and he wiped out the group in no time.

The Little Dwarves' bodies dissolved into light, leaving behind the products condensed from their life essence. Han Wu took the White Soul Coins and collected the various materials. The equipment, however, failed to impress him.

Most of the Little Dwarves' drops were trash, like small knives and small vests, all Rank 0 and barely better than his wooden club. After picking through the lot, he managed to find a single necklace worth using, which provided Spirit +1.

He placed the necklace into one of his six slots and immediately felt his mind become clearer. His casting speed for Frost Aura also improved slightly. As a seasoned fighter, even with his strength sealed, Han Wu's ability to analyze his own condition remained sharp, and he could discern the exact benefits that each attribute gave him.

After clearing out the Little Dwarves, the Desolation Manifestation directed him toward a herd of Saber Rabbits. Killing these Saber Rabbits netted Han Wu several pieces of Rank 0 leather armor and fur coats with better defense than the tattered cotton coat, so he swapped them in immediately and filled all six empty slots.

He checked his stats in his panel.

[Strength +1, Spirit +1, Agility +1, Attack +3, Defense +5]

Those were the bonuses from five pieces of equipment and one Ice Stone.

Having all six slots filled meant Han Wu could leave the Initial State as per the White Soul Civilization's laws, but his stats left him feeling dissatisfied.

After analyzing these attributes, Han Wu gained a clearer understanding of how the White Soul Civilization worked. In his Initial State, he could only equip Rank 0 gear and material stones. Still, there was a significant quality gap, even among Rank 0 equipment,

The tattered cotton coat he first obtained and the Saber Rabbit fur coat he got later not only differed greatly in warmth, but the latter also had double the attribute bonuses. Although Han Wu wasn't usually one for obsessiveness, it was hard to stomach two pieces of equipment with attributes that differed by a full hundred percent.

So, even after filling all six slots, he didn't rush to leave the Initial State and instead focused on finding better equipment. There were plenty of Saber Rabbits in the area, after all.

Han Wu swung his club until it nearly smoked from the friction. Materials and equipment piled up around him, yet few met his standards.

That changed when he spotted a giant Saber Rabbit that was roughly the size of an adult husky. This one was clearly unusual. The other rabbits had soft fur and an adorable appearance, while this giant Saber Rabbit was all bulging muscle, with not a strand of fur on its body.

Its muscle definition was essentially the Saber Rabbit world's equivalent of a bodybuilder. The sight of this creature even took the Desolation Manifestation aback, and it quickly told Han Wu to stop wasting time on the regular Saber Rabbits.

This one was the real prize. Killing it would likely yield multiple powerful pieces of equipment.

Han Wu immediately charged in with his club. Unfortunately, the giant Saber Rabbit's dense muscles caused his attacks to bounce right off. It even jumped up and delivered a perfectly executed flying kick straight to Han Wu's chest.

The impact sent him stumbling back, blood streaming from his nose and mouth. It felt like he'd been hit by a car. Still, the injury wasn't serious enough to stop him, and he activated his skill, Frost Aura.

A layer of solid ice formed around the wooden club. Han Wu swung the ice-coated weapon at the giant Saber Rabbit. The additional enhancement of Attack +1 and Ice +1 meant his blows were not only heavier, but the club itself also carried the power of frost. The creature was stunned on impact.

Han Wu pressed the advantage, landing several more blows to its skull until finally, it cracked open with a crunch. The scattering of ice shards across the ground, mixing with the pool of blood, and taking a long time to melt.

The giant Saber Rabbit's body dissolved into points of light, leaving behind a Rank 0 Saber Rabbit King Set. This full six-piece set could fill all of Han Wu's slots perfectly.

Han Wu didn't hesitate to remove the miscellaneous gear from his slots and equip the full set.

[Strength +5, Agility +5, Defense +10]

On top of the attribute bonuses, completing the full set also activated a passive skill called Muscle Fortitude, which granted additional strength and defense equivalent to one's muscles. Although the stat bonuses were less diverse, the overall values were much higher.

Han Wu was satisfied with this and, following the Desolation Manifestation's guidance, he successfully moved past the Initial State, locking in his attributes at Strength +5, Agility +5, Defense +10, along with the passive skill Muscle Fortitude.

With the Initial State behind him, Han Wu finally entered the true phase of the White Soul Civilization's Power of Forms. A new panel appeared before him, this time with ten empty slots waiting to be filled.

"What happens if I fill all ten slots?" Han Wu asked the Desolation Manifestation.

"If you fill all ten, you'll obtain a First Form. Your strength will be locked into that more powerful state, and you'll open up the slots needed for the Second Form," the Desolation Manifestation replied.

Han Wu nodded, his interest in the White Soul Civilization's laws piqued. He silently vowed to push himself as far as possible. Who knew? Maybe one day he'd become the king of the White Soul Civilization.

: Chapter 959

Chapter 959 - Void Stone

After completing his ascension from the Initial State, Han Wu continued his hunt for new targets. The Desolation Manifestation told him that this area no longer had anything that could satisfy his needs and that he would have to head to a new zone.

Han Wu agreed. The Desolation Manifestation then provided three directions, each offering a different path for growth.

The first option was to head southwest to a herd of Ironhoof Bulls, which excelled at raw power and could provide plenty of strength-based equipment.

The second was to head northeast to a lake where a flock of Black Ducks resided. Black Ducks were fast runners skilled in water-type attacks, making them ideal for an agility-offense build.

Finally, due west, a wolf pack ruled over a mountain. The pack's alpha, a creature named Ferris, was a well-known boss in the area and had a Second Form.

Han Wu always pursued overwhelming power, so he naturally chose the hardest challenge. The more challenging the trial, the greater the reward. That was a truth Han Wu had learned over his years of invading civilizations. With that, he headed straight for the western mountain without looking back.

The Agility +5 attribute gave his speed a 50% boost and reduced his stamina consumption while running. In less than an hour, Han Wu reached Wolf Mountain.

A wild wolf lunged at him from the bushes the instant he set foot on the mountain. Han Wu didn't hold back. He raised his fist and swung.

Strength +5 granted a 50% boost to his raw strength, roughly double that of a normal adult. The punch dazed the wolf, leaving it stumbling in place. Han Wu seized the advantage, following up with another blow that snapped the wolf's spine and killed it on the spot.

He picked up the five White Soul Coins the wolf dropped with a lick of his lips. It had a decent drop rate.

Killing one wolf appeared to anger the entire mountain, as more wolves poured out of the grass and threw themselves at Han Wu. They even had some strategy to their attacks. While Han Wu was busy dealing with one, another would strike from the opposite side.

If Han Wu couldn't break free quickly, more wolves would pile on, turning a two-sided assault into a full encirclement until they devoured him completely.

The wolves had misjudged his defenses, however. His Defense +10 wasn't just for show. It nearly doubled his body's toughness, making his skin as durable as cowhide. The wolves' claws were nothing more than an itch to him. Only their bites could do any actual damage.

Han Wu's reflexes were sharp. Even with the pack surrounding him, he constantly watched his flank for incoming bites, spinning with force and sending several wolves flying.

He pinned one wolf's head down, slammed three punches into its skull, and smashed it apart. Its body slowly dissolved into light. After repeating this method across a few exchanges, he managed to cut the number of attacking wolves in half.

Then a howl erupted from one of the uninjured wolves. The surviving wolves joined in and morphed before Han Wu's eyes. Their grey-white fur sprouted streaks of different colored fur—some green, others yellow, and a few red.

"These wolves have entered their First Form," the Desolation Manifestation warned. "Be careful."

It was this transformation that finally allowed Han Wu to grasp that the First Form was essentially an additional transformation on top of one's base state. These wolves' First Forms were weak, amounting to nothing more than a few colored streaks in their fur.

Thinking little of it, he charged forward again, targeting a wolf with yellow streaks. Contrary to his expectations, this wolf didn't engage him directly. Instead, it dodged backward while a yellow glow flickered in its mouth.

Before Han Wu could react, a ball of yellow light shot from the wolf's mouth and flew at him. Han Wu caught it with his quick reflexes. It was a heavy stone carrying considerable force.

An unprepared hit from it would have left a nasty bruise. A strike to the chest could have even broken a few ribs.

"Interesting," Han Wu remarked, hurling the stone right back at the yellow-streaked wolf.

With Strength +5 behind the throw, the stone slammed into the wolf and knocked it flat, blood pouring from its mouth. Han Wu closed the distance in one step and stomped it to death.

After another round of fighting, all the First Form wolves were dead, giving him time to collect his spoils. The normal wolves dropped mostly Rank 0 items with a few Rank 1 pieces mixed in. Their coin drops averaged five to eight White Soul Coins.

The First Form wolves dropped mainly Rank 1 materials and equipment. Even their coin drops increased, ranging from ten to fifteen White Soul Coins.

Han Wu picked out four pieces of Rank 1 equipment and placed them in his slots. He then selected a Rank 1 Fire Stone and a Rank 1 Wood Stone from the materials.

For the Rank 1 Fire Stone, he spent twenty-five White Soul Coins to inscribe the skill Flame Palm, which provided Attack +3 and Fire +2 when activated. He then spent another thirty White Soul Coins to inscribe the skill Slow Recovery, which accelerated healing and granted a temporary Constitution +3 bonus, onto the Rank 1 Wood Stone.

Among the materials gathered, Han Wu also found a special Rank 1 Void Stone. The Void Stone could also be equipped in a slot, but its function differed from the Fire Stone or Wood Stone in that it could store one cubic meter worth of items in total volume.

It could be used to carry fruit or water for replenishing stamina, but Han Wu couldn't help but feel that using it in such a way was a waste, so he studied it to see whether it could store items from his Divine Civilization inventory.

The answer was yes!

The first thing Han Wu thought of was his Refiner. The Refiner was an incredibly useful tool that could break down low-quality materials and equipment into pure energy crystals. He just didn't know what effect it would have when brought into the White Soul Civilization.

Han Wu tried it and successfully managed to place the Refiner inside. However, the internal space of a Rank 1 Void Stone was small, and only 0.008 cubic meters of space remained for feeding in materials. That was roughly a twenty-centimeter cube.

This meant he would only toss in compact items for the Refiner to break down. He fed a Rank 0 short knife into the Refiner. It processed the item in ten seconds and produced a small, transparent crystal.

Han Wu picked up the crystal and could immediately feel that it was different from the ones he normally got in the Divine Civilization. The Desolation Manifestation inspected it and concluded that the crystal contained mysterious, pure energy well-suited for crafting weapons or enhancing the quality of non-elemental weapons.

Unfortunately, Han Wu was still out in the wilderness. While he had picked up a few blacksmithing basics over his years of study, he lacked the proper equipment to strengthen any weapons.

He could only store the transparent crystals alongside his other materials and save them for later.

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Chapter 960 - First Form, Lone Wolf Warrior

It didn't take long for Ferris to notice the declining number of wolves on the mountain. As the alpha of the pack and the master of this mountain, it swore to make whoever was hunting its kin and encroaching on its territory pay.

Ferris let out a howl that cut through the sky. Every wolf on the mountain dropped everything it had been doing to join in. The howls were their way of showing loyalty to their king and the king's way of showing love for its pack.

Many wolves changed as they howled, advancing from their base state to their First Form.

Han Wu was still climbing upward when he heard the howls and realized the situation had shifted. It felt as though a sleeping predator had awakened, the mountain air thick with killing intent. His muscles tensed instinctively.

This tension felt almost nostalgic. His will to fight burned brighter.

Despite knowing there were angered wolves on the mountain, he decided to push forward anyway. Every wolf that sensed his presence came out to attack. Some were still in their Initial State, while others had entered their First Form. The power difference between the two forms was enormous, but both had sharp senses.

Han Wu had equipped four pieces of gear and two skills. His strength had also greatly improved since the beginning.

Buffing himself with Slow Recovery, which healed his wounds while providing a temporary Constitution +3 bonus, he then ignited his hands with flame. His inscribed skill, Flame Palm, granted Attack +3 and Fire +2, the latter of which was absolutely devastating against fur-covered creatures.

Rage drove the wolves to charge without regard for their lives. Han Wu calmly advanced to meet them. As his palms danced through the air, waves of fire rolled outward, igniting the fur of wolf after wolf.

Many wolves fell in the blaze, with Han Wu scooping up the dropped materials and equipment as he went. He checked the stats, kept anything that fit the three remaining empty slots, and tossed everything else into the Void Stone for the Refiner to break down.

He soon filled all three remaining slots. There was a Rank 1 Wolf Ring with Attack +2 and Fire +2; a Rank 1 necklace with Strength +2, Attack +2, and Defense +2; and finally, a Rank 1 Wolf Fang Dagger with Attack +10.

With all these bonuses stacked, Han Wu's Attack and Defense easily reached +21 and +18, respectively.

This targeted culling of its wolves allowed Ferris to pinpoint Han Wu's position. It charged straight for him, seeking to protect its remaining wolves.

The massive wolf barreled down the mountain with ferocious momentum and quickly spotted blood-drenched Han Wu. Most of the blood belonged to its wolves, though some was his own. Thanks to Slow Recovery, his wounds were steadily closing.

The two locked eyes, the tension thick between them. Ferris was furious at Han Wu for slaughtering so many of its kin, while Han Wu was excited to discover what equipment and materials Ferris would drop.

A single exchanged glance told them both that only one of them would walk away alive.

In the next instant, they clashed. Ferris's claws raked across Han Wu's body. At the same time, Han Wu drove his dagger into the alpha's back and struck with Flame Palm using his other hand.

Flame Palm's power had grown with his increased Attack. The Fire +4 bonus ignited Ferris's fur and dealt continuous burn damage.

Ferris howled in pain before unleashing a surge of power and activating its Second Form, Lone Wolf. As its fur turned pitch black, its speed and strength doubled, and its claws grew three inches longer, slashing through the air like twin rows of small steel blades.

Han Wu took a swipe during a brief loss of focus. Even his skin, as tough as cowhide, was sliced open. Thankfully, Slow Recovery was still active. The cuts stopped bleeding and started closing, making the damage manageable.

Still, this put Han Wu on high alert. Ferris was the first Second Form creature he had encountered in the White Soul Civilization. He had to put his all into the fight.

After exchanging several more attacks, Han Wu realized that he wasn't a match for Ferris in raw stats. A one-hit kill was impossible. His only option was to wear it down over time.

If he wanted to improve his strength as quickly as possible, he had no other choice but to commit to a strategy. He stopped meeting Ferris's attacks head-on, choosing to dodge instead while landing Flame Palms to burn its fur.

Ferris became increasingly burned all over its body, severely limiting its movement. Every step it took tore open the burn wounds. The searing pain drove Ferris into a frenzy.

This loss of composure didn't help its situation. It didn't matter if it was stronger if it couldn't land a hit on the more experienced Han Wu. Three hours later, Ferris finally succumbed to the accumulated injuries and collapsed, its body dissolving into light.

Three glowing items remained where it fell. Han Wu hurried over and snatched them up.

The first was a set of Rank 2 hook claws that gave Agility +5 and Strength +8 with the attached skill, Frenzied Tear. It was excellent equipment. Unfortunately, Han Wu was still at the First Form and couldn't use Rank 2 gear yet.

The second was a golden, glowing crystal stone called a Rank 1 Divine Stone that could load one of Han Wu's sealed powers. Han Wu's eyes lit up. Among his sealed abilities were

countless powers and Divine Aspects, but he hadn't found a way to unseal any of them until this moment.

Before using the Divine Stone, he checked the third item, which was shaped like a wolf skull. Han Wu assumed it was a piece of equipment, but after the Desolation Manifestation carefully examined it, it concluded that it was actually a legacy.

The name of this First Form legacy was Lone Wolf Warrior. When a non-wolf species obtained this legacy, they could follow its instructions to load equipment and crystal stones that would grant them a powerful First Form.

Han Wu scoffed at first. How strong could a mere First Form legacy be? He had killed the Second Form alpha Ferris with nothing but a basic, unnamed First Form.

Then the Desolation Manifestation displayed the legacy's full details: Strength +50, Agility +50, Attack +50, Defense +50, plus the two skills, Lycanthropy and Crushing Claws.

Lycanthropy temporarily turned Han Wu into a werewolf, doubling attributes for the duration. Crushing Claws added another Attack +50.

Seeing these powerful bonuses solidified Han Wu's decision immediately.

So what if it's just a First Form legacy? I'm going to use it anyway! Trying to stop me would just be picking a fight!

Chapter 961 - Loading the Merge Ability

Han Wu hunted Wolf Mountain to extinction before finally gathering all the equipment and materials required for Lone Wolf Warrior.

After absorbing the legacy, Han Wu finally completed his First Form. It seemed Han Wu would keep his human appearance until he specifically activated it, though his attributes had received a massive boost regardless. Even without activating any skills or changing forms, his base stats reached Strength +55, Agility +55, Attack +50, and Defense +60.

Once he activated Lone Wolf Warrior, these stats would double. That kind of power, combined with Lycanthropy and Crushing Claws, meant he was likely already stronger than some Second or even Third Form creatures that lacked a named legacy.

Completing the First Form also officially unlocked the Second Form. He received ten empty slots, just like before, except each slot could now accommodate Rank 2 equipment and materials.

Han Wu immediately placed the Rank 2 hook claws he'd gotten from the Wolf King into one slot. The Void Stone holding the Refiner was too valuable to be discarded, so he temporarily equipped it until he found a Rank 2 Void Stone to replace it.

Finally, he took out the Rank 1 Divine Stone. This was his chance to unseal one of his powers. The significance of that was enormous, so he had to weigh his options carefully.

After some deliberation, Han Wu decided to load Merge into it.

Merge could combine materials or equipment together and raise their quality. The only problem was that it was bound to the True Martial Jurisdiction. A Rank 1 Divine Stone simply couldn't contain both. He could force them in, but it would cap their effectiveness at 1%.

Han Wu had no choice. The White Soul Civilization's laws were throttling his powers, and he couldn't exactly negotiate terms with the Golden Will, so he'd just have to accept it. Even 1% was better than nothing, and he could always swap in a higher-ranked Divine Stone later.

After placing the inscribed Divine Stone into a slot, a warm sensation spread through his body. That was the protection of the True Martial Jurisdiction, granting him a 10% overall attribute boost and a 10% increase in the power of martial skills. It was extremely practical for his situation.

As for Merge, at 1% effectiveness, its speed was throttled a hundredfold. Han Wu fused two Rank 1 Fire Stones as a test. Fortunately, even at a hundred times slower, the two stones merged into a single Rank 2 Fire Stone in ten seconds.

Han Wu's eyes lit up. He'd found a way to access stronger skills ahead of schedule.

He immediately fused the remaining materials in his bag. Before long, he had multiple Rank 2 stones of various elements. Picking several, he inscribed skills into them and ended up with four more skills.

[Fire Breath Palm: Shoot a five-meter tongue of flame on release. Attack +8, Fire +8]

[Mend: Accelerates wound recovery and temporarily grants Constitution +5]

[Flash Kick: An explosive burst kick. Strength +5, Attack +5]

[Toxic Claws: A venomous claw strike that requires the right equipment to execute. Agility +6, Poison +8]

The reason he stopped at four was neither a matter of lacking available abilities nor slots, but the limit of his White Soul Coins. After inscribing these, he was down to single digits. He couldn't afford to inscribe anything else.

Still, those four skills would do for the moment. Han Wu headed down the mountain in a pleasant mood.

The Desolation Manifestation had already scouted a route for him. There was a human city to the southeast where Han Wu could resupply. Trusting the Desolation Manifestation completely, he set off toward the southeast. Along the way, he ran into a four-person adventurer party.

They had come to Wolf Mountain to hunt wolves for materials and equipment, but couldn't find a single one. Staying on high alert, they pushed deeper, yet still found nothing. As they were wondering what was going on, they spotted Han Wu and, terrified that he would attack, instantly dropped into a defensive stance.

Han Wu glanced at them once. Their sloppy formation was full of holes. If he actually wanted to kill them, it wouldn't even take ten seconds.

According to the White Soul Civilization's laws, killing any living being netted materials, equipment, or White Soul Coins. He didn't bother, though. Their strength was simply too low.

The Desolation Manifestation confirmed that none of them had even reached First Form. Killing them wouldn't be worth the effort.

Han Wu walked right past them. The four relaxed slightly when they realized he wasn't going to attack.

A chubby-cheeked girl dressed as a mage boldly called out to him, "Excuse me, do you know why there aren't any wolves on Wolf Mountain?"

After the Desolation Manifestation translated, Han Wu replied directly, "Because I killed them all."

The Desolation Manifestation relayed his words back to the group. All four of them froze. The mage girl's mouth hung wide open, and the staff slipped from her hand, hitting the ground with a dull thud.

"Every wolf on the entire mountain?" one party member asked. "You're joking. There had to be at least a thousand wolves here."

Another shook his head. "The number of wolves isn't the problem. The problem is Ferris, the Wolf King, controlling this territory. There's no way it would let someone slaughter its pack and do nothing about it."

"If he said he killed all the wolves, does that include Ferris?" the mage girl asked after collecting herself.

The very idea of this left her three companions stunned, and the party continued whispering amongst themselves.

“That would mean he has at least a Second Form!”

“A Second Form fighter, and I doubted him? I’m such an idiot!”

“Galewind City is organizing people to resist the Undead Legion’s invasion. Think we should invite him to fight?”

“Absolutely. If he really killed Ferris, maybe he can stand up to the Fourth Form Undead General too. The guild will reward us handsomely for recommending someone like him!”

“Then what are we waiting for? Go get him!” the mage girl cried out.

: Chapter 962

Chapter 962 - Galewind City

Han Wu hadn’t planned on getting involved with the four adventurers, but then they mentioned they had a horse-drawn carriage and even offered to take him to Galewind City, so he reluctantly agreed to travel with them.

Along the way, the four adventurers talked about the situation in Galewind City. Han Wu kept his eyes on them, but was actually listening to the Desolation Manifestation’s translation.

It seemed that an Undead General was planning to invade Galewind City, so the city was assembling manpower and building a defensive line to resist the incoming legion.

Han Wu had no issue with the Undead General’s actions. Under different circumstances, he could have been the one they were guarding against. So, keeping the mindset of hitching a free ride without getting emotionally involved, he politely continued to listen with half an ear.

That was until the mage girl mentioned that the city lord would reward the best performer with access to his personal vault, where they could pick one treasure as a prize.

This naturally caught Han Wu’s interest. After all, his purpose in entering the White Soul Civilization was to find a treasure capable of resisting a 99% kill rate for the Death God King. The city lord’s vault could contain it. There was no way to know for sure.

Han Wu decided to help Galewind City resist the Undead General's invasion.

The four adventurers were overjoyed, as if having already won the battle. Han Wu, on the other hand, couldn't bother reacting, simply sitting in the carriage with his eyes closed.

Soon, the carriage arrived at Galewind City. The four adventurers brought Han Wu to the guild, claiming he was a powerful fighter who had killed the Wolf King Ferris on Wolf Mountain.

The shocked guild attendant hurried to fetch the vice president. The vice president was a shrewd old fox. When he saw Han Wu's youthful appearance, he immediately doubted his strength and assumed that Han Wu was a fraud riding on a false reputation.

He maintained a cold attitude toward Han Wu and insisted that everything be done by the book. Regardless of Han Wu's claimed strength, he'd need to prove himself first.

Han Wu didn't have a habit of showing off his strength to strangers. It didn't matter if the vice president didn't believe him. He'd fight the Undead General regardless. If the city lord tried to weasel out of the reward afterward, Han Wu would just launch a little undead invasion of his own.

Seeing Han Wu about to leave, the four adventurers hastily grabbed him, not wanting all their efforts to go to waste. After much persuading, the vice president finally agreed to a small test.

He brought Han Wu to the guild's testing room. Inside was a golem, built to absorb strikes and measure the attacker's strength.

Han Wu simply went through the half-hearted motions of walking up and hitting the golem with a Flash Kick.

One kick left a massive dent in the golem's refined steel body. The explosive power left everyone in the room speechless.

"That golem is made of hundredfold-forged steel," the vice president muttered to himself. "To kick a dent in it... His combined Attack and Strength have to be over a hundred at least. That speed was incredible too. That kind of destructive power would cause even a Third Form Undead Warrior to fall in one hit!"

He quickly shuffled up to Han Wu with a fawning smile. "Please forgive me. I didn't know you were truly this powerful. I sincerely apologize for my earlier rudeness."

Han Wu couldn't be bothered listening to the vice president's prattling and turned to leave, but the vice president trailed behind him like a shadow.

“Mighty warrior, I don’t know your name yet,” the vice president rambled. “Judging from the elegance of that kick, you must be an extremely powerful martial artist. May I ask what Form you’ve reached...”

Even with the Desolation Manifestation translating every word, Han Wu still found it grating and was on the verge of losing his temper.

At that moment, the vice president added, “I was actually hoping to arrange a suitable piece of equipment for you. Whatever you need, the guild will get it for you as quickly as possible.”

Han Wu stopped walking. Setting aside the man’s incessant chattering, he was actually quite considerate, so Han Wu decided to forgive his earlier offense.

“I need three Rank 2 accessories that boost fire attributes,” he demanded.

The vice president blinked. “Rank 2?”

Rank 2 accessories were Second Form equipment. Could this powerful warrior only be at the Second Form?

The vice president studied Han Wu with uncertainty. He couldn’t pin down Han Wu’s true strength, so he continued treating him as someone formidable.

“No problem at all. Three Rank 2 fire-attribute accessories, coming right up. We’ve prepared a guest room at the guild. Would you like a handmaiden to attend to you for the night?” the vice president asked, maintaining his professional smile.

“No.” Han Wu took the key and walked out.

The vice president watched his back, a sharp glint flashing in his eyes. “Can a Second Form really be that powerful? That shouldn’t be possible. Did I misjudge him? Whatever. It doesn’t take much to prepare three Rank 2 accessories. If he turns out to be all talk and dies on the battlefield, that’s not on me.”

After leaving the guild, Han Wu wandered the streets. Using the Refiner to break down unused equipment and materials had allowed him to accumulate a large collection of small crystals of various types. He wanted to find a blacksmith to forge them into his weapons.

Han Wu quickly found a smithy thanks to the Desolation Manifestation’s guidance. Inside, a minotaur in a leather apron was rhythmically hammering an iron ingot with a small mallet.

The coming battle against the approaching Undead General required plenty of weapons, and the minotaur blacksmith was hoping to make a killing off that demand.

When he saw Han Wu walk in, he put down the ingot and mallet, greeting him with a broad, guileless smile. “Welcome, customer. Whatever equipment you need, I’ve got the best quality goods right here.”

Han Wu glanced up at the merchandise on display, not bothering to comment on the quality. Any random adult Scorching Dwarf from his divine realm could produce better work than this.

“I’m going to forge my own equipment. I need to borrow your furnace and tools,” Han Wu said.

The minotaur shook his massive head. “No way.”

Before, he would’ve likely rented the space out for a fee, but with a war coming, he needed his forge running at full capacity to produce weapons for sale.

That was when the Desolation Manifestation prompted, “I’ve sensed something interesting in his ore basket. It could be useful to you.”

Han Wu immediately glanced at the ore basket. The minotaur tried to block him, but Han Wu threw him over his shoulder and planted his horns into the floor. It took the poor blacksmith quite a while to pull himself free.

Knowing he couldn’t fight Han Wu, the minotaur shouted in a comically high-pitched voice for his size, “Someone help! He’s stealing my forge!”

Han Wu ignored the shouting and fished a dark, lumpy chunk out of the ore basket. When he squeezed it, a diamond-shaped metal shard fell out. It was the size of a coin but weighed a full kilogram.

As he held it, he felt his life force slowly being drained away. He didn’t know what this shard was, but he could tell that it was undoubtedly something extraordinary.

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

: Chapter 963

Chapter 963 - Crystal Greatsword

By the time the minotaur’s shouting brought the patrol to the smithy, Han Wu was already forging.

He pulled a large block of fused transparent crystal from his small bag and heated it in the furnace. Once it softened, he took up the forging hammer and struck it blow after blow.

The crystal quickly took shape under his skilled hands. He was making a greatsword, as his proficiency with it was higher than with any other weapon.

When the patrol arrived and saw Han Wu mid-forge, a guard who knew the minotaur asked, “Old Bull, is he the one trying to steal your furnace?”

The minotaur held up a hand in front of the guard’s mouth. “Wait, wait. Quiet. Let me watch for a while longer.”

Han Wu continued without interruption, his hammer ringing against the crystal. Every so often, he pulled out crystals of different colors and fused them into the forming greatsword.

The rhythmic clanging rang like a symphony, and the minotaur listened in a trance.

“That’s definitely dwarven technique. I’d stake my life on it. That is dwarven craftsmanship,” the minotaur blurted out to the patrol guard.

The guard saw the minotaur’s trance and decided not to bother. He withdrew from the smithy, leaving the minotaur to watch Han Wu work with total concentration.

About an hour later, Han Wu put down the hammer and set the diamond-shaped shard from the ore basket into the blade. As the shard locked into position, a network of veins lit up across the greatsword’s surface, and the life-draining sensation grew far more intense.

Han Wu lifted the finished blade with a satisfied nod. The greatsword was complete.

The minotaur was stunned. He’d initially only recognized the dwarven portion of Han Wu’s technique, but he was quickly realizing that dwarven craftsmanship was the least impressive part of the entire process.

He couldn’t make sense of anything that followed. It couldn’t parse the technique that Han Wu had used to embed the shard, nor the cause of the glowing veins. The minotaur couldn’t help but feel that his many years of smithing had been a complete waste.

“I’m done,” Han Wu finally said, pulling a Rank 2 Fire Stone from his bag and setting it down as payment for using the forge.

The minotaur rushed forward to stop him. “Master! It’s an honor to have you forge in my shop. Please forget the fee. If you truly insist on paying, I have a small request. I’d like to learn the dwarven forging technique you used.”

Han Wu gave the minotaur a look that seemed to say, “Does something that basic need to be taught?”

The minotaur’s face flushed red. Recognizing the dwarven technique was the extent of his knowledge. He truly couldn’t figure out the patterns in Han Wu’s process.

Ignoring him, Han Wu set down the Fire Stone and made to leave.

“Master, don’t you want to know where that shard in the ore basket came from?” the minotaur hastily asked.

That stopped Han Wu in his tracks. The diamond-shaped shard was remarkable, which was exactly why he’d forged it into the greatsword. If he could find more, the blade would become even more powerful.

“Tell me, and I’ll teach you the technique,” Han Wu offered.

The minotaur was thrilled. Under Han Wu’s guidance, it took him only half an hour to learn the dwarven forging method. Equipment forged using the technique came out at a noticeably higher quality than his previous creations. The minotaur could barely contain his joy, so much so that he nearly broke out into a dance.

Han Wu then reminded him to keep his end of the deal.

“Those ore chunks were mined from the quarry north of Galewind City,” the minotaur said earnestly. “That one shard was found among the ore, meaning there could be more down there.”

Han Wu nodded and headed straight for the quarry north of the city.

Once inside the quarry, the Desolation Manifestation scanned the surroundings and quickly located multiple shards. As Han Wu collected them one after another, he realized they could be pieced together into a broken longsword.

The blade was pitch black, as if it could swallow light itself. Even shattered into dozens of pieces, the reassembled fragments still radiated an aura that shook Han Wu to the core. He could only imagine this sword’s true power when it was whole. At minimum, it had to have been at the level of a 9-Star God-grade Divine Weapon.

There was no point in dwelling on it for long. The sword was broken, and restoring it would take tremendous time and effort that Han Wu wasn’t willing to sacrifice. Instead, he gathered all the fragments and fused them into his newly forged crystal greatsword, piece by piece.

Once every last fragment had been absorbed, the crystal greatsword turned pure black, an unsettling aura radiating from every inch.

Han Wu tested it on a nearby tree, one with a trunk as thick as a bowl. Despite keeping his swing light and merely scoring the bark, the tree immediately withered, its life force flowing through the crystal greatsword and into Han Wu's body.

The sensation was incredible, warm and intoxicating, like sitting in a sauna. Han Wu almost got lost in the feeling, but he hurriedly snapped himself out of it. He couldn't afford to become addicted to that kind of pleasure. That was a path to losing himself.

The crystal greatsword could drain a target's life force and feed that energy back to its wielder, bringing with it a rush of euphoria. It was designed to encourage its owner to keep hunting and killing. In this regard, it was no different from a cursed blade.

Han Wu didn't hold that against it. If the crystal greatsword grew stronger, he benefited too. The blade was his, and if he ever fell under its spell, he'd only have his own weak willpower to blame.

Of course, that would never happen.

As if sensing his resolve, the crystal greatsword voluntarily stopped its life force drain. That told Han Wu that the blade was sentient. Perhaps the intelligence came from the original longsword's Armament Spirit.

None of that mattered, though. The most important thing was that Han Wu had a powerful new weapon.

After some contemplation, he decided to drop the hook claws and the Toxic Claws skill. He'd replace them with something better suited for the crystal greatsword.

He ended up choosing a skill that he hadn't used in a long time: Spectral Dash. Combined with the crystal greatsword, it would unleash devastating power. He was out of White Soul Coins, though, so swapping skills and equipment would have to wait.

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: Chapter 964

Chapter 964 - The Undead Siege

The crystal greatsword turned out to be Rank 9, far too high for Han Wu to place in a slot. He could only carry it on his back. This meant he couldn't benefit from its attribute bonuses. All he had was the right to swing it.

Even that was terrifying enough. The crystal greatsword was immensely powerful, and its material quality alone could inflict devastating damage.

After returning to his guild room with the greatsword, Han Wu slept soundly through the night. He awoke the next morning to a commotion.

The vice president pounded on his door. “Are you awake? The Undead General has brought the full Undead Legion to attack the city!”

Han Wu got dressed, strapped the crystal greatsword to his back, and walked out. The vice president immediately handed him the three Rank 2 fire-attribute accessories he’d promised.

Equipping all three into his slots and feeling his fire attribute triple, he nodded in satisfaction. “Lead the way.”

The vice president ushered him toward the city gates. Outside, the battle was already raging. A flood of Galewind City adventurers charged into the field, clashing with the undead skeletons.

The Desolation Manifestation scanned the Undead Legion and gave its assessment. Other than the Fourth Form Undead General, the rest were all trash.

Han Wu agreed with that evaluation. After a brief stretch, he threw himself onto the battlefield. Facing a horde of charging undead skeletons, he raised both hands and unleashed Fire Breath Palm.

A fifteen-meter tongue of flame blasted forward, reducing the approaching skeletons to ash on contact. Dozens, then hundreds of skeletons burned to nothing with every passing second.

The vice president stood atop the city wall with his mouth hanging wide open. This was absurd. There was no wonder he’d asked for fire-attribute accessories. The power was staggering. Han Wu alone carved a path forward through the battlefield.

The Undead General wasn’t about to sit back and watch, though. It called upon its elite forces. Large numbers of First Form skeletons surged forward, their bones shimmering with colorful hues that marked their elemental attributes and skills.

Han Wu still wasn’t impressed. Their First Forms were cobbled together from random equipment with no cohesion. Worse still, they were useless to him since they had no set bonuses, no named legacy bonuses, and no meaningful stat synergy.

He blasted them with two rounds of Fire Breath Palm. Although the fifteen-meter flame tongues did slightly less damage to these First Form skeletons, most still turned to ash. Only those with fire, water, or ice attributes managed to endure the flames.

Unfortunately for the survivors, the only thing that awaited them was close combat with Han Wu. Those skeletons would finally get to witness true cruelty firsthand.

Atop the city wall, clad in full armor, Galewind City's city lord surveyed the battlefield below. The Undead Legion's ferocious assault had the city lord wishing he could leap into the fray himself. He had limited strength, though, and the skeleton horde would likely rip him apart if he jumped in recklessly.

Then he spotted Han Wu, blazing bright in the middle of the skeleton army. Barely any skeletons could get within a fifteen-meter radius of Han Wu. His fire was simply too fierce.

Initial State skeletons turned to ash upon contact with his flames. Even First Form skeletons hardly fared any better, perishing in under three seconds. The few survivors from the flames met an even worse fate, with a single kick from Han Wu shattering every bone in their skeletal bodies.

The city lord pointed down at Han Wu. "Who's that man? He's incredible!"

The vice president rushed forward to claim credit. "My lord, he's an expert I personally recruited. I went to great lengths to bring him here to help Galewind City through this crisis."

"Excellent work," the city lord praised. "I'll make sure to reward you well once the Undead Legion is defeated."

The vice president beamed. He'd recruited Han Wu using guild resources, but the city lord's reward would go straight into his own pocket. Spending the guild's money to line his own pockets was a fine arrangement.

Han Wu's performance only grew more oppressive. It didn't take long for his kill count to number in the tens of thousands, nearly surpassing every other adventurer combined.

This naturally drew the Undead General's attention. Urging its skeletal horse forward, it charged straight at Han Wu and unleashed its strongest transformation.

Blue-green flames engulfed the Undead General's body as it took on its Fourth Form, the Ghostfire Skeleton. It radiated a distinct pressure. Even Han Wu's Fire Breath Palm couldn't harm it.

The Undead General rode its skeletal horse toward Han Wu, aiming to trample him under hoof. One stomp was all it would take to crush this troublesome pest.

Han Wu instantly reacted. He spun around, drew the crystal greatsword, and met the skeletal horse's rising forelegs head-on. The impact snapped both of the horse's front legs clean off.

The crippled horse buckled, crashing to the ground and bringing the Undead General with it. As the Undead General tumbled off, the blue-green flames covering its body flared with greater intensity.

“You crippled my steed. I’ll kill you!” the Undead General snarled using its soul voice, which Han Wu understood immediately.

“You’re upset I hit your horse?” Han Wu mocked. “Then I guess I’ll just hit you instead!”

He swung the crystal greatsword with practiced skill as he charged at the Undead General. At the same time, it drew a longsword wreathed in blue-green flame and met him head-on.

Their two blades collided.

Han Wu was sent flying.

The Undead General’s raw strength clearly exceeded his.

However, the Undead General didn’t come out unscathed either. Its longsword had snapped on impact. The remaining half looked rather ridiculous.

Han Wu cast Mend on himself to repair the damage while he carefully studied the Undead General. It had incredible strength, and clashing head-on would only put him at a disadvantage.

Disregarding its broken sword, the Undead General taunted, “Once you’re dead, that greatsword will be mine. I’ll use it to slaughter everyone in this city and turn them all into undead skeletons.”

Han Wu didn’t find these words particularly rage-inducing. After all, he had no personal stake in this battle. All he wanted was to claim the city lord’s promised reward.

“Consider yourself lucky. You get to be the first to see my First Form.” Han Wu’s body started to morph. “This will be your first time seeing it, and your last! Awoooo!”

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

Chapter 965 - Second Form, Swift Shadow

Han Wu let out a howl as he shifted into a werewolf. All of his attributes doubled.

Gripping the crystal greatsword in both clawed hands, he charged at the Undead General once more. The Undead General couldn't dodge his blindingly quick attack in time and could only raise its broken sword to block.

Han Wu's doubled strength now exceeded that of the Undead General's. The crystal greatsword's quality was also far superior to the broken blade. In the clash, the broken sword snapped again.

The crystal greatsword followed through and plowed straight into the Undead General's bones. The crushing impact split it in half, separating its upper body from its lower body.

Still, the Undead General refused to die. It cursed Han Wu using its soul voice, swearing that Han Wu would die at the hands of the undead, as the great Undead King would avenge it.

Han Wu had no patience for empty threats. He brought the crystal greatsword down on the Undead General's skull. The blade shattered its bones and absorbed its soul.

The world went silent. The Undead General's death caused the rest of the Undead Legion to collapse into disarray. Even without Han Wu stepping in, Galewind City's adventurers could mop up the rest.

Han Wu was about to head back to the city when the Desolation Manifestation stopped him. "Don't go yet. There's something inside the Undead General's armor."

Heeding the advice, Han Wu searched the armor and found a bone made of crystal. The sight reminded him of Jing Jing. It wasn't a piece of equipment or a material. Like the wolf skull, this was a legacy.

The Desolation Manifestation scanned it and confirmed that it was a Fourth Form legacy, Crystal Lich. If a non-undead were to absorb this legacy, they would gain the power to transform into a Crystal Lich. If an actual undead received it, the benefits were even greater, as it would instantly elevate them to the most noble royal bloodline among the skeleton species, the Crystal Skeleton.

Despite having this incredible legacy, the Undead General had not used it. Its loss was Han Wu's gain. Unfortunately, as it was a Fourth Form legacy, Han Wu couldn't use it yet and could only hold on to it for the time being. He could always come back to it if he didn't find a better legacy later.

When Han Wu returned to Galewind City, he was greeted with a hero's welcome from the soldiers on the wall. They'd watched him destroy the Undead General with overwhelming force. Galewind City saw him as their savior.

The city lord personally came out to express his gratitude and invited Han Wu to enter his vault to pick a treasure as a reward. Han Wu accepted gladly. After all, this had been his goal all along.

Once inside the vault, he asked the Desolation Manifestation to scan it for the Death God King's requested treasure, the one that could resist a 99% kill rate.

After a thorough search, the Desolation Manifestation returned with a negative. The treasure wasn't here.

Han Wu was disappointed but not surprised. A treasure capable of resisting a 99% kill rate was never going to be easy to find.

Without that specific treasure, he'd settle for the next best thing. The Desolation Manifestation guided him to a solid Second Form legacy called Swift Shadow.

Swift Shadow's strength was in speed. The user's speed attribute would triple while in this Second Form. It also came with skills like short-range flight, Shadow Meld, Shadow Stitch, Shadow Blade, Shadow Shuttle, and Shadow Clone.

Absorbing it would give Han Wu a massive boost to survivability. He didn't know what dangers lay ahead, and having a form that kept him alive was a smart choice, so he followed the Desolation Manifestation's advice and picked Swift Shadow.

When the city lord learned Han Wu had chosen only the Swift Shadow legacy, he assumed Han Wu was being modest to save him the expense. Moved by the gesture, the city lord gathered all the materials and equipment needed for the legacy and graciously gifted them to Han Wu, saving him a great deal of time.

After absorbing Swift Shadow, Han Wu's base speed jumped from +55 all the way to +155. If he ran at full speed, he would leave afterimages behind.

Grateful for the city lord's generosity, Han Wu decided to repay the favor by eliminating the undead threat to Galewind City once and for all.

The city lord didn't believe him. Even though he assumed that Han Wu was just boasting, he took the time to explain the full history of the conflict between the city and the Undead Legion.

The two sides had been at odds for over a hundred years. The Undead Legion occupied a mass grave site over a hundred kilometers from the city. Every time Galewind City's merchant caravans passed through, the undead would ambush them.

Galewind City had assembled an adventurer force to level the mass graves, but that only provoked the Undead King, a Fifth Form at the time, into retaliating with the full Undead

Legion and driving the city's forces back. From then on, the slightest friction between the two sides would trigger another undead invasion.

After generations of this, Galewind City had weakened considerably. The city lord himself was only a mediocre Third Form. When he'd learned the undead were coming, his first thought was to seek outside help instead of fighting them himself. He simply couldn't handle it.

At least the fight this time had turned out well. The Undead Legion had been scattered. In Han Wu's view, though, the people of Galewind City would live in constant fear for as long as the mass graves still existed.

It was better to finish the job and wipe the place out completely. The city lord had been good to him, so Han Wu would return the favor. With his target set, Han Wu departed immediately, heading for the mass graves over a hundred kilometers away.

He traveled in his Swift Shadow form. Its incredible speed allowed him to cover the entire distance in less than an hour.

At the perimeter of the mass graves, Han Wu sensed at least 100,000 skeletons milling about, all stronger than the force the Undead General had brought to Galewind City.

Han Wu wasn't the least bit afraid. He was determined to level this place and end the threat for good.

Chapter 966 - The Final King Lingray

The moment Han Wu entered the area of the mass graves, countless undead skeletons detected his living aura, grabbed whatever weapons they'd scavenged, and charged at him.

Han Wu activated Fire Breath Palm, engulfing the skeletons in flames and reducing many of them to ashes.

Plenty of First Form and even Second Form skeletons tanked the fire. Unfortunately for them, Han Wu's physical attacks hit even harder. On top of that, he had the crystal greatsword strapped to his back. One swing from it had shattered even the Fourth Form Undead General, let alone these regular skeletons.

The virtually unstoppable Han Wu advanced step by step while the Desolation Manifestation searched for the strongest being in the mass graves, the Undead King.

Following the Desolation Manifestation's guidance, Han Wu soon arrived at the Undead King's burial site. It was far more lavish than the other skeletons' graves, decorated with elaborate stone carvings and draped in gold and silver jewelry.

"Quite the extravagant one," Han Wu remarked. "So, are you going to come out on your own, or do I have to drag you out?"

Sensing Han Wu's aura, the Undead King emerged from its grave. Its bones were perfectly translucent, marking it as a Crystal Skeleton, the royal bloodline of the skeleton species.

A platinum crown sat atop its head, and it carried a scepter that burned with a dark purple flame. A cloak woven from death energy billowed behind it, radiating authority.

The Undead King raised its crystal skull. The spiritual fire burning in its eye sockets flickered as it sized Han Wu up. It could discern that Han Wu hadn't even assembled a Third Form, meaning he would likely be weak.

It didn't dare let its guard down, though. The Undead King could sense the catastrophic losses among the skeletons of the mass graves, and the only one around was this person without a Third Form.

"Human, what do you want?" the Undead King asked through its soul voice.

Han Wu responded with his own soul, "Nothing major. I just want you to leave this place and stop harassing Galewind City."

His hand was already reaching for the crystal greatsword on his back, ready to fight, but the Undead King's next actions caught him completely off guard.

Despite the unreasonable demand, the Undead King simply nodded and replied with its soul voice, "Fine."

Han Wu was stunned. There was no way the Undead King was this agreeable.

"You're not trying to trick me, are you?" Han Wu asked, eyeing it suspiciously.

The Undead King shook its head, the spiritual fire in its eye sockets burning steadily and calmly. "I've already figured out that you're not a native of the White Soul Civilization. Your strength isn't much, but the potential hidden inside your body is limitless. I'm not foolish enough to make an enemy of a promising outsider over a small city like Galewind."

Han Wu was left speechless. This Undead King was clever. He couldn't even find a reason to pick a fight with it.

“In that case, relocate as soon as possible. I have things to do, so I’ll be going.” Han Wu turned to leave, not at all worried about the Undead King betraying him. If anything, he was hoping it would. At least that would give him a reason to destroy it.

“Wait!” the Undead King called out.

Han Wu turned back, hand drifting toward the crystal greatsword. “What? You want to fight me after all?”

The Undead King frantically waved its hands, signaling that fighting wasn’t its intent. “I can sense the power contained in the greatsword on your back. Could you have some connection to the Final King Lingray? He’s been dead for many years, though.”

So, the diamond-shaped shards were actually connected to Lingray. It was strange, though, that a small place like Galewind City would have any link to him. If there really was a connection, Galewind City had certainly fallen on hard times.

“You have information about Lingray?” Han Wu asked.

He had yet to find any leads on the treasure the Death God King needed, and Lingray had been the strongest being in the White Soul Civilization’s history. Places connected to him were more likely to hold something valuable.

The Undead King nodded. “I know the location of Lingray’s tomb.”

Han Wu’s eyes lit up. Powerful beings were usually buried with treasures. The Death God King’s prize could very well be inside Lingray’s tomb.

Still, Han Wu remained cautious. The Undead King could have kept this information to itself, yet it chose to share. He didn’t believe for a second that it was just doing this out of the goodness of its heart. In fact, it didn’t even have a heart to begin with.

“Out with it. What’s it going to cost me?” Han Wu asked directly.

The spiritual fire in the Undead King’s eye sockets trembled, as if surprised. “I want to occupy the Lingray’s tomb, but my power alone isn’t enough, so I’d like to invite you to help. Once it’s done, you can pick whatever treasures you want from inside.”

Han Wu considered the proposal. Two fighters would make the job far easier than going alone. The Undead King was a Fifth Form being, theoretically stronger than him. Teaming up actually meant Han Wu was getting the better end of the deal.

The offer was tempting, but there was one concern. The Undead King’s character. It seemed friendly enough, but there was no way to tell if it would abandon Han Wu or even stab him in the back if real danger came.

One could know someone's face but never truly know their heart. If Han Wu couldn't fully trust the Undead King, it would be better not to cooperate at all.

The Undead King seemed to read his hesitation. "If you're willing to explore the Lingray's tomb with me, I'll sign a Spiritual Contract with you."

"Are you serious?" Han Wu asked skeptically.

A Spiritual Contract would bind the Undead King far more tightly than it would bind Han Wu. After all, it was an undead whose entire existence was its soul, while Han Wu's life and soul held equal standing.

"Absolutely." The Undead King raised a hand and produced a Spiritual Contract. It drafted the terms, clearly outlining how spoils would be divided. Once done, it attached a strand of its soul to the contract as a sign of agreement.

Han Wu took the contract and had the Desolation Manifestation inspect it. Surprisingly, there were no hidden catches. It was a clean, straightforward Spiritual Contract.

Satisfied, Han Wu attached his soul signature to the document as well. The contract was sealed. Until they conquered the tomb of Lingray, neither party could harm the other. Violation meant the destruction of the offender's soul.

"Then let's get moving," Han Wu urged, barely containing his eagerness.

"No rush. Before we go, I think we should boost your strength a little," the Undead King said, returning to its grave and coming back with a scroll.

It was another Form legacy.

When Han Wu took it, the scroll's information flooded into his mind. This was the Third Form legacy, Swordwind!

Chapter 967 - The Undead King Relocates

The details of the Third Form legacy appeared before Han Wu. In this Form, he could transform into a Swordwind, wielding four greatswords simultaneously to attack. Swordwind were children of the wind and had an extremely strong affinity for the wind element.

Han Wu couldn't hold back a grin when he saw this. He was extremely familiar with the race. In fact, the information recorded in the scroll wasn't nearly as detailed as his existing knowledge. After all, one of his Saints, Steelcutter Swordwind, was of that race.

"Perfect. I'll take this scroll!" Han Wu declared.

The equipment and skills that the legacy required were no problem for him either. Although he was only an amateur blacksmith, with the tutelage of the Scorching Dwarf, Divine Hammer, he could forge a set of Rank 3 equipment without issue. His resources were plentiful, and anything he crafted would be superior to monster drops.

Skills were even less of a concern. Whirlwind Slash, Gust Chop, and Hurricane Slash were all recorded in the legacy. Besides that, Han Wu could also produce higher-level techniques like Steelcutter and Gold Parter.

Preparing this legacy would be completely effortless for him. Han Wu took the legacy scroll back to Galewind City and found the minotaur's smithy again. This time, the minotaur watched him forge with the reverence of a worshiper.

The minotaur only snapped out of his trance long after Han Wu finished and left. Letting out a long breath, he bellowed, "Brilliant!"

Afterward, Han Wu visited the city lord of Galewind City, explained the Undead King's decision to relocate, and "borrowed" some White Soul Coins with no intention of paying them back.

The city lord didn't believe Han Wu's story and assumed Han Wu was feeding him fake information to swindle money. Out of respect for Han Wu's contributions to the city, however, he didn't call him out on it and handed over the coins without fuss. He also told Han Wu that if things ever got rough out there, he was welcome to come work for Galewind City. The pay would be generous.

Han Wu just smiled. With his kind of strength, selling the entire city wouldn't cover his hiring fee.

This Swordwind legacy was considerably more powerful, and its attribute bonuses were substantial. Strength, Agility, Spirit, Defense, and Constitution each received +100 while Attack received +200.

Once activated, every attribute would double, with the wind attribute receiving an extra +100 on top of that.

The combination of those bonuses meant even Han Wu's lowest base attribute sat at +155, while his highest, Agility, reached +255. Both his Attack and Defense saw equally impressive gains. His base stats alone were already on par with some ordinary Fourth Form fighters.

If he ran into the Undead General again, Han Wu wouldn't even need the crystal greatsword to beat it. After ascending to the Third Form, Han Wu already had the Fourth Form Crystal Lich legacy prepared.

Crystal Lich was a mage-oriented Form focused on boosting spiritual attributes. He didn't have the right materials for it, though, since he hadn't fought the Undead King, so the Crystal Lich legacy would have to wait.

When the Undead King saw Han Wu's strength, the spiritual fire in its eye sockets leaped in shock. While it had expected the Swordwind legacy's attribute boosts to be impressive, it hadn't expected them to be to this extent.

It was good that Han Wu was getting stronger, though. It would help tremendously with exploring Lingray's tomb.

With everything prepared, the Undead King rallied every undead in the mass graves for a march. Over ten thousand armed skeletons filed out under the cover of night, leaving behind the home they'd occupied for a hundred years.

News didn't reach Galewind City until noon the following day. The city lord was in the middle of lunch when he heard it. He was so shocked that the bowl slipped from his hands and shattered on the floor, but he didn't even notice.

It took him a long moment to process it. Han Wu had told him the truth. The Undead King, who had threatened Galewind City for over a century, had actually left.

Then came the regret. He'd only given Han Wu a small amount of White Soul Coins. Hopefully, Han Wu didn't think he was cheap. Han Wu, of course, knew nothing of the city lord's worries.

Undead skeletons carried him in a palanquin as they traveled through the night. By dawn, they arrived at the mouth of a cave.

The Undead King stepped down from its own palanquin and said to Han Wu, "This is the entrance to Lingray's tomb."

Feeling skeptical, Han Wu preemptively had the Desolation Manifestation check it first. It pushed its senses deep into the cave and confirmed that there was indeed a tomb inside. A peculiar aura of authority surrounded it, blocking the Desolation Manifestation's perception from penetrating further, so it would have to wait until Han Wu was inside to investigate further.

Han Wu relaxed slightly, reassured that there were no issues. Taking the lead, he said, "Let's go in."

The Undead King followed behind him, while the skeleton soldiers stayed outside. They were too weak to be of any help inside. Besides, the Undead King had powerful summoning skills. If the situation called for it, it could summon reinforcements on the spot.

Inside the cave, Han Wu shifted into his Second Form, Swift Shadow. In this state, his Agility rocketed to 765, fast enough to leave multiple afterimages when running. The various shadow skills also performed better in the dark.

The Undead King took precautions as well. It used bone magic to summon a layer of bones to shield both of them, then conjured five Third Form Undead Warriors to scout ahead.

These Undead Warriors were pathetically weak in Han Wu's eyes, but they served their purpose as expendable scouts.

Their party didn't get far before something attacked. A pitch-black humanoid creature lunged from the darkness and clawed at Han Wu's head.

Han Wu reacted instantly, activating Shadow Meld and sinking his body into the shadows, leaving the creature to grab at empty air. Then, from within the shadows, he thrust out a black blade. This was a Swift Shadow skill, Shadow Blade.

The blade was forged from shadows, and its power increased in darker surroundings. Shadow Blade was at maximum strength within this pitch-black cave. A single strike pierced the humanoid creature clean through, pinning it to the stone wall.

The Undead King raised its fiery scepter and approached the creature. Its features were visible in the dim glow of the dark purple flames. The creature's skin was entirely black, and its face featureless. There was a twisted, unsettling quality to it that sent chills down the spine.

"This is a Third Form Dark Shade. It can be troublesome to deal with," the Undead King explained, jabbing its scepter into the creature.

The flame on the scepter ignited the Dark Shade's body and burned it to ash, leaving only thirty White Soul Coins behind as proof it had ever existed.

: Chapter 968

Chapter 968 - Inside the Tomb

The Dark Shade was only an appetizer. More dark creatures attacked as Han Wu and the Undead King pushed deeper. Fortunately, they were both powerful, and it didn't take much effort for them to deal with the creatures.

Working together, they quickly navigated the maze of cave tunnels and arrived at the tomb's entrance. The door was carved from a single, massive boulder. It was incredibly heavy and impossibly hard.

"This door is extremely heavy. Pushing it open will be very difficult," the Undead King said, preparing to show off its skills. "Allow me to—"

Han Wu activated his Swordwind legacy, slashing furiously with his four greatsword-wielding arms and carving a hole in the boulder door large enough to walk through. Then, turning back to the Undead King, he asked, "Were you about to say something?"

"No, nothing," the Undead King replied through its soul voice. It didn't dare say anything.

The moment they stepped into the tomb, the air itself grew heavier with a looming sense of danger. Han Wu immediately had the Desolation Manifestation scan the surroundings. Without the barrier of authority blocking it from the outside, the Desolation Manifestation's perception successfully spread through the tomb this time. Some sort of restriction inside still limited its range, though, so it could only survey a portion of the tomb's layout.

Even that partial picture was enough to alarm Han Wu. The Desolation Manifestation detected more than one Sixth Form fighter inside, and this was just the entrance. There was no telling what they would find if they went deeper.

Han Wu grew worried. The Undead King was also using its senses to scout, but its range was far smaller. It couldn't even detect where the Sixth Form fighters were.

As Han Wu was mulling over how to advance without alerting any Sixth Form enemies, the Undead King said calmly through its soul voice, "Follow me."

It walked ahead, not bothering to wait for Han Wu. Nervous about running into a Sixth Form being, Han Wu deliberately hung back. He quietly told the Desolation Manifestation to keep scanning their surroundings and alert him the instant anything seemed off.

If things went south, he'd run. The Spiritual Contract he'd signed only covered not harming each other and splitting the loot. There was nothing about abandoning a partner. Han Wu had plenty of room to maneuver.

Shockingly, the path the Undead King chose bypassed all the Sixth Form enemies. They didn't even see more than one Fifth Form opponent. It was practically a safe route.

The two of them made it all the way to the main burial chamber with absurd ease.

Han Wu started to wonder if the Desolation Manifestation had been mistaken... Or perhaps the Undead King simply wasn't what it seemed.

The Desolation Manifestation was part of the Death God King, and Han Wu trusted it completely. That left only one explanation: the Undead King was highly suspicious. Han Wu quietly shifted into his Swift Shadow form just in case. This way, he could disengage the instant something went awry.

The first thing Han Wu noticed inside the main chamber were the treasures lining the walls: powerful weapons, precious gemstones, artifacts crafted from rare metals, and more. Every single piece would fetch a fortune in White Soul Coins.

This was the caliber of Lingray's burial goods. The Undead King didn't spare the treasures a single glance. Its spiritual fire was fixed on a crystal coffin in the center of the chamber.

Inside the coffin lay a man dressed in magnificent robes. He was tall and broad-shouldered. Despite being dead for over a century, the crystal coffin had perfectly preserved his body. There was no trace of decay whatsoever. He looked as though he could wake at any moment.

"The Final King Lingray," the Undead King murmured, like awe and an introduction rolled into one. Then the Undead King turned to Han Wu, the spiritual fire in its sockets trembling. "There may be something you want inside his coffin."

Han Wu was eager to see. Pressing against the coffin lid, he pushed with his considerable strength, but even after straining for a while, the lid didn't budge a millimeter.

"Come, give me a hand," Han Wu called out.

"It's no use. The crystal coffin can't be opened by normal means," the Undead King explained. "There are only three ways to open it. We either need a king recognized by the Golden Will, a being of Ninth Form or above, or to shatter the coffin with Lingray's personal sword."

Han Wu reached behind him, fingers hesitantly brushing against the handle of the crystal greatsword.

Something had been bothering him. The Undead King had obviously known the path through the tomb intimately and could have easily reached the main chamber without his help. Despite this, it still went through the trouble of recruiting him.

Han Wu refused to believe there wasn't some kind of ulterior motive behind that.

At this moment, everything fell into place. The Undead King was after his crystal greatsword, or more precisely, the shards of Lingray's personal sword that were fused into it. The sword was the key to opening the coffin.

“Go on, use the greatsword on your back to smash this coffin open. There’s bound to be something you want inside!” the Undead King urged in a low voice, its words laced with a subtle, enchanting energy.

Han Wu’s soul was powerful, and the Desolation Manifestation was guarding him, meaning he could tell that the Undead King had just tried to use a charm skill on him. The coffin could contain something Han Wu needed, but it definitely held something the Undead King wanted.

“Hurry up and smash it!” the Undead King pressed, growing impatient at Han Wu’s hesitation.

Han Wu turned to face the Undead King, his eyes perfectly clear. “Has anyone ever told you that you’re annoying?”

The spiritual fire in the Undead King’s sockets flared when it noticed Han Wu’s clear gaze. Obviously, the charm had failed. Unsure whether Han Wu had actually detected it or was simply unaffected, it decided to maintain its cover.

“I just want to help you accomplish your goal as quickly as possible,” the Undead King replied.

Scoffing, Han Wu ignored it. Instead, he quietly asked the Desolation Manifestation to probe the crystal coffin and check whether the treasure the Death God King needed was inside.

The Desolation Manifestation pushed its perception into the coffin. After a thorough scan, it let out a gasp. It had found the treasure that the Death God King was looking for on Lingray’s body.

Han Wu’s face broke into a grin. It seemed the coffin had to be opened after all.

Drawing the crystal greatsword, he warned the Undead King behind him, “Step back. I don’t want you getting hurt.”

The Undead King quickly retreated several steps. The spiritual fire in its sockets danced wildly with barely concealed eagerness.

Han Wu was equally excited. What kind of treasure could the Death God King desire so badly? The answer was about to be revealed.

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: Chapter 969

Chapter 969 - Golden Rune

An enormous crack echoed as the crystal coffin shattered under the greatsword's blow. The Undead King threw itself at Lingray's body like a thing possessed, but Han Wu was closer and faster. He snatched the treasure the Desolation Manifestation had identified before the Undead King could reach it.

The Desolation Manifestation used precise perception to display the item's full details before Han Wu's eyes.

[Golden Rune (triple-sealed). A physical manifestation of the Golden Will. Capable of resisting any negative effect at or below the World rank.]

"Incredible!" Han Wu blurted out.

Resisting all negative effects was absurdly powerful! Leaving something like this as a burial offering for the Final King Lingray was honestly a waste.

It didn't escape Han Wu's notice, however, that the description included the words "triple-sealed." The Golden Rune couldn't be used until the three seals were removed.

That was annoying, like someone finishing up in the bathroom only to lock the door on their way out. Han Wu tucked the Golden Rune into his Void Stone and turned his attention to the Undead King.

It was clutching Lingray's body, skull pressed against the corpse's forehead in a pose that looked disturbingly romantic. A chill ran through Han Wu. Did the Undead King have some sort of twisted fascination with corpses?

Then again, it was already undead. A fondness for corpses was almost understandable, in a morbid way.

The Desolation Manifestation detected something different, though. The Undead King had no such inclination. Rather, it was actually transferring its soul into Lingray's body, stealing the nest and possessing the corpse.

As the Spiritual Contract prevented Han Wu from interfering, he busied himself rummaging through the surrounding burial treasures while he waited. Eventually, the Undead King finished transferring its soul, and its body collapsed. Crystal bones were strewn across the floor like a shattered work of art.

The Final King Lingray rose in an undead state. Blazing spiritual light erupted from his eyes as he gleefully shouted, "I, Daniel, have finally done it! Lingray, so what if you killed

me and sealed me away in that dump near Galewind City? I've taken your body, and I'll use your power to enslave your followers. You're the ultimate loser in this war between us!"

It seemed the Undead King Daniel and the Final King Lingray had history. None of that concerned Han Wu, however. His eyes were glued to the crystal bones scattered on the ground. Those were top-tier materials.

"This might be bad timing, but I really want your bones," Han Wu said bluntly.

"They're yours," Daniel said, in a generous mood. His eyes, brimming with spiritual light, were fixed firmly on Han Wu, but he found it impossible to parse the youth's thoughts.

Han Wu wasted no time collecting the crystal bones. Then, he pulled out the Fourth Form Crystal Lich legacy. He finally had the materials that it required.

Without a moment's hesitation, he began the fusion. His deep knowledge of the undead meant there wasn't a single hiccup in the process. It took just three minutes to absorb completely.

Han Wu's stats jumped again. Strength, Agility, and Constitution each gained +50, while Spirit gained +200. When he activated the Crystal Lich form, he'd also receive an additional +200 to Soul. The combined gains made him significantly stronger than before.

Daniel waited patiently for Han Wu to finish, then said. "My dear friend, thank you for helping me obtain this body."

"We each got what we wanted."

"In that case, shouldn't you return that sword to me? You're just returning it to its rightful owner." Daniel finally revealed his true aim.

Han Wu had created his crystal greatsword not only by absorbing all the fragments of Lingray's personal sword, but also with pure crystals and magical arrays that he had designed. Its overall quality rivaled the original sword when it was whole. It even retained perfect compatibility with Lingray's body, making it the ideal weapon for Daniel in his new form.

Although Daniel's argument seemed reasonable on the surface, any amount of logical thinking was enough for one to realize that it didn't actually hold water. Han Wu had spent a massive amount of crystals, time, and effort forging this weapon. It was Rank 9, a top-tier armament in the White Soul Civilization, and his trump card. There was no way he'd just give it away.

As Han Wu was about to refuse, Daniel added, “The treasure you’re looking for is the Golden Rune, right? It has three seals on it. I can tell you how to break them. But on the condition that you hand the greatsword over to me.”

Han Wu went quiet. Daniel had him there.

Finding the Golden Rune meant nothing if he couldn’t unseal it. As he had no connections or contacts in the White Soul Civilization, figuring out how to remove the seals on his own would be next to impossible.

However, if he handed over the crystal greatsword, Daniel would tell him everything he needed to know. It was the best deal he was going to get.

After a moment of thought, Han Wu sighed. “Fine. You win.”

He unstrapped the crystal greatsword from his back and tossed it to Daniel. The instant Daniel caught it, dense black flames erupted along the blade. This was the greatsword’s true power, one Han Wu had been too weak to unlock.

Daniel admired the weapon. Han Wu pressed him to hurry up and explain how to remove the Golden Rune’s three seals.

Fortunately, Daniel kept his word. The first seal required washing the Golden Rune in the Purifying Spring Water of the Golden City. The second seal required bathing it in dragon’s blood from Volcano Valley. Finally, the third seal required a branch from the Golden Tree.

After memorizing these three steps, Han Wu made to leave.

A flicker of reluctance crossed Daniel’s face at Han Wu’s departure. The black flames on the crystal greatsword wavered. He didn’t want Han Wu to go, but he also recognized that keeping Han Wu around served no purpose at the moment.

Then, a thought occurred to him, and Daniel quickly composed himself as he watched Han Wu walk out of the tomb.

“Outsider of limitless potential, I’ll be waiting for you beneath the Golden Tree,” Daniel murmured.

As Han Wu departed, every being of Sixth Form and above across the tomb converged on the main burial chamber. These were the original followers of the Final King Lingray, and having sensed his revival, they headed there to worship him.

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: Chapter 970

Chapter 970 - Golden City

Han Wu emerged from the tomb of Lingray with his back soaked in cold sweat, feeling as though he had been teetering at the threshold of death's door. He could tell that Daniel had wanted to harm him, but had inexplicably decided against it at the last moment. That was the only reason he made it out of the tomb alive.

"I'm still not powerful enough," Han Wu muttered to himself in a low voice.

Although he had four complete Forms, he was still far behind Daniel. In Lingray's body, he could crush Han Wu without even activating a single Form.

"I need to get stronger. I need to get stronger quickly," Han Wu murmured as he walked through the undead skeleton horde and headed outside.

His next destination was the Golden City.

According to the Desolation Manifestation, it would take at least a month on foot to get there. Riding a horse could cut that down to ten days. Fortunately, Han Wu was faster than a horse.

He activated his Second Form, Swift Shadow, and flew directly toward the Golden City. During the flight, he took out the treasures he had found inside the tomb.

The spoils included one Rank 4 Void Stone and two Rank 5 Divine Stones. The former was for storing the Refiner, which would speed up the refinement process, while the latter served a much greater purpose. Han Wu planned to use the Divine Stones to unseal two of his powers.

Following the principle of maximizing his gains, he chose the Slaughter Jurisdiction, mostly because it was bound to the Sacrifice ability, making it a two-for-one deal. This would allow him to receive bonus reward options after killing an opponent.

Naturally, a Rank 5 Divine Stone couldn't fully contain both, so the chance of triggering Sacrifice was only 25%. But that was enough to satisfy him.

Han Wu spent a while mulling over his options for the second stone before choosing the Demon King Transformation. Although the Demon King Transformation wasn't bound to a Divine Jurisdiction, it was plenty powerful on its own. It could at least serve as a trump card in critical moments.

Due to the Divine Stone's rank limitation, the Demon King Transformation couldn't reach its full potential either, and only allowed Han Wu to achieve the first stage of the

transformation. Unlocking the second stage would require at least a Rank 7 or even a Rank 8 Divine Stone.

The two new abilities at his disposal had Han Wu a little more at ease.

As for the journey, it took him only a single day to reach the Golden City.

When Han Wu had first heard of the Golden City, he imagined it to be some prosperous place, but it turned out to be a city that had been abandoned for many years. This meant it had also attracted many homeless wanderers and life forms from various races.

These life forms fought constantly over living space, and large-scale battles broke out regularly. Basically, it required some real skill to gain a stable foothold inside the Golden City.

Han Wu landed outside the Golden City and tried to enter, but two wanderers blocked his path.

“Kid, do you really think you’re strong enough to enter the Golden City?” One wanderer scoffed. “Hand over all your valuables, then get lost!”

The Desolation Manifestation patiently translated for Han Wu. Pasting on a bright, cheerful smile, he used Shadow Meld to circle behind them both, then Shadow Blade to slice their heads off with ease.

Han Wu didn’t normally resort to violence unless he couldn’t help it. However, these two wanderers had tried to rob him, which was the same as threatening his life, so killing them didn’t weigh on his conscience at all.

Bending down, he picked up all the equipment they had dropped and placed it all into the Void Stone for the Refiner to break down. A wanderer further away witnessed Han Wu’s brutality and tactfully turned away, pretending he hadn’t seen a thing.

When Han Wu approached the wanderer with a grin, the wanderer immediately pretended to be blind. Seeing his cooperative attitude, Han Wu didn’t give him any trouble and asked directly, “Do you know about the Golden City’s Purifying Spring Water?”

The Desolation Manifestation translated Han Wu’s words into the common language of the White Soul Civilization.

“Purifying Spring Water is Golden City’s treasure! It’s a resource that all the major factions fight over. Ordinary people can’t get any.” The wanderer’s face was pale with fright. Then, recalling the ease with which Han Wu had just killed those two wanderers, he quickly added, “If you want some, you could join the Wanderer Association and register for the competition to compete for it. You could claim a share that way.”

Having obtained the information he needed, Han Wu stood up with a smile. The wanderer waited a good while. Only after confirming that Han Wu was out of sight did he let out a long breath, feeling like he had just narrowly escaped death.

“Someone ruthless has come to the Golden City. I need to report this to the Wanderer Association right away,” he muttered to himself, getting up and running toward the Association’s headquarters.

Unbeknownst to him, Han Wu was quietly watching him from within his shadow.

The wanderer arrived at the Wanderer Association, found the receptionist, and asked to see the manager, claiming he had an urgent report. The attendant hurried to bring him into the manager’s office.

In the office, the Wanderer Association’s manager was leisurely sipping freshly brewed tea. When the wanderer entered, he cast him a cursory glance and said, “Alright, you can go. You’re not needed here.”

The wanderer was confused. He hadn’t even said a word after entering, yet he was already being dismissed. As he was about to ask what was going on, Han Wu emerged from his shadow, grabbed him, and threw him out the door with an effortless shoulder toss. With that, Han Wu casually shut the door behind him and sat down on the sofa without reservation.

“Hello, how can I help you, sir?” the manager asked.

He had noticed Han Wu hiding in the wanderer’s shadow the moment the man walked in, hence his earlier words.

“I want a share of the Purifying Spring Water,” Han Wu said bluntly

The manager frowned slightly. Purifying Spring Water was an extremely precious resource. It could heal diseases, purify curses, and undo seals, making it highly sought after. The annual yield for it was only three portions, and all the major factions fought tooth and nail over every single one.

For this stranger to come in demanding a portion right off the bat was bold, even for his standards.

“What if I refuse?” the manager asked, form shifting dramatically as he activated his Sixth Form, Thunder Champion.

Crackling lightning circled him menacingly, warning others not to approach. It was a clear message to Han Wu not to get cocky, lest he pay the price.

Han Wu refused to back down and activated his Third Form, Swordwind, in response. A powerful storm erupted inside the small room. Wind and lightning collided violently, tearing the place apart.

At that moment, the manager realized he had run into a truly dangerous opponent.

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Chapter 971 - Competing for a Spot

In the end, neither side came to blows. The manager recognized Han Wu's strength and knew there was no guarantee he could come out on top if they actually fought. On top of that, a fight would wreck the Wanderer Association's property and make their already tight finances even worse.

It was better not to fight. Peace was the best policy.

"Please have a seat. Let's talk this out," the manager invited, gesturing for Han Wu to sit and pouring him a cup of freshly brewed tea. "Purifying Spring Water isn't something the Wanderer Association just has in stock. You have good timing, though. This year's portion of Purifying Spring Water will be produced in half a month. I can give you a spot to compete on behalf of the Wanderer Association. If you can defeat the other factions' competitors, you'll earn a share of the Purifying Spring Water."

Han Wu nodded, having already expected as much. A resource as rare as Purifying Spring Water was unlikely to be stored in reserves. There was no other option but for him to join the competition.

"Fine. I'll take that spot," Han Wu said, then got up and left.

As the manager stared at the mess covering the floor, he couldn't help but silently fume.

"Where's that wanderer from earlier?" he shouted, voice echoing throughout the entire Wanderer Association. "Get him in here to clean this up!"

Han Wu didn't stop after leaving the Wanderer Association. After all, this was just one of the factions residing in the Golden City. Many other factions besides the wanderers existed as well, and Han Wu wanted to pay them all a visit.

He headed to the Little Dwarf camp next. Little Dwarves were weak, but with enough numbers, strong fighters could still emerge among them. The only issue was that they weren't friendly toward humans.

When Han Wu approached the camp, the Little Dwarves immediately attacked him. Arrows, rocks, and javelins flew at him as though they cost nothing. It was their way of telling Han Wu that he wasn't welcome. Han Wu was a very polite person, and he believed in returning the favor.

Since the Little Dwarves had generously sent him arrows, rocks, and javelins, Han Wu felt compelled to return some gifts of his own. His Swordwind form seemed fitting for the occasion. Soon, powerful slashes of wind were slicing through the air and cutting down every Little Dwarf that got too close.

More of them charged out, eager to avenge their fallen kin, but none of them stood a chance against Han Wu's strength. After fighting for a while, Han Wu decided that dealing with Little Dwarves was a waste of his energy, so he switched to his Fourth Form, Crystal Lich.

In this form, he could use Summon Skeletons and Osteomancy. A volley of bone projectiles wiped out a large wave of Little Dwarves. Han Wu then used Summon Skeletons on their corpses.

The undead skeletons attacked the Little Dwarves, killing more of them, which then drew even more Little Dwarves out to fight. Han Wu stayed in the back, occasionally firing off bone magic to pick off any Little Dwarf that stood out.

Under Han Wu's careful cultivation, the skeletons soon numbered in the tens of thousands. Both their bodies and souls were weak, but Han Wu had a solution. Using Merge, he fused them all, producing ten skeletons comparable to a Fourth Form fighter.

Unfortunately, the White Soul Civilization seemed to suppress skeletons, reducing the chance of special undead variants like Osteomancers or Skeleton Reanimators forming. Without Osteomancers, Han Wu's signature skeleton swarm tactic would be difficult to pull off.

While Han Wu was worrying over this, the Little Dwarf camp's leader finally appeared. It had reached the Seventh Form, and despite its short stature, the pressure radiating from its body was genuinely threatening to Han Wu.

When the Little Dwarf leader saw its people's heavy casualties, it immediately released its Seventh Form, Little Vajra. Golden energy coated its entire body. Sharp metallic sounds rang out as it moved, proving how hard its body had become.

The Little Dwarf leader charged at Han Wu. Its tiny body leaped ten meters into the air like a cannonball aimed straight at him.

One option when faced with a tough, armored opponent like this was to try matching hardness with hardness if they were on equal footing. However, as things were, Han Wu

would be at a disadvantage without the Demon King Transformation. Going head-to-head would be the worst move.

The best approach was thus to counter strength with flexibility. Han Wu shifted into his Second Form, Swift Shadow. His body melted into the shadows, and countless shadow tendrils flew out, wrapping around the Little Dwarf leader.

Binding it wasn't his goal; he wanted it dead. With that in mind, Han Wu directed the black shadows into its nostrils, mouth, and every other opening.

The Little Dwarf leader's exterior was as hard as diamonds and impenetrable, but underneath that was still flesh and blood. The shadows pierced and sliced through its insides, killing the Little Dwarf leader on the spot.

Han Wu immediately used Summon Skeletons on the corpse. This time, he got lucky and summoned a special Sixth Form undead skeleton called a Vajra Skeleton. The Vajra Skeleton's rigid bones and devastating destructive power made it far stronger than the Merged Fourth Form skeletons.

When the rest of the Little Dwarves saw their leader die, they scattered in terror. Even Han Wu couldn't catch that many of them fleeing all at once. A pang of disappointment hit him. He had wanted to demand a competition spot from the Little Dwarf camp, but had wiped the camp out instead.

On the bright side, that meant one less rival faction. It saved the other factions some effort. Han Wu quickly identified his next target.

Three days later, Han Wu had secured competition spots from every remaining faction. He had also assembled a large army of skeletons, establishing himself as a major faction in the Golden City.

Rising to prominence in such a short time was a clear testament to Han Wu's power. The other factions scrambled to get on his good side, hoping to form alliances for future conflicts. Han Wu accepted every offer and shamelessly pocketed every gift they sent.

The Kobold faction went a step further and presented him with a Fifth Form legacy called the Jackal Deathsworn. After examining it, the Desolation Manifestation concluded that it was extremely powerful.

It had three effects. They were the Jackal Transformation, the Black Sand Avatar, and the Immortal Soul Indestructible Body. It was practically cheating for all that to fit into a Fifth Form.

Naturally, when Han Wu saw this, he decided the Jackal Deathsworn was going to be his Fifth Form.

Chapter 972 - Great Fire Dragon Esquiem

The Fifth Form, Jackal Deathsworn, was powerful, but it required numerous materials. As the newest rising faction in the Golden City, Han Wu showed no restraint at all. Whenever he lacked something, he demanded from the other factions, acting as if he owned the place.

The other factions could only suffer in silence. They couldn't beat him, nor could they run. Once they learned that Han Wu's true objective was the Golden City's Purifying Spring Water, they collectively offered a hefty reward for a portion, just to get him to leave.

Unfortunately, Purifying Spring Water was so rare that anyone who acquired a portion used it immediately. None was ever left over. Hence, the factions had no choice but to keep tolerating Han Wu's presence.

After considerable effort, Han Wu finally collected all the materials he needed for the Jackal Deathsworn from the other factions and absorbed them. During the absorption process, the Fifth Form and his First Form, Lone Wolf Warrior, triggered a peculiar resonance and fused together.

From that point onward, whenever Han Wu activated either the Lone Wolf Warrior or the Jackal Deathsworn, the other Form activated as well. That caused a double attribute multiplier during transformation, effectively granting him a fourfold increase in power.

The tremendous enhancement caused Han Wu's combat power to soar. He roughly estimated that while using his Fifth Form, his overall strength would reach the level of a Seventh or even an Eighth Form fighter.

When news spread that Han Wu had absorbed the Jackal Deathsworn, the Golden City factions grew even more furious, yet none of them dared utter a word. They simply waited for the next batch of Purifying Spring Water to be produced. Every faction unanimously agreed that Han Wu didn't need to compete for it. They would hand him a portion outright.

Han Wu accepted without hesitation. After cleansing the Golden Rune with the Purifying Spring Water, he successfully removed the first layer of its seal.

Although he was reluctant to leave behind the Golden City factions' warm hospitality, he still had a mission to complete. In the end, he departed with their blessings and headed for his second destination, Volcano Valley.

This time, Han Wu wasn't traveling alone. He commanded a hundred skeletons comparable to Fourth Form fighters, along with one Sixth Form Vajra Skeleton. Together, they formed a formidable force.

Once they arrived at Volcano Valley, Han Wu realized that the environment wasn't suitable for his troops. The valley was scorching hot year-round, with frequent volcanic eruptions. The surface lava inflicted severe damage on skeletons, and the relentless heat was more than they could withstand.

Left with no alternative, Han Wu had to enter alone, brave the extreme heat, and find a Great Dragon somewhere within Volcano Valley.

While the intense heat drove away most life forms, it attracted countless fire spirits. They thrived in flames, and Volcano Valley was their paradise. The moment an outsider like Han Wu appeared, they launched their fiery attacks. They manipulated the lava and hurled it at him, trying to bury him beneath molten rock and burn him alive.

Han Wu had no intention of falling to a few streams of lava. He unleashed his strongest form, the Jackal Deathsworn, with which he controlled black sand to fight the fire spirits.

Superheated by the volcanic environment, the black sand became even deadlier. It was like thousands of red-hot iron nails, capable of punching clean through anything. Fire spirits with physical bodies were killed instantly.[1] Those without physical bodies fared no better.

Han Wu switched to his Third Form, Swordwind, and unleashed endless cutting gales that snuffed them out. Even so, the fighting took its toll. He could only rely on the handful of skills in his repertoire that increased fire resistance to maintain his condition. Without them, the valley's constant heat damage alone would have been enough to grind him down.

After three days of searching and countless clashes with fire spirits, Han Wu finally spotted traces of a Great Dragon on one of the volcanoes. He excitedly shifted into his Swift Shadow form and flew to the summit. There, he found the Great Fire Dragon bathing in lava.

The scorching molten rock didn't even qualify as warm water in its eyes. It swam freely through the magma without a care.

As Han Wu approached it, the Great Dragon sensed him immediately. Although Han Wu's powers were sealed, his innate talents still functioned in the background. The moment the Great Dragon sensed him, its eyes went wide.

It turned toward him and spoke with wonder. "Is it you? The noble Defier!"

Han Wu nodded. Having travelled through so many worlds, he had come to understand the significance of the Defier title. Among the Great Dragon race, it carried immense prestige.

As expected, once Han Wu confirmed his identity, the Great Dragon became noticeably friendlier. “Noble Defier, did you come to play with Esquiem?”

Esquiem’s large eyes radiated pure innocence. Han Wu judged that this Great Dragon hadn’t reached adulthood yet, at least not mentally. After all, it showed absolutely no wariness toward a stranger.

“Esquiem, I’ve come to ask you for some Dragon Blood,” Han Wu said directly.

Esquiem blinked its large eyes. “Noble Defier, how much Dragon Blood do you need? Is a barrel enough?”

Esquiem’s generosity stunned Han Wu. *This child is far too trusting. Doesn’t it know how precious Dragon Blood is? To think it would offer an entire barrel right off the bat.*

Although Esquiem was enormous, freely giving away a barrel of Dragon Blood would definitely harm it.

“I don’t need that much. Just a cup will do,” Han Wu said, using his fingers to indicate the approximate amount.

Esquiem nodded cutely, then slammed a claw into its face as hard as it could. Its cheek immediately swelled, but not a single drop of blood appeared.

Esquiem was about to hit itself even harder until it drew blood, but Han Wu quickly stopped it from hurting itself any further.

Sympathy stirred in Han Wu’s heart. *This child is unbelievably naive. If it had met anyone other than me, they would have swindled it down to its last bone.*

He had a natural soft spot for Great Dragons. Watching Esquiem act so innocently only deepened his resolve to bring it back to his divine realm. Life in the White Soul Civilization was too harsh. His divine realm offered beautiful scenery, comfortable living conditions, and an unlimited supply of Fire Crystals to feast on.

Han Wu described his divine realm so convincingly that Esquiem was completely won over. It voluntarily signed a contract with Han Wu, agreeing to serve as his mount and fight for him from that day forward.

Unexpectedly, Han Wu gained a Sixth Form, Fire Dragon Knight, through the contract!

1. Red sand is rich in iron, not black sand.... ☜

Chapter 973 - Saving the Great Fire Dragon's Mother

Han Wu drew a small amount of Dragon Blood from Esquiem and used it to soak the Golden Rune. The second layer of the seal dissolved, leaving only the final layer intact.

The last seal required a branch from the Golden Tree, but Han Wu had no idea what that referred to. After consulting the Desolation Manifestation, he learned that the Golden Tree was actually the Golden Will's physical manifestation.

That revelation made the final condition nearly impossible to fulfill. Asking the White Soul Civilization's very own Will for a piece of its body to break a seal was like trying to skin a tiger while riding it.

Han Wu had been fairly confident in his strength until now. If his opponent was the Golden Will, though, he had no confidence whatsoever. A civilization's Will was certainly not the strongest existence in its world, but it was undoubtedly among the most powerful. He was only at the Sixth Form, yet he was expected to pull a tooth from a tiger's jaws? It sounded like a suicide mission.

"No, absolutely not. With my current strength, going there would be throwing my life away. I need to find a way to get stronger first," Han Wu muttered to himself.

Esquiem had shrunk to the size of a charm and perched on Han Wu's shoulder. Thanks to their contract, it could now understand Han Wu's words.

"Noble Defier, if you want to get stronger, I know a place," Esquiem said.

Han Wu turned to look at the tiny dragon. "Where?"

"The Full Moon Library at the top of the Laurel Tree! Mama always said knowledge is power!" Esquiem replied earnestly.

Han Wu perked up at that, though not because of the Full Moon Library. His attention shifted to Esquiem's mother. As a capable Major God, Han Wu had personally raised many units and forged deep bonds with them. He understood better than most how painful it was for a mother to lose her child.

To prevent such a tragedy, Han Wu felt it was his duty to bring Esquiem's mother into his divine realm as well. That way, the whole dragon family could stay together. His divine realm already housed plenty of dragons, so she would never lack companions.

If Esquiem's mother was willing, he could even arrange a stepfather for Esquiem. He could provide everything a Great Dragon would ever need in its life.

The innocent Esquiem failed to notice Han Wu's ulterior motives. When Han Wu asked where its mother had gone, Esquiem's mood immediately darkened.

After listening to Esquiem's disjointed explanation, Han Wu managed to piece together the most important detail: its mother had been captured.

"Damn it, I was too late!" Han Wu cursed.

Esquiem stared at him with wide, confused eyes.

Han Wu quickly corrected himself. "I mean I got here too late. If I had arrived sooner, I could've helped protect your mother from the bad guys."

Esquiem nodded, deeply touched. Its inherited dragon memories told it that the Defier was a noble figure among the Great Dragon race. Now it seemed that the Defier was not only noble but kind-hearted as well.

Han Wu couldn't let this matter rest. After all, a full-grown Great Dragon was at stake. He immediately asked the Desolation Manifestation to compile intelligence based on Esquiem's account to determine who had taken the Great Fire Dragon's mother.

The Desolation Manifestation lacked combat ability, but its clearance level for information here was extensive. After a thorough search, it narrowed the suspects down to three organizations.

The first was the Full Moon Library that Esquiem had mentioned. Their members' clothing matched Esquiem's description. The second was a group known as the Fire Worship Cult. Their robes closely resembled those of the Full Moon Library, and because they worshipped fire, capturing a Great Fire Dragon would fit their beliefs.

The third was a notorious figure within the White Soul Civilization named Corpse Fiend Hennibal. He enjoyed consuming the corpses of various creatures and grafting their body parts onto his own.

The probability of Corpse Fiend Hennibal's involvement was low, but the Desolation Manifestation included him because of one small detail in Esquiem's account. Among the captors, one individual had an unusual physique and displayed a wide variety of combat techniques.

Han Wu trusted the Desolation Manifestation completely. With the analysis complete, the Full Moon Library on the Laurel Tree became the first destination in the search for Esquiem's mother.

Once they had settled on their destination, Esquiem transformed into its Great Dragon form and carried Han Wu through the sky. Its flying speed was three times Han Wu's own speed, reducing a journey that would have taken three months to a single day.

Seated on Esquiem's back, Han Wu gazed at the enormous Laurel Tree rising in the distance. He had no idea how many years it had been growing. The higher it stretched, the more branches it spread. The life forms living on it had built all sorts of uniquely styled houses among its boughs, weaving them seamlessly into the tree's natural contours. The sight was nothing short of extraordinary.

Han Wu was about to guide Esquiem closer when a figure suddenly appeared before him. The man wore solemn robes, carried an ornate staff, and hovered in midair. Powerful energy radiated from him.

Han Wu could sense that the man had definitely reached the Microcosm rank. He himself hadn't recovered his Microcosm strength, so he chose not to force his way through.

"The Full Moon Library is a restricted zone. No insects. No fire. Fire-type life forms are not permitted inside!" the man declared. [1]

Esquiem immediately looked hurt. It had dreamed of visiting the knowledge treasury its mother had spoken about, only to be turned away at the entrance.

Meanwhile, Han Wu felt a wave of relief. A library that prohibited bugs and fire made perfect sense. Denying Esquiem entry was entirely reasonable.

He comforted Esquiem, then stored it inside the summoning space tied to his Sixth Form, Fire Dragon Knight.

"Can I enter now?" Han Wu asked.

The man regarded him with a stern expression. "I am Cage, the Dark Archmage and director of the Full Moon Library. Once inside, do not engage in any activities beyond seeking knowledge. If I find you engaging in anything else, I reserve the right to punish and expel you."

"No problem," Han Wu replied.

With that, he was finally granted entry.

Inside the library, Han Wu found life forms from all kinds of races, including humans, ram-headed people, kobolds, and even Little Dwarves. Beyond these walls, many of them would have been enemies. Within the Full Moon Library, however, they were all students hungry for knowledge.

Han Wu found this amusing. Curious to see how extensive the library's collection was, he pulled a random book from a nearby shelf. Its title read *Human Pregnancy: Postnatal Care and Recovery*. Just as he was about to open it, a mental prompt came from the book. Accessing its content required payment of 1 White Soul Coin, and the book could only be read for a single day.

Han Wu froze. "Dark Archmage Cage... So the *Dark* in his title refers to his personality!"[2]

1. Fair enough to be honest ☜

2. Dark here refers to being shady. In this case, asking someone to pay one coin to read a book with a time limit of a day! ☜

Chapter 974 - Youngsters Should Read More

Han Wu wasn't about to waste a precious White Soul Coin on *Human Pregnancy: Postnatal Care and Recovery*. Instead, he asked the Desolation Manifestation to scan the entire library for any trace of Esquiem's mother.

The Desolation Manifestation spread its perception and silently enveloped the entire Full Moon Library. It didn't find the Great Fire Dragon mother's presence, but it did detect three areas that blocked its perception.

After learning that, Han Wu pretended to browse the shelves as he approached the first blocked area. Few visitors were reading there. Most only glanced through the books before leaving, and those who actually stayed to read were extremely rare.

"What kind of books are stored here? Why is nobody reading them?" Han Wu asked curiously as he moved closer to a shelf. He couldn't understand the titles.

The Desolation Manifestation explained, "These are documents from the era of the White Soul Civilization's First King. Most are records of major events from various regions, along with some hero biographies from that period."

Han Wu pulled out a book at random and tried to open it, only to be told it cost 100 White Soul Coins for a single day of reading. He hastily shoved the book back onto the shelf.

"No wonder nobody reads these," he grumbled.

They were outrageously expensive and completely devoid of anything useful. Who would bother?

Just as Han Wu voiced his opinion, a middle-aged man in a black robe silently appeared behind him. “No talking in the library. Since this is your first offense, the fine is 10 White Soul Coins.”

Han Wu stared at him. He had spoken only twice since entering the library, and he had kept his voice low. There was no way he had disturbed anyone. He also had no idea who this black-robed man was or what authority he had to fine him.

“This isn’t the place to talk. Follow me.” The black-robed man turned and headed toward the back of the area.

Han Wu noticed a room labeled *Fine Room*[1] at the back.

The Desolation Manifestation informed him that the Fine Room was one of the areas its perception couldn’t penetrate.

Han Wu followed immediately. The moment he stepped inside, he felt invisible shackles lock around him, severing his connection to all six of his Forms.

The black-robed man clearly expected this. He pressed his powerful, bony hand onto Han Wu’s shoulder. “Don’t try anything clever. Pay the fine!”

The grip was painful, but Han Wu twisted free with a burst of strength and demanded coldly, “Who are you? Why did you bring me here?”

Although he couldn’t access his six Forms, Han Wu’s base attributes were still intact. With those alone, he was still a capable fighter.

The black-robed man shook his head. His figure shifted as the black robe expanded into an endless spread of darkness that swallowed the entire room. It spread across the doorway and sealed off Han Wu’s only escape.

“I’m the librarian of this section. You dared to insult the books under my care, and that crosses a line. Pay the fine now, and I’ll let you leave safely,” the black-robed man warned.

“What if I don’t?” Han Wu shot back.

“Then don’t blame me!” The black-robed man spread his hands, and countless books materialized behind him. He plucked one from the air and tossed it at Han Wu.

Han Wu dodged and watched the man warily. “An attack of that level has no effect on me.”

“Attack? I never intended to attack you,” the black-robed man replied, looking genuinely confused. “Since you won’t pay the fine, you’ll have to study this book instead. Once you’ve memorized every character in it, you’re free to leave.”

Han Wu’s eyes widened. That was a novel form of punishment. He picked up the book. It was written in the obscure script of the First King era. The text made his head spin. It was even harder to understand than religious scripture. Memorizing the whole thing would take an eternity.

Han Wu tossed the book aside and headed for the exit, only to find that the door had vanished.

The black-robed man said nothing. He simply stood there with a stern expression and watched Han Wu.

Han Wu searched every corner of the room. He even asked the Desolation Manifestation to scan the entire space. Neither of them could find an exit. It was as if the space had been completely sealed.

The Desolation Manifestation also confirmed that there were no traces of Esquiem’s mother there. It was nothing more than a room, so the first suspicious area was ruled out.

After struggling for a while with no way out, Han Wu finally sat down and started reading. With the Desolation Manifestation’s quiet guidance, he worked through the entire book.

Only then did the black-robed man nod with satisfaction and offer a piece of advice. “Youngsters like you should read more. No book is useless. It’s only a matter of whether you’ll need it someday. I hope you’ll remember this lesson.”

He waved his hand, and the exit reappeared.

Han Wu walked out, thoroughly irritated. He checked the time and realized that he had been trapped in the Fine Room for an entire day.

What a colossal waste of time! If I had known it would take this long, I would’ve just paid the 10 White Soul Coins.

“What a scam. This place is a total scam,” Han Wu grumbled under his breath.

The black-robed man materialized behind him once again as if from thin air. “No talking in the library…”

“I know, I know. Here’s the fine!” Han Wu stuffed 10 White Soul Coins into the man’s hand and hurried out of the section. He never wanted to see that Fine Room again.

After personally checking the remaining two blocked areas, Han Wu found that they were also Fine Rooms. The entire Full Moon Library showed no sign of Esquiem's mother.

Han Wu was at a loss. "So the capture of Esquiem's mother really has nothing to do with the Full Moon Library."

He found the conclusion difficult to accept. The library's shady practices had already convinced him they were capable of almost anything. In his mind, if the librarians were willing to fine people today, they would force everyone to study tomorrow. The day after, they would set up exam halls and make everyone take tests. Kidnapping a Great Fire Dragon just to educate it through compulsory learning sounded exactly like something they would do.

Yet the truth remained that they hadn't kidnapped Esquiem's mother.

"Looks like I need to pay the Fire Worship Cult a visit," Han Wu said as he prepared to leave the Full Moon Library.

Just then, a loud alarm rang out.

The librarians went on high alert and shouted, "Protect every book in the library! The Word-Eaters are here! Everyone stay alert!"

"Word-Eaters? What are those?" Han Wu couldn't understand why the librarians were panicking, but he was about to find out.

1. Fine as in being fined for money ☜

: Chapter 975

Chapter 975 - Word-Eater Swarm

Looking out the window, one could see a dark mass blotting out the sky like a storm cloud as it surged toward the Full Moon Library. Then came the sound of shattering glass.

Flying insects the size of a human head crashed through the windows, their maws lined with fangs. They immediately swarmed toward the bookshelves.

The alarm had already triggered the library's protective measures. Every bookshelf was sealed behind a barrier, effectively keeping the Word-Eaters out.

Nonetheless, the Word-Eaters refused to give up. They repeatedly slammed against the barriers in an attempt to break through. Some, unable to reach the shelved books, changed targets and lunged at the readers instead.

The readers held books in their hands. If they didn't surrender them, the Word-Eaters would attack them savagely.

Screams echoed throughout the library. Han Wu had no intention of getting involved, but he happened to be holding a book. The Word-Eaters caught its scent like cats smelling fish and charged straight at him.

The Fire Dragon Knight was his strongest Form. Unfortunately, the Full Moon Library had strict rules that forbade fire-type life forms inside. He didn't want to risk punishment, so he used his Fourth Form, which allowed him to use Summon Skeletons and Osteomancy.

"Crystal Lich!" Han Wu summoned the powerful undead skeletons he had raised earlier, and they threw themselves at the Word-Eaters without hesitation.

Meanwhile, he stayed in the rear, continuously firing Osteomancy to kill large numbers of incoming Word-Eaters. The carcasses that hit the ground were put to immediate use. He cast Summon Skeletons on them and raised black-boned, bird-like skeletons from their remains.

Their wing bones lacked feathers, but under the Golden Will's rules within the White Soul Civilization, they could still fly. Their flight altitude was low, though. Someone could crush them into bone dust if they took a careless step.

Han Wu didn't have the luxury of being picky. In this civilization, having skeletons at all was good enough. With a large skeletal swarm of Word-Eaters helping out, the rate at which Word-Eaters breached the library slowed significantly. The librarians' workload dropped by half.

"This section is covered. Go help the other sections!" a librarian said, unleashing his own strength to deal with the remaining Word-Eaters.

Han Wu firmly shook his head. "I'm here to read books, not fight. This book is yours. If the Word-Eaters chew it up, that's between you and them. Don't come to me for compensation!"

He tossed the book to the librarian. Only after confirming it was safely returned to the shelf did Han Wu relax. He had finally escaped the threat of a fine.

The librarian refused to give up. If Han Wu was willing to help the other sections, he could significantly reduce their losses.

Unfortunately, Han Wu never worked for free. He said with complete sincerity, “I never do anything without a reward, or I get sick.”

The librarian was at a loss for words. He couldn’t believe Han Wu had used such a flimsy excuse to refuse.

At that moment, the dark, overcast sky outside suddenly brightened.

Han Wu ignored the librarian and looked out the window. Dark Archmage Cage now hovered high above the library. Behind him floated a brilliant pale ring, while a glowing Microcosm materialized above his head like a full moon.

The endless swarm of Word-Eaters spotted the luminous Microcosm and rushed toward it, piling over one another until they smothered every trace of its light.

That was when Dark Archmage Cage struck. Cold, pale beams erupted from the Microcosm like a volley of arrows, piercing through the Word-Eater blockade.

As countless Word-Eaters skewered by the light arrows rained down from the sky, Han Wu saw an opportunity.

This is nature’s bounty! He leaped through the window and cast Summon Skeletons on the fallen carcasses. One after another, Word-Eater skeletons crawled from the remains and joined his army.

Dark Archmage Cage noticed what Han Wu was doing but paid it no mind. The fallen Word-Eaters were only the tip of the iceberg. Far more were still charging toward the Full Moon Library, desperate to devour its books and absorb their power.

“Not a chance,” Dark Archmage Cage said coldly.

In the next instant, his Microcosm erupted with boundless light, enveloping the entire Laurel Tree.

When the blinding glow faded, Han Wu found himself in a strange space. The librarians and readers stood alongside him, as did the Word-Eaters that had been trying to break into the library. Dark Archmage Cage had teleported them all there.

The insects hovered in the air, still intent on reaching the library as they bared their mandibles.

“Kill every last Word-Eater, and everyone can return to the library,” Dark Archmage Cage declared.

Every reader had now been conscripted as a soldier and had no choice but to face the massive Word-Eater swarm. There was nowhere to hide either. This was Dark Archmage Cage's Microcosm, and he made the rules.

"What a scam. What an absolute scam," Han Wu muttered again.

There was no avoiding it now. If he didn't fight, the Word-Eaters would come for him anyway.

Han Wu preferred to take the initiative. At his command, his skeleton army sprang into action. At the same time, he used Merge and fused large batches of Word-Eater skeletons together. The mindless creatures with weak souls became far tougher, and their bones hardened tenfold. Each one rivaled a Third Form Word-Eater in raw strength.

These upgraded skeletons charged into battle and slaughtered even more Word-Eaters. Han Wu kept summoning fallen enemies and expanding his skeleton army. As his forces grew, so did his kill count. Before long, his total kills surpassed the combined total of everyone else in the space.

Naturally, Dark Archmage Cage took notice.

Through everyone's combined efforts, every Word-Eater teleported into Dark Archmage Cage's Microcosm was wiped out.

Han Wu emerged from the battle with a massive Word-Eater skeleton army. He was already planning his next move. Once he merged all the Word-Eater skeletons, he would command a large force of powerful skeleton guards, which would make the trip to the Golden Tree much safer.

While Han Wu was picturing this bright future, Dark Archmage Cage beckoned him over.

Han Wu approached but stopped two arm's lengths away, clearly wary that the Dark Archmage would try something.

Dark Archmage Cage hadn't expected such caution. Still, his many years of experience had taught him that caution was a virtue. Cautious people lived longer.

"Young man, would you like to inherit my legacy?" Dark Archmage Cage asked.

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

Chapter 976 - The Dark Archmage Legacy

It took Han Wu a good while to process the Dark Archmage's words.

"Inherit your legacy? Does that mean your fines? Your greed? Or this tree-house library of yours?" Han Wu asked without a shred of courtesy.

Dark Archmage Cage felt a twinge of embarrassment. He had been overzealous in managing the Full Moon Library, which had led to high reading fees and aggressive fines. However, this was all to keep the library running.

Every White Soul Coin collected from reading fees and fines had gone directly into maintaining and expanding the Full Moon Library. He had never touched a single coin for personal use.

"*Ahem*. What I mean, of course, is inheriting my Form," Dark Archmage Cage clarified.

Han Wu stared at the man, draped head to toe in black, and shook his head. "Not interested."

Dark Archmage Cage was at a loss for words. He was the director of the Full Moon Library. How could Han Wu have so little regard for him?

"*Ahem*. Young man, don't you want to know the Full Moon Library's secret?" Dark Archmage Cage gently prompted, hoping to spark Han Wu's curiosity.

"Not really," Han Wu replied, his eyes on the Word-Eater skeletons he had summoned. He planned to Merge them into a single powerful flying skeleton to add aerial combat power to his army.

"Young man, I actually know why you're here," Dark Archmage Cage said, lowering his voice. "The moment I saw you, I knew you were looking for that Fire Great Dragon's mother. Am I wrong? I have some leads on that."

This got Han Wu's attention. Taking on a more respectful tone, he said, "Then please share, Director Cage. Which faction took that dragon?"

"Accept my legacy, and I'll tell you," Dark Archmage Cage said.

Han Wu's brow furrowed. Something was off. Nobody just went around pushing their legacy onto a stranger. There were only two explanations for why Cage was so eager to hand it over. Either he was near death and needed a successor, or the legacy had a severe drawback, and passing it on was equivalent to passing on a curse.

Cage looked healthy enough to live another thirty or forty years, so Han Wu ruled out the first possibility.

"I'll pass. I can find the leads on my own," Han Wu declined.

With that, he turned to Merge his Word-Eater skeletons, planning to leave for the Fire Worship Cult immediately after.

Meanwhile, Dark Archmage Cage's expression darkened. This young man was far too cautious. It had taken him ages to find a suitable candidate. There was no telling how many more years he'd have to wait if he let Han Wu go.

"Young man, I'm offering you this legacy because I see your potential and your strong will. Don't be ungrateful. We're both cultured people with a love of books. Don't make me use force," Dark Archmage Cage warned, tone hardening.

Han Wu's expression turned serious as well. "There are plenty of people here. I'm sure someone else is a better fit for your legacy. Try them. I'm not interested."

"No. Only you can inherit it," Dark Archmage Cage insisted, activating his power again to expel everyone else from the space, leaving only himself and Han Wu.

At that moment, Han Wu realized the space they were in resembled the Fine Rooms in the library. He stopped hiding his strength and summoned Esquiem, unleashing a barrage of fire in every direction.

Nothing happened. The space held firm.

Even the Desolation Manifestation could only sense the boundaries of the space, not locate an exit. It estimated that breaking free would require at least Microcosm-rank power, which Han Wu had yet to reach.

With no way out, Han Wu had no choice but to accept. Dark Archmage Cage was thrilled and insisted Han Wu wouldn't regret it.

The legacy item was the black robe itself. When Han Wu touched it, the Desolation Manifestation scanned it and found that the legacy was indeed closer to a curse.

The Dark Archmage Form was the embodiment of darkness, and those carrying it were destined to walk alongside darkness forever. This Form also influenced and corrupted the bearer's other Forms. Over time, it would taint the bearer's heart, pushing them toward evil.

Only someone with an iron will or with a heart already steeped in darkness could inherit it. If the bearer reached the end of their life without passing the legacy on, the Dark Archmage Form would seize control of the bearer's corpse and use it to wreak havoc on the world.

That was the real reason Dark Archmage Cage was so desperate to pass it on. After learning all of this, Han Wu's resistance to the legacy actually faded. Walking alongside darkness? His most compatible attribute was darkness!

Besides his Third and Sixth Forms, Swordwind and Fire Dragon Knight, his other four Forms all had some connection to darkness. Han Wu actually felt a flicker of anticipation for the Dark Archmage Form.

Cage watched as Han Wu absorbed the Dark Archmage Form. It quickly fused with him and became his Seventh Form.

All six of Han Wu's other Forms instantly reacted.

His First Form, Lone Wolf Warrior, and his Fifth Form, Jackal Deathsworn, were already linked. With the Seventh Form acting as a catalyst, the three triggered another extraordinary fusion, combining into a special Form called the Desert Reaper. The Desert Reaper united four powerful attributes, namely wolf, sand, darkness, and death. Once activated, every base stat would surge tenfold.

That wasn't all. His Second Form, Swift Shadow, also underwent a special reaction with Dark Archmage and produced a new Form called Demon Shadow. While in Demon Shadow Form, Han Wu's other stats would remain the same, but his speed would skyrocket by twenty times.

His Fourth Form, Crystal Lich, was pulled into the reaction as well, producing another new Form called Crystal Lich King. Skeletons summoned in this state would carry the darkness attribute, and Osteomancy would gain a dark corrosion property, massively boosting its attack power.

The two Forms with lower compatibility with darkness—his Third Form, Swordwind, and Sixth Form, Fire Dragon Knight—only received minor enhancements. No special Forms were produced from them.

Han Wu wasn't satisfied with this. He had gone in with high expectations, but only three special Forms had come out of it. This was hardly enough to impress him.

The three special Forms each had their own strengths with little overlap, so Han Wu decided to go big and Merge the three new special Forms together.

: Chapter 977

Chapter 977 - A Perfect Merge

Throughout the process, Cage stood nearby, watching Han Wu's transformation. His strength had dropped sharply after giving his legacy away, and he had fallen below the World rank.

Without the Dark Archmage legacy gnawing at his mind day and night, his mental state also improved dramatically, and he felt lighter than he had in years.

Cage had his reasons for being so insistent on passing the Dark Archmage Form to Han Wu. Earlier, Han Wu had controlled a massive undead army without showing the slightest fatigue. That meant Han Wu's soul was strong.

The Dark Archmage legacy could only be inherited by two types of people. Either someone with an iron will, meaning a soul powerful enough to resist the legacy's temptations and corruption, or one whose heart was already dark. That latter would embrace the Dark Archmage's influence willingly, gaining rapid power at the risk of being consumed by it.

Cage had judged Han Wu to be the first, which was why he had pushed so hard. Doing so freed Cage from the burden while granting Han Wu greater strength. This was a win for both sides.

As Han Wu's fusion progressed, however, Cage noticed something troubling. The dark energy radiating from Han Wu was growing more intense by the second. A person with a strong will wouldn't react to the legacy in this way. This looked far more like someone with a dark heart merging perfectly with the Dark Archmage legacy.

Dread welled up within Cage. Have I chosen wrongly? Is Han Wu not someone with an iron will but someone with a dark heart?

"This is bad. If the Dark Archmage legacy takes control of him, the Full Moon Library is finished!" Cage muttered in a panic. "I have to destroy him before it's too late. I can't let him go out there and harm others."

Cage activated his power, and eleven librarians appeared in the space. Although they appeared outwardly unassuming in their day-to-day roles, every single one of them was actually a Seventh Form powerhouse.

"Director, why did you summon us?" one librarian asked. Then he felt the dark energy rising from Han Wu and understood immediately.

"The legacy failed after all?"

"Why is the darkness from this kid so dense?"

"Isn't it obvious? He has a dark heart, and the Dark Archmage legacy only grew his inner darkness. Someone like this would be a menace if released. We can't let him live."

“Then what are we waiting for? Let’s set up the formation and kill him while we still can.”

Cage and the eleven librarians coordinated seamlessly. They each activated their most powerful Forms and arranged themselves into a dazzling Twelve-Pointed Star formation, trapping Han Wu at its center.

Han Wu’s Merge of the three new special Forms was at a critical stage when he felt external pressure. Opening his eyes, he saw twelve people circling him, chanting under their breath. The pressure in the air was mounting rapidly, growing heavy enough to make even someone of his caliber struggle to breathe.

The Full Moon Library’s people were trying to suppress him. The Merge was nearly done, but he couldn’t use any of the Forms involved until it was. Neither his Third Form, Swordwind, nor his Sixth Form, Fire Dragon Knight, would be enough to withstand the combined suppression of twelve opponents.

At this critical moment, Han Wu played his hidden trump card: the Demon King Transformation!

His body changed as the imposing Demon King Transformation manifested. Its terrifying aura pushed Han Wu’s power to the Microcosm rank. As the Great Dragon Ring appeared behind him, his aura condensed into the shape of an invisible Great Dragon and let out a thunderous roar.

At that moment, Swordwind and Fire Dragon Knight Forms responded to the Demon King Transformation’s influence, activating alongside it. The two forms layered onto the Demon King Transformation, adding wind, fire, and darkness to its already overwhelming presence.

Han Wu brushed the edge of the Demon King Transformation’s second stage.

“What terrifying pressure! What a dark heart! We cannot let him escape this space, even if that means sacrificing our lives here today!” Cage shouted, pouring everything he had into the formation.

The eleven librarians followed suit, determined to seal Han Wu away forever. Han Wu fought back with everything he had. He was about to summon his Microcosm to bolster his strength when the Merge completed.

The new special Form, born from the fusion of the Desert Reaper, Demon Shadow, and the Crystal Lich King, was complete. Han Wu couldn’t wait to try it.

He dropped the Demon King Transformation and switched to his newest Form.

When Cage and the eleven librarians felt the pressure lift, they initially thought that Han Wu had surrendered.

Then, an even more terrifying aura erupted from his body. Han Wu's appearance changed once more. A black robe draped over him, a wolf-head mask covered his face, and black hooked claws extended from both hands. Overlapping Demon Shadows formed thirteen Shadow Blades behind him.

Fine black grains poured out endlessly from his feet. This wasn't ordinary sand. Each grain was a fragment of bone compressed to its absolute limit. Under Han Wu's command, the bone sand coalesced into a Jackal Deathsworn wielding a battle axe.

This single Jackal Deathsworn radiated an aura rivaling a Seventh Form fighter. But that was only the beginning. More bone sand gathered, forming more Jackal Deathsworn. By the time all the bone sand was used up, seven Jackal Deathsworn guards stood at Han Wu's side.

Standing between them, Han Wu looked like a lord of the underworld, master of both life and death. The Twelve-Pointed Star's suppressive force froze under Han Wu's icy aura. Then, the seven Jackal Deathsworn raised their axes and swung.

The Twelve-Pointed Star seal shattered. Cage and all eleven librarians coughed up blood and collapsed, crippled by the violent backlash. They couldn't muster a shred of resistance.

Han Wu moved like a ghost and appeared before Cage in the blink of an eye. "You gave me the legacy yourself, so why try to kill me?"

The question stunned Cage. If the Dark Archmage legacy had taken over Han Wu, his mind wouldn't be this clear.

"The Dark Archmage legacy didn't take control of you?" Cage asked through the pain of the backlash.

Han Wu raised an eyebrow. "A mere legacy thinks it can control me?"

Cage studied Han Wu's clear eyes and confirmed that he was fully in control. Thinking back to the intense darkness that had radiated from Han Wu earlier, an answer formed in his mind.

Han Wu undeniably had an iron will, but he also had a dark heart. Although the Dark Archmage legacy had activated his inner darkness, he had effortlessly kept it in check. This combination was nothing short of perfect.

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Chapter 978 - Infiltrating the Fire Worship Cult

Han Wu reluctantly accepted Cage's explanation. They had assumed the darkness had corrupted him, so they attacked to suppress him—an idea Han Wu could only scoff at.

Darkness couldn't control him. He controlled the darkness. Considering he had suffered no real harm and had gained a powerful Seventh Form for free, Han Wu forgave their rash actions.

Cage rested briefly, then shared what he knew about the Great Fire Dragon's mother.

A visitor from the Fire Worship Cult had once mentioned that they had captured a Great Fire Dragon. It seemed the cult was preparing for their once-a-decade Fire Worship Ceremony and had specifically sought a Great Fire Dragon to sacrifice to the ancient god they worshipped.

Han Wu grew anxious after hearing this. That was a Great Dragon! Killing it would be a terrible waste. Couldn't they learn from his example and go for a more sustainable approach?

Forcing himself to stay calm, he listened carefully to the details that Cage shared before setting off. The ceremony was in two days. Han Wu could only hope they weren't the impatient type.

With the Desolation Manifestation pinpointing the Fire Worship Cult's headquarters. Han Wu climbed onto Esquiem and flew straight there. Knowing its mother's life was at stake, Esquiem pushed itself to the limit. They flew without rest and arrived in a day and a half.

The Fire Worship Cult's headquarters was packed with followers. Esquiem recognized their distinctive robes from when its mother was captured.

"Don't get agitated. I'll help you get revenge, but we need to find your mother first," Han Wu said, calming the furious Esquiem before storing it in his summoning space.

He infiltrated the headquarters on his own. Everyone inside wore the Fire Worship Cult's robes. Han Wu didn't have one, but he acted quickly, activating Demon Shadow and snatching a lone follower at blinding speed. He then stripped their robes off, killed the man, and converted the corpse into an undead skeleton to hide the evidence. The sequence involved switching between two Forms in rapid succession.

Appropriately dressed, Han Wu blended into the crowd of followers and eavesdropped on their conversations to gather intelligence.

“Did you hear? The leader got his hands on a powerful secret technique. He’s going to use it on all the followers tonight. He’ll kill the captured Great Fire Dragon, mix its blood into the technique, and give it to every member. Apparently, once you apply that stuff, you become immune to fire-type attacks.”

“Is that even real? That sounds terrifying.”

“Imagine running into fire-type enemies after that. We’d crush them.”

This confirmed one critical fact for Han Wu: Esquiem’s mother was still alive.

“Thank goodness,” Han Wu murmured.

At that moment, a man in a lavish fire-trimmed gold robe stepped out of a building. “Don’t you all have jobs to do? Get to work!”

The followers began to scatter.

“Wait,” the man called out again. “I need a few hands. You, you, you, and you. Follow me.”

Han Wu was among the four selected, but he figured going in would reveal more information, so he followed the Fire Worship Cult officer into the building.

Massive torture devices filled the space inside. Some still had fresh blood on them. Han Wu’s sharp nose picked up the scent of a Great Dragon from the blood. Great Dragons were rare enough that he was almost certain it belonged to Esquiem’s mother.

She was alive, but she had suffered terribly.

“Carry these devices outside and wash them. Don’t dump the bloody water. Save every drop. Understood?” the officer ordered, glancing toward a room further inside.

The other three followers started hauling devices. Han Wu, meanwhile, had the Desolation Manifestation probe deeper into the building. His lack of movement caught the officer’s attention.

“I told you to work! Are you deaf?” the officer snarled, stepping forward to grab Han Wu by the hair and slap him.

Han Wu’s eyes shifted, and his Demon Shadow activated. Four Shadow Blades shot silently from the shadows at his feet, piercing the three followers and the officer through the heart.

The three followers died instantly. The officer survived the lethal blow by activating his Seventh Form, converting his body into a pure fire elemental to avoid the fatal damage.

Han Wu hastily shifted from Demon Shadow to his Third Form, Swordwind. Four arms gripped four massive swords and unleashed a devastating wind slash. The gales extinguished the officer's flames, and the blades hacked his exposed body apart before he could utter a single word.

Just to be safe, Han Wu switched to Crystal Lich King, converted all four corpses into skeleton dust, and stored them away.

Silently killing a Seventh Form opponent of equal level in a brief window took more than just the element of surprise. It demanded explosive power and experience. Luckily, Han Wu had both.

The Desolation Manifestation then informed him about a hidden chamber deep inside the building. A special energy field that blocked the Desolation Manifestation's scan shielded its exterior, so Han Wu would have to go in personally to investigate.

Han Wu had planned to do so even without the Desolation Manifestation's prompting. After all, he needed to confirm whether Esquiem's mother was imprisoned there.

Shifting back to Demon Shadow, he slipped inside as a living shadow, which was harder to detect than any physical form. He encountered no one along the way. It was as if no other soul occupied this part of the building.

Finally, Han Wu reached the boundary that the Desolation Manifestation had identified. Two crimson doors stood before him. Flattening into a shadow, he squeezed through the narrow gap between the doors without touching them.

A wave of blistering heat hit him the moment he entered. He had arrived in a world of fire.

Chapter 979 - The Mutilated Dragon

Fire blazed everywhere. Although the ground itself hadn't melted, it was still scalding hot. Even in his shadow form, Han Wu felt as though he were crawling across a scorching iron plate.

Numerous fire-type life forms were chained up in the space. Based on their wounds and their vacant expressions, Han Wu guessed they had been imprisoned here for a very long time.

He didn't know what they had gone through, but the fact that they were still alive was a testament to their stubborn will to survive.

Still, Han Wu didn't dare rescue them, not wanting to risk alerting anyone. Enduring the heat, pressed on in search of Esquiem's mother.

The Desolation Manifestation had scanned the room the moment Han Wu entered and soon detected a Great Dragon's presence. Following its directions, Han Wu arrived at a door and slipped through the crack in his shadow form.

He immediately heard a voice.

"Corpse Fiend, this success was entirely thanks to your help. We never could've captured that Great Fire Dragon without you." A man in a gold-red robe bowed to an elegant middle-aged man beside him.

From their exchange, Han Wu identified the man in the gold-red robe as a high-ranking member of the Fire Worship Cult, possibly the leader himself. The elegant middle-aged man was the Corpse Fiend, Hennibal.

Hennibal produced a handkerchief from his breast pocket and dabbed the corner of his mouth. "I should be thanking you, my dear friend. Your Fire Worship Cult helped me fulfill my dream of cooking a Great Dragon. I'm very satisfied with our partnership."

"Tonight, I'll sacrifice the Great Fire Dragon to the ancient god," the leader said with a smile. "Would you like to stay and witness our ceremony, Corpse Fiend?"

"Of course," Hennibal graciously accepted.

With that, the two exchanged pleasantries and left.

A full picture finally formed in Han Wu's mind. The Corpse Fiend had played a key role in the capture, and the Fire Worship Cult intended to sacrifice the Great Fire Dragon to their ancient god. As he didn't know the true strength of either the cult leader or Hennibal, the safest move was to find Esquiem's mother and get her out first.

Following the Desolation Manifestation's guidance, Han Wu approached the area where the Great Dragon's presence was strongest. A massive pit lay before him with its interior ablaze. Even the stones had been baked red.

Han Wu peered inside and saw Esquiem's mother. The sight was enough to make even a man who had witnessed countless horrors recoil.

She was there, but she was no longer a complete Great Dragon. Her wings, claws, and legs had been hacked off. Every scale had been stripped from her body. Festering wounds covered her from head to tail.

One word surfaced in Han Wu's mind. Mutilated. They had mutilated her in the same way a particularly cruel ruler might punish a subject.

As if sensing the Defier's presence, Esquiem's mother struggled to force her eyes open. Only one eye remained in its socket. The other was a raw, bleeding hole.

Han Wu dropped into the pit as a shadow and materialized at her side. The severity of her injuries was even worse up close. Wound upon wound was layered over raw flesh. If not for a Great Dragon's extraordinary life force, she would've been dead long ago.

"Defier..." Esquiem's mother said in the dragon tongue. Han Wu's Defier title allowed him to understand.

"I'm here."

"Kill me..." Tears spilled from her remaining eye, evaporating to steam as they met the heated air. Meanwhile, blood wept from the empty socket, leaving a crimson streak as it boiled away.

She had lost the will to live but lacked the means to end it herself. Her limbs had been severed, and her powers sealed, preventing her from even triggering a self-detonation. All she wanted was for the Defier to grant her a swift end.

"I can't do that," Han Wu replied, his voice heavy. Killing her would have been easy, but he wouldn't be able to face Esquiem if he did. That child was still waiting to see its mother.

Esquiem's mother sank into despair, and the world itself seemed to fade into monochrome.

"I can't kill you, but I can promise you this: I'll get you out of here, and I'll help you recover," Han Wu continued.

She shook her head weakly, well aware of her condition. Her limbs were gone, and her dragon essence had been drained. Restoring herself to her previous state wasn't impossible, but it was as close to that as it got. She didn't want the Defier to waste precious resources on her.

"I have... a child..." she rasped out.

"I know. Esquiem is here with me. I promised that I'd bring you back," Han Wu said.

She fell silent, not knowing what to say. She didn't want Esquiem to see her like this.

"Don't worry about anything else. I'll do whatever it takes to get you out. Leave the rest to me," Han Wu said with absolute conviction.

Esquiem's mother had no choice but to trust him. After persuading her, Han Wu asked for intelligence on the Fire Worship Cult and the Corpse Fiend.

Han Wu was certain that the two of them would show up to foil any escape attempt, and knowing his opponents would allow him to plan for that inevitable fight.

According to Esquiem's mother, both the Fire Worship Cult leader and the Corpse Fiend were Ninth Form fighters.

The leader's mastery over fire was at the peak of perfection. His opponent would need extremely high fire resistance to stand a chance. The Corpse Fiend was even more dangerous. Beneath his elegant exterior, he actually relished in devouring corpses.

His core Form was called the Greedy Ghoul, which allowed him to convert any corpse he consumed into personal power. If Esquiem's mother weren't needed alive for the sacrifice, Hennibal would've sliced her into pieces and eaten her as roast meat long ago.

This knowledge gave Han Wu a basic understanding of both opponents. Either could be handled using his Demon King Transformation or his new Merged Form. The problem was if he had to fight both at the same time.

Han Wu thought hard, then recalled the sacrifice ceremony the pair had mentioned earlier.

"What level is the ancient god?" he asked both Esquiem's mother and the Desolation Manifestation at the same time.

Chapter 980 - The One Who'll Kill You

Esquiem's mother had lived in the White Soul Civilization for over a thousand years and thus knew a little about the ancient god that the Fire Worship Cult revered. She only knew that this god had existed since the earliest days of the White Soul Civilization. They wielded dominion over fire, which the Fire Worship Cult fervently worshiped.

Han Wu immediately had the Desolation Manifestation use its access privileges to look up the ancient god based on her description, and the results came back quickly.

The Ancient Fire God was the first being in the White Soul Civilization to master the Flame Jurisdiction. In terms of the Power of Forms, this was roughly equivalent to an Eleventh Form fighter.

Han Wu swallowed hard. Two Ninth Form opponents were already a problem. An Eleventh Form was unthinkable. Each additional Form brought exponentially greater growth.

With his strength, Han Wu could at best pit his Seventh Form power against a Ninth Form opponent. An Eleventh Form was beyond anything he dared imagine.

Fighting the Ancient Fire God was out of the question, so Han Wu redirected his focus to his two Ninth Form opponents, specifically the Fire Worship Cult leader.

Everything Han Wu knew about the leader pointed to his power being almost entirely fire-based. Fortunately, Han Wu had a counter for that: his Conversion Jurisdiction.

Conversion was a hard counter to any elemental specialist. Unless the opponent had a Divine Jurisdiction that could counter it, Han Wu could absorb and convert fire energy effortlessly. There was one problem, though. Han Wu hadn't unlocked his Conversion Jurisdiction in this world yet. Doing so required a Divine Stone, and he had already used the three he had.

"Looks like I'll need to raid the Fire Worship Cult's vault," Han Wu muttered.

After explaining his plan to Esquiem's mother, Han Wu hurried out, hoping to make the most of the time before the sacrifice.

The Desolation Manifestation scanned the area freely, since most of the building lacked the special shielding of the inner chamber, and pinpointed the vault's location in short order. Han Wu moved toward it in Shadow Meld.

Defensive arrays surrounded the vault. Han Wu didn't have time to find gaps in the formations, so he activated his Merged Form and forced his way through at full power.

In an instant, his appearance changed. A black robe, a wolf-head mask, and hooked claws appeared. Thirteen Shadow Blades crisscrossed behind his back. An aura of cold, untouchable menace radiated from him. His energy couldn't be contained while in this form. It leaked outward, impossible to conceal.

It was only a matter of time before the Fire Worship Cult leader and Hennibal detected him and arrived on site. Han Wu had to find a Divine Stone inside the vault before they arrived.

"Don't disappoint me, Fire Worship Cult," Han Wu murmured.

His thirteen Shadow Blades slashed at the arrays guarding the vault. The blades were devastatingly powerful, and the arrays held for three measly seconds before shattering. The vault door was no obstacle at all.

Drawn by commotion, the Fire Worship Cult followers swarmed to stop him. Han Wu snorted. Bone sand poured from beneath his feet, forming seven Jackal Deathsworn warriors who charged the followers in a suicidal rush.

The followers fought desperately and even managed to destroy one Jackal Deathsworn, but the bone sand simply reformed into a new one. As long as Han Wu lived, his Jackal Deathsworn couldn't truly die.

Han Wu ignored the brawl outside and charged into the vault. Thirteen Shadow Blades became thirteen shadow arms, rifling through everything in sight. The Desolation Manifestation simultaneously scanned every corner.

"Found it! Northeast corner!" the Desolation Manifestation called out.

Han Wu rushed to the northeast corner and dug through the contents. The two powerful presences were closing in fast.

He found it just in time. Grabbing the Divine Stone, he immediately slotted it into an empty socket and loaded his Conversion Jurisdiction onto it.

In that instant, Han Wu felt as if every rule of the White Soul Civilization had loosened its grip on him. He could feel his own power again, the kind capable of killing gods and slaying demons.

This was only an illusion, of course. He had simply regained control of the Conversion Jurisdiction.

"Who dares steal from the Fire Worship Cult!" the cult leader roared from outside the vault. A bolt of flame shot ahead of him, locked onto Han Wu, and slammed into his body.

Han Wu activated the Conversion Jurisdiction's effect, Energy Conservation. The fire was absorbed completely and could be transformed into any other element at will.

All his earlier worries evaporated on the spot, and he answered the cult leader's question with absolute seriousness, "Who am I? I'm the one who'll kill you."

Chapter 981 - Corpse Fiend Hennibal

The cult leader held nothing back, unleashing his full power and hurling a barrage of fireballs at Han Wu.

Han Wu absorbed every fireball with glee. Using Energy Conservation, he converted all that Fire Energy into Bone Energy, producing vast quantities of bone sand. Under Han Wu's manipulations, this bone sand formed a single massive Jackal Deathsworn.

Its base attributes reached ordinary Ninth Form levels. It hefted a giant axe and swung at the cult leader. The cult leader tried to shift into his Seventh Form, a pure fire elemental body, to dodge the blow, but hadn't expected the Jackal Deathsworn's attack to carry a darkness attribute.

The axe bit into him, blood seeping through his flaming body as he cried out, "Corpse Fiend, this kid is strange. Help me!"

Hennibal had been watching Han Wu's techniques with keen interest.

"Very well," he said, stepping forward and producing a handkerchief to dab at the corner of his mouth. "Young man, I hope your flesh is as sweet as the power you've shown."

Han Wu ordered the Jackal Deathsworn to attack. It swung its massive axe at Hennibal. The darkness-infused blow would deal devastating damage on contact.

There was no trace of panic in Hennibal's elegant smile. A long horn shot out from beneath his foot and impaled the Jackal Deathsworn, lifting it into the air.

"This horn came from a giant unicorn," Hennibal explained. "I cut off its head and braised it for three months. I can still remember the taste of that rotting, stinking head."

Han Wu's expression hardened. He dissolved the Jackal Deathsworn back into bone sand, reformed it, and sent it in again. As long as Han Wu was alive, the Jackal Deathsworn could regenerate from any wound.

Since the Jackal Deathsworn couldn't get close, Han Wu changed tactics, sending his thirteen Shadow Blades lancing toward Hennibal from every angle.

Hennibal raised both arms. Bulging blue-black muscle tissue erupted across his skin, hardening to the strength of steel. The thirteen Shadow Blades struck but couldn't pierce through.

Han Wu switched strategies again. The Shadow Blades stopped stabbing and wrapped around Hennibal instead, binding his body and restricting his movement.

Thankfully, this worked. Hennibal couldn't break free.

Lunging forward with his hooked claws, Han Wu attacked with everything he had.

"Crushing Claws!"

The raw physical power behind the strike, combined with his razor-sharp claws and the devastating skill, was enough to tear gashes in a Microcosm.

At the last second, Hennibal erupted with new power. Red-hot dragon scales sprouted across his body. His limbs transformed into dragon legs and claws. Wings burst from his back, and a thick dragon tail grew behind him.

His strength surged, allowing him to tear the thirteen Shadow Blades apart with ease and meet Han Wu's claws with dragon claws of his own. Han Wu gouged several dark red wounds across Hennibal's body. Hennibal, in turn, tore a small chunk of flesh from Han Wu.

Dragon claws were no joke. While Han Wu was processing this, Hennibal lifted the scrap of flesh to inspect, drool already running from the corner of his mouth.

"What exquisite meat! If the situation weren't so pressing, I'd use the finest spices to marinate it and serve it on the most beautiful plate. Then, with a grateful heart, I'd savor every bite. I'm too hungry to wait, though. I'll just have a quick taste."

Flames erupted along his dragon claw, searing Han Wu's flesh on the spot. The heat resistance of his flesh only excited Hennibal more. He didn't bother checking whether its doneness before shoving it into his mouth.

The flavor drove him into a frenzy. Drool poured from his mouth, and all traces of elegance vanished.

"Delicious!" he reveled, luxuriating in the taste. "Absolutely exquisite! I'm going to eat you. Skin, sinew, bone, organs, hair, every last bit of you!"

Han Wu looked at the man and saw nothing but a deranged lunatic. Hennibal's strength was not to be underestimated, though.

The taste of Han Wu's flesh seemed to have changed something in Hennibal, as his attacks noticeably became more aggressive. The giant unicorn horn jabbed from every direction. Tumor-like muscle masses swelled across his body, with new limbs bursting out from them.

Within three minutes, the once-elegant Hennibal became a hulking monstrosity. His body was a patchwork of limbs harvested from dozens of species. It reminded Han Wu of the Origin of Mutation. The two weren't just similar; they were practically identical, except that the Origin of Mutation used genetics while Hennibal relied on consuming.

Han Wu quickly found that his Merged Form's attacks could no longer break through the defenses of Hennibal's new monstrous form. Fortunately, Han Wu was fast enough that Hennibal couldn't catch him.

Still, evading alone wouldn't do. Han Wu's goal was to kill Hennibal, not spar with him. Coming to a decision, he changed Forms once more.

He activated Demon King Transformation, which pulled in his Third Form, Swordwind, and Sixth Form, Fire Dragon Knight, causing them to manifest simultaneously. As his Great Dragon Ring appeared behind him, his concentrated aura took the shape of an invisible Great Dragon and unleashed a deafening roar.

The roar froze Hennibal in place. He stared at Han Wu's Demon King Transformation, a body assembled from the parts of different species, with gleaming eyes. At long last, he had found someone who shared his aesthetic!

Chapter 982 - The Ancient God Descends

"Exquisite. Absolutely stunning. You're a masterpiece. I almost can't bear to eat you!" Hennibal exclaimed. He faced an agonizing choice, torn between eating Han Wu or turning him into a specimen to admire.

Han Wu scoffed. "We don't know who'll eat whom yet."

With that, he triggered the Demon King Transformation's special trait. Gaping maws materialized at his command and lunged at Hennibal, snapping hungrily as they went. Each maw was connected to the Dark Locust's stomach, whose digestive power could break down virtually anything.

Hennibal struck with his many limbs, smashing the gaping maws apart one after another. Some of his limbs were bitten off and swallowed. Dark Locust's stomach digested them and fed the energy back to Han Wu.

Hennibal was losing ground, and he knew it. Switching gears, he closed the distance and hit Han Wu with close-range attacks.

Han Wu grinned. Close combat was his specialty, after all.

Brandishing four massive swords with his Swordwind arms and igniting his dragon claws with crimson dragon fire, he leaped forward.

The two behemoths collided. Flesh and bone flew in every direction. The gaping maws devoured any bits that fell and converted them into recovery energy.

After several bouts, Hennibal had lost large portions of his grafted limbs. Some dangled in broken halves from his body, making him look ghastly and wretched. Once it finally dawned that he was outmatched, he immediately turned to run.

Han Wu wasn't about to let him escape. Hennibal was a walking loot box, and Han Wu was betting on the rewards! His four Swordwind arms merged their power into a single Hurricane Greatsword and brought it crashing down.

"Steelcutter!"

The colossal blade cleaved through Hennibal's defenses, obliterating all traces of life within him.

Before the corpse could dissolve, Han Wu switched to the Crystal Lich King and cast Summon Skeletons. A special skeleton with countless mismatched limbs rose from Hennibal's remains. Bizarre appearance aside, its power reached the Eighth Form, making it a true Elite skeleton.

The Fire Worship Cult leader had been recovering nearby, watching as the mighty Hennibal was cut down with ease. Terror swelled within him. Hennibal had been a dominant force in the White Soul Civilization for years. Even Esquiem's mother had been helpless against him, yet this unknown kid had hacked him to pieces.

As Han Wu closed in, the cult leader activated his strongest Form, the Ninth Form Fire Fiend. His body transformed into a special, towering flame. Being in his strongest Form restored a sliver of confidence.

"I'll overlook the fact that you killed the Corpse Fiend. Today is our Fire Worship Ceremony, so I'd rather not fight. Leave now, and I guarantee that no harm will come to you," the cult leader said magnanimously.

In truth, he dared not pursue even if he wanted to. Han Wu was just that powerful. Only a fool would chase death. The best move was to get rid of Han Wu while minimizing losses.

Unfortunately for him, Han Wu wasn't interested in talking. His Merged Form manifested eight Jackal Deathsworn materialized from bone sand. The eight and the Elite skeleton[1] all charged the cult leader's Fire Fiend form.

Thirteen Shadow Blades slashed at him simultaneously. The cult leader retaliated with a wall of special flames that blazed over everything, hardening the Jackal Deathsworn's bone sand bodies and rendering them unable to move.

Whenever that happened, Han Wu would manually reconstitute them to keep them fighting. Any fire that touched Han Wu himself was simply absorbed and converted into more bone sand to form more Jackal Deathsworn.

A fierce and baffling battle ensued, particularly for the cult leader. He had started against eight Jackal Deathsworn, but not a single one fell throughout the battle. Worse still, their numbers had conversely grown to sixteen, and Han Wu himself hadn't taken a scratch.

Understanding of the situation dawned with painful clarity. Han Wu was a hard counter to everything he had. His only option was to run.

He tried to flee as a stream of fire, only to discover that his feet wouldn't leave the ground. It was as if he had been nailed in place.

Han Wu had used his thirteen Shadow Blades to pin the cult leader's shadow to the ground during the fight. Unable to fight or flee, the cult leader fell into complete despair.

"If you won't let me live, then we'll die together!" he suddenly shouted, forming a hand seal. Extreme heat erupted from his body. Buildings across the compound caught fire. Even the ground turned molten.

Han Wu assumed it was some powerful final attack. After all, he had the Conversion Jurisdiction. Whatever elemental energy the cult leader threw at him, he could simply absorb and redirect. Han Wu had won the moment he had gotten the Divine Stone.

Then the Desolation Manifestation warned urgently, "An entity that could threaten a God is descending on this location. Preliminary analysis points to the White Soul Civilization's Ancient Fire God. Run!"

Without hesitation, Han Wu shifted Forms and used Shadow Meld to flee at top speed. He had gone to great lengths to avoid confronting the Ancient Fire God, only for the cult leader to sacrifice himself to summon them. Han Wu hadn't unlocked his full power and knew he definitely couldn't defeat the powerful Ancient Fire God.

Unfortunately, he was too late. The Ancient Fire God descended into the cult leader's body.

"My glorious God, please help your faithful servant!" the cult leader pleaded. "Burn this sinner to ashes! I offer my life as payment!"

Then, to Han Wu, the cult leader screamed, "Even if I can't kill you, I can at least make sure you die together with me in the flames of the Ancient Fire God!"

With that, his body crumbled to ash in the blaze.

The Ancient Fire God absorbed the cult leader's offered energy and faith, then turned their gaze on Han Wu.

Han Wu's body instantly burst into flames.

1. Here's the weird part, not sure if they meant Elite as in the rank, or elite as in more powerful skeleton 🤏

Chapter 983 - Fire Dragon King Transformation

Han Wu ran the Conversion Jurisdiction at full power and barely managed to extinguish the flames on his body. The Ancient Fire God's fire carried the force of a Divine Jurisdiction.

Although Han Wu was also using a Divine Jurisdiction, he was not the Conversion God King, and his understanding of it was limited to a single effect, Energy Conservation.

The Ancient Fire God, on the other hand, had spent ages mastering their Flame Jurisdiction. The gap was enormous. This realization gave Han Wu a splitting headache. He had tried everything to avoid a fight with the Ancient Fire God, yet here he was anyway.

With his strength, defending himself was already a struggle. Both defeating the Ancient Fire God or escaping seemed almost impossible.

When the Ancient Fire God saw Han Wu quench their flames, curiosity flickered in their expression. They couldn't fathom how anyone in the White Soul Civilization could snuff out their fire. Could the Golden Will have chosen this person as the next king?

The Ancient Fire God sent another wave of fire at Han Wu as a test. This time, the flames were far more ferocious. Han Wu howled in agony and quickly shifted to his Sixth Form, the Fire Dragon Knight.

Fire dragons were creatures born from the union of flame and Great Dragon blood. They possessed an innate affinity for fire. Han Wu's pain thus eased considerably, though the Ancient Fire God's flames still burned. He had no choice but to keep running the Jurisdiction Conversion, converting the divine fire into his own energy.

The Ancient Fire God observed Han Wu's reaction and concluded he was not the Golden Will's chosen king. A true king would not cower before their flames. Satisfied, they moved to fulfill their follower's dying wish and burn Han Wu to cinders.

Han Wu had already been scorched twice and had no desire for a third round. Calling out Esquiem, he mounted it and flew as fast as they could, desperate to outrun the Ancient Fire God's flames.

Esquiem was fast, but not fast enough. The gap was rapidly closing.

Both Han Wu and Esquiem were set ablaze again. The intense fire sent them tumbling from the sky. Han Wu forced the flames off himself with the Conversion Jurisdiction. Esquiem had no such ability and was forced to endure the burn. The divine fire's corrosive power made it suffer terribly.

Han Wu rushed to help, using the Conversion Jurisdiction to strip the flames from Esquiem's body. Several consecutive burns had taken a heavy toll on them. They wouldn't survive many more rounds of this.

The Ancient Fire God held their fire for the moment, staring at Han Wu with genuine curiosity.

"You carry something that can quench my fire?" the Ancient Fire God asked, voice resonating directly in Han Wu's mind as a soul-level transmission.

Han Wu understood the implication. The Ancient Fire God wanted whatever was neutralizing their fire. In other words, they wanted the Conversion Jurisdiction. However, if he gave it up, he would have no defense left. One blast and he would be ashes.

"Surrender the treasure that quenches my fire," the Ancient Fire God commanded.

Han Wu knew he was out of options. Reluctantly removing the Divine Stone from its slot, he walked toward the Ancient Fire God. As he approached, he spotted something on the ground near the Ancient Fire God.

It was a Divine Stone. His first emotion was confusion. Divine Stones were rare, and even the vault of the Fire Worship Cult only had one—the same one he had put the Conversion Jurisdiction on.

So, where did the Divine Stone on the ground come from? It appeared to be a Rank 9 Divine Stone at that. After a moment of thought, he realized Hennibal had died there. He had been so preoccupied with fighting the cult leader that he hadn't noticed that Hennibal had dropped it when he died.

That was the key to turning this around!

His mind raced, but outwardly he kept up the act. He walked toward the Ancient Fire God, holding out the original Divine Stone. The Ancient Fire God stood their ground, too proud to lower themself, waiting for Han Wu to deliver the treasure to their feet.

When Han Wu was within three meters, he made his move. He veered sharply, snatched the Rank 9 Divine Stone off the ground, and instantly transferred the Demon King Transformation from his old Divine Stone into the new one.

The Ancient Fire God, believing that they had been tricked, sent another torrent of divine fire crashing down on Han Wu. Han Wu triggered the Demon King Transformation's second stage in that same instant.

"True Black Dragon King Transformation!" A terrifying wave of Dark Energy formed a protective membrane around him, blocking the flames and buying him a few precious seconds to breathe.

The divine fire was relentless, though, and the dark barrier wouldn't hold for long. As Han Wu braced himself to fight the Ancient Fire God head-on, Esquiem came flying toward him.

"Noble Defier, I felt you calling me!" Esquiem cried.

Han Wu was bewildered. He hadn't called it.

Then, he felt it. The True Black Dragon King Transformation was resonating with his Sixth Form, the Fire Dragon Knight. It had originally been born from Han Wu activating his latent dragon blood, but its second-stage transformation was now evolving.

The evolution only accelerated as Esquiem drew near. Han Wu slowed his flight and channeled energy into the process.

The resonance pulled Esquiem in, and it merged directly into Han Wu's body. In a flash, the black scales of the True Black Dragon King Transformation turned a blazing red. Darkness gave way to flame.

The Demon King Transformation's second stage underwent a complete metamorphosis, turning into the Fire Dragon King Transformation.

Flames erupted from every scale, replacing the Dark Energy with a blazing barrier that held the Ancient Fire God's divine fire at bay. No matter how fiercely the divine fire raged, the Fire Dragon King Transformation's flames showed no sign of weakening.

As Han Wu settled into the new form, he noticed something peculiar. The divine fire actually smelled rather pleasant. Acting on pure instinct, he opened his dragon jaws and inhaled.

The Ancient Fire God's divine fire poured into his mouth and settled comfortably in his stomach. Surprisingly, it wasn't painful at all. The Ancient Fire God lost their composure when they saw Han Wu swallow their fire.

Their divine fire roared to full intensity, determined to use everything they had to reduce Han Wu to slag. The might of an ancient god was not to be challenged.

Chapter 984 - Fire Dragon Spirit Esna

The flames, imbued with the power of a Divine Jurisdiction, exploded across Han Wu's body. In an instant, they engulfed him in an even fiercer blaze. The flames carried both the might of fire and the power of Divine Jurisdiction that ate into his Fire Dragon King Transformation.

Han Wu opened his mouth once more, inhaled deeply, and swallowed the raging flames whole. The dragon scales that had been scorched rapidly regenerated as the converted energy from the flames restored his frame. He emerged completely unharmed, with even more energy.

Flames rippled across the Ancient God's entire body. They had never encountered anything that their fire couldn't burn.

Han Wu wasn't one to take a beating without retaliation. Since the Ancient God had tried to burn him again and again, returning the favor seemed perfectly reasonable. The next moment, he charged at the Ancient God with his dragon claws.

The Ancient God consisted of pure elemental energy, so physical attacks couldn't hurt them. Han Wu's Fire Dragon King Transformation wasn't purely physical, however. He blazed with powerful flames. He grabbed the Ancient God, tore away a massive chunk of their elemental form, and shoved it into his mouth.

Eventually, he decided that the method was too slow and started biting directly. The Ancient God unleashed every fire skill at their disposal against Han Wu, but none of them could inflict any meaningful damage. Meanwhile, Han Wu's bites dealt real damage every single time.

They tried to flee, but Han Wu held them fast. Desperate, they opened their flaming jaws and bit back. Unfortunately, they couldn't match Han Wu's devouring speed!

When it came to devouring, Han Wu was the expert. Gradually, the Ancient God fell behind. They begged Han Wu to spare them, but he ignored them. Bite after bite, he consumed the Ancient God completely.

The moment the Ancient God was fully devoured, a complete Flame Jurisdiction appeared before Han Wu. This was the most precious treasure they had possessed.

Han Wu picked it up and used the power of Conversion to erase the Ancient God's mark from it. Just like that, the Divine Jurisdiction became ownerless.

With that done, Han Wu finally relaxed. He reverted from the Fire Dragon King Transformation to his original form. The moment his feet touched the ground, weakness washed over him.

This battle had drained him completely. He had battled Corpse Fiend Hennibal, then the leader of the Fire Worship Cult, and finally the Ancient God without a moment to recover.

Thankfully, luck had been on his side. He had emerged victorious, accomplishing the miraculous feat of defeating three powerful enemies in succession. He let out a long breath and turned to look behind him.

Esquiem had already fallen into a deep sleep. All the essence Han Wu had devoured from the Ancient God remained inside Esquiem. Once it absorbed it, Esquiem would become an existence on par with the Black Dragon King Alpheus. That would take time, though.

Han Wu returned Esquiem to his space and stepped into the Fire Worship Cult's secret chamber. Esquiem's mother was still inside, suffering.

Han Wu approached her. Sensing the Defier's aura on him, she opened her remaining eye, and a flicker of surprise crossed it. Only a few hours had passed, yet Han Wu was completely different from before. His overall aura had risen significantly.

"I killed the Fire Worship Cult's leader and the Corpse Fiend. I've avenged you," Han Wu said calmly, as though he had done nothing remarkable. Compared to devouring the Ancient God, it truly wasn't.

Tears of gratitude rolled from her eyes. Han Wu then took out the complete Flame Jurisdiction that the Ancient God had dropped. It was the White Soul Civilization's Flame Jurisdiction, so Han Wu didn't dare bring it back to the Divine Civilization.

Every complete Divine Jurisdiction within the Divine Civilization was unique, and the same was true even of minor ones.[1] If two identical complete Divine Jurisdictions existed simultaneously and the civilization's Will detected them, the milder outcome would be negotiations, with the God King of that Jurisdiction claiming and absorbing the duplicate. The worst outcome would be a divine war in which both sides fought to the death.

Han Wu had a decent relationship with the Blazing God King. He didn't want this Divine Jurisdiction to drive a wedge between them. On top of that, Han Wu's affinity for fire wasn't particularly high. The moment he obtained the Flame Jurisdiction, he knew he couldn't absorb it. Since he couldn't use it himself, he might as well give it to an ally who could.

Esquiem was still young. Digesting the Ancient God's essence alone would take a very long time. That made his mother the ideal choice. Han Wu was completely confident in her

loyalty. The life-saving favor was one reason. The more important reason was that Esquiem was in his hands.[2] His mother had no choice but to be loyal to Han Wu.

“Will you become my strength?” Han Wu asked as he held out the complete Flame Jurisdiction.

Esquiem’s mother nodded firmly.

Han Wu smiled in satisfaction and brought the complete Flame Jurisdiction to the edge of her mouth.

She didn’t swallow it. Instead, she closed her eyes and guided her dragon spirit into the Divine Jurisdiction. She could no longer fight in her physical form. Rather than clinging to a broken shell, she chose to abandon it and pour the full power of the Flame Jurisdiction into her soul.

As her dragon spirit merged with the Jurisdiction, an aura similar to the Ancient God’s, yet more domineering, descended. Flames imbued with Divine Jurisdiction took the form of a massive dragon and manifested before Han Wu.

Then it knelt before him. “Great Fire Dragon Esna pledges herself to the honorable Defier as her master.”

As Esna’s gentle voice reached Han Wu’s ears, a smile tugged at the corner of his mouth. It was done. The trip to the Fire Worship Cult had been worthwhile. Having lost her physical body, Esna could no longer truly call herself a Great Fire Dragon. More accurately, she was now a Fire Dragon Spirit.

With Esna’s pledge of loyalty, Han Wu was thoroughly satisfied. He was ready to leave, but she stopped him. Her gaze settled on the dragon carcass she had abandoned.

Although Corpse Fiend Hennibal had taken her limbs and drained her dragon core, a Great Dragon was still a Great Dragon. Despite its depleted state, the carcass still held considerable value.

Han Wu understood immediately what she meant. He shifted into his Crystal Lich King Form and used Summon Skeleton on the dragon carcass. After consuming a tremendous amount of energy, a bizarre dragon skeleton separated itself from the flesh. Without limbs, wings, or a tail, it looked rather comical. For an expert of the undead arts, however, this posed no problem.

He shifted once more into his Special Fusion Form. With a wave of his hand, countless grains of bone sand gathered around the dragon skeleton. The missing parts reformed in moments, giving birth to a Bone Dragon with Ninth Form strength. Another powerful warrior had joined Han Wu’s forces.

Han Wu mounted the Bone Dragon and rode toward the exit. As he passed the spot where the dragon carcass had been, his eyes caught something on the ground. After the flesh dissolved into light, it had left behind a piece of equipment.

Han Wu used his shadow to pull it into his hand. It was a Rank 9 fire-attribute greatsword. He hadn't finished consolidating his Eighth Form yet, so he couldn't equip such a powerful weapon. As such, he had no choice but to hand it to Esna beside him.

Using her soul to control the fire greatsword, Esna could unleash its full power. On top of that, the greatsword came from her own body, making it all the more precious to her.

1. While it seems that there are multiple Divine Jurisdiction copies, the author is explicitly stating that there will only be one complete Jurisdiction at a time, meaning only one God King of a certain Jurisdiction. The ones in the War faction used by their Major Gods were all incomplete War Jurisdictions. ☜

2. I think the Dark Archmage Form is already affecting him... Shady, shady ☜

: Chapter 985

Chapter 985 - Dragon Firebearer

Afterward, Han Wu destroyed the Fire Worship Cult.

Many of its followers didn't escape in time, and Han Wu's Bone Dragon killed them. Han Wu felt no pity for them. The cult had slaughtered other life forms for its own benefit, so slaughtering them for his own benefit was only natural.

After wiping out the cult, Han Wu collected a decent haul of equipment and materials. Most of the materials were low-grade, below Rank 6, with nothing above Rank 7.

This made Han Wu deeply realize why true powerhouses were so rare. Powerful equipment and materials were scarce to begin with. Thankfully, Han Wu possessed the Refiner and the Merge. He could merge the materials he refined and create powerful equipment from scratch.

Without the cult leader and Corpse Fiend Hennibal in the way, Han Wu raided the cult's treasury and emptied it completely. Unfortunately, he didn't find a second Divine Stone as precious as the first. He did find several powerful legacies, however, so the haul wasn't bad.

Among them were three Eighth Form legacies that Han Wu needed. They were the Fire Worship Priest, the Firebearer, and the Flame Devourer Prince. All three were fire-related.

The Fire Worship Priest possessed exceptional spiritual attributes and could control multiple powerful fire-type skills. The Firebearer focused on stamina and endurance, and the wielder used themselves as fuel to burn and increase destructive power. The Flame Devourer Prince excelled at suppressing fire, preventing fire-type life forms from unleashing their full strength.

Han Wu evaluated all three options. The Fire Worship Priest focused entirely on fire skill output, which made it useless to him. He already had the Fire Dragon Spirit, and Esna would never lack fire-type skills.

The Firebearer, which increased strength by burning oneself, had some appeal. As for the Flame Devourer Prince, Han Wu dismissed it immediately. He had the Conversion Jurisdiction, which rendered the legacy meaningless. The Flame Devourer Prince could only suppress fire, while the Conversion Jurisdiction could suppress all elements. It wasn't even a competition.

After careful consideration, Han Wu chose the Firebearer legacy as his Eighth Form. The treasury also contained enough materials to fulfill the legacy's requirements.

As Han Wu merged the Eighth Form, something happened. His Sixth Form, Fire Dragon Knight, reacted, and Esquiem emerged on its own without being summoned. It was still asleep as it continued absorbing the Ancient God's essence, but that didn't prevent it from forming a link with the Eighth Form.

Esquiem's flames flowed into the Firebearer, converting its ordinary fire into dragon fire. Under the burning dragon fire's influence, the Firebearer evolved into a special Form known as the Dragon Firebearer. In that Form, Han Wu could pass dragon fire to other species, granting them the Firebearer state as well. The dragon fire also inflicted less damage on its wielder while significantly greater enhancements.

Once Han Wu entered the Dragon Firebearer Form, all his base attributes increased tenfold, and his attacks carried dragon fire damage. Even a casual strike could reach the Microcosm rank. Although it still fell short of his peak strength, it was enough to make Han Wu a dominant force within any region of the White Soul Civilization.

Satisfied with his newfound power, Han Wu turned his attention to the Ninth Form legacy he had found in the treasury. It was the Fire Fiend form that the cult leader had used.

Han Wu looked down on it from the bottom of his heart. Transforming into a pure elemental body could negate a lot of damage, but once it encountered something that countered, the transformation was a dead end.

Han Wu didn't consider the cult leader's Fire Fiend particularly powerful, so he had no intention of accepting this Ninth Form legacy.

After turning the Fire Worship Cult upside down, there was nothing left to gain. His strength had improved once more, so he decided it was time to visit the Golden Tree and break the final seal on the Golden Rune.

Esquiem was in a deep sleep and couldn't be summoned. Esna was a soul entity and unsuitable as a mount. Left with no other choice, Han Wu rode the Bone Dragon he had summoned.

The Bone Dragon was imposing and constantly radiated scorching Dragon Fear. A single glance was enough to tell anyone that it wasn't something to provoke. Along the way, it spared Han Wu plenty of trouble.

After two days of travel, Han Wu finally arrived near the Golden Tree's territory.

The Golden Tree was the physical manifestation of the Golden Will within the White Soul Civilization. Naturally, Han Wu could sense its pressure from far away.

At first, he didn't think much of it. However, as he rode the Bone Dragon closer, the Golden Will's pressure erupted violently. Han Wu and the Bone Dragon suddenly felt a thousand times heavier and crashed to the ground.

After communicating with the Golden Will, the Desolation Manifestation explained to Han Wu that it forbade any living creature or undead from flying within its territory. Doing so was considered an act of disrespect.

Han Wu was immediately annoyed. It's just a tree. What's there to be arrogant about!

The Desolation Manifestation quickly talked him down, warning him not to insult the Golden Will. It was notoriously petty. If it overheard him, it would deliberately make things difficult.

Han Wu promptly shut his mouth and felt relieved that he hadn't said those words aloud. At the same time, he grumbled to himself, The Golden Will is the will of an entire civilization. Being so petty is a flaw it really ought to fix.

With no other option, Han Wu continued his journey on the ground. Thankfully, the Golden Will didn't forbid riding on the ground, so he rode on the Bone Dragon's back. It was a bit hard on his backside, but at least he didn't have to walk.

After another half day of travel, Han Wu finally saw the Golden Tree in its entirety. An enormous golden tree that would take over a hundred people to encircle with their arms stood before him.

Its grandeur immediately stunned Han Wu. Every leaf shimmered with a golden radiance. If he could sell them, how much would they be worth?

At that moment, the Desolation Manifestation suddenly warned him, “Don’t try to break off a branch of the Golden Tree yourself. A branch obtained that way is completely useless. Only a branch that the Golden Tree gives willingly can break the Golden Rune’s final seal.”

Han Wu nodded, though disappointment crept into his expression. He preferred to take matters into his own hands. The Desolation Manifestation’s warning had raised the difficulty considerably. His greatest concern was that the Golden Tree would refuse to give him a branch no matter what.

In that case, his journey over the past several days would have been for nothing. Since he had already come this far, however, Han Wu decided to try first. He fixed his gaze on the Golden Tree’s trunk and marched toward it.

At last, he climbed the towering staircase and saw the Golden Tree up close. Its entire trunk looked as though it had been forged from pure gold. It shimmered constantly with a golden glow, making it an exquisitely beautiful sight.

As he admired the Golden Tree, Han Wu noticed someone standing before it. When he drew closer and examined the figure carefully, he recognized the person immediately. It was none other than the once-famous king of the White Soul Civilization, the Final King Lingray, or rather, his corpse.

Han Wu knew that the true soul inhabiting this corpse belonged to the Undead King Daniel, who bore a grudge against the Final King Lingray.

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

Chapter 986 - The Golden Tree’s Trial

A faint smile spread across Daniel’s bluish face. “I’ve been waiting for you for quite some time.”

Han Wu looked at Daniel’s lifeless face, and a chill ran down his spine. *Why is he waiting for me? Is he trying to steal the Golden Rune?*

Han Wu’s expression turned serious. His main reason for coming to the White Soul Civilization was the Golden Rune. If Daniel intended to steal it, that grudge would run deep.

Daniel continued, “Your strength has grown quickly.”

Han Wu glanced at Daniel’s pale, lifeless face again and replied casually, “Not bad. Strong enough to beat you to death.”

Daniel let out a cold laugh. “Beat me to death? I’m already dead. How can I die again?”

“Who knows? I happen to have some experience grinding bones to dust. Wanna give it a go?” Han Wu’s voice carried an unmistakable warning.

Daniel smiled and stepped aside. “The Golden Tree is right ahead. I hope you can pass its trial.”

Han Wu grew even more wary. Daniel clearly wanted to steal the Golden Rune but wouldn’t take the trial himself. Instead, he planned to let someone else do the work before swooping in to reap the rewards.

Despicable, Han Wu thought. With his current strength, he wasn’t afraid of Daniel openly trying to steal it. Fire posed a deadly threat to the undead, and dragon fire was even more devastating. If Daniel really attacked, Han Wu would gladly incinerate him with dragon fire and use his ash as fertilizer for the Golden Tree.

Ignoring Daniel, Han Wu walked forward and finally beheld the Golden Tree in its entirety. Standing before it felt like facing a wall of gold. Compared to the Golden Tree, Han Wu felt impossibly small.

The Golden Will sensed the Golden Rune Han Wu carried and immediately understood why he had come. “Outsider, are you willing to pay the price required to fully unseal the Golden Rune?”

The Golden Will’s majesty was enough to shake Han Wu despite his Microcosm strength. Still, he answered without an ounce of hesitation, “Yes!”

The Golden Tree swayed, and countless golden leaves drifted down.

“Then you must pass a trial to receive the Golden Tree’s gift,” the Golden Will said.

Endless golden leaves assembled before Han Wu, forming more than a dozen portraits. Each one depicted a different figure. Han Wu didn’t recognize most of them, but one familiar face stood out among the rest: Lingray.

If these follow a pattern, then these figures formed by the golden leaves are very likely the kings of the White Soul Civilization throughout its history!

As Han Wu considered the possibility, the Golden Will explained, “Before you are the portraits of every past owner of the Golden Rune. Defeat the projection of any one of

them, and you will receive a branch from the Golden Tree that will fully unseal the Golden Rune."

Meanwhile, the Desolation Manifestation had already started gathering information on each Golden Rune owner. The list included the First King, the Crescent Moon Goddess, the Star Shattering General, the Final King, and many others. Every one of them had a brilliant track record. Any of them could have risen to lead a civilization.

Han Wu's gaze settled on the Final King, Lingray. From what the Desolation Manifestation had uncovered, Lingray was unquestionably the strongest of all the Golden Rune owners. Choosing him meant choosing the hardest path.

After a brief moment of thought, Han Wu selected the Final King. His reasoning was simple. Daniel was waiting outside. If he could learn Lingray's fighting style now, dealing with Daniel and the Final King's corpse would be much easier later.

Han Wu confirmed his choice to the Golden Will, much to its surprise. It had expected him to pick the weakest opponent, the Crescent Moon Goddess. Even so, the choice raised the Golden Will's opinion of Han Wu. Having the courage to challenge the strongest was a quality a true warrior should have.

"As you wish!" the Golden Will declared.

Endless golden leaves swirled, and from within the cascading leaves, Lingray's figure appeared. Han Wu knew this was only a replica. Although a gap separated it from the real Final King Lingray, the pressure it radiated was alarming.

Before it even shifted into a Form, while still in his Initial State, the replica had already reached the Microcosm rank. If it shifted into any of its Forms, wouldn't its power jump straight to the Subcosm rank?

Han Wu's eyes filled with caution. Lingray, however, let out a hearty laugh. "Kid, how many years has it been since I died?"

Han Wu's eyes widened. He hadn't expected the replica to possess intelligence.

"I'm not sure, but it's probably been decades. Maybe a century," Han Wu replied.

The replica's smile turned faintly bitter, then he asked, "I didn't realize so much time had passed. Has anyone stronger than me appeared out there?"

He had named himself the Final King precisely to proclaim his supremacy and declare himself the ultimate king among all kings. Naturally, he desperately wanted to know whether anyone had surpassed him.

“I’m not sure about that, either. There’s an undead out there occupying your corpse, though. He may be stronger than you were when you were alive,” Han Wu answered honestly.

Lingray immediately flew into a rage. He had once ruled the White Soul Civilization. Even though he had been dead for years, the thought of someone taking over his body still infuriated him.

Han Wu took in his anger and spoke up right away. “How about you tell me the weaknesses of your fighting style? Once I get out there, I’ll teach that undead squatting in your corpse a good lesson.”

He added, “By the way, that undead calls himself Daniel. He says you defeated him before.”

“Daniel?” Lingray thought for a moment. “I have no memory of him!”

Han Wu almost wanted to observe a minute’s silence for Daniel, who had been consumed by hatred day and night after his defeat. He had plotted and schemed to obtain Lingray’s corpse. In the end, the Final King didn’t even remember him. If Daniel had been there, Han Wu suspected that Lingray’s remark would have shattered him completely.

“Forget about this Daniel. Since you’ve chosen me, I have to show you what I’m made of. It’s been many years since my last fight, and my sword has been thirsting for battle. Are you ready, kid?” Lingray asked as he assumed his stance.

A black sword materialized in his hand. As he channeled his power, black energy surged from it like flames reaching toward the sky.

Seeing that sword, Han Wu paused briefly. *This fella pulled out his ultimate weapon right from the start. Then I can’t afford to look weak either.*

“Fire Dragon Spirit!” Han Wu called out.

A Rank 9 fire greatsword appeared in his hand. The greatsword radiated powerful Dragon Fear, and a complete Flame Jurisdiction was embedded within it. Despite being Rank 9, its true power had already surpassed its rank.

Lingray’s eyes lit up with excitement at the sight of Han Wu’s weapon. He had been dead for so many years, yet he still had the chance to fight against such a magnificent weapon. The feeling was simply incredible!

: Chapter 987

Chapter 987 - Passing The Trial

The black sword and the fire greatsword collided in midair. A ring-shaped shockwave erupted from the impact and spread outward. Their first exchange ended in a draw.

Although Han Wu's stats weren't as high as the Final King's, his weapon was stronger than that black sword.

Han Wu had already reached the Eighth Form and could unleash the fire greatsword's true power. He wouldn't do that himself, though. It wasn't that he lacked the ability. Letting the Fire Dragon Spirit control the fire greatsword was far more efficient.

Han Wu could unleash the fire greatsword's full power, but Esna could increase its output fivefold. Better still, Han Wu could conserve both stamina and energy in the process.

After the initial clash, Lingray gained a rough understanding of Han Wu's strength. He stepped back and called out, "I have a general idea of what you can do. Now comes the real fight!"

With that, Lingray activated his special Form, Sword Demon. It wasn't a single Form but a fusion of several of his Forms.

In Sword Demon form, Lingray turned completely black, as if he had fused with the black sword in his hand. He swung it again, and black energy transformed into waves of blade aura that shot toward Han Wu.

Han Wu wasn't about to fall behind, so he activated his own special Form, Dragon Firebearer. His stats increased tenfold, and explosive dragon fire engulfed him. He could feel the flames burning his flesh, yet an endless stream of power filled him.

The fire greatsword in his hand released towering flames right on cue. They crashed head-on into the incoming blade aura, and both attacks were destroyed on contact.

At that moment, Esna produced even more flames, and the flames clung to Lingray relentlessly.

The latter swung his black sword and blocked every last flame. In Sword Demon form, the blade aura was only one part of his offense. His true strength lay in his swordsmanship. In the next instant, Lingray closed the distance and brought his black sword crashing down on Han Wu with devastating speed.

Han Wu raised the fire greatsword to block the strike, but the blade aura pinned him in place.

This made Han Wu realize that he was no match for Lingray in a direct confrontation. Once he confirmed that, he shifted Forms without hesitation, activating his special fusion Form of Demon Shadow, Crystal Lich King, and Desert Reaper.

Han Wu exuded a cold, dangerous aura, and thirteen Shadow Blades crisscrossed through the air, driving Lingray back. At the same time, a massive tide of bone sand poured out around Han Wu. Under his control, the bone sand formed into his Seventh Form, Jackal Deathsworn. The Jackal Deathsworn howled and charged at Lingray.

Han Wu wasn't finished. He continued summoning. Special undead skeletons, assembled from bones of multiple species, appeared one after another, each with Eighth Form strength. Then a Ninth Form Bone Dragon answered Han Wu's call.

Every one of these undead skeletons shared a single trait. As long as Han Wu was alive, they would reassemble and continue attacking his target no matter how many times they were destroyed!

Lingray now had to defend against thirteen Shadow Blades while battling an army of undead skeletons. He was so busy that he couldn't reach Han Wu himself.

As a seasoned fighter, Lingray quickly realized that this approach would wear him down, so he immediately switched to his special King form. The transformation altered his appearance. He wore a crown, a magnificent robe, and a red lion armor, looking both powerful and regal. Although his stats dropped to less than half of the Sword Demon form, this wasn't a downgrade. It was an upgrade.

Lingray issued a command. "Warriors, come!"

Dozens of heavily armored warriors of varying appearances answered his call. Every single one had Eighth Form strength. Wielding a wide array of weapons, they clashed head-on with Han Wu's undead army.

That was still only a fraction of Lingray's power. He raised his black sword once more and roared, "Soldiers, come!"

Entire formations of armored soldiers materialized in neat ranks and charged toward Han Wu in formation.

Han Wu immediately fired off volleys of Bone Bullets. Countless fist-sized bone projectiles tore through the advancing ranks, killing soldiers by the dozens. When the soldiers died, they dissolved into light instantly, which gave Han Wu no chance to raise skeletons from their remains.

After a prolonged stalemate, Han Wu's skeleton army was the first to crumble under the pressure. Left with no other choice, he switched Forms again. This time, he used his strongest one, the Demon King Transformation.

The moment it took shape, all of Han Wu's Forms layered onto it and amplified its power. Then he gathered his energy and activated its Second Stage, the Fire Dragon King Transformation!

Its firepower far surpassed that of the Dragon Firebearer. Esna also took the shape of a dragon made of flame, infusing Han Wu's fire with boundless Dragon Fear. Every soldier that came near was burned to ashes.

Seeing this, Lingray activated his strongest Form as well. "White Soul King!"

In an instant, the Golden Will bent to Lingray's command and formed a terrifying Divine Pressure. The Golden Tree responded, and countless golden branches reached out to surround Han Wu.

"Are you a sore loser? This is cheating!" Han Wu cried out immediately.

Han Wu was powerful and feared no opponent, but even he didn't think he could stand against the Golden Will itself. This was the White Soul Civilization, and the Golden Tree stood on its own home turf. Here, the Golden Will could wield not just a sliver of its power but almost to its full might. Fighting it was practically the same as taking on the entire White Soul Civilization alone.

When Han Wu stopped resisting, Lingray realized that he had used power that went beyond the rules. That was indeed unfair. He quickly withdrew the Divine Pressure and looked at Han Wu with admiration. Forcing him to resort to the White Soul King form was enough to earn his respect.

"You've passed the trial!" Lingray declared.

The surprise came so abruptly that Han Wu could hardly believe it. Moments earlier, they had been fighting with everything they had, and now Lingray was telling him he had passed. The sudden shift left him speechless.

"What? You're not happy about it?" Lingray teased.

"Of course I am," Han Wu replied quickly.

Knowing when to quit while he was ahead was one of Han Wu's finest qualities.

"Then shouldn't I get a Golden Tree branch for passing the trial?" Han Wu asked.

Lingray smiled and beckoned a branch over before cutting off a section with his black sword.

"This branch is enough for you to unseal the Golden Rune," he said and handed the severed branch to Han Wu.

Han Wu accepted it and sincerely thanked Lingray.

If the Final King hadn't stopped using Divine Pressure on his own, Han Wu would have been crushed even in the Fire Dragon King Transformation. In the end, the Golden Will had gone easy on him.

"Now that I've passed the test, could you tell me what your weakness is?" Han Wu asked, holding the branch.

Lingray smiled without a word. He simply raised the black sword in his hand.

Han Wu immediately understood what his weakness was.

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Chapter 988 - Dragonflare Jurisdiction

Han Wu held the Golden Tree's branch in one hand and took out the Golden Rune with the other. The moment the two made contact, they started fusing.

The branch finally broke the last layer on the Golden Rune's seal, and the rune radiated its true aura. Brilliant golden light poured from it, so dazzling that Han Wu could barely keep his eyes open.

In the end, he managed to gaze at the glittering Golden Rune with undisguised desire. This treasure could resist almost every World negative effect. It was the ultimate safeguard against assassinations, so anyone would covet it.

If only I could have ten more of them. That fantasy was never going to become reality. The Golden Rune was so precious that even the White Soul Civilization, which had created it, possessed only one. Where was anyone supposed to find more for Han Wu?

Han Wu carefully put the Golden Rune away. He still had unfinished business. He bowed to the Golden Tree in gratitude for the Golden Will's generosity, then turned and walked outside.

Daniel was waiting with a large group of subordinates. Among them, Han Wu spotted some familiar faces. During the fight against the Final King's Emperor State replica, Lingray had summoned those very warriors. Now, every one of them served Daniel, who had stolen Lingray's corpse.

Daniel stepped forward to congratulate him. “I already sensed the Golden Tree’s change. I knew you’d succeed!”

Han Wu remained cautious and kept his distance. Daniel didn’t seem to mind Han Wu’s hostility.

“What exactly do you want? Why are you here with all these people blocking my way?” Han Wu asked bluntly.

Since Han Wu had laid everything out in the open, Daniel dropped the act. “The White Soul Civilization has been without a king for far too long. I want to join forces with you and rule the entire civilization together!

“From the moment I first laid eyes on you, I knew you were a genuine prodigy. With you at my side, conquering this civilization will only be a matter of time.”

Han Wu scoffed. “You know perfectly well that I’m not native to the White Soul Civilization. I have to return to my own civilization.”

Daniel’s bluish face carried a look of calm composure. “What if I won’t allow you to leave? If I become the White Soul Civilization’s king, its future will be no worse than it was under the Final King’s reign. Following me will give you far more room to grow than returning to your civilization.

“Stay and help me. I’ll grant you a position second only to the king. I’ll make you the most powerful being in the White Soul Civilization beneath the throne.”

Han Wu looked at Daniel as if he were an idiot. “Why should I work with you, let you become the king, and settle for a position beneath you? Why would I hand the throne over to you?”

“Dear brother, I forgive your ignorance and naivety. Let me explain something to you. Only the strong can become the king, and compared to me, you’re still too weak,” Daniel said confidently.

Ever since obtaining Lingray’s corpse, his confidence had swelled beyond measure. He had already forgotten who had forced him to flee the mass graves in the first place.

Han Wu let out a hearty laugh. “Great. You’re so strong, and I’m the weakling. In that case, you do your thing. I’ve got business to attend to, so I won’t be sticking around for your little game of house... *Oh*, I mean, your conquest of the entire White Soul Civilization.”

With that, Han Wu turned to leave.

Daniel's face darkened at once. "Did I say you could leave? I didn't come here to ask for your opinion. I came to inform you. Today, you will stay and serve me. You will swear loyalty to me!"

Han Wu turned around and regarded Daniel calmly. "And if I don't?"

Daniel narrowed his eyes. He suddenly realized that letting Han Wu leave back then had been careless. He had given Han Wu too much time to grow, and now Han Wu had grown strong enough to defy him.

Even so, the situation was clear. If he let Han Wu leave now, he would return to his own civilization, and Daniel would never have another opportunity to bring him under his command. This was his last chance.

Daniel's current plan was to defeat Han Wu and make him his general to help achieve his ambition.

"If you won't agree, then I'll beat you until you do." Daniel reached behind his back and drew the crystal greatsword.

Han Wu himself had forged it. It contained most of the fragments from Lingray's personal sword, combined with high-quality crystals and a magic circuit Han Wu had personally laid out. Its quality rivaled the original.

With the crystal greatsword in hand, Daniel's aura surged tenfold. Black flames engulfed his entire body, allowing him to enter Lingray's special Form, Sword Demon.

Feeling the terrifying power radiating from Daniel, Han Wu had to admit that Daniel was stronger than the Lingray replica he had faced inside the Golden Tree. However, even against a stronger Daniel, Han Wu showed not the slightest trace of fear.

He first activated his special Form, Dragon Firebearer, then summoned the Fire Dragon Spirit to stand against Daniel. Powerful dragon fire with horrifying heat clashed against Daniel's black flames.

The black flames burned more fiercely, yet they couldn't extinguish the dragon fire surrounding Han Wu. He was like a lone lantern that refused to go out, unwavering amid the black flames Daniel unleashed. Dragon fire shielded him from everything.

The two were bound to collide. The crystal greatsword and Esna erupted with earth-shaking force, and the shockwave from their clash forced both Daniel and Han Wu back several steps.

"It seems I was far too lenient with you, letting you grow to this extent," Daniel said grimly.

Han Wu's progress frightened him. Daniel owed his current strength entirely to stealing Lingray's corpse. By contrast, Han Wu had earned all of his power through his own efforts.

Even so, Daniel wasn't in a hurry. He hadn't unleashed his most powerful abilities yet. In the next moment, he began to transform. While still in Sword Demon form, he triggered a second transformation: Undead King form.

The two Forms didn't merge. They stacked, giving Daniel's strength another massive boost. Soon, terrifying pressure transformed into black flames that swallowed Han Wu whole.

"You don't have the slightest chance of winning!" Daniel declared, proclaiming victory before the battle had been decided.

What answered him was Han Wu's flames, the kind of flames that would never be extinguished. He had activated his most powerful transformation: Fire Dragon King Transformation, the Second Stage of his Demon King Transformation.

Behind him, the Great Dragon Ring appeared, amplifying his Dragon Fear. Esna chose that very moment to bestow its Jurisdiction upon Han Wu, granting his flames the power to incinerate everything they touched.

The black flames were savage, but they became nothing more than fuel before Han Wu's Dragonflare Jurisdiction. In an instant, every last trace of Daniel's black flames converted into Dragonflare, the dragon fire infused with the power of a Divine Jurisdiction.

Han Wu stood amid the inferno like a king of flames and declared, "Death is your destiny! Burn to nothing under my Dragonflare."

He gripped Esna and unleashed Steelcutter, compressing the flames into a single devastating slash.

Daniel frantically raised the crystal greatsword to block the attack.

That was exactly what Han Wu had intended. The moment Esna came down carrying her Dragonflare Jurisdiction, the impact triggered a violent explosion. The crystal greatsword shattered into countless fragments.

Without the crystal greatsword to sustain it, Daniel could no longer maintain his Sword Demon form. He reverted to Lingray's Initial State, and only then did he realize how dire the situation had become.

: Chapter 989

Chapter 989 - Undead Disaster

“How could this happen?” Daniel exclaimed.

He could barely believe it. The powerful Sword Demon form had simply dissolved on its own. Was it simply because the crystal greatsword had broken?

Han Wu landed beside Daniel in his Fire Dragon King form. He had expected this outcome.

During his battle against the Final King’s replica inside the Golden Tree, the replica had subtly hinted to Han Wu that the key to defeating him lay in the sword. The black longsword had served as Lingray’s key. As long as he possessed it, his Form changes were unrestricted. Without it, Lingray was a tiger without fangs.

Han Wu even suspected that Lingray had fallen because the black longsword had broken, though that was only his speculation.

He looked at Daniel and considered what to do with him.

Daniel was an ancient undead who had lived for countless years. Realizing that he couldn’t fight Han Wu anymore, he rushed to beg for mercy. “Don’t kill me! I’m willing to accept you as my master and serve you. I can use my power to control the legion Lingray left behind. They’ll fight for you and help you become the White Soul Civilization’s new king.”

That was what he said aloud. Inwardly, however, Daniel seethed with resentment. He believed that his defeat was only temporary. Once the opportunity presented itself, he would regain the upper hand. For now, his priority was to keep Han Wu calm and survive. As long as he stayed alive, there was still hope. If all else failed, he would simply outlive Han Wu and seize his corpse! It was the same plan he had used before. The only uncertainty was how long Han Wu would live. Until then, all he could do was endure.

After listening to Daniel’s pledge of loyalty, Han Wu considered it carefully. Daniel had mentioned becoming the White Soul Civilization’s king, and that prospect genuinely interested him.

Within the White Soul Civilization, the king was the supreme ruler. The position received the Golden Will’s recognition and even its gifts, both of which were incredibly valuable to Han Wu right now.

“How does one become the king?” Han Wu asked.

Daniel answered eagerly, “You need recognition from more than ten major factions. After that, you come to the Golden Tree for a coronation and become the king. The stronger the factions that acknowledge you, the more of the Golden Will’s power you can borrow as the king.”

Han Wu nodded. The requirements didn’t sound especially difficult. The real question was what qualified as a major faction.

Before he could ask, the Desolation Manifestation answered. The White Soul Civilization had many major factions, and they were judged by two main criteria. First, whether the faction had a powerful Ninth Form fighter guarding it. Second, whether it had a large number of powerful fighters.

By Han Wu’s count, the Full Moon Library and the Fire Worship Cult were two genuine major factions he had already encountered. Daniel’s forces barely qualified as a new major faction. As for the Golden City, it fell slightly short by most standards, but the sheer number of powerful fighters was enough to place it among them.

In other words, Han Wu had already secured recognition from four major factions. He still needed six more.

Han Wu had come to the White Soul Civilization primarily to find the treasure that the Death God King needed. The Golden Rune was now fully unsealed, so he could return to the Divine Civilization whenever he wished.

The prospect of becoming king, however, convinced him to stay a few more days. The Divine Civilization’s situation was unstable, and every increase in strength meant another layer of protection. Nonetheless, his time was limited. He couldn’t stay in the White Soul Civilization for long. He needed to conquer six more major factions as quickly as possible.

“Is there a place in the White Soul Civilization that has six major factions in one location?”

Han Wu posed the same question to both the Desolation Manifestation and Daniel.

Both gave him the same answer: Apocalypse City, the city established by the White Soul Civilization’s First King.

After the First King died, his descendants split into separate factions. Over the years, other major factions from across the civilization had also established themselves there. By now, Apocalypse City held far more than just six major factions.

Han Wu’s eyes lit up. If he could take Apocalypse City in one swoop, he could achieve his goal of becoming king in no time.

Daniel felt the plan was risky. He had failed to conquer Apocalypse City on his own, which was exactly why he had been so desperate to recruit Han Wu. What Daniel couldn't accomplish, however, Han Wu just might.

With his mind made up, Han Wu brought Daniel's forces along and headed straight for Apocalypse City.

The army was enormous, and every member had at least Sixth Form strength. Every faction they passed took one look at the advancing force and froze with fear, terrified that Han Wu would wipe them out on a whim.

Han Wu couldn't be bothered with such minor factions. All his focus was on Apocalypse City.

After three days of marching, Han Wu and his army arrived outside Apocalypse City. The city lived up to the First King's legacy. It was ancient and massive. According to the Desolation Manifestation's scouting, the city covered an area at least 3,000 times larger than Galewind City, housing no fewer than 1 billion life forms.

Han Wu's army hadn't even reached the city gates before a coalition of the major factions emerged to block their way. Han Wu's forces were simply too strong on average. Allowing them into the city would cause chaos.

Han Wu saw the coalition and decided to turn the confrontation into war. He had been looking for an excuse to attack, and Apocalypse City had just handed him one on a silver platter.

They won't let me in? Fine. Then war it is!

Han Wu would fight his way in. At his command, Daniel reluctantly led Lingray's former retainers into battle against the coalition forces. The battle quickly grew fierce, and both sides suffered heavy losses.

Han Wu hung back behind the lines, waiting for corpses to pile up. He used every fallen soldier to summon skeletons. It was the most basic way to build an undead army.

As the battle escalated, Han Wu's skeleton legion entered the fray. Massive numbers of powerful skeletons surged toward Apocalypse City, triggering battle alerts throughout the major factions stationed inside.

Complex defensive formations activated one after another, unleashing devastating elemental barrages against the undead army.

Daniel led his forces in the first wave. The formations hammered them, inflicting devastating casualties.

Seeing this, Han Wu knew it was his turn to step in.

Countless formations immediately locked onto him and bombarded him with everything they had. On the receiving end, Han Wu was thrilled. Every attack contained raw energy. Under the deluge of energy attacks, Han Wu used the Conversion Jurisdiction's Energy Conservation effect to convert every last bit of incoming energy into bone sand.

The massive barrage produced a vast sea of bone sand. From that bone sea, Han Wu shaped countless Jackal Deathsworns.

Seeing the endless army of fearless Jackal Deathsworns, Daniel was completely convinced. He felt that his hundreds of years as the Undead King had been wasted! Next to Han Wu, he was nothing.

Han Wu was the true Undead King. No, even that title fell short. He was a walking undead force of nature!

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: Chapter 990

Chapter 990 - Supreme Power

Within Apocalypse City, the leaders of three great families and the five organizations, eight major factions in total, gathered at the city lord's manor to discuss the war.

The three great families all traced their bloodlines back to the First King. Every generation produced talented fighters, yet none had ever matched the First King's brilliance.

The five organizations were major factions that had established themselves within Apocalypse City over the years. Their overall strength rivaled that of the three great families, though their status within the city remained slightly lower.

"The undead army outside has already exceeded 1 million! That black bone sea is a breeding ground for the undead army. We need to find a way to wipe out both the army and the bone sea at the same time!"

"Easy for you to say. The undead army and the bone sea cover over 10,000 square kilometers, and the bone sea's shape is completely irregular. Do you have a way to deliver a powerful enough strike to cover all of it?"

“Everyone’s here to discuss a plan, so stop arguing. If we can’t stop this undead siege, nobody in Apocalypse City is getting out alive!”

With the stakes laid bare, the leaders of the three great families exchanged glances before reaching a decision.

“Our three families still possess a powerful weapon created during the First King’s era. Once activated, it will completely destroy both the bone sea and the undead army. Operating it requires a massive amount of energy, however.”

“It has come to this, so stop holding back. Bring out the weapon. The five organizations will supply the energy.”

Everyone quickly agreed. With the city’s survival on the line, holding anything in reserve would only lead to destruction.

Outside Apocalypse City, Han Wu stood within the overlapping attack zones of several formations. Waves of energy attacks rained down on him, and his Conversion Jurisdiction transformed them all into Bone Energy.

The steady influx of Bone Energy created more bone sand, which in turn produced more Jackal Deathsworn. Once their numbers reached a certain scale, Han Wu started creating other types of undead as well. He replicated the special skeleton he had summoned from Corpse Fiend Hennibal’s remains and named the new type Limb Grafters. Then he began mass-producing them.

Each Limb Grafter matched an Eighth Form fighter in power. Their defining trait was the assortment of mismatched limbs onto their frames, each capable of releasing different attacks simultaneously. Although they easily adapted to any environment, producing one required far more bone sand than a regular Jackal Deathsworn.

Beyond that, Han Wu also mass-produced Bone Dragons. Without the Wicked Dragon present, he lacked a proper dragon spirit, so these Bone Dragons were imitations. They ranked above the Limb Grafters, but not by much.

To further strengthen his undead army, Han Wu used the Dragon Firebearer’s ability to cloak every skeleton in roaring dragon fire. Their strength soared. Under this new wave of attacks, several sections of Apocalypse City’s walls collapsed, and civilians were swept into the war.

Han Wu felt no sympathy. He understood exactly where he stood. He was an invader, and every life form inside Apocalypse City was his enemy. Mercy toward the enemy was cruelty toward oneself.

He had already delivered his terms to the major factions at the beginning of the battle. If every major faction surrendered, he would stop. So far, not one had surrendered. They showed no concern for civilian lives, so Han Wu saw no reason to care either.

Daniel had watched everything unfold from the beginning. Han Wu's methods filled him with awe while leaving him feeling utterly inferior. Compared to Han Wu's ruthlessness, Daniel sincerely believed that he was outclassed.

Just as Daniel was about to step forward and pledge his loyalty once again, a massive explosion erupted from the heart of Apocalypse City. He looked up, and his bluish-black face twisted. At the city's center, a colossal puppet was rising from the ground.

"What is that thing?" Daniel shouted in shock.

He had never heard of anything this massive hidden inside Apocalypse City. The colossal puppet stood over 1,000 meters tall. The moment it reached its full height, it leapt and plunged into the bone sea.

Han Wu directed swarms of Jackal Deathsworn to scale the colossus and hack at its joints with their battle axes.

The colossus retaliated at once, releasing a massive shockwave of compressed air and blasting every skeleton away. It then fired ultra-concentrated energy blasts from its palms. The blasts incinerated bone sand and undead skeletons alike into a lava-like fluid on contact.

Han Wu couldn't reshape that molten substance into skeletons. After several blasts, the undead army had suffered devastating losses.

From the colossus' head, the eight faction leaders issued a declaration. "Whoever is controlling these undead, you are no match for the Supreme Power. We advise you to surrender now. Once we find you, we will tear you limb from limb."

As the declaration echoed across the battlefield, even more of Han Wu's carefully assembled undead army was reduced to molten slag.

Daniel watched with weakening knees, terrified that the colossus would aim one of those blasts at him.

Meanwhile, Han Wu showed no fear at the sight of the Supreme Power. If anything, he was excited.

"Apocalypse City lives up to its reputation. They really were hiding something good!" Han Wu marveled.

He could tell that the Supreme Power possessed Subcosm destructive capability.

What a treasure! Leaving it to gather dust in the White Soul Civilization is such a waste. Han Wu would head back to the Divine Civilization, and he needed a worthy war trophy.

“Analyze the composition of its attacks for me,” Han Wu told the Desolation Manifestation.

The Desolation Manifestation immediately began its analysis. The results came quickly.

“The ultra-concentrated energy blasts compress dozens of elemental energies before release. Once fired, they expand rapidly and produce the effects we’re seeing,” the Desolation Manifestation explained.

“Can those attacks reach the level of a Divine Jurisdiction?” Han Wu pressed.

“Only up to the level of a Divine Authority. They fall short of a true Divine Jurisdiction,” the Desolation Manifestation replied.

Han Wu’s grin widened. This colossus might as well have been made for me.

Its energy attacks couldn’t reach the level of a Divine Jurisdiction, which meant they were simply waiting for him to convert them. Without a moment’s hesitation, Han Wu leapt into the open and exposed himself to the Supreme Power.

He didn’t unleash any of his powerful forms to attack it. In his eyes, it was already his trophy. Why damage it?

The eight faction leaders were delighted when they spotted Han Wu. “So you’re the one behind the bone sea. Bold of you to show yourself!”

The strategy for dealing with an undead army was simple: destroy the one creating it, and the entire invasion would collapse.

“Don’t waste time talking. Destroy him.”

The five organizations were desperate to end this. They were footing the energy bill, and every blast from the Supreme Power burned through White Soul Coins. The sooner Han Wu was eliminated, the more money they would save.

The three great families ordered, “Die!”

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: Chapter 991

Chapter 991 - Unkillable

The Supreme Power's palm blazed with a brilliant light at the three great families' command. This strike would channel the maximum output to eliminate the target.

The massive energy went through extreme compression. Han Wu could feel its terrifying force even from the ground. Still, he trusted the Desolation Manifestation's assessment that its attacks hadn't reached Jurisdiction level.

"Die!" the eight faction leaders cried, eyes fixed on Han Wu below.

Given the Supreme Power's blast radius, Han Wu couldn't escape even if he ran now. He was going to get hit.

A thunderous boom rang out as the ultra-concentrated energy blast fired. The compressed energy expanded at incredible speed the moment it left the compression field, and horrifying pressure crashed down on Han Wu.

The eight faction leaders watched intently, eager to see Han Wu crushed to pulp and melted, only to be left baffled as the energy blast struck him dead-on.

It had no effect. The next instant, black bone sand erupted from beneath Han Wu's feet like a geyser. Everything the Supreme Power had just destroyed became covered in bone sand, and new Jackal Deathsworn formed all over again.

The eight faction leaders were stunned. He tanked that direct hit and not only survived but is counterattacking?

"Keep firing! Hit him again and again until he's dead!" the three great families cried in fury. They refused to believe that the Supreme Power, a legacy from the First King himself, couldn't kill one measly person.

The five organizations shared the same thought. They assumed Han Wu was using a defensive item to tank the blow. Powerful defensive items usually had limited uses. As long as they attacked enough times, they would surely break through. Han Wu would have nowhere to hide at that point.

Daniel watched the ensuing spectacle from the safety of the city wall. The Supreme Power hammered Han Wu with its most powerful energy blasts one after another, while Han Wu's bone sand erupted wave after wave.

Chunks of ravaged land were covered with bone sand, thicker than before, and the lost Jackal Deathsworn were replaced. Wave after wave of Jackal Deathsworn swarmed through Apocalypse City's broken walls, launching indiscriminate attacks on every living thing inside. The city turned into a living nightmare.

Every faction leader's face paled, as if they had seen a ghost. They had never encountered anything this impossible to kill before. Some even wondered whether the Han Wu down there was just an illusion. That was the only way they could rationalize his taking this much punishment.

Then Han Wu went on the offensive. The Fire Dragon Spirit gathered the massive fire energy Han Wu channeled into it and poured everything into the greatsword.

Through the power of a Divine Jurisdiction, that energy became the Dragonflare Jurisdiction. The terrifying flames radiated a heat so extreme they seemed capable of turning everything in existence to ash.

The eight faction leaders inside the Supreme Power's head were shaken to their cores. Han Wu was coming for them!

They watched as Han Wu launched himself upward and aimed a devastating attack at the Supreme Power's head.

"Run!" someone screamed, snapping the others out of their shock.

All eight leaders unleashed their strongest Forms. Not to fight Han Wu, but to escape the head before his fire reached it.

The moment they fled the Supreme Power's cockpit, Han Wu pulled back the Fire Dragon Spirit and dove inside. The command center was still fully operational, with the system awaiting orders.

Han Wu knew a thing or two about puppets, so he ran through every basic operation he had learned and shut the Supreme Power down. The colossus froze in place, standing like a tower on the battlefield.

Below, endless Jackal Deathsworn continued to spawn from the sea of bone sand and pour into Apocalypse City, killing everything in their path. Only after the eight faction leaders landed safely from the thousand-meter fall and saw the Supreme Power still standing did they realize Han Wu's true intent.

His Dragonflare Jurisdiction had been a bluff to scare them off so he could seize control of the Supreme Power.

"Damn it, we fell for his trick!" one organization leader cursed.

The three great family leaders assured everyone that there was no need to panic. Without their special command codes, Han Wu could only shut the Supreme Power down. Using it to attack them was out of the question.

"Thank the heavens for that."

The five organization leaders fully understood the Supreme Power's might. If Han Wu could turn it against them, surrendering would be their only option.

The Supreme Power being unusable was the best possible news, but that didn't make their situation any less dire.

Massive numbers of Jackal Deathsworn had already breached the city. Most casualties were civilians, but the eight factions' business operations were suffering too. If the war continued, even if they ultimately won, the losses would be catastrophic.

"How about we negotiate?" one organization leader suggested.

All five organizations agreed. Their assets were all in Apocalypse City, which the Jackal Deathsworn were tearing through. The losses were already beyond reckoning. The sooner they reached an agreement, the less they would lose.

However, the three great families refused. They were descendants of the First King and held great pride in carrying his blood. In plain terms, they cared about reputation and appearances. They would rather lose resources than lose face.

While they argued over whether to negotiate, a swarm of Jackal Deathsworn charged their position. When the three great family leaders spotted Daniel at the head of the charge, they froze, then hastily turned to the five organizations and agreed to negotiate.

"Quickly. It's urgent!"

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: Chapter 992

Chapter 992 - Only Surrender

The five organizations couldn't understand it. The three great families had just been completely against negotiating. What had caused them to suddenly change their minds?

They followed the three families' gaze and spotted Daniel leading the charge. Though the Final King had been dead for over a hundred years, his legend still echoed through the White Soul Civilization.

At once, the five organizations understood. The Final King had already submitted, meaning there was no reason the three great families, descendants of the First King, had to keep holding out either.

Of course, all eight factions could tell that this figure was not truly the Final King Lingray, but nobody cared whether he was real or fake.

There was no shame in negotiating with or losing to the Final King. In fact, the outside world would see it as perfectly normal. After all, the real Final King Lingray had once commanded the loyalty of dozens of major factions and led the entire White Soul Civilization to the peak of known civilizations.

Submitting to the Final King was not only acceptable, but was conversely an honor. Most other factions wouldn't even have this privilege.

Daniel brought his undead skeleton forces right up to the eight factions. The leaders immediately raised their hands and proposed negotiations. Recognizing this as a golden opportunity to conquer all eight factions, Daniel immediately relayed the news to Han Wu.

When Han Wu heard the proposal, he waved it off without a second thought. "Negotiate? What's there to negotiate? Is there any point? Tell them I only accept surrender."

The situation was crystal clear to Han Wu. His undead army had grown beyond their control in Apocalypse City. The eight factions' last resort, the Supreme Power, was already in his hands and couldn't be turned against him.

Under these circumstances, that Han Wu hadn't wiped the eight factions out entirely was already more than generous. The very prospect of negotiations was a joke. There was nothing to negotiate.

Han Wu wanted everything. Anything else was a waste of his time.

Daniel passed Han Wu's message to the eight furious leaders. Despite their anger, they ultimately agreed to surrender on the condition that Han Wu withdraw the undead army from Apocalypse City afterward.

They simply had no choice. Between them, the eight factions had nearly twenty Ninth Form fighters, a formidable force when combined.

Even these Ninth Form fighters could only shake their heads when faced with an ocean of undead, though. They were powerful enough to fight one against 10,000, but Han Wu's undead army numbered far more than 200,000 and counting. Given enough time, he could produce 2 billion.

This naturally terrified the eight factions. The most critical issue was that they hadn't figured out how Han Wu was creating these undead skeletons. Unless they could address the problem at its root, the only outcome was death or surrender.

Han Wu was pleased when all eight factions surrendered, and he didn't hesitate to lay out his terms. As the victor, he was confiscating the Supreme Power and demanded a powerful Ninth Form legacy. Having only reached the Eighth Form so far, a Ninth Form would complete his progression.

The five organizations immediately agreed to both. The Supreme Power wasn't theirs to begin with. If Han Wu took it away, it would actually remove a major threat hanging over their heads.

The three great families, on the other hand, were miserable about it. The First King had been dead for several hundred years, with little remaining of his legacy, and the Supreme Power was easily the most valuable treasure he had left behind.

For Han Wu to take it was like a chunk of flesh being carved from their hearts. Worse still, as the Supreme Power belonged to them, the five organizations were effectively getting off cheap. The three families protested to Han Wu, demanding that the five organizations contribute assets of equal value.

Han Wu naturally agreed and was even privately impressed. The three families were worthy descendants of the First King with real vision. They were shoving more treasure into his hands. It almost made him feel guilty.

The total price of surrender went from the Supreme Power plus one Ninth Form legacy to the Supreme Power plus ten Ninth Form legacies, along with enough energy to power the Supreme Power at full capacity for three hours.

The five organizations nearly choked. They despised the three families for this underhanded move, but there was nothing they could do except grit their teeth and accept.

Han Wu was powerful beyond belief. One moment of defiance could uproot their organization entirely. The five organizations treated it as paying for peace.

Within a single day, the eight factions had everything Han Wu demanded ready. The Supreme Power's core command authority was transferred to Han Wu, and its energy reserves were topped off.

Han Wu picked through the ten Ninth Form legacies and settled on one best suited for him: the Netherflare Wolf King.

It granted control over both darkness and fire, with solid physical attacks as well. Absorbing the Netherflare Wolf King affected all of Han Wu's previous forms.

Under Han Wu's deliberate guidance, every form merged into a single special form that he named the Nether King.

His control over darkness and fire received a massive boost while in Nether King form, allowing him to unleash both dark and fire attribute attacks, as well as combined attacks using both elements. He could also summon undead, wolf spirits, and dragon spirits.

It had virtually no weaknesses. This Nether King form was every bit as powerful as his Demon King Transformation. Once activated, his overall strength would approach the Subcosm rank. Achieving this level of power in the White Soul Civilization in such a short time was no small feat.

After fully assessing his abilities, Han Wu rode a Bone Dragon straight back to the Golden Tree to submit his request to become king. The Golden Will was already aware of Han Wu's actions and made no attempt to object to his request.

Using the Golden Tree as a conduit, the Golden Will drew on the entire White Soul Civilization's power to crown Han Wu the new king.

This also meant Han Wu could choose his title. For convenience, he simply used his strongest form, and the name "Nether King Han Wu" spread across the White Soul Civilization through the Golden Will's broadcast.

A new king had been crowned. Some major factions that had never dealt with Han Wu refused to acknowledge him and declared to the Golden Will that they would not accept him unless he demonstrated strength worthy of their submission.

Han Wu had no time to deal with these factions and so didn't bother responding personally. He had already become king and received the White Soul Civilization's greatest reward. His priority was returning to the Divine Civilization so that he could fulfil his responsibilities.

Instead, he left the task of disciplining those factions to Daniel and the Fire Dragon Spirit Esna, as they couldn't follow him back to the Divine Civilization. The two of them would bring the White Soul Civilization to heel on his behalf.

With everything arranged, Han Wu chose to return.

The White Soul Civilization, however, was far from peaceful. Daniel and the Fire Dragon Spirit Esna were fully prepared to unleash a war of conquest across the entire civilization in the name of Nether King Han Wu.

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

: Chapter 993

Chapter 993 - The Full Haul

After leaving the White Soul Civilization, the Desolation Manifestation reverted to its original appearance and teleported Han Wu directly into the Death God King's divine realm.

The Death God King was dealing with the Death Faction's internal affairs. During Han Wu's absence, he had secretly dispatched people to monitor the Light Faction, the Destruction Clan, and the War Faction, keeping his guard up against them.

Han Wu's safe return eased some of the Death God King's tension.

"Your Majesty, mission accomplished," Han Wu said, presenting the Golden Rune.

A faint smile appeared on the Death God King's usually stern face when he took the Golden Rune and felt its effects. "Han Wu, Desolation already told me everything you did in the White Soul Civilization. You did very well."

"I still need to keep working harder," Han Wu replied modestly.

"You do indeed. Your potential in undead summoning is enormous. It's worth investing serious effort and resources into developing it further," the Death God King said, pulling out an object.

Han Wu examined it closely and realized it was a complete Divine Jurisdiction.

"This complete Divine Jurisdiction is tied to the undead. It can greatly improve the quality of the undead you summon." The Death God King tossed it over to Han Wu.

Han Wu caught it with trembling hands, the Jurisdiction's information appearing before his eyes.

This Netherworld Jurisdiction granted the ability to commune with the souls of the dead and convert them into undead. Shockingly, this complete Jurisdiction wasn't a minor one, but a full-blown major Jurisdiction with extremely high growth potential.

"Your Majesty, this is far too valuable!" Han Wu exclaimed.

"I've already placed my trust in you. No resource is too precious. Besides, you brought me back the Golden Rune."

Han Wu felt genuinely moved.

The Death God King then warned, “The Light Faction has been very active in the Divine Civilization lately, openly recruiting divine realm players on a massive scale. They’re planning something big. You embarrassed them last time, so be careful.”

“I will!”

After saying goodbye to the Death God King, Han Wu returned to his own divine realm. This trip to the White Soul Civilization had been enormously rewarding.

The first gain was the Nether King form, which significantly improved his control over darkness and fire, and also provided a boost to his undead summoning.

The second was the undead army stationed in the White Soul Civilization. Although the army was housed there, Han Wu could summon it to his side at any time through his authority as king. Basically, he had a hidden army raised outside the Divine Civilization, one nobody had ever seen before. It could serve as a devastating trump card when used at the right time.

The third was the Supreme Power. Han Wu handed this Subcosm-rank puppet over to V and Epistians for research, to see if they could produce detailed blueprints from studying it. If blueprints could be made, Han Wu would go bankrupt building more of them if he had to. Peace of mind was the only justification he needed.

Lastly, there was Han Wu’s new status as the king in the White Soul Civilization, which came with a gift from the Golden Will.

When Han Wu returned to his divine realm, a beam of golden light shot from his body to the ground. A Golden Tree sapling grew rapidly from that spot, with its trunk reaching the thickness of a bowl in no time.

The Will of Evolution that had formed in Han Wu’s divine realm sensed the Golden Tree’s presence and independently moved into it, giving the previously intangible will a physical vessel.

This granted the Will of Evolution a massive upgrade in efficacy. The entire divine realm would benefit as well, with all life forms gaining accelerated growth. Han Wu peered down at the shimmering Golden Tree with a satisfied smile.

Afterward, Han Wu received the various blood samples he had purchased before leaving for the White Soul Civilization. These were essential materials for accelerating the development of the Everchange Jurisdiction.

After a grueling series of absorptions, the Everchange Jurisdiction’s development finally hit 100%, unlocking its first effect, Shapeshifting.

This allowed Han Wu to transform into any life form by observing, sensing, or absorbing its blood or flesh. He would gain that life form's abilities and skills in the process.

That was just the Everchange Jurisdiction's effect alone. Combined with his Myriad Martial Caste ability, Han Wu could maintain up to 10,000 fully armed life form transformations.

This army could include any life form he had previously transformed into. Each could even be equipped with gear and locked in as one of the Myriad Martial Caste.

Doing this ate through more than half the equipment in his divine realm's treasury. When the Scorching Dwarf chief Hammie learned of this, he immediately prayed to Han Wu. He wanted to personally craft custom equipment for each of Han Wu's Myriad Martial Caste forms, so that every transformation could reach its maximum potential.

Han Wu agreed to Hammie's request and split the Myriad Martial Caste ability into Avatar Creations. These avatars worked alongside Hammie and the Scorching Dwarf clan to forge said equipment.

With the Everchange Jurisdiction mastered, Han Wu could fuse another Divine Jurisdiction, and he conveniently had the Netherworld Jurisdiction on hand.

He immediately chose to embed the Netherworld Jurisdiction into Reincarnation, which had a high compatibility with it.

The Netherworld Jurisdiction enabled him to commune with souls and summon them as undead, while Reincarnation could pull souls back to the Underworld and grant them a new life. The two complemented each other perfectly.

Wanting to test it, Han Wu looked toward the highly intelligent Epistians living in his divine realm.

The Netherworld Jurisdiction pulled the soul of a recently passed elderly Epistian back into their body, converting them into an undead, a zombie. This zombie retained all its memories and was completely familiar with every skill it had learned in life.

After becoming a zombie, it actually performed better than it had when alive. It could even push its former abilities and skills further through deeper study and development.

When the zombie eventually perished, its soul wouldn't dissipate. Instead, the Reincarnation ability would guide it into the Underworld that Han Wu had established, where it would be reborn with all the knowledge and memories from its previous life.

In practical terms, this gave every soul an extra chance through undead life. This effectively extended each life into two or more. If deployed in warfare, the results would be devastating.

Chapter 994 - You Really Are Desperate

The Light God King pressed one hand against his forehead, a frustrated expression on his face. Standing before him was his own flesh and blood, the Daughter of Light, Elina.

Just a few minutes ago, Elina had made a request that shattered his worldview.

“Elina, are you sure everything you just said came from the heart?” the Light God King asked, voice dripping with disbelief.

“I wish to marry Brother Jia Gui.” A faint blush colored Elina’s cheeks.[1] “Please give us your blessing.”

The Light God King’s brows knitted so hard they nearly formed an X. He had never even heard of Jia Gui before, at least not until An Yunian got stabbed in the groin.

Everything he knew about Jia Gui filled him with contempt. He had written the man off as a petty, underhanded rat. Unexpectedly, Jia Gui not only stooped to ambushing people, but even stole women too! The bastard even had the audacity to steal women from the Light God King’s own household, no less.

“You really are desperate, aren’t you? You’ll eat anything that’s put in front of you! Didn’t you despise him before? What on earth do you see in that scum?[2] Do you like that he’s old and ugly? Or is it his shamelessness and sleaziness that does it for you?” The Light God King was too furious to maintain his composure.

Elina normally never talked back, but for the first time, she defied him. “Brother Jia Gui is nothing like what you describe!”

“Oh, of course he isn’t. He’s exceptionally talented at hiding and running. If the Divine Civilization had a ranking for cowards, he’d be number one!” the Light God King snapped.

The Light Faction had been hunting Jia Gui for days, but the bastard had always managed to dodge their large-scale operations as if he could see the future.

At first, the Light God King assumed it was because of Jia Gui’s Concealment Jurisdiction. However, with every escape, the Light God King suspected that someone was feeding him information.

There was a traitor inside the Light Faction!

Jia Gui had thus become a thorn in the Light God King's side. The latter wanted nothing more than to rip the man apart and feed his remains to dogs.

Then, Elina suddenly showed up, demanding his blessing for her and Jia Gui. She was all but confessing that she was working with the man!

"Everyone's gone mad. Guards! Take Elina away and lock her in the dungeon. She's not to be released without my command," the Light God King ordered, absolutely pissed.

Two Light Faction members stepped forward and escorted Elina to the dungeon. A prodigy of her generation reduced to a prisoner. It was tragic, but Elina didn't care. Her eyes burned with an obsession for Jia Gui. She already considered herself his woman.

Once the guards left, a faint sound came from beside Elina. Jia Gui deactivated his Concealment Jurisdiction and flashed her a grin.

Elina hurried over, using her body to shield him from the dungeon guards' view.

"Brother Jia Gui, you came to see me again," she whispered, her cheeks flushed.

Jia Gui stared at her, drool practically running down his chin. If not for the cramped space, he would have sealed the deal right then and there.[3]

"Elina, you've suffered so much. Don't worry, I'll get you out of here as soon as I can," Jia Gui said with deep affection, his wrinkled old face bunched up like a chrysanthemum.

Behind him, a nearly invisible Divine Ring was working its effect, though Elina couldn't detect it because of the Concealment Jurisdiction. Jia Gui's Divine Ring had the ability of bewitchment.[4]

At Jia Gui's Microcosm rank strength, Elina had no hope of resisting his repeated hypnotism and had been completely brainwashed into his devoted follower.

After soothing her with a few more words, Jia Gui quietly slipped out of the dungeon and called Sun Qingnian. "Brother Sun, it's me, Jia Gui. I'm completely sold on your method. Elina is eating out of my hand now, calling me 'Brother Jia Gui' nonstop. It's making my knees weak."

"The conditioning isn't fully set yet," Sun Qingnian warned. "You need to keep at it. Remember, keep pointing out her flaws. Make her feel like she's not good enough for you. Keep the pressure up. Your Bewitchment Ring lowers her mental defenses by a huge margin."

"Don't worry, Brother Sun. I'll keep working on her. When we get married, you're definitely the best man." Jia Gui was so excited that he had already picked out names for their future children.

Sun Qingnian chuckled, then turned serious. “I almost forgot. I have something to ask you. Have you finished mapping out the Light Faction’s layout as I asked? Is all the intel organized?”

“Done ages ago. I’ll send it over right now.” Jia Gui transmitted everything he had gathered on the Light Faction to Sun Qingnian.

When Sun Qingnian received the intel, he split it into ten copies and handed them to his spies embedded in the Light Faction for verification. The result came back 100% accurate.

Jia Gui really is a talented individual, though he’s been using it in the wrong ways, Sun Qingnian thought to himself. *Winning a girl’s heart through manipulation and bewitchment is dirty. Sincerity is the only real winning move. Then again, asking that of Jia Gui is asking too much. His face robbed him of any chance at normal courtship for the first half of his life.*

After compiling Jia Gui’s intel, Sun Qingnian passed it along to his network of informants. What those informants did with the information to turn a profit was none of his business.

The only instruction he gave when handing over the intel was this: Make sure every faction hostile to the Light Faction learns its layout.

“Han Wu, your brother has buried the mines for you. All that’s left is for you to blow the Light Faction to pieces,” Sun Qingnian muttered after finishing up. [5]

1. wtf it shattered my worldview too ☜

2. Yeah! What do you see in him? ☜

3. oi oi oi, even I have standards. ☜

4. Oh, now it makes sense ☜

5. The true goat ☜

: Chapter 995

Chapter 995 - God King Jing Jing

Inside Han Wu’s divine realm, the evolution paths had been progressing steadily after extensive cultivation. Roughly five percent of the older generation of units had reached the end of their natural lifespans and passed away.

The new generation of his core race was evolving along the ten established paths, with the fastest-growing one being the Enhanced Restoration Path.

This path had the lowest potential of the ten, but was the quickest to mature. Blood Wraiths at the ultimate tier were only High Lord life forms. Han Wu's divine realm already held over 100,000 of them, with even more at stages below ultimate.

The Self Detonation Path was also coming along well. Han Wu had built his early career on Self Detonation tactics, so he had put serious work into perfecting them.

His divine realm housed 80,000 Nuclear Locusts[1] at the ultimate tier, or Sage life forms. When a Nuclear Locust detonated, the burst of destruction it produced was no less than the full-power strike of an Earthsunder life form.

Despite this firepower, Han Wu remained unsatisfied. Wanting the Nuclear Locusts to go even further, he had the Origin of Mutation run experiments on them, trying to get them to adapt to Giant Spinal Fluid modification as quickly as possible. If the experiments succeeded, the Nuclear Locusts' destructive power would jump another full tier.

The other evolution paths were still progressing slowly, but this was normal, so Han Wu wasn't worried. He believed that with persistence, his divine realm's overall strength would see a massive upgrade.

Not being worried didn't mean he wasn't paying attention, though. Han Wu cared deeply about the Giant Enhancement Path and provided it with practically unlimited resources.

This path progressed relatively quickly thanks to his support. It had already produced 180,000 Cyclops at the perfect tier and over a hundred Skyreach Giants at the ultimate tier, or with Heavenrender rank power.

A super ultimate Mythic Titan, however, had yet to be born. Han Wu blessed and sent over a hundred Skyreach Giants to the Blood Coliseum every day to fight and increase their chances of evolving, but with no results so far.

Still, he kept at it. The probability of a Skyreach Giant evolving into a Mythic Titan only grew with every passing day. A super ultimate evolution was just a matter of time.

After wrapping up his inspection of the divine realm, Han Wu received a message from Jing Jing. She completed her God King advancement on the lost continent!

Jing Jing had first comprehended the Soul Jurisdiction prototype in the Giant Shadow Civilization. Then, through training on the lost continent, she absorbed massive amounts of soul energy and developed the Soul Jurisdiction to 100%.

Unlike Han Wu's experience with his own Divine Jurisdictions, Jing Jing had extremely high compatibility with the Soul Jurisdiction and had fully committed to it. Once it hit 100%, she initiated her God King advancement ritual on the lost continent.

Han Wu had already conquered the lost continent, so nobody gave her any trouble, and the advancement went smoothly.

All she needed to do now was return to the Divine Civilization and officially ascend into a God King under the witness of the Divine Civilization's Will.

When Han Wu heard the news, he immediately notified Qin Shuang, Sun Qingnian, and Xiang Meng's trio to witness the ceremony. This was a rare opportunity for Major Gods like them to observe the process up close and would provide a valuable reference for their own future advancement.

Han Wu even used his Wealth Faction connections to purchase an Exquisite Skill Gem for Jing Jing to use during the ritual, to ensure she gained a powerful ability upon advancing.

Jing Jing never refused anything from Han Wu. With the Exquisite Skill Gem in hand, she commenced the advancement ritual under everyone's watchful eyes.

The first step was to establish a connection with the Divine Civilization's Will. Although Jing Jing wasn't originally a native of the Divine Civilization, she had formally immigrated under Han Wu's guidance.

Ascending to God King required the Divine Civilization's Will to review her qualifications. It would also examine her chosen Divine Jurisdiction to ensure that no others existed in the civilization at the same time.

After completing the verification, Jing Jing started the ritual. The key step was channeling the energy sent down by the Divine Civilization's Will to improve every aspect of herself. At minimum, it would raise her baseline strength to the World rank.

Under normal circumstances, Jing Jing could unleash attacks just below the Microcosm rank, even if her baseline strength wasn't at that level. This meant even a Microcosm fighter couldn't stop her if she went all out. Once her baseline strength entered the World rank, her true combat power would receive an even greater boost.

Everyone watched as the Divine Civilization's Will sent down a flood of Origin Energy. Jing Jing revealed her true Crystal Skeleton form to receive it. Every crystal bone in her body became as brilliant as diamond under the energy's influence.

Normally, the energy would stop flowing once the target's body was fully saturated, but Jing Jing had planned ahead. The moment every crystal bone turned diamond-bright, she pulled out her Evilspawn Ghost Blade.

Jing Jing had since refined Evilspawn from the inside out using soul energy. The blade was no longer a separate entity but had become a genuine part of her body.

She had done this for the sole reason of absorbing more energy from the Divine Civilization's Will. As expected, the Divine Civilization's Will detected the blade as part of her body and poured additional energy into it. Evilspawn's quality shot up under the infusion, ultimately transforming into a World-rank Divine Weapon.

The maneuver taught Han Wu and the others a valuable lesson in milking the Divine Civilization's Will for everything it was worth.

"Impressive. Truly impressive. She even has the nerve to fleece the Divine Civilization's Will. I wonder who she learned that from?" Sun Qingnian asked rhetorically.

Qin Shuang, meanwhile, had gone quiet. Jing Jing had surged ahead to become a God King, while she was still just a Major God. She felt as though she were falling behind.

Noticing Qin Shuang's mood, Han Wu moved to her side and gently took her hand. "What's the rush? Steady progress is the way to go. Your rate of improvement is already much faster than most people your age."

His words eased her concerns a little.

Once Jing Jing had fully absorbed all the energy the Divine Civilization's Will had sent down, her eyes finally opened. The light that blazed from them was as blinding as the sun.

It took her a while to adjust before she returned to normal. After ascending into a God King, her every movement and expression seemed to radiate an untouchably noble aura.

Han Wu rushed over to congratulate her. "Jing Jing, congratulations on becoming a God King!"

"My Lord, I have become a God King." Jing Jing stared at Han Wu with deep affection in her crystal-bright eyes. "Am I now qualified to be your wife?"

Han Wu froze. What kind of setup was this? How was he supposed to respond to that?!

1. Insert Oppenheimer meme ☜

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

Chapter 996 - Love is the Soul's Ascension

Qin Shuang felt like she was facing the biggest crisis of her life.

While she had always suspected that Jing Jing's feelings toward Han Wu were a bit off, she had never considered the possibility of romantic intentions. After all, Jing Jing had originally been one of Han Wu's units, and they were different species.

It was only at this moment that she realized the error of her ways. She had treated Jing Jing as a close friend. Meanwhile, Jing Jing had been after her man the whole time.

Qin Shuang stormed over to Han Wu and planted a kiss on his cheek, staking her claim. Han Wu was hers!

Jing Jing strode over on long legs, then leaned down to kiss Han Wu on the forehead.

Han Wu had just been kissed twice out of nowhere. Although he enjoyed it, he was extremely aware that something was wrong. Two women fighting over him outwardly seemed like a blessing, but it was actually a battlefield.

His only relevant experience in this area was helping Sun Qingnian survive similar messes, and he instinctively sent a panicked look at his friend. The man was a grandmaster at these things. He would know what to do.

Sun Qingnian was standing to the side, trying not to laugh. It was usually him caught in the crossfire, begging Han Wu for help, but it seemed the tables had finally turned.

Han Wu, oh, Han Wu. It's finally your turn. Amused as he was, he couldn't leave a brother hanging.

"Ladies, fighting over him like this won't get you anywhere," Sun Qingnian placated. "How about this? We chop Han Wu in half, and you each take one piece."

"Don't you dare!" Qin Shuang snapped.

"Anyone who harms my Lord seeks death!" Jing Jing unleashed her God King pressure and pinned Sun Qingnian to the ground.

Xiang Meng's trio rushed over to check on things before an actual fight broke out. Han Wu also told Jing Jing not to hurt his friend.

Jing Jing pulled back her pressure. Sun Qingnian felt the weight lift, but his legs were too shaky to stand. He genuinely thought that Jing Jing was about to crush him to death.

"It was just a joke. Did you really have to go that far?" Sun Qingnian grumbled.

Jing Jing shot him an icy glare. That one look told Sun Qingnian everything he needed to know. Her warmth was reserved solely for Han Wu. Everyone else, even comrades in arms, got nothing but her icy attitude.

“Actually, the solution is simple,” Sun Qingnian said, not forgetting his mission. “Han Wu has Avatar Creation. Split into two, and you each get one. Problem solved.”

Both Qin Shuang and Jing Jing instantly shot that idea down.

“The Han Wu I love is one of a kind. You can’t split that,” Qin Shuang declared.

“My Lord is unique,” Jing Jing added. “No one deserves to share him with me.”

This left Sun Qingnian stumped. Both girls wanted the whole Han Wu, and neither would budge.

“How about splitting your time with him then? Han Wu takes Qin Shuang on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Jing Jing gets Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. He gets to rest on Sundays,” Sun Qingnian proposed.

“Get lost!” Qin Shuang shot back immediately.

Jing Jing’s frosty glare conveyed her desire to kill him with her pressure as a God King.

Sun Qingnian immediately backed down. This situation was beyond his ability to help.

Seeing that Sun Qingnian was useless, Han Wu decided to handle it himself.

“So, Jing Jing, you just advanced to God King. What powerful ability did you get?” he asked, trying to change the subject.

Jing Jing smiled. “My God, I gained an ability called Seven Sins Avatars.”

Activating it in demonstration, seven figures materialized beside her, each identical in appearance but bearing a unique symbol. Each represented one of the seven deadly sins.

Based on their aura, every single avatar possessed the same Microcosm rank power as Jing Jing’s main body, and with its own unique abilities to boot. They could fight alongside Jing Jing to lighten her combat load but couldn’t stray too far from her.

Han Wu’s gaze lingered on Jing Jing’s smile, unable to shake the feeling that she had changed since returning from the Lost Continent.

The old Jing Jing had also been warm toward him and cold toward everyone else. However, she seemed more human than before, as though she had gained the rich, complex emotions that only living beings possessed.

Following that line of thought, Han Wu quickly realized the cause. The Lost Continent amplified emotions without limit. While absorbing massive amounts of Soul Energy to develop the Soul Jurisdiction, Jing Jing likely absorbed many forms of Emotional Energy as well.

The emotion she had fused with most successfully was clearly love. It had become fully integrated into her Soul Jurisdiction. That was why she suddenly wanted to be his wife after advancing to God King.

Han Wu finally understood. However, that still didn't give him a solution.

Jing Jing gaining the ability to love was an ascension of the soul. He couldn't just sever her emotions simply because she loved him. That would be cruel.

As Han Wu struggled with this problem, Xu Hai came hurrying over from Imperial College. Over a dozen instructors trailed behind him.

Sensing the aura of a newly ascended God King, they had rushed over to witness it, not expecting the new God King to be the non-human Jing Jing rather than their valued Han Wu.

The Imperial College instructors didn't know what to make of it. On the one hand, it was hard to claim Jing Jing as a student when she rarely attended classes, but on the other, her enrollment records were complete and protected by the Divine Civilization's Will.

The true sting, though, came from the fact that a student had become a God King while the instructors themselves were stuck at Major God or even as a God. It was humiliating!

Han Wu's rapid progress had already left them embarrassed, but Jing Jing had truly left them in the dust.

"Student Jing Jing, did you ascend into a God King?" Xu Hai asked directly. With his powerful perception as a Wisdom God King, he could sense Jing Jing's extraordinary state.

Though reluctant to answer, Jing Jing understood that Xu Hai was Han Wu's mentor, and having gained the ability to love, she had also learned to care for those close to Han Wu. Han Wu's mentor was her mentor too.

"Professor Xu Hai, I have indeed ascended into a God King," Jing Jing confirmed.

Xu Hai's heart raced. "Which Divine Jurisdiction do you hold?"

Every instructor leaned in to hear the answer.

"The Soul Jurisdiction," Jing Jing replied.

A collective gasp swept across the area.

: Chapter 997

Chapter 997 - Kids These Days

The Soul Jurisdiction was another major Divine Jurisdiction with limitless potential. According to the Divine Civilization's records, no Soul God King had ever led the civilization forward, yet every Soul God King in history had demonstrated excellent growth potential and could easily rank among the top ten on the Divine Civilization's God King rankings.

Jing Jing had only just advanced. She hadn't even established her own faction yet. Once she did, her standing within the Divine Civilization would skyrocket.

The instructors congratulated Jing Jing one after another. The sight of a group of God and Major God lecturers congratulating a student for becoming a God King was indescribably strange, yet it somehow felt perfectly natural.

Jing Jing ignored the flattery entirely. She might as well have tuned it out. Those instructors had no real connection to Han Wu, so she couldn't be bothered.

Meanwhile, Han Wu had found his lifeline. He rushed to Xu Hai's side and threw him a look as he spoke. "Professor, didn't you say you had something important to discuss with me? Let's go talk in your office."

Xu Hai had no idea what Han Wu was up to, but he trusted his most outstanding student without question. The two of them teleported away.

Qin Shuang and Jing Jing locked eyes and let out cold snorts.

Sun Qingnian genuinely feared they would start fighting. Thankfully, neither made a move. They simply returned to their respective divine realms, and Sun Qingnian finally let out a long breath of relief.

With Jing Jing gone, the instructors who had come to congratulate her gradually dispersed as well. Xiang Meng's trio, however, remained worried and approached Sun Qingnian.

"Sun Qingnian, is Han Wu going to be okay? He's not in danger, is he?" Xia Tian genuinely feared that Jing Jing would do something to Han Wu. After all, Jing Jing's history with him wasn't exactly a secret within their circle.

Sun Qingnian patted his chest confidently. “Relax, all of you. Han Wu will be fine. He’s clearly retreating to advance. He left the scene first so he can deal with them one at a time later.

“This is nothing serious. He’ll handle it. If he can’t, I’ll be there to personally coach him through it.”

The trio nodded. When it came to handling women, Sun Qingnian was unquestionably a God King.

Having witnessed Jing Jing’s entire ascension, the trio had gained valuable insights. They planned to go back and study everything they had observed so they could create the best possible blueprint for their own future God King ascension.

Thinking back, they couldn’t help feeling amazed. In the past, they would’ve considered ascending into a Major God before graduation a tremendous achievement. Graduating as Gods would have already placed them ahead of ninety-nine percent of their class.

Now they were already wondering whether they could attempt to ascend into a God King before graduation. Four years ago, they would have never even dared to dream of such a thing. Every bit of that change had come because of Han Wu.

Xiang Meng now believed that the best decision he had made in his four years of college was submitting the application to recruit Han Wu.

“Our juniors are all pushing hard. We can’t afford to fall too far behind,” Xia Tian said, “Let’s go back and improve our Jurisdiction development. Then we’ll ascend into God Kings too, and make the lecturers come congratulate us.”

Xiang Meng and Ye Ling both nodded in agreement, and the trio left together.

Meanwhile, Sun Qingnian suddenly remembered something. He had already distributed the Light Faction intelligence he had obtained from Jia Gui to numerous factions, but he still hadn’t given a copy to Han Wu.

He sent Han Wu a communication request. Once accepted, he teleported straight into the Wisdom God King Xu’s office.

Xu Hai glanced at Sun Qingnian. His gaze held a mix of admiration and disdain.

He had heard from at least ten different people that this kid ascended into a Major God by mooching off his girlfriends. He had three official girlfriends, along with more than a dozen unofficial ones.

His personal life was an absolute mess! His morals were rock bottom! The man was the evolved form of a player! Xu Hai worried that Han Wu would pick up bad habits by hanging around him.

Looking at today's events, though, Xu Hai felt some relief. At his core, Han Wu was loyal, just like Xu Hai himself. Two women were already more than enough to leave him flustered.

For Han Wu, becoming a cheater would probably be harder than ascending into a God King.

"Good day, Professor Xu Hai." Sun Qingnian greeted him politely, then turned to Han Wu, "I've dug up the Light Faction's entire operation. Here's all the detailed intel. Read through it carefully. It might come in handy. If anything changes, I'll message you immediately."

Xu Hai, who had been listening from the side, did a double take. Wait. What? The Light Faction's entire operation had been exposed?

Xu Hai doubted that he heard that correctly. As far as he knew, Sun Qingnian was just a Major God. Meanwhile, Xu Hai was a full-fledged God King, yet even he hadn't been able to uncover the Light Faction's secrets. How had Sun Qingnian managed it? Could the intel be fake?

"Sun Qingnian, let me confirm. You're really talking about the Light Faction? The Light Faction near the top of the Divine Civilization's faction rankings?"

"Who else?" Sun Qingnian asked, looking confused. The Divine Civilization only had one Light Faction.

Xu Hai drew a sharp breath. Are kids these days really this insane?

"May I take a look at the intel you gathered?" Xu Hai asked. He felt obligated to verify it for Han Wu. If it turned out to be fake, it could get Han Wu killed.

"Of course. Given your relationship with Han Wu, I'll just give you a copy outright," Sun Qingnian said generously.

He placed the entire collection of intelligence before Xu Hai. Even while recorded on the lightest paper in terms of density in the Divine Civilization, the stack still weighed a full 250 kilograms.

Before he even read it, the sheer volume stunned Xu Hai. He activated the Wisdom Jurisdiction's effects and scanned every document. Then he cross-referenced the contents with everything he already knew about the Light Faction.

Every single detail matched. Xu Hai broke out in a cold sweat. Possessing this intel was like holding the key to the Light Faction's back door. If the Light God King ever found out, he wouldn't be able to sleep at night!

"Where did you collect all this?" Xu Hai asked out of pure curiosity.

Sun Qingnian smiled. "That's a trade secret, Professor Xu Hai. I can't share the details. I can promise you one thing, though. Given my relationship with Han Wu, I will never sell the Wisdom Faction's intel."

Xu Hai's blood ran cold. The Wisdom Faction's intel had been compromised too! How was he supposed to sleep tonight?

"Well then, I suppose I should thank you, Sun Qingnian." Xu Hai felt that he was truly getting old. Whatever the younger generation was doing, he was falling further and further behind.

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: Chapter 998

Chapter 998 - Soul-Body Fusion

Han Wu stepped out of the Wisdom God King's office. He had obtained intelligence on the Light Faction, along with Sun Qingnian's advice.

Sun Qingnian suggested that he speak with both women about their plans for the future. The key was to meet each of them separately.

Han Wu thought that it made sense. As such, he called Qin Shuang first, and after she accepted, he teleported into her divine realm.

Dark clouds stretched across tens of thousands of meters inside Qin Shuang's divine realm. Lightning flashed across the sky, and thunder rumbled like war drums. The ominous atmosphere made Qin Shuang's terrible mood unmistakable.

The moment she saw Han Wu, Qin Shuang rushed forward and wrapped her arms around his waist. "You're mine. I'm not sharing you with anyone."

Han Wu smiled and patted her head. There had been a time when he had nothing to his name. Poor and constantly struggling, he had rejected all romance. With nothing in his

pockets, how could he dare step into such a glamorous world? With empty hands, how could he dare hold someone close?

Through his own efforts, Han Wu had risen to a level comparable to a God King. He now possessed the wealth, strength, and influence to support the life he wanted. That was why he finally dared to accept Qin Shuang's love. He had chosen her, and her worries were completely unnecessary.

"Don't worry. I'll handle everything," Han Wu said as he reassuringly patted her head.

Qin Shuang nodded. "I'll work hard too and develop my Divine Jurisdiction as quickly as I can. The Lightning Jurisdiction already has a God King in the Divine Civilization, though..."

"It's fine. If it comes to a divine war, I'll fight it for you," Han Wu replied.

A deep sense of security washed over Qin Shuang. Having a boyfriend willing to take on a God King's forces for her sake was more than she could have hoped for.

After reassuring Qin Shuang, Han Wu contacted Jing Jing. Once she agreed, he entered her divine realm.

Unlike Qin Shuang's divine realm, Jing Jing's was saturated with the aura of death. Every unit here was undead. With her God King ascension, every undead under her received her blessing, making their souls far more solid and stable.

Jing Jing stepped forward to welcome Han Wu. "My God!"

Han Wu felt a clear resistance within him. What he felt toward Jing Jing resembled the protectiveness he had for one of his units rather than romantic love. However, Jing Jing clearly didn't see it that way.

"My God, now that I am a God King, race is no longer a barrier. May I become your wife?" Jing Jing asked.

"Jing Jing, why are you so determined to become my wife?" Han Wu asked, somewhat confused.

"I love my God."

Han Wu tried to explain. "That sounds more like admiration than love."

Jing Jing shook her head stubbornly. "That is love. Does my God not love me?"

Han Wu didn't know how to answer that. Of course he loved Jing Jing, just not romantically. His feelings were much closer to a father's love.

“I do love you, but...”

Before Han Wu could finish, Jing Jing’s face lit up with joy. “My God loves me! Then I can be your wife.”

“I already have Qin Shuang,” Han Wu said firmly.

A trace of sadness crossed Jing Jing’s pale face. As the Skeleton Queen, she had her own dignity and will. She would never share a husband with someone else, yet she refused to give up on Han Wu.

After a moment of thought, Jing Jing replied, “I won’t make things difficult for my God. I can wait. The Crystal Skeleton race’s lifespan far exceeds a human’s. I’ll wait until Qin Shuang passes away, and then I’ll become your wife.”

Han Wu nearly choked. Jing Jing was already looking forward to Qin Shuang’s death!

Han Wu couldn’t help asking, “What if I die first?”

Jing Jing’s eyes brightened even more. “I will raise my God as a skeleton, and you will stay by my side forever.”

Han Wu finally saw the full picture. Jing Jing had latched onto him for good. Whether he died first or Qin Shuang did, Jing Jing would eventually get what she wanted. The situation was strange, but as long as Jing Jing didn’t cause trouble anytime soon, he decided to leave the matter alone.

Seeing that Han Wu had dropped the subject, Jing Jing eagerly introduced the powers she currently possessed.

The Soul Jurisdiction perfectly complemented her identity as the Skeleton Queen. She had only just become the Soul God King, and the Soul Jurisdiction’s development had produced a single effect so far. It was called Soul-Body Fusion.

Its function was to fully merge a soul with its vessel, reaching a state where the soul was the vessel and the vessel was the soul. Naturally, Jing Jing had chosen bones as the vessel.

She was already preparing to refine every bone she possessed with Soul Energy to achieve complete fusion. Once the process was complete, controlling souls would be the same as controlling bones.

Under her command, bones could easily assemble into any shape she desired. They could become weapons such as swords, spears, and halberds, or take the form of races like skeletons. In short, the soul was the bones, and the bones were the soul. The more bones she had, the stronger her soul would become, and the greater her strength would grow.

Jing Jing currently commanded several skeleton-summoning techniques. She could assemble bones into Bone Dragon forms, and she possessed eighteen dragon spirits. When a dragon spirit merged with a Bone Dragon, it created a flawless Bone Dragon with devastating combat power.

She could also shape bones into Skyreach Giant forms, whose defining traits were raw strength and massive destructive power. Beyond that, she could turn bones directly into a skeleton sea that drowned her opponents and left them with no chance of survival.

In short, after her Soul God King ascension, Jing Jing's strength had increased enormously.

Coincidentally, Han Wu had recently gained some expertise in undead summoning during his time in the White Soul Civilization. After exchanging ideas and research with Jing Jing, he activated his Nether King form and started to make detailed modifications to every skeleton within her divine realm.

The first step involved grinding all the bones in Jing Jing's divine realm into bone sand. It was far finer than ordinary bones, making it much more practical when constructing forms.

When Jing Jing used the newly produced bone sand to summon skeleton soldiers, the entire process felt noticeably smoother. Soul Energy consumption dropped significantly, and the skeleton soldiers that emerged were even stronger. She felt like she had discovered an entirely new world.

She estimated that if Han Wu grounded every skeleton in her divine realm into bone sand, her overall strength would increase by at least thirty percent. For a God King, such an increase was no small leap.

Han Wu stayed inside Jing Jing's divine realm over the next few days.

While grinding all the bones into bone sand, he also studied Jing Jing's soul manipulation techniques. Their combined expertise complemented each other perfectly. Jing Jing's overall strength rose dramatically, while Han Wu gained a much deeper understanding of souls.

In his Nether King form, the wolf spirits and dragon spirits he summoned reached exceptionally high levels of quality. When attached to their corresponding undead skeletons, they unleashed far greater power than ever before.

Now that they had both grown significantly stronger, they were eager for a battle to prove that their research had been on the right track. At Han Wu's suggestion, they turned their attention to the enemy: the Light Faction.

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Chapter 999 - Infiltrating the Light Faction Headquarters

There were two reasons for choosing the Light Faction.

The first was that Han Wu and the Light God King had already fought before. The two were like fire and water. The Light God King was undoubtedly looking for an opportunity to kill Han Wu, so the latter believed that striking first would at least give him some initiative.

The second reason was that Han Wu now had intelligence on the Light Faction, including a complete defensive deployment map of their headquarters. It was like holding the key to the Light Faction's back door. Letting such an opportunity slip away would be an insult to the intelligence he had obtained.

As for Jing Jing, she didn't care which faction they attacked. She simply followed Han Wu's lead. If he wanted to hit the Light Faction, then the Light Faction it would be.

With the plan settled, Han Wu started to make preparations. Sun Qingnian was already handling the intelligence side, so there was nothing to worry about there. At the same time, Han Wu hadn't forgotten about Jia Gui, who was still hiding inside the Light Faction.

That sly old fox had been playing hide-and-seek within the Light Faction for ages without getting caught. He was definitely useful. As such, Han Wu contacted Jia Gui to arrange the rendezvous, then set out for the Light Faction's headquarters with Jing Jing.

In the Divine Civilization, every faction's headquarters was typically located in a secret region known only to their members. The goal was to maximize the headquarters' security.

The Light Faction was no different. Their headquarters lay within a region with natural barriers that prevented certain life forms from detecting it. They had also set up arrays that automatically generated illusions to keep wandering creatures away.

None of that posed any obstacle to Han Wu, who already had the intelligence. He slipped through effortlessly and brought Jing Jing into the Light Faction's headquarters.

Inside, every Major God had claimed a territory as a personal domain. They stationed numerous units throughout their territories to guard the headquarters and maintain security. Anyone below the Major God rank, whether Gods, Demigods, or Divine Beings, wasn't qualified to reside there.

Normally, simply being permitted to visit and run errands for the Major Gods was considered a great privilege.

Han Wu silently criticized the Light Faction's rigid hierarchy as he and Jing Jing made their way toward the edge of the headquarters.

Jia Gui was already there, lurking and waiting for them.

"Brother Han Wu," Jia Gui called out softly from a distance, channeling his Divine Points to carry the whisper to Han Wu's ears.

Han Wu followed the voice and quickly found him.

After so many days apart, Jia Gui looked the same as ever: thin, shady, and wearing his perpetually sly expression. Han Wu's sharp senses also detected something else. Jia Gui's Concealment Jurisdiction had reached full development, and he had completed his ascension. Jia Gui was now a God King.

The Concealment Jurisdiction was a minor Jurisdiction, but its function was unique enough. In certain situations, even a major Jurisdiction couldn't match Concealment's utility.

Jia Gui had already reached the World rank before his ascension. After receiving the Divine Civilization's energy from his ascension, his strength had improved somewhat. Knowing Jia Gui, however, the boost had probably gone entirely toward his ability to run away. His actual combat strength was likely still as mediocre as ever.

If Jia Gui had known what Han Wu was thinking, he would have given a thumbs-up and said, "Brother Han Wu, you really do know me!"

His offensive power was clearly lacking, but from another perspective, Jia Gui had reached an unrivaled peak in the art of escape. During this period, the Light Faction had spent countless resources trying to capture him, yet every effort remained fruitless.

Jia Gui was quite proud of that. The more they spent trying to catch him, the more successful he considered himself.

After meeting up with Han Wu and Jing Jing, Jia Gui activated his Concealment Jurisdiction and cloaked all three of them. For the time being, the Light Faction couldn't detect Han Wu or Jing Jing's presence.

"Brother Han Wu, you have to help me rescue Elina this time. If you get her out, I'll make you the witness at my wedding, and I won't even pester you to bring a gift," Jia Gui said.

"How is that a reward? That's a punishment," Han Wu shot back.

Given Jia Gui's reputation, being his witness would be nothing short of embarrassing. That simply couldn't happen.

On the other hand, Han Wu had no objection to rescuing Elina if circumstances allowed. His primary objective was to humiliate the Light God King. He was also curious how Elina had fallen for Jia Gui in the first place. He could always ask her once they met.

Once inside the headquarters, Han Wu and Jing Jing exchanged a glance before summoning skeleton soldiers together.

As Han Wu shifted into his Nether King form, the undead skeleton army stationed within the White Soul Civilization answered his call and flooded toward him. Meanwhile, Jing Jing opened her divine realm, and bone sand surged out like ocean waves.

From the bone sand, Bone Dragons emerged one after another. Every single one of them possessed Microcosm strength and had already mastered a Divine Aspect. They were incredibly powerful. Skyreach Giant skeletons soon followed, each radiating an aura only slightly weaker than the Bone Dragons.

The sudden appearance of so many undead within the Light Faction immediately put the resident Major Gods on high alert.

When the nearest Major God recognized the tactics the undead were using, he relaxed. The skeleton sea strategy was an outdated tactic that had fallen out of favor years ago. The Light Faction's Major Gods had long since developed reliable countermeasures against it.

The Major God immediately deployed the standard response. First, he summoned a Holy Mountain imbued with purification energy, intending to use its wide-area effect to keep the undead at bay. He then followed up with various counteractive Divine Skills.

Based on past experience, a single volley of light-attribute Divine Skills would leave even Heavenrender undead reeling. This time, however, those standard countermeasures proved almost useless against the undead that Han Wu and Jing Jing had summoned.

The Major God even noticed that some skeleton soldiers with unusual attributes actually grew stronger after being struck by the light-attribute Divine Skills.

Naturally, he was stunned. He couldn't understand what was happening. Since when had skeleton soldiers become resistant to light-attribute Divine Skills and Purification?

The answer was simple. After her Soul God King ascension, Jing Jing's skeletons no longer feared light-attribute Divine Skills or Purification. Under the Soul Jurisdiction's Soul-Body Fusion effect, her skeleton soldiers had gained the soul attribute. Light held no inherent advantage over souls. Its natural counter only applied to death and darkness. Therefore, her skeletons shrugged off most of the Major God's attacks.

As for Han Wu's Jackal Deathsworns, they burned with dragon fire, which dramatically enhanced their strength. The light-attribute Divine Skills couldn't penetrate the dragon fire at all.

The undead skeletons pushed through the barrage of light-attribute Divine Skills and the Holy Mountain's purification, closing the distance at a frightening speed. By the time the Major God realized that he needed to summon his own units, it was already too late.

Chapter 1000 - Darkness Approaches

The undead swarmed the Major God from every direction. He was strong, but even he couldn't withstand the endless assault of an infinite skeleton horde. In the end, he fell under their relentless onslaught.

His Divine Aspect and Divine Jurisdiction embryo flew from his corpse, and Han Wu collected them. Naturally, a Major God with a seat at the Light Faction's headquarters possessed high-quality Divine Aspects and Divine Jurisdiction embryos. Han Wu could use those resources to cultivate his units.

As for the Major God's corpse, Jing Jing pointed a finger at it, and a powerful skeleton tore itself free from it. The skeleton sea had gained another elite member.

Jia Gui watched from the sidelines. The sight of Han Wu and Jing Jing working together to bring down a powerful Major God so quickly shook him to his core.

This was true power. This was real strength. His fear he of Han Wu surged as though a switch had been flipped. At that moment, Han Wu seemed impossibly imposing in Jia Gui's eyes.

Jia Gui was well aware that he could never become someone like Han Wu. All he could do was keep up, make himself useful, and hope that Han Wu wouldn't turn on him.

"What's your next move?" Jia Gui asked. His current role was to conceal Han Wu and Jing Jing until they achieved their objective.

After this real combat test, Han Wu and Jing Jing had a clearer understanding of their combined strength. Their skeleton sea could easily overwhelm a Major God. The question was whether it could defeat a God King.

A bold idea formed in Han Wu's mind. They had already infiltrated the headquarters. Why not go all the way and assassinate the Light God King himself? If he died, the entire Light Faction would fall apart and no longer pose any threat to Han Wu.

Han Wu and Jing Jing alone had decent odds, but not reliable enough to justify the attempt. He needed confirmation, and only Sun Qingnian could provide it.

Han Wu opened a channel to Sun Qingnian, who accepted immediately. He had been waiting for Han Wu to contact him.

“I want to assassinate the Light God King,” Han Wu said without preamble.

“Excellent,” Sun Qingnian replied, barely containing his excitement.

“What are my chances?” Han Wu asked.

“Less than ten percent. Even if your strength is sufficient, the Light God King isn’t stupid. He’ll flee and send hordes of subordinates to block your path. On his home turf, he has far too many options,” Sun Qingnian assessed objectively, “However, if you decide to go through with it, I’ll play every card I have and raise your odds to fifty percent.”

Most people would have dismissed the claim that he could raise the odds of assassinating a powerful God King from less than ten percent to fifty percent as an empty boast. Han Wu knew better. Sun Qingnian wouldn’t lie to him. If he said the odds were fifty percent, then they were fifty percent.

“Brother, help me,” Han Wu said firmly.

Sun Qingnian was so excited that he nearly leapt from his seat. He had been secretly preparing numerous contingency plans to boost Han Wu’s odds. Han Wu officially going to war with the Light God King would set all those plans in motion.

“Go. I’ll throw everything I have behind you,” Sun Qingnian said before ending the call.

He then opened a hidden group channel. Every member was anonymous, their identities masked by Divine Jurisdiction. Only Sun Qingnian knew who they truly were. They were the leaders of various factions that had purchased intel on the Light Faction from him over the years.

Some of their factions had suffered under the Light Faction’s bullying. Others had been exploited. Some harbored personal grudges against the Light God King and would have attacked long ago if they had possessed the strength. Now, their opportunity had arrived.

Sun Qingnian’s hands trembled with excitement as he typed a single message into the channel. It contained only two words: Darkness approaches!

One by one, the anonymous members left the channel. Outside the Light Faction’s headquarters, faint lights flickered at predetermined locations before expanding into gates.

All kinds of unaffiliated life forms poured through the portals. Some were units left behind by fallen Gods. Others were slaves purchased from foreign civilizations. Still others were wild, untamable beasts captured from alien worlds. They had all been sent there for one purpose: to attack the headquarters.

Every Major God stationed there sensed the intrusion. The Light God King felt it as well. A massive wave of life forms had flooded into their territory.

The Light God King's terrifying pressure swept across the entire headquarters. He had already guessed what had happened. Someone had obtained intelligence on their headquarters and leaked it, drawing this swarm of enemies to their doorstep. There was almost certainly a traitor within the faction.

Rooting out the traitor would have to wait; eliminating the invaders came first.

"All Light Faction members, release your units! Wipe out every last invader!" the Light God King commanded with absolute authority.

The resident Major Gods answered his call and summoned massive numbers of units to battle the invading life forms.

As the entire headquarters descended into chaos, Han Wu immediately guessed that this was Sun Qingnian's handiwork. Throwing the entire Light Faction into disarray gave them the perfect chance to move undetected.

"Now we just need to find the Light God King," Han Wu said.

Sun Qingnian's intelligence had revealed the location of the Light God King's palace. However, during a crisis like this, the Light God King wouldn't remain inside.

Just as Han Wu was wondering what to do next, Sun Qingnian sent him a message. Han Wu opened it and found a live map that marked the positions of every Light Faction member, including the Light God King.

"You really came through for me," Han Wu muttered. Following the live map, he headed straight for the Light God King.

Jia Gui kept his Concealment Jurisdiction active the entire time, shielding Han Wu and Jing Jing from detection by every Major Gods they passed.

The live map led them to the prison within the headquarters. The Light God King was inside.

Jia Gui immediately grew worried about Elina. He feared the Light God King would punish her harshly during a crisis like this. Without hesitation, he charged ahead with his Concealment Jurisdiction active.

Han Wu and Jing Jing followed close behind.

They quickly found the Light God King. He was trying to persuade Elina to abandon her defiance. She refused to listen and even talked back to him for the first time in her life.

The Light God King sensed that something was wrong with her. He had watched her grow up. Her faith in the light had always been purer than anyone else's. Yet now, she openly opposed everything she had once believed in.

Using his Divine Jurisdiction, he purified Elina's mind. The dazed, lovestruck look in her eyes vanished instantly, replaced by a wave of nausea and disgust.

After regaining her senses, Elina cursed furiously, "That despicable man! How dare he bewitch me! I will never forgive him!"

The Light God King breathed a sigh of relief. He had genuinely feared that Elina would betray the light. He was about to lecture her when he suddenly detected a faint energy fluctuation behind him. He spun around toward the seemingly empty space and unleashed a Divine Skill capable of breaking through all forms of concealment and stealth.

Jia Gui, Han Wu, and Jing Jing were instantly exposed before him.

"You!" the Light God King growled, his voice seething with rage. He despised both Jia Gui and Han Wu to the bone.

"Brother Han Wu, think of something! The wife I've been working so hard for is about to slip away! She's my first love!" Jia Gui was even more desperate than Han Wu. Elina had regained her senses, which meant that winning her over again would be far more difficult.

Han Wu had no time to worry about Jia Gui. The Light God King was standing right in front of him. To prevent him from escaping, Han Wu pulled out a Forced Invasion Card and poured a massive amount of Divine Points into it, and activated it with the Light God King as its target.