

Pet Store 221

Chapter 221 Beast King Ability

The Celestial Pig used to be a third-rank Astral Pet with an adorable body that looked too pink to pose any threat. Staying inside a nursing pen helped it reach the fourth rank. Though such an improvement didn't help it avoid feeling terrified by the mind-crushing aura as it began screaming, just as if it had been taken to a butcher house.

The presence of the Inferno Dragon was enough to make such a low-rank pet faint. Not to mention that something even more terrible was right there.

"Oink!"

The pig's brain was no longer functioning properly. Its bodily instincts urged it to run away.

"Tsk."

Su Ping unleashed the "Killing Intent" skill again through their temporary pet contract, making the Celestial Pig stop in its tracks and run back as its beady eyes slightly glowed in red. Under Su Ping's command, the pig charged to the battlefield on its tiny hooves,

However, the effect of the skill didn't last very long when a whip-like tentacle excavated a meter-deep gash on the floor right in front of the pig, almost cutting its nose off.

"Eeeee—"

The poor creature began trembling again. Then it turned around and fled.

"Man, my skill failed so soon?" Su Ping watched it run and complained, "That's the biggest coward I've trained so far."

He had no choice but to use the skill again, once again forcing the pig to turn around and fight. This time, he made sure to "refresh" the skill in time so the pig didn't wake up too soon.

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It worked, but that didn't contribute much when it came to the fight because the pig was instantly turned into pork slices as soon as it was close enough to their enemy. Copying his good old tactic, Su Ping forced the pig to dive to death repeatedly. This would not help them defeat it, nor would it help the pig learn any new techniques. By doing so, Su Ping wanted to keep the pig under the pressure of being murdered so it might gain something new when encountering desperate situations.

Both his Dark Dragon Hound and the Inferno Dragon learned to be vicious and careful at the same time from their "death training." It had done wonders. This was why they could listen to his orders and face off Beast Kings and Goddesses without ditching him. Well, most of the time.

Su Ping mainly kept his attention on his own pets during the battle since it was more important to have them acquire new experiences. As for the Celestial Pig, the quest only required him to improve its aptitude by a small level; it wasn't something too hard to achieve.

Whoosh!

Little Skeleton teleported around the monster to look for its weak spots.

Little Skeleton was mostly safe when the Dark Dragon Hound and the Inferno Dragon were keeping the monster's attention with their lives on the line. Besides, it was pretty good at evading attacks. Even a Beast King needed some effort to catch it.

"Use Undead Enslaving!" Su Ping ordered, when he saw plenty of bones available for use in the surroundings. The sizes of those bodies suggested that they probably had also been Beast Kings when they were alive. He was not sure whether Little Skeleton was strong enough to turn Beast Kings into slaves, but he wouldn't waste time thinking about other chances to try.

Heeding his order, Little Skeleton appeared on top of one of the bone piles and unleashed a cloud of dark energy around it, causing the bones to start twitching.

Losing Little Skeleton's help, the other pets began dying too fast without giving Su Ping enough time to summon them back. Seeing this, Su Ping jumped off from the Purple Python and asked it to join the battle as well.

After that, he had to constantly keep an eye out for danger.

The Purple Python didn't do much better than the Celestial Pig as it could only be helplessly slaughtered in the blink of an eye. Or to live just a little longer since the monster didn't consider it as a main threat yet.

Like its friends, the python maintained its best focus during the painful training and unleashed its hidden potential again and again, just to keep up for an extra second each time it came back.

Away from them, Little Skeleton had successfully manipulated the bone pile to reform and stand up. Its general shape seemed to be of an elephant, but at least a hundred meters in height.

Grooowl!

The first thing it did was to growl at Little Skeleton and resist its control.

Little Skeleton was shaking as if its body were breaking apart. Its hollow eye sockets lit up, and the shadow of a bigger skeleton emerged from behind it, sending a dominating aura from another dimension.

The "elephant" collapsed, before some of its bones floated back up, gathering to make an incomplete shape that slowly moved toward the sand alligator.

Su Ping could tell that Little Skeleton was at its limit through their connection. But the result was satisfying enough; Little Skeleton was actually able to control the body of a Beast King, albeit part of it, as a mere sixth-rank Astral Pet. Nobody would believe him if Su Ping told them that a sixth-rank skeleton had managed to partially enslave a dead Beast King

That was all thanks to the skeleton king's bloodline hidden inside Little Skeleton. That much was plain to see.

The bloodline was only deemed as "inferior" by the system. Su Ping wondered what kind of terrible things true Skeleton Kings could have done.

The arrival of a “half Beast King” quickly attracted the alligator’s attention as it ditched its weaker enemies and headed that way.

The Dark Dragon Hound and the Inferno Dragon found a chance to unleash their best attacks, which were mostly ineffective against the monster’s hard body.

Groooowl!

The Inferno Dragon felt humiliated because of its inadequate strength. It gathered the last bit of energy available in its body and discharged an inferno ember at the sand monster.

The concentrated power of destruction contained inside this hellish ember caused the alligator to halt briefly.

The ember landed on the monster’s tail and set it on fire. The monster attempted to extinguish the flame using the sand around it. But no matter how it tried, the fire persisted, while leaving puddles of melted sand behind.

Enraged by the small pain sensation, the monster slammed a pincer-like claw on the ground and sent a circular shockwave from its position.

Su Ping only had time to levitate himself off the ground to evade the attack. All of his pets except for Little Skeleton were caught by the shockwave and exploded into clouds of blood.

Strangely, the shock had no effect on the bone slave controlled by Little Skeleton.

Su Ping sighed in relief and revived his pets to continue.

“What was that...?” He glanced at the monster’s tail which was still burning, before he used the Identify skill on the Inferno Dragon.

He saw a new skill displayed.

[Inferno Dragonfire (level 1)]

It seemed the Inferno Dragon’s original fire attack had just gained a new name, along with a level tag next to it. But he didn’t remember seeing any other skills that had such a label.

So... I can raise this skill to higher levels in the future?

He decided to throw the question to the system. The system was usually generous enough to answer simple inquiries. Though sometimes he just had to pay a price.

“Replying to host: a level is always shown when a skill used by Beast Kings is adapted for further improvement. You will see a more detailed explanation once you learn Identify (intermediate). Do you wish to learn it now?”

Chapter 222 Random

“How many energy points?” “That’ll be ten thousand.”

Su Ping was interested. This wasn't a high price. That being said, since he was in an advanced cultivation site where he could die multiple times, he decided it was better to hang on to the energy points in case he couldn't be brought back to life upon death. That would be tragic.

"Maybe later," Su Ping said. He did need to learn it but he wasn't in dire need to do so for the moment.

The system went silent.

Su Ping shifted his focus back to the battlefield. After the Inferno Dragon unleashed the Inferno Dragonfire, the flames surrounding its body had died down and disappeared. The Inferno Dragon was incredibly weak at the moment.

That had to be a side effect of the new skill.

After all, the Inferno Dragon had merely reached the seventh rank. To unleash a skill that belonged to a beast king was overwhelming for the Inferno Dragon. If it weren't for the fact that the Inferno Dragon's constitution was much stronger when compared to its peers, the skill would have cost its life.

Su Ping made the Inferno Dragon kill itself by charging toward the monster.

The monster immediately granted the Inferno Dragon's wish. Several of its sharp bone spurs pierced the Inferno Dragon through.

Su Ping revived the Inferno Dragon at once and told it to use the Inferno Dragonfire once more.

The Inferno Dragon had just learned the skill and it had to try the skill several times to be familiar with it. Besides, Su Ping was intending to keep the Inferno Dragon in this state where it would reach its extreme and stimulate its potential even further.

The Inferno Dragon is still rated as above average. How come it still can't have its aptitude rated as high... Su Ping was surprised to see the information of the Inferno Dragon. The Inferno Dragon was at the seventh rank and with the newly learned Inferno Dragonfire, it was able to deter any beasts at the peak of the ninth rank. That was an amazing accomplishment and yet the Inferno Dragon was still considered above average. Going by this logic, it would have to be able to overwhelm beast kings to have a high aptitude rating!

Was that even possible?

Su Ping couldn't even picture it.

He kept observing for a moment longer. Gradually, he noticed something about the Inferno Dragon. Given its current ability and the amount of energy stored within its body, one release of the Inferno Dragonfire was the best it could do. As soon as the skill was unleashed, the Inferno Dragon would collapse and its abilities would weaken.

This skill was the last resort, so to speak.

But this last resort wasn't fatal. The fire would stick to the monster and keep burning, eating away the monster's flesh, but it would take some time for the skill to inflict any practical damage, and the more time passed, the more serious the damage would be.

However, in real-life battles, this kind of damage was less effective than direct damages.

When the Inferno Dragon ran into beasts at the peak of the ninth-rank, even if it could gravely maul them with this Inferno Dragonfire, those beasts would still be able to kill the Inferno Dragon first!

This wasn't a skill that could finish the enemy once and for all!

Su Ping felt a bit sorry for this fact. On second thought, he could accept it. This skill could not exert any decisive damage but when the Inferno Dragon grew stronger and was able to use the skill at will, this skill would be catastrophic for any contender when unleashed.

No wonder this was a skill with various levels. It implied that it had great potential!

Su Ping was happy. It was a pleasant surprise that the Inferno Dragon could develop so quickly, not long after they arrived in this plane.

He then turned to see the Dark Dragon Hound, the Purple Python and the pink Celestial Pig. All of them would have to work harder.

The three pets felt a chill all of a sudden while they were fighting, as if some evil presence was staring at them.

The fight went on.

The monster bellowed furiously, and smashed the huge skeleton into pieces. Several places of the monster were burning up, as a result of the Inferno Dragonfire. The burning continued. The sand that the monster touched turned into liquid under the high temperature and the liquid seeped into the monster's wounds, making them hurt even more.

Su Ping gave commands to the pets. They continued this fight in an orderly manner, dashing and dying time after time.

Ten minutes later, the monster screamed in a weird way to force the pets back. Then, it snuck in the sand. It was running away!

Su Ping couldn't believe that the beast king had chosen to flee!

The pets hurried to the sandpit into which the monster had vanished. The path had been filled with sand and they could no longer go after the monster.

Su Ping blinked. This was a strange feeling... He had repelled a beast king!

He did understand that this was thanks to the system's revival ability. Otherwise, he would have died for real.

I think that guy is quite intelligent. It was just pissed off by our shameless way of fighting. Su Ping forced a smile. He felt sorry that such a good sparring partner had taken off. He would have to find another "cooperative partner."

Su Ping hopped onto the Purple Python's head and left.

The Little Skeleton approached Su Ping as well. Its dark energy had thinned down. Controlling the skeleton of the beast king had taken a toll on the Little Skeleton. At the moment, the Little Skeleton had climbed on top of the Purple Python's head, lay down, and then let all of its bones scatter around. That was how the Little Skeleton rested.

Su Ping patted its skull and then looked up, gazing into the vast desert.

Not long afterward.

The Dark Dragon Hound that was scouting ahead became the first to encounter the enemy, just like before.

The Dark Dragon Hound had always been proud of its nose but it failed again; it had also been unable to detect the enemy's ambush in time.

The beast was quite horrific. As soon as the beast came out, not only did it launch an attack against the Dark Dragon Hound but also another to deal with the Inferno Dragon that was dozens of meters behind. Both had been pierced through at the same time and died on the spot! Su Ping was further away and yet he could sense something dangerous was targeting him.

Whoosh!

Su Ping somersaulted in the air to move away from the Purple Python's head. With a bang, right at the second he jumped up, the Purple Python was torn apart. A huge piece of sharp bone had cut the Purple Python open.

Su Ping was terrified. The Purple Python was two to three hundred meters away from the Dark Dragon Hound. How did the beast reach both targets instantly?

Hovering in the air, Su Ping saw a beast that resembled a huge centipede emerging from the sand. The beast was covered with sharp spurs. It was tearing and eating up the pets.

Su Ping revived them to continue the fight.

But before the pets could unleash any skills, they died, yet again.

Su Ping had no other choice but to bring them back to life, time after time. At the eighth time, all of a sudden, Su Ping felt a piercing pain and there seemed to be a scream traveling at a special frequency which disturbed his mind.

Bang!

Su Ping shook a bit and then fell onto the sand.

The next second, Su Ping's consciousness came back and revival choices were given to him.

Su Ping was surprised. He remembered what had just happened and after a second of hesitation, he chose to return to life at a random location.

He felt that he would be killed right away if he chose to revive on the spot. He was much weaker than that beast; there would be no chance to train at all.

After he revived, he found himself in complete darkness. It was a cave.

Before he could see, he heard noises made by some arthropod reptiles. Right after, he felt a dull pain and passed out.

The revival options were once again available.

“F*ck...”

Su Ping’s heart was aching.

That was how the 120 energy points went up in smoke.

Previously, the system had provided him with unlimited revival times and he had gotten used to it. But he truly knew how expensive revivals were since he had to spend the energy points for this!

“Please help me, god...”

Su Ping chose to revive on a random spot after he prayed a bit.

This time, when Su Ping opened his eyes, he had heard how some whispers died down immediately with his arrival.

Su Ping looked around. He was standing in a room with dim light, where several huge people were around him. They were all four to five meters tall with golden hair and a divine feeling

At the moment, they were all staring at Su Ping, shocked and wide-eyed.

“Eh...” Su Ping was dumbstruck.

He could tell that those guys were talking about something, and they had been interrupted by his sudden appearance.

Chapter 223 Divinity Value

“Well then, carry on...” Su Ping mumbled something in their language. Without further ado, he crushed his heart and all his internal organs with his astral powers. Suicide was the only way out.

Given the rich experience he had accumulated in the Chaotic Realm of the Undead, Su Ping could immediately tell that those gods were formidable beings. They were kings of kings.

To capture him, one look from those people would be enough.

The gods were all stunned to see blood oozing out and how Su Ping had killed himself all of a sudden.

They had lived long years and had witnessed many events. Even so, they had been left baffled by this scene.

“Wasn’t there a seal... outside our meeting hall?”

“How did... this human get inside?”

Having committed suicide, Su Ping had to choose to revive at a random place.

This time, he was a bit relieved. He had reappeared in a remote, thickly forested mountain. He called out the Dark Dragon Hound and the Inferno Dragon at once to lead the way and continue to find other beasts so that they could practice.

While they were moving forward, Su Ping was looking around as well. This was a world of the gods. If he could pick up some precious herbs along the way, he could take them back and sell them at a good price.

Not long afterward, they met a beast at the peak of the ninth rank of the plant family.

The Dark Dragon Hound leading the way was the first to run into this beast. Without any hesitation, Su Ping ordered all the pets to move out and join in the fight.

Time zipped by during the rounds after rounds of battles and deaths.

Su Ping would remain in the Demigod Burial for seven days.

Only seven hours would have passed in the world outside.

After the first day, Su Ping had died 13 times and that had cost him 1560 energy points.

He didn't count the times the pets had died, but they certainly went through death over a hundred times.

Sometimes, Su Ping's deaths were worthless. For example, when he was killed just as he was brought back to life, that death would be "futile."

When he was resting, Su Ping did a calculation of their achievements. During that first day, he had spent 1560 energy points, which was a large number but at the same time, the trip was fruitful!

The Inferno Dragon had learned the "Inferno Dragonfire" at the very beginning, a multi-level skill that belonged to the beast kings. The Inferno Dragon had grown stronger, even though its aptitude was still rated as above average. Even so, Su Ping believed that the Inferno Dragon had made some progress, which was not completely reflected by the evaluation.

The Inferno Dragon's combat strength had increased from 9.4 to 9.6.

That was an increase of 0.2!

When the pet's combat strength reached the 9.0 rating, even a 0.1 progress would make a world of difference. To move up by a decimal was incredibly hard at this level.

The 0.2 increase could be interpreted as the Inferno Dragon having moved up by one position.

Given the Inferno Dragon's current abilities, to kill beasts at the intermediate position of the ninth rank would be a child's play. The Inferno Dragon could fight and find a chance to escape when running into beasts at the upper position of the ninth rank.

If the Inferno Dragon were to devote all of its energy and use the Inferno Dragonfire, it could even hurt beast kings. It was just that, this choice would spell its death, since it would not even have the strength to run away.

The Little Skeleton had a combat strength of 9.9. At the moment, the Inferno Dragon was Su Ping's second most powerful pet, his lieutenant!

For the second half of the day, the Inferno Dragon made some progress but its combat strength remained at 9.6. At this stage, without a major breakthrough, to move upward would prove to be difficult.

Below the Inferno Dragon was the Dark Dragon Hound.

Its combat strength was 9.2

The Dark Dragon Hound could kill most beasts at the lower position of the ninth rank on its own.

After a day of repeated deaths, the Dark Dragon Hound had become more powerful and agile. Still, its combat strength stayed at 9.2. Su Ping assumed that after another day of training, the Dark Dragon Hound's combat strength would go up by 0.1, reaching the 9.3 rating Su Ping was satisfied with an increase of 0.1 after two days. It would be surprising if the Dark Dragon Hound's combat strength could rise to 9.5 after seven days.

The weakest of his pets was the Purple Python with a combat strength of 9.1.

As a pet with a sixth-rank bloodline, to reach a combat strength of 9.1 was already incredible. The Purple Python had an above average aptitude.

Su Ping's expectation for the Purple Python was to see its combat strength go up to 9.5, or 9.4, or at least 9.3 after seven days.

Up until then, the pet with the most noticeable progress was the Celestial Pig.

Its combat strength had grown to 5.2 from the original 4.1!

While the Celestial Pig had been squashed into minced pork time after time, its potential was tapped. Although the Celestial Pig was still pink all over, the patterns on its skin had changed.

The patterns seemed to be some miraculous and complicated energy channels that enabled the Celestial Pig's energy flow to become smoother, and more efficient. The Celestial Pig could react much faster at the moment, and it had a new skill to build a shield.

Su Ping noticed that all the pets he trained could master one or two defensive skills.

The Dark Dragon Hound was the expert in that regard and the Inferno Dragon was not any weaker. Usually, a pet like the Purple Python would know next to nothing about energy skills. But at the moment, even the Purple Python had learned Earth Shield or how to hide underground to flee...

The day was a veritable torture. The Celestial Pig was still timid as a mouse but it could become ferocious when pushed into a hopeless situation, daring to put up a desperate fight against the enemies. For battle pets, that trait was definitely valuable.

The Celestial Pig's aptitude was also improved.

There was hope that the Celestial Pig could better its aptitude to reach the above average level.

The times when they were rushing forward as they traveled were the times when Su Ping could have some rest.

Soon, several days had slipped away.

Five days later.

Dead insect bodies had filled up a dark cave.

Su Ping sat on the ground and leaned against a rock to take a breather. Next to him were the scarred pets.

The previous fight noises had completely quieted down.

All the insects had been killed, only leaving their corpses behind. Even their beast-king level queen had been torn apart by the Inferno Dragon and the Little Skeleton and then torched by the Inferno Dragonfire.

I might be able to pick up some rewards if I bring this back with my information about this place. Su Ping looked at the corpses and smiled a self-mocking smile.

He didn't go to the cave after a random revival but of his own choice.

During the past several days fighting, apart from beasts, he had also met some gods and some adventurers.

Su Ping had obtained the map of this cave from those gods and adventurers, and with it he had attained a better understanding of the Demigod Burial.

The Demigod Burial was boundless. Apart from the heartland where some of the supreme gods resided, smaller lands were floating around in the void by the edge of the Demigod Burial. Those small lands had residents of the god race as well; those places were considered the countryside but they were much larger than the countryside on the blue planet.

Those small lands were fractures that had fallen off from the Demigod Burial.

Some supreme gods were managing the Demigod Burial and there were many cities here.

The god race dwellers didn't lead comfortable lives. They had to battle against the insects and bugs that would invade through the void, generation after generation. The cave that Su Ping had just cleared out was a cave built by the insects in this deserted place after they invaded.

There were many more of those caves in the deserted areas.

Su Ping didn't go there to help clean out the insects. Several days past, during one of the fights, he had killed other insects like this. He noticed that there was a special kind of crystal inside them. The system identified the crystal and told him they were called Divine Crystals.

Those Divine Crystals had a rich energy that could be consumed by the pets.

The system didn't disclose the exact effects because it would cost Su Ping energy points.

The price was unreasonable, one hundred thousand energy points for the briefing. Su Ping gave up on paying without a second thought. He chose to find out on his own.

Luckily, he had many pets. After harvesting some Divine Crystals, he had the Dark Dragon Hound take them first.

After the Dark Dragon Hound took the Divine Crystals, Su Ping found some golden hair mixed in with the dark hair. A new property was added to the Dark Dragon Hound Divinity Value!

Currently, the Dark Dragon Hound's Divinity value was 22/100.

Chapter 224 Divine Beast

Consuming each Divine Crystal gave his pet one or two Divinity Value points. For the moment, Su Ping had given the hound a few of them.

Not every Void Bug had a Divine Crystal in its body. As Su Ping noticed, he had more luck finding them when encountering stronger targets. He had no idea what this Divinity Value did for the moment. He assumed that he might learn something once the number was boosted to a hundred.

That cave had been mainly occupied by weaker Void Bugs of the ninth rank or below. If he wanted to get his hands on more Divine Crystals, he had to look for ones that were at the peak of the ninth rank, which were almost as deadly as Beast Kings.

Again, by sending his pets into suicidal missions while keeping himself at a distance, he managed to clear out the bug cave within a day.

By then, he had learned that the divine beings in this world weren't actual gods, but half-bloods who had inherited some divine blood from their parents or ancestors. Usually, an adult who never underwent any specific training was as strong as a fifth-rank pet warrior at best, while those who did receive training could go all the way to the ninth rank.

Above them, there were elite members who could reach the Beast King level, who were under more advanced entities such as Gods, Major Gods and Superior Gods that were several times more powerful than Kings of Beast Kings. This didn't sound as complex as the "rank system" in the Chaotic Realm of the Undead, but it was still pretty scary; if those gods and whatnot discovered his home planet, humans would undoubtedly become slaves under their rule. As far as he knew, the strongest warriors back home would only count as average laborers if they traveled to this place.

After a brief respite, Su Ping stood up and ordered his pets to search the dead bugs. He would not bother doing the dirty work himself, for he didn't want to get close to all the green goo that reeked quite badly.

As an "adept," the Dark Dragon Hound did quick work when tearing up all the bug corpses one after another. Under half an hour, Su Ping found a big pile of over a hundred Divine Crystals placed in front of him.

While keeping Little Skeleton and the Celestial Pig at their job, Su Ping called the Dark Dragon Hound back and patted its muzzle gently.

The hound gave him a doubtful look, not sure what he was up to. Su Ping grinned and picked up a Divine Crystal, telling the hound to eat it.

The creature seemed relaxed when it took a sniff at the crystal. After giving its working partners a proud look, it began munching the crispy objects as if it were enjoying bone treats.

After depleting what it had been given, it licked Su Ping's hand as if asking for more; Su Ping generously agreed without a problem. Meanwhile, he kept an eye on the Divine Value digit and saw it going up by one or two points each time a new crystal was taken.

They almost emptied the crystals they had saved up, by which time the Divine Value of the hound had reached 99. Excited, Su Ping tossed another one into the creature's avid mouth and saw the number reaching the maximum, before it became zero again. At the same time, another entry popped up below that line.

(Divine Charge: 1]

What's this...?

Su Ping thought his Dark Dragon Hound was going to get stronger or would sport a new look once this Divine Value thing was filled. It seemed there was more to it. Apart from the new entry, all of the hound's existing skills had new options beside them.

(Shield of Earth (divine enhancement cost: 3 charges)]

[Tearing Claw (divine enhancement cost: 2 charges)]

(Shield of Wind)...

Apart from those, he saw another name below them: "Divine Lineage," with the number "0" next to it.

"What's going on?" He decided to ask the system for help.

To his surprise, he got an answer right away.

"Host, 'Divine Charge' represents the power of divinity a pet has gathered. You can either use such power to temporarily enhance their skills, or inject the power into its bloodline to help it transform into a Divine Beast, if enough divine energy is provided."

"Divine Beast?? What's the difference between a Divine Beast and an Astral Pet?" In his view, strength was always more important than fancy names.

"There are many advantages. A Divine Beast has a longer lifespan, and grows stronger in a different way compared to common pets. Usually faster. For details, you may purchase the skill 'Divine Beast Identify' to learn more."

"... I think I see where this is going. How much for that skill?" "One hundred thousand." "Figures."

A hundred thousand energy points was not a price he could pay lightly. Still, he had already learned that he had to find more Divine Crystals if he could, since they were clearly helpful with the growth of his pets.

“Well, I guess coming to this cultivation plane was a good decision. Hey system, since there are ‘Divine Beasts,’ are there other something?”

“There are ‘Abyssal Beasts.’ You may find them inside the Chaotic Realm of the Undead, who are as potent in terms of strength as Divine Beasts. They went through a different path of evolution.”

“I see. Wait, if this is the case, can I find different types of crystals over there and turn my pets into Abyssal Beasts?” “The Chaotic Realm of the Undead is an intact realm protected by its own rules, which means Void Creatures can’t invade it. Without them, you will not find the crystals you can use.

“Unless you enter the deepest part of-error, please forget the last part.”

Man. The system sure knows a lot about these bugs. Su Ping wondered.

“Did you just say that these bugs can produce Abyssal Crystals if they get inside the Chaotic Realm of the Undead? Then, the crystals I just found must be...”

“Correct. They came from divine beings and fallen gods, and were devoured by the Void Bugs.”

Su Ping frowned and checked the remaining crystals, then he looked at the killed bugs all over the place. Each Divine Crystal had previously belonged to a living god?

Chapter 225 Breaking the Limit

Tut-tut. Guess even gods aren’t all-powerful after all. ‘Survival for the fittest’ is a protocol we all have to follow. Su Ping slightly shook his head.

What the system told him reminded him of something interesting, and he meant to ask it.

“System, can I make pacts with these Void Bugs and take them as my pets?”

He just had a new idea. If those bugs could eat gods and underworld creatures to turn them into energy crystals he could use, it would be convenient if he could have such a pet and so he could take it to the Chaotic Realm of the Undead in the future.

The system remained silent for a while, before it replied in a somewhat sad tone, “All lifeforms may fall under the power of a pet contract...”

Su Ping was a bit puzzled by the strange reaction of the system, though he quickly forgot it since he was thrilled to realize that enslaving a Void Bug was doable.

“Nice. Guess I’ll use the remaining time looking for them.”

Little Skeleton and the Celestial Pig had finished digging up all the Divine Crystals they could find by then. Again, Su Ping chose to give the crystals to the Dark Dragon Hound, acquiring a second Divine Charge afterwards.

He wanted to find out what those charges could do to his pet right away.

“System, if I spend these charges to gain a temporary effect, would they be gone forever?”

“They will recover as time goes by, albeit very slowly, if you do not provide more Divine Crystals,” the system responded using its plain tone again.

Su Ping nodded and mentally commanded the Dark Dragon Hound to use its Divine Charges on the “Tearing Claw” skill. It was an eighth-rank combat skill the creature would often use.

The golden strands on the hound began to glow all of a sudden, followed by its front claws, which were also coated by a bright, yellow aura that was almost blinding inside the cave.

After gathering enough power, the hound rushed to the side and slammed its claws against the wall, carving a hole open that looked as big as a train tunnel, allowing Su Ping to see the sky and stars outside.

Su Ping was forced to stand up when the power of the attack made the ground shake. He could only stare at the destroyed wall with an open mouth.

That hit was at least three times deadlier than before. This common eighth-rank skill looked as effective as ninth-rank ones after the upgrade. If he could use the Divine Charges on rarer skills, his pet would be able to compete against real Beast Kings for a short while.

He looked at the Dark Dragon Hound again, who also looked scared by its own power, and noticed that the skill name had reverted to normal. Of course, the two Divine Charges had been spent. This seemed to be a new tool he could save up and use in a pinch. Also, he could increase the “stock” by gathering more Divine Crystals.

The aptitude level of the Dark Dragon Hound remained unchanged. Although its Combat Rating just had gained another 0.2 after it received the charges, reaching a 9.6 rating. This meant the hound was currently able to deal with average ninth-ranked opponents by itself.

It was an amazing feat for a beast that was only at the sixth rank. Too bad the hound could not break the limit of being a common species yet. Little Skeleton had a Combat Rating of 9.9 upon entering this realm, which remained at the same spot after all the battles during those days. If he had given the crystals to Little Skeleton, the rating could have breached 10 already.

Su Ping could feel that Little Skeleton was growing bit by bit. The last bit of rating before reaching 10 had to be a great bottleneck that required a ton of work, just like how ninth-rank pets needed the effort of a lifetime to become Beast Kings.

Would it be strange if an undead-type pet received divine power? I guess I can try that out later.

He jumped onto the Purple Python and decided to move on. Apart from training his pets, he had a new task at hand.

Two more days had passed.

The ground violently quaked as something large approached. Soon, five figures and their pets emerged from the woods, with an eye-catching adult Wyrms Hound taking the lead. It was a ninth-rank creature at the peak of its current level, also with a portion of divine blood in its body. After spending a few thousand years in this world, it had grown to be wiser than most humans.

“It’s another swarm, damn it!”

“There’s a void tear in there!!”

Those people didn’t look pleased as they ran from something that was chasing them.

Soon, the creepy, squeaking noises that suggested crawling insects were approaching.

A young man among the group suddenly stopped running. "You guys go ahead. I'll stop them here!"

"Su?? Oh no you don't!"

"We're a team for fu**'s sake. We can't abandon you!"

"Stand back, Su. If someone's going to protect the team, it should be me, the leader." A bigger member approached the younger one and smiled. "If there's a next life for me, I'll be sure to make friends with you again so we can drink till the world ends."

"But captain..."

The young man suddenly unleashed a forceful aura around him that surprised all of his teammates.

"Come on, I'm not dying yet. I have my ways to escape. Just trust me and go!"

The woman riding the hound saw his serious look and chose to agree.

The young man gave his friends a reassuring smile; he summoned a dragon-type pet and went back to face the enemies.

Meanwhile, the team leader took the other members away, after giving their young friend a final, sad glance.

"We'll remember you... my friend."

The trees in the forest fell down one after one as if a farm tractor were rolling over them. Soon, the closest trees in view collapsed, revealing a large swarm of various insects madly marching to the young man's position, instantly burying him and his dragon pet under their claws and teeth.

"All right. Ten minutes. They should be gone by now." Su Ping muttered as he waited to select how to be revived.

He was planning to be revived on the spot this time. But not too soon, as he would only die again by the bugs' embrace. He meant to wait for the majority of them to pass by, before he went back to bully weaker targets.

Huh. I wonder if those guys made it out.

Unfortunately, he was unable to check what was going on in his original position while he was "dead."

The team he was in consisted of a group of adventurers who called themselves "divine descendants." All things said, they only had a very small trace of divine blood inside their bodies, which had been left behind by perhaps their great-great-great-many-greats-grandparent S.

As for why Su Ping was hanging around with them... It was by pure accident.

Earlier, he had died and then resurrected in a location just outside the "city of gods," where he had seen this team recruiting members for a bug-hunting mission, so he joined them to make his work easier.

The members of the team were pretty helpful on the way, even though most of their courageous actions weren't necessary in Su Ping's view. But still, he appreciated their kindness.

Since he didn't have a clock in this dark "waiting room," he had to estimate the passing of ten minutes by himself. As soon as he was revived, he expanded his astral perception to examine the immediate surroundings. Such an action successfully saved him 120 energy points because he had just seen another bug coming from behind him.

He quickly side-stepped a deadly biting attack, then he summoned the Dark Dragon Hound and Little Skeleton.

Splash!

A swing of the bone blade was all Little Skeleton needed to cut the enemy in half. This eighth-rank bug seemed to be pretty sturdy on the outside, though this was pointless against Little Skeleton's blade which could cut through stone like tearing paper. As Su Ping summoned all of his pets, he carefully inspected further and saw a dozen more bugs nibbling the trees nearby, which all began moving towards him in the next second. Following Little Skeleton's lead, his pets charged against the enemies. It seemed the "major force" of the bug army did not fully leave the forest just yet. Soon, the ruckus of the fight drew more of them.

With every direction being blocked by bugs, Su Ping had no choice but to be painfully overwhelmed again.

Now there was more waiting to be done in the "afterlife space." He waited for half an hour this time, which seemed to be enough for the enemies to leave him alone.

By following the trail of destruction left behind, he began picking on random bugs that moved too slowly and successfully found some crystals for Little Skeleton. The hunt during those days had gotten him enough crystals to give each of his pets 3 Divine Charges except for the Celestial Pig.

This meant they all had a chance to unleash an enhanced version of their skills when necessary. Little Skeleton had amazingly gathered 8 charges since Su Ping had intentionally given it more resources. Apart from allowing Little Skeleton to execute "divine skills" up to three times, those charges had finally boosted its Combat Rating to 10.1.

Little Skeleton's overall strength had reached that of a true Beast King. All the deaths had cost Su Ping a good amount of energy points. But the points had been well-spent considering the considerable improvement of his pets. Besides, the Celestial Pig's Combat Rating had already surpassed 7, fulfilling the requirement of the special training task.

At the moment he only needed to wait for a few more hours to return to reality. The fatigue of his body didn't prevent him from feeling mentally relaxed.

Two hours later, Su Ping found the main force of the bug army trying to build a nest on the side of a mountain. Since some of the bugs had a better perception than his Dark Dragon Hound, he was found out and was killed again together with his pets before he could do anything. Even his new friend-a Void Bug he had captured-could not help him negotiate a truce with the enemies.

This new bug pet was a seventh-rank, beetle-like member who had managed to reach the eighth rank soon under his care. Though it was still useless against its stronger kin. However, just like the other bugs, the beetle was also capable of converting something it ate into energy crystals, which was the main reason why Su Ping took it with him.

Since there was no point to going back to the bug nest and waste his energy points, he chose to go to a random spot and perhaps look for some souvenirs he could take back before the end of the timer.

At first, he saw something white in his view.

There was a nice smell of perfume around him. Looking up, he found himself standing in front of a gigantic bed, on which a girl was picking her nose with a really bored look.

Chapter 226 A Deal

Su Ping didn't know what to do.

The two of them gazed at each other in speechless dismay.

After a short moment of silence, Su Ping felt a sudden and cold air current that was swarming toward him. The girl had taken out her finger from her delicate nostril. A ray of golden light was shot from her fingertip; it went straight for Su Ping.

"This is a mistake..."

Su Ping couldn't finish his sentence. He had to jump to the side first.

After days of training and practice, Su Ping's reaction had become quite agile and fast. His astral powers had increased to the lower position of the fifth rank from the upper position of the fourth rank. With the help of the Star Prism, he could mobilize astral powers of the upper position of the seventh rank.

Astral powers were running across his entire body. The Solar Bulwark gave him explosive power as well. The moment the girl lifted her fingers, Su Ping had already moved away. At the same time, he opened up the contract space; the Little Skeleton was the first to come out. An evil aura was exuded by the Little Skeleton, who stood between Su Ping and the girl. A dangerous light was flickering in the Little Skeleton's crimson eye sockets.

That ray of golden light pierced through the wall behind Su Ping. The entire room was shaking

Su Ping felt like weeping but had no tears. What a huge mess.

He had always known that random revivals were uncertain. Sometimes, when he went back to life, he would appear directly inside some beasts' mouths. This time, he had revived in some weird, violent girl's room. "It's you again!!"

The girl glared at Su Ping and bit her teeth.

Su Ping was confused.

All of a sudden, he noticed that the girl looked familiar.

On second thought, he remembered that this was the girl of the god race that he had met on the first day he was teleported to the Demigod Burial.

It was her?

Oh, destiny is a b*tch...

Su Ping was smiling wryly inside.

“This is just a mistake, a misunderstanding...”

The girl didn't heed Su Ping's complaints. While furious, the girl was stunned. Her room was covered with a seal of enchantment. It would be hard even for supreme gods to break in. How could this human come in from nowhere...

Her eyes flickered. She recalled how this person had “faked his death” to get away last time...

The previous time she went out to chase Su Ping, but was unable to find him and she could only come back empty-handed. She had to let the matter slide. But Su Ping reappearing had proven her speculation and a shocking matter.

There was a mighty existence that could control the power of space and time behind this human!

“Who are you exactly?”

The girl pulled a long face. She didn't try to attack Su Ping again. What happened the previous time had proven that she could never end the human's life for real. If she went too far or decided to use her true strength, she would probably antagonize the mighty existence and force a dangerous confrontation.

If that happened, it would be impossible to escape with her life...

Su Ping produced a forced smile. It was the same question from before...

Why did she have to get to the bottom of this? There was nothing special about him.

“A man? An upstanding citizen? For you, perhaps I should be called an alien...” Su Ping looked at the girl. He wondered if she would find his answer satisfactory. He would hate to waste his energy points unnecessarily.

Besides, his stay at the Demigod Burial was about to reach its end. He wasn't worried that she could imprison him. But he would very much love not to be imprisoned and be able to continue this conversation.

The girl knew it was unlikely that Su Ping would give her the answer she was looking for that easily. She thought of another question. “Last time, you mentioned that you were from another world. What is the name of your world? Where is it? What are the coordinates?”

“It's the Blue Planet. As for the location... Is the solar system a good answer? As for the coordinates, I don't know,” Su Ping said honestly. As a matter of fact, even if he knew the coordinates, he would never reveal them. On the off chance that this Demigod Burial wasn't far from the Blue Planet's galaxy, and those of the god race hunted him down, it would be a disaster for the entire federation.

The girl sneered. "What's your intention of appearing before me repeatedly?"

"... This is just a misunderstanding."

The girl tried to threaten Su Ping, "Hmm, tell me the truth. I know you're not afraid of death and that you can leverage the power of space and time to come back to life. But imagine this. I can make you a wanted man. I believe that in this Central Divinity, no matter how many times you can come back to life, the ultimate outcome is still your doom!"

Su Ping raised his eyebrows. That was a problem for him.

That being said, he could stop coming here in the worst case scenario. After all, there were quite a number of godly planes. If he had to, he could save up some energy points and go to the Archean Divinity directly to train his pets.

At the same time, he was wondering if he could use his revival chances to kill this girl.

"What are you thinking?" The girl became alert. It was just an instant but she did catch that flashing glimpse of killing intent which gave her the chills.

She wasn't afraid of Su Ping, but she was worried about the mighty existence behind all this.

Su Ping didn't know that his killing intent would be so easily noticed by the girl. Surprised, he stared at the girl and began to think.

Su Ping remained silent. The girl was worried. Secretly, she put on an armor suit. She had calmed herself down. She was considering what she should do once the battle began.

There were no sounds in the room for a moment. After a while, Su Ping resumed the conversation. "Here's what I think. We don't have to be hostile. Since you know you cannot kill me, why do you have to make things so difficult for me?"

The girl replied with silence.

Theoretically speaking, she didn't have to target a pawn that was being manipulated by some mighty existence. Rather, she should befriend him. She didn't have to make an enemy for that mysterious Divinity.

However, this human had picked the worst times to show up, which were among the most embarrassing moments for her. She had been taken advantage of twice, including their first encounter...

Despicable!

She bit her teeth in fury and clenched her fists tightly.

While she was furious, she did manage to stop herself from throwing a tantrum.

Su Ping thought of an idea. "How about we make a deal?"

"A deal?"

"A deal?"

The girl looked at him. What is the human aiming for by coming here?

“What kind of deal?” she asked.

Su Ping grinned while putting an innocent expression. “Last time, you said that your cultivation would progress rapidly if you could visit the Archean Divinity, right? What if I tell you that I have a way to take you there?”

The girl was taken aback.

In that plane, the words “Archean Divinity” were taboo.

Only those like her, the pure-blooded of the god race, understood the significance of those words. The name carried meanings and dignity!

However, the Archean Divinity had long been closed. No other outside races were allowed in. Not even the supreme gods could break the barrier to the Archean Divinity.

Otherwise, they would have opened up the path so that this fallen piece of land could return to the Archean Divinity. It was their hometown as well...

A short while of silence later, the girl asked, “What do you want?”

She glared at Su Ping. She would turn her nose up if it were someone else telling her this. But this human was odd and he was being backed by a mighty existence that could manipulate space and time; that existence was likely to know how to access the Archean Divinity.

Chapter 227 A Contest of Wits

“What can I get in return if I do fulfill that promise?” Su Ping asked a question instead, for he didn’t wish to reveal his intention too soon.

The woman raised an eyebrow. “Land? Power? Gold? A divine ability to crush your enemies?”

Su Ping gave her a doubtful glance. “That’s a lot of stuff. Are you saying that I can get none of these?”

“Hmph. As a matter of fact, you may choose freely. Note that if you want a piece of land, the best I can do is to grant you a minor world of a divine city. Since I have zero idea who you are or what you’re planning to achieve, I suggest that you ask for money or a skill. Don’t even think about asking for any of our secret arts though. You won’t get any.”

Su Ping stared at the woman without speaking. A small world? A city? He had never intended to ask for that much!

He suddenly realized that he might have miscalculated the woman’s true value. “Pardon me, but... What kind of god are you?”

He invaded my territory twice but doesn’t know who I am?? The woman thought carefully. If so, I might as well play dumb. No point in telling him too much.

“Forget what I said. I wasn’t being serious about that. Heh.”

Su Ping’s lips twitched. That was a big lie even he could notice. She sounded quite serious back then.

Moments before, he thought he had been dealing with another common worker among all gods or maybe a small leader. But he just had a different idea; this woman might be someone really important.

By working with many divine descendants in recent days, Su Ping had learned that “racism” was a pretty bad problem in this world. Pure-blooded gods would always despise half-bloods, who in turn looked down upon lesser divinities. Then, the chain of discrimination went on and on until it reached humans and the livestock they kept.

This land had first been discovered and ruled by several pure-blooded gods, who still reigned over all else to the present day. In their view, those who carried the blood of lesser creatures were filthy products who ought to be treated as slaves.

Su Ping wondered if this woman was such a “pure god.” She sure looked different from all the other semi-gods and whatnot he had encountered previously. In a good way. That golden hair and pure, golden irises suggested the purity of her blood, which only added to her divine look. While such a hair and eye color was not exclusive to pure gods, half-bloods with similar features tended to have a lot of random shades blended in their hair. Sometimes, they even attempted to pluck them clean just to look better.

If their eyes had mixed colors... Well, there was no fixing them.

The most reliable proof that confirmed the “purity” of a god was their wings, which were also their tools for unleashing their inner strength in various ways. However, gods usually kept them hidden when not in use. At least Su Ping couldn’t see the woman’s wings from his position.

Ugh, forget it. Su Ping shrugged. Her lineage has got nothing to do with my plan once I capture her. Being a pure-blood is just a bonus.

By using her, I can start looting this world for valuables or even build my own army. Oh that sounds great...

“What are you thinking about?” The woman frowned when she noticed a hint of evil in Su Ping’s eyes. She was naturally sensitive to signs of emotions; she had been born with such a gift. “Oh, hehe...” Su Ping feigned a smile. “I mean, I don’t want a secret art if you don’t want to show me. Can you give me something a little weaker then? Like... an art that is less of a secret?”

Heh. Of course he has more dirty plans than that. The woman thought before replying, “You should know that those arts you’re thinking about are only available to divine beings. A human without divine power cannot master them. How about this, I shall present you with a secret training technique that works wonders for human warriors.”

Su Ping grinned. “Sure, that’ll do.”

The woman summoned a glowing booklet in her hand. “Here, this is one of the nine exceeding arts known to humans, the “Transcendent Spirit.’ It was said that an ingenious human warrior created this skill based on a secret divine art and made it possible for humans to enhance their spirits similarly. A good choice if your own abilities are heavily reliant upon your spirit power. Do you wish to take it?”

“Of course, of course! This is nice.”

“I see. So, how are you going to take me to the Archean Divinity?”.

“Can I take a look at that book first?”

The woman tossed the book his way without a second thought.

However, Su Ping tried and failed to flip it open.

The woman giggled happily. “I’ve placed a seal on it. I’ll help you access the content once I arrive at the Archean Divinity.”

Su Ping didn’t protest, for the book was never the real prize he was looking for.

He stashed the book inside his inventory space with an unchanged smile. “It’s quite easy. I can teleport you there right now.”

The woman tried but didn’t find any storage-related containers on Su Ping’s body. She was rather surprised to see Su Ping place the book somewhere she couldn’t see.

“Is that so? Kindly show me.”

Su Ping nodded. “To make sure the teleportation works, I will need to leave a rune on your forehead. Without it, you will be at risk of being lost forever in the void. I surely don’t want that to happen.”

The woman narrowed her eyes. “That’s no problem.”

She moved her blanket away, exposing her body covered in a golden, fancy armor, before moving her head closer to Su Ping.

Just as I thought. She’s prepared. Su Ping smirked. Too bad you’re going to fall into my trap regardless. Su Ping bit his finger and began using his blood to draw several lines on the woman’s tender skin. The soft touch almost made his heart race faster, though he had experienced enough battles and deaths to learn that he shouldn’t be affected by her charm that easily.

“Ah-ha...” The woman noticed Su Ping’s movement and also smiled.

Behind her back, she reached a hand inside her armor and also began writing something on her body—a “reversed version” of Su Ping’s rune.

They both applied their finishing touches at the same time.

“There. It’s done.” Su Ping took a step back.

Of course, this so-called rune was a pet contract. He meant to enslave this goddess. As the system said, all life forms had to succumb to the power of a pet contract once established. Gods weren’t the exception.

The contract with a Beast King or something even stronger wouldn’t work if his spirit couldn’t take it. But this wasn’t an issue here, since he could simply sacrifice his life force to make up for his lack of spirit power.

As he watched his work with a contented smile, the woman also appeared quite happy for some reason.

Chapter 228 Employment

For a moment, it was difficult to gauge whose smile was bigger.

It was the woman who spoke first, "Just as I thought, you're not just an insignificant human found elsewhere. My oh my... This is an ancient pet contract, isn't it? It's antique, but it wasn't completely forgotten by us, which is bad news for you, my mortal friend."

Her smile vanished as it was replaced by a cold sneer.

"Reversal!"

Her body glowed as the "rune" on her forehead was dispelled, before it reappeared in front of her but mirrored.

Su Ping was indeed surprised by such an action, for he never knew that a pet contract could be reversed.

The woman simply waited for the "new contract" to turn Su Ping into her pet instead. According to what she knew, nothing would help him escape from the contract at this rate. She just needed to pry every last bit of information from his mouth

Bang!

She felt a giant force hitting her head all of a sudden.

An unstoppable will easily tore through her spiritual defense and reached her soul, while chanting something in a strange language she couldn't recognize.

She felt overwhelmed by fear as if the whole world had just landed on top of her. She was no stranger to the feeling of being suppressed by someone's sheer power. But she had never gone through a direct invasion of her soul before.

But-but I'm a pure-blooded god! Not even the other Superior Gods can simply leave tricks on my soul like this!

She was unaware of the passage of time. It was the burning sensation still lingering on her forehead that woke her up from the dreadful trance.

The moment she could think clearly, she was terrified to find that her "reverse contract" had been utterly erased by the same force that invaded her body.

To make it worse, she could tell that whoever did it had never intended to attack her. It was a mere punishment because of her attempt to sabotage the pet contract, and this small punishment had nearly obliterated her soul.

Meanwhile, Su Ping was glad to once again find that the system had been honest with him. The system had once mentioned that he as the "chosen shopkeeper" was immune to any attempts that aimed to subdue him with a pet contract. Someone might imprison him by physical means, but they'd never enslave him from the inside.

As to the problem at hand, the pet contract he had just drawn was destroyed, whether reversed or not.

Could he ask the woman to sit still so he could do it again? No, that would be stupid.

“Hey system, did you see that? It failed!” Su Ping tried negotiating with the system, “And it almost got me killed. Any chance I can get compensated for that? Since your ‘merchandise’ has quality issues... Can you give me a more powerful contract? Or sell me one with a discount?”

“P*ss off.”

“Come on! You are THE ‘pet management system’ and yet, here’s a pet you can’t handle. Do something about it!”

“P*ss, off.”

“Have you ever learned how to reject someone in a different way?”

“Please p*ss off.”

“Okay. Now you’re just being a d*ck, aren’t you?”

“Affirmative.”

Su Ping decided to quit arguing. And since the system wouldn’t provide any help, capturing this “goddess” was definitely a no-go. However... Putting her under a pet contract wasn’t the only way to achieve his plan. Maybe he could persuade her into becoming his employee? The shop happened to need some helping hands as business was booming. And this pretty charmer seemed to be a perfect candidate.

He didn’t want to use a beast to help at the shop, as that would only scare his customers away.

“System, is there a way to hire her as a worker for the shop?”

“There are two ways available. The first one is using your pet contract to order a pet to work for you. Of course, the pet is still your committed follower in this case and will not receive any payment.

“The second method is by signing an employment contract on fair terms. Through such a contract, the worker must be compensated accordingly for their work. Once you leave the shop, you won’t be able to summon them to help you elsewhere.”

“So... An employee only helps me tend to the shop and nothing else, huh?”

“That is correct. However, an ‘outstanding employee’ will acquire various bonuses and benefits from the shop, one of which is the right of going on temporary absences. Note that it will be difficult to earn such a score.”

“Nice. They can fight for me during their ‘vacations’ then.” Su Ping nodded in satisfaction. Then I’m free to determine if an employee did a good job

“The discretion to evaluate an employee’s performance is exclusive to the system.”

“... Damn you. You read my mind, eh?” “That is unnecessary. Also, first profanity alert.”

Su Ping took a deep breath; he decided not to risk angering the system to avoid suddenly starting to twitch like a terminal patient in front of the goddess.

“Ahem. Are there any restrictions regarding the employees if I go for the second option? Can I sign a contract with this person in front of me?”

“The contract will be drafted and administered by the system. It can be accepted by any type of lifeform. However, the second party in question must willingly agree to the contract. You may show this entity the contract and see whether she accepts it.”

Su Ping sensed an object being added to his inventory space. He took it out and noticed that it was a golden scroll with several simple lines already written on it.

“Let me see... Employment Agreement made by the Pixie Pet Shop. First section, employee duties...”

It was rather brief. The agreement mostly resembled conventional contracts used by commercial companies, which were all about telling their workers to obey their bosses. Wait... It didn't mention anything about employees being grounded at the shop... Su Ping frowned as he noticed an obvious flaw. Man. The system is even nastier than me. Not my problem though.

“Ahem.” He tossed the scroll to the woman still staring at him. “That pet contract was necessary to take you to the Archean Divinity realm. But you ruined it. Here, I'll give you another option. Read it and sign your name if you have no problems with it. If you work for me, the Archean Divinity won't be the only wonderful place you'll see. I can take you to all kinds of worlds and corners you have never even dreamed of.”

The woman had just recovered from her shock. She glanced at the scroll she just caught in her hand.

“The Pixie Pet Shop? Employment??”

Chapter 229 Joanna Reporting for Duty

“A pet shop??”

Of course, she didn't recognize such a strange name since there were way too many shops selling all sorts of things for her to remember. And she surely wasn't expecting someone to hire her like this.

I'm a god! He thinks I'm some kind of common helping hand he could use? Even the biggest trading companies in this whole realm would do my bidding without question. Now a human wants me to work for him??

She frowned and carefully used her divine power to check whether the scroll was rigged with any traps. She fully expected Su Ping to do such a thing after the recent attempt.

But... It was just a scroll no matter how she looked. Maybe the material was a little bit strange, yet there was nothing harmful about it.

“Are you done yet?” Su Ping urged, impatient. “Just hurry up and sign it if you want to go to the Archean Divinity for real. I need to leave soon.”

“... Are you sure this will help me go there at all? What’s this employment stuff got to do with the Archean Divinity?”

Su Ping spat, “I need that so I can teleport you away from this realm, slowpoke.” “And how do I know you’ll fulfill your promise if I follow you?”

“Mistrust, I see. And I totally understand.” Su Ping spread his hands. “That’s the only chance you’ll get from me. Nothing more. I will be expelled from this world very soon. You won’t find me again. I probably won’t come here a second time. Heck, there are many interesting worlds out there waiting for me to check them out. And even if I somehow return, I won’t be looking for you. Now, make your choice.”

The woman gazed at him for a moment and didn’t see any signs of lying. Her perception did help her detect his shady attempt earlier. At the moment she could see he was being honest.

“Archean Divinity...”

She couldn’t make up her mind.

Many gods, including the strongest rulers, had always been dreaming of going there someday. By doing so, they might talk to the gods over there and persuade them into accepting the Demigod Burial once again, after having been abandoned for millennia. But she wouldn’t believe that a human knew how to enter the Archean Divinity. Even though this employment offer seemed real, it didn’t seem to be enough to get them anywhere near that locked-up realm. “Come on,” Su Ping urged again, “I only have like an hour left.”

“Just, give me some time.”

Su Ping took it easy by sitting at the edge of her bed. “Make it quick.”

The woman looked displeased to see that a human had tainted her sheets. But she managed to hold back her outburst since there were more important matters at hand.

“How do I sign this thing?”

“Easy. Write your name on it. Be sure to use your blood.”

The woman closed her eyes and performed another thorough scan. This time, she felt a faint trace of exceptional power contained inside the scroll.

This is... a creation governed by the rules of absoluteness?

This told her that the contract had been made and ensured by the absolute rules that watched over all worlds. There would be no turning back once she agreed to the clauses. She had to read them with care.

All things said, it didn’t take her much time because there weren’t too many words written. Duties and restrictions... Payment and welfare... Ohh, there’s a lot of interesting stuff I can get. And a free chance to go on a vacation inside a realm of my choosing. I can earn it by becoming an ‘outstanding employee’...

Since it was impossible to disobey anything written in the agreement, it could be said that every part inside the ‘payment and compensation’ section had to be true.

But deep down in her mind, she still had doubts regarding Su Ping’s morality.

Half an hour soon elapsed; Su Ping felt his patience was being put to the test. "For god's sake-I mean, no offense. Are you coming with me or not?"

The woman showed him a somewhat determined look. "Fine. I'll sign it."

"Do it then!"

Without asking more questions, the woman nibbed a finger and left her name on the scroll that slowly started to glow-Joanna.

Su Ping glanced at the finished agreement and asked the system, "Is this okay now?"

"Please wait for a moment, host. She is presently attempting to dodge the restrictions by transferring her consciousness elsewhere. Locating her source in three, two, one..."

At the same time, Joanna suddenly yelped in horror and held her head. "What have you done, human??"

"Just making sure you don't try any dirty tricks. So, what I'm looking at is not the real you, right? Tell me already, what's your job among all gods?"

Joanna appeared somewhat mad when Su Ping revealed her plan. "None of your business!"

"If you haven't figured it out already, you're my employee now. And if you want to earn the extra bonus, you gotta listen to my orders. I won't regard someone who always causes trouble as 'outstanding,' you know?" Su Ping tried scaring her with a small bluff.

Rather, it was partially the truth since she indeed needed to work harder to earn her keep.

Joanna clenched her teeth. Her final attempt to shirk her "duties" just ended up as a failure when a terrible force somehow followed her escaping soul and locked up her true self. She had no way to escape from it.

The overwhelming knowledge regarding a "pet shop" entered her mind uninvited, which both confirmed that the shop was real, and told her that she had indeed become a hired worker.

It was... not so bad, because she could see that her promised rewards were real as well. The same irresistible force had already reassured her of her future gains as long as she delivered enough effort, including how it was possible to pay a visit to the Archean Divinity later. The unknown force even showed her a brief image of the Archean Divinity realm, which looked the same as how she remembered when the two realms were still together.

"System, you just found where her true self was hiding? Is she going to use that true body to work in the shop then?" Su Ping wanted to make sure.

"...According to the agreement, she is free to use her current avatar to attend to her job. Although it would be advisable to try winning her trust, so she might feel comfortable enough to come as her real self."

"Well, that's a bummer. But I guess it makes no difference as long as she helps. What does that 'true body' look like? How strong is she?"

“She is akin to a Superior God that rules over this piece of world.”

“Woah, for real?” Su Ping was surprised to hear that. “That must be why she knows the secret arts used by all gods.”

“Alert. The connection with Demigod Burial will terminate in ten seconds. Nine, eight...”

Su Ping quickly turned to Joanna. “All right, time to go back to the shop. Try to behave, okay?”

Joanna still looked pissed off because something had exposed her vulnerable source, even though there was much to earn from her new job.

Chapter 230 Return and Reward

After a sudden change of environment, which was no longer surprising for Su Ping, he reopened his eyes and saw the familiar pet room of his shop. Though there was someone else accompanying him this time.

“Is this... the Archean Divinity?” Joanna looked around the room. Su Ping tried putting up a “bossy” look as he said, “No, this is the pet shop in which you’ll be spending a lot of time working. The Archean Divinity can wait until you earn the chance.”

Joanna didn’t look happy about his attitude. “Kindly tell me when it’s going to happen, will you?”

She felt bad as soon as she asked that question; it was as if she was already accepting her new role willingly.

“An evaluation will happen at each end of season. It’s possible to do it earlier if you excel at your job, though,” Su Ping recited what he had just learned from the system. “For now, you should listen to my arrangement and treat our customers with good manners. This is basic.”

“You’re not going to boss me around like that just yet!”

“Oh really? Try that again and I’ll add the first negative review on your paper.”

Joanna was silenced by a sudden image that popped up in her mind, which showed her a basic profile of her current employment status. The profile contained some details such as her combat strength, her rank, and many skills she had learned.

Also, she saw an “employee rating” which was currently set at 100. By directing her attention to a question mark beside the number, she saw another message explaining how this rating worked.

She could become an “outstanding employee” by improving the rating to 200. On the other hand, her basic benefits would be revoked should it fall below 80. If it kept worsening to the extent of reaching 60, she would lose the job and be forced to become an asset of the pet shop instead. Meaning, she would turn into an expendable pet.

WHAT?? A pet?? Me?? There’s nothing like that in the agreement!

She felt the urge of unloading a bunch of dirty curses despite her royal upbringing. This place is a freaking prison!

She was already regretting her decision. Revealing all of her privacy was enough reason for her to not accept the job, if she had known it earlier. Not only did the profile contain almost everything about her, it even mentioned a lot of things even herself couldn't remember clearly, like several skills she had not used in a long time.

Such a detailed investigation also suggested that something she couldn't disobey was taking care of this pet shop.

At least there was something comforting; she noticed that Su Ping was not the one to judge her rating. Otherwise, he would have already made it zero and turned her into a pet.

"See those?" Su Ping pointed to several empty nursing pens nearby. "Get in there and don't come out unless I say so."

Of course Joanna didn't want to listen. She knew Su Ping couldn't control her rating, but she did not want to find out what would happen if she openly opposed him either.

Frustrated, she followed his hint and saw several magic runes drawn on the floor. These are... Nursing runes?

She checked several occupied nursing pens in which some pets were resting. It was clear that they had been forced to become smaller to fit in.

She checked the rune and soon learned how to copy them. They were a bit difficult to draw, but she could manage as long as she had the right materials.

"I must say it's rare to find such efficient nursing runes these days..." she muttered as she stepped inside a nursing pen.

She felt the power of the rune taking control of her surroundings. Everything including Su Ping grew bigger in her view as her own body was readjusted to a more convenient size that allowed her to better sit inside the nursing pen.

Meanwhile, she also felt an enriching stream of energy entering her form.

Such pure nourishment...

Even in specialized training grounds created by gods, it wasn't easy to find such "clean" energy to be used. Demigod Burial used to be an ancient battlefield. The passage of time didn't fully cleanse all the taint and traces of malevolence left behind, which was why all gods found it difficult to improve their strength by natural means.

Even after many millennia, only a few Superior Gods had managed to reach their level, which granted them immortality, which allowed them to hold everlasting dominance over their world, unless they sought death for some reason.

The pure, unadulterated energy didn't seem to be as potent as divine energy, yet it was generally helpful to all manners of creatures, judging from all the different pets peacefully resting in their spots.

Amused, Joanna closed her eyes and began channeling her own special training technique to improve her strength. The energy was mostly useless to her “true self,” but this avatar was only at the “Beast King” rank, which still had room for improvement.

Su Ping was glad that this goddess had agreed to sit quietly instead of causing a ruckus, in which case it would be rather difficult to explain where she came from to his family. A man and a pretty girl who had spent a few hours in a private room would only lead to terrible misinterpretations.

Speaking of his family... He noticed that the shop was awfully quiet. He had a bad feeling about it so he quickly went outside, only to see that her mother had fallen asleep on the only chair available at the shop, whereas Su Lingyue was playing with her phone on the floor. Telling from the movement of her finger, she was probably playing a cheap puzzle game popular among youngsters.

Su Ping sighed in relief. For a moment, he thought something bad had happened while he was away.

Spending seven days inside Demigod Burial meant that only a few hours had passed in reality. He was surprised, since whoever was trying to find him had yet to show up. If someone was powerful enough to govern the Mysterious Realm, to find out everything about him would only take a few minutes.

Could it be that something was obstructing this person?

Nevertheless, he had to expand the safe ground as fast as possible.

Su Lingyue heard him coming and looked up from her cellphone. “You sure took your time in there, eh? You didn’t answer my calls no matter how many times I tried.” “You called me? What for?”

“Oh, nothing serious. We kinda needed to order something to eat. But we need to, you know, ask whether we can do such a thing.”

“You can’t. Eating something brought by the wrong man can be dangerous right now, and you know it.”

“Fine, I can go without a meal or two. But what about mom? We can’t let her starve.”

Su Ping frowned. That was indeed a problem.

The system suddenly interrupted his thoughts with an alert.

“Congratulations, host. You have successfully completed the special training task. Reward: one intermediate Force Pellet, plus a random mythical technique tutorial.”

Following the message, Su Ping saw a roulette wheel appearing in front of him, while his sister didn’t react.

Nice. I just reached the fifth rank. With this Force Pallet, I may directly get to the next rank right away. And with the help of the Star Prism, I can briefly unleash eighth-ranked astral power in a fight!

The roulette was pretty much self-explanatory since the tutorial book was supposed to be randomly chosen.

In order not to look too silly by staring at empty air, he went back inside the pet room and closed the door.

“Again?? How much longer do you need?” Su Lingyue protested out loud.

“Won’t be long!” Su Lingyue humphed and picked up her phone to continue playing. “Oh fu—I forgot to pause the game!”

“Okay, start it up,” Su Ping muttered at the virtual wheel in his view.

As the wheel came to a full stop, a book appeared at its center and flew toward his face. The title read “Fist of Exorcist.”

Fist? Some kind of martial art? Su Ping wondered.

Abiding his will, the book melted and became a beam of light that entered his forehead, delivering a giant flood of wisdom directly to his mind, along with several images that showed him a desolate, battered world that seemed to have been victim of a brutal war.

Swarms of ghosts and goblins rampaged around the already infested land.

An abrupt golden beam of light penetrated the darkness and slammed on the ground. It was a giant, golden fist that came down like a comet, crushing a good number of monsters to pieces in the blink of an eye.

Su Ping watched in awe as he saw the impressive attack destroying evil creatures despite their resistance.

Following the display, he saw a shadow coming up while explaining the origin of this technique, who claimed to be an ancient Beast Master that ruled over a primitive yet bountiful world.

“Punches that deliver impeccable justice, absolute might, peerless power...” Su Ping read the introduction out loud as he fully focused on his studies.

He woke up and found that everything about the new technique had been printed deep inside his mind.

It appeared that he could improve this skill all the way to the fifth rank, by which time he would be able to unleash that almighty attack that could destroy heaven and earth alike.

That skill was a remnant left behind by an ancient warrior, who didn’t wish to fully vanish from this world even after death.

“Man. I sure hope I can become such a hero someday...” Su Ping muttered.

Next, he tried to execute several basic moves as instructed, only to find that he could do none of them at the moment.

Ugh. Let me see, so my spirit, body and soul must be aligned, following a certain flow of energy...

He closed his eyes to carefully remember the very first step of the instruction, before moving a fist in an outward motion.

Whoosh!

His hand caused a sharp, audible noise in the air. That punch was clearly more powerful than what he could normally muster. Still, he was far from achieving the first rank of the skill.

According to what he had learned, the first rank would be achieved when his fist became fast enough to create a small sonic boom; by then he would be able to punch ninth-rank monsters to death without using any tools.

Training the skill would take a lot of time. For the moment, he decided to tend to the shop's business first. There was no reason to make haste when such an ancient skill clearly required decades or even a lifetime to fully master. At least for common warriors.

He summoned his inventory space and took out the Force Pellet he had just gained.

Unable to resist the tempting energy radiating from it, he quickly swallowed it in one go.

For a moment, he felt how his body was filled by pure energy, an amount that would have taken him months to gather. His astral power capacity was instantly boosted to the lower sixth rank, when he had just reached the fifth rank earlier that day.

He really hoped to gather more of those pellets to be able to rise up in rank straight away, which he sorely lacked. Although he wouldn't get too greedy. After all, he had just become a battle pet warrior around two months back. He was progressing fast enough. After quenching his excitement, he left the pet room again and found his sister, who was still playing the same mobile game.

"Did anyone come to talk about our shop expansion plan?"

Su Lingyue threw him an impatient glance. "Yeah, and there was nothing I could do since you know, you wouldn't come out. I had to tell them to come back later."

"I see. Huh, they're pretty fast."

He went to his computer so he could call the helpers he had hired to see him sooner.

Since there was nothing to do while waiting, he simply went inside the pet room again to practice his new art.

About half an hour later, several representatives from a few different housing companies arrived.

Su Ping opened the shutter and finished up some necessary follow-up payments without letting anyone inside. He received close to 50 new deeds in total which cost him 200 million astral coins to fulfill. As he promised, he purchased the houses nearby by paying triple their original plot prices.

He did a quick evaluation and realized that all the new properties would give him an area of about 4 or 5 square kilometers, even though he might need to tear several places down.

One of the system's requirements for raising the pet shop to level 3 was owning a land bigger than 3 square Km. He had more than enough at the moment. There were still a few places to buy before he could own the entire street. But that would be a concern for another time.

It was finally time to pay some energy points to commence the shop upgrade.