

Pet Store 51

## **Chapter 51: Fractures in Space**

“An unclaimed territory?”

Su Ping remained surprised for a moment.

On this blue planet, other than the base cities that humans resided in, almost all the areas were considered wilderness and over 500 such unclaimed territories were scattered across the planet.

Such unclaimed territories were unsuitable habitats for humans.

Two reasons led to the existence of such unclaimed territories. The first reason was the damages done to the earth, caused by human wars in the past. Hazardous materials and technology remnants polluted the lands, making them uninhabitable.

The other reason was that many space fractures would appear in areas that were deemed unstable.

The space fractures were twisted cracks that usually led to many mysterious and unknown places.

Some places were strange pieces of land hovering amid the stars and ferocious beasts could be found there.

Some were death stars that could not even be found on the Federation’s interstellar map. On those stars, there were no traces of plants or animals.

Some cracks would lead to a fixed star just like the sun which could destroy people as soon as they set their foot in!

In those unknown, mysterious places lived many doughty Astral Pets. Most Astral Pets on this blue planet were originally from those unknown hidden worlds.

Space fractures worked as portals that led to those lands.

Generally speaking, defensive fortresses would be built in the perilous lands where space fractures existed, with federal armies stationed there in case the untamed, wild pets and beasts in those unclaimed territories would sneak into the base cities where humans lived in; otherwise a massive slaughter would ensue.

When unclaimed territories were found, the federal government would designate detachments for “mopping-up” operations in the unclaimed territories to keep them stable.

The staff members working for such detachments were all known as explorers.

Being an explorer was an incredibly dangerous occupation but at the same time, the pay was tremendous!

Explorers lived in the base cities and they enjoyed many benefits. Every month, they could collect generous subsidies and rewards; in some special cases, they were entitled to use their power to seek privileges.

The best way for the general public to obtain wealth and position was to join an explorers' team. Even an average explorer would enjoy a higher status than military personnel. If the explorer could make contributions, the explorer would have an even higher position in society. Even the mayor would have to receive such an explorer with good manners.

"Yes."

Su Ping was hesitating. Fan Yujing hurried to explain, "Sir, given your strength, don't you think you're overqualified to run a store here? Our explorer team is in dire need of master-hands like yours. If you can join us, you can name the rewards you want. I believe the money made from the exploration will be over a hundred times more than what you make now!"

Su Ping cleared his mind. He flatly declined, "Sorry, but I'm not interested."

*"Exploring the unclaimed territories?"*

*"No, thanks. Why would I go to a dangerous place like the unclaimed territories to risk my life when I can simply lie here and make money in comfort?"*

If he died, his life would be gone for good.

What was the unclaimed territories's main feature? There was no protection whatsoever!

If by any sh\*t luck they encountered monsters as strong as beast kings, he would have delivered himself to doom for nothing.

This was not the answer Fu Yujing had on his mind.

He had never assumed that Su Ping would turn the offer down so readily.

Was it because Su Ping was not in want of money?

Well, considering how Su Ping broke his arm, Fan Yujing did not think it would be hard for Su Ping to make money.

Maybe, a master such as Su Ping only craved for missions of a challenging nature.

Fan Yujing thought about it and added, "Recently, some things seem to be happening in the unclaimed territories outside the explorer's base of our Longjiang Base City. There are many extra middle-level or advanced pets. I think this can be a good training opportunity. Are you interested?"

"..."

Su Ping looked at Fan Yujing as if the latter was a fool.

*"Why would you persuade me to go when such dangers were lurking about?"*

*"What's your brain's damage?"*

*"Training?"*

*"F\*ck the training!"*

Su Ping replied, "There are two words I want to say."

“Yes?” Fan Yujing’s eyes glowed. He wondered if the two words were “I am.”

Su Ping kept a straight face as he uttered the words, “Piss off.”

Fan Yujing was taken aback.

Fan Xiaoyu, who was standing next to Fan Yujing, said angrily, “Why are you insulting him?”

Su Ping answered indifferently, “I suggest you take a look at my goods. You are welcome to leave if you don’t want anything else.”

Looking at Su Ping’s calm expression, Fan Yujing produced a forced smile. Neither money nor the prospect of a challenge could appeal to Su Ping. Fan Yujing felt his effort to rope Su Ping in had failed.

Fan Yujing heaved a sigh before he confessed in a bitter tone, “Actually, I’m only here to invite you because I have no other options. Last night, a new space fracture appeared in the unclaimed territory outside the Longjiang Base City.

“Our team headed there to explore. However, since we’re not familiar with the environment, two of our teammates were injured by accident. To make things worse, one of them lost a pet in the excursion. So, we have to hurry back as soon as possible to find his pet.

“But, since both teammates are injured, we cannot find anyone to take their places at the moment. That’s when I thought of you, sir. I thought you would be intrigued...”

Su Ping raised his eyebrows but offered no other reaction.

He had nothing to do with this matter. He didn’t need to meddle.

Sympathetic?

He was a little bit sympathetic but that was all.

Besides, he wasn’t sympathetic to their team, but to the pet that was lost in the space fracture.

Su Ping’s eyebrows knitted tighter as he thought about how lonely the pet would be at the moment. The team could make money when they explored an unclaimed territory. But they had acted greedily when their abilities were not enough. The pet was innocent.

“I’m sorry but there’s nothing I can do,” Su Ping voiced his refusal again, pulling a long face.

Fan Yujing was disappointed but he said nothing more.

Fan Xiaoyu darted a look at Su Ping. She, too, did not say anything. She was well aware of how dangerous exploring an unclaimed territory could be. It was only natural that Su Ping was unwilling.

“Ding!”

“Congratulations. The host has triggered a side quest: look for a lost pet.”

“Completed quest reward: one Magic Forging Skill book.”

“Failed quest punishment: 10 points will be deducted from the host’s score.”

The system's prompt messages suddenly popped up in his mind.

That startled Su Ping.

What did he do to trigger a side quest?

Su Ping couldn't help but shout out in his mind, "System, are you serious? Think about my abilities. Aren't you asking me to send myself to doom by making me help them find their lost pet?"

The system sounded detached, "As an owner of a pet store, the host shall not ignore anything related to pets. Please finish the quest as soon as possible."

"Are you being serious..."

Su Ping could not win an argument with the system. Inside, he almost burst into tears of rage.

He was merely a loser with a combat strength of 3.5. What was the difference between sacrificing his life and exploring an unclaimed territory?

He wanted to give up on the quest directly.

That being said.

He began to hesitate as he thought of the punishment for failure.

He would be erased when his score dropped below the passing line.

*"This damn system has been rating me this entire time!"*

Also, the reward seemed to be appealing...

The internal struggle went on for a long time. Finally, Su Ping made up his mind and questioned Fan Yujing, "Tell me about the world inside that space fracture first. Another thing I need to know is the kind of pet you lost in there."

Fan Yujing was surprised by this question. His eyes began to shine as he asked happily, "Sir, are you willing to join our team?"

Su Ping wore a solemn look. "Answer my question first."

## **Chapter 52: Ninth Rank**

"Sure!"

Fan Yujing adopted a more serious attitude and explained, "The world found inside the space fracture this time is a place suitable for habitation. The place floats in an unknown galaxy not registered on the interstellar map. As for whether the new world is a continent or a planet, we don't know yet."

"A large number of indigenous Astral Pets live there, and the majority are aggressive Astral Pets of the demon family. Based on the information we collected of the environment near the entrance, for the most part, we have found low to middle-level Astral Pets. However, as our team advanced to the deeper regions, we've encountered more middle-rank and advanced pets."

“The strongest of all the Astral Pets we’ve met was an eighth-rank Flame Bone Dragon. Fortunately for us, we spotted it in time and managed to get away in advance.”

At this point, Fan Yujing realized that he had revealed too much. An eighth-rank Flame Bone Dragon was not something to be messed with. Although Su Ping was strong, he was in his early twenties nonetheless. He would be unable to defeat an eighth-rank pet.

Fan Yujing stole a look at Su Ping and surprisingly, he saw no worries on his face.

“The deeper areas you reached, how deep were they?” Su Ping looked into Fan Yujing’s eyes.

Fan Yujing replied, “We haven’t covered the entire area yet, and we have no idea how vast the world is. The so-called deeper area is a relative term. But based on information we collected with our instruments, we believe we got close to that world’s inner zone.

“According to our past exploration, there must be more than one eighth-rank Astral Pet living in that world. There’s a chance that ninth-rank Astral Pets can be found there!”

He was telling the truth.

He knew what he was doing.

Fan Yujing was aware that by saying this, Su Ping could lose his interest. After all, ninth-rank Astral Pets were the strongest of all, second only to beast kings. Even the best of the top explorers’ teams would pale at the mention of a ninth-rank pet.

“Ninth-rank?”

Su Ping squinted his eyes.

The only ones who could tame ninth-rank Astral Pets were battle pet warriors with titles. Only a handful of such battle pet warriors could be found in the entire Longjiang Base City.

But this was not among Su Ping’s biggest worries. He had other questions. “Is the ninth-rank the highest present? Could we encounter Beast Kings?”

If we were to compare ninth-ranked Astral Pets to a cannonball, Beast Kings could be regarded as a small nuclear bomb! The gap between the two was huge!

A Beast King could even destroy over half of a base city!

“Beast Kings?” Fan Yujing’s face was drained of color after hearing that term. For people who had to constantly risk their lives, this name was taboo.

Su Ping was not joking. Fan Yujing shook his head and answered, “No, it’s not possible. If Beast Kings lived there, then the number of eighth and ninth-rank Astral Pets would be far greater than what we found. Otherwise, there wouldn’t be enough food for the Beast Kings, unless we were dealing with a herbivore Beast King.”

“However, the death aura in that world is rich. There are few herbivore Astral Pets to begin with, let alone those that can grow to be Beast Kings.”

Su Ping gazed into Fan Yujing's eyes and nodded. "How is the strength of your team?"

Fan Yujing stated, "The explorers' teams are always made of five. Excluding the two injured teammates on our team, we have our captain, another member, and myself. I am a battle pet warrior at the intermediate position of the sixth rank and the strongest of my Astral Pets is at the lower position of the seventh rank.

"Our captain is the most powerful of us all. He's a battle pet warrior at the upper position of the seventh rank and he has an eighth-rank Astral Pet. However, that pet cannot compare to an Astral Pet of the demon family like the Flame Bone Dragon. The other teammate is on par with me."

"That is to say, the strongest power that can be released can only reach the eighth rank?" Su Ping frowned.

That was too weak.

They would not stand a chance against a ninth-rank Astral Pet, not to mention a Beast King.

Even a stronger eighth-rank Astral Pet could eliminate the entire team!

Fan Yujing felt embarrassed for a moment, since he noticed the dissatisfaction and contempt shown in Su Ping's facial expressions.

He had introduced his team proudly. After all, they were a middle-level team that could explore a space fracture. On the other hand, many explorers' teams could only explore third-level unclaimed territories in their own blue planet.

Fan Xiaoyu felt vexed by the fact that her brother had been looked down upon. In her mind, since young, her big brother had always been a genius superior to many others!

Her brother was a celebrity at the academy. After he graduated, he had achieved his current position and strength and joined a second-level team, all in a matter of a few years. His future was promising!

Still, he had just been despised!

*"How annoying!"*

If it weren't for the memory that Su Ping could break her brother's arm easily, Fan Xiaoyu would have talked back. But the world was one that was run by fists. While she was unhappy about Su Ping's attitude, she had to admit that compared to her brother, this despicable store owner was a more powerful man. A peculiar and odd one at that!

He opened a store there to live out his life in retirement instead of fighting and training in pioneering excursions when he was so young. This was a complete waste of his talent!

Su Ping paid no heed to how the siblings reacted. His eyebrows were knitted together as he pondered about the risks of this trip.

"System, are there any tools for protection?" Su Ping asked in his mind.

The system replied, "No."

*“Seriously!”*

He could not count on this stupid system.

Su Ping was grinding his teeth inside.

While running into ninth-rank Astral Pets was the worst that could happen, he had to be prepared.

Fan Xiaoyu and Fan Yujing didn't make a sound. They waited for Su Ping's reply quietly. At the end of the day, exploring the barren land was not like playing house or making jokes. People could lose their lives!

A long moment later, the glow in Su Ping's eyes dimmed down. He lifted his eyes to look at the siblings and inquired, “Aren't you going to buy something?”

“...”

The siblings, who were looking forward to his decision, almost spat out of blood in frustration.

*“What is wrong with your brain?”*

*“We said so many words and all of them went down the drain?!”*

“Sir, sir...” Fan Yujing's lips were trembling.

Su Ping said, “Don't misunderstand me. I will go with you. But before that, aren't you going to make a purchase?”

“What?” Fan Yujing opened his eyes in astonishment and asked, “Are you willing to help?”

Su Ping nodded and repeated his words, “Pick some goods now. All the items in the store are of high quality. You know that. Well, buy something expensive. What's the point of having money if you don't spend it?”

The siblings, who were momentarily happy due to the surprise, were stunned speechless by Su Ping's words.

Well, indeed, they had also gone there to buy more goods. They felt relieved, given that Su Ping had agreed to join them in the exploration. They began to browse the goods on the shelf.

“What? This...” Fan Yujing's sight landed on a pale-white bone lotus instantly. He was shocked after seeing the price tag. “Is that worth 1.2 million coins?”

Su Ping's eyes sparkled. “Do you want that?”

Fan Yujing was dumbstruck.

Was Su Ping trying to rip them off?

Despite the fast money-making chances explorers had, it was still hard for them to make more than a million.

“What... does it do?” Fan Yujing couldn't help but ask. Last time, the treasured food that was said to be able to inspire intelligence was sold at 20,000 coins. But the price for this lotus was 60 times that!

Su Ping introduced it with a smile, "It can help an advanced undead pet to directly rise a rank. If you have a ninth-rank pet of the undead, there is a 5% chance that the pet can become a Beast King after consuming this."

The siblings were wide-eyed and could not make a sound.

That food could promote an advanced pet one rank directly. Did such a thing exist in reality?

There was a chance that a pet at the peak of the ninth rank could evolve into a Beast King?

As informed as Fan Yujing was, he had only heard about such treasures in legends. He had never seen one in real life. He just thought those were only things made up to spice up a story. How could he believe that such an item was being sold there?

"Do you want to buy it?" Su Ping pressed him.

Fan Yujing recovered from his shock. He pulled up the corner of his mouth and smiled. "Well, we don't have contracts with any undead pets. So, I don't think we're going to buy it."

Su Ping pulled a long face at once.

*"What are you smiling about if you don't want to buy it?"*

### **Chapter 53: Bloodthirsty Little Skeleton**

Eventually.

Following Su Ping's recommendations, the Fan siblings picked some pet food they needed and spent 67,000 coins.

That sum of money was converted to 670 energy points automatically.

"Sir, may I know your family name?"

"Su."

"Mr. Su, when can we leave?"

Fan Yujing was more concerned about finding his teammate's pet than the precious pet food he had just bought.

Su Ping didn't reply to this question directly. Rather, he answered with another question, "How long are the day and night in the space fracture?"

Since that was an unknown world, the alternation between day and night would be different from that on the blue planet. Maybe, it would be in the daytime in the space fracture while it was nighttime in the blue planet.

This was common. For instance, consider the Chaotic Realm of the Undead... Su Ping had never seen the sun there.

"What?"

Fan Yujing was surprised by this question.



Su Ping had to be a professional since he noticed this point.

Only senior explorers that would go in and out of space fractures would pay attention to such details.

The time difference might appear to be an issue of little consequence, but it could be critical to the daily schedule of some Astral Pets!

The majority of Astral Pets of the demon family would hide by day and come out at night. During the nighttime, such Astral Pet's would be more aggressive and thirstier for blood!

Previously, when Su Ping was hesitating, Fan Yujing was still having doubts about him. However, at that moment, Fan Yujing felt he had underestimated this store owner.

Someone that could break his arm easily was more powerful. How could Su Ping not be afraid of space fractures?

"The space fracture was just discovered. We haven't registered the existing alternation between day and night yet," Fan Yujing confessed.

Su Ping said, "Can you have your teammates wait there and guard by the entrance? We can go in at once when daylight comes on the other side."

Fan Yujing nodded, but at the same time he still had questions, "What if it would take a long time for the day to arrive? Wouldn't we have to wait for several days?"

Su Ping replied in a low voice, "We will set off tonight at the latest."

Su Ping was also unwilling to wait for that long. They would have to take actions overnight if they couldn't wait for the day to come in that space fracture. Otherwise, if they postponed their actions for too long, the lost Astral Pet could be murdered and his quest would fail.

"Sure," Fan Yujing agreed at once.

His bottom line was to set off by the evening of the following day at the latest, or the chances to find his teammate's pet would be small.

"Off you go. Come to this address to wait for me at 10:00 tonight." Su Ping found a pen to write down an address close to his home and handed it to Fan Yujing.

Fan Yujing took it and read the note. "Sure. Let me go back and get ready."

Su Ping nodded. "Of course."

As the siblings almost crossed the door, Su Ping stopped them at once, "Wait."

"Yes?" Fan Yujing turned around in surprise.

"Aren't you going to buy more?"

"..."

After the two were sent off, Su Ping took a look at the energy points he had collected. Counting what was left from before, he had more than 700 energy points in total.

*“We’re looking for a pet of the fire family with an advanced bloodline, the Fire-tailed Blood Fox. Unfortunately, the Fire Herb was sold out. The only thing left is the ‘Fire Dragon Fruit’.”*

Su Ping picked up a bottle of Fire Dragon Fruit from the shelf. There were eight pieces of fruit inside and each was worth more than 300 coins. This was a kind of food that was favored by pets of the fire family. The fruit could increase the density of fire elements inside such pets and enhance the power of attacks involving fire.

To accomplish the task, he would have to use the Fire Dragon Fruit as bait.

He tried hard to mollify his aching heart. Su Ping placed the Fire Dragon Fruit into his storage space. Then, he went to the pet room and cast an identification spell on the Little Skeleton that was soundly asleep.

Bloodthirsty Little Skeleton

Property: pet of the demon family

Rank: third rank

Combat Strength: 7.8

Aptitudes: Below average

Abilities Mastered: Regeneration, Undead Enslaving, Intermediate Saberplay, Puppetry, Rotting Flesh, Darkness Blinding, Deadly Roar

Compared to when they came back from the Chaotic Realm of the Undead, there had been some shifts in the Little Skeleton’s interface.

Its rank had been elevated. When they came back from the Chaotic Realm of the Undead, the Little Skeleton was at the upper position of the second rank. It had already reached the third rank at the moment.

Its combat strength had advanced to 7.8 from 7.4, which implied that the Little Skeleton could compare favorably with a pet at the upper position of the seventh rank.

However, its aptitude rating dropped from above average to below average.

But what stood out more was the addition of “Bloodthirsty” in front of the Little Skeleton’s name.

Every piece of change was related to one item, the treasure that was worth 15 million coins, the Blood Bead!

This Blood Bead was still hovering inside the Little Skeleton’s skull but had shrunk in size. The Little Skeleton had absorbed a fair portion of the Blood Bead. This was the reason for the elevation in rank, combat strength, and constitution. The Little Skeleton had more potential. It evolved from a regular Skeleton-Pet to a Bloodthirsty Skeleton-Pet!

Amongst all the skeletons, bloodthirsty skeletons were pets with middle-rank bloodlines. That being said, amongst all the middle-rank Astral Pets, the bloodthirsty skeletons were at the bottom and even an adult skeleton would only have a combat strength of the fourth rank.

Yet, compared to the original average skeleton kind, the bloodthirsty skeleton kind was much better.

This could explain something.

The Little Skeleton had become more talented but its combat strength did not increase markedly. Therefore, amongst its peers, the Little Skeleton's aptitude could only be rated as below average.

Of course, its peers were not the common skeletons, but the bloodthirsty skeletons that were superior.

Amongst all the bloodthirsty skeletons born since the beginning of chaos, what the Bloodthirsty Little Skeleton had could only be regarded as below average.

Luckily, since that quest had been finished, even the drop of aptitude ratings would not affect Su Ping.

After all, the Little Skeleton had absorbed enough energy from the Blood Bead, completely changing its bloodline to that of a Skeleton King. Given its incipient combat strength in contrast to such a constitution overhaul, it was understandable that its aptitude rate would be lower.

"Little fella, time to get up."

Su Ping woke up the Little Skeleton.

Some red sparkles shot out from the Little Skeleton's empty eye sockets as it regained consciousness. The Little Skeleton sat up and looked at Su Ping in a daze.

Su Ping told the Little Skeleton to leave the nursing pen, then he took it to the store and closed the shutter door.

Su Ping said in his mind, "Cultivation plane window."

Yes, he wanted to pay a visit to a cultivation plane. But, he was not going to train the Little Skeleton. The true aim was to give the Little Skeleton enough time to absorb the Blood Bead.

After all, one day in the cultivation plane was merely an hour in the real world.

He had more than half a day left before the rendezvous at 10:00 that evening, so he could stay in a cultivation plane for about a week.

A week of nurturing with the Blood Bead would improve the Little Skeleton's constitution and strength.

Given the Little Skeleton's current status, improving its constitution would be much better than finding an advanced cultivation plane for it to fight.

After all, the Little Skeleton had almost reached the limit of its potential when it fought in the Chaotic Realm of the Undead. Plain fighting and dying would not necessarily improve the Little Skeleton's combat strength in the short term.

Besides, if they were to engage in fights, the Blood Bead in the Little Skeleton's skull would have to be taken out, or else the Blood Bead would be lost when the Little Skeleton died. That would delay the absorption of the Blood Bead.

Soon.

Su Ping found the low-level cultivation plane he went to last time, the Extraterrestrial Meteorite Region 1002.

The charge for admission was merely one energy point.

Su Ping chose that cultivation plane without any hesitation.

That plane had little danger. Once they got there, he could summon the Little Skeleton back to his pet space and then enjoy seven days in that plane. Plus, he could collect some pet food.

Even if he used up all 30 deaths that came for free as a gift from the system, he could use some energy points to buy more. The price was merely one-tenth of the admission price.

Time zipped by.

The seven-day trip in the cultivation plane went by in a blink.

Deep at night, Su Ping re-emerged at the store. He came back with uncombed hair and dirty face after seven days in the cultivation plane.

He looked at the time. It was 8:30 in the evening.

Su Ping breathed in relief. He poured out all the pet food in his storage space and asked the system to help him count and put them on the shelf. Then, he took a shower at the store and then he quickly rode back to his home.

#### **Chapter 54: Unclaimed Territory No. 38**

“Mom, I’m back.”

“How come you’re so early today?”

“There haven’t been many customers recently.”

“Oh. Wash your hands, I’ll heat up your meal.”

Su Ping went to wash his hands and returned to sit at the table.

While waiting, he was wondering if he should let the family know that he had awakened as a battle pet warrior.

After all, fire couldn’t be wrapped up in paper. It was only a matter of time before his sister and mother found out about him.

Soon, some hot dishes were delivered to Su Ping.

Su Ping was surprised, since he saw some meat in the dishes. “She skipped dinner?”

Judging by the astral power vortices upstairs, Su Ping knew that his sister had been home for a good while. However, there was meat in the dishes left for him. What a miracle!

Li Qingru was happy that he would think of his little sister. "She already had dinner. This is another share I saved for you."

Su Ping understood.

No wonder...

"Mom." Su Ping hesitated for a moment, ready to spill the beans about his awakening.

"Mom," someone said at the staircase.

Su Ping's words were stuck in his throat.

Then, someone hurried down the stairs and went to the dinner table. She sounded surprised as she asked, "Mom, didn't I finish all the dishes? Where did this come from?"

Su Ping curled his lips. *"She finished them all..."*

*"How cruel!"*

Li Qingru said, "I cooked some more."

Su Lingyue pouted after she heard the answer, but she regained calmness soon enough. She stared at him coldly and asked, "Why are you back home so early today? The store should be open at this hour."

Su Ping talked back grumpily, "What's it to you?"

"What?"

Su Lingyue raised her eyebrows?

*"How dare you talk to me like this?"*

*"What gave you the courage?"*

She sat down casually and threw out a remark, "It's been a long time since I did some exercise."

Su Ping pretended not to have noticed the hostility in those words. He just replied with curiosity, "Haven't you been participating in contests? How could you not exercise? Are you saying that you're cowering at the back and shouting while the pets do all the work for you?"

The table trembled.

The iron spoon held by Su Lingyue was bent a little bit.

"Hmm. Interesting."

She smiled, showing her teeth.

She stretched out her fingers and the iron spoon in her hand was straightened at once.

"Hmm." Su Ping grinned as well.

He grinned and ate at the same time.

Su Lingyue looked at him with a smile for a while. Then, she looked away and said to Li Qingru, “Mom, I’ll take a shower now.”

“Sure. The water heater should be ready now.” Li Qingru nodded. “Go ahead. I’ll have your clothes ready in a moment.”

“Thanks, mom.”

Su Ping quickly finished the last bits of his dinner as Su Lingyue was leaving. Making the most of the time while trouble was away, Su Ping mentioned after some thought, “Mom, I have some errands to run tonight. I need to go away and may come back late.”

Su Ping knew that he probably couldn’t return home that night, even though he claimed he would be back late.

However, he had to act first and report later so that he could leave the house.

“Errands? What errands?” Li Qingru was surprised.

Su Ping had prepared an excuse for this. “It’s about the pet store. A customer asked me to drop by for some home service...”

Li Qingru was relieved since it was something related to the store. She gave her permission. “Then take care and come back early.”

“Sure.”

Su Ping lingered at the table for a while, so that he wouldn’t appear to be in a hurry. Then, before his sister came out from her shower, he took off in case she would disrupt his plan.

...

...

A black SUV was parked under the shade of some trees on a remote street.

Two figures were leaning against the door, one of them smoking.

“Brother Fan, is this guy as strong as you described? He can break your arm easily. He must be as good as our team leader, right?” the man smoking asked in curiosity.

The other young man wearing a black t-shirt and ripped jeans replied, “Possibly. Anyway, the man is a genius. He is quite young. I think he can become a battle pet warrior with titles in the future.”

The smoking man sounded amazed as he replied, “Are you serious? Is he that good?”

Fan Yujing shrugged. Who could foretell the future?

At the moment, Fan Yujing looked from the corner of his eye. He said at once, “He’s here.”

The two men looked over. From the other end of the street came a slim man wearing casual clothes.

While he was approaching, the man who was smoking was sizing the former up and down as well. Just like Fan Yujing had mentioned, this man was young. But he was suppressing his aura; the smoking man could not tell how strong this young man was.

“Sorry for making you wait.”

Su Ping could see the black SUV parked under the tree from a distance, Fan Yujing who was standing in front of the car and another unfamiliar man with profound astral powers. Su Ping supposed that the other man was Fan Yujing’s teammate.

“We’ve only been here for a short while.”

Fan Yujing smiled. He was surprised; Su Ping didn’t seem to be carrying any weapons, but he didn’t ask him about it.

The most powerful weapon a battle pet warrior could have was the pet itself. As for firearms, there was no lack of such items in their explorers’ base but few would use them.

“Mr. Su, this is my teammate, Li Ying,” Fan Yujing introduced the man who was smoking to Su Ping.

That man put out his cigar and gave Su Ping a friendly greeting, “Nice to meet you. I’ve heard so much about you.”

“Nice to meet you.”

Su Ping went directly to his question after this exchange of pleasantries, “What’s the current situation over there? Is it daytime yet?”

Fan Yujing appeared to be in a bitter mood. He heaved a sigh and said, “Not yet.”

Su Ping frowned but he had been expecting this. “Let’s go.”

“Sure.”

Fan Yujing opened the side door for Su Ping.

Su Ping said, “I call shotgun.”

With that said, he went to the front passenger seat.

Fan Yujing didn’t mind. He sat in the driver’s seat, then started the SUV and dashed out after Li Ying sat down as well.

“Mr. Su, I heard that you run a pet store. Your pets must be powerful.”

Li Yi took the initiative to start the conversation. He was also trying to probe Su Ping. Li Ying trusted Fan Yujing, but exploring an unclaimed territory was not a joking matter. One careless decision and people could die.

Su Ping looked at Li Ying through the rearview mirror. “If you say so.”

Li Ying smiled. “Mr. Su, you’re quite the modest one. Can I ask your name?”

“Su Ping.”

While driving, Fan Yujing finally came to know Su Ping's full name. He committed it to memory.

"Brother Su, I think you're in your early twenties. Usually people at this age are still studying in the academy. Brother Su, did you graduate early?" Li Ying posed another question curiously.

Almost all the battle pet warriors were trained in schools. Alternative ways to train battle pet warriors were quite rare.

Su Ping only replied with a smile.

Su Ping was avoiding the question but Li Ying was unwilling to let go. He pressed Su Ping on this topic, "Brother Su, I heard from Brother Fan that you broke his arm. Is that true? Brother Su, are you an advanced battle pet warrior?"

Su Ping frowned. He was only on a quest. He didn't wish to be grilled like this.

While sitting on the side, Fan Yujing could tell that Su Ping was unhappy. He tried to break the ice, "Brother Su, our explorers' base is kind of far away. You can take a nap if you're tired."

Su Ping rolled his eyes at him. "Why would I go and explore with you if I were tired?"

"Talk to me about the exploration," Su Ping said, "I've never been on one and want to know more."

Fan Yujing found that surprising. Why has Su Ping never gone to any exploration given his strength? If so, why did he notice the importance of the time difference?

Anyways, since Su Ping had posed this question, Fan Yujing could not doubt him. He explained to him, "The space fracture found this time is in unclaimed territory No.38 outside Longjinag Base City. Our team is temporarily stationed at the explorer's base there."

## **Chapter 55: Explorers' Base**

"Unclaimed territory No.38?"

Su Ping did know that the 500 or so unclaimed territories around the globe had numbers designated. The unclaimed territory No. 38 must have been discovered a long time ago, given its small number.

"Yes." Fan Yujing nodded and continued, "Unclaimed territory No.38 is a Class B territory. Throughout history, there were several Beast Kings found but they have all been eradicated. At the moment, there are only traces of advanced pets."

Su Ping nodded.

Even the general public knew about the classification of the unclaimed territories.

Generally speaking, there were five classes labeled ABCDEF, representing five different danger levels.

Amongst the five, unclaimed territories of Class A, B, and C were unstable areas. They became unclaimed territories because of the frequent appearance of space fractures.



As for Class D and Class E territories, the former became deserted after the war. Nuclear radiation and mutated germs were abundant in such areas. Many Astral Pets living there were infected by the germs. Large-scale plagues and illnesses would break out. That was why such areas were isolated and marked as deserted regions.

Class E unclaimed territories on the blue planet were places with scant resources and harsh environments. There were no human settlements in those places. Such areas became habitats for wild Astral Pets and gradually, they became unclaimed territories.

Su Ping intended to seek confirmation, "I heard that middle-rank and advanced pets frequent Class B unclaimed territories. Is that correct?"

Class B Unclaimed territories were rather dangerous. At the very least, the freshly graduated battle pet warriors were not qualified to go. Those fresh graduates would have to go to Class C unclaimed territories or even Class E areas to explore and train. If their performance was outstanding, after three to five years, they could be assigned to Class B unclaimed territories.

Fan Yujing admitted, "It's mostly middle-rank pets there. The advanced pets are rare. We only get to see advanced pets once every two to three explorations, unlike Class A areas. I heard that you can find advanced pets on every trip to Class A territories, and the mortality rate is high!"

As he spoke of Class A unclaimed territories, Fan Yujing couldn't help but feel appalled.

"A one in three chance..." Su Ping blinked.

That was acceptable.

He could deal with it as long as they didn't encounter any Beast Kings.

Soon, the SUV got onto the city's highway. When they were passing through the toll gate, they were allowed to go without having to swipe their card.

Just then, Su Ping found out it was because of the SUV's license plates.

The license plates were the pass.

On special occasions, they could even run a red light!

Su Ping had heard stories about the benefits enjoyed by explorers. Once, an explorer shot down some civilians who had offended him.

News reported that the explorer was taken into custody and punished with confinement.

As to whether that explorer was really "confined," nobody knew. The public would not probe, either.

Anyways, it implied that explorers didn't have to be sentenced to death when they killed someone!

The general public was well aware that explorers were not people to be offended.

After running down the highway for about an hour, they finally arrived at the border of the base city.

Few people resided at the border. Buildings were far apart from each other, but the roads here were wide and sturdy.

Su Ping looked up from his car window. It was a high wall that stood towering like a giant.

That was the base city's border wall.

The wall could fend off the invasion of wild Astral Pets, and more importantly, invasion of Beast Kings!

*"It's so high..."*

The views he saw on television were entirely different after seeing the wall in person. Su Ping was amazed at the wall; it was at least two to three hundred meters tall. This was a magnificent project!

Down the highway was an asphalt road that was surrounded by weeds and wilderness on the sides.

Ahead of them was the exit leading to outside the city. Lamps lit the road.

As they were driving out of the city, there would be occasional cars driving in the opposite direction, brushing past them.

"They are adventurers." Fan Yujing glanced at them and explained, "They didn't pass the exam to join any teams after graduation, and have to work for private companies as battle pet warriors."

Su Ping nodded.

There were two paths for the battle pet warrior. The first was to join the explorers' teams.

The second was to work in a private company.

Although most of the private companies could not compare to federal departments, some forces were financially sound. They could offer benefits as good as those enjoyed by the explorers' teams, but such private companies would have stricter requirements. Their recruiting requirements were even stricter than those for the explorer's teams!

Soon, they arrived at the city exit.

Armies were stationed there day and night. When Fan Yujing and the team arrived, over a dozen people landed their gazes at the party.

"Inspection." An army officer stepped over.

Fan Yujing rolled down the window and presented a medallion with a black wolf head.

The army officer stood in awe and saluted immediately, then he allowed Fan Yujing to pass, not even looking inside the vehicle.

The path to leave the city extended for dozens of meters. One could imagine how thick the wall was.

The land outside the base city was overgrown with underbrush.

Such a wasteland could not be seen inside the base city, except for the shantytown at the outermost edge of the city where some kids lived.

But that wasteland had several roads which led to different directions.

The roads were not as clean or intact as those in the city, but it posed no difficulty for SUVs. Fan Yujing chose a path, hurried on, and arrived at a fortress after more than half an hour.

The fortress had been built with huge boulders; there were regular buildings inside.

“This is the base for unclaimed territory No. 38.”

Fan Yujing parked his car outside the base and got off with Su Ping and Li Ying. Fan Yujing presented his medallion and they were allowed in without any hindrance.

It was more like a marketplace in the city.

It was lively.

It was nighttime, but there were road lamps illuminating the place. The area had a power supply.

There were shabby stalls along the road, displaying strange things; weird-looking plants, young cubs, and even eggs.

At the sight of the eggs, Su Ping remembered the one he had.

He wondered if his egg had been hatched...

“The goods we obtain during explorations will be sold here and on the explorers trading web as well,” Fan Yujing smiled and said, “Becoming an explorer is a risky choice but it is a profitable job as well. If you’re lucky, you can make in one mission what the general public has to spend a life to make.”

Su Ping nodded. He had little interest in becoming an explorer.

As for making money.

At the end of the day, explorers were wage earners as well. The real money-making people were the big potatoes that could enjoy the company of beautiful ladies and wine in the base cities. Those big potatoes didn’t have to risk their lives or work hard. They simply filled their pockets by taking a portion of the explorers’ hard-earned money.

Soon.

Fan Yujing showed Su Ping to a small one-story house.

“Guys, I have a new friend for you!” Fan Yujing shouted, laughing.

Two people stepped out of the house. One of them was a middle-aged man in his forties with a bulky build. He had whiskers. His muscles attested to his strength.

The other person was a young lady, slender and pretty. Su Ping knew her.

“Your sister?”

Su Ping was astounded.

“What’s wrong with that?” Fan Xiaoyu rested her hands on her hips in anger.

Fan Yujing couldn't help bursting into laughter. "My sister is here to train herself. She's in third-grade and about to graduate. It was actually an arrangement set by the academy."

Su Ping was speechless after seeing Fan Yujing's smug smile. How careless would Fan Yujing have to be, to be this happy knowing his sister would tag along to explore the unclaimed territory?

Su Ping blurted out his question, "Will she slow us down if she comes with us?"

"You!"

Fan Xiaoyu was fuming with rage.

*"Slow them down??"*

Since young, she had been the one pushing others forward!

## **Chapter 56: A Test of Strength**

Fan Yujing smiled as he gave Su Ping an explanation, "Brother Su, you don't have to worry. My sister won't be joining us. She's not qualified enough yet, and can only stay in the outer edge of the unclaimed territory. She will be safe with other teams protecting her."

This resolved Su Ping's concern. He followed up with another question out of curiosity, "Didn't you say that, usually, students can only train in Class C unclaimed territories?"

Fan Yujing sounded proud, "My sister's grade is excellent and the academy she is studying in is a famous one as well. So, she was directly recommended to the Class B unclaimed territory. The academy contacted an explorers' team that is as good as ours to escort her all the way here, and to accompany her to explore the outer edge."

"I see."

Su Ping had a clear idea after that.

That was the advantage and benefit that came with studying in a famous academy in the upper town, much better than the benefits offered by the academy Su Ping's sister was in.

Both academies proclaimed themselves to be famous, but the one in the upper town was well-known in the entire Longjiang Base City, whereas the other was in the lower town area, and its fame was limited to the lower town and the outskirts.

"Hmm!"

Fan Xiaoyu retorted with a proud face, "Don't belittle me just because I'm a student. I am a middle-level battle pet warrior at the upper position of the fourth rank. Besides, I have two fifth rank pets. In most cases where sixth rank pets are not involved, I can protect myself and get away!"

"That is good." Su Ping nodded.

That kind of strength could earn her a place amongst the best students in the academy, similar to the master of that Lightning Rat. Fan Xiaoyu was even better in comparison. She was one step away from becoming a fifth rank battle pet warrior.

Fan Xiaoyu raised her eyebrows. She was unhappy because of Su Ping's calm reaction.

But she could only feel vexed about it, since she recalled the strength Su Ping demonstrated at the pet store. She was outstanding as it was, but Su Ping was freakishly strong.

*"This is so annoying!"*

She clenched her teeth.

The whiskered strong man had been watching while Su Ping and Fan Xiaoyu were bickering. He asked after the two finished their exchange, "Fan, is this your new friend?"

Fan Yujing said at once, "Captain, this is the genius that I told you about. Brother Su, this is our captain, Fan Ganglie, an advanced battle pet warrior."

"Heroes come from the young. Brother Su, you're so young. You are twenty, right?" Fan Ganglie's voice was hoarse and vigorous, but gentle at the same time.

Su Ping said, "I'm 18."

"Only 18?"

Fan Xiaoyu and Fan Yujing were stunned speechless.

How could Su Ping be this strong at the age of 18?

This fact came as a greater shock to Fan Xiaoyu because she was also 18. They had the same age, but the gap between their strengths was huge!

Fan Ganglie and Li Ying were shocked as well. They knew that Su Ping was young, but he turned out to be even younger than he looked. He was practically their younger brother.

How could they ask a kid like Su Ping to go with them and explore the space fracture?

Su Ping frowned as he saw their reaction. He only went there to finish the quest. He didn't want to deal with unexpected problems or to be forced to prove something.

"Well..." Fan Ganglie looked at Fan Yujing with questions and doubts in his eyes.

He had heard stories about Su Ping from Fan Yujing. But once he met him in person, Fan Ganglie found it hardly believable.

A man at the age of 18 could defeat Fan Yujing. Wouldn't this man be a top student that could only be trained by some big forces? Why would someone like him show up to explore the unclaimed territory with them?

Fan Yujing collected himself. The meaning of the looks Li Ying and the captain darted at him were obvious. Fan Yujing himself was hesitating. Could it be that it wasn't Su Ping that injured him but someone else?

If that was the case, then inviting Su Ping was a big mistake.

Fan Yujing was in a dilemma.

Fan Ganglie intervened with a remark. He didn't question Su Ping directly, which would be a foolish action taken only by people with low EQ. Intending to feel Su Ping out he said, "Brother Su, our trip to the space fracture will be incredibly dangerous. If you want to join our team, you have to register first. Besides, for better cooperation during the battles, we hope you can call out your pet and let us get to know each other."

After the pet testing, they could have a better understanding of Su Ping's abilities.

Su Ping could tell what was on Fan Ganglie's mind and knew that this was a subtle way to sound him out. Su Ping felt troubled but he had to play along. He stressed, "Sure, but note this: I'm not here to join your team. I'm only here to help. I will leave as soon as the lost pet is found. I do not plan on becoming an explorer."

If it weren't for the quest, he wouldn't have gone there in the first place.

Wasn't it more convenient to make money while sitting at the store? Why would he want to challenge death out in the field?

Fan Ganglie was surprised. Soon, he came back to his senses. If Su Ping had such abilities, given his talent, it was natural that he wouldn't want to be an explorer.

"Of course," Fan Ganglie agreed. "But the Federation has rules. Anyone that goes into a space fracture must be an explorer. Brother Su, you can first sign up as a temporary explorer. While the benefits enjoyed by temporary explorers are fewer, the basics are all there."

"Temporary?" Su Ping raised his eyebrows.

"That's right. You will see that in the contract when you sign up later," Fan Ganglie said seriously, "Now, Brother Su, please let us see your pet."

Su Ping took a glance at the group. They all appeared to be concerned about whether his ability would be up to standard. If not, Fan Yujing would have wasted his trip and they would have to see their hope fall through.

"Okay."

The mysterious runes telltale of a pet space appeared as he summoned with his mind.

The Little Skeleton fell out from that pet space and smashed onto the ground, accompanied by a crisp sound.

"..."

Nobody said a thing.

But soon, the scattered bones were reassembled. The Little Skeleton patted its head, looked down to check the bone blade inserted by its hipbone, and then ran to Su Ping. The Little Skeleton looked around for enemies.

“...”

Still, nobody made a sound.

The Little Skeleton was looking around. The other people's faces appeared to be twitching.

After a long while, Fan Xiaoyu became the first to talk. She whispered her question, “Is this your pet?”

“What else do you think?”

“...”

Fan Xiaoyu was hopping mad.

*“That’s just a skeleton. What’s there to be proud of!”*

Fan Yujing felt embarrassed as well. If something went wrong with Su Ping’s strength, then he would be the one making the biggest mistake.

He took up the unpleasant task and asked, “Mr... Su, do you only have this one pet?”

Su Ping nodded. “This is the only one I have for now.”

Fan Yujing felt he had been slapped in the face.

Fan Xiaoyu looked at Su Ping in confusion. “Don’t you run a pet store? How come you only have this one pet?”

“Are you implying that wedding planners have to get married every day?”

Out of habit, Su Ping retorted even though he knew that wasn’t what Fan Xiaoyu meant. Su Ping turned around, then he looked at the space by the side and gave the Little Skeleton a mental instruction, “Intermediate Saberplay!”

The Little Skeleton heeded the order and drew its blade at once.

Other than Fan Ganglie, maybe no one else was paying close attention to the little thing; they didn’t see how the Little Skeleton drew its blade.

Fan Ganglie barely saw a blur. By the time he could see clearly, the little skeleton was holding the blade tightly.

The Little Skeleton’s posture was a bit intimidating!

Slash!

Bang!!

The bone blade was wielded. An explosive sound was heard and a ray of black saber aura was released. The ground burst open, leaving a deep crack all of a sudden!

## **Chapter 57: The Explorers’ Warehouse**

Fan Ganglie, Fan Xiaoyu, and all the others were dumbfounded.

The dark crack on the ground that extended for seven to eight meters with a width of half a meter startled them all.

None of them, except for Fan Ganglie, would have withstood such a powerful attack!

Was it done by the Little Skeleton?

Was it a low-level skeleton?!

When the group cast their looks on the Little Skeleton again, they soon noticed there was something different about it.

The Little Skeleton's bones were not pale white, but black. There seemed to be some blood-red glow flowing inside its bones, just like blood. Besides, there was a red gem the size of a thumb in the Little Skeleton's skull. The gem was like the Little Skeleton's soul and it kept emitting a weird scarlet luster.

"This is..."

Fan Ganglie shifted his attention back to Su Ping. A skeleton that could cut this deep with one slash had to be a middle-rank pet, at the very least!

Moreso, when did skeletons ever learn to use saberplay? Not to mention such a formidable saberplay. It implied that the skeleton had undertaken professional saber training!

Su Ping told the Little Skeleton to sheathe its blade and asked the group, "Is this good enough for you?"

Fan Ganglie's eyes shone. He was convinced that it was just a sampling of what the skeleton was capable of; its real power was still hidden. That was to say, the skeleton was a pet at the middle-level at the very least.

Although Su Ping was probably not an advanced battle pet warrior as Fan Yujing had speculated, he was already qualified by explorer standards.

"No problem."

Fan Ganglie stopped his mind from wandering and said to Fan Yujing, "Take him to the registration booth. Afterward, take him to the warehouse to pick a suit of armor. We will leave when you're ready. There's no time to lose. I'm afraid that the Blood Fox will be in danger if we waste any more time."

Fan Yujing nodded and told Su Ping, "Brother Su, come with me."

Su Ping didn't send the Little Skeleton back to the pet space. He bent over to take out the Blood Bead from the Little Skeleton's skull, in case it would fall off and get lost during battles when they entered the space fracture.

He put the Blood Bead into his pocket and said the name of the storage space in his mind to place the Blood Bead there.

Having finished this, Su Ping went after Fan Yujing.

Fan Xiaoyu, who had been on the side, told them to wait for her and hurried over.



Once they were far enough from the one-story house, Fan Xiaoyu threw a curious look at the Little Skeleton who was staggering along behind Su Ping. She asked, "What kind of skeleton is this? It seems to be out of the ordinary."

"Out of the ordinary?" Su Ping asked, "Do you mean extraordinarily handsome like me?"

Fan Xiaoyu didn't know how to respond to that. "Forget I asked."

Then the rest of the trip became quiet.

Minutes later.

They arrived at a magnificent building in the heart of the base. Fan Yujing took the lead and went in. The hall was spacious but few people were there, taking into account it was in the dead of night.

They approached an automatic machine placed by the side of the hall. Fan Yujing asked Su Ping, "Did you bring your ID card? If not, stand there and have your iris scanned. The system will record your information and gain access to the civil affairs bureau. From here on, everything about you will become a secret."

Of course, Su Ping didn't bring his ID card with him. He followed Fan Yujing's instructions and stepped on the footboard in front of the machine. Fan Yujing helped Su Ping to go through the options on the screen: "Explorer Registration-Temporary-Authentication-Iris Authentication," etc.

A rock-arm camera slowly moved in front of Su Ping.

The red light glowed and Su Ping's iris was scanned.

At the same time, everything about Su Ping was presented on the screen.

Su Ping

Gender: Male

Age: 18

Education: Blue Dragon Kindergarten, Saint Oriole Elementary School, Saint Oriole Middle School, and Baiwu High School

Family Connections:

Mother: Li Qingru

Sister: Su Lingyue

Father: Su Yuanshan

Mother's Identity...

Sister's Identity...

...

Su Ping saw the excruciatingly detailed information of him; so specific that even his hair was introduced. The surprise he felt gradually shifted to terror.

Just with this registration, his background information since he was a kid was collected and even information about his family was recorded in the file!

It meant that the explorers' identity archive system had a high security clearance and could directly acquire related information from other departments whenever necessary.

When the Fan siblings saw Su Ping's age, they were stunned speechless. Su Ping was indeed 18 years old. He didn't lie about his age.

"Registered," Fan Yujing said. He closed the information sheet and did not take another look.

Su Ping thought it would take longer. "That's it?"

Fan Yujing smiled. "The registration for temporary explorers is simple and does not need to be approved, as long as you're invited by a team. I invited you from the team's intranet so you can register directly."

Then, Fan Yujing tapped on the screen and inserted a string of passwords. Soon, their team's web page was pulled up.

On the page were five profile pictures.

Below the five profile pictures was Su Ping's profile picture.

"From now on, you will be our team's temporary explorer. You have to be approved at the base if you want to become a full-time member."

Fan Yujing went on with a smile, "But since you're a temporary explorer, you won't receive any allowance at the base and you won't have an exclusive vehicle assigned. But in other aspects, you will enjoy the same benefits as the other explorers. Anyone that provokes you, as long as they are the initiators, you can just punch them at will. But don't kill people so casually. After all, you're not a formal explorer and you would be subject to a small punishment."

*"Just a little punishment?"*

Su Ping was taken aback. Once again, he had a sense of the privilege enjoyed by explorers.

That being said, the explorers protected the base. They enjoyed a higher status than the army. It wasn't rare for explorers to have such rights.

If any regular person could kill someone like an explorer could, it would be bitterly disappointing to explorers. For the higher-ups at the federal government, that would result in a greater loss.

*"Of course, strength is the rule. A regular person unknown to fame would not be safe in these turbulent days,"* Su Ping said to himself. He couldn't say that all explorers were good people. If some hot-tempered explorer killed an average Joe, then that average Joe's family would have no means to fight back.

That was sad for the weak.

Life was never equal in any world!

“Brother Su, although you are a temporary explorer, you have the basic rights of explorers. During every mission, merits will be distributed according to performance. When merits are accumulated to a certain extent, there will be different welfare benefits. Merit points can also be used to purchase various needed items.”

Fan Yujing smiled and went on, “Brother Su, let me take you to the explorers’ warehouse. Brother Su, you can pick anything you need.”

“Oh?” Su Ping’s eyes glowed. This was interesting.

Soon, they arrived at another building. They logged in on a computer and entered the interface of “Warehouse for Benefit Redemption”.

Fan Yujing introduced, “There are armors, weapons, and cultivation methods you may need, such as the four basic augmentation skills. Academies only teach from the first to the fourth ranks. But here, you can find augmentation skills from the first to the ninth rank.”

## **Chapter 58: Entrance**

“Really?”

Su Ping’s eyes were sparkling.

He had not gone through any teaching in the academy and was utterly ignorant of the augmentation skills.

He was clearly unqualified as a battle pet warrior.

Fan Yujing helped Su Ping open the Warehouse for Benefit Redemption on the screen. A whole variety of items were displayed on the list.

There were different categories of weapons, cultivation methods, treasures, pets, etc.

“Dragon Scale Armor can fend off a physical attack from low to middle-level Astral Pets and greatly reduce the harm inflicted by advanced pets...”

“‘Magical Ape Physical Exercise’: when achieving great mastery, you will be able to dodge bullets, act with agility and have abilities that can compare to an eight-rank Astral Pet...”

“Rippled Ice Fruit: this fruit can help enhance the skill strength of a pet of the water family by two fold.”

“Blue Dragon Hatchling: aptitude still unrated. 50,000 credits required for redemption.”

...

Su Ping’s eyes were confused by the large variety of items. In the cultivation method category, apart from the augmentation skills, there were other skills for physical exercise that battle pet warriors needed, and methods for using various types of weapons.

“I can select whatever I want, right?” Su Ping asked Fan Yujing.

Noticing the looks in Su Ping’s eyes, Fan Yujing had a bad feeling. He produced a forced smile and said, “Brother Su, I cannot afford the high-value items. I can give you whatever you want among the low or middle-value items.”

“Sure.”

Su Ping didn’t make things difficult for Fan Yujing. He chose the four basic skills from the first to the sixth rank which were sold at a cheap price.

“Is that all?” Fan Yujing was surprised to see that Su Ping didn’t want anything else. He had thought that Su Ping would select many low and middle-value items which were coveted by the explorers. They could never have enough consumables.

Fan Yujing thought about it and picked a middle-level armor for Su Ping, one that could fend off attacks from most of the fifth rank pets. The armor could offer some protection.

After the credits were paid, the machine spat out a receipt.

Fan Yujing told Fan Xiaoyu and Su Ping to wait there while he went to the warehouse to pick up the items.

A few minutes later, Fan Yujing came back carrying a black armor in his hand.

“Here are the cultivation methods.” Fan Yujing gave Su Ping a small mobile HDD.

Su Ping took it and put it in his pocket, so he could send the mobile HDD to the storage space.

“Here’s your armor.” Fan Yujing gave Su Ping the armor; afterward, all of them went back to the one-story building.

After they left the base, Fan Ganglie, Li Ying and Fan Yujing summoned their pets.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Three enormous beasts came out from cracks connecting to their contract spaces. They were middle-level Astral Pets, Rock Japalura.

Once Rock Japaluras came of age, they would become fifth-rank Astral Pets. Among all the fifth-rank Astral Pets, Rock Japaluras would not stand out in combat. However, they were useful as steeds to save them from walking and could even climb up steep rocks and cliffs.

The three of them hopped onto the Rock Japaluras’ backs. Su Ping had no riding pet. So, Fan Yujing shouted, “Brother Su, come with me.”

Su Ping didn’t turn down the kind offer. He picked up the Little Skeleton next to his feet, concentrated astral powers on his legs, and hopped onto the back of that Rock Japalura.

Having sensed a strange presence, the Rock Japalura was a bit agitated. It flicked out its long and thin tongue to show its reluctance.

Fan Yujing patted the Rock Japalura and comforted it for a while to calm it down.

“Let’s go.”

Fan Ganglie grabbed the reins and took the lead to head out.

Fan Yujing and Li Ying followed him closely.

They pressed forward at full speed under the night sky.

Once they were unable to see the base behind them, Li Ying mobilized his astral power and opened up the pet space again to call out a flying pet.

That was a bird less than half a meter tall. As soon as the bird came out, it spread its wings and darted into the night sky; it moved at such a fast speed that the bird disappeared within a blink.

A moment later, Li Ying said all of a sudden, “Five kilometers that way, there’s a small pack of beasts.”

Fan Ganglie gave an instruction without hesitation, “Go around them!”

The Rock Japaluras climbed the hills on the side. On the steep hill, Su Ping had to grab Fan Yujing’s shoulders to keep himself from falling.

Half an hour later.

Su Ping began to see some light on the horizon.

He saw a cluster of fire on a plain, a crowd had gathered over there.

As they moved closer, Su Ping could tell that it was a temporary campsite. Seven to eight meters above the campsite was a vertical crack that was shaped like an eye with a length of over twenty meters and a width of seven to eight meters. Inside the crack was a spinning, twisted space.

“That’s the space fracture?” Su Ping was surprised. It was the first time that he had seen one.

Soon, they rode the Rock Japaluras to the campsite. At the gate, the three of them called the Rock Japaluras back to the pet space and then presented their explorer’s chips to enter the campsite.

“Fan?”

When they entered the base, someone greeted them.

Fan Ganglie stood there and cast a glance at the person who called his name. A lean young man with a black dagger hanging on his belt stepped over.

Under the glare of the bonfire by the gate, a long scar on the young man’s cheek was made visible. The scar was somewhat ferocious and added a gloomy nature to that handsome face.

“Sorry to have kept you waiting.” Fan Ganglie smiled as he saw the young man and then he introduced him to Fan Yujing and Li Ying, “This is the lead fighter in the Black Wolf team, Lin Mokong, an advanced battle pet warrior!”

“Advanced battle pet warrior?” Fan Yujing and Li Ying were stunned. They introduced themselves as well and said, “Nice to meet you.”

"I've seen your files." Lin Mokong nodded to them slightly and cast his eyes on Su Ping on the side. "And this is?"

Fan Ganglie answered at once, "This is a helping hand Xiao Fan has solicited, Brother Su Ping."

Lin Mokong sized Su Ping up and down and asked, "Brother Su, were you an explorer before?"

"No," Su Ping replied.

Lin Mokong frowned. He had already noticed this from his observation. Su Ping was in too good a shape. There were no scars on him. He didn't appear to be a senior explorer.

Besides, the armor Su Ping was wearing was too ordinary. Lin Mokong could tell at once that while this was a middle-level armor, it was a cheap one. Rarely any explorers would wear this type of armor in the Class B unclaimed territory.

Fan Ganglie could tell that Lin Mokong was unhappy. So, the former explained hurriedly, "This is an urgent matter. Brother Su is not an explorer but his abilities are up to standard."

Lin Mokong glared at Fan Ganglie. The coldness in his eyes was evident. *"Just up to standard? If that were okay, then anyone could be an explorer!"*

That being said, there was no going back. Lin Mokong's opposition would not bear any meaning at the moment. He just cautioned them, "Listen to my instructions when we go in. Otherwise, don't blame me for being merciless!"

"Don't worry about that," Fan Ganglie promised at once. After all, he was the one who brought Su Ping there. He had to make sure Su Ping behaved.

"Let's go," Lin Mokong said and headed toward the space fracture.

Fan Ganglie turned around, gathered the team, and followed after Lin Mokong.

Fan Yujing was embarrassed by what had happened. He comforted Su Ping, "Brother Su, all explorers are like this, outspoken. Don't mind it."

"No problem." Su Ping nodded.

Of course, he wouldn't mind because he was seeing Lin Mokong in the same way.

## **Chapter 59: Tiger Scale Tapir**

They stepped to the center of the campsite and stood under the space fracture.

"Try to keep up."

Lin Mokong hopped straight into the space fracture in the sky without looking back. Soon, he vanished inside it.

Fan Ganglie reminded Fan Yujing, "This is Brother Su's first time here. Take care of him."

With that said, Fan Ganglie hopped into the space fracture as well.

Li Ying followed him closely.

Fan Yujing told Su Ping, "After you."

Su Ping took a close look at the space fracture. Making sure that it was danger free, he hopped into that fracture.

The moment he dived into that vortex, Su Ping felt space and time were shifting. It was very similar to what he experienced when he entered a cultivation plane.

Suddenly, he landed on the ground and felt a burden being lifted off of his body. Eventually, Su Ping was able to look at the surrounding view. There were people hurrying to and fro behind the space fracture. They were explorers of other teams.

Su Ping looked up. It was a crystal-clear galaxy above his head. Outside the atmospheric layer, there were some stars and planets of various sizes and at different distances. Evidently, this had to be the unknown world Fan Yujing mentioned.

The place was dark. It was also nighttime in that world.

Luckily, after all was said and done, Su Ping was a battle pet warrior with a better visual sense than others. He could see things within 30 meters. But he only saw blurred objects beyond the 30 meter mark.

Whoosh!

With a flash of light, Fan Yujing came as well.

Everyone was there. Fan Ganglie took out a map from his backpack. "This is the most updated map of the areas we have explored. This is the place we went to the last time we came here. The Blood Fox was lost here. Let's go and search."

Everyone was looking at the map, trying to remember the layout and markings.

Su Ping was sure that the price of the map was high. He took a close look and remembered all the routes and lines depicted.

For the moment, nobody knew how vast the world inside this space fracture was. If possible, Su Ping would stay clear of the dark areas noted on the map, since they were still unexplored.

Lin Mokong asked, "Li Ying is in charge of reconnaissance, right?"

Li Ying nodded. He called out that reconnaissance bird from before. That bird dived into the night sky ahead.

Lin Mokong posed another question, "What is the furthest place the bird can reach?"

Li Ying replied, "About 7,500 meters."

"Only 7,500 meters..." Lin Mokong frowned. Compared to what the scouts of his team could do, this distance was quite short. That being said, Li Ying was merely a middle-level battle pet warrior. Lin Mokong couldn't ask too much of him.

The former then said to Fan Ganglie, "Let's spread out, shall we?"

"Sure." Fan Ganglie was thinking about the same thing. He summoned a huge wolf, its body completely black. This was a Bloodthirsty Demon Wolf with a seventh-rank bloodline, very aggressive and suitable for combats at night. It was an adult, judging by the size of this one, unlike the still-growing pets that were used by students at the academies.

Lin Mokong looked at this Bloodthirsty Demon Wolf. He lifted his hand and summoned a python longer than 10 meters. This was a Codson Python. While it was a python, it was incredibly poisonous, one of the most difficult kinds to tackle among all the seventh-rank pets.

Fan Ganglie and the others appeared to be worried as they saw this huge python. Li Ying and Fan Yujing in particular, they seemed to be afraid and reluctant to be near this python.

Usually, ferocious and bloodthirsty pets like this python would easily go out of control. With their abilities, it could instantly kill them with ease once it fell into a frenzy.

They truly believed in Lin Mokong's abilities; he wouldn't lose control over a seventh-rank pet. That being said, this was a matter of life and death. Nobody could afford to be careless.

They had to admit that the Codson Python was intimidating. The moment it appeared, explorers from the other teams cleared a path out of instinct.

"Let's go!" Fan Ganglie shouted.

The Codson Python and the Bloodthirsty Demon Wolf set off side by side and dashed into the darkness ahead.

The further they were away from the campsite at the exit of the space fracture, the duller the darkness would be. No firelight could be seen at all.

Since they entered the space fracture, Su Ping had become quite careful. His mind was more focused than when he was in cultivation planes. He extended the reach of his senses to their limits to feel the surroundings, instead of relying on information collected by Li Ying alone.

Li Ying alerted the team all of a sudden, "There's an unknown Astral Pet up ahead."

He could only discern the number and size of the Astral Pets from the information relayed by the bird, but not the species.

Fan Ganglie wished not to have unexpected problems popping out. He asked, "Is there another way around it?"

Li Ying closed his eyes and opened them a moment later. "All the other routes have Astral Pets there, more than one."

Lin Mokong proposed, "Let's go and take a look, then. We will withdraw if that's an advanced Astral Pet."

Fan Ganglie did not oppose this. It was a simple decision. He was thinking about doing the same thing.



Soon, they were near that area. A giant elephant-sized star pet was found in a forest lake in front of them, drinking water by the lake.

Fan Ganglie took out something like a night-vision device from his backpack. He took a look and said with relief, "That is a sixth-rank Tiger Scale Tapir."

"Kill it." Lin Mokong went on to make a prompt decision.

Fan Ganglie nodded and was ready to engage. But Su Ping frowned. Something felt wrong to him. Seeing that Fan Ganglie was about to take action, Su Ping stopped him. "Wait a minute."

"What?"

Fan Ganglie turned around and looked at Su Ping with confusion.

Lin Mokong knitted his eyebrows. He turned to look at Su Ping as well. He had no good feelings for this new person that had no experience in exploring unclaimed lands. If Su Ping could not produce anything useful, Lin Mokong would tell him to keep his mouth shut for the rest of the trip.

Su Ping asked Fan Ganglie, "Did you get a clear view? Is that the Tiger Scale Tapir?"

Fan Ganglie was surprised by the question. He replied with a frown, "It's the middle of the night, but I can see it clearly."

"Let me see." Su Ping asked to borrow the night-vision device.

"Are you making a scene or are you afraid of death?" Lin Mokong pulled a long face and glared at Su Ping with his ice-cold eyes.

Li Ying was unhappy as well. Clearly, Su Ping was worried that the beast was not a Tiger Scale Tapir but something else. How timid Su Ping was! Besides, Li Ying was sure that their captain would never lie or boast about anything he wasn't sure of. Otherwise, they would have lost their lives many times!

Fan Yujing felt embarrassed. He whispered to Su Ping to persuade him, "Brother Su, the captain surely saw it clearly."

"Right." Fan Ganglie was very certain about the pet he had just seen. Besides, he was convinced that his eyes were not worse than Su Ping's. If he had made a mistake, then there was no way that Su Ping could tell!

Su Ping's face was clouded as he heard their words.

This was a decisive matter in his life. He would not pretend at the moment.

His eyes were cold as he glared, concentrating an emotionless look on Lin Mokong. "Afraid of death? Do all explorers act like you? Simply charging forward without thinking, like morons?"

Lin Mokong was furious. "What did you just say?"

If it weren't for the fact that Su Ping's glare made his heart tremble, Lin Mokong would have drawn the dagger right then.

Su Ping's eyes were as cold as they could get. "Feel the temperature. During this season, if I remember correctly, Tiger Scale Tapirs would not come out for no reason.

"Besides, Tiger Scale Tapirs don't drink much water. They stay hydrated by eating small insects. When they are thirsty, they eat plants to get water. They are omnivorous pets."

The others were surprised.

They felt the breeze blowing. It was chilly. This puzzled the other guys.

Fan Ganglie stared at Su Ping. "Are you being serious?"

Su Ping glared right into his eyes coldly, "Do you think I am kidding?"

Somehow, Fan Ganglie felt his heart beat faster as he looked into Su Ping's eyes. It seemed as if the Su Ping next to him was a completely different person. When they were at the explorers' base, Su Ping appeared to be gentle and mild. However, at the moment, Su Ping's eyes were as cold as if he had seen a dead body. Was this really a person that had never taken part in excursions of unclaimed territories?!

## **Chapter 60: Bloodsoul Beast**

"Let me see again."

Fan Ganglie was a prudent person. He took out the device to take another look. This time, he was extra careful and was certain that the animal was a Tiger Scale Tapir.

"Is it a Tiger Scale Tapir?" Lin Mokong looked at him.

Fan Ganglie was in a bad mood. He handed the device to Lin Mokong and said, "Take a look for yourself."

Lin Mokong put the device on and was sure in an instant, "It is a Tiger Scale Tapir!"

He gave the device back to Fan Ganglie. As the former looked at Su Ping, he turned hostile. Su Ping was courting death by being this extremely suspicious and having cast doubt in the group, making them loose too much time!

Fan Ganglie sensed Lin Mokong's hostile intentions. He heaved a sigh but kept it to himself. Fan Ganglie knew that this was Su Ping's mistake. But to turn on each other during a mission was a taboo. Fan Ganglie said, "Let's finish the job first."

"Hmm!"

Lin Mokong glared at Su Ping. "Don't blame me for being harsh on you if you spout nonsense again!"

With that said, Lin Mokong let his Codson Python charge toward the Tiger Scale Tapir by the lake at once. It was just a sixth-rank pet. His Codson Python was more than qualified to kill that Tiger Scale Tapir!

By the lake, the Tiger Scale Tapir sensed the Codson Python was approaching quickly. It turned around and the moment that it did, Fan Ganglie, who was using the device to observe the battle couldn't help but shout, "Oh no!"

Lin Mokong was surprised to hear this cry of terror. He took out his device to look as well.

This look covered him in goosebumps!

The Tiger Scale Tapir was drinking water by the lake so they could only see one of its flanks. But the moment it turned around, the other half of its body was revealed. There were only bones!

The other half of its head had no flesh and blood, and snake-like tentacles were twisting in its eye sockets; there was an octopus-like creature with tentacles over its skull!

This was indeed a Tiger Scale Tapir but one that had died a long time ago!

Just then, Su Ping was wondering if he had misjudged the situation as well. But Fan Ganglie's scream made him realize that he was right. He reacted quickly, taking away Fan Ganglie's device to look.

"It's a seventh-rank Soul-Spirit Beast!" Su Ping's pupils contracted in fear.

This was a kind of creature that was in the range of lower beings; he had encountered its kind in the Chaotic Realm of the Undead. The creature was small but powerful. More importantly...

Bang!

The Codson Python had zig-zagged its way to the Tiger Scale Tapir rapidly. The latter did not move away. Instead, under the control of the Soul-Spirit Beast, the Tiger Scale Tapir was running toward the Codson Python.

This was just what the Codson Python wished for. It opened its bloody mouth and swallowed the Tiger Scale Tapir at once.

"Sh\*t!"

Su Ping was scared by this. He shouted at Lin Mokong with a grave voice at once, "If you don't want to see your pet dying, make it spit out the Tiger Scale Tapir and get back here. Now!"

Lin Mokong was taken aback. How could Su Ping, a person he despised, shout at him? The murderous intent was rising high in Lin Mokong's eyes. "What did you say?"

Lin Mokong could also tell that the Tiger Scale Tapir was being manipulated by something. But then again, many low-level undead beings could manipulate other creature's bodies. His Codson Python was a pet of the seventh rank. What harm could the Tiger Scale Tapir do even if it were alive, not to mention a dead one?

Since the two were fighting, Fan Ganglie hurried to interfere. All of a sudden, they heard a miserable cry coming from the distance.

They looked over.

The Codson Python that had swallowed the Tiger Scale Tapir was rolling around on the ground in extreme pain. At the same time, dark air covered the Codson Python. That was dark energy that was unique to undead creatures.

“You idiot!”

Su Ping gnashed his teeth. He knew it was too late.

He turned his focus away from the pets and warned Fan Ganglie at once, “We need to leave now. That Codson Python is a goner. The thing sticking on the Tiger Scale Tapir is a seventh-rank Soul-Spirit Beast. Unless your pet is its natural enemy, none of the pets of the same rank will be able to defeat it!”

“Soul-Spirit Beast?” Fan Ganglie, as well as Li Ying and Fan Yujing stood in confusion.

Lin Mokong, who was about to hit Su Ping, was both surprised and angered by Su Ping’s words, “What are you saying now?”

Fan Ganglie had never heard about this Astral Pet but the fact that Su Ping had noticed the odd situation added credibility to his words. Fan Ganglie interposed with his remark, “If this is a seventh-rank pet, we can kill it if we work together.”

“If there’s only one, sure, of course,” Pulling a long face, Su Ping spoke quickly, “But the Soul-Spirit Beast is just a parasite living inside a Bloodsoul Beast. Usually, where there’s a Soul-Spirit Beast, there is Bloodsoul Beast. If I’m not mistaken, that is not water in the lake. It is blood and the Bloodsoul Beast is right there!”

“Bloodsoul Beast?”

Again, the unfamiliar name of a pet shocked them.

“With a seventh-rank Soul-Spirit Beast transferring nutrition to it, this Bloodsoul Beast must be of the ninth-rank at least or even a Beast King!” Su Ping squeezed the words out from between his teeth.

If it weren’t for the fact that he was in an unclaimed territory and that he had to rely on those people present to explore the area, he would have already made his escape.

*“Ninth rank? Beast King?”*

Those words snapped the others into reality. They didn’t know why Su Ping knew this, but they could see how the Codson Python was struggling in pain in the distance. They shivered in fear.

Something that could defeat the ferocious Codson Python in an instant and in such a weird way had to be something extremely lethal.

“Let’s go!”

Fan Ganglie made a prompt decision.

Lin Mokong was surprised. After he came back to his senses, he said in a hurry, “Are you leaving my pet?”

“Well...” For a moment, Fan Ganglie didn’t know what to say. He was the one who invited Lin Mokong to join them. It would be bad publicity if people knew he was asking Lin Mokong to abandon his pet and escape.

“You punk. Are you trying to retaliate against me? Are you making this up and want to see my pet die for nothing?!” Lin Mokong turned his looks to Su Ping; his eyes were beaming with murderous intent.

Su Ping never liked this person. Since Lin Mokong was delaying their retreat, again and again, the murderous intent in Su Ping was stimulated as well. He kept his glare fixed on Lin Mokong and said, “Shut up if you want to stay alive!”

“You!”

Lin Mokong’s face was fierce, and he immediately drew his sword.

At this moment, there was a sudden splash of water in the distance.

In a rush, they looked over. The upper half of the Codson Python that was struggling by the shore had fallen into the lake, stirring up the waters.

The next moment, three blood-red tentacles that were as thick as the Codson Python reached out from the lake, entangling the Codson Python, and dragging it down until it disappeared.

“What...?” Lin Mokong was shocked speechless.

He felt the connection between him and the Codson Python break at that moment.

The only thing he felt from the Codson Python’s consciousness before it died was extreme fear.

“Hurry!”

One look and Su Ping could tell it was the Bloodsoul Beast. He could not say more. He turned around and ran away at once.

Fan Ganglie, Li Ying, and Fan Yujing followed Su Ping out of instinct with their hearts full of terror.

Lin Mokong came back to his senses. He looked awful and his expression changed several times. A moment later, he made up his mind and went after Fan Ganglie and the others.