

Strongest

Chapter 1981 – Trial Difficulty

“What? Even the Guild Leader is going to train?”

“I wonder how far the Guild Leader can reach?”

“Didn’t the Guild Leader say that he would wait for us on the second floor’s training ground? That means he has to pass through the first floor!”

“This trial is so difficult I wonder how the Guild Leader will clear it?”

As Shi Feng approached the first-floor training ground, Zero Wing’s members stopped their respective training and turned to look at Shi Feng, curious to see his performance.

By this time, they had all attempted the training ground’s trial already, so they knew that its difficulty was frustratingly high. Hence, they couldn’t believe that Shi Feng would succeed.

As Shi Feng got increasingly closer to the boundary of the training ground, he did not make any preparations at all—unlike everyone else. Instead, he stepped straight into the training ground, his gait not faltering even in the slightest.

The moment Shi Feng entered the training ground, four beam attacks suddenly appeared and flew straight at him.

The beam attacks of the training ground appeared with no warning at all, making it impossible for players to take preemptive action to evade them. Players had to rely on their sight and quick judgment to dodge the attacks.

Of course, dodging four of such sudden attacks would not be a problem at all for the expert players present, so long as they gave it their all.

However, despite seeing the beam attacks, Shi Feng gave no indication of wanting to dodge them. Instead, he maintained his pace, continuing to walk forward, straight into the attacks.

Xiu... Xiu... Xiu...

In the next moment, Zero Wing's members saw the beam attacks pierce right through their Guild Leader.

However, contrary to everyone's expectations, even after the four beam attacks faded out of existence, Shi Feng still did not get sent flying backward. His pace hadn't even faltered. The beams had apparently passed through Shi Feng to no effect.

"What's going on?"

"I didn't see the Guild Leader making any evasive maneuvers!"

“How did the Guild Leader do it?”

The spectating crowd was stunned as Shi Feng kept moving forward.

The beam attacks that had repeatedly given Zero Wing’s members a terrible beating actually had zero effect against their Guild Leader. Shi Feng did not even sidestep the attacks. Right now, it looked as if Shi Feng was merely taking a leisurely stroll through his backyard as he walked toward the central magic array. The beam attacks would always miss their mark by just one or two centimeters, as if they were actively avoiding Shi Feng, and bypass him ineffectually.

When Shi Feng crossed the 50-yard mark and faced 20-plus beam attacks simultaneously, one of the beams suddenly altered its trajectory just as it was about to reach Shi Feng. However, despite this abrupt change, Shi Feng reacted to it calmly and simply slashed it with one of his swords.

In the end, the beam attack got sliced through cleanly. It did not even manage to slow Shi Feng’s advance for even a heartbeat.

Following which, as Shi Feng continued advancing, the number of beam attacks that abruptly altered their trajectories increased as well. By the time he neared the 100-yard mark, the number of transforming attacks had already reached eight. However, this increase was trivial to him. It just meant that he needed to swing his swords a few more times, at most. From a spectator’s perspective, it would look as if the beam attacks were attracted to his swords, as if they all automatically headed toward the weapons.

“Are you kidding me? Did the difficulty of this training ground change?”

Zero Wing’s members were at a loss for words as they watched Shi Feng’s leisurely progress through the training ground.

The players who were formerly members of adventurer teams, in particular, found themselves doubting their own eyes right now. Before today, they had rarely ever seen Shi Feng fighting in person. Most of their knowledge regarding Shi Feng came from battle videos.

Now that they were seeing Shi Feng in action with their own eyes, however, they doubted their senses.

Meanwhile, after Shi Feng crossed the 100-yard mark, the attacks he faced were no longer limited to straight beams and beams that abruptly altered their trajectories. Slashing beams joined the onslaught.

The addition of the slashing beams instantly increased the surface area under threat by a significant margin. Moreover, the slashing attacks contained great power. When Shi Feng tried blocking one with his swords, he found himself stumbling back several steps.

So, this is the first-floor training? Shi Feng deflected a slashing attack with Killing Ray, surprised by the change in attack patterns.

The first-floor training was much more difficult than the Extraordinary Tower's initial entry test.

If the trial before the 100-yard mark trained players' dodging capabilities, then the trial past the 100-yard mark focused on players' offensive and defensive capabilities.

While Shi Feng was entertaining such thoughts in his mind, the number of slashing attacks had very quickly increased from one to four. The difficulty of the trial now already rivaled that of Rhinebeck's trial, which Shi Feng had undergone to obtain the Sea God's Legacy.

However, despite the high difficulty, Shi Feng, who had already reached the Ascension Realm, had no problem controlling his body's instinct to dodge and block the incoming attacks. This was also the most rudimentary usage of the Realms of Truth—the skillful utilization of one's own body. Instead of moving just his arms and legs, he had to employ his entire body. Otherwise, he wouldn't be able to dodge and block all these beam attacks.

Following which, under everyone's gaze, Shi Feng started advancing toward the central magic array at flying speeds. The numerous beam attacks couldn't hinder his progress at all.

After a short moment, Shi Feng finally set foot on the central magic array. Shock filled the eyes of Aqua Rose and the others, who were spectating outside the training ground, at this sight.

Although they had long since expected that the first-floor training ground wouldn't pose a problem for Shi Feng, they still had not imagined that he would clear it so effortlessly.

"That's it for the demonstration. You'll have to rely on yourselves to get through," Shi Feng said as he glanced at the flabbergasted crowd behind him. He then teleported to the second-floor training ground.

The first-floor training ground provided very thorough training for players to master the Truth Realm. If not for him having already reached the Ascension Realm, he would've most likely had a difficult time reaching the central magic array, as even the slashing attacks had started altering their trajectories suddenly toward the end of the trial. Trying to defend against such attacks was extremely challenging. Merely moving one's arms and legs wouldn't be enough to cope with these attacks. One needed to coordinate their entire body with their weapons in order to effectively block and deflect these attacks.

The difficulty was doing so was extremely high. At the very least, if Shi Feng were still in the Truth Realm right now, he would have an even chance of receiving a direct hit from the changing slashing attacks. In other words, if one had just entered the Realms of Truth and barely had any attainments, clearing the first-floor trial would be impossible.

Meanwhile, Shi Feng's demonstration allowed everyone to understand that reaching the central magic array wasn't exactly impossible. After all, Shi Feng had done so—and in a very leisurely manner at that. From start to end, he had not made any large movements at all.

“Is the Guild Leader really human? He actually got through such a challenge!” After snapping out of his daze, Seven Light was bursting with excitement and motivation.

“So, this is the Sword King's strength?” Watching Shi Feng's leisurely display had likewise ignited Stubborn Bone's fighting spirit.

In the past, although he knew that there was a massive gap in strength between himself and the peak experts of the various superpowers, he had attributed this disparity to the difference in Basic Attributes. He had believed that there wasn't much difference between them when it came to combat standards. In hindsight, he found his thoughts laughable.

The difference was not limited to just Basic Attributes. Even his combat standard was inferior by leaps and bounds. Moreover, aside from Shi Feng, he was also inferior to the Guild's Vice Guild Leader Aqua Rose, the main force's commander Fire Dance, and the healer Violet Cloud.

Only, the gaps between him and the three women were not as gigantic as the one between him and Shi Feng.

However, it was precisely because of this discovery that he became keen on the training ground before him. In the past, he did not know how far behind he actually was, but now he knew.

Chapter 1982 – Breakthrough

After Shi Feng disappeared from the first floor, Zero Wing's members quickly snapped out of their daze and resumed challenging the first-floor trial.

Extraordinary Tower's second-floor training ground:

So, this is the second floor's training? The scene before Shi Feng took him by surprise.

At this moment, the space he stood in was no longer inside the Extraordinary Tower. Instead, he had arrived in an alternate realm.

Unlike the first-floor training ground, the second-floor training ground consisted of a mist-covered staircase, which had a hundred steps, and a pair of stone doors at the top of the staircase. It was obvious the second-floor trial required players to ascend this staircase and reach the stone doors.

However, what caught Shi Feng's attention the most was the Mana density here, which was at least 50% higher than what he felt in the Extraordinary Tower. Surrounded by such concentrated Mana, Shi Feng felt his mind becoming extraordinarily clear. For a moment, he felt as if he could accomplish anything so long as he put his mind to it.

In such a Mana-rich environment, he would not have to worry about running out of Stamina and Concentration, even if he were to use Advanced Combat Techniques nonstop. He could exert his full strength as much as he wanted.

Shi Feng finally understood why activating the second-floor training ground had cost 100,000 Magic Crystals, why the second-floor training ground required 5,000 Magic Crystals to operate every day, and why only 50 people could undergo the training at the same time.

With such an excellent environment, as well as the fact that the training ground here provided in-depth training for the Realms of Truth, the second-floor training ground was indeed worth every Magic Crystal he had paid. Given the opportunity, the various superpowers would be willing to pay five times that price to obtain such a training ground.

After Shi Feng familiarized himself with the environment here, he promptly stepped onto the snow-white staircase.

Each step of the staircase was half a meter tall, requiring players to make quite a large movement just to climb one. A distance of roughly 13 yards separated each step. Even a Tier 2 expert would need some time to climb each step; they wouldn't be able to climb the next step in a single breath at the very least.

The moment Shi Feng climbed onto the first step, he felt his entire body weakening. His Basic Attributes and the improved Life Rating he gained from his Dark Iron Bloodline became useless as soon as he set foot on the staircase.

After three seconds, his Basic Attributes had fallen to the standard of a Level 50, Tier 1 Swordsman fully geared in Bronze Equipment. Even his physique had regressed to the Tier 1 standard. He was as ordinary as an ordinary player could get now.

Meanwhile, before Shi Feng could adapt to this sudden drop in strength, two Tier 1 Swordsmen, who looked exactly like him and were geared in silver armor, appeared on the step he stood on. As soon as they had fully materialized, these Swordsmen unsheathed their twin swords and charged at him.

Within a breath of time, both Level 50, Tier 1 Swordsmen crossed the 10-yard distance and arrived before Shi Feng.

Tier 1 Skill, Gale Sword!

Tier 1 Skill, Triple Moon Intercept!

Both Swordsmen used an extremely rare Tier 1 Skill. Moreover, their actions were free of any unnecessary movements as they struck directly at Shi Feng's vitals.

Upon seeing this, Shi Feng hurriedly countered by executing Sword's Orbit.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

After the swords of the two sides clashed about five or six times, Shi Feng got sent flying off the staircase's first step. Meanwhile, once Shi Feng fell off the step, the two silver Swordsmen did not pursue him. Instead, they returned to their original positions and stood there quietly.

So strong! Shi Feng was astounded as he looked at his two opponents. Even after falling to the foot of the staircase, he had to take five steps back before he managed to stabilize himself.

Although the clash with the silver Swordsmen was brief, Shi Feng understood that their combat standard was already close to reaching the Refinement Realm standard. Moreover, their mastery over their Skills was practically perfect with both Skills executed at a 100% Completion Rate. Their true combat power was definitely no weaker than a true Refinement Realm expert's.

Aside from having very high technical standards, the silver Swordsmen's Basic Attributes were also far superior to his own.

If he tried to face their attacks head-on, he would definitely get sent flying.

The difficulty ramped up this much just by going up a floor? Glancing at the motionless, silver Swordsmen, Shi Feng roughly understood the difficulty rating of the second-floor trial.

If a Flowing Water Realm expert were to go up against these two silver Swordsmen, the said expert would have no chance of getting past even the first step.

The Flowing Water Realm allowed one to perceive the actions of one's opponents and make simple, preemptive offensive or defensive maneuvers.

However, both silver Swordsmen were invulnerable to damage. Attacking them would be meaningless. Moreover, doing so would only expose holes in one's defenses to the silver Swordsmen. Executing simple defensive maneuvers, such as blocking or deflecting, would result in the Flowing Water Realm expert getting gradually pushed off the staircase step after step. As for evasive maneuvers, those were simply impossible. With the disparity in Basic Attributes, Movement Speed, and reaction speed, a Flowing Water Realm expert would find it next to impossible to dodge the attack of just one silver Swordsman, let alone two.

In other words, a Flowing Water Realm expert would not be able to achieve anything on this floor. Only if said Flowing Water Realm expert had reached the Truth Realm might they barely defend against the two silver Swordsmen. As for Refinement Realm experts that had entered the Truth Realm, they would very likely get sent flying off the staircase on the first exchange.

Following which, Shi Feng stepped onto the staircase once more.

This time, however, he did not choose to receive the attacks of the two silver Swordsmen directly. Instead, he skillfully brandished his two swords and redirected the attack of one of the silver Swordsmen toward the other silver Swordsman's attack, the two attacks canceling out each other. This then created an opportunity for Shi Feng to move past the two silver Swordsmen and climb to the next step.

Only, climbing each step was a challenge, as he had to make huge movements to climb up the tall steps while deflecting the attacks of the two silver Swordsmen.

However, with each step he climbed, Shi Feng could feel his understanding of the Realms of Truth deepening.

When he ascended to the tenth step, one more silver Swordsman suddenly joined the two silver Swordsmen chasing after him, instantly increasing the trial's difficulty by a large margin.

Things are finally getting a little interesting. Shi Feng felt the pressure on him strengthening as he dealt with the relentless assault of the three silver Swordsmen.

Fortunately, it had already been quite some time since he had reached the Ascension Realm. The combined assault of the three silver Swordsmen was still within his tolerance range. Nevertheless, each time he wanted to climb a step, he had to prepare himself both physically and mentally for quite a while.

By the time Shi Feng reached the 29th step, he was facing four silver Swordsmen and already close to reaching his limit

When he eventually climbed to the 30th step, one of the silver Swordsmen suddenly turned into a golden Swordsman. Before Shi Feng could adjust to the change, the golden Swordsman's improved Strength and speed sent him flying back down to the 29th step.

Due to the presence of the golden Swordsman, Shi Feng was stuck moving back and forth between the 29th and 30th steps.

As the number of times Shi Feng got sent flying increased, he began to grasp his shortcomings—his skill at utilizing external forces was still inadequate. Although he had redirected one of the silver Swordsmen's attacks toward the golden Swordsman's, the golden Swordsman's Strength was simply overwhelming. Before the golden Swordsman's attack could be nullified, the silver Swordsman's attack was crushed, and the golden Swordsman's attack would continue toward him.

One hour...

Two hours...

Four hours...

After many hours had passed, when Shi Feng was faced with the golden Swordsman's oncoming longsword once again, he executed Sword's Orbit and filled his surroundings with a galaxy of stars.

In the next moment, however, the three silver Swordsmen's attacks involuntarily moved to greet the golden Swordsman's attack.

Boom!

After a loud explosion echoed throughout the entire training ground, the golden Swordsman went flying up a step while the three silver Swordsmen fell down the step. At this moment, only Shi Feng remained standing quietly on the 31st step.

Wonderful! I succeeded! Shi Feng had an ecstatic expression on his face as he gazed at the collapsed golden Swordsman. I finally have my own combat technique!

Chapter 1983 – Sword’s Transmigration

While Shi Feng rejoiced over the new combat technique he had successfully created and prepared to test it on the golden Swordsman and three silver Swordsmen on the 30th step, the sound of a system notification reached his ears.

System: Congratulations! You have created a Bronze Combat Technique. Please name your combat technique.

Shi Feng was stunned to hear the notification.

Taking advantage of the distraction, the golden and silver Swordsmen stood and charged towards Shi Feng in a coordinated assault.

By the time Shi Feng snapped out of his daze, it was too late to defend himself. All four attacks struck vital points, and Shi Feng’s body vanished from the 30th step, reappearing at the very bottom of the staircase.

Although Shi Feng had to restart his climb from the bottom, he wasn't disappointed in the slightest. Rather, he stared at his notification window in astonishment.

What? A Bronze Combat Technique? Dubious, Shi Feng examined the system's congratulatory message.

Although he knew that he hadn't created a low-standard combat technique, he didn't think that it was so amazing to be categorized as a Bronze rank Combat Technique.

Mastering a single Advanced Combat Technique would enable players to challenge opponents of a higher combat standard. Of course, there was a limit to how effective these combat techniques could be. For example, the Advanced Combat Technique, Void Steps, was most effective against Flowing Water Realm experts, but the footwork technique had little-to- no effect against Void Realm experts or above. After all, Void Steps relied on fooling an opponent's sight. Void Realm experts used more than one sense to locate their opponents.

However, Bronze Combat Techniques were a different story.

Bronze Combat Techniques would even be effective against Domain Realm experts. If a Domain Realm expert failed to cope with a Bronze Combat Technique properly, it could even cost them their life.

Until now, Zero Wing had only possessed a single Bronze Combat Technique—Lightning Flash, which he had only obtained through luck from the Primordial Divine Ruin. The only other way Zero Wing's players could obtain more Bronze Combat Techniques was by entering Bronze Legacy Tablets, but they were extremely rare and highly coveted by the various superpowers.

Unfortunately, despite many Zero Wing members attempting to learn Lightning Flash, not one of them had mastered the Secret Attack Technique, and Shi Feng was no exception.

Yet, he had just succeeded in creating his own Bronze Combat Technique.

Why wouldn't he be surprised?

Of course, the technique's creation had been a coincidence. He had only created it through the inspiration he had gained as he tried to deal with the golden and silver Swordsmen's relentless assault. If he tried to create another Bronze Combat Technique, he'd simply waste his time and energy.

Just creating a Basic Combat Technique required a solid foundation, and those that were capable of doing so were, without a doubt, geniuses. As for Advanced Combat Techniques, only the various superpowers' old monsters had any hope of successfully creating one.

Shi Feng's success in creating a Bronze Combat Technique was nothing short of a miracle.

As Shi Feng reveled in the joy of his new Bronze Combat Technique, the system reminded him to name the technique.

A name? The combat technique he had created was a variant of Sword's Orbit that he had combined with the Realms of Truth's principles. After giving the matter some thought, Shi Feng decided, Let's call it Sword's Transmigration!

Once Shi Feng had entered the technique's name, the system rang with another notification.

System: Congratulations! You are the first player to create a Bronze Combat Technique. Rewarding one Bronze Legacy Orb and the title 'Bronze Legatee.'

As the system notification ended, a green orb appeared before Shi Feng.

Creating a Bronze Combat Technique offers such a benefit as well? Shi Feng could not help his surprise to see the green orb.

[Bronze Legacy Orb] (Epic Rank Item)

Can record up to three created Bronze Combat Techniques. Players may learn the combat techniques in immersive environments. Each attempt will cost 100 Magic Crystals.

Cooldown: 1 hour after each use.

Shi Feng had heard of many experts creating their own combat techniques in the past, although those techniques had only been Basic or Advanced rank. However, he hadn't heard of those players receiving a recording device as he had. If other players wished to learn the combat techniques, they had to either rely on videos or receive the technique creators' personally tutelage.

Unfortunately, learning a combat technique was easier said than done.

Experts struggled desperately to learn Basic Combat Techniques, even if they had the assistance of a book. It was easy to imagine how much more difficult learning a Basic Combat Technique would be without proper guidelines, not to mention learning Advanced rank or higher combat techniques.

Thus far, the various superpowers had obtained quite a few Bronze Legacy Tablets, yet despite possessing complete legacies that provided detailed instruction, Shi Feng hadn't heard of a single player mastering a Bronze Combat Technique.

Meanwhile, the Bronze Legacy Orb allowed him to record three Bronze Combat Techniques permanently. This would be a great help. Moreover, the Bronze Legacy Orb had a very short Cooldown. He could allow one player to learn the technique he had created each hour. While the Bronze Legacy Orb wasn't as effective as an actual combat technique book, which didn't have a cost or Cooldown, it was better than a Bronze Legacy Tablet.

Following which, Shi Feng examined his new title.

[Bronze Legatee] (Advanced Title)

When using combat techniques, expenditure is reduced by 20%. Enjoy the status of Baron in any city, kingdom, or empire.

Amazing! It actually grants a global Baron status! Developing in the various major cities will be much easier now. The Bronze Legatee title's benefits surprised Shi Feng.

Although the Demon Hunter title was a Basic Title, it was extremely rare and valuable. After all, it gave him the status of a World Noble, and he had greatly benefited from the title thus far. Meanwhile, the Bronze Legatee title offered him a higher status than the Demon Hunter title. Unlike an ordinary noble, a Baron would have access to greater benefits when purchasing items and Lands in NPC cities.

As he considered the situation, the names of a few super-large-scale neutral cities came to Shi Feng's mind.

These super-large-scale neutral cities were similar to the Sea of Trees; all of the various superpowers wanted access to these cities to conduct business. Only, unlike the Sea of Trees, these neutral were not located within secret lands; gaining entry to these cities was much easier.

Every one of these neutral cities had a player population of over 20,000,000 in the past, even more than ordinary empires' imperial capitals. Hence, the various superpowers had frequently fought over dominance in these cities, while first-rate Guilds and below had only been able to watch from the sidelines.

I think the minimum level-requirement to activate a super-large-scale neutral NPC city was Level 70? Now that I have the Bronze Legatee title, I can go and take a look. Shi Feng immediately decided to set aside his Realms of Truth training. He knew that he had already exhausted his current potential at this point, and he wouldn't gain anything from continuing his training right now. If he wished to progress in the second-floor trial, he needed inspiration. Following which, Shi Feng took out a Return Scroll and left the Extraordinary Tower.

984 White River City Promoted

Chapter 1984 – White River City Promoted Star-Moon Kingdom, White River City:

When Shi Feng returned to White River City's Teleportation Hall once again, he discovered that the hall was quite busy. The Teleportation Hall had recently transformed, becoming even more magnificent than before.

What?! The city has been promoted?! Shi Feng was slightly surprised as he gazed around the building's interior.

Originally, only the first-floor hall had teleportation arrays, but now the second and third floors of the open-air hall had their own arrays, as well. The higher a teleportation array was located, the farther it could transfer players. Moreover, multiple platforms now floated around the main hall. These floating platforms could transport players to the second and third floors, and if players wished to, they could pay a small fee to teleport to White River City's airport, central plaza, or business district.

The floating platforms moved even faster than Dark-Gold Mounts, becoming the fastest mode of transportation in White River City. By using these platforms, players could save plenty of time while moving around the city.

While this new function might not seem like much, NPC cities would grow larger as they were promoted, accommodating more players. After a certain rank, running from one end of the city to the other would require a considerable amount of time. Although floating platforms had fixed destinations, they could save players half the travel time.

Normally, NPC cities only activated the floating platform function once they had become a Main City with a certain level of prosperity. However, this prosperity wasn't the equivalent to the city's player population. Rather, it referred to economic interactions between players and NPCs, as well as the Shops' quantity and quality within the city walls.

Thus far, only the various empire's imperial capitals had unlocked the floating platform function, and they had only done so recently. Kingdom's capital cities were still some time away from the upgrade, yet White River City had achieved the feat.

As Shi Feng walked through the city streets, he discovered that White River City was far livelier than it had been before the latest promotion. The number of merchant players in the city, in particular, had increased drastically. Moreover, more Shops lined the streets now that the city streets had been broadened.

“Selling Level 50 Secret-Silver leather armor! Price is open for negotiation!”

“Selling various types of Level 50 equipment with Magic Resistance! Welcoming long-term partnerships with adventurer teams!”

“Purchasing Energy Essence and Primordial Crystals in bulk! Offer available long-term!”

Idle and merchant players fervently hawked their wares, all selling much higher-quality products than during Shi Feng’s last visit to White River City. During his last visit, only the Guild-operated Shops had sold Level 50 Secret-Silver Equipment, but now even idle and merchant players announced that such items were for sale.

The city’s various Shops had even put up Level 50 Dark-Gold Equipment on display, although their prices were ridiculously high. Not even Guild experts could afford these equipment pieces.

Once Shi Feng had seen enough, he rented a floating platform and made his way to White River City’s business district.

Due to the recent promotion, the main street had changed significantly. Rather than a street, it looked like a commercial plaza. Not only had it tripled in size, but it was now home to a building that was over 70-stories-tall. This building was none other than White River City’s Auction House.

When the Auction House had been upgraded, it had gained new functions. Players weren’t the only ones who could consign items for auction anymore; even NPCs held Basic and Intermediate Auctions a few times a week. In addition, players could browse and purchase items that players sold from one-fourth of Star-Moon Kingdom’s towns and cities. Previously, players had only been able to view and buy items from White River City and its neighboring NPC cities.

If players wished to find and purchase specific items, doing so at White River City's Auction House was now the best option. Meanwhile, the most valuable of the Auction House's new functions was the Auction Arena.

Might was right in God's Domain, and the game's Auction Houses were no exception to this rule. Once the Auction Arena activated, the Auction House would hold a competition each day. The Auction House would offer various rare items as prizes during these competitions, and players only needed to pay the entry fee to take part. The competition had two phases. The first phase was a test the system decided, and the second involved a battle between players. However, equipment wouldn't help players in this battle. The competition focused on testing players' financial strength and resources. While combat standards were also tested, they were insignificant in comparison.

When the Auction Arena had been introduced in the past, it had caused quite the stir in God's Domain. Merchant players that hadn't been suited for combat had gone mad over the arena, and while many of them had taken part in the competition themselves, some had also hired experts to fight in their place. Countless merchant players had made their fortunes through the Auction Arena, and some experts had obtained top-tier weapons, equipment, and tools with their success in the arena.

Of course, due to the Auction Arena, God's Domain's influence in the real world had expanded.

However, the Auction Arena's appearance had also been responsible for the various superpowers' violent frenzy that had followed...

It's finally time to wrestle over the city's management rights. Shi Fen took a deep breath as he gazed up at the towering White River City Auction House.

NPC cities were different from Guild Cities. During the game's early stages, the various powers had to rely on player-count and Shop economy to spread their influence in an NPC city. These powers also used

physical and economic oppression on those who moved against them. Even so, they couldn't gain any substantial authority in an NPC city.

But once the Auction Arena activated, players could secure the Auction House's management rights.

While this change might not seem like much, a city's Auction House was extremely important to players' daily lives. Taking control of an Auction House was akin to controlling the NPC city's lifeblood, indirectly controlling the player economy.

If someone obtained an Auction House's management rights, they could bar certain players from the Auction House, for example. This would be a fatal blow to the city's independent players and various major powers. Both relied on the Auction House as their main source of income, and without it, independent players couldn't sell their items, and Guilds couldn't purchase materials.

One could easily imagine the consequences of losing access to an Auction House.

The competition for an Auction House's management rights would be held once a month on a fixed date. All NPC cities with Auction Arenas would hold the competition at the same time, preventing the various superpowers, who had an absolute advantage in terms of resources and experts, from monopolizing every NPC city in the game. Unfortunately, this arrangement also restricted the various large Guilds' development

Guilds only had a limited number of resources and expert players, and the more NPC cities they controlled, the fewer resources and experts they could allocate to each location. Occupying a large number of NPC cities would be impossible for Guilds that lacked sturdy foundations.

Of course, only Shi Feng knew about this right now. The Auction Arena function wouldn't activate the moment the Auction House had been promoted. It would only activate once a certain number of Auction Houses in God's Domain had risen to the appropriate rank.

Although the Auction Arena hadn't activated yet, this did remind Shi Feng that he had to prepare funds and resources for the inevitability. Currently, Zero Wing's foundations were slightly stronger than an ordinary first-rate Guild, and it would be some time before the Manatite vein affected the Guild's development in a significant way.

Following which, Shi Feng entered the Candlelight Trading Firm and notified Melancholic Smile, instructing her to bring him the Tier 1 Mysterious Flames the Guild had collected so far.

He then took his Fire Spirit to the warehouse that housed the Holy Grail. He intended to increase his strength before he left to activate a super-large-scale neutral city. The quest to do so was even more difficult than an ordinary Epic Quest after all, and he'd only get himself killed if he didn't prepare.

1985 Strengthening Fire Spiri

Chapter 1985 – Strengthening Fire Spirit Candlelight Trading Firm's private warehouse:

Due to the Holy Grail, Divine Might filled the entire room. The Divine Might's powerful pressure would even suppress Tier 1 expert players until they moved as slow as turtles. Despite having the Strength to rival Great Lords of the same level, even Shi Feng felt uncomfortable as he entered the warehouse, his movements becoming somewhat sluggish.

Shi Feng hadn't originally planned to use the Holy Grail since the Power of Evolution was so costly, and he wouldn't get a refund if the evolution attempt failed.

However, if he wished to complete a super-large-scale neutral city's activation quest, he needed to grow stronger. He had to rely on the Fire Spirit.

To increase his chances for success, he had no choice but to gamble on the Holy Grail.

As Shi Feng arrived before the stone platform housing the Holy Grail, he retrieved a crimson crystal ball from his bag. The crystal ball was none other than the Fire Spirit.

Despite being an Epic item, he could only use it to summon one Tier 2 Fire Spirit of the same level in exchange for 5 Magic Crystals. It was a toy compared to the Bible of Darkness. Even a Tier 2 Summoning Scroll could call forth a stronger creature than the Tier 2 Fire Spirit. The item simply didn't deserve its Epic rank.

This was also why Shi Feng had decided to upgrade the Fire Spirit. The stronger an item was, the lower its chances would be for success, and before devouring any Mysterious Flames, the Fire Spirit could only be considered an Epic item at best. Its quality would only increase after absorbing powerful Mysterious Flames. If nurtured properly, this crystal ball could even become stronger than Fragmented Legendary items.

Shi Feng then had the Holy Grail scan the orb in his hand.

Dark-purple mist emerged from the grail, enveloping the crimson orb in Shi Feng's hand. After five seconds, Shi Feng received a system notification.

System: Designated item cannot be evolved to Fragmented Legendary rank.

“Cannot be evolved?” Shi Feng was stunned.

He had never imagined that the Fire Spirit was so special. Despite being an Epic item, the Holy Grail couldn't force an upgrade to Fragmented Legendary rank.

However, as Shi Feng began to feel disappointed, the sound of a second notification reached his ears.

System: Do you wish to sacrifice 5,000 HP to enhance Fire Spirit's effects?

Enhance its effects? Shi Feng was surprised again to read the words in his notification window. However, he was stupefied to see the cost of this enhancement. How fraudulent! Evolving the Blacksteel Insignia had only cost 1,000 HP, yet enhancing the Fire Spirit's effects cost 5,000?

Five thousand HP was significant even to a Tier 2 MT. Very powerful Level 70, Tier 2 MTs would only have 100,000 HP at most, and the cost was taken from the player's base HP. Taking into account the percentage HP modifiers on weapons and equipment, players would lose far more than just 5,000 HP.

But even after considering his options, Shi Feng gritted his teeth and agreed to the cost.

While 5,000 HP was a painful amount to lose, even for him, the Fire Spirit was extraordinarily valuable. Most importantly, he wasn't attempting to evolve the item to Fragmented Legendary Rank; he could only enhance its effects. Logically, the risk of failure shouldn't be as high.

Moreover, HP wasn't particularly important for a Swordsman player like himself, and he could also rely on his Bloodline to compensate for the loss. With the Bloodline, he gained a lot more HP than ordinary players with each level-up. He wouldn't suffer as much of an impact by losing 5,000 HP as other players.

After Shi Feng agreed to enhance the Fire Spirit, more purple mist spilled out of the Holy Grail, far denser than it had been a moment ago. So much mist spilled out that it filled the private warehouse.

As the purple mist continued to seep into the Fire Spirit, the miniature Flame Dragon woke and roared again and again. The sound pierced through its crystalline cage and echoed throughout the warehouse.

Due to the purple mist's invasion, the baby Dragon began to grow.

In less than ten seconds, the baby Dragon had transformed into a mature Flame Dragon and was nearly twice as large. Intelligence flashed in its eyes, no longer lacking emotion as it had earlier.

Was it a success? Shi Feng could not help his growing excitement as he gazed at the adult Flame Dragon.

God's Domain's players might not know about Fire Spirits, but Shi Feng was very familiar with the items. He also recognized how valuable an intelligent Fire Spirit was.

To put it simply, the difference between a Fire Spirit with higher intelligence and an ordinary Fire Spirit was like the difference between an expert and an ordinary player. Even if both Fire Spirits possessed the same Basic Attributes, the combat power they could exert would be worlds apart.

Many powers had gotten their hands on Fire Spirits in the past, but trying to increase a Fire Spirit's intelligence wasn't easy. One would only have a chance of triggering an intelligence growth by sacrificing Tier 2 and above Mysterious Flames. Unfortunately, despite many owners feeding their Fire Spirits the appropriate Mysterious Flames, very few had succeeded in increasing their Fire Spirit's intelligence.

A Fire Spirit was a very special Epic item with endless potential. Countless experts had even guessed that by feeding the item enough Mysterious Flames, a Fire Spirit could grow to become a Tier 6 God. Even Tier 6 God-ranked players would flee from a Tier 6 God with higher intelligence.

Once the purple mist had dissipated, Shi Feng carefully picked up the Fire Spirit and inspected its Attribute Panel.

As expected of the Holy Grail. Despite the fact that I haven't fed it any Mysterious Flames, the Fire Spirit has already grown so much? Shi Feng was ecstatic when he saw the Fire Spirit's updated Attributes.

The new Fire Spirit didn't summon an ordinary Tier 2 Fire Spirit, but a bona fide Tier 2 Advanced Fire Spirit with higher intelligence. Moreover, the Advanced Fire Spirit would be ten levels higher than the player that summoned it.

An Advanced Fire Spirit's Life Rating was only slightly inferior to an Archaic Species, and since it had higher intelligence, its combat power could rival ordinary Great Lords of the same level. An Advanced Fire Spirit would provide far more assistance than ordinary Tier 3 monsters as well, possessing even more Spells than a Tier 2 Elementalist. A Tier 2 Advanced Fire Spirit would likely beat a challenging Tier 2 peak expert black and blue.

Advanced Fire Spirits could cast their Spells with a 100% Completion Rate, and their Basic Attributes were far higher than Tier 2 players of the same level-

while Shi Feng marveled at the new and improved Fire Spirit, Melancholic Smile contacted him and reported, "Guild Leader, I've gathered the Tier 1 Mysterious Flames you asked for."

“Good! I’ll head there right away!” Shi Feng nodded. He then disconnected the call and visited his Special Forging Room on the top floor.

Chapter 1986 – Consecutive Growth

In one of the Candlelight Trading Firm’s top-floor Special Forging Rooms...

As Shi Feng entered the room, the sight of Melancholic Smile organizing various crystal balls on a stone table greeted him. Each crystal ball contained a Tier 1 Mysterious Flame, and there were easily over 20 of them on the table.

If other Guilds saw this collection of Tier 1 Mysterious Flames, they’d be astonished.

Everyone in God’s Domain was privy to the existence of Mysterious Flames by this stage of the game. They knew that these unique flames were a great help to forgers and alchemists.

Hence, the various major powers fought over any Mysterious Flame they came across. They wouldn’t even pass over a Tier 1 Mysterious Flame. After all, Mysterious Flames were extremely rare and even coveted by superpowers’ master-level crafters.

“Guild Leader, here are all the Tier 1 Mysterious Flames we have collected so far. There are a total of 23.1 did find another flame in the Blackwing Auction House, but the bidding was intense. In the end, the price rose past our 5,000-Gold budget, and another Guild purchased it for 8,300 Gold,” Melancholic Smile said.

She hadn't fully understood how valuable Tier 1 Mysterious Flames were since collecting the first few had been relatively easy with the clues Shi Feng had provided. Furthermore, the Guild shared the flame Shi Feng used, and his Mysterious Flame was much stronger than Tier 1.

She certainly hadn't expected a Tier 1 Mysterious Flame to sell for more than an ordinary Epic item...

Shi Feng nodded in response. He then asked, "How is our business with Secret coming along?"

"The basic arrangements have been completed. We have even started to sell many of our products through Secret's channels, but as we are only a basic member, we can only sell our products in up to 80 of the Chamber's NPC cities. Among them, only 25 can be within empires, and only five of those can be major cities. Of the 55 kingdom cities, we can only select ten major cities," Melancholic Smile said, a little excited.

Currently, the Candlelight Trading Firm's influence only reached across a little over 50 NPC cities, nearly half of which were located in Star-Moon Kingdom. Now that Candlelight had joined the Secret Chamber of Commerce, it had access to an additional 80 cities. This more than doubled Candlelight's sales channels.

Secret is quite impressive, to think it can even give its basic members 80 city slots. Shi Feng was slightly astonished by Melancholic Smile's report.

Joining a Chamber of Commerce in God's Domain didn't mean that one would gain immediate and full access to its sales channels. That depended on one's rank within the alliance.

Normally, newcomers were given positions as basic members. Only powerful superpowers could be promoted to an advanced member upon joining.

Based on Shi Feng's knowledge, most Chambers only granted 60 city slots to basic members, yet Secret had given them 80. It was clear how powerful Secret's foundations were.

"Guild Leader, here is the list of cities we've selected. Once we begin our collaboration, Candlelight's income will double at the very least. We won't have to worry about lacking development funds," Melancholic Smile said, smiling as she took out a list and handed it to Shi Feng.

She had worked with Aqua Rose to choose the cities on the list. They had decided to do business in a total of three empires and six kingdoms, and although they couldn't sell all of their products in the selected kingdoms and empires, as doing so would be unprofitable, they wouldn't have to worry about a lack of customers. They would've chosen many more kingdoms and empires had they not been limited by a specific number of cities. After all, they couldn't afford to waste the referral fee they had paid to the Secret Chamber of Commerce.

"I see no issues with the chosen cities," Shi Feng said. Changing topics, Shi Feng asked, "How is the Resuscitation Potion's production coming along?"

"Silent Wonder and the others are doing their best to brew the potion now. Moreover, Candlelight has recently gained another Master Alchemist. Now, we have a total of four Master Alchemists working on the potion, and they have made over 3,300 bottles thus far," Melancholic Smile replied.

She had very high hopes for the Resuscitation Potion. It was, after all, a potion that allowed players to resurrect themselves without losing any EXP. Moreover, the production cost for each bottle was only a little over 20 Silver. Although the potion required a lot of rare materials, it had become very easy for Zero Wing to acquire what it needed with the Secret Chamber of Commerce's connections.

"Good. Continue production. Later, try to nurture as many Master Alchemists as possible. We need to ensure that we have enough people to learn the recipes You Ziping's group obtains," Shi Feng said, chuckling.

The Resuscitation Potion had been extremely popular during his previous life. At one point, it had even sold for 3 Gold per bottle. Three Gold was incredibly expensive even for ordinary expert players, not to mention ordinary players. Only the various adventurer teams and Guilds could possibly afford such a price.

Normally, he wouldn't have bothered to push for so many Resuscitation Potions since there was a limit to the number of adventurer teams and Guilds in Zero Wing's territories, but now that Candlelight had joined the Secret Chamber of Commerce, they didn't have to worry about a lack of customers. Hence, they needed to craft as many Resuscitation Potions as possible.

After Shi Feng finished giving Melancholic Smile her latest instructions, he shifted his focus to the Mysterious Flames on the table.

While one Tier 1 Mysterious Flame might be of little help to the Fire Spirit, he had a total of 23 on hand. Furthermore, he had upgraded his Fire Spirit to Advanced rank. An Advanced Fire Spirit would gain more from absorbing Mysterious Flames than a normal Fire Spirit.

As Shi Feng pulled the Fire Spirit from his bag, the Flame Dragon within quickly noticed the Tier 1 Mysterious Flames on the table and grew restless.

"Start absorbing! Show me how much you can grow!" Shi Feng immediately picked up a Tier 1 Mysterious Flames and placed it before the Fire Spirit

Like a hungry wolf, the Flame Dragon burst forth from the crystal ball and pounced on the Mysterious Flame.

As the Flame Dragon devoured the Mysterious Flame, the flame grew weaker until it eventually vanished.

Although the Fire Spirit's Attributes hadn't transformed, the little Dragon began to emit more heat. Its previously blurry form also began to sharpen.

Shi Feng immediately chose to feed the Fire Spirit another Tier 1 Mysterious Flame.

With each Mysterious Flame the Fire Spirit devoured, the Flame Dragon's figure became clearer. By the time it had absorbed its seventh Mysterious Flame, Shi Feng could see the scales across the Flame Dragon's body.

After devouring the eighth Mysterious Flame, the Flame Dragon began to expand, releasing a low growl. The Fire Spirit's Attributes finally changed.

Tier 3? Shi Feng's excitement grew when he saw the new Attributes.

Tier 3 meant that the Fire Spirit had now reached the Great Lord standard. With its higher intelligence, it was even more powerful than a Tier 3 peak expert of the same level.

Following which, Shi Feng continued to feed the Fire Spirit Tier 1 Mysterious Flames.

Twelfth-

Fifteenth...

Twentieth...

Finally, after the Fire Spirit absorbed the 21st Mysterious Flame, it underwent a transformation. Not only did the Flame Dragon grow larger, but Shi Feng could also sense that its Life Rating had improved.

Wonderful! I've finally succeeded! Shi Feng's eyes glowed as he gazed at his Fire Spirit.

Chapter 1987 – Giant Race

The flames that surrounded the Fire Spirit's body expanded drastically, transforming from their original crimson color to a scorching white. Even the space around the Flame Dragon began to show signs of crumbling under the power of its flames.

Tier 3 Archaic Species? Shi Feng's heart skipped a beat when he examined the Attribute Panel.

He hadn't thought that a measly two dozen or so Tier 1 Mysterious Flames would be enough to upgrade the Fire Spirit to a Tier 3 Archaic Species. So many powers in his past had fed their Fire Spirits a large number of Tier 1 Mysterious Flames, yet the results of their efforts had been disappointing. Most powers had only nurtured their Fire Spirits into Tier 3 Archaic Species after feeding them a significant number of Tier 2 flames.

Shi Feng had assumed that his Fire Spirit would grow to the Tier 3 standard at most, and he'd have to feed it Tier 2 Mysterious Flames if he wanted it to become an Archaic Species. He hadn't expected the Advanced Fire Spirit's absorption rate to be so effective.

Now that his Advanced Fire Spirit was a Tier 3 Archaic Species with higher intelligence, its combat power should be even greater than an ordinary Grand Lord of the same level. Though, if it really came down to a one-on-one fight, the Advanced Fire Spirit would still have a high chance of losing since actual Grand Lords had far more HP.

However, Shi Feng was satisfied with these results.

Although he could summon Kite and Anna to help him with his quest, he did not want to risk them. Resurrecting Personal Guards was very troublesome, and even if he resurrected them, they'd need quite some time to recover their losses.

Fortunately, the Fire Spirit was a different story. Even if it died, he could simply spend Magic Crystals to resummon it. Furthermore, each time he summoned the Fire Spirit, now that it was a Tier 3 Archaic Species, he only had to spend 300 Magic Crystals. Moreover, its Cooldown was even shorter than the Bible of Darkness's Demon Summoning. He only had to wait 30 minutes to resummon the Fire Spirit. However, unlike the Bible of Darkness, he could only summon a single Fire Spirit to fight for him at a time.

Once Shi Feng had finished upgrading the Fire Spirit, he collected a small stock of Magic Crystals and left the Candlelight Trading Firm. He then made his way towards the Adventurer's Association in Star-Moon City.

Although God's Domain didn't have many super-large-scale neutral cities, there was one near every few empires and dozen or so kingdoms. Like the Fairy Country's Forest City, these super-large-scale neutral cities served as trade hubs between the game's neutral races and the nearby empires and kingdoms.

To enter super-large-scale neutral cities, like the Sea of Trees, players had to complete specific quests.

The neutral city Shi Feng aimed to activate was called Thunder Axe City, home to the Giant race.

Appearance-wise, Giants looked no different than humans, only larger. Generally, Giants stood at least four-meters tall, and their physiques were even more powerful than Ores'. Giants were born for combat.

Aside from the Titan race, Giants' Defense was the highest among the numerous neutral races.

In the past, Giant Shield Warrior and Guardian Knight players had been incredibly popular among the various major powers. Some of the various superpowers had even pressured some of their members to convert to the Giant race since there was nothing that prohibited neutral race players from joining human Guilds. However, they would be restricted within human cities. But how could such a small issue compare to the benefits of having a powerful MT?

Of course, while the Giants' advantages were obvious, their flaws were just as glaring. Giants weren't very skilled with magic, and their mobility was atrocious compared to humans'. Defeating players or monsters that were particularly fast and agile would give Giant players a massive headache.

These obvious weaknesses were the reason many players refused to become Giants. There had been far fewer Giant players than Half-elf and Beastkin players in the past.

Meanwhile, as a super-large-scale neutral city, Thunder Axe City had a wide variety of unique aspects. Chief among them was the city's location within the Icefire Mountain Range, a neutral map that was rich in ores. Due to their environment, Giants were experts in the art of forging. Their forging techniques had been passed down from the Titan race, making their standards even superior to the Dwarves'.

This was also one of the reasons that Shi Feng had chosen Thunder Axe City.

Although Zero Wing current had many advantages, its position in the Ore Empire was still precarious, and it would only get worse as time passed. The Guild's foundation was too weak, and it had too few experts. While Zero Wing had enough manpower and resources to defend its current position in the empire, it didn't have enough to launch an assault against its enemies.

Zero Wing might possess more resources and experts than ordinary first-rate Guilds, but it was an infant compared to the various superpowers. Zero Wing didn't have nearly as much territory as the various superpowers, after all.

Star-Moon Kingdom, Star-Moon City:

Once Shi Feng had arrived in Star-Moon City, he immediately headed for the kingdom's Adventurer's Association. Star-Moon City hadn't developed nearly as much as White River City, and most of the players that visited the Adventurer's Association were Level 55 or 66 elite players. Level 58 or higher expert players were still far and few between.

Without hesitation, Shi Feng headed to the second floor and approached one of its counters.

"Lord Spirit Slayer, how may I be of service today?" the NPC beauty manning the counter asked with a smile.

"I wish to pick up an Exploration Quest," Shi Feng said.

"Very well." The NPC clerk revealed a list containing a large number of Exploration Quests and handed it to Shi Feng. "Lord Spirit Slayer, these are all of the Exploration Quests you can accept right now."

With a nod, Shi Feng carefully examined the list.

The Adventurer's Association had many quests to offer, and among them, the most difficult were Crusade and Exploration Quests. Meanwhile, only players who had reached Level 70 and three-star status in the Association could accept Thunder Axe City's Exploration Quest.

Although three-star adventurers could accept the Exploration Quest, it was even more challenging than ordinary Epic Quests.

Players had only entered Thunder Axe City in Shi Feng's previous life after he had reached Level 75. At the time, peak experts had already reached Level 77 and beyond and were geared in Level 75 top-tier weapons and equipment.

"I'll take this quest," Shi Feng said as he pointed to a quest named Giant's Hideout.

"Very well. I will mark you down as this quest's challenger. Please pay a 1,000-Gold deposit. Should you abandon this quest, your deposit will not be returned," the NPC clerk informed him.

The other Tier 2 experts picking up quests on the second floor were astonished to hear the NPC clerk's comment.

"Crap! What kind of quest is that? A 1,000-Gold deposit?"

"That can't be real, right? Even my two-star quest only required a 3-Gold deposit."

Many of the Tier 2 experts stared at Shi Feng's cloaked figure in shock.

Normally, the Adventurer's Association only charged 3% to 5% of a quest's reward as a deposit fee, preventing players from picking up quests they had no hope of completing. The fact that Shi Feng's quest cost 1,000 Gold meant that its reward was worth at least 20,000 Gold...

After Shi Feng accepted the quest, the sound of a system notification reached his ears.

Chapter 1988 – Three-star Reward

System: Congratulations! You are the first player to accept a Three-star Unique Exploration Quest. You have the right to choose between two options.

System: The first option will reduce the quest difficulty by 15%, but the reward will remain the same.

System: The second option will maintain the quest difficulty but increase the reward by one rank.

System: You have ten minutes to consider. If you do not make a decision within ten minutes, the difficulty will remain the same by default.

I have such an option? Shi Feng read his notification window in surprise.

He had picked up Three-star Exploration Quests in the past, but this was the first time the system had presented such an option.

While the Thunder Axe City's Exploration Quest was more difficult than ordinary Epic quests, it awarded far more. It would also grant him the opportunity to occupy Thunder Axe City before other players. That benefit alone was worth the effort of completing the Giant's Hideout Exploration Quest

If he could lower the quest's difficulty by 15%, it would become easier than completing an ordinary Epic Quest, giving him a much higher chance of completing it. However, he could increase his reward by one rank if he maintained the quest's difficulty. In other words, he would receive the reward of an Inferior Legendary Quest. That was just as tempting, and Shi Feng had accepted the Giant's Hideout Exploration Quest with the understanding of the quest's difficulty.

After giving the matter some thought, Shi Feng decided on the second option, maintaining the quest difficulty and upgrading his reward.

The Exploration Quest's reward was a large part of the reason he had chosen it, aside from access to Thunder Axe City's resources. Although the Adventurer's Association did not mention the quest reward, he knew what to expect.

Conversion slots for players!

It wasn't easy to convert to a neutral race in God's Domain, especially for the races with powerful racial traits. The stronger a race was, the more difficult the Conversion Quest would be. However, the Giant's Hideout quest awarded conversion slots for players upon completion. With these slots, he could convert the players into a Giant without having to complete the Conversion Quests.

As far as he could remember, the Giant's Hideout quest awarded 1,000 conversion slots upon completion. While the players he converted would not be able to enter most NPC cities in God's Domain, they could enter towns and cities Guilds and neutral races operated.

With a bunch of powerful MTs, Zero Wing would have a much easier time raiding Team Dungeons and Field Bosses. The Giants' racial traits were too perfect for MTs to pass up, and unlike Half-elves and Beastkin, becoming a Giant didn't improve a player's five senses or magical abilities. Instead, it granted a massive boost to players' Basic Attributes.

If a Tier 1 MT converted to the Giant race, they would gain the Strength and Defense to rival Tier 2 MTs. Their HPs would increase drastically, as well. In return, though, their Movement Speed, Attack Speed, and reaction speed would decrease, making it more difficult to complete future Promotion Quests.

If a Tier 2 MT converted to a Giant, they'd become more powerful than human, top-ranked Tier 2 MTs, although they wouldn't reach the Tier 3 standard.

The superpower that had completed the Giant's Hideout quest in the past had increased its strength by a large margin very quickly due to the 1,000 Conversion slots. Its development speed had easily surpassed the other superpowers, and although the other superpowers had sent their own experts to attempt the Conversion Quest, they hadn't been able to catch up due to the amount of time needed to complete the quest.

After Shi Feng made his selection, the NPC clerk took out an ancient, yellowish-brown Magic Scroll and handed it to Shi Feng.

"Lord Spirit Slayer, this Magic Scroll will help you temporarily remove the magic seal on the path. However, you can only use it once, so please choose your timing carefully. If you expended the Magic Scroll without completing your quest, a replacement will cost 1,000 Magic Crystals," the NPC clerk respectfully explained.

“I understand.” Shi Feng nodded as he accepted the Magic Scroll.

Quests from the Adventurer’s Association were different from Exploration Quests found elsewhere. If players failed the quests they had accepted from the Association, they’d at most lose some Coins or Magic Crystals; they wouldn’t suffer penalties that affected their performance in battle, such as Basic Attribute reductions. This was why most players preferred to accept quests from the Adventurer’s Association.

Once he left the Association, Shi Feng made his way to the Teleportation Hall and traveled to a border town in the Purple Thorns Kingdom. This was also the closest town to the Icefire Mountain Range.

Unbeknownst to Shi Feng, his actions in the Adventurer’s Association had aroused quite the commotion. No quest requiring a 1,000-Gold deposit was ordinary, and many players within the Association had begun to search for the Giant’s Hideout quest

Although multiple players couldn’t accept some of the Adventurer’s Association’s quests, they would show up on the list of available quests until they were completed.

“What’s going on? Why isn’t there such a quest on my list of Exploration Quests?”

“Maybe we aren’t a high enough rank?”

“That can’t be possible! I’m a two-star adventurer! Was that guy a three-star adventurer? That’s even less possible! Not even the first-rate Guilds’ peak experts, who have focused on the Adventurer’s Association’s quests, have reached the three-star standard yet!”

“A three-star quest? Who was that guy?”

After Shi Feng left, the players within the Adventurer’s Association fell into a heated discussion. They all wanted to know the identity of the player who had accepted this mysterious Exploration Quest.

News of the event quickly reached the Star Alliance’s Residence in Star-Moon City.

“I’ve never considered that the Adventurer’s Association had hidden such a major quest. Have someone notify Crimson Feather and the others. Tell them to become three-star adventurers as quickly as possible,” Galaxy Past, who sat in the Guild Leader’s office, commanded after reading the report he had received from a subordinate.

The various large Guilds often had numerous teams focus on different aspects of development. Some teams specialized in completing the Adventurer’s Association’s quests and raising their rank within the Association, while other teams focused on quests that were only available out in the fields, and other teams focused on increasing their Reputation in particular NPC cities. By doing so, Guilds could secure greater advantages in the game.

“HI notify Crimson and the others immediately!” Purple Eye, who currently wore a set of luxurious, dark-blue robes, replied. “Guild Leader, what should we do about the Witch’s Hill situation? The Guilds that own the two Guild Towns in the area have invited us to join their alliance, and I’ve heard that multiple corporations are now supporting the towns. Even Sin Realm, a first-rate Guild from the Purple Thorns Kingdom, has joined the alliance. Why don’t we join as well?”

The Witch’s Hill had already become the center of attention in Star-Moon Kingdom. The map was the sole producer of Primordial Crystal Fragments, and as long as players reached Tier 2, they could enter the Otherworld Gate, which offered bountiful resources.

If the Star Alliance could secure a foothold in the Witch's Hill, it could help the Guild's development considerably.

"Sin Realm, is it?" After giving the matter some thought, Galaxy Past shook his head and said, "Let's wait and see for now. Tell them that our Guild has some matters to settle first, so we can't join them at the moment."

"Are we really going to give up on such a good development opportunity?" Purple Eye asked, confused.

"According to the Secret Pavilion's information network, the Evil God's Temple hides in the Sin Realm's shadows. I doubt that Zero Wing will tolerate the Guild Town's parading much longer," Galaxy Past said, chuckling. "If those two towns can truly defend themselves, we can join them then."

"I understand." Purple Eye nodded. She then sent the Guild Towns' representatives a reply.

The upper echelons controlling the Guild Towns in the Witch's Hill received Galaxy Past's reply at the same time.

"He has rejected the offer?"

"How cowardly. He is actually willing to ignore such a golden opportunity? It seems Zero Wing has beaten the Star Alliance into submission already."

"I agree. How can the Star Alliance even be considered a first-rate Guild with such a cowardly attitude?"

“The Star Alliance’s cooperation doesn’t matter. Once we’ve completed our preparations, not only will we destroy Zero Wing City, but we’ll also keep more of the profits for ourselves. We’ll make Galaxy Past regret his decision!”

Multiple major powers’ upper echelons revealed delighted grins as they gazed at the map of the Witch’s Hill on the table before them from within a secret meeting room.

Chapter 1989 – Basic Level Strengthening Potion

Purple Thorns Kingdom, Glory Town:

Glory Town was built atop a mountain and surrounded by tall walls. Although it was only a border town, its defenses nearly rivaled a fortress.

Huh? There are already so many players here? Shi Feng was a little surprised to see the thousands of players outside of the Teleportation Hall.

The monsters near Glory Town were Level 70 and above, and a neutral map not far away was a Level 80-plus map. Just surviving in Glory Town’s map would be challenging for current players, not to mention setting foot in the neutral map.

Most of the thousands of players Shi Feng could see were Level 56 or above, with the highest at Level 59, and more than a hundred Tier 2 players wandered the street outside of the Teleportation Hall.

Moreover, most of the players in the town didn't wear a Guild Emblem, proving that they were independent players.

Independent players were typically weaker than Guild players in terms of Levels and equipment, yet so many independent players were visiting an area that the various large Guilds had yet to touch. Why wouldn't Shi Feng be surprised?

The independent players around him didn't think anything of Shi Feng's arrival. They simply went about their business.

"Wind Basilisk grinding party is recruiting a healer! Must be Level 57 or higher!"

"Recruiting two Level 57 or above DPS for the Black Cavebat Quest! Tier 2 players get priority!"

Players shouted as they recruited teammates from the street outside of the Teleportation Hall. Whether they planned to quest or grind monsters, they all acted as if this were normal.

However, if Star-Moon Kingdom's experts saw this, they'd be astonished.

Wind Basilisks and Black Cavebats were Level 70-plus monsters, at least 10 Levels higher than current players. The level suppression would be substantial with such a massive difference. Even Level 60, Tier 2 players would struggle against these monsters, much less Tier 1 players, yet these independent players intended to grind these monsters as if it were natural.

After a short moment, Shi Feng noticed that these parties and teams had recruited quite a few members before they headed past Glory Town's main entrance to grind or quest...

Is this really the Purple Thorns Kingdom? Shi Feng was momentarily stunned as he watched these teams leave.

He was quite familiar with Glory Town, a place the Purple Thorns Kingdom's army constantly had to protect from monster assaults from the nearby neutral maps. This wasn't a safe place. In the past, players had only dared to visit this town after they had reached Level 65.

Wind Basilisks were Level 72 Chieftains, and although the Black Cavebats were only Special Elites, they usually moved in large groups. The Great Black Cavebats that led these groups were also Chieftain ranked monsters.

The six-man parties and 20-man teams Shi Feng had seen might be able to take down one Wind Basilisk or a single group of Cavebats, but only barely. If they accidentally aggroed additional monsters, they could even team-wipe.

These players might have a chance if they all wore top-tier equipment, but that wasn't the case for these independent players. From what Shi Feng could see, they all wore average equipment. With such equipment, killing the area's high-level monsters would take a long time. In Shi Feng's opinion, these independent players would be much better off grinding Level 60 or so monsters.

Shi Feng also soon discovered that these players weren't limited to those outside of the Teleportation Hall. Plenty of players occupied the rest of the town's streets, as well. Similarly, these players were all Level 56 or above. Shi Feng guessed that there should be more than 30,000 players in Glory Town at the moment, and they were all elites or stronger.

Normally, one would be hard-pressed to find such a gathering of elite and expert players in an NPC town, even in the various empires, yet this phenomenon was occurring in the Purple Thorns Kingdom's Glory Town...

As Shi Feng reached the town's main street to investigate further, he noticed that an extraordinarily large number of players were setting up stalls alongside the street. Player stalls took up every available space on both sides of the street, and every one of them sold considerably valuable items. They either sold rare herbs or high-ranking items that were normally hard to find on the market.

Among the items sold, one item, in particular, caught Shi Feng's attention.

The Basic Level Strengthening Potion!

This was a super-rare potion that, when consumed, granted players an Ignore Levels +7 buff for six hours.

While ignoring a difference of seven levels might not seem like much, fighting monsters that were ten levels higher was still incredibly difficult for Tier 1 players, despite the recent reduction on the system's level suppression during the previous updates. Only Tier 2 players had the power to do so without too much of a problem.

However, as long as Tier 1 players had sufficient Attributes and combat standards, they could fight higher-leveled monsters efficiently, increasing their leveling speed, after consuming the Level Strengthening Potion. In the past, the Level Strengthening Potion had been immensely popular among elite and expert players.

No wonder why so many players are grinding here. Realization dawned on Shi Feng.

Although the Basic Level Strengthening Potion wasn't as effective as Zero Wing's Void Field Magic Array, it was the best option for independent elite and expert players when grinding higher-leveled monsters.

After this discovery, Shi Feng approached one of the stalls selling the Basic Level Strengthening Potions.

More than ten players had lined up at the stall, every one a Level 57 or higher expert. The strongest among them was even a Level 59, Tier 2 expert.

Producing the Basic Level Strengthening Potion was laughably cheap compared to the Void Field, with each bottle only costing 8 Silver to brew. In the past, Basic Level Strengthening Potions had sold for roughly 50 Silver per bottle. Unfortunately, the potion's recipe was painfully rare and could only be acquired by opening Treasure Chests found in Level 50-plus maps. Moreover, the Luck Attribute wouldn't affect its drop-rate, so players had to rely on their personal luck to obtain it

Each recipe had easily sold for around 800 Gold in the past due to its rarity.

Meanwhile, only two players manned the stall that sold the Basic Level Strengthening Potions, a man and a woman. Both appeared quite young.

The handsome, young man was a Level 58, Tier 2 Assassin named Smiling Breeze. Most of his equipment consisted of Level 50 Mysterious-Iron and Secret-Silver Equipment, with a few pieces of Level 55 Mysterious-Iron Equipment. Even independent experts would have a hard time getting their hands on such items at this stage of the game.

As for the beautiful, young woman, she was a Level 57, Tier 1 Summoner named Cool Summer, and her equipment was in no way inferior to her companion's. However, unlike Smiling Breeze, she did not possess a Tier 2 Class Insignia. Instead, she wore an Advanced Alchemist's Insignia.

Why are these two people? Shi Feng was astonished to see these two players.

He was actually familiar with both of them. After all, the brother and sister duo had been very famous in the Black Dragon Empire in the past. Smiling Breeze had ranked as one of the Black Dragon Empire's top ten Assassins, while Cool Summer had been a Master Alchemist. Moreover, Cool Summer hadn't just been a Basic Master Alchemist, but an Advanced Master Alchemist. Even the various superpowers had been wary of her.

Although the siblings were independent players, ordinary large Guilds had avoided provoking them due to their superb combat power. Although the younger sister, Cool Summer, hadn't been as strong as her brother, she had still been a Refinement Realm expert, and the various large Guilds' ordinary experts had been no match for her in battle.

As Shi Feng wondered why these two were in the Purple Thorns Kingdom, a group of players approached the stall, surrounding it.

"Sin Realm is conducting business here! Anyone who isn't a member needs to scam!"

Chapter 1990 – Heavy Sword

The town's main street fell silent as the shouted announcement echoed. Very quickly, the players waiting in line distanced themselves from Smiling Breeze and Cool Summer's stall. Even the expert players that had waited to purchase Basic Level Strengthening Potions had retreated.

"Why are Sin Realm's people here?"

“Does Sin Realm plan to expand its control to Glory Town?”

“Damn it! Sin Realm’s members again?! They’ve already prevented us from grinding in the normal resource maps, and now they want to claim this town, too?!”

“I don’t think that’s it. Glory Town isn’t a resource-rich map. By the looks of it, it seems they’re interested in the Basic Level Strengthening Potion.”

“Those two players are certainly unlucky. They’ve actually attracted Sin Realm’s attention just for selling some products.”

As the crowd watched Sin Realm’s 100-man team, which had already surrounded Smiling Breeze and Cool Summer’s stall, they flashed the Guild players indignant looks. They also pitied the sibling pair.

But despite their true feelings, the surrounding players only dared to discuss the situation in whispers. Even though only 100 of Sin Realm’s members were here, which the crowd outnumbered by several-fold, no one dared to voice their opinions loudly enough for the Guild players to overhear. Even the Level 59, Tier 2 experts gritted their teeth and reluctantly left the scene.

They all knew that they wouldn’t have a future in the Purple Thorns Kingdom if they provoked Sin Realm. They’d be lucky if they only died a few times. In the past, players’ accounts had been crippled, forcing them to start over, due to Sin Realm...

In the Purple Thorns Kingdom, Sin Realm was king!

Other kingdoms generally had two or three first-rate Guilds and over a dozen second-rate Guilds. The Purple Thorns, however, only had one first-rate Guild: Sin Realm. The kingdom's second-rate Guilds could also be counted on one hand.

Sin Realm had absolute control over the Purple Thorns Kingdom.

Otherwise, independent players wouldn't have bothered to come to a place like Glory Town to grind.

Under the crowd's hateful gazes, the fierce, young man leading Sin Realm's team stepped forward. He wore dark-gray armor and carried a greatsword with a deathly aura. As he emerged from the Sin Realm group, the crowd gasped.

"What?! Crocodile Breaker?!"

"Why is the Heavy Sword here?!"

This young man's appearance gave the watching players goosebumps.

Sin Realm had seven great experts, and every one of them was one of the Guild's core upper echelons. Crocodile Breaker was one of these great experts. His role in the Guild was to deal with players that opposed Sin Realm, and he had easily over 3,000 expert player deaths under his name. He had even set the record for defeating 100 players single-handedly, and those 100 hadn't been random nobodies. They had all been Guild experts, and one had even ranked on the God's Domain Expert List.

The reason behind Crocodile Breaker's astonishing success was his unbeatable Strength. He had even whittled the expert that ranked on the God's Domain Expert List down until the player had died.

Due to Crocodile Breaker's immense Strength, he had gained the nickname 'Heavy Sword.'

While the watching players were surprised by Crocodile Breaker's appearance, the young man arrived before Smiling Breeze's stall.

"Pack up. Today, you two have the honor of joining Sin Realm," Crocodile Breaker proclaimed, flashing Smiling Breeze and Cool Summer an arrogant grin. "The Guild Leader has decided that you two will be instantly promoted to core members when you join, and you won't have to grind for GCPs like everyone else. If you perform well, you might even become Guild Elders in the future. If you don't have any questions, come with me."

Although Crocodile Breaker's words seemed like an invitation, his imposing aura hinted that he'd slay the sibling pair if they rejected his invitation. When his aura and pressure washed over the spectators, they shuddered.

However, many of the watching experts envied Smiling Breeze and Cool Summer for receiving this forceful invitation.

Although Sin Realm behaved like a tyrant in the Purple Thorns Kingdom, it had the strength to stand behind its actions. Becoming one of the Guild's core members was a golden opportunity. At the very least, one could freely roam the Purple Thorns Kingdom. Even the upper echelons from the kingdom's second-rate Guilds had to tread lightly around Sin Realm's core experts. As for Sin Realm's Guild Elders, even the kingdom's Guild Leaders treated them with respect.

As everyone expected the siblings to leave with Crocodile Breaker, Smiling Breeze shook his head and stated, "Thank you for your invitation, but my sister and I are used to living on our own, and we prefer to keep it that way."

Cool Summer nodded in agreement with her elder brother.

As soon as Smiling Breeze finished speaking, however, the crowd felt the surrounding temperature fall by several degrees. An intense killing intent filled the street, so powerful that even the various Tier 2 experts felt a chill crawl down their spines.

“You’re rejecting Sin Realm’s invitation?” A cold glint flashed in Crocodile Breaker’s eyes as he stared at Smiling Breeze. “Do you know the consequences for those who reject Sin Realm’s goodwill?”

As Crocodile Breaker finished his question, the Sin Realm members around him stepped forward, clearly ready to act at a moment’s notice based on their postures.

“Is Smiling Breeze stupid? He actually rejected Sin Realm?”

“Sin Realm has even sent Heavy Sword for this. Does that guy think he can escape with his life?”

The crowd watched Smiling Breeze and Cool Summer in shock. They had never expected to find players who would dare to reject Sin Realm within the Purple Thorns Kingdom. The overbearing Guild had even annihilated peak adventurer teams, and those teams’ upper echelons had been so crippled that they had to delete their accounts and start over. Getting rid of two independent players would be child’s play for Sin Realm.

Even Smiling Breeze felt a little nervous in this situation.

He had no doubt that if he continued to reject the invitation, Crocodile Breaker and his minions would take action.

Although NPC soldiers patrolled the town, he wasn't confident of escaping if Crocodile and the other Sin Realm members attacked. It would take the NPC soldiers too long to react and arrive to stop Sin Realm's members.

As Smiling Breeze tried to find a way out of this predicament, a low voice rang out of the crowd.

"Excuse me, but are you still selling Basic Level Strengthening Potions?"

As this voice broke the silence, the tension on the street loosened considerably. Almost as one, the crowd turned toward the voice's origin. They were all curious to know what fool dared to interfere with Sin Realm's affairs.

As they turned, the spectating players found themselves looking at a cloaked player. At a glance, everyone assumed that this player was a young Swordsman. As the Swordsman approached Smiling Breeze's stall, his leisurely gait made it seem as if Sin Realm's players were nothing in his eyes.