

Super Power

Chapter 941: Disloyal Knight Beast Soul

The fist carried a destructive light. The power was so great that it shone straight through Han Sen's hand like an x-ray, revealing the skeleton beneath his flesh.

Han Sen's Water-Thunder skill smashed against the Disloyal Knight's back.

Boom!

When the Water-Thunder came into contact with the knight's blood, it electrified the being. The crackle, sizzle, and pop of the lightning strike grew louder and fiercer until it crescendoed in a dizzying firework of electricity.

Without super king spirit mode, the body of the Disloyal Knight was not blown to smithereens. Still, it froze and paralyzed the knight, inhibiting any further movement from it. This was exactly as planned.

The Dragon-Blood Snake and Moment Queen both re-collected themselves and did not spare a single moment in taking the opening Han Sen had created. They raced towards the disabled knight that could not currently move.

All the knight could do was try to block. With each hit that landed on his defenses, the force pushed him back.

The attacks mounted, and the rate of fire against him steadily increased. When the knight looked ready to lose all control, Han Sen fired coins onto his body. The pressure of several mountains weighed upon him, slowing him down considerably.

When the Disloyal Knight finally buckled under the pressure of the relentless attacks, Han Sen had fired a dozen coins upon it.

Since Han Sen had opened his second gene lock by now, they were far more effective, too.

Dragon-Blood Snake and Moment Queen did not cease in their merciless assault, particularly now that the coin-laden knight was unable to fight back.

The knight was maddened by what was happening, and its mind could not fathom losing to them. As much as it wanted to lash out and do something, its health was being slowly whittled away, and the coins prevented it from doing anything. The weight that disabled it only got increasingly heavy over time, as well.

Han Sen himself took advantage of the situation he had stuck the knight in. He noticed their fruity foe was still trying its hardest to resist its predicament, and he also noticed the negative effects the halo upon its head continued to exude.

But still, he knew that he had all but triumphed over the frighteningly powerful tree-born nemesis. It had been crippled by the weight and repeated attacks; it was no longer a threat to him.

The Disloyal Knight had countless coins stacked on it.

Boom!

The Disloyal Knight could no longer withstand the pressure. It submitted to the weight and collapsed to the ground, entirely immobile.

Han Sen, the Dragon-Blood Snake, and Moment Queen did not lax. They all continued to batter the monster, and after a few more minutes of such a treatment, it died.

“Super Creature Disloyal Knight killed. Beast soul gained. The flesh of this creature is inedible, but you may harvest its Life Geno Essence. Consume its Life Geno Essence to gain zero to ten super geno points randomly.”

Han Sen was exuberantly happy. Not only had he just slain a super creature, but he had also received its beast soul. He was a lucky man.

Han Sen’s joy was given a momentary lapse, however, as he contemplated the string of events that led to his ability to kill the creature. He was incredibly fortunate to have dislodged the super creature, despite the fact that it wasn’t fully matured.

The Disloyal Knight’s body vanished, but in its place rested a copper Life Geno Essence.

Han Sen gladly accepted it, for it was the first Life Geno Essence he had received in the Third God’s Sanctuary. Even he was surprised he was able to acquire one so soon.

After the knight died, the tree died along with it. Bringing it into the shelter now would be pointless.

Still, this did not disappoint him too much. For now, he was simply pleased that he had gotten the beast soul and the Life Geno Essence.

Quickly returning to the underground shelter, he spared no time in summoning the beast soul he had just received.

A copper-plated knight appeared in front of Han Sen. There was no halo above its head, but the armor was complete.

“Disloyal Knight: Super Pet Beast Soul.”

As glad as Han Sen was, he was a little upset to learn it was a pet. That meant it would take a long time for it to be raised, and he couldn’t use it for a while.

If others learned he had a super pet, the attention he would receive would be insufferable. It’d undoubtedly create another big fuss.

After the ordeal, Moment Queen returned to the spirit base. In her absence, Han Sen decided to refine the Life Geno Essence.

He simulated the energy flow of the knight and consumed the orb. He received five super geno points.

Perhaps it was because it hadn't fully grown, or that it was a first generation super creature, but receiving only five points was a little disheartening for Han Sen.

The shelter, after another couple of jumps, reached the outskirts of Thorn Forest. Creatures were finally appearing now, and it looked as if Han Sen could start hunting again.

With Little Wind and the Dragon-Blood Snake, Han Sen wasted no further time and left the shelter to kill as many creatures as he could. It wasn't long before Han Sen was able to max out his ordinary and primitive geno point tallies.

Han Sen did not know which area he was in, and he wondered whether or not there might have been a shelter nearby. If there was, he didn't want anyone to discover the location of his shelter, so he didn't allow his shelter to advance any further. He preferred walking a greater distance, if it meant less exposure.

Wherever he was, though, it was far away from the human shelter he had previously discovered. It was even further away from Qing Ming Shelter. Regardless, it wasn't a coarse area of woodland. Low-level creatures populated the region, which made for more relaxing hunts.

After walking fifty miles, however, Han Sen stumbled across another shelter. It appeared to be a knight class shelter. From what he could see from the outside, the interior seemed to resemble some sort of ancient city.

Han Sen saw many humans there, and that excited Han Sen a great deal. If it was a spirit shelter, there'd be many creatures in and about the shelter as well. Fortunately, they were absent, so he thought he was in luck.

"Hmm, but why do they only stand there on the inside? Doesn't anyone want to come outside?" Han Sen pondered the curious sight.

Normally, he'd have met and greeted the humans already. The fact that there was not a single human outside of the shelter struck Han Sen as strange.

After contemplating it some more, Han Sen decided to approach the shelter with equal amounts of confusion and concern.

Chapter 942: Abandon the City?

"What are you doing out there? Get in!" Han Sen witnessed someone calling out to him.

When Han Sen entered the shelter, he was able to get a better look at the people who seemed unwilling to go outside. They looked awfully glum. It seemed as if something bad had been going on.

This was a small town, a knight class shelter that provided residence to around thirty people. It wasn't the worst location for people to band together in the hostile lands of the Third God's Sanctuary.

"Is something wrong? What's going on here?" Han Sen asked the middle-aged man who had called out to him.

“Hmm, I’ve never seen you before. Are you new?” The middle-aged man didn’t respond to the question he was asked.

“Yes, I’ve only just arrived,” Han Sen said.

“Well, that’s unfortunate. You may think spawning in a human shelter is a good thing, but we’re about to lose the place,” the middle-aged man said with a sigh.

“Why?” Han Sen asked.

The middle-aged man explained, “Twenty years ago, we conquered this shelter and built it up as a safe refuge for many people. A few days ago, a creature discovered our shelter. It’s not your average woodland critter, either. It is a foul beast, one that came here from the north. The creature belongs to a royal shelter someplace in the mountains of that region, and we have been informed of an impending assault. The leader of that shelter is determined to lay waste to our little sanctuary.”

“How did you learn about all of this?” Han Sen asked.

He thought it was strange that they would even know about the shelter that lay to the north.

“We have a man in their shelter. He has risked life and limb to provide us this information. But even so, with all the knowledge in the world, there is little that can be done. We don’t have the manpower to withstand an assault like the one that is said to be coming down on us. We only wonder now whether or not we should make our glorious last stand here or flee to the wilds,” the middle-aged man explained.

Han Sen, understanding their predicament a bit better, acknowledged the direness of their situation and their hesitance to defend the shelter against the hostilities of the north. He could tell they were weak and had no chance of protecting their home.

As Han Sen retreated into thought, a loud noise brought him back. It was the tolling of a bell in the plaza.

“Old Huang is summoning us,” the middle-aged man told Han Sen, before proceeding to the plaza.

Han Sen followed the rest there, as well.

Normally, many would take a newbie under their wings and treat them well. They’d be asked many things and offered an all-around welcome. Under the current circumstances, however, few cared enough to make the effort. Things were bleak for them, after all.

A man with white hair was ringing the bell, a man Han Sen naturally assumed was Old Huang.

For a moment, Old Huang’s eyes fell upon Han Sen. Then the man’s eyes moved on.

“The time is nigh. Now we must decide; do we fight or do we go?” Old Huang finally spoke. “Against the darkness that fast approaches, raise your hands if you wish to flee.”

Everyone looked at each other before making a decision, but ultimately, almost all chose to raise their hands.

“Then perhaps it is for the best. Let this be our final night of refuge in what has become our home. Tend to any last duties and prepare yourself for the road ahead; we leave at first light on the morrow,” Old Huang solemnly spoke.

After his speech concluded, everyone stood where they were. They all knew it would be best if they abandoned the shelter.

But the sudden realization of this loss was difficult to swallow, and they knew once they departed, they’d have nowhere else to go. There was going to be a great deal of hardship for them, beginning the next day.

Some of the older community members had put their hearts and souls into securing this place, and spent the years toiling hard to make it prosper. They felt the most agony, in understanding they would soon depart the safety of its walls.

“Go home,” Old Huang said, returning to the podium he had spoken from. They had been there many years, and it was their home. But if they didn’t leave, it would swiftly become their grave.

Unless they were willing to obey a spirit for what would likely be the remainder of their days, they had to flee. And even if they did decide to accept a lesser fate as thralls for a spirit, there was no guarantee the spirit would even want their service. They might have been killed even in surrender.

But the majority still wanted to leave, of course. They wouldn’t allow a spirit to dictate their fates, if they had the choice. They determined their own destiny, and that was how it would remain.

Still, leaving their home behind was a difficult thing to come to terms with.

Han Sen observed the lifeforces of the people around him, and he noticed many of them were quite skilled and powerful. Thirty such people in a group was quite impressive.

“Can I say something?” Han Sen broke the silence.

Everyone turned to look at Han Sen, and when they did, Old Huang said, “Of course. Speak; we are all family here.”

“We should fight,” Han Sen said.

Old Huang, with a wry smile, said, “Young man, I understand the zeal of youth and the way in which you feel. But you must understand, we face the unyielding wrath of a royal spirit. They have at least fifteen mutant creatures; even if half our people went to face that wall of terror, there is little we could do.”

“Do you think we would leave if we had what it took to fight, grasshopper?”

Han Sen wished to say something more, but a young person who stood near Old Huang suddenly asked, “Are you Han Sen?”

“Yes.” Han Sen nodded.

“Little Yu, do you know who this young man is?” Old Huang asked.

“He is Han Sen; the son-in-law of the president. He is a great man. He is the one who defeated the royal shura,” Little Yu explained.

After Little Yu said this, people recalled the name and the deeds he had become known for. Even the elderly of the shelter had heard of Han Sen.

“If you choose to flee, then flee. But if you decide to fight, you have my full support. Not only will we defeat those who believe they can trample us underfoot, but we will strike back and claim that northern royal shelter for ourselves,” Han Sen proclaimed.

“Little Han, we would like to, but... we don’t have the power. It is a struggle to maintain our current grip on this shelter,” Old Huang confessed.

“Do you not believe we can stand firm against the assault on this shelter with this?” Han Sen summoned his Dragon-Blood Snake.

Chapter 943: Defending the Shelter

“This is...” Old Huang and everyone there looked at the Dragon-Blood Snake in wonder. They thought it was some small, average pet beast soul.

Han Sen let the pet do the explaining for him, by having it unleash its gene locks.

When the first gene lock opened, the Dragon-Blood Snake’s body grew to the size of a tiger.

When the second gene lock opened, the Dragon-Blood Snake’s body grew to the size of a bull.

When the third gene lock opened, the Dragon-Blood Snake’s body grew to the size of a golem.

When the fourth gene lock opened, the Dragon-Blood Snake’s body grew to the size of a giant beast.

When the fifth gene lock opened, the Dragon-Blood Snake’s body grew to the size of a dinosaur.

“A pet beast soul with five of its gene locks opened?!” The plaza gathering had quickly become an audience, and they were each amazed by the mutant pet.

Then, the Dragon-Blood Snake hissed and grew in size one more time. Its red-scales glistened as it became a terrifying beast of gigantic proportions. It looked ready to murder any that offended it.

“Six gene locks? The best possible mutant pet one can claim?!” Someone in the crowd shouted.

“Old Huang, with this snake... Do you think we stand a chance of repelling those who seek to remove you from your home?” Han Sen posed the question.

“That just may be possible.” Although he tried to hide it, his loosely bottled excitement began to overflow.

Although the spirit shelter that opposed them had many creatures, it was very unlikely there'd be a creature amongst them with an open gene lock tally anywhere close to the snake's.

Mutant creatures could open six gene locks at the most, but that did not mean it was achievable for all mutant creatures.

And now, it wasn't only Old Huang who got excited, as hope of a future in their shelter returned to the crowd.

“This mutant creature can at least kite three creatures for us, and with us there, valiantly fighting alongside it, we may just pull through!”

“Yes; let's fight and prove to that spirit we're not to be messed with.”

“We're not leaving this place; f*ck those spirits!”

Aside from a few of the elders, everyone who saw the snake had a change of heart they were keen to vocally express.

Old Huang told everyone to calm down soon after, however, and then told Han Sen, “I would like to ask you a few questions, Han Sen. And I would like you to answer my questions seriously and truthfully. This is a matter of life and death.”

“I will gladly answer your questions,” Han Sen said in response.

“Where did you come here from? Did you travel here from another shelter?” Old Huang asked.

“Yes.” Han Sen nodded.

Hearing this, Old Huang also nodded. Then he asked, “If we succeed, will you remain with us?”

Everyone understood what Old Huang was implying.

Even if they could withstand the attack, Han Sen's absence after that would mean they'd have no more manpower if something sought to retaliate. They would still be vulnerable.

Fighting now would be pointless if it meant they'd only fall in the future.

Everyone looked at Han Sen, hoping he would choose to stay.

“I will leave,” Han Sen answered.

Everyone looked disappointed. It felt as if their new-found hope had been dashed across the rocks.

"I appreciate your honesty." Old Huang did not hold it against Han Sen and understood why he'd leave.

Han Sen was a famous person of much renown. He had a Dragon-Blood Snake with six of its gene locks open. He was destined for a place greater than the little shelter he had stumbled upon. He was bound for someplace far grander, for sure.

"I have not finished. I said I will leave, but only under these two conditions; firstly, we claim that royal shelter. Secondly, if we fail, I leave the snake behind," Han Sen said.

Everyone looked surprised, and in response, Old Huang asked, "Do you speak the truth?"

"If you don't believe it, I can give you the snake now." Han Sen was not afraid of any potential theft, and didn't think they'd refuse to return it. Had they sought to, there was nowhere they could run off to. They were in the middle of the woods with a small army of creatures preparing to wipe them off the face of the sanctuary. To do so would be futile.

If the people did not stand and fight for their shelter, they'd most likely run off into the forest. And gauging the strength they possessed, Han Sen believed they did not have the mettle to survive in that domain.

Han Sen knew the end result if they chose to flee, so he felt compelled to help them.

Han Sen would use this opportunity to raise his mutant geno point tally, too. It was far more difficult to do when flying solo, after all.

The people there weren't that strong, but many could challenge and rival mutant creatures in strength.

If Han Sen could use this opportunity to obtain a royal shelter, it would be a terrific result, as well.

"Little Han, you are the president's son-in-law, so of course we believe you." Old Huang was not stupid, and he most certainly would not have kept the snake.

Now, following Han Sen's promise, everyone readied themselves for a fight and geared up in the best armaments they possessed.

"So, which shelter seeks to destroy you? And what is its master?" Han Sen hadn't been told the name of the shelter that sought to conquer them, so he asked for elucidation.

"It's Thorn Shelter, and its master is Thorn Baron. She is a royal spirit, and she is wickedly powerful," Old Huang said.

Han Sen was surprised to receive this answer, and so he said, "Ah, then we are in the regions that belong to Thorn Shelter?"

Han Sen became the de facto leader of the shelter for the time being, and others relied upon him to establish and organize their defenses and tactics for the coming battle. He was capable, when it came to leading others; he might not have had what it took to command large armies, but a group of about thirty people was within his comfort zone.

Han Sen was able to use his formations to effectively coordinate the others.

At first, others did not trust Han Sen, but after some more practice with the formations, they listened and paid greater heed. They soon realized the true talent he had, and so they were all able to work together in greater cohesion and synergy.

Three days later, the spirit army had yet to arrive. Han Sen traveled to a nearby knoll, to see if he could spy any movement.

Chapter 944: The Hunt Begins

Han Sen ascended a mountain, led by an old man. He was on his way to Thorn Shelter.

The mountainsides were steep, and unlike the woodland that circled them, they were barren. The environment there was poor, which provided little reason for creatures to visit; as such, there was a noticeable lack of them.

The old man did not go too far across the mountain, and when he decided to return, he instructed Han Sen on which way he should go.

Han Sen's purpose for making this venture to Thorn Shelter was to meet the person who had supposedly risked life and limb in warning the knight shelter and its inhabitants of an imminent attack.

After one hundred miles of travel, Han Sen was finally able to lay eyes on the black shelter which resided on the peak of that mountain.

Above the foothills of the mountain, Han Sen caught sight of creatures, running to and fro.

The human who delivered the news was said to live separate from the shelter, in a house that had been built in a nearby valley that was said to resemble the shape of a fish's mouth.

When Han Sen came to that valley, he spotted the house. It was wooden, but ill-kept and all-around ugly.

Han Sen did not approach as he frequently did—casually and without care. He instead chose to approach stealthily. There didn't seem to be anyone around, so he waited for the onset of night. As the sun was being reclaimed by the horizon once more, a man returned to the house.

The man was built like a tower, and when Han Sen saw his face, he couldn't help but quietly exclaim in shock, "Tiger of Blueblood, Tie Yi!"

Han Sen and Tie Yi once butted-heads in a competition for a military position. He beat Tie Yi, thereby becoming Ji Yanran's bodyguard. This allowed him to remain in the sanctuaries while he served in the army.

"Who's there?" Tie Yi was quickly alerted upon hearing Han Sen's unexpected outburst.

"Long time, no see. I didn't expect to find you here, as a courier of bad news to the shelter that lies a good distance south of us." Han Sen arose from the bushes and smiled as he delivered his dialogue.

"Han Sen? Why have you come here?" Tie Yi appeared to be just as surprised.

"I have come here to find out when Thorn Shelter plans to begin its assault." Han Sen smiled.

"Come inside; it would be best if we spoke there." Tie Yi took a gander at the surrounding environment and then opened the door.

Han Sen followed, and when he entered the shack, he closed the door behind him. There were no chairs inside, so he had no choice but to sit on the floor.

Han Sen observed the decor and decayed architecture of the home he found himself sitting in, and was surprised to see it so bare. Items of comfort were in short supply, and the majority of what lay scattered about were tools. There wasn't even a bedframe, mattress, or duvet.

"Have the people in that shelter evacuated?" Tie Yi asked.

"No. We will fight Thorn Baron and slay her," Han Sen said with confidence.

"Are you people insane? She also has a multitude of royal spirits in her service. They would be all that is required to conquer that shelter and its meager populace," Tie Yi finished with a concerned frown.

"That won't happen. We have a nice howdy-doodo prepared for whatever threat comes our way. But can I ask if you know which spirits and creatures are to be rallied and sent against the shelter in the planned assault?" Han Sen asked.

Unfortunately, Tie Yi shook his head, saying, "I am only here to grow geno vines for them; that's all. I was lucky enough to overhear the murmurs that spoke of their planned conquering of that shelter, but I've been here long enough to learn a thing or two about how Thorn Shelter and its occupants operate. If Thorn Baron is going, she'll lead the battle with eight mutant creatures."

Han Sen nodded and said, "And when are they planning to strike?"

Tie Yi shook his head and said, "I have told you everything you need to know. You and your people should leave, for Thorn Baron's power is unmatched. She will slaughter whoever remains there."

Han Sen smiled and said, "A matter of principle is involved in all this, and as easy as it would be to run away, we can't do that. We, nor the people who initially claimed the shelter way back when, will not throw away all they have built."

"If you don't run, then at least consider a surrender. You might still walk away with your head attached to your shoulders if you do that," Tie Yi offered. It was, he believed, the only alternative to flight.

"I am confident we can defeat Thorn Baron." After a pause, Han Sen continued by saying, "You can remain here. When we launch our counter-attack, we will save you."

Tie Yi looked strangely upon Han Sen. After a moment of contemplation, he said, "Are you naive? Are you stubborn? Or are you just too thick in the skull to not hear what I'm telling you? You don't actually have a plan, do you? And a viable one at that?"

"I won't tell you more than you need to know, but I will save that shelter." Han Sen smiled and then continued by saying, "Now, tell me about the mutant creatures and the royal spirits we might expect to see."

"I don't know much but..." Tie Yi told Han Sen all he knew. After asking a few more questions, Han Sen decided to return to his shelter.

Seeing Han Sen leave, Tie Yi could only sigh before closing the door behind him.

Back in the shelter, Han Sen continued to refine and formulate more plans for the upcoming siege. Thorn Shelter was far more powerful than he expected it to be.

If Thorn Baron decided to bring ten mutant class creatures, even with the snake on Han Sen's side, they'd pay a high price in blood to secure the shelter's freedom and future.

"I think we should strike first. We can take the fight to them, and battle them beyond the immediate borders of home." Han Sen decided to return to the Alliance.

Han Sen figured he needed a good bow; one that was good enough to slay mutant creatures.

He had already maxed out his ordinary and primitive geno points and managed to obtain seven sacred geno points, as well as five super geno points. His fitness was over a thousand points by this point, and that put him in the range of mutant creatures.

If he had a quality bow, he could make use of the Flaming Arrow he received off the porcupine and further increase its efficiency and power by employing the Drillhead Arrow skill. Killing the mutant creatures should not prove too difficult.

The Alliance had many powerful bows he could use for such an occasion, but their use required much strength. Not everyone could use them effectively.

With a fitness level of one thousand, Han Sen would only be able to use such a bow once or twice in rapid succession.

Han Sen received a bow from Annie. The Z-steel arrows that were available for purchase would be ineffective against creatures of the Third God's Sanctuary, so the best arrow to use would undoubtedly be his Flaming Arrow.

Han Sen brought the bow and arrow with him, as he snuck near Thorn Shelter. He wished to find Tie Yi again, but before he could, he saw a group of people approaching him.

Han Sen went into hiding and watched the people go by. They were all so strong, it was clear that they hailed from Thorn Shelter.

When Han Sen saw the leader of the collective, he was delivered another shock; it was the female spirit he had once encountered in Thorn Forest.

Chapter 945: The Unseen Shooter

“She is Thorn Baron! Hmph, I suppose that rules out my use of the red dagger. If she sees that, she’ll recognize me.” Han Sen was glad he had decided to bring a bow.

After opening his second gene lock, Han Sen’s dongxuan aura had improved a considerable amount. Its effective radius had greatly increased, and it now allowed Han Sen to inspect and observe every member of Thorn Baron’s team.

The team was massive. A royal class spirit accompanied Thorn Baron, and seven mutant class creatures encircled him.

There were three hundred primitive creatures in Thorn Baron’s company, all in all, and even with the Dragon-Blood Snake on Han Sen’s side... If they were to triumph, it would be a hard-fought victory.

“It is lucky I came out here to scout. I may have gotten everyone killed, had I chosen to remain in the shelter waiting for all this to descend upon them.” Han Sen continued observing the creatures.

He knew he’d have to start taking them out, thinning the herd before they arrived at the knight shelter. All he would have to do was wait for the right opportunity to start doing so. Spirits would respawn, so killing the creatures would be the best course of action, since it dealt permanent damage to the strength and integrity of the enemy horde.

Hen Sen spent time looking at the seven mutant creatures the baron had brought with her.

A gold-winged hawk was one of them, and it flew high above the rest, as if in airborne defense. Its eyes flickered with gold lightning, as its body glistened in the warm rays of the sun.

It was a powerful thunder class mutant creature, in terms of the damage it could deal out. Han Sen, however, could gauge the strength of its defense and tell that it had a weak body. It was like a glass cannon.

Its weakest spot, Han Sen could detect, was a furry section on its chest. It was even less sturdy than the plated wings.

Han Sen remained hidden for the time being, clutching the bow he had borrowed from Annie. He summoned his Flaming Arrow and nocked it on the string. Having prepped himself for dealing with the host of creatures he would engage solo, he pulled the string back.

Han Sen suddenly felt very heavy. He had to exhaust all his strength in preparation of firing the bow.

The bow was aimed at the exposed spot of the gold thunder-hawk's chest, and the moment it spread its wings to reveal it clearly, Han Sen loosed the arrow.

Without making a sound, the arrow glided towards its target without drawing any attention to its presence. It pierced directly through the hawk's chest, causing it to gush blood in a cascade to the ground below.

The hawk cried out, fell to the earth, and after a few futile flaps of its wings in an attempt to return to the skies, died.

Everyone and everything that accompanied Thorn Baron saw it happen and were dazed. The baron herself was shocked, seeing one of her most prized creatures suddenly assassinated.

The creatures and spirits all peered in the direction they believed the arrow had come from, and without hesitation, the baron barked an order for them to annihilate the hidden assassin.

When they arrived in the area where they suspected the arrow had come from, there was no one there. No sense or lifeforce revealed the presence of an enemy in that place.

"Mutant Creature Gold Thunder-Hawk killed. No beast soul gained. Consume its flesh to gain zero to ten mutant geno points randomly."

Before Han Sen could even hear the announcement chime, he had already vanished from the area.

He was not afraid that others could find him, as he was able to erase any indication of his lifeforce and even the precise trail of the arrow. Unless they could see the arrow, no one could detect where he might have attacked from.

Han Sen used the skill Cold Arrow, which masked the flight of an arrow and made it incredibly difficult for people to deduce where the attack originated. If he had not done this, he might not have been able to kill the creature without catching its attention and giving it a chance to evade.

He thought it was a shame he could not retrieve the dead body, though.

When Thorn Baron noticed that the hawk had been murdered, Han Sen was already long gone.

He simulated the powers used by Qu Lanxi and masked his scent. Although he wasn't as proficient at it as she was, it was still good enough to mask the scent of one person.

Even mutant creatures that were of the same level as Han Sen would not be able to detect him.

And the creatures that were naturally talented in detecting scents and lifeforces were unable to detect Han Sen due to his dongxuan aura.

Like a ghost, Han Sen weaved his way between the trees. With his bow raised, the Flaming Arrow was nocked and ready to fire again.

"How can there be no one there?!" Thorn Baron frowned.

“Roar!” As Thorn Baron mulled what phantom might have decided to attack them, she was suddenly interrupted by the cry of another creature. An arrow of fire had pierced through Gold-Talon Wolf’s left eye.

It writhed around in agony as the arrow vanished into thin air. Blood flowed out of the annihilated eye socket in a gruesome stream.

It wasn’t dead yet, but it would be soon.

Thorn Baron looked angry, and she herself raced towards the area where she believed the arrow had come from.

But when she reached there, as reported by others in the first location, there was no one to be seen. No lifeforce could be detected, and it was as if her team was being assassinated by a ghost, one by one.

“Who is this? Who is out there? Reveal yourself! Quit hiding in the foliage like a rat and face me. Allay your cowardice for a time and fight me like a real warrior!” Thorn Baron exclaimed to the trees, but was met with no response.

Roar! A primitive class beast was killed.

Thorn Baron’s formation of creatures descended into anarchy and chaos. They looked around for their phantom aggressor, but it could not be found.

Spirits and creatures searched high and low, but they were jittery, each fearing that they might be the next to greet the murdering arrow.

Katcha!

Another arrow was fired into Gold-Talon Wolf’s right eye. The same fire arrow that had initially dropped it had returned to finish the job.

A few creatures leapt to where they believed the arrow had come from, but there was nothing to be found.

The spirits and creatures were terrified, as if the reaper himself was playing some game with them. They did not know who would be the next to go or when they would be taken.

“Mutant Creature Gold-Talon Wolf killed. Beast soul gained. Consume its flesh to gain zero to ten mutant geno points randomly.”

When the wolf died, the announcement played inside Han Sen’s head.

Chapter 946: The Creatures Attacking

“Walk in a circle and keep walking!” Thorn Baron was angry, but she had to maintain her composure in order to effectively lead and issue appropriate commands for the situation.

Han Sen’s arrow was a silent killer, but it could still be seen with the naked eye.

Thorn Baron's subordinates were situated in a formation that allowed them to carefully watch in every direction. If an arrow was fired, it'd definitely be seen.

Han Sen's arrow delivered terrible damage to the creatures it struck, but if the creatures were able to see it come their way, they could block it.

Unable to find a decent opening for the time being, Han Sen had no choice but to fall back. Removing two mutant creatures from the field of play was good enough for the time being.

There were five mutant creatures and two royal spirits remaining, as the key figures of the enemy horde. With the Dragon-Blood Snake on their side, they stood every chance of defeating those who sought to oppose them.

Thorn Baron's people, following this, walked at a much slower pace in fear of another ambush. When Han Sen returned to the knight shelter, they were still descending the mountain region he had engaged them on.

Han Sen had been able to get a reading of the power of the mutant creatures and spirits remaining, so he returned quickly to make some final adjustments to his plan.

"Five mutant creatures and two royal spirits? And only three hundred primitive creatures? Perhaps you are correct; perhaps we really can win this," Old Huang said, with tempered excitement.

"By committing to a strong defense, we can employ a great advantage over the assaulting force. The primitive creatures are only cannon fodder and are not a genuine threat for the time they remain in the open. All we must fear is them breaching the wall..." someone else chimed in to say.

"Their numbers are too many, and ours too few. We don't have enough people to effectively guard all four walls," another man said, with a frown.

"We have to try; we have committed ourselves to this. We have no choice!" someone else said, with a clap of their hands.

After the discussion, Han Sen went to the spirit hall. It was situated in the center of the shelter, and from there, he could see all four walls and their ramparts.

"They're here!" someone proclaimed, riding into the shelter.

The time had come, and even though they had steeled their hearts for the hardships to come, they were still in shock. They all looked to Han Sen for the initial instructions.

"You know the plan. Everyone, get to your positions now." As Han Sen issued the command, he summoned Dragon-Blood Snake, which went to the northern side of the shelter. He also had Little Wind with him, who he told to stay near one of the walls.

Han Sen stood atop the spirit hall, not planning to leave. He didn't care much that his fighters were feeling nervous, only that they did as they were told. He now looked at his Gold-Talon Wolf beast soul.

Mutant Gold-Talon Wolf: Weapon Beast Soul

Han Sen summoned it, and a fang-like dagger appeared in his hand. It was not as lethal as the red one he had been using, but it was still a powerful weapon.

"I am Thorn Baron. This shelter and the lands that encompass it are to be relinquished by the current inhabitants and given to me. If you wish to escape the futile death that will result from pointless resistance, your lives can be spared and forfeited to service beneath my rule." Thorn Baron was not in a good mood.

"And I am just a soldier. If you wish to escape a futile death that will come about from pointless attempts of shelter-conquering, your lives can be spared and forfeited to service beneath my rule. I could do with a pretty new maid," a man called Chen Lei spoke aloud in response.

The humans around him all burst into laughter, and they did not appear as tense as Thorn Baron had expected.

"As a baron of thorns, I'm used to dealing with pricks, but you..." Thorn Baron's mood went from sour to curdled. Hearing this, she became angrier than ever. Not in the mood to negotiate any further, she commanded her creatures to begin their assault.

Han Sen had drafted many different plans, but most of them seemed to be pointless now. Perhaps it was due to her impatient mood, but her entire host seemed to only attack from one sole direction.

"I overestimated her intelligence." Han Sen had a wry smile and commanded everyone to the defense of the northern wall and ramparts. He also went to accompany them there.

With Thorn Baron's less-than-efficient method of assault, the pressure they had each been under was lifted by a great degree.

Having thirty people to guard the northern wall was more than enough.

Monsters roared, explosions sounded, thunder struck, and humans shouted their war cries. The variety of noises melded together to form the grand soundscape of war. It was a magnificent scene.

The walls were being shredded by blades of wind, as fireballs were also hurled at it. A creature that looked like a leopard started to scale the stone wall, and just as it was about to reach the top, a human plunged a sword deep into one of its eyes. Blood squirted from the puncture, as the leopard dropped back down to the chaotic ground below.

Roar!

A tiger that was wreathed in fire appeared and announced itself. Its body was sturdily built like a tank, and its mere presence was enough to exude a feeling of dread on those that saw it coming.

Boom!

A red shadow jumped out of the shelter and lashed out against the terrifying tiger. It was sent flying through the air, on a low trajectory which had it knocking down trees as it went.

The Dragon-Blood Snake cried out at the foes that assaulted the shelter. With a simple swing of its tail, eight primitive creatures were instantly slaughtered.

A black eagle circled the air and cast its own Windblade down below. A titan-like beast brought a battering ram towards the gate of the shelter, and with each pounding impact, the shelter rattled and vibrated.

Han Sen did not fight during the entirety of this, he merely commanded the Dragon-Blood Snake and the humans that fought valiantly in the defense of their home. As good as things had been going so far, Han Sen believed the enemy was more formidable than he had initially assumed them to be.

They even had two mutant creatures with them that had unlocked five of their gene locks. The flaming tiger that had been knocked away had six of its gene locks open, just like the snake.

The humans were in a bad spot, and the battle was going to be far tougher than they expected.

But calmly, Han Sen watched and commanded his troops to repel the invasion. And with his improved dongxuan aura, he could keep track of all the humans and creatures. While things would be okay for now, he knew he'd need an additional trick to give his team an edge. As such, he spared one part of his mind for figuring that out.

He knew he could maintain a stalemate, continuing as he had been, but a surefire victory would need something more.

"If this isn't enough to win, we may have to cut corners." Han Sen observed Thorn Baron, who was standing behind her army.

She too observed Han Sen. She believed the humans would be easily defeated, and was surprised to see such an effective resistance. Of course, she knew this was down to the person commanding them. He attracted her gaze.

Chapter 947: Dead Man's Arrow

"My Baron, do you wish me to rid the field of that human?" the royal spirit Dragon Demon asked.

In response, Thorn Baron said, "Yes. Do it at once; quick and clean. We have wasted far too much time as it is."

"Yes," Dragon Demon said. He was clad in black armor, and with a black dagger in hand, he raced towards the gate.

His eyes looked on Han Sen with the desire for cold-blooded murder.

When Han Sen saw him come, he frowned. He knew this latest foe would be a more formidable opponent than the Dragon-Blood Snake itself.

The odds truly were against them, it felt. Thorn Baron's team was, on the whole, significantly stronger than those who defended the shelter.

"Old Huang, take the reins of command!" Han Sen leapt down into the chaotic battlefield below.

If he wanted to halt the incessant advance of the creatures, Han Sen knew he'd have to take down Thorn Baron. If that didn't happen soon, he'd have no choice but to summon Moment Queen for aid in the shelter's defense.

Han Sen did not want to make his ownership of Moment Queen public yet, so he decided to go solo for now.

Old Huang was shocked to see Han Sen so casually descend onto the battlefield. How Han Sen would survive, amidst the carnage, he could not even hazard a guess.

The humans that fought were starting to realize the creatures were stronger than they initially believed them to be. To them, Han Sen's sudden behavioral shift was like suicide.

Of course, Han Sen did not think this way. Although the Baron was physically stronger, it was a situation he wasn't likely to drown in. He knew he could hold his own against her.

And for as long as he remained fleet-of-foot, Han Sen wouldn't find himself surrounded by the creatures of the battlefield, either. He could detect and respond to each and every creature movement. The moment he leapt from the ground, he'd know exactly where to land and what he'd do next.

Left and right, Han Sen swerved, bent, and twisted his way through the hordes of enemies like a breakdancing leopard.

The entire scene looked as if he was running through a number of bushes, yet not a single leaf touched him. It was wild to watch.

Despite the countless creatures that thirsted for his blood and did the best they could to stop him, nothing could come close to touching Han Sen. Closer and closer, Han Sen advanced to the approaching royal spirit.

"Arrogant." Dragon Demon's eyes were filled with the desire for slaughter. The black armor began to generate scales, as horns formed atop his helmet.

The black claws were like the fangs of dragons, and they looked indestructible.

Han Sen could feel the staggering amount of power inside his latest nemesis, but it did not make him afraid. He didn't feel any hesitation, even in the knowledge that his own speed and strength did not match that of the spirit who desired his blood.

Han Sen and Dragon Demon's shadows flickered past each other. But before Han Sen could launch his fist, slashes were carved in his chest that exposed his ribs.

Katcha!

Han Sen coughed out a glob of blood, as a river of claret oozed from his chest. He fell to the ground with no sign of life. He was a dead man.

“Dumb human. He could not even recognize the difference in strength between us.” Thorn Baron looked upon Han Sen’s lifeless corpse with disdain, then she issued one more command, “Kill the remainder!”

“Yes.” Dragon Demon was delighted to hear this, and he took off running towards the shelter.

He was confident in his powers, and he could sense there was no more lifeforce inside Han Sen’s body. There was no longer any need for him to concern himself with the human that so stupidly engaged him in battle.

A primitive creature then jumped onto Han Sen’s body and tried to devour it.

The remainder of the humans, those left guarding the stronghold they had spent their lives in the Third God’s Sanctuary building, were sad. They saw what had happened to the man they believed to be their savior, and felt the zest and zeal to fight being sapped upon the realization the hero Han Sen had been killed.

“Don’t give up, people. We still have a chance of securing victory!” Old Huang could not give in to sadness, and he did his best to instill some confidence in the people who were valiantly fighting for their lives and future.

He saw the Dragon-Blood Snake continuing to fight out on the battlefield. If Han Sen had truly been killed, the pet beast soul would have disappeared.

But the Dragon-Blood Snake was still fighting as hard as it could against the Flaming Tiger, indicating Han Sen was still alive.

Old Huang was not sure what game Han Sen was playing, but he knew this was all part of a greater plan of his. Things weren’t over yet.

Seeing the humans continuing to fight, Thorn Baron smiled mockingly. “Dumb humans.”

Then, all of a sudden, an arrow was flying towards her face. She felt a searing heat approach, and the hair of her head singed.

She recognized this to be the arrow that slew Gold Thunder-Hawk and Gold-Talon Wolf.

Thorn Baron was quick to react, though. With a hardy rose, she tried to deflect the incoming projectile.

But the arrow acted as if it had a mind of its own. It swerved to the side and lodged itself in her throat.

Thorn Baron looked down on the protruding arrow, her face consumed with disbelief. She tried to speak, but only pathetic gurgling sounds came out as she choked on her own blood. Her eyes moved up to observe the battlefield.

The dead man was stepping on the corpse of a primitive creature. He held a bow and mocked her in return. Thorn Baron had wished to later cut his lifeless body up into pieces to release her anger.

But now, she could do nothing. The life was leaving her body, which began to fade away.

The entire battlefield came to a stand-still. Immediately, all the creatures retreated.

Chapter 948: Fair Trade

Dragon Demon cried against the insubordination of the creatures that wished to flee and yelled at them to stay, but they did not listen. He lacked the authority, for he and the creatures had signed a contract with Thorn Baron. She was the sole person either party could accept commands from.

The humans were exuberantly happy, following the quick turn of events. Under Old Huang's lead, they chased off the creature horde into the woods and away from the shelter, slaying stragglers.

"I'm going to kill you." It was through Dragon Demon that Han Sen was able to feign death and kill Thorn Baron.

And seeing Dragon Demon come for him, Han Sen called for his Dragon-Blood Snake to back him up.

"I will kill you; maybe not now, but someday. I promise you this." Dragon Demon knew he could not defeat Han Sen under the current circumstances. So, he pledged an oath to kill him, turned, and departed the battlefield.

There was no point going after him, though. His spirit stone was nowhere near, and any victory against him would be short-lived. With the Dragon-Blood Snake at his side, Han Sen instead decided to cull as many of the fleeing creatures as he could and thin the horde that would soon recover their numbers and personal strength in Thorn Shelter.

"Mutant Creature Pillar Titan killed. Beast soul gained. Consume its flesh gain zero to ten mutant geno points randomly."

Han Sen and the snake delivered the beatdown upon the creature. Through the entire ordeal, this only marked their third kill of the evening. Receiving another beast soul was remarkably fortunate.

With most of the horde dispersed, scattered in flight across the thick underbrush in a desperate attempt to return home, Han Sen turned away and focused his attention on the primitive stragglers he could more easily capture and slay.

Humans won the fight, and they were treated with many spoils for their bravery. Plenty of beast souls had been collected and much creature flesh had been harvested.

The only thing that disheartened Han Sen was the size of the creatures they had slain. While bringing such foes down was an impressive task, the hulking bodies meant their consumption would be slow, and many mouths would have to work on the same meat. Still, it allowed for a feast in the victory celebrations that were soon to follow.

Han Sen summoned Meowth and Disloyal Knight to feed them. The knight, however, didn't even look at the food it was offered.

"Another picky-eating bastard." Han Sen unsummoned the knight swiftly after.

In the celebration, Han Sen was treated as a hero, and he was almost made drunk.

In Thorn Shelter, things were expectedly glum. The beautiful Thorn Baron was furious over the events that had transpired. "That obscene *sshole! I'm going to have him hung, drawn, and quartered!"

The spirits and creatures in her presence all trembled in fear of their matriarch. The last thing they wanted to do was say or do something that displeased her even more; no one wanted to incite her ire in her current frame of mind.

"They did it." Tie Yi wore a complicated expression, and he struggled to wrap his head around the fact Thorn Baron and her army had been beaten back. It was a shocker to learn that the little human shelter had claimed victory. He had never been so surprised as when he saw a horde of worn-out creatures scramble their way through the gates of the shelter.

After a while, he decided to count how many creatures had returned. He was even more surprised to learn five mutant creatures had not come back and were likely slain.

"How in the sanctuaries did he pull this off?" He actually wished he had been there, fighting alongside other humans. Such a battle must have been a glorious spectacle. Unfortunately, he had signed a contract with Thorn Baron.

Back in the Alliance, Han Sen went to meet up with Ji Yanran in the virtual community. He told her about the battle he had been in.

Ji Yanran was happy for him, but she still had to plead that he try to remain as safe as possible. The Third God's Sanctuary was a dangerous place, and she wanted nothing more than for him to be secure.

Shortly after their meeting, Ji Yanran had to return to work so she left the virtual community. Before he departed, however, Han Sen stopped Annie.

"Annie, can I borrow this bow for a while longer?" Han Sen ordered the construction of the very same bow for his personal use, but it'd take three months to be completed. Liking it very much, he asked her if he could continue using hers for the time being.

Bows like this required much hard work and delicate deliberation in their crafting. They were extremely valuable, and even with present technology, mass production of such a bow was impossible.

"Sure. But how about you do me a favor in return?" Annie said.

"Do what?" Han Sen asked.

"I'm joining a surpasser party; I'd like you to accompany me," Annie answered.

"You? Partying?" Han Sen looked flabbergasted.

Han Sen had always taken Annie for some sort of lifeless robot that followed Ji Yanran around like a shadow. He had never seen her demonstrate much emotion, and neither had he seen her do anything remotely interesting.

He had never even seen her visit the sanctuary.

And now that she was saying she was off to a party. Han Sen was taken aback.

“Yes, so will you come?” Annie coldly asked.

“Um, of course. What kind of party is it?” Han Sen needed the bow to hunt, so he knew he had no choice but to join her.

“Oh, it’s just a get-together with some of my old friends,” Annie said.

“Friends? You have friends?” Han Sen’s mind struggled to think what sort of people would want to be friends with Annie.

“Forget it. Give me back my bow!” Annie’s temper suddenly flared up in anger.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry! I’ll come, I’ll come; no questions asked. Just tell me where to be and I’ll go,” Han Sen swiftly pleaded.

“Go to the Atlantic Planet. Someone will come pick you up there tomorrow.” After saying this, Annie promptly took off.

“Atlantic Planet? Isn’t that Lan Te’s family’s planet?” Han Sen thought to himself.

Lan Te’s family was similar to Angel Gene, and was one of the big four; but Lan Te did not sell anything remotely similar to the Angel Fluid.

Lan Te’s family only produced money.

It was the oldest and biggest bank in the Alliance, and most other banks referenced and cooperated with them.

There was an organization in the Alliance called Levo Federal Reserve. It was connected to the economy and was an independent department.

Not even the president had the authority to control them, solely. If something needed to be changed or done, it had to be agreed upon through a vote.

Lan Te’s family was the boss of the banking world, and no family could avoid having some form of ties with them.

As a result, they had an unprecedented amount of influence in the Alliance and council, and no single person could ruin their reputation.

The Ji family and Lan Te family had business together, but hearing Annie was going to a party with them, Han Sen couldn’t help but be surprised.

Chapter 949: Special Collection

The next day, a spacecraft came to pick up Han Sen. Clearly, but perhaps unexpectedly, Annie had revealed herself to be a bit of a scrooge. The spacecraft was only a shuttle that was to bring him and Annie to the spaceport so they could charter public transportation and make their own way to Atlantic Planet.

“Did you have a blind date with one of their men? Did you not fancy him enough for a second date? Am I to come along with you, all so you can pretend I’m your hot and s*xy new boyfriend?” Han Sen jested.

Giving Han Sen a side-eye, Annie told him, “If you, in any way, ruin my chances of dating and subsequently marrying a man from the Lan Te family... I will kill you. Each and every person from that family is a better example of a human being than you.”

“That’s disappointing to hear.” Han Sen let out a chuckle, but then went on to ask, “So, why have you asked that I accompany you? Shouldn’t I prepare before we get there?”

Annie said, “There is no reason. They know I work for Captain Ji, but since she’s too busy to come, I’m having you take her place. You are, unfortunately, her fiance, after all.”

“So, I’m only a substitute? I almost feel insulted.” Han Sen feigned sadness, but then went on to say, “But what about these friends you say you have? Provided they are genuine human beings, are they people you met in the Third God’s Sanctuary?”

“No, it was from my time in the Second God’s Sanctuary.” Annie paused briefly before continuing. “In the Third God’s Sanctuary, I am in a restricted area.”

A restricted area was a place that was previously owned by humans, but was then taken over by spirits. Humans who teleported away could not return. If they did, they’d either be forced into slavery or killed.

Unless someone fancied being a thrall to the whims of a brutal spirit, such people could never go back.

“Ah, that’s why she’s always around in the Alliance. That’s why she can follow Ji Yanran like a puppy,” Han Sen thought to himself. Then he said, “What is your shelter called? If there is a chance I can reclaim it for you, I’ll do my best to help. Then, you can return to the sanctuary.”

“Beast Shelter. A spirit emperor conquered our shelter, one who went by the simple name of Beast,” Annie coldly said, as the haunting, previously suppressed visions flickered across her eyes in remembrance.

Han Sen could only present a wry smile, because he knew there was no chance he could take on an emperor spirit.

“Well, I may not be strong enough to help you now, but one day I will be. And when that time comes, I’ll help you,” Han Sen kindly told her.

Annie believed he was only saying that to comfort her. Taking down an emperor class shelter was an impossible feat, she thought.

When they arrived on Atlantic Planet, Lan Te's people were there waiting. They brought them to the yard.

Annie had told Han Sen that she had befriended people in the Second God's Sanctuary, people who were forming an army.

She had been positioned vice-commander of the forces, while the leader was a man from the Lan Te family. His name was Liu Meng.

"Lan Te Liu Meng? That's a mouthful," Han Sen commented.

Annie rolled her eyes. She told Han Sen he was an important man of the Lan Te family, he was just unfortunate to receive a long and girly name.

When they arrived in the yard, Liu Meng was there to greet them. He looked quite different than Han Sen had imagined he would. He didn't have the signature blue hair and blue eyes of the family.

In fact, he looked like any other person in the Alliance. He was fairly handsome, but plain. And much like everyone else in the Alliance, he had black hair and black eyes.

"You are Han Sen, I can only assume. Finally, I get to meet the man!" Liu Meng was polite, and there seemed to be genuine enthusiasm and passion in his mannerisms of speech. Han Sen expected an encounter with another rich snob, so it was nice to know he might be spending time with a humble, educated gentleman instead.

When they entered the lobby, there were many other guests there. All the members of the aforementioned army came forward to greet Annie.

Seeing Ji Yanran was not accompanying her, they were disappointed. Fortunately, Han Sen had made a name for himself and they weren't short-changed. They thought he made for a fine substitute, and due to them being keen on meeting him, as well, things weren't too awkward.

Annie was a quiet person, and whenever she was asked a question, she replied in as few words as she possibly could.

"Have you heard tales of a powerful spirit said to be rising through the ranks? It is said he destroys any spirit he goes up against."

"Oh, you mean The King? Of course, I've heard of him. I live in a shelter that belongs to Thunder-Devil King's father. His son was one-hit killed by The King."

"Ugh, that's just what we need. Another wretched, looming threat for us humans to worry about."

"Spirits are born stronger than us."

As everyone dined and drank, they somehow ended up discussing The King.

“Han Sen, what are your thoughts on The King?” Liu Meng asked.

“He sounds strong.” Han Sen wasn’t sure what he should say as, unbeknownst to them, he was commenting on himself.

Everyone thought Han Sen could provide a professional review or an insightful observation of what the new threat might have been. They were taken aback by the response he gave.

“You have just become a surpasser, have you not? It is normal that you do not understand, I suppose.” Liu Meng smiled and then went on to say, “There are many smart and powerful spirits in the Third God’s Sanctuary, but we’re not too far behind. We have Angel Gene Fluid and pet pills; in time, we will bridge the gap that separates our power from the spirits there. The speed of our development will only increase beyond that, too.”

People were very interested in Han Sen, but they were surprised to see he mostly ignored everyone else there.

Han Sen was not a quiet person, but still, he wasn’t much of a talker. He could only relax when he wasn’t the center of attention or being asked a bunch of questions.

Annie had been pulled away by a few of her girlfriends, so Han Sen focused his attention on the chefs in the kitchen. From the open-view, he was able to watch them prepare and cook their meals. But as he watched, the housekeeper came over to Han Sen and said, “Mr. Han, my master wishes to show you his collection.”

“What about the rest?” Han Sen looked around and saw that Liu Meng had gone.

“My master tells me the special collection can only be shown to special people,” the housekeeper said.

Chapter 950: Special First Time

Han Sen followed the housekeeper out into the gardens. The area glistened like polished jade, and it skirted the edges of a lake. In the middle of the lake was a stone pavilion. Liu Meng was sitting there, and he smiled at Han Sen.

“Mr. Liu, is the collection you wish to show me the fish in the lake?” Han Sen approached the stone pavilion, and aside from the active fish below the glass surface of the water, saw nothing else there of note.

Liu Meng, in response, said, “The collection I wish for you to see is right before you.”

“You can’t be talking about yourself, can you?” Han Sen looked at Liu Meng with wide-eyes.

With a serious look on his face, Liu Meng answered, “Yes. I have never fought anyone before. I have practiced and done all-manners of training, ascended ranks at an alarming pace, but never before have I fought against another human. To me, it is a valuable collection, and I wish to give this to you.”

With a wry smile, Han Sen said, "I think you have the wrong person. Shouldn't you give this to someone who is more qualified?"

Liu Meng calmly responded, "As a family member of Lan Te, I am provided much care and protection. Even in the sanctuary, I am given everything I need without challenge."

"This is a good thing, isn't it?" Han Sen said.

The Lan Te had business with every aspect of the Alliance, so such treatment was not unexpected. And Han Sen believed this to be a great thing.

Liu Meng nodded and said, "This is good, yes. But personally, I feel that it is wrong. And yet, no matter how hard I try, I am still nothing before the Lan Te glory."

Han Sen did not say anything. The two were nothing alike, and Han Sen had been raised in a completely different manner and environment. It would be impossible for him to empathize with Liu Meng.

"I like fighting, and I am learning the arts of combat to the best of my abilities. However, all I challenge never treat me as a proper opponent," Liu Meng explained.

Han Sen thought to himself, "Isn't the reason why obvious? Who would dare harm you?"

"The moment I saw you fight Yu Qielan, I knew I would have to make you an opponent." Liu Meng looked at Han Sen with much excitement.

Han Sen had no idea what to think or feel.

He hadn't done anything and had never met Liu Meng before, yet the man wanted to fight him. The way he spoke made it sound as if they were destined to compete, too.

Han Sen wanted to tell him, "What makes you think I'll challenge you?"

Liu Meng smiled and drew a shortsword. He placed it onto a table and said, "I know I'm putting you in an awkward position, but if you can beat me, this sword is yours."

"No, I am too weak to go up against you. Why don't I recommend you to fight someone who is truly powerful?" Han Sen spoke, but then retreated into his mind, thinking, "Even if you gave me a billion, there is no way I'd beat up a son of the Lan Te family."

Liu Meng slid the shortsword across the table, closer to Han Sen. "Look at it, would you? This is a weapon that comes from ancient times. Its name is Taia."

Han Sen had no knowledge of ancient weaponry, but he knew the blacksmithing required in the past could not compete with what was produced in the current age. Humans were still primitive back then, and even metals such as z-steel hadn't been discovered.

Han Sen picked up the shortsword, and when he felt the power inside it, a chill ran down his spine.

Han Sen observed Taia. The blade was shorter than two feet, and the metal had a certain reddish hue to it. It almost looked as if it had been crafted from bronze.

It wasn't blood-red, it was more like the last light of a sun that was to dip below the horizon.

The bronze, elegant sword looked cold and murderous.

But the sword had been crafted from primitive materials, so it wasn't as if it could serve as a suitable weapon. Even a knock-off z-steel sword could break it with the greatest of ease.

"This sword was created in a country called Chu. Its crafting was the joint operation of two expert blacksmiths, and it was a gift for a king. It became an infamous, well-renowned sword following the king's rule with that weapon," Liu Meng said.

Han Sen was not much of a fan of swords. To Han Sen, practicality always came first. The relic he was handed, he believed, should have been placed in a museum.

"You must think this is some useless sword hailing from a bygone era, but you'd be forgiven for thinking that." Liu Meng knew exactly what Han Sen was thinking.

"The blacksmithing of ancient times can't hold a candle to what is done today, right? It might look good, but it is undoubtedly weak. I can't say I'm much of a fan of art," Han Sen clarified his true feelings.

Liu Meng did not speak, but instead drew a dagger of his own and attacked Han Sen.

He was not expecting Liu Meng to start a fight there, of all places. And being caught off-guard, it was too late for Han Sen to dodge.

He did recognize that the dagger being used against him had been crafted from z-steel, though.

In a flash, he used Taia to block the incoming attack. He was planning to evade as soon as the sword began breaking.

Katcha!

Something broke, and it was not Taia. It was the z-steel dagger.

Han Sen observed Taia in his hand, and then looked at the z-steel dagger's severed blade. He was shocked.

"Taia was not always a shortsword. In the past, Taia was once a five foot long greatsword. After it was cut in half, it was refined into the weapon you now hold. The remainder of the blade that was broken is in the possession of the Qin family. They continually try to buy this back, but I reject them each time," Liu Meng said.