

Cultivating with Top Enlightenment

Chapter 36: Chapter 33: The Great Dream of 9 Deaths, Advancement to Inner Essence (Two-in-One)

Within the Seeking Tao Institute.

Ning Qi was slowly practicing the Myriad Phenomena Origin Stance. Although his physical body was now flawless and had reached its limit, he still needed to use "God" to stimulate the body, thus continuously generating Inner Strength.

Like right now.

The Inner Strength within Ning Qi's body was no longer just a few strands as before; it had gradually coalesced into a mass. In a matter of days, it could completely condense into an Inner Essence "fruit," thereby nourishing the body and greatly extending lifespan once more.

This was truly the advancement to the Inner Essence Realm.

For Ning Qi, that day was not far off, just twenty days or so would suffice.

During this period.

Ning Qi had gained a more profound understanding of the essence of Inner Strength.

"Inner Strength is formless, lacking a visage, a 'virtual substance.' Whether strands sensed previously or now coalesced into mass, these are actually perceptions the body gives back to me, not necessarily truly existing within."

"But cultivation to the Inner Essence Realm is about condensing the virtual into the real. Upon reaching a profound stage in the Inner Essence Realm, Inner Strength is nearly in a 'semi-real' state, not only amplifying the body but also adhering to fists, palms, and weapons, enhancing their power."

"How to condense the virtual into the real?"

Ning Qi gently swung his fist, feeling the body gently 'peel off' and 'squeeze out' strands of Inner Strength.

In his mind, inspiration continually arose.

The various Stacking Strength Skills and Secret Techniques he had studied floated in his mind, providing an answer to this issue.

"Every instance of Stacking Strength is actually making Inner Strength integrate with the body once again, allowing the body to produce stronger, more 'real' Inner Strength. After nine times, it can completely transform into Gang Essence!"

"Therefore, all Stacking Strength Skills in the world can be divided into two steps."

"The first step is forming a connection between Inner Strength and the body, merging once more to improve body strength. The second step is squeezing new Inner Strength from the enhanced body!"

"It means the body serves to 'enhance' and 'compress' Inner Strength during this process, and the effectiveness of the Stacking Strength Skill depends on optimizing this process. For instance, the Ice Silkworm Strength, with nine instances of Cocoon Breaking and Rebirth, actually presses the body to an extremely high degree, surpassing even the four superior Stacking Strength Skills of my True Martial Sect."

"But, I don't think this is the true limit!"

Ning Qi had forgotten that he was practicing Stance Skill; he had entered into a marvelous state of enlightenment.

Ning Qi's mind was bubbling with inspiration, constantly springing forth.

"Wanting the body to reach the true limit each time in this process requires the body to 'die,' and then be reborn. Not only will this extract stronger Inner Strength, but it can also let the body transform again. This is the true Cocoon Breaking and Rebirth!"

"However, letting the body die is a very dangerous act; mishandling it could lead to a complete cessation of vitality, truly dying. Therefore, 'fake death' can be used instead, going through cycles to reach the true limit of the body!"

In his mind, there was faintly the sound of Heavenly Thunder roaring.

At some point.

Ning Qi had stopped practicing Stance Skill. He closed his eyes, standing motionless in the courtyard like a sculpture.

Fine rain began to pour from the sky.

Seeing this, the White Ape quickly stopped the Ape King Stance, fetched an oiled paper umbrella from the storeroom, and carefully walked to Ning Qi's side to shield him, ensuring he was as quiet as possible, fearing to disturb Ning Qi.

His eyes were filled with reverence.

After living with Ning Qi, he learned just how formidable Ning Qi truly was and how well he treated him. Although Ning Qi never acknowledged him as a disciple, the White Ape had long regarded Ning Qi as his master.

A man and an ape stood quietly in the rain.

Until the rain ceased late at night.

Ning Qi slowly opened his eyes, genuine joy in them.

"Tiansheng, go rest."

He gently said.

The White Ape bowed respectfully and returned to his own courtyard.

Ning Qi looked at the faint rain lines in the sky and smiled.

Having reviewed seventy-six Stacking Strength Skills, using the Myriad Phenomena Origin Stance as a foundation, drawing on the concept of Cocoon Breaking and Rebirth from the Ice Silkworm Skill, and capturing the essence of Dreaming Gluttony, he had gained enlightenment.

Great Dream Nine Deaths Strength.

This was Ning Qi's achievement during this time, a Stacking Strength Skill tailored for himself.

"Letting the body die in a sleep-like dream, and awakening as a rebirth. Each Stacking Strength can reach the true limit; this is the Great Dream Nine Deaths!"

"Each realm breakthrough can be replaced by long slumber, thus avoiding any danger. Just need to consume enough energy before sleeping. Fortunately, I've optimized the absorption problem for the body's rebirth, without becoming like Zhuang Chen, a little fatty."

Ning Qi chuckled.

He stretched lazily, feeling very satisfied.

Now he only needed to fully set foot in the Inner Essence Strength, and could then explore the potent Great Dream Nine Deaths Strength in subsequent levels.

Completing the Inner Essence Realm in twenty years was already considered an exceptional talent, but Ning Qi thought he would do so very quickly.

"Strictly speaking, the second half of the Great Dream Nine Deaths Strength is still lacking."

"Upon achieving Great Success in the Inner Essence Realm, reaching the 'semi-real' state allows Inner Strength to acquire various attributes. For example, with Ice Silkworm Strength, one can condense Ice Silkworm Inner Strength, forming it within the palm, able to freeze one's bones, immensely powerful, and even relates to the later Gang Essence Realm's True Gang cultivation method."

"But there's no rush, achieving Great Success in the Inner Essence Realm will take at least over a year, so I need to deliberate further."

Ning Qi set aside the thought.

He would strive towards this goal in the future.

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The autumn gradually faded away, and the cold winds were biting.

There was a chill on True Martial Mountain, and the commotion of the Divine Sword Sect's visit gradually subsided. That day, when Ning Qi easily subdued the chubby Zhuang Chen, it attracted quite a bit of attention within the True Martial Sect. Many people gained a clear understanding of Ning Qi's talent as the ninth true inheritor for the first time.

A few curious disciples would inevitably find excuses to visit the Scripture Pavilion to get a closer look at Ning Qi.

However.

Ning Qi had always been mysterious and rarely interacted with other disciples. Gradually, the heat died down, and the Scripture Pavilion became quiet again.

After all, most disciples focused on the improvement of their own cultivation.

But the third senior sister Ye Qinghe and fifth senior brother Jiang Baishan visited one after the other to see how Ning Qi was doing. After teasing the White Ape for a bit, Ye Qinghe told Ning Qi some news.

Ye Qinghe told Ning Qi.

After descending from the Divine Sword Sect, Qin Yun was ordered by Taoist Longshan to go down the mountain for training.

Ning Qi could only sigh lightly.

Qin Yun had not been to the Seeking Tao Institute for a long time.

He felt helpless about this.

Ning Qi still remembered Qin Yun telling him that he wanted to become the number one in the world and restore True Martial Sect to the pinnacle of Taoism in the world.

But today.

There was no one to disturb him in the Seeking Tao Institute, not even the White Ape. While diligently practicing stance skills, the White Ape sometimes went to play with young disciples, and occasionally Ye Qinghe would take it for a stroll. The White Ape held quite a good position in the True Martial Sect.

It was rare for Ning Qi to sit cross-legged on his bed.

He had his five hearts facing the heaven, with a solemn expression, and carried some expectation.

Inside his body.

A startling change was occurring.

The robust foundation of his physical body generated a vast amount of Inner Strength within Ning Qi, probably ten times more than that of an average person.

At this moment.

The Inner Strength generated by his body was about to completely form a 'fruit.'

Ning Qi could feel that his dantian seemed to be filled with an invisible substance, presenting a mixed primordial state.

"Gather!"

In that instant.

The last trace of 'sweet dew' was extracted from his body, and the Inner Strength was completely condensed into a fruit. Ning Qi felt a surge of spirit, and his entire state sublimated.

In his dantian, the Inner Strength could be freely extracted, concentrated on his right arm, making it feel like he could smash mountains, an illusion brought by the massive increase in power.

The Inner Strength, enhancing his physical body, could erupt with far greater force than his body alone.

The current Ning Qi was frighteningly powerful.

Originally, his physical body surpassed others by far, and now with the more abundant Inner Strength augmenting it, he was beyond his past self. Although he just broke through to the Inner Essence Realm, he feared that even typical Sixfold or Sevenfold Realm experts might not be able to rival him.

What delighted Ning Qi the most.

Was the mysterious sublimation of his body.

After condensing the Inner Strength fruit, his lifespan increased again, now reaching two hundred years.

Now, Ning Qi was only five years old, meaning he could live for a full one hundred and ninety-five more years, or even more. His body was so strong, reaching a preeminent state that his lifespan might surpass ordinary people.

At this moment.

His spirit rejuvenated, his body at ease.

Ning Qi felt his thought processes speed up once more, with occasional spiritual enlightenment, surpassing before.

"Is this the Inner Essence Realm? It's truly marvelous."

Ning Qi smiled slightly.

Cultivation indeed was an interesting thing, the feeling of climbing towards the peak step by step fascinated him. Now, he was one step closer to immortality.

After a moment of reflection.

Ning Qi began to try the Great Dream Nine Deaths Strength.

Instantly entering a state of cultivation, Ning Qi swiftly found his footing, which for others at this stage would take quite some time.

Ning Qi controlled the Inner Strength fruit, step by step establishing a deeper bond with his body.

Once the bond was fully established, he could begin to absorb Inner Strength with his body, transforming it into even stronger Inner Strength.

"However, the process of establishing this bond is purely a drawn-out effort. Even a natural genius would need one to two years."

"Fortunately, my creation of the Great Dream Nine Deaths Strength can greatly shorten this process, making two to three months enough."

Ning Qi smiled with confidence.

He slowly concluded his cultivation, deciding to find his master.

Taoist Longshan had previously said that once Ning Qi broke through the Inner Essence Realm, he should seek him out, as there was something important to tell him. Therefore, Ning Qi never concealed his cultivation progress from Taoist Longshan—there was no need.

Ning Qi stood up, employing his self-created Misty Dragon Roaming Step, with Inner Strength silently merging into it, making his speed soar instantly. In just a brief moment, he already became familiar with utilizing Inner Strength in various martial arts.

By drawing analogies from known concepts, the martial arts he created easily adjusted with his cultivation.

Though in the future, he could create several more formidable martial arts.

One purpose was to enrich his Path Guardian Foundation, and another was to present them to Taoist Longshan, enriching the Scripture Pavilion's collection. The current Scripture Pavilion already housed many martial arts created by Ning Qi. Sometimes, when he was bored, he would secretly observe the cultivation of True Martial Sect disciples and create suitable martial arts for them.

Walking with hands behind his back, Ning Qi exuded an indescribably graceful demeanor.

But upon reaching the Bright Martial Pavilion.

He saw the pavilion tightly shut.

Ning Qi froze in place, hearing his senior brother Luo Wentian's voice from behind:

"Jiu, you came at an inconvenient time. Master just went into seclusion yesterday. He wanted Tiansheng to inform you, but there wasn't enough time. Do you have any matters to discuss with Master? Let your senior brother help you resolve it!"

Looking at his senior brother's concerned expression, Ning Qi said with a smile:

"It's nothing important. Since Master is in seclusion, I'll wait for him to come out before visiting."

He hesitated but chose not to mention to Luo Wentian that he had already ascended to the Inner Essence Realm.

Although his senior brother was kind, it was better to avoid unnecessary trouble.

After chatting for a while, Ning Qi departed.

Watching Ning Qi's departing figure, Luo Wentian showed a hint of puzzlement in his eyes. Compared to two months ago, Ning Qi seemed to have undergone some change, but he couldn't quite put his finger on it.

Finally, he shook his head, dismissing an absurd notion in his mind.

"How could it be possible? Junior brother is only five years old."

He shook his head with a chuckle, then bowed to the closed Bright Martial Pavilion and walked away, focusing on more affairs of the True Martial Sect while Taoist Longshan was in seclusion.

Luo Wentian, now nearly fifty, was about to reach Inner Essence Realm Ninefold, a respectable achievement, but still not among the very top of the world. Though his progress was somewhat hindered by the sect's duties, his talent wasn't considered top rank among the True Martial Nine Sons.

For example, the fifth disciple, Jiang Baishan, had also reached the Ninthfold of the Inner Essence Realm and was likely to become the first of the True Martial Nine Sons to step into the Gang Essence Realm.

Regarding this,

he felt that if his younger disciples and juniors were talented and progressing rapidly, it was worth sacrificing some of his cultivation time to support them with logistical tasks.

The two chatted briefly before Ning Qi left.

He continued his structured training.

Perusing the texts in the Scripture Pavilion, practicing the Nine Deaths Great Dream Strength in the Seeking Tao Institute.

Ning Qi's cultivation was going exceptionally well, and he had once again established a complete connection between his Inner Strength and his physical body. The next step was to allow his body to absorb the Inner Strength, converting it into a more powerful form.

"However, the process of forming this connection is purely tedious work. Even a prodigy would need a year or two for it."

"Luckily, the method I created, the Great Dream Nine Deaths Strength, can significantly shorten this process to just two to three months."

Ning Qi smiled confidently.

He decided to go find his master.

Earlier, Taoist Longshan had mentioned that Ning Qi should seek him out once he broke through the Inner Essence Realm, as there was something important to tell him. Therefore, Ning Qi never hid his cultivation progress from Taoist Longshan—it wasn't necessary.

With hands clasped behind his back, there was an indescribable grace in his demeanor.

But when he arrived at the Bright Martial Pavilion.

He found the pavilion closed.

Ning Qi paused in his tracks.

Looking at Ning Qi's departing silhouette, Luo Wentian shook his head and dismissed the absurd speculation in his heart.

"How could it be? My junior siblings are talented and brave, always improving. If I have to sacrifice some cultivation time to help them with the sect's affairs, so be it."

With that thought, he paid his respects to the closed Bright Martial Pavilion with a wry smile and walked away, pondering True Martial Sect's matters while Taoist Longshan was in seclusion.

Ning Qi still practiced steadily.

He continued to read through the books and records in the Scripture Pavilion, practicing the Nine Deaths Great Dream Strength in the Seeking Tao Institute.

Ning Qi's cultivation was incredibly smooth, and he had once again established a complete bond between his Inner Strength and his physical body. The next step was to let his body absorb the Inner Strength, transforming it into a more powerful force.

At that point in time.

To further explore the bloodline and constitution of the White Ape using his Inner Strength, Ning Qi tried but ultimately failed.

The Inner Strength was still too 'ethereal.'

Like with Zhuang Chen's Innate Sword Bone, Ning Qi was equally curious about the White Ape's constitution.

There were two possibilities.

Either the heavenly beast bloodline within the White Ape was too weak to detect, or the heavenly beast bloodline within the White Ape was too strong, making it difficult to activate.

Ning Qi tended to lean toward the latter.

He could only suppress his curiosity to explore further.

He would have to wait until later to attempt to activate the celestial bloodline.

During his hesitation on his first attempt.

Ning Qi continued to immerse himself in his training.

He decided to execute the Nine Deaths Great Dream Strength.

Instantly entering a state of cultivation, Ning Qi found the feeling immediately. It would have taken others quite some time to reach this point.

Ning Qi manipulated the Inner Strength fruit, step by step forging a deeper bond with his body.

Once the bond was fully established, he could attempt to use his body to absorb the Inner Strength, transforming it into even greater power.

"But the process of establishing this bond is just pure grinding work. Even a talent bestowed by the heavens would take a year or two to finish."

"Fortunately, the Great Dream Nine Deaths Strength I created can drastically shorten this process to just two or three months."

Ning Qi smiled with confidence.

He slowly concluded his practice and decided to find his master.

Taoist Longshan had mentioned earlier, that once Ning Qi achieved the Inner Essence Realm, he should come to him, as there was something important to discuss. Consequently, Ning Qi never hid his cultivation progress from Taoist Longshan, as there was no need.

Ning Qi got up, executing his self-created Misty Dragon Roaming Step, and seamlessly integrated Inner Strength into it, his speed increased drastically. In just a brief moment, he already familiarized himself with the application of Inner Strength across numerous martial arts.

He drew inferences by analogy, easily adapting the martial arts he created to his cultivation.

However, he could create several more powerful martial arts in the future.

One is to enrich his Path Guardian Foundation, and the other is to offer them to Taoist Longshan, enriching the Scripture Pavilion's collection. Currently, the Scripture Pavilion already bears many cultivation techniques created by Ning Qi. Occasionally, when he was bored, he would secretly observe the True Martial Sect disciples' cultivation, creating suitable martial arts for them.

Walking with his hands behind his back, there was an indescribable charm in Ning Qi's demeanor.

When he reached the Bright Martial Pavilion.

He found it tightly closed.

Ning Qi paused in his steps.

He heard from Luo Wentian that his master had entered seclusion. Tiansheng wanted to inform him, but there was not enough time. If he had any issues, the senior brother offered to resolve them.

After considering, he decided not to share this with his master now.

Although his master was in seclusion, the affairs of the True Martial Sect still needed attention.

Your junior brothers and sisters will continue to progress with their strong talents.

If necessary, he would assist his junior brothers and sisters with the sect's responsibilities, even at the cost of sacrificing some time for his own cultivation.

He walked away, looking at the departing figure of Ning Qi.

He could only shake his head and dismiss the absurd thought forming in his mind.

In the future, there is a possibility that he can create several more powerful martial arts.

This would serve two purposes: enrich his Path Guardian Foundation and provide Taoist Longshan with more books for the Scripture Pavilion. The current collection already included many of Ning Qi's creations, as he would sometimes discreetly observe the True Martial Sect disciples practicing and create suitable martial arts for them when he was bored.

Chapter 38: Chapter 34 Half-step Celestial Being

Taoist Longshan had a significant gain this time.

Sharing the secrets of the Celestial Human with Divine Sword Old Man is not merely helping him, it's a win-win situation.

Although Divine Sword Old Man's talent does not exceed Taoist Longshan's, he is, after all, a strong Sword Dao practitioner in the Primordial Core Realm. Sometimes, his inspirations have greatly enlightened Taoist Longshan.

This time in seclusion.

He processed his insights from this period.

Taoist Longshan now exudes an ethereal aura.

Simply by standing there, he emanates a unique pressure, as if one with the heavens and earth. He can now truly be called a Half-step Celestial Being, quite different in essence from his prior Primordial Core Perfection.

Luo Wentian, standing nearby, showed respect and admiration in his eyes; he was the disciple who had been with Taoist Longshan the longest, even before Taoist Longshan rebuilt the True Martial Sect.

He can perceive the changes in his master.

The faint oppression emanating from him made his heart uneasy.

"Master, are you..." Luo Wentian cautiously asked.

Taoist Longshan smiled:

"It will be soon, maybe in a year, perhaps three; for sure, I shall reach the Celestial Human Realm!"

It seems like a lengthy period, yet he is already confident.

Surveying the world, few have the courage to speak such words before reaching the Celestial Human Realm. Even if he takes three years to break through, given Taoist Longshan's age, he is still far from reaching a hundred. His talent is enough to stand proud in Great Yan.

Luo Wentian was overjoyed:

"Congratulations, Master! It seems that I have to start preparing for the Celestial Being Grand Ceremony ahead of time!"

Traditionally, when the Great Yan dynasty has a new Celestial Being, they hold a grand ceremony—an excellent opportunity to boost the prestige of the True Martial Sect, potentially allowing it to rise out of Qing State and gain renown in Great Yan.

Looking at the Great Yan dynasty.

Celestial Human Realm practitioners are unmatched strong individuals, garnering the respect of countless people.

Taoist Longshan collected himself and waved slightly:

"Have any significant events happened within the sect recently?"

Luo Wentian thought for a moment and said:

"Everything seems normal within the sect, except that the eighth junior brother went down the mountain to train and hasn't returned for a while."

Taoist Longshan frowned slightly:

"Never mind, it seems Ba hasn't resolved his obsession yet. He probably won't return by year-end. Let him be. When he figures things out, he'll naturally come back."

Luo Wentian remained silent for a moment and then said:

"By the way, over a month ago, Jiu came to seek you once. I'm not sure if there is anything important."

Taoist Longshan paused.

His little disciple, Ning Qi, was the one he felt most proud of and had to worry about the least.

Except for the initial teachings when Ning Qi first started on the Martial Path, there was generally little to fret about. Usually, Ning Qi wouldn't actively seek him out; Taoist Longshan simply needed to provide the necessary resources.

Suddenly.

Taoist Longshan recalled something.

His eyes flickered in shock.

"Impossible? Jiu is only five years old... Even though he reached the Refining Spirit Realm before, breaking through the flesh without blemishes and the bottleneck for birthing Inner Strength isn't so easily accomplished..."

At this thought.

Taoist Longshan couldn't sit still.

He wished to go to the Seeking Tao Institute to see if his speculation was correct.

But as he was about to get up.

He glanced outside the pavilion, his eyes moved slightly, and he sat back down.

"Wentian, you may leave now."

Luo Wentian was somewhat bewildered, as he hadn't been there long, he thought there would be more matters to report.

However, he always respected his master.

After saluting, he left quickly.

But just as he stepped outside, he saw Ning Qi; he smiled and said:

"Jiu, you're just in time; Master has emerged from seclusion. We were just talking about you."

Ning Qi smiled and nodded.

Looking at Ning Qi's back, Luo Wentian slowly realized.

"Has Master sensed Jiu is coming, thus asking me to leave?"

This thought arose in his heart, yet he bore no particular sentiments or dissatisfaction, just curiosity about what his master intended to discuss with Jiu alone.

Soon after, he chuckled and shook his head; this wasn't a matter of his concern.

"If Master breaks through to the Celestial Human Realm in the next two years, the ceremony must be held. Disciples under him should improve their strength to avoid weakening Master's prestige."

"Perhaps, at this year's end, we can hold a sect martial arts competition, allowing the second and third senior siblings to guide the Outer and Inner Sect disciples?"

Various thoughts appeared in his mind as he gradually walked away.

Within Bright Martial Pavilion.

After Ning Qi respectfully saluted, Taoist Longshan's gaze was already fixed on him, sensing intently, suppressing his inner excitement, he asked:

"Jiu, did you break through?"

Ning Qi was slightly startled, then nodded.

"I broke into the Inner Essence Realm a few days ago; I wanted to inform you back then, but you were in seclusion."

Receiving Ning Qi's affirmative response.

Taoist Longshan stood dumbfounded.

Speculation is one matter, but reality before one's eyes is entirely different.

The impact is distinctly different.

"Under the Taoist Ancestor, Jiu is just five years old..."

Three years of martial arts training, five years old and breaking into the Inner Essence Realm.

What a peerless genius!

Originally, based on Taoist Longshan's forecast, Ning Qi might delve into the Inner Essence Realm after turning six, and even in that case, he already found it extremely

uncanny. Never did he expect Ning Qi to be even more astonishing; only a year earlier, yet the qualitative difference in innate talent is beyond logical sense.

At this moment.

Taoist Longshan regretted not preventing Ning Qi from making a move when the Divine Sword Sect came up the mountain. Losing face, a little would be fine.

Fortunately, Ning Qi's Body Tempering stage exhibition was not high, likely only Divine Sword Old Man discerned some of the subtleties, yet Taoist Longshan trusted Divine Sword Old Man's character.

"Jiu, from now on, remember not to display your cultivation in front of outsiders; even if you do, avoid revealing your age, at least not until you become a Celestial Being."

Taoist Longshan advised sternly.

One cannot be too cautious.

Unlike Qin Yun or Zhuang Chen, whose talents pose less risk unless there is profound enmity, nobody would intentionally target them. However, someone like Ning Qi is too astonishing. If someone finds out, even without grudges, they might want to snuff the threat prematurely.

Only upon reaching the Celestial Human Realm would he have the power to safeguard himself.

Yet within another year or two, Taoist Longshan estimated he too would ascend to Celestial Human, thus ensuring Ning Qi's safety on True Martial Mountain without worries.

This caution towards Ning Qi serves as a dual safeguard, preventing any issues from arising.

Ning Qi nodded sincerely.

He could feel his master's affection and concern.

"Master, you mentioned earlier that after I broke into Inner Essence Realm, there is something important to tell me. What might it be?"

Ning Qi asked.

Already having some guesses internally.

Indeed.

Taoist Longshan's expression stiffened, he sighed deeply, seemingly hesitant, and finally, slowly said:

"Regarding your origins."

Chapter 39: Chapter 35 Blood Rain Tower

Ning Qi's eyes shook.

Five years ago, he traveled through time and immediately faced a dangerous situation. If not for his awakening to a full-level comprehension ability, he might have perished again before Taoist Longshan arrived.

Although he could sense some things back then, it was ultimately not comprehensive enough, and he did not know the whole story.

"You were not an orphan picked up by me from the wilderness. Your parents were Ning Ye and Jiang Xuemei of Snow Plum Manor. They were harmed by villains, and I rescued you from the sea of fire,"

Taoist Longshan slowly relayed. Back then, he brought Ning Qi back and declared that the child was an orphan found in the wilderness.

Seeing that Ning Qi's expression was solemn but not overly shocked, one of his lingering doubts was finally resolved.

"Jiu, you really were born with wisdom."

He sighed deeply.

Back then, he wondered if the cries of the infant when he arrived at the fire were deliberately made to attract him.

Now it seems so; his disciple indeed had innate wisdom, could discern good from evil, and it was his survival instinct that led him to wait for rescue.

Ning Qi tacitly agreed.

He sufficiently trusted Taoist Longshan.

"Master, I want to know, who exactly were the people that killed my parents back then?"

All he knew was of a certain 'Master Feng', but he didn't know who that was exactly, nor the reasons behind the annihilation of Snow Plum Manor.

Taoist Longshan fell into recollection:

"Five years ago, I received an invitation from your parents to celebrate your birthday and discuss important matters. Unexpectedly, when I arrived, Snow Plum Manor was already devoid of life, and the culprits were long gone. Fortunately, your innate Qi was abundant, which protected you for such a long time."

"These years, I have been secretly investigating and finally made some progress."

"The culprits might be related to the Blood Rain Tower that has risen in recent years, but the investigation is ongoing. I still don't know if there were others involved or why Snow Plum Manor was annihilated. I can only speculate that it may be related to the important matter your father mentioned."

His eyes carried a sense of dread.

Ning Qi's eyes also slightly narrowed.

He had heard of Blood Rain Tower from senior brothers and sisters who had trained down the mountain. It is a very powerful assassin organization, with four ace killers named Wind, Rain, Thunder, and Lightning, all at the Gang Essence Realm, and it's rumored that the four once teamed up to escape unscathed from someone in the Celestial Human Realm, gaining unparalleled fame.

"Wind, Rain, Thunder, and Lightning? Master Feng?"

Ning Qi pondered in his heart.

Taoist Longshan, seeing Ning Qi silent, comforted him by patting his head:

"Qi'er, the reason I am telling you this today is because you have the right to know. But you must remember not to let hatred blind you and foster obsession. With your talent, practicing diligently under me for twenty years will make revenge easy in the future."

"Rest assured, I will assist you when the time comes!"

His caring and protective intent was evident.

In fact,

Taoist Longshan hesitated for a long time. He originally planned to slowly tell Ning Qi about this after he became an adult.

But as Ning Qi's behavior became more extraordinary, and his displayed intelligence far surpassed ordinary people, he set a goal to tell Ning Qi the truth when he reached the Inner Essence Realm.

Because he suspected that Ning Qi might have a natural understanding, perhaps having perceived certain things as a baby. Instead of concealing the truth, it seemed better to speak openly, thus preventing Ning Qi from bottling it up, and he worried Ning Qi might develop obsession, leading to a Heart Demon.

On the Martial Path, if a Heart Demon cannot be eradicated, it almost results in half a ruin.

Ning Qi respectfully saluted.

"Master, your disciple understands."

"The grudge of extermination will not be forgotten by your disciple, but your disciple will not be impulsive; when capable enough in the future, I will definitely wipe out those culprits."

Ning Qi said determinedly.

With his full-level comprehension, there was no need to rush.

Now that he knew the target, he was even less anxious.

"Blood Rain Tower..."

He slowly chewed over this name in his heart.

Taoist Longshan comfortingly stroked his beard:

"Then it's good. Now that you've reached the Inner Essence Realm, if you need anything in the future, just come to me. As for now, let me talk to you about cultivating in the Inner Essence Realm..."

Ning Qi sat cross-legged opposite Taoist Longshan, smiling.

Pretending to listen attentively.

Taoist Longshan spoke at length, and Ning Qi occasionally raised different insights, often leaving Taoist Longshan speechless, both amazed and comforted. He found that there was less and less he could teach Ning Qi, perhaps the only thing he could do was to create a good environment for him.

After a long while,

watching Ning Qi leaving with the demeanor of a little adult, hands behind his back,

Taoist Longshan comfortingly stroked his beard.

"With a disciple like this, what more could one ask for?"

...

Ning Qi sat with closed eyes in the Seeking Tao Institute.

The conversation with Taoist Longshan was very beneficial to him.

After learning that the culprits from back then were Blood Rain Tower, he wasn't in a hurry; instead, he felt more at ease. At least now there was a target, unlike before when he only had an illusory assumption.

"Not to mention reaching the Celestial Human Realm, once I attain the Primordial Core Realm, I'm afraid I can easily destroy Blood Rain Tower."

Ning Qi had never gone all out before, but his actual combat power within the same rank was extremely exaggerated, and fighting beyond his rank was not difficult. One day, when he reaches the Gang Essence Realm, there's a good chance he could challenge someone in the Celestial Human Realm.

Not dwelling on this for too long,

Ning Qi started his inner observation.

"Inner Strength and the body have fully established a connection. According to my master's cultivation experience, the initial transformation of the body won't take too long and will be in time for the end of the year."

He did not hesitate.

Ning Qi began to eat.

Exotic beast meat, Three-leaf Ganoderma, Centennial Ginseng, Qi Blood Fruit... many highly nourishing items were consumed by Ning Qi. He ate at a steady pace, not too fast, and soon all the prepared items were devoured.

He felt a slight fullness in his stomach.

Ning Qi had long instructed White Ape to act as his guardian.

It was also very safe within the True Martial Sect.

With the door locked, Ning Qi slowly lay down.

His vitality visibly faded at a speed noticeable to the naked eye; his face turned pale and then ashen, and his once glossy skin became dull and sallow. In just a moment, Ning Qi gradually resembled a dead body.

He began his first 'death' of the physical body.

The physical body gains rebirth from withering, achieving ultimate transformation.

This was risky, but Ning Qi had the Great Dream Nine Deaths Strength to protect his path.

At this moment,

the various nourishing items he had consumed began to take effect, transforming in a magical way deep within his physical body.

Marvelous changes were occurring within Ning Qi's body.

Outside the house,

White Ape sensed something, his pupils full of worry, restraining the urge to go in and check.

Ning Qi had instructed him that he was going to seclude himself and needed White Ape to guard him.

White Ape decided he would not leave and would wait for Ning Qi to wake up.

Time passed slowly.

The festive atmosphere on True Martial Mountain grew more intense as the end of the year approached. Especially after Luo Wentian proposed the True Martial Year-End Competition, it made the disciples eager to compete.

In contrast, the Seeking Tao Institute seemed somewhat deserted.

White Ape would listen for any sounds outside the house every day.

But there was no sign of life inside, as if it were empty, making him extremely anxious but afraid to disobey Ning Qi.

Fortunately,

This anxiety did not last long.

Seven days later,

A familiar aura reappeared inside the house.

White Ape was overjoyed.

Chapter 40: Chapter 36: From Death to Life

The White Ape scratched his head, instinctively wanting to investigate, but ultimately suppressed the impulse. He began practicing the Ape King Stance to divert his attention, though he still kept a bit of focus on Ning Qi's side.

Inside the room.

Ning Qi slowly opened his eyes, a fleeting trace of ancient sorrow and confusion appeared in them, but fortunately, it quickly returned to liveliness.

"The Great Dream Nine Deaths, every time the physical body dies, it's essentially undergoing a cycle of life and death."

"It's not just a transformation of the physical body, but there are advantages I never could have predicted before."

Ning Qi was somewhat amazed at heart.

He estimated the time and knew that seven days had passed. In these seven days, he entered into an extremely magical state.

Unaware and senseless, without feeling, without light.

Yet he was not afraid or lonely; time seemed to lose meaning, appearing slow yet actually swift. He felt he had just entered the state of physical death and was already awake again.

With a slight smile, the withered skin on his face shifted, immediately making Ning Qi aware of his current physical state.

But he didn't panic.

Ning Qi shifted his mind.

The 'Light of Vitality' hidden deep within his body immediately began to pulsate anew.

In the intangible, it was as if he could hear the hum of flames reigniting, a surge of vibrant vitality emerged from his limbs and bones. Not only that, his internal strength and vitality fused together and penetrated deeply into his flesh.

"Buzz!"

The withered body began to replenish at a speed visible to the naked eye, instantly becoming imbued with a jade-like luster.

His vitality was thriving, his aura powerful.

Even the White Ape practicing the Ape King Stance in the yard couldn't help but look over in astonishment, his face showing reverence and delight.

But soon.

This vitality gradually subsided.

Ning Qi rose from the bed, his face displaying a joyful smile, he slightly clenched his fist, feeling that his physical body had grown even stronger.

Moreover.

The existing inner strength, absorbed into the body, was now reborn from the new flesh, both in quality and quantity significantly improved.

"From death to life, the potential of the body is tapped to its utmost, enhancing by at least double!"

"This is something other Stacking Strength Skill can only dream of."

"Moreover, my inner strength is even more powerful. Although I'm only at the Second Fold Layer, I've started to feel some 'substantiality'. At this rate, perhaps I won't even need Great Success of Inner Essence to begin attaching attributes to my inner strength?"

The greatness of the Great Dream Nine Deaths Strength was gradually beginning to manifest.

Ning Qi's foundation was somewhat exaggerated.

Others cultivate Stacking Strength slowly over time, even after establishing a connection, they would only gradually transform their inner strength. But Ning Qi, leveraging his body's decay and rebirth, could instantly transform all inner strength, saving a lot of time.

His cultivation was quick, the tempered flesh and inner strength also stronger.

The only drawback might be the difficulty.

This Great Dream Nine Deaths Strength, even if laid before others, they wouldn't understand it.

But for Ning Qi, after experiencing this physical rebirth, everything afterward became much simpler.

Next.

It's all about continuous accumulation, endlessly cycling from death to life, at most requiring extra effort when breaking through the three major bottlenecks of Small Success, Great Success, and Perfection.

Ning Qi opened the door and stepped out.

The White Ape approached joyfully, he had started gradually abandoning his original monkey-like habits of jumping and rolling, resembling more and more a human.

Ning Qi smiled slightly:

"Regular cultivation, there might be a few instances in the future, there's no need to worry."

The White Ape nodded repeatedly.

He began practicing the stance respectfully beside him, Ning Qi watched calmly, nodding inwardly.

The White Ape's Body Tempering progress was fast, only inferior to his own.

His future strength was certainly formidable, perhaps even capable of surpassing others among the True Martial Nine Sons.

Thinking of that scene, Ning Qi couldn't help but smile.

"If Third Senior Sister ever finds out that the little monkey she brought back has surpassed her strength, I wonder what expression she'll have, it'll surely be interesting."

...

In the blink of an eye.

The end of the year arrived.

The entire True Martial Sect was unbelievably lively.

"It's a pity, Ba is not here, we're missing a member among the True Martial Nine Sons."

Seventh disciple Song City sighed longly, he joined the sect only a few years before Qin Yun, the two were close in age and had a good relationship.

Everyone remained silent for a moment.

Then Ye Qinghe smiled and said:

"Don't worry, Eighth Junior Brother has always been clever, probably had great gains during his experience down the mountain. We must work hard, otherwise, it would be a little embarrassing if Eighth Junior Brother surpasses us someday."

Luo Wentian waved his hand and said:

"I actually hope all of you can surpass me, especially you, Qinghe, wasting your great talent and even dragging Jiu to drink with you."

Everyone burst into laughter.

Ning Qi also smiled.

Though he spent most of his time cultivating alone, his senior brothers and sisters consistently cared for him, granting whatever he asked.

He enjoyed the atmosphere on True Martial Mountain very much.

A moment later.

Luo Wentian saluted Taoist Longshan on the high platform, then shouted loudly:

"I announce, this year's end grand competition officially begins!"

"Divided into Inner Sect competition and Outer Sect competition, the top twenty will all be rewarded!"

The disciples were eagerly ready.

The competition proceeded intensely.

First was the Outer Sect disciples' competition.

Then came the Inner Sect disciples' competition.

The True Disciples watched from the side, Ning Qi occasionally chatted with his senior brothers and sisters, occasionally focusing on the competition. Yet to him, the battles of these disciples seemed like child's play, only occasionally did someone catch his eye.

Currently, Ning Qi, although only in the Second Fold Layer, had no opponents among the Inner Sect disciples.

Even among the True Disciples, he estimated there were several individuals who couldn't rival him.

As for great experts like Luo Wentian and Jiang Baishan in the Inner Essence Realm's ninefold layer, Ning Qi couldn't be completely certain, needing a battle to know for sure, although it was evidently unnecessary.

The grand competition ended.

Luo Wentian awarded the top-ranked disciples, then several True Disciples also shared their Martial Path experiences, intending to enhance the strength of Outer and Inner Sect disciples in preparation for the upcoming Celestial Being Grand Ceremony.

"Jiu, do you want to go up and try? Senior Brother can exchange pointers with you?"

Fifth disciple Jiang Baishan grinned as he put his arm around Ning Qi's shoulder.

The surrounding True Disciples all showed curious expressions.

To this day, they didn't know what level Ning Qi had reached in Body Tempering.

But they weren't blind; somehow, they felt Ning Qi's presence was extraordinary.

Ye Qinghe's eyes revealed a mischievous smile.

Be careful not to be dazzled.

But Ning Qi seriously refused:

"I won't fight, I don't have a tendency for self-abuse. Ask me again in twenty years."

Everyone burst out laughing, with some regret.

Jiang Baishan smiled bitterly:

"Oh you, Jiu, holding a grudge, planning to come knock me down in twenty years."

However, he didn't take it to heart.

Luo Wentian volunteered:

"Fifth Junior Brother, let's spar!"

"Alright!"

Both of them were overflowing with fighting spirit.

Watching for so long made them itch to fight, originally wanting to let the True Disciples show off a bit, set an example for the rest of the disciples, to motivate them.

Now's the right opportunity.