

## Daily life 341

### Chapter 341 Sorry States Of The Trio

However, the following step was where it would prove challenging to He Shan since he had to synch up his breathing with his movements then. Every step, every twist and turn, every leap he took had to be synced with his breathing. This would help him control how much oxygen each muscle had, which would, in turn, help him regulate his energy and also increase the fluidity of his movements.

After he had done all this was when he would move to the final part, which was deep sensory awareness. Sensory awareness involved perfecting the first two steps to the point he could feel every single part of his body as though it was the only part in his body and have fine control over it.

The ultimate goal of all these steps was to create harmonization. Harmonization of a person with his own body and then with the environment around him, all with the goal of achieving the most natural and optimal movement.

He Shan knew without guidance, it would take him a few years before he reached that state because it also needed to be complemented with a few resources.

For now, all he was aiming for was to gain rudimentary mastery of body alignment to achieve symmetry and balance and work on shifting his weight for smooth transitions of his movements, and finally, if he had time, supplement it with breath control.

He picked up a few bamboo poles with leaves hanging on by a thread and spread them all around the area he had selected for his practice. Next to each bamboo on both sides, he placed brittle earthen bowls filled to the brim with water. His goal was to shuttle in between those bamboo poles without disturbing the water or the leaves within the time it took half a joss stick to burn.

Once everything was set, he lit up the joss stick and began the training. He had already expected the training to be hard and to put a strain on his body and his mind, but the moment he began, he realized he had grossly underestimated the difficulty of the art.

Within the first ten minutes of his exercise, he had already failed over a dozen times. Either he made the leaves fall with the wind from his movement or broke the bowl earthenware next to him, or made the water spill over.

He Shan didn't grow frustrated over the failures. With every failure, he would sit down and analyze what he did wrong, then begin again. His progress was slow, and there were times when he thought he'd figured it out, but the result would be different every time.

One moment he would reach halfway, the next, he would fail at the third or fourth bamboo, but in all these, he kept trying with the same eagerness that he had before he started.

After half an hour, he was already soaked in sweat, could barely move an inch, and his breathing was ragged,, but despite his sorry appearance, there was a mad smile on his face as he eyed the bamboo poles like they were some prey waiting to be devoured.

Zou Yi and Zou Liqin also had, at some point, begun training in their own arts. Just like He Shan, they all chose an area far from each other, and they, too, had their own resources to help them in their training, as listed in their booklet.

Zou Yi trained against some wooden puppet which, if not for the blank face with no facial features, would have been mistaken for a real person. It had on a white robe, and on that white robe were orange leaves that had numbers on them running from one through to fifteen. Two leaves were on its eyes; three were on its wrist, elbow, and shoulder on each arm; two on its chest and one on its navel; one on each knee and lastly, one on each ankle.

Zou Yi's training in the flurry wist wave art pursued speed and flexibility. His goal was to use the fist art to grab each of the leaves on that puppet in the order of the numbers from one to fifteen.

It was a tall order since the puppet had insane reflexes and was equally as skilled in its fist art, which gave Zou Yi no small amount of trouble. Zou Yi had almost been beaten unconscious a few times since he started. He could barely survive its onslaught, let alone think of grabbing any of the leaves.

As for Zou Liqin, she was training next to one of the few trees in the combat area. The tree was an urchin exploding thunder tree. As long as one made any sudden contact with it, it would release small

wooden shards from its trunk like an explosion. Along with the explosion was a thundering noise that would disorient the victim, leaving them open to be struck with thousands of tiny wooden shards.

Zou Liqin looked like an urchin. She cut a sorry figure even worse than Zou Yi, whose nose and eyes couldn't even be identified. Zou Liqi had torn bloody robes with disheveled hair and wooden prickings that were so many it looked like she had goosebumps.

The technique she chose, the withering leaves palm technique, focused on force. Force that was strong enough to create a barrier around it and also causes a capillary wave when it struck something, thus resulting in a ripple-like attack that spread the attack from the point of contact outward in a circular motion.

From her sorry state, Zou Liqin made little progress in it as the art served as both a defensive and offensive measure. With it, she would be able to strike the urchin exploding thunder tree and leave unscathed.

He Shan was run ragged, Zou Yi was a human punching bag, Zou Liqin was a human porcupine, while Yu Mei was still seated in her lotus position, exuding serenity.

The three couldn't help but spit out bitterness and hate every time they passed her and compared themselves to her.

Chapter 342 Sudden Announcement!!

When Zou Yi and Zou Liqin saw He Shan head for the wooden tub, they all stopped their training and went over to observe if the herbal solution he had brewed, the Azure grace elixir was functional.

While on the surface, it looked okay as per the description of the booklet, they couldn't be sure until someone soaked in it and felt its effects. The two siblings gulped in nervousness as they watched He Shan open the wooden lid and then set up a covering wooden compartment for privacy since he couldn't very well get in with his beast hide robe.

"How is it?" Zou Yi nervously asked, which only increased when He Shan didn't answer back until a few minutes had passed.

"It's working," answered He Shan with a tone that had a mix of excitement and pain.

Zou Yi and Zou Liqin lit up when they heard He Shan's reply. With the solution having effects, it was only a matter of time until they reached the silver body. After being stuck in the bronze stage for five years due to their circumstances, a chance to grow their strength past the bronze stage was something they had been looking forward to greatly.

Zou Liqin couldn't help but tear up.

He Shan, on the other hand, had massive twitches on his face. The herbal solution didn't offer any grace at all but torment mixed with relief.

The moment he submerged his whole body into the Azure grace solution, he felt he had been thrown into a frozen tundra which then changed into molten magma that then transformed into bullet ants gnawing at every fiber of his muscle, then it transformed to this heavenly solution, that gave him relief and comfort that he couldn't help but groan before it turned into a frozen tundra again.

Despite its contrasting effects, he could feel the solution strengthen his body with every minute. Each stage, whether it was the iron, bronze, silver, or gold stage, involved the collective and complete transformation of the body from its muscles, marrows, bones, and internal organs, which in turn qualitatively influences the senses, functions, and vitality of the cultivator.

He Shan could feel his blood get more vibrant, his muscles get strengthened, his bones felt denser, and his body overall felt lighter and lighter, and his senses a bit sharper despite the worn-out state he had been in.

His body was greedily absorbing the solution through his pores. After the thirty-minute mark, the efficacy of the solution reduced, and the turquoise color from the start had turned grey with black murkiness floating within it.

"He Shan is that you?!!! Have you died in there?!!!!" Zou Yi said as he pinched his nose to avoid the stench that was wafting his way. Zou Liqin did the same, with an almost hurling expression.

"I wonder if the other recipes will have better effects?" wondered He Shan as he rinsed the black impurities from his body and put on his beast hide robe.

He had chosen the Azure grace solution since it seemed like the easiest to concoct. There were a few other recipes whose ingredients were all there. However, they had an increased degree of difficulty in comparison to the Azure grace solution.

After feeling the effects of the Azure grace, he was tempted to try the other solutions, especially if their efficacy was much more than the Azure grace.

Once out, he shared his findings with Zou Yi and Zou Liqin and then got to work to brewing some more for himself and Zou Yi and Zou Liqin. With the experience from the first try, the second, third, and fourth solutions were much easier to brew for him, and it took the shortest amount of time possible, and the efficacy had also increased.

Through those brewing sessions, Zou Yi and Zou Liqin came to realize just how skilled He Shan was when it came to alchemy and how assiduous he was, and it wasn't only in relation to alchemy. The animal corpses they had dragged along turns out He Shan didn't only bring them as a source of food but for study.

He dissected them and mixed each organ with various solutions and ores he had on hand to figure out their attributes which he noted in a book. He even listed where they were found, what triggered their attack, and if there were any plants they seemed to guard at the time, among other factors that Zou Yi and Zou Liqin had paid zero attention to.

His study then moved to the herbs that were provided to them for free. He made drawings in an old leather book he had on him as he noted down their names as provided by the recipe and the properties he discovered from them when he was brewing the solutions.

The greatest shock to Zou Yi was how great He Shan was at drawing, and his handwriting was spectacular. He couldn't believe that scar-ridden He Shan, rough-looking He Shan, would have such soft handwriting and great drawing skills, which, as per Zou Yi's judgment, overshadowed his great skills in herbology, alchemy, and spirit beast zoology.

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Over the next three days, He Shan alternated between training, brewing the solutions, and studying the different herbs provided, while Zou Yi and Zou Liqin trained and handled cooking since their demand for food grew with how exerting the exercise was and their growing strength. Zou Yi even helped He Shan craft some more arrows.

While he was not as good as his sister in formations, he had some skills in talisman refinement, which he learned from his bear-tempered mother, who was a perfectionist. The torturous training his mother gave him left him with deft hands, which came in handy in intricate work such as making arrows and inscriptions.

Yu Mei, on the other hand, would wake up every twelve hours to eat before she went back to meditation. In those three days, even though the trio couldn't tell why, they felt Yu Mei had grown stronger on some level even though she still had no cultivation base.

The team had all agreed to stay for seven days before they had to leave the special zone. They didn't know if reaching the top had a deadline since they couldn't remember Yang Qing mentioning it, but they decided it was safer to arrive earlier rather than spend more time than needed in the special zone.

Also, with a working deadline, they could push themselves more. The next few days, He Shan experimented with other herbal solutions, in which he succeeded with three out of the seven he tried. Their effects were multiple levels higher than the Azure grace, and just like that, four days quickly passed by with the quartet pushing themselves to the limit to grow their strength and also increase their familiarity with the 108 steps of the autumn leaves cultivation art.

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"He Shan, why are you trembling? Are you nervous? Did those experiments of yours leave damage on you?..just so you know, I won't stop to carry you. I'm heading straight to the top.." Zou Yi smugly said as battle intent flashed in his eyes.

Even though he was nine years old, his body looked like that of a 15-year-old, and his hair seemed longer and much more lustrous than before. He wasn't the only one. He Shan and Zou Liqin had just as much a transformation, but the largest was on Yu Mei, who had transformed from a 13-year-old who looked like a six-year-old to a young lady with a calm, pure serenity to her.

"Sister Yu Mei, we will be in your care from now on as the only person in the group at the qi refinement realm," said Zou Liqin with a cheeky smile on her face.

"Surely you jest, Sister Liqin. Even with my cultivation base, I doubt I could defeat any of you in a fight.." said Yu Mei with a gentle smile

"but at least I could run faster than you all now.." she added, with the rest laughing after.

"I hope when we stop, it will be all of us at the peak.." Zou Yi said as he looked at his teammates. The seven days and the ordeal they had been in before had made them closer, unlike when they first formed the team. Even He Shan didn't reach for his bow like he did before.

The group nodded to each other and charged into the trees ahead of them with skillful speed, with one goal in mind, that is, to reach the peak of the mountain and maybe even win the merit points promised for those who would be the first three to reach the finish line.

After a few minutes of running, they had barely reached five hundred meters when they heard an announcement from Yang Qing that made them stop dead in their tracks with widened eyes.

"To all participants. I'd like to announce the first, second, and third place have just arrived at the peak. In addition to them, three more people have just completed the test making a total of six people.

The first fifteen people will get a direct entry and will be immediately enrolled at the institute, while those who reach the peak after the fifteen people will have to wait for one more month before they are enrolled. In that month, they'll receive brutal training from the instructors. I would not recommend it because you may very well die. Please do your best, and for those not too sure that they will make it to the top fifteen, you have a chance to forfeit, otherwise it will be too late if you land in the instructors' hands.

I will now announce the first three people and their awarded merit points.... "

Chapter 343 Shocking Revelation From Yu Mei

"Liao Jiayi is in the first position and gains 10,000 merit points, in second place is Meng Jia who gets 4,000 merit points, and in third place is Yan Qiu, who gets 1,000 merit points.

I would also like to congratulate Tang Su, Tang Di, and Bu Fui who have come in fourth, fifth, and sixth place respectively.

I wish good luck to the remaining participants."

Even after a few seconds had passed since Yang Qing's announcement, He Shan and the rest stood rooted in place with shock in their eyes, especially Zou Yi who had just announced aiming for the top three.

Even though he had not said it with much seriousness and thought their odds were slim, he still didn't expect both three places to disappear in such a fashion.

"Did they all finish simultaneously, or did Brother Yang Qing wait so he could announce them all together?" muttered Zou Yi.

"I think they must have arrived together, otherwise if Brother Yang Qing were waiting he would have announced the moment the first three arrived, and not do it all together by announcing all six participants at the same time.." Zou Liqin answered with a bitter smile on her face.

She barely made it through the first test, but six people already reached the peak just as they were about to start scaling the mountain. They didn't know how far away they were from the peak, but they figured they were closer to the bottom than the top, and as they moved up, it was bound to get tougher and tougher.

The reality of six people having already cleared such a test was a huge hit to their egos when they realized the disparity between them and the six people.

"I didn't expect that old man to be that powerful. He finished sixth!" muttered Zou Yi in shock.



Of the names mentioned he only recognized the sixth place Bu Fui who was one of the unique participants present because of his old age. He looked to be in his seventies and had a farmer's get-up on. He was also one of the few people who summoned enough courage to ask a question.

Even though he had a cultivation base that was in the middle stages of the qi refinement realm, Zou Yi didn't hold too many high hopes for him. He was even surprised to see someone that old participating in the test.

Being that old, and having only reached the middle stages of the qi refinement realm meant his talent was too low, and even if it wasn't, his best years for cultivation were already behind him. Zou Yi couldn't understand why the Order let him take the test. He just chalked it up to the Order being generous with its quota.

Still, he didn't expect much from him, but ending up in sixth and if the top six announcements happened in real-time, it meant he wasn't that far from the first-place finisher.

The announcement was filled with shocking surprises to him.

"Do any of you know any of the participants mentioned?" Zou Yi asked with a grim expression.

The question was mostly directed to Yu Mei. He Shan with his 'excellent skills' in striking conversations, Zou Yi had doubts if he would know anything about the participants. He could know what spirit beast they ate for supper, which herbs they brushed up against when coming here, or which weak points he could target, but when it came to knowing normal things like their names, Zou Yi had serious doubts if he would care about that.

"Of the six other than Bu Fui, I know of only one of the names..." Yu Mei paused as she had an incredulous look on her face.

She was shocked just like Zou Yi and the rest, but her shock was different. It was more of a surprise that came when someone you know reached heights and did something you never expected.

"The first-place finisher...Liao Jiayi. I met them on my way here. His father and mother were kind enough to invite me to travel with them here which gave me the opportunity to interact with him. I can't believe

he is in the first place even without a cultivation base..." Yu Mei's voice trailed off as she this look that made it seem like she was replaying the scene in her head.

Can't you finish it, Don't you see how anxious He Shan is because of your delays? If he shoots an arrow at you out of frustration, I'm not stepping in for you...

Zou Yi couldn't help but roll his eyes, and dock a few points from Yu Mei or her delay tactics. He Shan did look twitchy and impatient from her delay, and Zou Yi oblivious of himself, ignored the fact that his hand was clenching and unclenching the century-iron pebble stone as he looked at Yu Mei.

"Liao Jiayi was the youngest participant among us. That seven-year-old kid, who had blue robes with circular symbols on the chest..." Yu Mei finally said, with disbelief still showing in he tone as she said this.

"HIM?!!!" they all yelled.

They had all unanimously assumed that the first three place finishers were all legacies. Never in a million years would they have thought it would have been the seven-year-old boy whom they all assumed had no hopes of joining and his parents had probably signed him up in the hopes of lucking out and shooting for the stars in one fell swoop in the hopes of their child joining the Order.

Such a notion wasn't impossible. Over the years parents have tried even sending month-old babies to try out and join the Order. Of course, they were ruthlessly turned back and scared stiff, but such cases had not stopped happening. Zou Yi and Zou Liqin had heard of those stories from Yang Qing's nephews. They assumed Liao Jiayi's case was the same since he had no cultivation base.

It took them a short while before they processed it, along with the shock of the sudden announcement.

"Let's focus on reaching the peak. For now, the position doesn't matter though ideally I would like us to reach it before the 15 places are up. I'd rather not experience a month-long training that could in my death if I can help it," Zou Yi said as he dryly laughed with fear flashing in his eyes.

Everything he endured in Purple City paled in comparison to those brief few seconds he almost got drilled into by the snapping willow. Even with the increase in strength he still held an unreserved fear for the tree and death itself as a whole.

The rest all nodded in agreement to Zou Yi's statement and immediately set off with increased urgency to their steps.

Chapter 344 Path Of The Six Participants (1)

Top of the Autumn Mountain...

The four judges i.e. Yang Qing, Kang Huilang, Xia Boqin, and Dai Chen all had their gazes trained on a few individuals in front of them.

They had looks of admiration towards the party before them, particularly Yang Qing and Kang Huilang who had worked together on a few things for the test.

"We found the crazy ones.." said Yang Qing.

"That we did.." said Kang Huilang.

Before them were six people. Even though they were different in age, sex, or cultivation base among other things, they did have a few things in common one of which was the ragged state in which they were in.

They were all on the ground a few inches from the table Yang Qing and the rest were seated. They barely had any strength to get up with some even looking like they were about to pass out. Their robes were all in tatters and as far as their bodies went, they were all in different conditions but badly battered all the same.

Some had missing limbs, and others had holes and deep gashes throughout their bodies that revealed bone. Blood constantly soaked the ground beneath them, with their breaths becoming labored.

There was only one person who seemed relatively better in comparison to the rest. He had the fewest wounds, with a few deep scratches here and there and they were in areas that wouldn't prove too fatal even if they were left unattended which was in stark contrast to the rest who looked to be already sharing tea and having discussions with death.

That person was a young boy who had on blue robes that were torn at the sleeves and knees and was currently shrouded with grey mist that had a sort of heaviness to it, like within that mist was a big ocean. Within that mist, one could hear faint cries that sometimes sounded like the cries of a primordial whale, and other times sounded like the cries of a primordial bird.

"This is truly unexpected and a great find for us. Someone with the kunpeng bloodline.." said Xia Boqin with a glow in his eyes as he eyed the young boy who even though looked better than the rest, was unconscious, unlike the rest who though badly battered, had a sliver of consciousness to them.

"Dai Chen, what do you think?" asked Yang Qing.

"Seems natural and unnatural at the same time.."

"I feel so too. Quite the peculiar kid.."Yang Qing said with a smile.

"The rest are not too shabby either. I didn't expect to get more than one surprise.." he added as he waved his sleeves and green water droplets were produced which gently enclosed the six people before them like a bubble.

When the droplet approached the young boy, the mist reacted as if to attack the droplet. However, it was forcefully smothered by the droplet when it enlarged to cover the young boy.

Once inside the bubble, all the wounds that the six participants had rapidly started healing, and those that had missing limbs and holes in their bodies began regrowing the missing organs and appendages.

Yang Qing couldn't help but sigh in admiration as he observed the six participants. Zou Liqin had been right in her guess that the six arrived almost at the same time which turned out to be a blessing in disguise for them because of the final surprise that awaited them at the finish line.

Yang Qing had a feeling that a few of them may have managed to get by individually, but facing it together added increased their odds which was why despite their injuries they still managed to reach the finish line.

The six had brought him a few surprises, one of which was, of the six, only one of them was a legacy, and it was the third place, Yan Qiu.

Considering how they crossed the finish line part from the first place Liao Jiayi, the others it was a roll of the dice whether one finished second or sixth. The difference was a literal hair's breadth.

First place was the young boy who had the grey mist on top of him, second place Meng Jia, was the fourteen-year-old girl with the unlocked mental sea and abnormally powerful soul.

Third place Yan Qiu was the brown almond hair legacy whose parent was a blacksmith in the craftsmanship division. He didn't seem to have his father's talent in weapon refinement, however, when it came to understanding weapons, he was by far one of the best. His skills with the spear were one of the reasons he made it this far and that fast.

Fourth and fifth place Tang Su and Tang Di respectively were the two twin brothers who had a beginner level of understanding of a blue-grade art that gave them elemental attributes. Tang Su was skilled with the earth element while Tang Di had the lightning element.

The order of their finish was amusing to Yang Qing. The brother Tang Di as per Yang Qing's estimates would have finished second had he wanted to. However, he dragged back a few inches to help his brother Tang Su forward. Tang Su among the six participants had some of the heaviest injuries.

He had a few holes in him and would have been eliminated had it not been for the regenerative effects attributed to the earth element brought about by the blue-grade cultivation art he cultivated. Yang Qing inner cultivation arts hoarder was itching to have a look at the blue-grade art they cultivated.

The art had single-handedly catapulted the two brothers ahead to the point that one could survive with holes in his body even if he was only at the early stages of qi refinement, while the other could have finished second. This showed not only the skills the two brothers had in cultivating high-tier cultivation arts but also the power of the blue-grade art they cultivated.

Yan Qiu cultivated a blue-grade cultivation art, but to Yang Qing, the blue-grade art the two brothers cultivated was better, especially in versatility.

The last participant, Bu Fui was the biggest surprise. His cultivation realm was now in the seventh stage of qi refinement as opposed to the fourth stage he had earlier.

However, what surprised Yang Qing wasn't his cultivation base but the fact he developed sword sense whilst in combat.

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Chapter 346 Liao Jiayi's Background?

It didn't take more than twenty minutes for all of the participants to be healed and restored fully by Yang Qing.

Bu Fui had his missing arm restored, Tang Su had the various holes, ruptured organs, and broken bones healed, Yan Qiu had his body detoxified along with the injuries he suffered along the way when he decided to speed run the mountain and abandon all caution.

The first-place finisher Liao Jiayi was completely healed. However, he was still unconscious. He had overdrawn the abilities associated with his physique which put a strain on not only his body but his soul too.

From what Yang Qing and the rest had gathered, Liao Jiayi had a physique associated with the Kunpeng. However, the physique wasn't a naturally occurring one.

When it came to physiques one could either acquire it naturally as a form of bestowal by the order or rules governing the world, or you could acquire it through assiduous cultivation through body refinement, which is what the large populace does since naturally acquired physiques were a rarity.

They were no different than natural Dao treasures if one thought about it.

However other than these two, there was also one other group that could be considered a hybrid of the two physiques. Liao Jiayi happens to fit into this category.

The physique was both acquired and natural at the same time. Such a physique was usually acquired through a pact between a human and a spirit beast or a sentient spiritual herb. Such a pact is usually soul-binding between the two parties and is intrusive to the point it may perpetually affect the bloodline of both parties or one of them.

Some of the largest and most powerful clans and empires within the southern continent had their origins tied to such a pact. One of them was the Shu Clan a rank 1 clan, which was as ancient as the two holy lands. Their founder formed a pact with a powerful golden roc that was in the soul formation realm. The founder had been in the soul formation realm at the time too.

His blood as a result of the soul pact was altered, containing traces of the golden roc's physique within it, and with it came the abilities of the golden roc, one of which was the speed the rocs were famous for.

The roc in return gained a portion of the Shu patriarch's talent when it came to understanding different types of Dao, more specifically the one the patriarch was gifted in.

Humans had the weakest bodies, and the lowest start when compared to other species. However, they had one area in which they outdid the other species, which was their malleability and adaptability to different forms of dao to the point that they could master two different Daos that were antitheses to each other such as the water and fire Dao or the wind and lightning.

This is why there are millions and millions of cultivation arts floating around the world. Humans have no birth restriction on what they could learn unlike spirit beasts who despite their powerful bodies, long lives, and racial traits, were restricted to a particular Dao, and the improvement of their cultivation is at a snail's pace.

A pact between a spirit beast, a spiritual plant, and a human helps alleviate that issue. But for the pact to succeed, the human has to have talent and strength that matched theirs or they would be swallowed by the soul pact ritual. I think you should take a look at [pandasnovel.com](http://pandasnovel.com)

pandasnovel.com The Shu Clan patriarch had his physique altered from the pact and gained some of the racial abilities of the Golden roc, one of which was immense speed and an affinity for the wind dao. This bloodline soon got passed down to his children, and their children down the progeny line to date.

Thus the Shu clan is known as Roc physique users, though there are different variations of it among the clan members, and not everyone gains the bloodline and the purity of the bloodline also differs which affects how many traits of the golden roc they gain. When it came to purity the generation of descendants didn't matter as someone in the 50th generation could have a thicker bloodline compared to someone from the 5th.

The only ones that were exceptions to this rule were the patriarch and his direct children.

Liao Jiayi seemed to have a thin bloodline of the Kunpeng. However, the abilities he showed were one of someone who had a thick bloodline.

Yang Qing guessed he had something else in him, that belonged to a real kunpeng or the progenitor who had formed the pact with the kunpeng which was why he could draw out some of its abilities such as high-speed regeneration via the water Dao.

Both Yang Qing and Dai Chen had tried to use their palace sense to investigate his body, however, there seemed to be a shield that isolated his inner structure from them.

The only reason that they even discovered he had its bloodline was the final move before he crossed the finish line.

"Whatever....the vice chancellor will handle any concerns about Liao Jiayi," thought Yang Qing.

Whatever object Liao Jiayi had on him, whether it belonged to a kunpeng directly or someone who had formed a pact with one, whichever case it was, they both meant his background wasn't simple.

Yang Qing decided not to overthink the matter. Liao Jiayi was officially part of the Order despite his background, and there were trusty seniors above him who were more suited to deal with it than him.

His part as a lowly Order worker was to serve and to try and shamelessly score more merit points for discovering Liao Jiayi with the kunpeng bloodline, Yu Mei with the crystal heart glazed physique, Meng Jia a 14-year-old with an unlocked mental sea, there was Yin Rong with the blazing vined white rose physique, and Bu Fui an old man with a talent for the sword who would have likely been buried in the dust.

Yang Qing couldn't help but snicker at the thought of merit points and treasures he would fleece out of the Order. He had every intention of making it seem like he had scouted them personally.

"Zou Yi, Zou Liqin make sure you reach the finish line so I can milk this for all its worth.." thought Yang Qing as a greedy glint flashed in his eyes.

Chapter 347 Difficult Choice

It didn't take long for five of the six participants to regain their senses as they hurriedly cupped their fists at Yang Qing.

"We greet the examiner..."

"Thank you for healing me.."

Since it was sudden, there were mixed replies from all five which made them pale before they all unanimously decided to settle on the two statements with fidgety expressions afraid that their earlier discordant greeting may cost them a place in the Order.

"First, I would like to sincerely congratulate you all for your display and for making it to the finish. You have all shown qualities deserving of the Order.." Yang Qing said as he offered them Daoist salutes.

Kang Huilang, Xia Boqin, and Dai Chen did the same too as they offered their congratulations, which drew gleaming eyes from the five participants, more so Yan Qiu who somewhat knew about them and their abilities.

"Meng Jia, Yan Qiu please have these, they're your rewards. You can redeem them after this at the external logistics division or you can wait till your orientation is over then you can do it at the Institute.

If you decide on the former, Yan Qiu can you please show her the way?" said Yang Qing as he produced two blue jade talismans.

"I will!!" Yan Qiu solemnly answered as he thumped his chest with one fist like he was undertaking a grand mission.

"Now let's move to the next matter. Other than Yan Qiu, and Liao Jiayi, there is something I'd like you all to consider, especially you, elder Bu Fui..."

The atmosphere became heavy from Yang Qing's austere words.

"I'd like to make something clear, you're free to refuse it if you don't want to, and your entry to the Order will not change no matter the decision, and will still do our very best to nurture you all.

You should all have an inkling of what I'm driving at.." said Yang Qing as he eyed the five of them with his gaze concentrated on Bu Fui, Tang Su, Tang Di, and Meng Jia.

"Your foundations in the body refining realm and the qi refinement realm will limit your progress ahead. While the Order has vast resources, that help can only reach so far.

For some of you, you will be halted at areas beneath what your potential could reach because of your earlier foundations.

Forgive my crass tone, but they're too brittle to meet the standards required of you and the work the Order will give you. They will affect how far you reach.

The minimum threshold is a gold body which none of you has reached, and the qi refinement can only be polished with a good base body to work from.

Some of you may have had good cultivation art, but without a good solid foundation, you can't bring out the best of its abilities.."

Tang Su and Tang Di lowered their heads when they heard this. Yang Qing could tell at the body-refining realm they had only reached the bronze stage, the same as Meng Jia which was why her body couldn't handle her powerful soul.

Bu Fui had the worst since he had an iron body and the cultivation art he practiced for qi refinement was massively flawed that it left his qi erratic, and with a lot of hidden injuries. It was only when he started cultivating the 108 steps of the Autumn leaf did his qi flow appear to be smooth.

However, his meridians had developed sequelae which if left unattended would hinder or risk his progress to the foundation establishment realm.

"My solution to you all is this, to abolish all your cultivations and help you start from scratch. I know it's not an easy thing, so you have a month to decide. You can inform your instructors then. I think you should take a look at

If you have any questions or fears, your assigned instructors will help dispel them, so don't shy away.

Like I said earlier, whatever you decide, your entry to the Order will not be affected in any way nor will your treatment..."

All four participants had complicated expressions on their faces since they were already in the qi refinement realm, more so Bu Fui who was in the seventh stage and was far along in his years.

"Your lives won't be at risk, neither will your potential.." Yang Qing added when he saw the fear in their eyes, especially Bu Fui.

"Once again, congratulations and welcome to the Order. I wish you all the best in your future ahead.." Yang Qing warmly said as he waved his sleeves activating the teleportation array below them.

Only the unconscious Liao Jiayi was left behind while the five were transported to the administrative building of the Institute to start their enrollment procedures along with meeting up with their parents and or guardians who had also been sent along.

The four judges moved their focus back to the other participants. Other than the six who made it to the peak, there were still a few others not far away from reaching them.

There were two of them to be exact.

One of them was the remaining legacy after one of them got eliminated by the seven-colored doe. Even though that particular was less talented than the six, he had sturdy foundations and a steady personality hence his slow and measured rise to the top.

As for the remaining one he was a gifted alchemist who would have arrived earlier had he not spent a long time using up all the materials in the special zone he stumbled onto. With a qi refinement cultivation base, he could already make earth-rank pills and potions that were suitable to those in the foundation establishment and were of decent quality.

Potions and pills were given grades in terms of quality and the grade run from I-XII.. Based on Yang Qing's judgment the pills and potion he brewed were grade XII and his success rate of reproducing such a quality was 70%.

The alchemist was only 11 years old and had already shown such skills.

When he thought of the alchemist his gaze couldn't help but fall on, He Shan, who fit the model of what an Order based alchemist should have.

When the order trained alchemy they not only focused on recipes and how to correctly brew potions and pills, but they also focused on the ecology of the herbs and supplemented it with spirit beast zoology. They needed to know which herbs grew where, and which animals were drawn to them, which would help them in their adaptability when sourcing for new ingredients.

The test had a lot of participants who showed a lot of promise in alchemy, but they were eliminated because of carelessness that shouldn't be in one aspiring to be a complete alchemist. They fell to the

allure of precious spirit herbs and got attacked by spirit beasts that were co-existing with those spirit herbs.

Some were big and some were the size of a melon seed, regardless the result was the same, which was the elimination of the careless participant who didn't know to look out for those spirit beasts.

Yang Qing felt He Shan showed a lot of promise. Even if he failed to make it to the peak, he had a feeling his odds of getting a special recommendation from the Alchemy faculty department were very high.

The person in question was currently working with Zou Yi and the rest making steady gains as they scaled up the mountain. They had already covered about three kilometers of it in that short time and still had enough energy to maintain the momentum.

Their cooperation was seamless with each sticking to their own strengths. They had all made significant improvements when it came to the execution of their respective arts which was a huge boost to their strengths, but their biggest attribute was Yu Mei.

While physically in terms of battle technique, she would lose out to the three despite being a first-stage qi refinement cultivator, she had unlocked an attribute of her physique when she broke through to the qi refinement realm.

That attribute was called the 'heart mirror'.

#### Chapter 348 More Announcements

Yu Mei had only partially unlocked the heart mirror, however, the partial features were sufficient to give her team a leg up in gaining ground.

The heart mirror was similar to a spiritual sense in that it could be used to detect the surroundings on a detailed level and wasn't affected by the concept of darkness and light.

However, there were a few differences between the spiritual sense and the heart mirror, one of which was versatility. The spiritual sense was much more versatile than the heart mirror when it came to using



it outside of combat. It could be used to investigate ores, artifacts, and weapons down to researching the structure of herbs and spiritual plants.

When it came to the heart mirror, however, it couldn't be used in those investigations. It was useless in anything outside of combat. That was where its true brilliance lay. With the heart mirror the user could detect hidden attacks from their fluctuations; the owner could even see through certain techniques that aim to impair the sense of the cultivator.

The range and the strength of the heart mirror were tied to both the strength of the user and how much of their physique potential they have excavated.

In Yu Mei's case, her range was restricted to a 25-meter radius around her, and how much she could read via the heart mirror was still a bit vague at times or overt. An assassin with true skill at the peak of qi refinement could kill her before she could even react.

In addition, she had not used the attribute for long, so she couldn't adjust her reactions and judgments accordingly, and that could only be done with continuous training of both her attribute and her combat and body response.

However, despite the shortcomings, the heart mirror was still sufficient for the team to avoid ambushes, traps, and extremely dangerous locations along the way, which helped them gain a lot of ground and cut down their time on reaching the peak.

Only nine spots were left in the top fifteen. If they failed to make it, then they would have to go through torturous death-inducing training for a month. They may not have a clue how bad it was, but they could use their imaginations.

They, therefore, had sufficient motivation to be among the fifteen, and Yu Mei's heart mirror came in handy in achieving that target.

....

Almost one and a half hours had passed by since the announcement was made and Zou Yi and his team had already crossed the halfway point of the mountain. There were notices all around that informed them they had crossed the halfway point.

Zou Yi and the others, all had excited looks as they took a short rest beneath a honey locust tree. They were working at regulating their breathing and had a few shallow injuries on all of them, but they all were otherwise okay and pumped.

They had tangled with spirit beasts and spiritual herbs that were more vicious than the scarlet crown hummingbird and the snapping willow tree respectively. However, they managed to get through effortlessly with their increased strength that came from the improvement in their cultivation bases, cultivating moves from the 108 steps of the autumn cultivation art gave them explosive strength and they also had seamless cooperation built up. I think you should take a look at

They had also stocked up on weapons and supplies. The century iron pebble was still a trusty weapon that could not be matched by anything in the special zone, but they now had versatility in weapons which even though were used by mortals could still have an effect on their foes, especially when laced with poisons courtesy of He Shan's handiwork.

Zou Yi was terrified when he saw how effortless and gifted He Shan was with poisons and the tranquil and joyous face he had on as he was brewing them. They applied different kinds of poison to the arrows, short spears, and the sword that Zou Yi and Yu Mei carried.

He Shan even had the crazy idea of them storing the poison in their mouths and playing bait so as to draw the spirit beasts closer and spraying it on them the moment they did. He was brutally rejected on that plan and the team would have given him a beating had they not seen how 'gifted' he was in brewing and choosing how to use the poison.

"If we keep going like this, in a matter of hours we will be at the top.." Zou Yi said with a wide smile on his face as he panted.

"Thank you, Sister Yu Mei, your ability really saved us.." Zou Liqin offered a big thumbs up to Yu Mei as she said this.

"We can't celebrate yet, we still need to keep our guard up. The latter half will definitely be more dangerous and difficult than what we have experienced..." said He Shan dousing the joyous atmosphere with a cold water of reality.

"What a sour ball.." Zou Yi muttered under his breath as he snorted at He Shan who didn't seem like he cared as he casually picked his ear wax and conveniently flicked it close to his direction.

"Let's go..." said Zou Yi as he got up along with the rest, all wearing stern and determined expressions.

They had decided on taking a fifteen-minute break to condition themselves to be in peak form to pull through the latter half of the mountain. Just as He Shan had said, they all knew the latter half would not be easy, and they needed to be at the most optimum state to try and get through it.

pandasnovel.com Ten minutes after they begin traversing through the latter half of the mountain heading to the peak, another announcement from Yang Qing came in announcing the seventh participant to make it through which was someone by the name of Shen Liu.

Five minutes after that another announcement came in announcing the eighth participant by the name of Shi Hong.

The team got nervous since it meant only seven more spots were left which was cutting it close since there were four of them already.

Chapter 349 Strike With Intensity

With an increased urgency they increased the speed at which they scaled up the mountain. However, they quickly found out they couldn't rush through their way as they did the first half of it. There were way more insidious traps than Yu Mei could detect, the spirit beasts were cunning and more powerful. He Shan's poison came in handy in those moments but they were quickly burning through their resources.

A day and a half passed before they reached the 50-kilometer mark which they had managed to cover within a few hours in the first half of the mountain.

Their expressions became grimmer with every rise up the mountain. It felt like the difficulty doubled every kilometer and the variations were a lot. One place was swarming with spirit beasts of different kinds, another was filled with miasma, trap formations were almost everywhere and there were occasional inexplicable occurrences.

For example, at the place they had reached, they felt their cultivation base suppressed, even Yu Mei could no longer access her heart mirror. All they could rely on was their techniques to survive. Yu Mei was the one hit hardest by this since she basically relied on her natural physique to contribute to the team and also move up.

But because of the suppression, she was basically where she was at the start of the test, no cultivation, except this was even worse since she didn't even have her physique to rely on. Lucky for her, He Shan was a fish in such a setting.

For someone who survived only on pure skill, a setting such as this one was perfect for him since it not only affected them but the spirit beasts and other organisms in the area. However, things were still difficult for them since the spirit beasts in the area to adapt to such a setting had also honed their individual skills.

It was because of this that it took them almost six hours to cross the region which was a little less than ten kilometers.

By the time they came out of it, they were all haggard, especially Yu Mei, but thanks to the removal of the suppression, the vitality of their cultivation bases helped them recover.

Despite them regaining their cultivation bases none of them looked too happy about it. The first six participants had only taken seven days to climb the whole mountain, while for them at the rate they were going, they felt it would take two times that, and that was with them working together.

Surely among the first six participants to reach the peak, there must have been some who did it alone.

This comparison put a dark look over their faces, but they still kept going with the only positive thing being there was no announcement of other participants. The number was still at eight, and there were still seven free slots.

That little comfort got taken away when four hours and seven hours in, the ninth and tenth participant got announced respectively, leaving only five spots for immediate entry.

Though they didn't halt a step despite the announcement, some part of them knew at their pace, their odds of grabbing four of the remaining five spots were growing slim. Every minute that went by was another chance that an announcement could be made.

This reality made the already tough job of climbing the mountain even tougher.

....

"Do you hear that?" Yu Mei suddenly said as her remark made the group suddenly halt in their steps.

"Don't tell me you've heard other special noises?" He Shan warily asked.

The Zou siblings were just as wary too. They couldn't afford any detours. Even if they saw another special zone, they would not get into it.

"No, it's not that kind of noise..." Yu Mei said as she smiled bitterly when she saw the looks they were giving her.

"I'm using my ears, there's a fight that way...and the voices sound familiar.." said Yu Mei as she pointed to the northwest of their area.

"Whose?" asked Zou Liqin.

"One of them is that young blonde lady. I think her name is Yin Rong and the other is Lai Rou," answered Yu Mei.

The trio instantly recognized the two people. They both asked questions during the open Q&A initiated by Yang Qing. Lai Rou was the lanky youth who was afraid of taking the test with the other participants

because of his iron body realm while Yin Rong was the seemingly combative yellow-haired girl who asked if it was okay to attack other participants.

Zou Yi had wanted to form a partnership with Lai Rou but the latter had already left with the first group before he had a chance to do so. I think you should take a look at

"So he made it this far by himself?" thought Zou Yi in disbelief.

"Yu Mei are they fighting against something or each other?" asked Zou Yi with a contemplating look.

Zou Liqin could already tell that there were gears already turning in Zou Yi's mind in regard to the situation.

Yu Mei tilted her head toward the northwest direction as she closed her eyes and focused her hearing in that direction.

"It seems like they are fighting each other, but I'm not too sure. We will have to go a bit closer to confirm it.."

Zou Yi went silent for a few seconds before he suddenly opened his eyes with firmness to them.

"What do you guys think of partnering with Lai Rou?" he suddenly asked.

Without waiting for their response he continued,

"At our pace, and even strength, I know you can all tell it would be hard for us to make it to the top fifteen.

While making it to the top fifteen doesn't matter as long as we reach the peak it's okay, even reaching the peak may not be assured for us, but adding Lai Rou to the mix will increase the odds.

The fact that he made it this far alone, is proof enough of how skilled he is.

My opinion is we team up with him and fight Yin Rong. We can kill two birds with one stone. We can eliminate one of the strongest contenders left and we can also gain Lai Rou's favor.

What do you guys think?" asked Zou Yi.

"I think it's the best option we have.."

The first support came from the unlikeliest of people, which prompted Zou Yi to throw a dumbfounded gaze in his direction. It was He Shan.

"What?" asked He Shan with an embarrassed expression from suddenly being stared at by the trio.

Zou Liqin and Yu Mei also expressed their support for the plan.

"If we are to really do these and stand a chance of winning, the best way to ambush someone is to do it instantaneously more so for a human.

If we are to strike, we can not wait for the opportune moment and stalk her. At her level, she will likely detect us.

The best chance is for us to strike immediately before she has a chance to register what is happening.

The moment we leave here we are charging straight for her, no planning for how or when to strike. The strike happens from here. Unpredictable and swift, otherwise we may be eliminated.

Strike with intensity, hold nothing back and don't think. We can't have that lag," said He Shan.

Chapter 350 Potential End Of The Journey (1)

The team sat in silence as they soaked in He Shan's words. Ideally, Zou Yi would have liked to stalk the fight between the two so they could plan better and gauge Yin Rong's abilities but if they jumped in, they would be blind in there.

For someone who liked planning his steps, going in blind put him out of his comfort zone. There were a lot of variables to consider and doing it He Shan's way carried considerable risk to him.

Deep crease marks appeared on his head as he replayed best-case and worst-case scenarios if they were to go with He Shan's plan. The more he thought about it the more cons he came up with, which made him even more nervous than he already was.

"Zou Yi, forgive me for saying this, but while planning is good, it may end up being a shackle for you at some point in life..." He Shan solemnly said breaking Zou Yi out of his contemplation.

"There are times when you're called to act with no preparation or plans. Whether it's in a cultivation breakthrough, a sudden appearance of treasure, or when your life or those you love are in danger.

If such a situation were to happen in front of you, would you wait and plan, or would you act and try to seize the moment?.." asked He Shan.

"That blonde girl is in the qi refinement realm and is therefore stronger than us on multiple levels. Do you think we can stalk her without her realizing it?" He Shan fired another question.

"If we trail her to observe her fighting she will likely discover us and if she is smart she will react accordingly. She will feign weaknesses here and there to sound us out and also hide some of her moves and insert some trickery.

We don't know her well enough to know what's real and what's not. Falling for her ploy will be very easy and we will also tip our hand since she will already be on guard against us...

But if we do it my way, she will have no idea if we are targeting her or running away from something.



The suddenness may throw her off which may work for both our favor and the lanky kid. This is why whatever you do, make sure you don't hold anything back.

Don't hold anything in reserve like telling yourself you're doing it so you can have a fail-safe to escape in case things go wrong..." He Shan sternly said.

"If that's your plan then we might as well avoid the fight all together since it's all but guaranteed to be a losing battle.

Other than Yu Mei, we are all in the silver body stage, and that girl is one major realm above us. We all felt the difference in power when we moved from the bronze stage to the silver stage.

Then how exaggerated is it to be in the qi refinement realm?" asked He Shan.

This statement brought clarity and shock to Zou Yi's hesitant expression.

The seven days in the special zone were enough for them to not only improve their cultivation arts but also break through to the silver body.

The moment they did, Zou Yi and the rest could feel how qualitative the difference was between the two stages i.e. bronze stage and the silver stage.

Even though it was just one minor realm, the differences were monumental and wholesome. All the body's senses from sight, to touch, to other elements such as body control were improved greatly. They were at least two times better than they were in the bronze stage.

Their blood vigor and vitality had improved immensely. Whatever internal injuries and fractures he still had left over, had already healed completely.

The internal organs, sinews, muscle, bone, marrows, and skin had been refined and cleansed making them sturdier and increasing the explosive force of their attacks.

If everything was constant, Zou Yi felt he could easily defeat three of him in the bronze stage. He now had a punching force of 500kg which was double the force he had in the bronze stage which was between 180-220. I think you should take a look at

With such an obvious improvement, he shuddered to imagine what it would feel like to break through to the qi refinement realm.

When that picture sunk in, some part of him even wanted to abort the plan.

What were they thinking intervening in a fight between two qi refinement cultivators while they were at the body refining stage themselves?

Wait, did Lai Rou move all the way from the iron body to the Qi refinement?

Zou Yi suddenly remembered he had not confirmed Lai Rou's cultivation base with Yu Mei.

"Yu Mei can you tell their cultivation base?" asked Zou Yi.

"I can't tell from here, I would need to be close to do so. All I can hear are faint sounds, which don't tell much.." answered Yu Mei.

Zou Yi frowned and went silent for a few seconds before he finally said,

"Let's do as He Shan says. I know it's a risk but right now we need to take it.." Zou Yi said as he sought the opinion of Zou Liqin and Yu Mei, more so the latter.

This was a gamble that could result in their elimination. Yu Mei was in the qi refinement. Even if she had no combat abilities for now, with her heart mirror she could potentially go at it alone by avoiding various dangers and running.

If she played it safe, even if she wouldn't make it to the top fifteen, she was guaranteed to reach the peak. She didn't need to tie her fate to theirs.

"We are already a team.." she firmly answered.

That single answer said it all.

With all four of them in agreement, they made a little preparation which was mostly poisoning every piece of equipment they had from the swords down to even the century iron pebble.

They were already the weaker, so whatever means they could use to close up that gap they would do it.

After they were sure everything was in check they ran full force in the direction of the fight.

The closer they were to the area, it wasn't just Yu Mei who could hear the sounds, they all now could and from the sounds, the battle seemed very intense.

They even came across a couple of spirit beasts running for their lives with the most human-like expression of fear on their faces that they didn't even bother attacking them. Some even seemed like they were signaling them with their eyes saying

Don't go in that direction. You will die.

However, that well-meaning advice fell on deaf ears.