

Outside of Time

Chapter 26: Danger lurks around every corner (1)

“What exactly is the purple crystal? And that shadow which possessed the intention of malicious invasion, what was that as well? Does it have something to do with the disappearance of my mutation point?”

Xu Qing didn't understand. While he was muttering to himself and analyzing, Captain Lei and his comrades returned one after the other. All of them looked at him as they passed by.

Xu Qing composed his thoughts, and there was a glimmer in his eyes.

Regardless of what that was, it was not important right now.

After reconditioning, it was his turn to continue fighting.

Xu Qing stood up and wiped the iron stick on his body. Once the cold gleam returned, he rushed out the instant Cross passed him.

His speed was quick, and he neared the pursuing wolf pack immediately.

After that, the sound of fighting and blood-curdling screeches were mixed together, as though it was a baptism session for the youth.

Under the scattered afterglow of the sunset, it made him, who had survived the opening of the god's eyes and the blood rain, display the sharpness gained after gradually improving.

This time, he persisted for even longer.

Time slowly slipped by with the Thunder Team's ceaseless retreat and rotational resistance.

Now, the setting sun had disappeared and the bright moon hung up high. Night had fallen in the forbidden zone, but the sound of fighting continued.

This lasted until... their exhaustion reached an extreme and all the white pills had been consumed. Just when the concentration of anomalous substances in their body was about to reach the critical point of mutation, dawn arrived.

The wolf pack finally began to retreat.

Following the sprinkle of the first rays of the morning sun, the last black-scaled wolf in the jungle of the forbidden zone looked at them tiredly and disappeared in the distance. Their surroundings then quietened down slowly.

At this moment, all of them were covered in a thick layer of blood and were lying on the ground, panting

Xu Qing was no exception. Even with the restorative power from the purple crystal, the psychological tension still caused his entire body to be exhausted beyond comparison.

“Finally... we survived.” At the side, Luan Tooth mumbled and struggled to sit up. When she looked at Xu Qing, she spoke softly.

“Thank you.”

Barbaric Ghost was also panting and flashed Xu Qing a thumbs up. During the night of fighting, the duration of Xu Qing’s turn exceeded Captain Lei and Cross. It could even be said that without him, one of them might have already mutated before the wolf pack retreated.

Now, Xu Qing lay looking at the sky. He was tired, but at the same time, he felt profound doubt from the bottom of his heart.

The accumulation rate of anomalous substances in his body was slower by a lot compared to before.

It even made him feel as though the anomalous substances in his body were disappearing on their own at times.

While everyone was resting, Captain Lei rubbed the area between his brows. His serious gaze swept across Cross and the others before he said hoarsely.

“This incident couldn’t have happened by chance. The continual pursuit of the black-scaled wolves seemed as though something was attracting them. So, you all, take out any external objects you have gained during this time. Let us inspect them carefully. I suspect that something... or someone is the cause of this.”

Listening to Captain Lei’s words, Cross and the others thought that it could be true as well. Hence, all of them began taking out their items in succession and started checking themselves.

Something clicked for Xu Qing as well. While he was considering if the reason behind this could be that metal plate in Horse-Four's belongings, Luan Tooth who was at the side suddenly let out a surprised cry and pointed toward Barbaric Ghost.

Among the items that Barbaric Ghost had obtained was a wooden box.

The wooden box was broken and seemed to be corroding on its own. Also, a wisp of faint scent emanated from it. As it was mixed with the scent from within the forbidden zone's jungle, they didn't take a closer sniff since it would be difficult to distinguish.

"How did this thing corrode on its own?" Barbaric Ghost was flabbergasted.

Captain Lei immediately stepped forward and took the wooden box before passing it to Luan Tooth. Luan Tooth took a careful sniff and nodded with an unpleasant expression.

"How did you get this?" Captain Lei looked at Barbaric Ghost.

"I bought it on the day I came back to the campsite from one of the street vendors. It should contain insect repellent powder..." Barbaric Ghost scratched his head.

"This was made from the feces of butterfly rabbits. When in contact with the outside world, it would self-ignite and attract scale-type lifeforms... the black-scaled wolf is also considered a type of scale-type lifeform."

Luan Tooth looked at Barbaric Ghost and said slowly.

Barbaric Ghost was dumbfounded.

All of a sudden, the atmosphere of their surroundings seemed to freeze. Even Xu Qing narrowed his eyes.

After a long time, Captain Lei shook his head.

"Barbaric Ghost was deceived. To be able to lay such a trap for us within the campsite, it is easy to imagine who it could be."

"Bloodshadow Team!" Cross spoke up coldly from the side.

"For the Bloodshadow Team to set such a trap, it would be hard to say that they didn't have a way to escape. And we are not in good shape right now..." Luan Tooth hesitated.

“Then, do we continue to the harvest point and complete the mission, or do we withdraw at this point? What do you all think?” Captain Lei lifted his head and gazed at a faraway place as he asked slowly.

Xu Qing looked thoughtful but did not speak.

The others also made eye contact with each other. Ultimately, it was Cross who spoke with difficulty.

“Leader, we are not far from our harvest point and everyone has lost too much this time around. If we return empty-handed...”

Captain Lei was silent as he regarded Barbaric Ghost and Luan Tooth. The former lowered his head in guilt, while the latter seemed reluctant. After a while, he sighed softly.

“Continue forward. When we arrive at the harvest point, do your best to collect them as quickly as possible. Thereafter, everyone will spread out and take a different route. Everyone will leave on their own and meet back at the campsite.”

Captain Lei made the final decision. After a simple reconditioning, everyone proceeded once more within the jungle of the forbidden zone.

On their way, Xu Qing walked close to Luan Tooth. He then took out the amber he had obtained from Fat Mountain and sought her advice on what the object was.

At the sight of the amber, Luan Tooth was surprised. She took it and inspected it carefully before informing Xu Qing that the item was the stinger of the ghostface scorpion.

This scorpion was venomous, but it didn't mean that its poison couldn't be neutralized. It also had great medicinal properties. After being poisoned, it could cause the potential of the user's body to erupt in an instant, but it couldn't be sustained. After the eruption, the poison needed to be detoxified immediately. Hence, it was reared by people for the most part and was worth a considerable amount of value.

Chapter 27: Danger lurks around every corner (2)

Xu Qing understood. After thanking Luan Tooth, he put away the item. Thereafter, everyone stayed vigilant. They observed their surroundings closely as they traveled swiftly forward.

Compared to before, their journey this time around was a lot quieter.

Perhaps because of the appearance of the black-scaled wolves yesterday, most of the other ferocious beasts in this area had dispersed.

As such, the Thunder Team didn't encounter any danger on their way there. Just like that, they arrived at the boundary between the depths and the outer edges of the forbidden zone.

The landform of this area wasn't just a jungle. There were a few hills and streams as well. However, the stream was black and non-potable.

And at a part of the dense forest, there was a small hidden alley, and at the end of it was the beautiful scenery of a small canyon.

When Xu Qing and the others stepped into the canyon, the sight that greeted him was like another world.

The top of this place was covered with thick rattan, akin to a roof, so sunlight couldn't penetrate it at all. Also, there were no large trees, but plants and flowers were everywhere.

Fist-sized flowers with a variety of different colors filled the whole canyon. They were accompanied by grass that was emitting blue shimmery light.

Every stalk had seven pieces of leaves.

They emitted lights that were like the constellations as if transforming the quiet canyon into a peaceful, starry sky. There was a kind of unique beauty to it.

Team had discovered, and each of such harvest points was top secret. It was the foundation of the team's survival.

When they arrived at the place, seeing that harvesting required a special technique, they didn't allow Xu Qing to participate. Instead, they spread out and began their own picking. This way, they would be quicker and more efficient.

Xu Qing took note of their technique but didn't forcibly participate. Instead, he sat cross-legged and quietly practiced his breathing technique.

After the experience of yesterday's battle, he realized that his cultivation base seemed to have increased by much from the ceaseless training. Now, it had reached the boundary point where he could try for a breakthrough.

To prepare himself for even better survivability during the next crisis, Xu Qing didn't waste his time. Even if he was in the forbidden zone, he still circulated the Mountains and Seas Art in his body, absorbing the spirit energy from his surroundings.

With the emergence of spirit energy, the wind within the canyon picked up.

Captain Lei looked at Xu Qing, but he didn't stop him. He was well aware that the possibility of being ambushed on the way back was high. At such a time, any increase in strength was an additional chance of survival.

It wasn't long before Xu Qing's body gradually emitted thumping sounds while they were picking. As a result, bursts of filth spilled out from the pores of his body and melted the blood on the outer layer. When combined with the expulsion of filth, the flesh and blood of his entire body absorbed the spirit energy rapidly, and they were growing increasingly tenacious by the nourishment.

The sound became stronger and stronger, but it suddenly stopped after reaching the limit. At this moment, there was a roar in Xu Qing's mind.

The blood vessels in his entire body suddenly swelled beneath his skin. At the same time, his flesh and blood were full of spirit energy as though it held even more astonishing strength and speed than before.

All of it turned into a penetrating breath, pervading his body. After that, the spirit energy outside his body fluctuated and spread in all directions as well.

The third level of Mountains and Seas Art.

Xu Qing slowly lowered his head and opened his eyes.

No one could see the fleeting purple light, but there was no joy of breakthrough in his eyes. Rather, it was replaced by profound doubt.

What he saw when he looked down was the mottled shadow of himself under the scattered sunlight.

He had felt something off when he had been cultivating just now. After the process of separation from the Mountains and Seas Art, the purified part of the spirit energy nourished his body.

But unexpectedly, the anomalous substances... didn't flow into the mutation point on his arm. Instead... It had flowed into his shadow.

It was as if the shadow had swallowed the part with the anomalous substances.

It was only after a long while did Xu Qing lift his head and suppress all his doubts to the bottom of his heart.

He looked at Captain Lei and the others who were done picking and then gazed into the distance, along the end of the canyon and into the depths of the jungle.

Vaguely, he could see a building somewhere in the far distance ahead. It was like there was a group of several temples linked together into one, sitting silently during this time and emanating an ancient air.

“That’s a building left from an unknown era and the farthest boundary we scavengers can go. You can’t go past the building, but if you encounter any danger nearby, you can still choose to take shelter there for a while.”

After harvesting his portion, Captain Lei came to Xu Qing’s side and followed his gaze toward the cluster of temples, speaking slowly.

“Boundary?” Xu Qing nodded his head.

“That’s right. Someone said during that era, the reason this forbidden zone was formed was because the god looked at these temples. Some scavengers searched the place too, but there was nothing there except for a special kind of stone which appeared at times.”

Captain Lei extracted a portion of the seven-leaf grass he picked and kept it in another leather bag.

“How are the stones special?” Xu Qing asked curiously.

“Grind it into powder and sprinkle it on top of a scar that isn’t formed too long ago, and it can remove the scar. It will not leave the slightest mark. However, that’s useless to scavengers like us. However, some important figures will want it occasionally.” After Captain Lei said this, he looked toward Cross and the others.

At that moment, Cross, Barbaric Ghost, and Luan Tooth were done picking as well. Under Captain Lei’s arrangement, each of them extracted a portion and placed it in the leather bag that Captain Lei was holding.

In the end, the seven-leaf grass was portioned out into five. Captain Lei then passed the fifth bag to Xu Qing.

“This is yours. From now on, everyone will leave separately. By breaking up the team into individuals, there’s a greater chance for some of us to make it out.” Once Captain Lei was done, he looked at Xu Qing and gave him a map.

“Kid, the target on me is too big and I’m bound to be the focus that Bloodshadow is paying attention to. Also, with my role as the captain, I have to protect you all as well. You should get out as quickly as possible and wait for me at the campsite.”

Chapter 28: Danger Lurks Around Every Corner (3)

Captain Lei spoke in a deep voice and walked out of the canyon under the other teammates’ silent gazes, disappearing into the distance.

Xu Qing wanted to say something, but before he could, Captain Lei had left far away.

Cross then patted Xu Qing’s shoulder and left as well.

Barbaric Ghost and Luan Tooth were the last to leave. Both of them shared their experiences with him in detail and then left hurriedly.

Xu Qing looked at them quietly, put away the seven-leaf grass, and then turned back to look at the temple cluster in the far distance.

A short moment later, Xu Qing turned around and inhaled deeply. He then ran toward the canyon’s entrance. His speed had clearly gotten faster after he had reached the third level of Body Refinement, and he disappeared from the entrance in an instant.

Xu Qing moved agilely like a monkey, darting through the forbidden zone jungle endlessly. He didn’t take the path they had used but followed the map and took a detour.

He also made use of the experiences he had learned on their way here on how to differentiate dangers. Even though he encountered a few mutated beasts on the way, he managed to take care of them successfully.

At the same time, he also paid attention to his shadow under the sunlight on many occasions. A strange glow then flashed in his eyes.

He had tried things out. Regardless if it was to absorb spirit energy or when he inhaled deeply, all the anomalous substances would slowly gush into his shadow after they entered his body. This was just like how he had felt when he had broken through earlier!

Thinking back, he realized that this started when the purple crystal released a cold stream.

After he had reached the third level of the Mountains and Seas Art, it became even more apparent.

It seemed that after the purple crystal consumed the black-scaled wolf's shadow... his shadow had mutated.

This strangeness caused Xu Qing to slowly squint his eyes.

He rolled up his left sleeve and looked over. There was only one mutation point on his arm, and it had become extremely faint. If he didn't take a closer look at it, it would be hard to notice any traces.

If this development continued, the anomalous substances in his body would get increasingly lesser until his body reached a stage of perfect purity.

And this perfection... Xu Qing had seen it on the Mountains and Seas Art's bamboo slip before. Only the extremely distinguished people in the Wanggu Continent, the place of origin for the human race, could enjoy this perfection.

"Is it the effect of the purple crystal?" Xu Qing mumbled. He squatted on a branch, looked at the sky, and went into a daze for a while.

Very long later, he touched his chest where the purple crystal was embedded and fell silent for a moment. When he raised his head again, he suppressed all his doubt to the bottom of his heart. His body then swayed and he sped into the jungle, continuing on his way.

Although the anomalous substances were no longer a threat to him for now, this was just one of the many dangers in the forbidden zone. Xu Qing still encountered other dangers as he went on his way.

For example, he now saw two mutated bears whose auras surpassed that of Captain Lei's.

Each of the bears' backs had a colorful huge spider lying on them, with countless threads coming out from the spiders' stomachs and digging into the bears' bodies. It was as though they were under the control of the spiders.

This caused the two enraged bears to lose control over themselves as they ran.

The trees were knocked down by them. When they encountered other mutated beasts that tried to stop them, the bears would also tear them up. They displayed great brutality.

If it wasn't that the target they were chasing was a red tiger and they didn't pay any attention to Xu Qing, in addition to the fact that Xu Qing also quickly escaped at the first instant, the situation would probably be extremely dangerous.

These weren't the only dangers in the forbidden zone.

Two hours later, when Xu Qing was checking the surroundings warily on top of a tree, he saw a living creature from afar. It was a creature that didn't seem to belong to the forest.

Its entire body emitted an icy chill, its size so massive that it looked like a mountain. It was a... jellyfish.

Its entire body emitted a glow, and it drifted in the air above the forbidden zone.

When sunlight passed through its translucent body, one could see that there were countless rotting mutated beasts' corpses in it.

A tremendous number of tentacles swayed, and each of them had many eerie eyes growing on it. However, half of these eyes were currently shut.

At this moment, the jellyfish was flying leisurely toward the depths of the forbidden zone. Wherever it passed by, the part of the jungle below it would be instantly sealed in ice. All existences couldn't escape from the freezing calamity.

The strength of its aura surpassed Xu Qing by many folds, to the point that even the two berserk bears that Xu Qing had encountered earlier felt extremely fragile before this jellyfish.

Xu Qing's body stiffened up just by glancing at it from afar. He then felt an intense danger that rose from the depths of his soul.

It was only until the jellyfish disappeared did Xu Qing heave a sigh of relief. His heart was filled with trepidation as he looked toward the far distance, at the jungle area that was sealed in ice. It looked like a straight line that extended to a great depth.

"If this jellyfish flew in my direction..." Xu Qing gasped.

He understood that since his shadow could absorb anomalous substances, he had additional advantages in this forbidden zone forest which had dangers lurking around at every corner.

However, this advantage could only allow him to stay longer in the forbidden zone.

This was unless he became stronger one day. When that happened, this advantage would be magnified endlessly.

A short moment later, when Xu Qing left, he became even warier inside the forbidden zone.

Just like that, time flowed by slowly. Very soon, the sun was setting, leaving only a bit of remnant light illuminating the area.

More roars started to ring out in the jungle. Xu Qing, who was running through the forest, silently estimated the direction stated on the map. He knew that if he were to travel through the night, he should be able to get out of the forbidden zone before daybreak.

Just as he was in deep thought on whether he should travel through the night, a boom suddenly rang out from a far distance in the jungle. There was also a sharp agonizing cry that sounded very familiar.

“Barbaric Ghost?” Xu Qing’s eyes narrowed as he recognized that voice.

He immediately leaped up and carefully got closer. His small and skinny figure was moving agilely in the jungle while concealing himself. It was hard for him to be discovered by others.

Not long later, he arrived at the place where he had heard the cry and hid at the crown of a tree. He looked down and saw about six to seven corpses there. One of them... Was Barbaric Ghost!

His entire body was greenish-black, clearly from mutation. His head was broken off from his body, and his death state was extremely horrible.

The huge finesteel shield was also broken into two, with one piece bigger than the other. As for the mace, it lay at the side, covered in blood.

Clearly, he had gone all out before his death and then perished together with his enemies as he mutated.

Xu Qing fell silent and grief rose in his heart. He then saw Captain Lei not far away, being surrounded and attacked by five people. His body was also turning a greenish color, and he was close to mutating!

This scene caused Xu Qing's pupils to contract. He then grabbed his iron stick firmly and sharp killing intent erupted forth instantly in his gaze.

Chapter 29: Blood-Colored Dusk (1)

He saw that the people attacking Captain Lei were from the Bloodshadow Team!

The sun was slowly setting, being covered by the darkness in the far distance at a rate that could be seen by the n*ked eye.

It seemed that it wouldn't be long before darkness would cover the entire land.

Waves of coldness also gradually spread out from the darkness, spreading in all directions.

The jungle that was amidst the glow from the setting sun was like a struggling old man, not willing to leave the stage. However, the light from the setting sun didn't seem to have much strength to put up a fight. It could only helplessly stream through the densely-packed tree leaves, seeming dull and sparse.

However, Xu Qing, who was hidden on top of a tree, was different. He looked at the battlefield coldly and took in the entire scene with his ice-cold gaze.

Out of the group of five from the Bloodshadow Team, two of them were the main attackers while the other three blocked off the escape paths, preventing Captain Lei from escaping.

The three of them seemed to be of similar cultivation base as Luan Tooth – at the third level.

They didn't dare to get too near and only circled around. However, their existence caused Captain Lei to have no choice but to be distracted.

As for the two people in front, one of them released spirit energy fluctuations that were only a little weaker than Captain Lei. He was clearly at the sixth level of Qi Condensation, and he was also an old man.

His hair was disheveled and his gaze was fierce. There were cuts on his clothes, and it could be seen that his muscles were so pumped that they looked like they were going to explode. It was none other than the Bloodshadow Team's captain who had eaten raw dog meat.

At this moment, this Bloodshadow Team Captain licked his lips and attacked rapidly while staring coldly at Captain Lei, whose body was turning increasingly green.

“Today, the Thunder Team will have its name removed from the campsite. Captain Lei, you might as well commit suicide. Otherwise, you’d be like that Barbaric Ghost, unable to get a complete corpse even after fighting until you get mutated. That’s too undignified. If you were to commit suicide, I’ll take good care of your team members.”

“That’s right, Captain Lei can be assured. After you die, we’ll take good care of the other members of the Thunder Team. I’ve wanted to have a taste of that Luan Tooth long ago. As for that kid you brought back, he should be worth some money if we were to sell him off as a treasure-nurturer.”

The one who spoke up after the Bloodshadow Team Captain was the one attacking Captain Lei together with him.

He was an ugly middle-aged man whose back was bulged up as if it was distorted. He was blinded in one eye, and his remaining eye gleamed with bloodthirst. Although his spirit energy wave wasn’t as strong as his captain’s, it surpassed Xu Qing’s impression of the spirit energy that Cross had, reaching the fifth level of Qi Condensation.

However, it wasn’t very stable. He seemed to have just broken through recently.

Faced with the duo’s verbal challenge, Captain Lei was expressionless, but he seemed to have the intent to die and attacked even faster and more ferociously.

The Bloodshadow duo, who had been unwilling to suffer serious injuries from killing Captain Lei, were forced to back off slightly, and they started guerrilla tactics.

Clearly, they were very determined in succeeding today. Therefore, they were prepared to drag things out.

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“One at the sixth level, one at the fifth level, and three third levels!” The killing intent in Xu Qing’s eyes was strong. He could leave, but he viewed debts of gratitude very highly. Captain Lei had treated him quite well from the beginning, so Xu Qing wasn’t planning on leaving. Instead, he quickly scanned the battlefield and the surrounding environment.

This place wasn’t very spacious. There were many trees and the light was dim, with more dark spots. It was suitable for him to take action.

After making an assessment in his heart, killing intent erupted forth from Xu Qing's eyes instantly.

His legs stomped the tree's top fiercely, borrowing the momentum to spring forward, moving closer and closer like an arrow that was released from the bowstring.

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The physical power brought by the third level of the Mountains and Seas Art together with the purple crystal was instantly displayed at this moment.

He was so fast that a clear afterimage was left at the top of the tree. Before everyone on the battlefield could react to things, Xu Qing's figure had dashed into the battlefield in the blink of an eye.

He appeared next to one of the trio who was blocking Captain Lei's escape routes.

Xu Qing's target was a small and skinny youth, and the latter's triangular-shaped eyes reflected the image of Captain Lei who was being jointly attacked. He didn't notice Xu Qing's appearance at all.

It was until he felt a cold wind blowing into his face did he start for a moment. And just when he was about to turn his head, at the next moment... an iron stick pierced through his temple with horrifying force.

Xu Qing didn't wait for the corpse to fall over or for the agonizing cries to ring out. He then bent over and kicked out toward the back, erupting in speed and charging toward another person like a hunting leopard.

Upon seeing this, the second scavenger's countenance changed drastically, and his pupils contracted with fear. He wanted to retreat, but Xu Qing had gotten too close. His fist displayed astonishing might from the third level of the Mountains and Seas Art, which instantly arrived at his target.

With a boom, the second scavenger was hit in the chest. As a result, his chest caved in, and then a bloody hole was blown through his back. The sounds of bones cracking echoed out as well. After that, Xu Qing waved his left hand, and a dagger was thrown out with terrifying force, drawing a long arc in the air and shooting out with extreme speed at the third person.

When the second scavenger's chest bone was smashed, his heart collapsed. And when his back burst open, only then did the third scavenger come to his senses.

He was just about to take action when his vision blurred and a strong wind blew into his face. After that, his body instantly stiffened up and his eyes widened in surprise. With his last bit of strength, he raised his hand out of instinct and gingerly touched his glabella. An icy dagger had penetrated there.

The great force from the dagger caused the area around his glabella to sink, shattering his skull!

Everything happened at lightning speed.

Xu Qing was too fast and his moves were extremely decisive. At this moment, as the first and third corpses fell to the ground, the second target, whose chest caved in and whose heart was damaged, also fell down, revealing Xu Qing's figure.

Xu Qing's posture was stooped low, and his long black hair covered half of his face. However, this couldn't hide his cold and sharp gaze that was like that of a wolf.

At this moment, he looked up and met the gazes of Captain Lei and the two other men from the Bloodshadow. They were all stunned by his interference.

Chapter 30: Blood-Colored Dusk (2)

The surrounding wind seemed to have frozen up at this moment.

Captain Lei's eyes that were filled with death intent finally had a ripple in them. He took a long look at Xu Qing and then suddenly let out a low bellow.

"Kid, hurry up and go!"

However, Xu Qing didn't listen to Captain Lei's request but stared at the Bloodshadow Team Captain with narrowed eyes.

The Bloodshadow Team Captain also took a proper look at Xu Qing for the very first time. When he saw the three corpses next to the youth, his face twitched slightly. He had to admit that he had made a mistake in his assessment of the Thunder Team.

Barbaric Ghost's fearlessness of death was one of them, and this kid who had suddenly appeared was another.

"Kill him!"

The Bloodshadow Team Captain let out a cold snort and decided not to drag out the battle just to avoid injuries.

As he spoke, his aura exploded forth and he punched out toward Captain Lei. Hence, he instantly got entangled in an intense battle with Captain Lei.

On the other hand, the other middle-aged man at the fifth level of Qi Condensation let out a sinister smile as he turned and ran toward Xu Qing.

As he moved forward, all of his spirit energy was released and he also cracked his knuckles, revealing a brutal expression.

Even though this youth had astonishing speed and had instantly killed three of his comrades, he was still certain that given he had just made a breakthrough to the fifth level, it'd be an easy feat for him to kill this kid.

At this moment, Xu Qing narrowed his eyes and the cold light in them grew even more intense.

Based on his judgment of his fights earlier, he felt that he'd be able to kill someone at the fourth level of Qi Condensation, but as for the fifth level... He hadn't fought against one before, so he wasn't sure.

With a sway, Xu Qing charged out abruptly with great speed, heading straight for the middle-aged man. He then threw out a punch the instant he got close.

The middle-aged cultivator's lips curled up into a disdainful smile.

The instant Xu Qing arrived, the spirit energy fluctuations outside the middle-aged man's body turned into an invisible barrier that came into contact with Xu Qing's fist.

As a result, a loud boom rang out, and cracks appeared on the barrier, but it didn't crumble.

On the contrary, an intense counteracting force was emitted, causing Xu Qing's wrist that came into contact with the barrier to emit cracking sounds. It was directly dislocated.

Hence, Xu Qing's eyes narrowed and he dodged to the side. At the same time, he swung out his right hand fiercely, forcibly connecting back his dislocated wrist. Viciousness flashed in his eyes. He didn't retreat but struck out another punch with all his power again.

As a result, a rumbling sound rang out and the barrier that was covered in cracks finally broke down completely.

However, the instant it broke into pieces, a crazy impact expanded out abruptly from within. The invisible force then kicked up soil while surging toward Xu Qing, enveloping his entire body.

The invisible pieces from the shattered barrier seemed like many sharp blades that couldn't be seen, leaving behind many bloody marks on Xu Qing's body. It was a shocking sight.

Xu Qing's entire body trembled.

His thin body then retreated unceasingly because of the impact, and many bloody wounds could be seen appearing on various parts of his body. Also, his wrist that had just recovered became dislocated once more and hung unnaturally by the side.

"Fool!"

"A mere body refiner isn't worthy to fight a spellcaster, let alone someone like you who is at the third level yet wanting to overestimate yourself to fight me who is at the fifth level."

As the soil landed, the disdain in the middle-aged cultivator's gaze became even more intense.

However, he was also surprised. He didn't expect that his spirit energy barrier would collapse after the second punch.

Thankfully, he had made a breakthrough to the fifth level not long ago, causing his spirit energy barrier to be able to explode despite shattering. Otherwise, he'd be caught at a loss in the situation earlier.

Xu Qing frowned. He was staring at the middle-aged man as if he couldn't feel the intense pain coming from his entire body and his arm. While staring, he placed his right hand on the ground and used it as a medium to slam his wrist into, returning the dislocated joint back to its original spot.

The middle-aged cultivator, who was walking toward Xu Qing, saw the viciousness he displayed and couldn't help but pause in his footsteps as his eyes narrowed slightly. He then raised both hands and quickly performed a set of mudras.

Spirit energy once again gathered outside of his body. After that, it transformed into a fireball the size of a human head and whistled toward Xu Qing.

This fireball had astonishing power, causing distortion in the surroundings. This showed that its temperature was extremely high.

After the fireball got near, Xu Qing shifted to the side and dodged it. However, the fireball continued to chase after him.

The middle-aged man's eyes were now gleaming with killing intent. He didn't forget to erect another barrier outside his body as he simultaneously performed a set of mudras, manifesting the second and third fireball that also pursued Xu Qing.

Xu Qing's eyes contracted as he watched the three fireballs coming for him, sealing up all his escape paths. He rolled over to one of the corpses he had killed earlier and threw it fiercely toward one of the fireballs.

With a boom, the fireball and corpse came into contact and the corpse instantly burned up. The entire process lasted less than three breaths of time before the corpse turned into ashes.

This gave Xu Qing a direct assessment of the fireball's might.

At this moment, the air was radiating heat from the fireballs, and it caused his entire body to instantly turn red. Hence, he moved his body and wanted to dodge, but the second and third fireballs had already gotten close.

Under the middle-aged man's sinister gaze, the fireballs exploded fiercely the instant they got close, not allowing Xu Qing to have a chance to escape.

Boom!

The flames spread to a very wide range, and the resulting high temperature had a shockingly high level of killing prowess.

It was hard for Xu Qing to completely avoid the impact in this area. Although he had avoided half of the flames with his speed, he still ended up with a lot of blisters. Moreover, as the water vapor in the air evaporated, it felt as if even his internal organs were burning

"Fire Crow, hurry up!"

The Bloodshadow Team Captain, who was engaging Captain Lei in the distance, let out a low bellow.

"Understood, Captain. This b*stard can at most take two more of my fireballs before he completely turns into a dry corpse!"

The middle-aged man who was called Fire Crow laughed. As he looked toward Xu Qing, the cruelty in his gaze grew even more. After that, he raised his right hand and two more burning fireballs appeared next to him. When he swung his hand, the fireballs flew quickly toward Xu Qing.

He was worried that Xu Qing would dodge, so he repeated what he had done earlier, controlling the two fireballs to suddenly explode when they got near Xu Qing. The explosions then permeated the surroundings, sealing up all of Xu Qing's escape routes.

As a result, blazing heat spread and fire was burning on the ground. Many trees were then burned down into ashes, unable to cover the light from the sky. This caused the sunlight to shine upon the ground, merging with the light from the flames and temporarily obstructing Fire Crow's vision.

However, he was very confident that there wouldn't be an issue for him to kill someone on the third level with his fireballs when he was at the fifth level.

Therefore, he wiped his hands. Although he was a little out of breath, his gaze was still disdainful. He turned and walked toward where Captain Lei and the Bloodshadow Team Captain were fighting.

"Captain Lei, your subordinate is useless."

Fire Crow sneered coldly as he walked over. However, he didn't see any despair in Captain Lei's eyes. On the contrary, he saw a change in the Bloodshadow Team Captain's expression.

Fire Crow's reaction was very fast as well, and he quickly dodged to the side.

However, it was still too late. A small and skinny figure shot out from behind him, landing two consecutive punches to the spirit energy barrier outside Fire Crow's body.

As a result, the barrier shuddered intensely and shattered a moment later. Under the impact eruption, although the small and skinny figure was forced to back off, a dagger and an iron stick flew forth ruthlessly in a sneak attack.

Even so, the impact caused by the collapse of the barrier obstructed the weapons to a certain extent, causing the dagger's speed to be slower when moving closer to Fire Crow. This gave Fire Crow a chance to dodge.

Fire Crow rapidly evaded, but the dagger still cut through one of his ears, sending blood splattering everywhere. As for the iron stick, it penetrated his chest, causing him to spurt out blood. It was a pity that he wasn't hit in critical spots, so the attacks weren't fatal.

The intense pain caused Fire Crow's eyes to turn red and made him howl. After he miserably dodged the attacks, he stared furiously behind him.

In his vision, he saw the wolf-like figure of the youth stomp the embers on the ground and retreat seven to eight zhangs away. He was half-crouching and looked ready to take action.

His body was flushed red and still covered in blisters, but at this moment, the glow from the setting sun reflected in the youth's eyes. In his eyes... there was a gleam as cold as ice. His killing intent hadn't diminished at all!