

Prodigies 41

[Chapter 41: Illuminate the Stars](#)

After eating, Xia Zhi lay on the bed to sleep. She rested her head on Lin Xun's pillow, covered herself with Lin Xun's blanket, and, of course, she slept on Lin Xun's bed.

Xia Zhi was direct and straightforward, and, when she did speak, she always spoke in a forthright manner. She was very quiet and seldom spoke, which made her seem very unusual.

She only looked like a little girl when asleep. Her eyelashes curved like a fan; her breathing was light and her beautiful-near-perfect face was sweet and innocent.

As Lin Xun gazed at Xia Zhi, who was deep asleep, a smile formed at the corners of his mouth. He felt the little girl had shown only him kindness, goodwill and even dependence.

Lin Xun no longer cared that he couldn't find out about Xia Zhi's past because he realized that Xia Zhi had made his life no longer lonely. She added a sense of steadiness and stability to his life, which he had never felt before.

Perhaps this was a feeling of dependency?

Lin Xun wasn't sure what it was but he felt that Xia Zhi had integrated into his life.

.....

Sitting cross-legged on the bed, Lin Xun held his breath in deep concentration and began to cultivate.

The Organ Opening Stage, the third layer of the True Martial Stage, put importance on drawing aeth power to circulate into the five internal organs and consolidating a cultivator's foundation, for the next stage was the Orifice Unlocking Stage.

The so-called Orifice Unlocking Stage was to unlock the acupoints and orifices in the entire body. The unlocking of orifices would strengthen the practitioner's spirit and resulted in abundant vital energy, qi and blood.

After reaching that stage, a person's cultivation base would undergo transformation once again. Not only would their strength double, their entire body would be further tempered and the impurities inside would be removed.

After Lin Xun experienced the fierce battle four days ago, he had distinctly felt his cultivation base further consolidating and being refined. With diligent practice, it wouldn't be long until he could make another breakthrough!

This was the benefit of real-life battle. Being tempered through the flames of combat would not only significantly improve a person's combat techniques, skills and experience, but also their cultivation base.

The time it took to burn an incense stick passed by.

Lin Xun circulated his aeth power thirty-six times around his body before and began to visualize the Star Cycle phenomenon.

The Little Divine Meditation Art was undoubtedly mysterious and profound. Despite it only having three great stages, the Star Cycle, the Moon Phases and the Sun Illumination, each one was broad and all-encompassing. The more a cultivator comprehended, the more they would notice how unfathomable it was.

In Lin Xun's mind-sea, a starry sky spectacle began to emerge. The starry sky was vast, mysterious, and stippled with millions of stars. However, every star was dim and unreachable.

Lin Xun felt embarrassed to say that he hadn't been able to break through the Star Cycle despite daily practice of the Little Divine Meditation Art.

Regardless, Lin Xun's spirit had been refined and strengthened after each training session. The benefits it had brought were evident.

Hu—

Lin Xun exhaled long and slow. In his mind-sea, he was fully concentrated on illuminating the billions of stars in the starry sky.

Only when he could perceive and cross the star paths to trigger a star to shed its light would he be truly considered to have touched upon the Star Cycle.

That step was called Illuminating the Stars.

Undistracted by any other things and devoid of any desires, Lin Xun silently meditated. Suddenly, he felt he had drifted up thousands of miles into the sky. Despite flying thousands of miles, he didn't feel tired. A natural force was pulling him upwards.

He passed the sky, went beyond the nine heavens, and flew into the vast boundless starry sky.

Countless stars came into his sight, but he came to realize that the stars were not fixed in position and were constantly changing. They were orbiting along different paths.

It was as though an invisible hand was controlling their movements. The cycle and path of each star was indescribably mysterious and they resembled heavenly steeds soaring across the sky,

As far as the eye could see was the chessboard-like starry sky. The stars were chess pieces dotted on the chessboard while the star paths were where the chess pieces would move.

Lin Xun quietly watched and observed. As time passed, a perplexed feeling crept to his heart.

If the starry sky is the chessboard and the stars are the chess pieces, who is the one playing the game of chess?

It's me!

Lin Xun felt a flash of realization. His perception spread like a ray of light rushing into the starry sky, and lit up one of the stars!

It was as though an invisible hand had placed a piece on the chessboard!

The stars, which were the chess pieces, would light up, and the chess pieces would be brought to life. When it did, the real journey would begin.

Hua—

At the same time, the originally dim starry sky in Lin Xun's mind-sea changed. A blurry star suddenly turned incredibly bright and shed rays of light. The rays passed vast nothingness and into his mind-sea.

Lin Xun snapped to his senses. He felt an indescribable refreshing feeling both inside and outside his spirit field. It was so comfortable that he felt like he was soaking in a hot spring and almost even groaned out loud.

The Star Cycle Realm!

He had finally touched upon the Star Cycle Realm!

Lin Xun was brimming with excitement. After two months, he had finally inadvertently lit up the first star in his mind-sea.

At that moment, his perception felt like a delicate cobweb spreading out and enveloping the courtyard.

Everything in the courtyard was vividly presented in his mind. The grass swayed by the night wind, the crickets perched on the window, a drop of dew forming on the side of the well, the weeping willow illuminated by the moonlight...

Everything was so clear, vivid and ethereal.

This was perception!

A power from his spirit.

It was also known as the spirit from the orifice reflecting all things in the mind.

Generally, only when a cultivator had broken through the True Martial Stage and had reached the Spirit Dipper Stage would they possess such power of perception.

But now, Lin Xun, who was only at the third-layer True Martial Stage, had managed to achieve that step!

Naturally, this had to be credited to the Little Divine Meditation Art!

He had already possessed such powers when he had just touched upon the Star Cycle Realm. Thus this Spirit Refining Art was incredibly mysterious and profound.

From what Lin Xun knew, reaching the perfect realm of the Star Cycle only happened when he could control his power of perception to light up all the stars in the starry sky of his mind-sea and illuminate everything.

Lin Xun found that he could perceive everything within a radius of ten feet.

Huh?

Lin Xun was about to get up to engrave a rune with his rune brush to check the changes brought about by his strengthened spirit but when he opened his eyes, he found that Xia Zhi was resting her head on his lap and curled up sleeping. A trace of a longing flickered over her beautiful and peaceful face.

A rare and almost imperceptible smile touched the corners of her lips.

Lin Xun thought for a while and carefully moved Xia Zhi's head away. But she scrunched her brows and mumbled, "No" while hugging Lin Xun's leg.

Lin Xun smiled wryly. He had no choice but to test his new powers in the morning to avoid disturbing the little girl.

Lin Xun lay down and gazed at Xia Zhi who was lying beside him. He pondered about how to face the upcoming second test of the Omega Secret Realm.

After an unknown period of time, Lin Xun also drifted off into deep sleep.

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The next morning.

Lin Xun got up early and repeatedly practiced the Marching Army Fist in the courtyard until he was drenched in sweat and his blood was bubbling. Then, he rinsed himself with the cold water from the well, changed into some clean clothes, and started to prepare breakfast in the kitchen.

Lin Xun felt much more energetic, spirited and stronger, and all his senses felt renewed.

Xia Zhi immediately woke up when she smelled the aroma wafting from the kitchen. It was as though sleeping and eating were the most important things in her world and mustn't be neglected.

While eating, Lin Xun suddenly remembered something he wanted to ask the little girl. "Xia Zhi, have you ever learned any body tempering arts?"

Xia Zhi blankly shook her head. "No."

Lin Xun pointed to the giant hammer tossed to one corner of the courtyard. "Then how did you mold that hammer?"

"I just used my hands." Xia Zhi casually replied.

Lin Xun: "..."

Xia Zhi frowned and studied Lin Xun for a while before saying, "Are you going to strengthen your body?" *novelnext.com*

Lin Xun nodded. He had given it a deep thought overnight. Given that the second test of the Omega Secret Realm was called Body Tempering, it had to be related to the tempering of the body.

Additionally, since there were 108 chances to pass, it suggested it was very difficult and the rate of failure was extremely high.

In that case, Lin Xun had to be prepared. It would be even better if he could strengthen and improve his body beforehand.

However, Lin Xun knew no methods of doing so except for consuming the flesh and blood of rare beasts and the decoctions of various aeth ingredients.

There were many methods in the world that specifically aimed to temper the body but Lin Xun knew none and it was impossible to find any in Feiyun Village.

In truth, based on the cultivation stages, the nine layers of the True Martial Stage was a kind of refinement of a cultivator's body.

The first layer, Qi Drawing, trained a cultivator's awareness of their body of qi.

The second layer, Inner Strengthening, toughened a cultivator's muscles, bones and limbs.

The third layer, Organ Opening, tempered the five organs in a cultivator's body.

The fourth layer, Orifice Unlocking, strengthened the acupoints and orifices in a cultivator's body.

The fifth layer, Essence Refining, purified the marrow and essence of a cultivator's muscles and bone.

The sixth layer, Blood Igniting, improved the blood in a cultivator's body.

The seventh layer, Little Cycle, and the eighth layer, Big Cycle, were the same in that they were a comprehensive refinement of a cultivator's flesh, blood, tendons, bones, acupoints, orifices and organs.

The Little Cycle was a preliminary refinement and the Big Cycle was a further refinement.

The ninth layer, Aeth Transformation, refined the aeth power inside and outside the cultivator's body to initiate a transformation.

All nine layers of the True Martial Stage helped a cultivator to establish a solid foundation in order to successfully form Dipper Qi from Aeth power at the Spirit Dipper Stage!

However, Lin Xun was only at the third-layer True Martial Stage and it was impossible to further improve his body in such a short time without resorting to other means.

Xia Zhi pondered for a moment and said, "How about we fight?"

Lin Xun repeated in puzzlement, "Fight?"

Xia Zhi seriously nodded. "Yes, fighting with pure physical strength is one of the most direct ways of strengthening your body."

Lin Xun exclaimed in surprise, "How do you know this?"

Xia Zhi's eyes looked dazed and confused. She shook her head after thinking for a long time. "I can't remember it, but I know it can't be wrong."

Lin Xun clenched his teeth and decided to trust Xia Zhi. "We should give it a try."

[Chapter 42: Miserably Abused](#)

After breakfast, Lin Xun went to stand in an open area in the courtyard, drew a deep breath and said to Xia Zhi, "Let's start."

Fighting with physical strength alone was the most direct and effective way to strengthen a person's body?

Lin Xun needed to see whether the little girl was right.

Xia Zhi leisurely got up and came to stand exactly ten feet before Lin Xun. She calmly and unhurriedly rolled up her sleeves and revealed her fair and spotless arms.

Then, she lifted her little face, and her bright jewel-like eyes sparkled as she looked at Lin Xun. "You attack."

Lin Xun looked a little taken aback. In truth, he couldn't bring himself to attack an exceptionally beautiful little girl who was only five to six years old and who barely reached his chest.

Even if he knew what sort of unbelievable strength Xia Zhi possessed, it felt wrong to bully a little girl.

However, when Lin Xun saw the serious and solemn look on Xia Zhi's face, he clenched his teeth and gathered power to his hand. He slammed his fist forward like a roaring tiger.

Hu—

The physical strength from his fist generated wind blasts that shook the air, and the force was so tremendous that it felt like a fierce tiger emerging from the mountains.

This clearly demonstrated that Lin Xun's mastery of the Marching Army Fist had reached the Precise realm. He could precisely exhibit the essence and wonders of the fist art.

However, Xia Zhi didn't move or dodge as the punch flew towards her. She simply lifted her slender and fair arm and clutched Lin Xun's wrist like a pair of iron tongs.

Shocked, Lin Xun frantically struggled to break free but Xia Zhi simply flicked her wrist.

With a loud thud, Lin Xun's entire body violently quivered like a flapping cloth and he dropped to the ground. It was so painful that he thought his bones were crushed. He grimaced as he inhaled sharply.

The shock in Lin Xun's heart was far greater than the pain in his body. Xia Zhi's attack was so quick that he was already blasted to the ground before he had time to react!

Lin Xun could distinctly feel that Xia Zhi didn't circulate any aeth power earlier, which meant she defeated him with a simple flick of her wrist.

Lin Xun pulled himself up and looked at Xia Zhi with embarrassment. The hint of leniency in his eyes had faded and was replaced by utmost solemnness.

However, Xia Zhi furrowed her delicate eyebrows and said in puzzlement, "Your control of physical strength is very bad. The fire mane boars in the mountains are better than you."

Lin Xun's face immediately darkened. A five to six year old little girl dared to compare him to a pig!

What an insult!

Boom!

Lin Xun exhaled, expelling the rage. Then, he balled his hands into fists and charged over with the move “a mountain crushing the moon”.

That move was both offensive and defensive. Lin Xun believed that he wouldn’t lose to the little girl again.

However, his vision suddenly blurred and his wrist was being held in a tight grip again. With a loud thud, he again slammed into the ground like a meteorite and whipped up a cloud of dust. His face was bruised and swollen.

So embarrassing!

Regardless of how shrewd Lin Xun was, he was still only thirteen years old. How could a youngster full of potential endure such humiliation?

“Again!”

Lin Xun didn’t care about anything anymore. With a thunderous roar, he charged forward again.

He had learned his lesson. This time, he lifted his arms and his fists were akin to a stretched bow. It was the Iron Bridge Across the River move from the Marching Army Fist.

Given Xia Zhi’s height, she couldn’t touch Lin Xun’s wrist anymore.

As he expected, Xia Zhi frowned. Then, she suddenly trotted forward and charged into Lin Xun’s line of defense like a rising dragon. Like a drill, she kicked Lin Xun’s knee.

Lin Xun suddenly felt his right leg go numb and immediately lost sensation there. Then, he stumbled forward and almost planted his face in the ground.

At the same time, Xia Zhi tightly gripped his wrist once again. She gently flicked it again.

The familiar scene happened again. Lin Xun once again embraced the ground head-on. The ground shook and dust and dirt whirled into the air.

Lin Xun got up. His face was dirtied, his hair disheveled, his nose bruised, his face swollen, and his clothes were covered with dirt and dust. He looked extremely miserable.

His eyes were fixed intently on Xia Zhi and his heart was a vortex of complex emotions— shock, disbelief, confusion, anger, and humiliation.

Xia Zhi seemed totally unaware of what Lin Xun was feeling. She frowned, perplexed. “Lin Xun, you really are worse than the fire mane boar. I wonder if you’re more stupid than them too.”

Boom!

Her words made Lin Xun’s blood boil and rush to his forehead. An indescribable sense of shame and humiliation spread all over his body like fire.

She said I’m worse than a pig!

She said I’m more stupid than a pig!

Lin Xun was seething with rage that smoke almost rose from his seven orifices. Then, his eyes widened, and with an enraged roar, he charged forward again.

Bang!

Xia Zhi curled her lips, unenthusiastically raised her hand and blasted Lin Xun to the ground once again.

“Again!”

Lin Xun looked like a cockroach that couldn’t be killed. He pushed himself up and charged at Xia Zhi without any hesitation.

The strong feeling of humiliation had ignited his fighting spirit. He had completely forgotten everything and put aside all the distractions and restraints in his heart.

He was like a youngster refusing to admit defeat.

It was also only then that Lin Xun resembled a real thirteen-year-old. All his emotions were revealed in his facial expression—passion, resentment, bitterness, joy and anger.

Bang!

He was beaten to the ground again.

“Again!”

Bang!

“Again!”

Bang!

On that afternoon, the same noises repeatedly rang from Lin Xun’s courtyard in the east of the village. The noises not only made people panic but scared away the skylarks perched on the willow tree.

Village Chief Xiao Tianren hurried to Lin Xun’s house and saw Xia Zhi lift Lin Xun up like a sack and tossed to the ground.

Dumbfounded, Xiao Tianren repeatedly rubbed his eyes, thinking it was an illusion.

However, he quickly realized it wasn’t an illusion. The youngster who saved Feiyun Village from the abyss of suffering and was respected by all villagers was miserably beaten beyond recognition by a five to six-year-old girl. Xiao Tianren uncontrollably fell into a trance. This is too crazy. When did the world become like this...?

I don’t understand anything anymore!

Xiao Tianren came to discuss with Lian Xun about the matters regarding the Feiyun Fire Copper mine but he unhesitatingly left after seeing that scene.

He felt that he needed to first calm down. The scene was so shocking that anyone’s eyes would glaze over in a hypnotic trance.

It wasn’t until the sun had set that the courtyard returned to its usual peaceful state.

Lin Xun gritted his teeth and hobbled over to the wooden bathtub. He took off his tattered and dirty clothes and jumped into the prepared bath.

Various aeth ingredients with significant body-repairing effects had been prepared into the wooden barrel.

Hu—

Feeling the warmth from the medicinal bath caress the numerous scars all over his body, Lin Xun couldn't help exhaling a long breath of turbid air.

But when he saw Xia Zhi, he unconsciously twitched and a look of shame and bitterness washed over his face.

Lin Xun had lost count of how many times he was defeated that afternoon. Every time his bones almost broke apart like he was being crushed by Mount Tai.

His body had long become numb and his strength was almost exhausted. Every inch of his skin, flesh, muscles and bones throbbed with unbearable pain.

He could have endured if it was only pain that he suffered.

However, he couldn't accept the fact that he lost so many times to the same trick!

It made Lin Xun begin to wonder if he really was more stupid than the fire mane boar.

Lin Xun firmly shook his head, unwilling to admit that he was worse than an animal.

"I'm going to sleep."

Xia Zhi got up and walked into the room. "Oh, yes, I'll be very hungry when I wake up. Don't forget to cook for me."

Lin Xun was stumped for words. He was so angry that he almost cursed out loud. I have become like this and you still want me to cook! Do you not have any sympathy?!

Immediately afterwards, Lin Xun smiled bitterly and sighed like he was accepting his fate. Resting in the wooden barrel bathtub, he raised his head and watched night descend on the village. His eyes gradually restored their usual clearness as all emotions faded from them.

He reflected on the battle in the afternoon. He thought over every little detail and gradually immersed himself in it.

Xia Zhi adopted a very simple fighting method. She simply grabbed him and tossed him to the ground.

Her grip was unbreakable like an iron hoop.

Her flick was as swift and direct as an experienced hand sifting chaff from wheat.

But upon a deeper thought, there was a lot to learn from it. For example, her grip was lightning fast, precise and flawless. Like a goshawk catching a rabbit, her every move directly struck its target!

That ability required remarkable eyesight and speed. It wasn't considered particularly profound and could be achieved by anyone with painstaking practice.

What truly amazed Lin Xun was the power of her flick. The flicking motion of her wrist produced a tidal-like force that shook and almost shattered every muscle and bone in the body.

It was too terrifying!

How did Xia Zhi achieve that with mere physical strength?

Lin Xun fell into deep thought.

.....

Night fell and stars dotted the vast and boundless sky.

Lin Xun had soaked up the medicinal effect of the bath and his numbness and exhaustion had been swept away. Without any hesitation, he put on some clean clothes and began to prepare dinner.

His battle with Xia Zhi in the afternoon wasn't as simple as it seemed. He appeared to be miserably beaten, but he had only suffered superficial wounds and his internal tissues were undamaged.

When Lin Xun thought of this, he knew Xia Zhi held back her strength. But he didn't know what fraction of her powers she had used.

Xia Zhi appeared immediately when dinner was prepared and served on the table.

Lin Xun smiled as he ladled rice into the little girl's bowl. "I roughly understand now."

Xia Zhi looked surprised. While chewing on a chunk of meat that was as thick as an arm, she remarked, "It's so simple. If you don't understand, you really are stupid."

Lin Xun: "..."

Lin Xun took a deep breath, trying to ignore Xia Zhi's inadvertent insult. He then changed his tone of voice to a serious and firm one. "Let's continue tomorrow!"

His words were resounding, but Xia Zhi felt a hint of resentment and bitterness in his voice. She couldn't help but raise her eyes to look at Lin Xun. She tilted her head and said ruminatively, "Diligence can make up for one's lack of talent. A dumb sparrow needs to make an early start. I just learned these two sentences. I think they fit you very well."

Lin Xun's face suddenly darkened. Is this little girl addicted to abusing me now?*NovElnext.CoM*

What do you mean by lack of talent?

What do you mean by dumb sparrow?

Do I have such a bad image in her mind?

"Let's eat dinner!"

Lin Xun gritted his teeth and glared at Xia Zhi. He sullenly ate dinner, venting all his emotions on his food. He ended the conversation that made him feel crushed.

The night was calm as usual, but when they recalled the night in the future, they would understand the preciousness of it.

Chapter 43 Physical Transformation

The next morning.

After breakfast, Lin Xun got into position and gazed at Xia Zhi, who was already in position ten feet away. He was overflowing with fighting spirit this morning.

He had barely slept last night. After his aeth qi and spirit cultivation sessions, he had spent the rest of the time revisiting Xia Zhi's battle techniques.

It had been a battle of pure physical prowess with the aim of tempering his body. However, after Lin Xun's tragic loss yesterday, he suddenly understood a certain principle. Strength paired with technique could also be an effective killing method!

Xia Zhi was a prime example. Her combat capabilities were absolutely terrifying despite not using any aeth power.

"Let's begin."

Xia Zhi's expression was tranquil. The gentle rays of the morning sun bathed her face in a dazzling holy aura.

Huu!

Lin Xun stepped forward without hesitation. He moved like a galloping horse, his presence compact and heavy.

On closer inspection, the muscles on his body had swelled like an undulating ripple, concentrating all of their power. His entire being was akin to a fully pulled back bow, ready to strike with full power.

Tiger Roar Echoing in the Mountain Forest!

The punch had a completely different feel from yesterday: simple, clean, and direct. Power flowed from his arm to his shoulder and finally submerged into his spine, drawing along the core muscles near the ribs. All the tightly wound muscles abruptly sprang up like a spring.

Boom!

His fist blasted through the air, creating a muffled boom.

Xia Zhi was completely unfazed as she twisted her hand and trapped Lin Xun's wrist like before. However, before she could exert any force, she felt his wrist muscles vibrate at an extreme speed, making his wrist as slippery as a mudfish.

He instantly escaped from her vice-like grip.

Lin Xun's eyes brightened. Sure enough, by applying the proper technique and force through his muscles, he could move every muscle, bone, and joint in his body as if they were his hands and fingers!

Previously, he had only known a fighting style that centered around aeth power. It was only after a night of reflection did he understand that every inch of muscle, tendon, skin, and joint in his body contained great power. Once he mastered how to move them all in harmony, he would be able to display unimaginable power.

To better elaborate, the body could be likened to a battlefield. The muscles and joints were the soldiers deployed at various positions across the battlefield. If the commander was able to direct them as a single harmonious unit, an unstoppable army would be created!

However, before Lin Xun could celebrate, Xia Zhi's fingers suddenly moved like a hissing snake. Her fingertips lightly brushed his wrist, causing him to lose all feeling around the area.

Almost immediately after, his body was once again flung by the arm, smashing painfully into the ground.

Lin Xun gritted his teeth, flipped to his feet, and charged forward once more.

Xia Zhi's fingers had precisely found Lin Xun's wrist joint, disrupting his flow of power. This was why he had lost feeling in his wrist.

Lin Xun understood what had happened immediately. As such, he was now on guard against this possibility. *Novelnext.Com*

However, he was beaten back to the ground again two moves later!

This time, he was defeated by an unexpected wrist lock. Xia Zhi's arms had clamped around his wrists like metal hoops. She then pushed forward with her left hand and pulled her right hand back, creating an opposing force that dislocated his wrists.

The clean and effective maneuver caused Lin Xun's wrists to fall limp with a crack. He only felt the intense pain after his body kissed the ground again.

This was the art of separating tendons and dislocating bones!

After reconnecting his wrists, Lin Xun looked toward Xia Zhi again. However, there was no trace of dejection in his gaze but instead a burning fighting spirit.

Although he only lasted two moves, it was a huge improvement from yesterday. This allowed Lin Xun to feel how rapidly he was progressing.

"Continue!" With a low shout, Lin Xun moved. He had already abandoned the Marching Army Fist's forms. Since he was no longer fixated on the forms, his movements had become much more agile.

Thud! Thump! Thud!

Subsequently, a slew of goosebump-inducing sounds rang out from the yard.

At some unknown time, the residence's main gates had been opened and a group of young kids dashed in. The village children could not help but gasp in shock when they saw their most respected martial instructor Lin Xun being repeatedly defeated by Xia Zhi.

Xia Zhi was only six-years-old and she was no bigger than several of them. In fact, she was younger than most of them. Despite this, she was inconceivably crushing Lin Xun time and time again.

The village children's hearts shivered each time Lin Xun was smashed into the ground. They were secretly relieved that they had not slighted Xia Zhi before, and did not dare to imagine what kind of fate would await them if they had.

The uncles and aunties of the village were soon drawn over, keen on partaking in the excitement as well.

Although they likewise felt pained by the beating Lin Xun was receiving, they were even more shocked by how kick-ass Xia Zhi was.

Only now did they find out that this unbelievably beautiful little girl possessed combat capabilities that could overwhelm even Lin Xun!

Was this still a five-year-old?

With so many people watching, even a thick-skinned person like Lin Xun could not help but feel embarrassed. He gritted his teeth and tried to ignore them as he cast his entire being into the fight.

Xia Zhi, on the other hand, was completely unaffected. She countered each attack that came at her, sending Lin Xun to the ground time and time again in a merciless fashion.

In her view, everything was for the sake of helping Lin Xun temper his body and thus needed to be treated with the utmost seriousness. Moreover, concepts such as dignity did not exist in Xia Zhi's dictionary.

After watching Lin Xun's face kiss the ground numerous times, even Xiao Tianren was no longer able to continue watching. He glared at the surrounding villagers and waved his hand, "Is everyone so free? Then follow me to Fiery Smoke Mountain!"

He swiftly scattered the crowd and shut the gates, leaving Lin Xun and Xia Zhi to focus on their sparring.

Only when night fell did Lin Xun finally drag his battered body into the wooden tub and began to review the details of the sparring.

As for Xia Zhi, she went straight to sleep.

.....

This routine continued for five days.

Over these five days, all Lin Xun did was eat, spar with Xia Zhi, and recover from his injuries using medicine soup while reviewing the details of the fights. Although monotonous, the training regime was extremely effective.

Lin Xun gradually became familiar with the technique of controlling his body, and could skillfully maneuver every muscle, joint, and tendon.

In addition, his body had undergone a remarkable transformation. Although it still looked like the same thin body on the outside, every inch of muscle, skin, and bone had been refined thousands of times, becoming as hard as a rock while also pliable like a steel wire; every inch had been repeatedly polished like jade and tempered like steel.

Moreover, his qi and blood had also grown more robust!

Although five days of nonstop defeats seemed soul-crushing, the benefits were clearly visible; Lin Xun's physical abilities had entered a whole new level.

This was something that undoubtedly raised Lin Xun's spirits.

However, his supply of beast meat, aeth grain, and various aeth resources was also being depleted at an alarming rate.

Not only were they used for his recovery, both of their food intakes had also risen.

Now, Lin Xun could eat half an adult snow spotted leopard and ten pounds of aeth grains!

As for Xia Zhi, she never ate less than him and would often eat much more.

At this rate, the supply of meat would be finished in less than half a month, while their stock of aeth grain would not last beyond a month.

Lin Xun had no choice but to begin thinking about how to replenish their supplies.

Fortunately, the villagers had already started mining operations under Xiao Tianren's leadership and had already collected over a hundred pounds of ore. Once the ore was refined, there should be around fifty pounds of Feiyun Fire Copper.

If sold, it could fetch a small fortune.

Lin Xun planned on making a trip to the Qingyang Tribe soon. Besides the Feiyun Fire Copper, he had several other valuables which could be traded for a tidy sum.

On the morning of the fifth day, Lin Xun was surprised to find Xia Zhi missing. There was only a single strip of paper in the room on which a simple sentence had been scrawled—'I'll be back soon.'

Relieved, Lin Xun felt like chuckling as he gazed at Xia Zhi's message. The characters resembled crawling earthworms and were so ugly that he was barely able to recognize them.

Since Xia Zhi said she would be back soon, there was no need to worry. Lin Xun walked into the kitchen and began preparing breakfast.

When Lin Xun placed the steaming breakfast on the table, the residence's main gates were opened with a loud thump. A calf-like creature that was covered in a flame-like mane was thrown into the yard, shaking the surrounding ground.

It was a fire mane boar!

The boar was bound by thick and tough vines, and its mouth was gagged with mud. All it could do was lie there on the ground and try to growl, its scarlet-red eyes filled with rage and hatred.

Meanwhile, Xia Zhi's tiny figure walked in. She washed her hands, sat at the table, and began to eat.

Lin Xun dazedly stared at this scene. He pointed at the fiery mane boar, "You went out to catch this brute?"

Xia Zhi nodded, "After breakfast, you will fight this pig. Only through bloody battle will you learn how strong your body has grown."

Lin Xun's expression turned somewhat conflicted, "If I lose, won't it mean that I'm less than a pig?"

Xia Zhi pondered before she earnestly answered, "Indeed."

Lin Xun's heart felt stuffy. It had merely been pure talk before. To think that she would actually capture a fiery mane boar. This was putting him in a difficult spot!

"Don't worry, I won't lose to a pig!"

Lin Xun viciously glared at Xia Zhi. He also sat at the table and began to eat with gusto as if pumping himself up to slaughter the pig.

[Chapter 44: A Streak of Light](#)

The fiery mane boar was an extremely formidable savage beast. It was covered in flame-like fur that seemed soft but was actually tough to the extreme. Even a sword would have difficulty getting through.

It had an aggressive, violent nature and was blessed with unparalleled strength. The pair of sinister tusks which grew from its mouth were deadly weapons that even a True Martial fourth layer expert would prefer to avoid.

Compared to this savage, the snow spotted leopard and one-horned lizard were akin to docile farm animals.

Rumble!

In the yard, Xia Zhi removed the vines that bound the boar. The savage beast abruptly howled and slammed its four hooves into the ground causing dust to fill the air. Its enormous, bull-like body was akin to a small moving mountain as it ruthlessly charged at Lin Xun.

Its sharp sinister tusks were akin to a pair of sharp razor-sharp blades, flickering with a bloodthirsty gleam.

Thud!

Lin Xun moved immediately. Power flowed into his hand and a fist smashed into the side of the savage beast's neck. However, the boar easily shook it off, completely unfazed. It suddenly spun around and thrust its sharp tusks through the air, stabbing toward Lin Xun's stomach.

Lin Xun's eyes narrowed as he sidestepped, feeling quite astonished. Although his earlier blow had consisted of purely physical power, any True Martial fourth layer expert who took it would not be unscathed.

However, it was completely ineffective against the boar.

Rumble!

The fiery mane boar was exceedingly barbaric. Its scarlet-red eyes glared at Lin Xun as its enormous body charged again.

Lin Xun realized that it was impossible to dodge this time, leaving him no choice but to face the brute head-on. He immediately felt as if a boulder had slammed into his body, causing his qi and blood to churn erratically as he was pushed back.

What overwhelming power!

Lin Xun's expression darkened as his muscles tensed up like steel threads. He crouched like a cheetah and suddenly leaped forth, hooking his hand around one of the boar's tusks. Power gushed through his wrist, and his arm muscles rapidly expanded as he abruptly hoisted up.

The thousand-pound fiery mane boar was raised off the ground.

Lin Xun's shoulder muscles rapidly rose like the tide as power rapidly accumulated in his wrist. The force finally erupted with a ruthless jerk.

Rumble~

The boar's giant body was shaken like a sieve as its bones emitted cracking noises. The boar was mercilessly smashed into the ground by Lin Xun, creating a giant crater.

Lin Xun had learned this technique from Xia Zhi. With a single jerk, power would ripple forth like the tide, shaking and disrupting the opponent's power. In serious cases, it could even rupture a foe's inner organs.

Before Lin Xun could celebrate, however, the boar shook its body and stood up again. Its scarlet-red eyes overflowed with endless savagery as it charged at him again with a howl.

Lin Xun's eyes nearly popped from their sockets. Was this brute invincible?

He quickly dodged to the side and scanned the boar's body. The fiery mane boar had not sustained a single injury and had only become increasingly savage.

Its four hooves seemed to fly as it charged about in the tiny and narrow yard. Dust clouds rose into the air and the ground was cracked in several places.

If not for Xia Zhi, the charges would have destroyed all three of Lin Xun's thatched houses.

"Bastard!" Lin Xun's qi and blood roared, showing that he had also been angered. He was absolutely not going to admit that he could not even beat a pig. Otherwise, how would he ever raise his head in front of Xia Zhi in the future?

Thud! **nOVe**next.cOm

Lin Xun no longer took any evasive maneuvers and faced the charge directly. He raised his arms in front of him and dashed into the incoming fiery mane boar, catching its tusks and forcibly stopping it in its tracks.

The boar bellowed, clearly enraged to the max. Its four hooves pushed madly as its body violently twisted in an attempt to force off Lin Xun's hands.

However, Lin Xun's arms suddenly squeezed like a noose. Two clear cracks rang out and the boar's tusks were snapped into two. Blood poured out as the boar frantically howled in pain, nearly shaking off Lin Xun's body.

Lin Xun immediately dropped to his feet and locked the boar's leg joint with his arms. With a brutal twist and a crack, the boar's front right leg was dislocated, causing its body to crash into the ground.

However, this was not the end. Lin Xun took advantage of the opportunity and did the same to the fiery mane boar's remaining three legs. In the span of a few breaths, its body lost all support and it could only miserably wail on the ground.

Only then did Lin Xun finally stand up, dust off his hands, and let out a long, drawn-out breath.

He looked at the subdued boar. Although he was exhausted, he could not help but feel a sense of pride flow out in his heart.

Several months ago, he had been weak and pathetic. Now, he was able to subdue a savage beast comparable to a True Martial fourth layer cultivator with only physical force. It was impossible for Lin Xun to not be excited by such a tremendous transformation.

It was all attributed to his relentless hard work and Xia Zhi's help.

The constant sparring with Xia Zhi had made his body stronger with each passing day. His skin, muscles, and bones were now as hard as steel and filled with explosive power.

At the same time, the continuous sparring also taught Lin Xun the secrets of properly utilizing his body. He was now capable of perfectly gathering every inch of power in his body!

"Even without aeth power, my raw physical might should allow me to challenge a True Martial fourth layer expert." Lin Xun pondered for a moment before shaking his head.

A cultivator was different from a beast. A cultivator possessed equipment, weapons, techniques, and, most importantly, battle tactics and experience. There was no way to compare such an existence to a mere beast.

Hence, it would not be so simple to defeat a True Martial fourth layer expert with physical power alone.

Xia Zhi walked over and lightly tapped the fiery mane boar's head with her tiny hand. The beast immediately fell unconscious as if it had been struck by lightning.

Xia Zhi looked at Lin Xun. "You're a bit stronger than this pig."

The pride in Lin Xun's heart instantly vanished. He helplessly shrugged and smiled bitterly, "Can't you praise me just once?"

Xia Zhi frowned as she earnestly considered, "Is there any part of you that's worth praising?"

Lin Xun was speechless.

.....

While they were eating lunch, Lin Xun thought of a question, "When compared to aeth power, physical power seems to only be suitable for close combat. No matter how strong the body becomes, the power I gain will not be as great as focusing solely on aeth power cultivation."

Xia Zhi did not say a single word. Instead, she lightly swung her finger as if it were a blade.

Ch!

An arc of blade-like qi flew out and sliced off a willow branch that was more than a hundred feet away.

Lin Xun was stunned while Xia Zhi shifted her focus back to the food.

A long time later, Lin Xun said with a complicated expression, "You...how do you cultivate?"

He had seen everything clearly earlier. There had been no trace of aeth power in Xia Zhi's attack and it was created purely from her physical power!

In other words, this was hard proof that when physical power reached a certain level, it could break free from the restrictions of 'close-combat'!

From what Lin Xun knew, only Spirit Dipper stage and above aeth power cultivators were able to release their aeth power externally and kill their enemies from a distance away.

With this comparison, Xia Zhi's external force release appeared even more extraordinary.

Xia Zhi puzzledly said, "It's easy to achieve. I could do it once I remembered it."

Lin Xun was not as devastated by her unreasonable explanation this time and accepted it as the truth. After these few days of observation, he had discovered far too many inconceivable things about Xia Zhi. She was basically a born genius that knew everything from the start!

How else could anyone explain why a five-year-old girl possessed such terrifying battle power?

After a long session of thinking, Lin Xun ultimately gave up on getting to the bottom of the matter and instead asked Xia Zhi what the technique was called.

In his view, the technique was very similar to martial arts and should not have appeared out of nowhere.

Xia Zhi shook her head. "It has no name."

Lin Xun let out a bitter chuckle, "Then let's give it one."

Xia Zhi offhandedly agreed.

In contrast, Lin Xun was full of zest. After some thinking, he said, "Shall we call it Joint Disruption Art?"

He had learned several close-combat techniques over the past few days, such as the shock ripple disruption, the double arm-twist, the bone-locking art...etc.

All of these techniques were simple, straightforward, and clean. They specialized in targeting the opponent's weak points such as joints and required a certain combination of ruthlessness and decisiveness.

Xia Zhi half-heartedly nodded, not stopping Lin Xun's enthusiasm.

His eyes shined as he confidently said, "Although this art has yet to be perfected, I believe that through our combined intelligence, this art will become increasingly powerful. Who knows, it might even become famous one day and leave its mark in history."

Xia Zhi looked as if she wasn't even listening as she continued to eat.

Lin Xun's passion soon dulled upon seeing that he was not getting any response. He shook his head and said, "Never mind, this matter isn't urgent. We can discuss more next time."

Xia Zhi suddenly raised her head and looked at Lin Xun, "Didn't you say you will be going to the Qingyang Tribe in a few days?"

Lin Xun nodded, "Yeah. If everything goes smoothly, I should be leaving in five days."

The reason he said this was because according to his estimation, the Omega Secret-Realm's second attempt should arrive in three days. He intended to first deal with this matter before heading to the Qingyang Tribe.

Lin Xun had gained some confidence over the past few days of training and was now somewhat expectant towards the Omega Secret-Realm's second trial.

At this point, Lin Xun suddenly realized something and asked, "Why are you asking?"

Xia Zhi responded, "I find it a little hard to see you leave."

"It's okay, I'll be back soon." A warm feeling flowed in Lin Xun's heart. Although the little lass had repeatedly pummeled him over the past few days, she at least had some conscience.

However, Xia Zhi quickly shook her head, "I'm just wondering who will be making my meals if you suddenly leave."

Lin Xun's face froze. So that's her concern...

He spitefully said, "Don't worry, I'll definitely make sure you don't starve to death even if I leave!"

Xia Zhi acknowledged with a peaceful expression, "That's good."

After which, she returned to her food...

Meanwhile, a dazzling streak of light suddenly flew over the old mountain forests a dozen miles from the village.

Chapter 45 An Unfamiliar Guest

A streak of light zipped through the air like beautiful flowing silk.

The light came to a stop above an old mountain forest and transformed into a ten-foot-long flying carpet!

Numerous rune arrays were densely packed together on the carpet's surface, flowing with light as if they were alive. The runes rhythmically breathed in the surrounding aeth qi, creating a magical and extraordinary sight.

The flying carpet was evidently an extremely valuable tool!

There was a man and woman standing on the carpet.

“First Young Master, why have we stopped?” The woman was puzzled. She wore a black dress, had a slender waist, and had an amazing figure. She had a beautiful oval face and nice black eyebrows. However, a sharp, blade-like aura spread from between her brows.

She was like a wild rose, beautiful yet thorny.

If any influential figure from Donglin City was present, they would certainly recognize this woman. She was Mu Wansu, who was also known as the ‘Black Rose’.

At the same time, she was also the manager of Donglin City’s number one merchant association, Stone Cauldron Alms.

Stone Cauldron Alms was one of the few merchant associations in the Ziyao Empire which had a far-reaching and extensive network. It had branches all over the empire’s territory and boasted wealth that could rival a country.

Stone Cauldron Alms’ boss, Fortune God Shi, was a legendary figure in the empire. The wealth he possessed was rumored to have reached an astronomical number that even the powerful imperial clan members envied him.

As someone who could become the Stone Cauldron Alms Donglin City branch manager, Black Rose Mu Wansu was clearly no ordinary person.

However, this very individual was being respectful and deferential towards the man beside her.

“Can’t you tell? A great battle occurred here not too long ago.” The man looked down with his hands behind his back.

He had a tall figure with shoulders as broad as a mountain. The lines of his face were strong and bold. When his eyes opened or closed, an aura of disdain would unwittingly flow out which gave a heavy feeling akin to looking at a deep abyss.

The mere sight of him standing there made a person feel an intimidating pressure as if they were looking up at a great mountain.

“A battle...” Mu Wansu’s eyes focused as she took a closer look. Sure enough, she discovered that the mountain forest below had been struck by terrifying destructive power and traces of an earth-shaking battle were revealed one after another.

Amazed, Mu Wansu commented, “First Young Master has excellent observation skills.”

The man she called ‘First Young Master’ did not seem to care about such flattery. He mumbled to himself, “If my guess is correct, the capital’s Black Cloth Alley Xie Clan’s ninth son was one of the fighters. His opponent, however, is quite interesting.”

“The Xie Clan’s ninth son?” A carefree sword-wielding figure in a blue jade gown. appeared in Mu Wansu’s head.

Shocked, she asked, “The capital’s recent rising star who has been praised as the Little Sword Lord, the Xie Clan’s ninth young master?”

“Who else can use the Ruling Sword Art? This sword art has great origins. Despite being rumored to be incomplete, it possesses astonishing and terrifying power that can subdue ghosts and slay gods.”

The first young master’s eyes shone brightly at the topic of martial arts, “It’s a pity that we arrived a little late. We could have had the chance to admire the Ruling Sword Art’s might.”

There was regret in his voice.

Mu Wansu was taken aback as waves churned in her heart. To think that it was the Little Sword Lord Xie Yutang...

The Ziyao Empire was extremely vast. In its capital, which was also known as the Forbidden City, was a very famous alley called Black Cloth Alley.

Practically all of the empire’s most powerful and influential noble clans could be found in Black Cloth Alley.

The Xie Clan was a martial clan with a thousand years of history. It was a powerful clan that had always maintained its territory in Black Cloth Alley.

As one of the Xie Clan’s descendants, Little Sword Lord Xie Yutang was extremely famous and was said to be a first-class cultivation talent. He had shaken the entire Forbidden City when he successfully learned the Ruling Sword Art, turning him into one of the city’s rising stars.

After all, no one had managed to comprehend the Ruling Sword Art in nearly a hundred years!

Although Mu Wansu was not from the Forbidden City, as a Stone Cauldron Alms manager, she had naturally heard of this matter. Hence why she was so shocked by the revelation.

“In other words, the Xie Clan’s ninth young master reached the Three Thousand Great Mountains earlier than us?” After Mu Wansu returned to her senses, she soon realized the crux of the issue.

“He must have.” The first young master nodded. “There’s currently no one in the Forbidden City who does not know that the stargazing platform’s Heavenly Overseer has observed a strange phenomenon in the Three Thousand Great Mountains. Rumor says that an exceptional treasure has likely appeared and I believe Xie Yutang has come because of it.”

As he spoke, he frowned and said, “I’m only curious about the identity of Xie Yutang’s opponent.”

Mu Wansu contemplated for a while. She took out a map, checked it, and pointed in a certain direction, “There’s a village called Feiyun Village a dozen miles from here. We might be able to find out something there.”

The first young master was surprised, “There are people living in this remote place?”

Mu Wansu smiled, “Before we left, I specially researched anything related to the Three Thousand Great Mountains. That’s how I stumbled upon information that a small Feiyun Fire Copper vein was discovered here years ago.”

As they conversed, the flying carpet was steered towards the direction she had indicated.

Along the way, Mu Wansu explained the history of Feiyun Village, allowing the first young master to understand the village's origins.

Moments later, the two appeared above Feiyun Village.

"No wonder these villagers survived. They've managed to cultivate aeth fields." The first young master displayed a thoughtful look as he observed the fields below.

Soon after, his gaze paused and he pointed towards the eastern side of the village, "There are aeth power undulations there which should belong to a cultivator. Come, let's go over and take a look."

.....

It was evening time. Lin Xun had already prepared dinner, which consisted of six large steaming plates of meat and a pot of crystal-like aeth rice.

Lin Xun and Xia Zhi were seated at a table under the willow tree in the yard and were busily eating their dinner.

Only three days remained before the Omega Secret-Realm's second trial. Lin Xun had no plans to continue training his body. Instead, he was hoping to use these final three days to rest and recover so that he would be in the best condition to take on the trial.

Lin Xun swiftly explained as he ate, "I've roughly summarized the Joint Disruption Art into five main principles: shake, twist, lock, pinpoint and crumble. Of course, this is only an initial organization. As we create more techniques in the future, we will be able to further perfect the art."

He did not know if Xia Zhi was listening. She was focused on her food as if Lin Xun's words were far less interesting than her meal.

Lin Xun did not appear to be angered by her actions and continued to talk to himself. Learning and summarizing was a habit Lin Xun had picked up from Mister Lu.

It was because Mister Lu never explained anything. Whenever Lin Xun encountered any problems or new findings, he would need to understand, study and make his own conclusions.

Although the martial path was different from runes, it followed the same logic.

As he was speaking, Xia Zhi suddenly put down her chopsticks and looked towards the distant sky. Graveness flashed across the pitch-black gem-like crescent eyes. "Someone is coming."

Lin Xun's heart shivered. A visit from the villagers would never elicit such a reaction from Xia Zhi.

This meant that an outsider had arrived in Feiyun Village!novelnext.coM

"Continue eating." Lin Xun considered their options and ultimately decided to meet whatever came at them with an unwavering will.

Xia Zhi made a noise in assent and lowered her head to continue her meal.

"How fragrant." Moments later, a tall, stalwart figure pushed open the gates and invited himself in. He was followed by a lady wearing a black dress. It was the first young master and Mu Wansu.

The first young master scanned the beast meat and skins that were hanging on the walls, before turning to the boy and girl seated at the table located in the center of the yard.

"May I ask who our two guests are?" Secretly shocked, Lin Xun stood up and cupped his hands together. The man's and woman's presences were as immeasurable as a bottomless abyss. They were evidently very powerful individuals.

Merely facing them made Lin Xun feel an oppressive pressure.

"Eh, we're just passing by." The first young master arrived at the table and lowered his head to look at the six plates of meat. "Blue vine python, jade plume mountain sable, striped tiger...these dishes are nutritious, and it's been a long time since I've last tasted them. No wonder something smelled so fragrant."

Lin Xun's eyes narrowed and he suddenly grinned, "Since that's the case, if the young master doesn't mind, please sit down and have a taste."

"I won't hold myself back then." The first young master chuckled and sat down. He picked up a pair of chopsticks and began to gorge himself. He certainly was not holding anything back and was treating the place as his own home.

Even Mu Wansu was slightly taken aback, completely not expecting the first young master to show such great interest in the dishes.

What delicacies had someone of his status never eaten before?

Mu Wansu could not understand. She glanced at Lin Xun and relaxed when she saw that he was merely a boy at the True Martial third layer stage.

Although Lin Xun did not know the couple's goal, he remained calm and did not attempt any little tricks.

However, he would not let his guard down before figuring out their intentions.

"I'm going to sleep." Xia Zhi suddenly stood up and left.

She had already covered her face with a hat at some unknown time and did not draw much attention from Mu Wansu. She merely took the girl as Lin Xun's younger sister.

The first young master, however, shot a glance at Xia Zhi's leaving figure, his brows furrowing almost unnoticeably as if sensing something. In the end, he shook his head and continued to gorge himself on the meat.

Lin Xun took in all of these little details. Upon seeing that there was no special reaction from Xia Zhi, he breathed a sigh of relief inside.

"Young brother, shall we share a cup of wine?" The first young master invited Lin Xun with a smile. A wine pot had appeared in his hand, giving off an intoxicating fragrance.

"Gladly." Lin Xun smilingly walked forward and sat down. He looked happy and completely at ease.

Mu Wansu could not help but look at Lin Xun again as surprise flashed in her eyes. Only a handful of people could maintain such composure in front of the first young master.

It was even more incredible for someone like Lin Xun, who was merely a boy from a poor and remote village, to act like this.

Chapter 46 Four Seasons Brew

Although Mu Wansu was somewhat surprised by Lin Xun's composure, her expression changed slightly when she saw the wine pot brought out by the first young master.

"First Young Master..." Mu Wansu could not help but speak as worry appeared between her brows.

"It's fine." The first young master waved his hand, stopping her from continuing. He lifted the wine pot and poured a cup for Lin Xun.

The dark blue wine was translucent like amber, giving off a simple, elegant, and refreshing fragrance.

Lin Xun's eyes shone when he looked at the cup, "Good wine!"

He had seen Mu Wansu's expression and could roughly guess that the wine was either poisonous or an extremely valuable and rare brew.

In Lin Xun's opinion, the second possibility was more likely. After all, based on their terrifying auras, it was unnecessary for the man and woman to resort to such measures to kill him.

Lin Xun downed the entire cup and his eyes soon brightened again.

As the wine entered his mouth, it gave off a sensation of the never-ending spring rain. Warm and gentle aeth power soon began spreading to his entire body.

Lin Xun felt his aeth power gradually boil as it slowly saturated. It flowed in a lively manner as if cheering.

Lin Xun could not help but compliment it again, "It is indeed an excellent wine!"

At the sight of Lin Xun's carefree attitude and straightforward wine mannerisms, the first young master could not help but look at him again in surprise. Soon after, the first young master chuckled, "This wine is called Four Seasons, and was personally brewed by Qinglu Academy Heavenly Workshop's Grandmaster Mei. The first cup tastes like a spring breeze in the night and focuses on bringing out the 'moistness' of spring."

As he explained, he poured Lin Xun another cup, "Try the second cup."

Lin Xun did not hold back this time either and downed the second cup in a single gulp. He seemed to feel rumbling as a fiery torrent was poured down his throat. A surge of unbearable and fierce qi began to run amok inside his body, causing him to tremble uncontrollably. His skin began to turn red inch by inch and his face instantly flushed red as well.

It felt like he was amidst the scorching heat of summer. Fire burned in his body like a furnace, evaporating the moisture outside while every aperture on his body spouted abundant aeth qi.

Lin Xun opened his mouth and stuck out his tongue, “To think that the same pot of wine would have two such unique and distinct flavors. Qinglu Academy’s Grandmaster Mei is definitely an amazing grandmaster brewer.”

Mu Wansu was speechless. This kid was so ignorant. Grandmaster Mei was a first-class grandmaster alchemist in the empire!

His Four Seasons Brew was considered a priceless treasure even in the Forbidden City, and was enjoyed by only the most powerful and influential figures!

Although Mu Wansu was considered an influential figure, even she did not dare to hope for a taste of the Four Seasons Brew.

Despite this, the first young master was using this precious wine to entertain a boy from a poor and remote village. This made Mu Wansu dumbfounded and envious, feeling that this ignorant boy really had some unbelievable luck.

However, no one else would know of Mu Wansu’s thoughts. The first young master let out a hearty laugh and said, “The second cup feels like a scorching sun down the throat and will make your organs feel as if they’re burning. Its focus is intensity.”

He looked at Lin Xun’s bright red face and asked, “Young brother, would you like a third cup?”

Lin Xun could not seem to properly gather his thoughts. It was not because he had a low alcohol tolerance, but because a mere two cups of the brew had caused his aeth power to grow drastically. It was as if a raging river was flowing into a tiny pond and was about to overwhelm its capacity.

The Four Seasons Brew was clearly an aeth wine! Moreover, it must be extremely rare and valuable!

Lin Xun forcefully circulated his cultivation, using his qi to cycle the rapidly increasing aeth power in his body in an effort to digest its potent energy. *NOVELNext.CoM*

Meanwhile, he smiled and said, “Since it’s called the Four Seasons Brew, it would be far too regretful to not have a taste of the third and fourth cups.”

This kid is so shameless!

Mu Wansu cursed inside. She could roughly tell that Lin Xun had already experienced the benefits of the Four Seasons Brew. Logically speaking, he should have been panicking as he tried to decline. After all, who would be so shameless as to voluntarily ask for such a valuable wine?

However, this kid was clearly trying to take a mile after being given an inch!

The first young master was also taken aback. He did a quick doubletake of Lin Xun again and said, “To be honest, you have somewhat surprised me. An ordinary True Martial cultivator would have fallen drunk on the ground after the first cup, unable to bear the aeth power in the wine. However, you are clearly different from others.”

Lin Xun squinted as if he was drunk. His cheeks were flushed as his mouth seemed to loosen, “Eh, I might be quite a good drinker.”

The first young master chuckled and poured Lin Xun a third cup. The first young master suddenly pointed to the meat and skins hanging around the yard and asked, "Were these savage beasts hunted by you?"

Lin Xun shook his head, "Nope, there was a battle in the mountain forest some distance from here a few days ago. Most of these savage beasts were unlucky victims that were caught in the aftershocks of the battle. I was just lucky enough to take advantage of the situation."

A battle!

The first young master's and Mu Wansu's eyes suddenly became focused.

Lin Xun continued to talk to himself as if he was drunk, "You might not know this, but the two combatants were Spirit Sea stage experts. One of them traveled on a flying sword like a sword immortal..."

So it was Xie Yutang!

The first young master and Mu Wansu were now certain.

Mu Wansu could not help but ask, "Who was his opponent?"

"He seems to have been called...a brute warrior." Lin Xun frowned in thought. "I can't really remember."

While answering, he downed his third cup of wine. The taste this time was fresh, cool, and cleansing like a flowing stream. It gave him a broad sensation like he was high up in the autumn sky, alone in the vast emptiness.

Rumble!

The aeth power in his body erupted like a volcano, rushing and crashing through his channels with increasing ferocity.

Even the repeated refining by the aeth power vortex at Lin Xun's four heart acupuncture points was unable to restrain the rapidly rising momentum.

At this rate, instead of benefiting him, the violent aeth power would do irreversible damage to his body.

Lin Xin gritted his teeth and cast away all unnecessary thoughts. With a deep breath, he got into a cross-legged sitting posture and began to attack the next cultivation level!

His unusual actions were not much of a surprise to the first young master and Mu Wansu, who instead felt it normal.

After all, the Four Seasons Brew was made for Spirit Dipper stage and above cultivators and contained a tremendous amount of aeth power. It was unimaginable for a True Martial third layer youngster like Lin Xun to have finished three entire cups without passing out immediately.

However, what currently drew the two guests' attention was the brute warrior Lin Xun had mentioned.

“To think that the Darkness Kingdom’s experts have also come to the Three Thousand Great Mountains. Could they have also heard the news about the exceptional treasure that might have appeared?” The first young master frowned as killing intent spread from between his brows.

The Darkness Kingdom was located deep within the wastelands and was the Ziyao Empire’s mortal enemy!

“It should not be wrong since it was said by Xie Yutang. I never expected the Darkness Kingdom would become restless again after a thousand years.” Mu Wanyu pursed her lips as worry appeared in her eyes.

“Putting aside this matter for the moment, I’m curious whether Xie Yutang managed to find the treasure.” Iciness flowed in the first young master’s eyes.

Mu Wansu did not know what to say. There were still far too few clues. There was no way to get any reliable information unless they found Xie Yutang and asked him.

The first young master also understood this and shook his head. His gaze turned towards Lin Xun.

Mu Wansu also shifted her attention to the boy and could not help but ask in a low voice, “First Young Master, why did you bring out the Four Seasons Brew to entertain such a person? Isn’t this far too wasteful?”

The first young master shook his head to tell her not to speak any further on this topic.

Although Mu Wansu was still confused, she ceased her questioning.

The time it took to brew a pot of tea passed.

Lin Xun opened his eyes as abundant aeth power pulsed strongly around him. His entire aura had changed in a short span of time, now possessing a certain sharpness akin to a sword leaving its sheath.

Inside his body, pure and rich aeth power swam through his channels, apertures, and the four heart acupuncture points; it made a round through his five organs before returning to his channels.

In contrast to before, faint light now flowed in his many apertures, creating better harmony in his qi and blood.

This was the True Martial fourth layer, Orifice Unlocking!

By unlocking the orifices, the flow of qi and blood would improve. Upon reaching this cultivation stage, the cultivator’s qi and power would undergo a complete transformation.

“Congratulations on advancing another step on your cultivation journey.” The first young master smiled and cupped his hands together.

Lin Xun hurriedly rose to his feet and returned the gesture, “It was thanks to the young master’s generosity. How else would I have obtained such a blessing?”

The first young master chuckled and waved his hand, “No need to be courteous. It was only a few small cups of wine. Please sit down.”

Lin Xun happily obliged.

Although this cultivation advancement had been far too out of the blue and had caught him off guard, when he thought about it, he realized that he now unknowingly owed the other party a debt of gratitude.

However, Lin Xun would not say this out loud. After all, who knew whether the other party had done so intentionally? He would return the favor if he found an opportunity to do so in the future, but if no chance came by, he would take it as if it had never happened.

Lin Xun was not a stubborn and old-fashioned person. He would not try to desperately repay a debt of gratitude.

Upon seeing Lin Xun sit down in a cool and relaxed manner, Mu Wansu could not help but increase her opinion of him. Would another person have been able to maintain such a delicate balance between knowing when to advance or retreat?

“To be frank, I’ve come to the Three Thousand Mountains in search of a special treasure. I’ve heard that a strange phenomenon occurred here three months ago. Do you know anything about this matter?” The first young master casually asked as he poured Lin Xun a fourth cup.

“I don’t recall anything.” Lin Xun shook his head. “I would definitely remember if anything special happened over the past few months, but nothing really comes to mind. The villagers can verify this.”

The first young master acknowledged this and fell into deep thought.

Mu Wansu frowned, “Are you certain?”

Before Lin Xun could reply, the first young master waved his hand and said, “It’s alright. No need to probe any further. I already have my answer.”

Mu Wansu was clearly unsatisfied and viciously glared at Lin Xun. Never mind that the brat did not know how to be grateful after drinking the Four Seasons Brew, but he could not even give them any useful information. This was truly infuriating.

However, she also understood that a youngster from a poor and remote village like Lin Xun most likely would not know any details about the treasure.

It was at this moment that the residence’s gates were pushed open as Village Chief Xiao Tianren excitedly rushed in, “Good news, we had an excellent haul today...”

His words came to an abrupt halt.

Xiao Tianren’s expression changed slightly when he suddenly discovered that there were two strangers in the yard with Lin Xun.

[Chapter 47: Bestowing a Token](#)

Xiao Tianren’s timing was terrible.

This was Lin Xun’s first thought. When he subsequently saw the crowd of villagers behind Xiao Tianren, Lin Xun could not help but feel a little nervous.

Every villager was carrying a large sack on their back. There was no need to guess. The sacks obviously contained the Feiyun Fire Copper ore they had mined.

In addition, two young kids had followed along, each holding a fiery-red Feiyun Fire Copper ore. There was basically no way to hide it now.

Various thoughts flashed in Lin Xun's head as he moved forward to meet the group with a smile, "Uncle Xiao, leave the items here."

Xiao Tianren dazedly nodded his head and quickly set about the task, ignoring the two strangers in the yard.

The other villagers could also sense that something was amiss. Although they were puzzled, no one asked any further questions. Even the two kids were tightly hugged by the adults to prevent them from saying something wrong.

In the end, Lin Xun gave Xiao Tianren a look. The latter quickly understood and hurriedly departed with the group of villagers.

"Feiyun Fire Copper ore?" Mu Wansu finally spoke after silently watching the entire process. "Wasn't that small copper vein already mined out?"

Lin Xun did not hide anything and calmly explained, "Big sister might not know this but I stumbled into the abandoned mine a few days ago and discovered a yet to be mined vein deep in the mine."

"That's quite a fortune you've discovered." Mu Wansu shot a meaningful glance at Lin Xun.

The first young master was likewise rather surprised. "Aeth fields, savage beasts and Feiyun Fire Copper ore. Your village is quite a money-earner."

Lin Xun shrugged with a bitter smile, "Young master, Feiyun Village is located deep in the Three Thousand Great Mountains, and even the 'nearest' Qingyang Tribe is more than two thousand miles. Although we have some ore, aeth grain, and hunting grounds, it is honestly not easy for us to exchange them for money."

The first young master chuckled. He could tell in a single glance that Lin Xun was worried they would have designs on these riches. However, the first young master did not expose Lin Xun's thoughts. "That is quite a problem indeed."

Lin Xun sighed, "Exactly."

The first young master revealed a thoughtful look. He retrieved a token and casually tossed it to Lin Xun. "There's a merchant group in the Qingyang Tribe called Stone Cauldron Alms. If you're looking to exchange your produce, you can try heading there with this token."

"First Young Master, you absolutely cannot!" Alarmed, Mu Wansu said, "This token is your personal artifact, and is too valuable and important. How can you give it away so easily?"

Lin Xun had originally intended to decline, but could not help but change his mind upon seeing this scene. His fingers tightly clutched the token.

"It serves no purpose to me anyway, so why not give it away? Moreover, how can something that I, Shi Xuan, give away be taken back?" The first young master calmly said with a hint of pride.

Mu Wansu was still deeply worried, "But this..."

The first young master waved his hand, "It's settled, so don't say anything more."

He turned his head towards Lin Xun, "Young brother, I believe fate has brought us together. If you ever come to the Forbidden City, feel free to seek me out at Stone Cauldron Alms. Farewell."

After speaking, he turned around and left.

Mu Wansu reluctantly glanced at the token in Lin Xun's hand before venomously glaring at him, hoping to intimidate him into voluntarily giving the token up.

However, Lin Xun acted oblivious and ignored her. He turned his head and solemnly said to the departing first young master, "I will repay the young master's kindness in the future."

Upon seeing this, Mu Wansu knew that the shameless youngster was determined to keep the token. She gnashed her teeth and said in a low voice, "Brat, I'll settle this debt next time!" *nOvelnext.COM*

Lin Xun immediately displayed a terrified expression as he intentionally said in a loud voice, "Big sister, what debt are you referring to? Are you resenting me because I wasn't a good enough host?"

At these words, Mu Wansu cursed inside.

Sure enough, the first young master's voice soon sounded from afar, "Hahaha, don't be angry young brother, Mu Wansu was only joking with you. Wansu, come quickly. We're leaving."

Mu Wansu felt vexed and angry. She had not expected the youngster to be so shameless.

Despite this, she maintained a lovely smile on her face. Her beautiful eyes seemed to swirl in thought as she sweetly said, "Little brother, big sister has suddenly recalled that the Qingyang Tribe is quite close to Donglin City. We'll definitely be meeting again if there's a chance."

After which, she left with a twirl of her black dress.

Grinning, Lin Xun replied in a loud voice, "Don't worry big sister, I will definitely come to visit you in Donglin City if there's a chance. When that time comes, I hope that you will help stand up for me if I get bullied!"

Mu Wansu's figure paused for a moment at the doorstep. She could not help but feel annoyed when she recalled Lin Xun's shamelessness and crafty appearance.

Brat, since you dare to call me big sister, I'll make sure to let you have a taste of your big sister's methods in the future!

Mu Wansu silently cursed as she quickened her footsteps. If she stayed a second longer, she was worried that she would not be able to hold herself back from beating up the repulsive brat.

Mu Wansu was not being petty. In fact, she clearly understood the weight of the first young master Shi Xuan's token. It not only represented him but also possessed an unimaginable authority!

How could Mu Wansu not feel anxious when such a token was so casually thrown to a backwater village youngster?

However, spilled water was difficult to recollect and Mu Wansu had no choice but to concede on this matter.

.....

After sending the two guests away with his eyes, Lin Xun silently stood on the spot for a long time. Only after seeing a streak of light soar into the sky did he let out a long, drawn-out breath as he collapsed into the chair.

The earlier events might have seemed smooth-sailing on the surface, but to Lin Xun, it had felt more exhausting than a desperate battle.

Both the first young master Shi Xuan and the woman called Wansu were extremely formidable characters. This not only described their cultivation but also their intelligence and cunning.

Although Lin Xun had seemed composed while sitting with them, he was extremely tense throughout, not daring to show the slightest bit of carelessness.

Although everything was now over, Lin Xun still had a few questions.

First young master Shi Xuan was likely an expert with high status and his goal for coming here was easy to guess: the exceptional treasure he had mentioned.

This was the key. If Lin Xun's guess was not wrong, the strange phenomenon Shi Xuan talked about had coincidentally occurred three months ago when he unraveled the secret of the Omega Secret-Realm!

Was there some relation between these two events?

Lin Xun did not dare to speak carelessly and would never tell anyone what he knew.

However, it puzzled him that someone like Shi Xuan would bring out such a precious wine to entertain Lin Xun and ask a few completely unnecessary questions. Moreover, Shi Xuan had given his token to Lin Xun right before their farewell!

Why had he done this?

Lin Xun did not believe there was such a thing as a free meal in this world. Even if there was, it would never happen to him.

However, he could not decipher Shi Xuan's thoughts no matter how long he mulled over the various possibilities. In the end, he could only put the matter aside. It was enough that the other party did not display any ill intent.

There was still a cup of wine on the table; the Four Seasons Brew's 'winter cup'. Lin Xun picked up the cup and downed it in a single gulp. Bone-piercing cold stabbed its way down his throat, turning into countless tiny cold flows which spread throughout his body and made him shiver uncontrollably.

This wine was amazing.

A single pot of wine yet four distinct flavors. Additionally, there was even an extremely terrifying amount of aeth power concealed within. At Lin Xun's current cultivation, he could only assimilate twenty percent of its power. As for the rest, most of it was firmly suppressed and stored in his body.

A rapid increase in power might not always be a good thing. If a cultivator advanced too quickly, he could very easily end up with an unstable foundation which would in turn affect his future cultivation.

Lin Xun pursued a state known as 'flawless perfection akin to water overflowing from a full cup'. He was extremely serious about building a solid foundation.

He did not seek rapid cultivation level advancement because it would instead make his future path increasingly narrow. That would be akin to climbing a tree to search for fish, a completely fruitless endeavor.

Meanwhile, on a flying carpet that was whizzing about among the clouds.

Since there were no longer any outsiders around, Mu Wansu could finally ask the question that had been plaguing her heart, "First Young Master, why did you do that earlier?"

"I knew you would not be able to resist."

Shi Xuan stood with his hands behind his back, his mighty figure akin to an unmovable mountain. "Would you believe me if I said it was merely on impulse?"

Mu Wansu was taken aback. She soon shook her head.

"But I do believe in fate."

Shi Xuan nonchalantly said, "The boy should be of similar age to my third brother. It's rare to find someone without any trace of the pride that should accompany a person of his age. That's not all; his boldness, intelligence, and adaptability are very remarkable. A person like him will never be content to stay in a tiny place like Feiyun Village."

Mu Wansu sneered, "To me, he looks like a shameless and crafty little thief. He's nowhere near as outstanding as you make him out to be."

Shi Xuan chuckled as he calmly gazed at the distant mountains and rivers. "You don't understand. There's a type of person in this world who will shine gloriously the moment he's given a chance. Although it's still too early to say anything about the boy, we'll know whether he's a dragon or a snake in the future."

Mu Wansu never imagined that the first young master would view a country bumpkin so highly. The revelation made her expression subconsciously turn serious.

When she thought about it more closely, the mannerisms and speech Lin Xun had displayed since their sudden entry were indeed not something a youngster from a backwater village should possess.

However, the crafty appearance Lin Xun had shown right before she left made it very difficult for her to view him as an outstanding individual with amazing potential.

Mu Wansu sighed, “I’m only worried that he does not understand your kind intentions. There are far too many ingrates in this world.”

A carefree smile rose from the corners of Shi Xuan’s mouth, “It’s just some wine and token which has little use. How much can they be worth? It doesn’t matter even if he forgets me in the future. Do you think that I would obsess over a youngster’s gratitude?”

Mu Wansu answered without hesitation, “Of course not!”

What a joke, who did they think Shi Xuan was?

He was the first-born of Stone Cauldron Alms’ boss, Fortune God Shi, and a top-tier shining star even among the Forbidden City’s younger generation!

Most importantly, Shi Xuan was a Spirit Sea expert who could go toe to toe with the Little Sword Lord Xie Yutang!

It might perhaps be as Shi Xuan had said. Everything he had done was merely akin to an inconsequential passing glance.

There were all kinds of strange and bizarre things in this world. Truth and lies, reality and illusion. Some truths were actually simple and not as complicated as one would imagine.

[Chapter 48: Rune Battle Realm](#)

Lin Xun held the token in front of his eyes as he carefully inspected it.

The token was made from some kind of special jade material and felt heavy in the hand. An intricate rune array had been carved onto its surface.

On the other side were three ancient gilded words—Stone Cauldron Alms.

If Lin Xun’s guess was correct, the rune array was a symbol unique to Stone Cauldron Alms.

“Several problems could be solved with this token...”

Lin Xun carefully kept the token in his storage ring as he began to ponder about his trip to the Qingyang Tribe and the bartering he would have to do.

A few days ago, Xia Zhi had killed the Wu Apothecary’s chief steward, Wu Henshui. According to Lin Xun’s understanding of the world, the other party would not take this lying down.

The Stone Cauldron Alms token he now had might hold a clue to resolving this problem.

“No matter what, I still have to make a trip to the Qingyang Tribe.”

Lin Xun’s eyes were deep in thought.

In the Three Thousand Great Mountains region, the Qingyang Tribe was the closest location to Donglin City. From what Village Chief Xiao Tianren had described, it was comparable to a bustling town.

It was a place Lin Xun needed to visit regardless of whether it was to solve the problem of the villagers’ livelihoods or for his future cultivation progress.

Before all that, however, Lin Xun had one more matter he needed to attend—the second trial of the Omega Secret-Realm!

.....

At night, Xia Zhi woke up and walked out of the room. She observed Lin Xun's busy figure in the kitchen in silence for a long time, before she said, "Lin Xun, I wish to become stronger."

Lin Xun was stunned. He swiftly brought out the cooked dishes one by one before earnestly looking at Xia Zhi, "Why do you wish so?"

Xia Zhi pursed her lips, "No reason."

The young girl's expression was as serene as usual. However, there was a never-before-seen determination in her pitch-black pupils.

Lin Xun was silent for a moment. As he recalled the events in the day, he seemed to understand something. "That man and woman aren't bad people."

Xia Zhi shook her head, "I don't know who is good or bad. I only know that if I don't become stronger, the initiative will never be mine when I encounter someone stronger than myself. I do not like that feeling."

Lin Xun nodded, "I understand."

He did understand. Xia Zhi's views might be simple, but she could naturally see things very clearly and knew what she needed.

Like how Xia Zhi had to abandon her most beloved food and hide in the room when the first young master Shi Xuan and Mu Wansu arrived.

At that moment, she had definitely sensed that she was not Shi Xuan's match and had no choice but to retreat for the time being.

Lin Xun filled Xia Zhi's bowl as he asked, "How do you plan on growing stronger?"

Xia Zhi picked up her chopsticks and thought for a long time. In the end, she answered, "Battle! As long as I fight strong people, I will be able to rapidly grow stronger."

Lin Xun's eyes narrowed, not expecting this answer. It made his heart ache because it felt like a last resort to grow stronger.

If only they had a teacher's or elder's guidance. If only they had some kind of great inheritance. If only they had an abundance of cultivation resources. Who would voluntarily choose battle in order to grow stronger?

Unfortunately, Lin Xun and Xia Zhi were all alone in this world, like a pair of orphans who could only rely on themselves.

Lin Xun ultimately made his decision, "We can discuss this matter at a later date. I will give you a proper answer after a few days."

Xia Zhi nodded.

She had never doubted or objected to Lin Xun's decisions because she had complete trust in him.

It was this very trust that made Lin Xun secretly resolve himself to leave Feiyun Village with Xia Zhi after finishing their affairs here. He intended to head to Donglin City and find her the best cultivation venue no matter the cost or method!

Lin Xun absolutely did not wish to see Xia Zhi fighting against powerful enemies. It was just far too dangerous.

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Three days passed in a flash.

At night, Xia Zhi was slumbering peacefully. Starlight sprinkled onto her fair and beautiful face from the window, bathing her in a pure and sacred glow.

Lin Xun was seated in a cross-legged posture with a calm and peaceful expression.

In his mind-sea, wisps of consciousness surged towards the silently floating mysterious blood-red door.

Omm~

A familiar feeling washed over his body as if he was strolling through time and space. Stars swirled around him and, when he returned to his senses, he found that he had already appeared in a mysterious domain.

The straight Great Azure Cloud Path stretched out into the distance, ending at the mysterious and majestic Omega Door.

Lin Xun stood on the path and took in everything, unable to stop himself from feeling overwhelmed. This was the Omega Secret-Realm. What kind of person could have created such an amazing thing?

A cryptic undulation stealthily approached and scanned Lin Xun in the blink of an eye. A split second later, a cold emotionless voice sounded.

"Dao Seeker, the Great Azure Cloud Path's second trial is called body tempering and you will be given a hundred and eight attempts. There will be three days of rest between each failure, and if you fail all hundred and eight times, this trial will be considered a failure and the Omega Secret-Realm will return to a sealed state."

"I understand. Let's begin." Lin Xun's expression was calm. His clear and deep eyes shone with determination.

"The trial shall begin." As the voice echoed, a light screen surged out from the Great Azure Cloud Path. Within it was a sea where endless waves raged violently, even reaching all the way to the sky.

Before Lin Xun could react, a giant vortex suddenly swept out from the screen and instantly swallowed his figure like a black hole.

Body tempering trial will start.

Venue: rune battle realm—Thousand Heavy Wave Sea!

Pass condition: break through the waves and ascend the peak.

.....

In the dark room, the sleeping Xia Zhi suddenly opened her eyes. When she saw Lin Xun's seated figure, she could not help but close her eyes again.

However, she opened them a split second later as frustration emerged within them. Within her senses, Lin Xun seemed to have completely vanished, not even leaving a sliver of his presence behind.

However, when she opened her eyes, she found that Lin Xun was still seated in front of her. This confused Xia Zhi. Her pitch-black eyes widened and concentrated on Lin Xun. After she was certain that he was real, she shut her eyes again to sleep.

However, she immediately lost Lin Xun's presence again. This made Xia Zhi feel an unexplainable frustration for the very first time.

It was a long time later before the little girl fell asleep again.

.....

Rumble~~

The thunderous sound of rapidly flowing water boomed in Lin Xun's ears, nearly bursting his eardrums.

When he opened his eyes again, he discovered that he had appeared in an endless sea. The sky-blue waters stretched out into the horizon, seemingly merging with the sky itself.

Less than ten thousand feet away stood a mountain that reached straight into the heavens. It was an extremely unique mountain; giant white-dragon-like waves poured down its peak and crashed into the sea below, lifting numerous waves.

From a distance, it looked like a water mountain made from hundreds and thousands of waves falling from the sky. It was magnificent.

At the same time, information about the trial appeared in Lin Xun's head, allowing him to instantly understand that he had to push through the falling waves and ascend the peak!

Lin Xun's expression turned exceedingly grave. He was currently at the True Martial fourth layer. Although it was not difficult to climb the mountain, the challenge lay in how he would overcome the torrential downpour!

It was unavoidable.

Lin Xun carefully observed the mountain. It was tall, likely reaching ten-thousand-feet in height. An endless waterfall poured down from its peak, roaring like water dragons. There was essentially no way to avoid the powerful force of the falling water to ascend the mountain.

Although a hundred and eight attempts seemed a lot, Lin Xun understood that this only proved the insane difficulty of the trial.

He decided that he would not waste a single attempt.

“The key likely lies in how to face the battering force of the waves because stability is required to climb. Being washed away will probably result in failing the attempt. Since the trial is called body tempering, it likely means that I’ll have to challenge it using only my physical power. As for aeth power...it’ll likely be of no use here.”

Lin Xun began walking and discovered that although he was unable to fly, he could walk on the surface of the sea as if it were land. There was no sign of him sinking into the water.

This was probably some special rule of the rune battle realm and Lin Xun did not dwell on it. He did not immediately rush to climb the mountain either and instead spent two hours circling the mountain as he closely inspected each inch of it.

There was no shortcut!

After ascertaining this, Lin Xun extinguished all thoughts of trying some kind of bypass and cautiously advanced towards the foot of the mountain.

The surging waterfall roared like an angry dragon, crashing down with a terrifying force that raised thousands of waves on the sea.

Although he was only at the mountain’s foot, Lin Xun could already feel a suffocating pressure. He tried to circulate the aeth power in his body and, sure enough, he found that his aeth power seemed to be restricted, making it impossible to use.

This further proved that the trial was a test of his physical power!

With a deep breath, Lin Xun raised his head to gaze upon the magnificent scene before him and could not help but feel confidence rising within him. How exhilarating would it be to conquer such a mountain?

There was no more hesitation. Lin Xun’s muscles tightened like a bowstring, swelling as he concentrated his physical power to the max. He pushed a foot back as his other foot stepped onto a protruding rock.

Rumble!

The wave of water mercilessly slammed into Lin Xun’s body, causing him to stagger as he was nearly sent flying.

It was more powerful than the full-power blow of a True Martial third layer cultivator!

Though alarmed, Lin Xun executed the thousand catty drop[1] technique with his toes, firmly gripping the rock as if he had metal claws to stabilize his body.

However, he still had to endure the constant battering of the falling water. It felt as if someone was ruthlessly smashing a giant hammer into his body again and again, inflicting unbearable pain.

Lin Xun knew that he could not stop here. If this continued, it would be over sooner or later.

He gritted his teeth, stretched his arms in front of him, and pushed against the falling water. His fingers dug into the stone wall, his body hugging the rocks as close as possible as he began to climb.

Thud! Thud!

Moments later, however, two consecutive waves slammed into his body, sending him flying before he could respond.

“F*ck! Isn’t this way too difficult?!” Lin Xun could not help but curse in the air. A split second later, he returned to the Omega Secret-Domain’s Great Azure Cloud Path.

At the same time, the robotic ice-cold voice rang out, “Dao Seeker's first attempt: fail.”

[Chapter 49: Golden Beast Claw](#)

Lin Xun panted heavily in the dark room, feeling as if needles were stabbing every inch of his skin. His clothes were already drenched in sweat.

“The second trial was much crazier than expected...” mumbled Lin Xun. However, he was not discouraged. He had already predicted that he would not have a high chance of passing the trial on the first try.

The only surprise was that he would fail so quickly. He was honestly still a little unable to come to terms with it.

He glanced at the soundly sleeping Xia Zhi. Since he was not feeling the least bit sleepy, Lin Xun walked out of the room to take a cold shower.

As he left, Lin Xun was completely oblivious to the faint smile that rose from the corners of Xia Zhi’s lips.

She had sensed Lin Xun’s presence while asleep. Although she did not understand what had happened, feeling his presence gave her an unprecedented peace of mind.

.....

It was late at night. Stars flickered in the dome of the sky, sprinkling their faint light onto the land.

In the yard, Lin Xun was soaking in the wooden tub. The ice-cold sensation of the water over his skin soothed the piercing pain, making it slowly recede.

“The second attempt will begin in three days, but I’m afraid that I’m certain to fail at my current level of physical power.”

Lin Xun leaned against the side of the tub as he blankly stared at the night sky.

The water mountain was ten-thousand-feet tall, and the water flow was rapid and powerful; the battering force had wildly surpassed his imagination. It was basically impossible to ascend the peak against such a torrential flow.

Lin Xun suspected that even if his physique reached the True Martial ninth layer, he would still have little hope of passing the trial.

“What a headache.” Lin Xun was unable to find a solution no matter how hard he racked his brains. In the end, he let out a deep sigh.

Eh?

Lin Xun suddenly discovered that his energy was recovering at an unimaginable speed. Every inch of his skin, muscles, blood, and flesh were giving off a slightly numb sensation as if they were growing.

Lin Xun's attention was immediately drawn and he took a closer look. Sure enough, he discovered wisps of peculiar power continuously fusing with his body.

Not only was his energy rapidly recovering, but his body was also growing stronger!

This unexpected change made him feel a surge of excitement, causing him to suddenly recall what happened several months ago when he first left the Omega Secret-Realm.

Back then, he had originally assumed his only prize for passing the Great Azure Cloud Path's first trial was the Little Divine Meditation Art. Who could have imagined that the injuries at his four heart acupuncture points would also disappear and even allow him to create four aeth power vortexes!

Furthermore, his originally weak physique had been improved tremendously!

"Could entering the Omega Secret-Realm have some kind of secret beneficial effect on my physique? Or perhaps the changes have something to do with the body tempering trial?"

Various possibilities began to swirl in Lin Xun's head. The Great Azure Cloud Path's second trial had sent me into a rune battle realm called the Thousand Heavy Wave Sea.

Could what have initially seemed to be punishing pain left by the torrential downpour of water actually be a kind of training?

It was possible!

The name of the trial was body tempering. Aeth power was forbidden and I can only use physical power.

The more he thought about it, the more he was certain that the wisps of peculiar power in his body originated from the Thousand Heavy Wave Sea!

This discovery immediately excited him and swept away all his earlier disappointment. He hurriedly wiped his body dry, changed into a set of clean clothes, and began to practice the Marching Army Fist in the yard.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Fist winds rippled through the air. As he closely examined his physical power, Lin Xun discovered that it had grown substantially!

Previously, only a full-power punch could shake the surrounding air and make it howl. Now, even an ordinary strike could achieve the same impact.

"Hmm, it seems that I can't give up on any trial attempts even if I have no chance of passing. If each trial improves my physique, I will grow stronger with each attempt. Correspondingly, the trial will gradually become easier than before."

The more he thought about it the clearer it became. "So that's how it is! The second trial's true goal is to train my physique. There will be hope even if I fail repeatedly!

“Like how the first trial might have appeared to test the examinee’s ability to understand the secrets of the flowing light rune, but the true secret of the flowing light rune was actually the Little Divine Meditation Art?”

“It seems that I’ve underestimated the Great Azure Cloud Path’s trials design. Who could have imagined that there would be an unimaginable secret behind each trial?”

Lin Xun felt as if the clouds had cleared and he could see the sun. Everything had suddenly become so clear. His eyes shone like stars as he stood amidst the darkness of the night.

.....

Three days passed.

At night, Lin Xun entered the Omega Secret-Realm and attempted the Thousand Heavy Heavy Wave Sea trial again.

Due to his strengthened physique, Lin Xun managed to climb twenty feet higher this time before he was ultimately flung away by three torrential waves.

Rather than focus on his failure, Lin Xun was more concerned about the changes in his physique this time. Sure enough, after some careful inspection, he discovered that his hypothesis was correct. After the attempt, his physical power had grown again!

Lin Xun did some calculations: if the trial could be attempted once every three days, 108 trials would take 324 days. This was nearly a year!

If he could raise his physical power each time, the benefits were practically immeasurable.

This was not all. While the trial was awesome, his daily training was also an alternate method that trained his body. With these two superimposed together, it was exciting to imagine how strong his body would become.

All of this reignited Lin Xun’s fighting spirit, making him more determined than ever to conquer the Great Azure Cloud Path’s second trial.

“What a pity. If only I didn’t accumulate so many resources and be forced to make a trip to the Qingyang Tribe. I rather spend all of my time on training.” Lin Xun sighed. He had already promised Village Chief Xiao Tianren he would head out tomorrow and begin his long trip to the Qingyang Tribe.

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The next morning.

At the village entrance, Lin Xun waved goodbye to the villagers from atop a majestic scaled horse.

“I’ll be waiting for your return.” Besides the scaled horse, Xia Zhi raised her face, revealing a serious expression, “If you don’t return, I’ll go find you.”

“Good.” Lin Xun grinned. His smile seemed more dazzling than usual under the morning sun.

Neigh!

The scaled horse neighed as it kicked out a cloud of dust and galloped away with Lin Xun.

Xia Zhi watched until Lin Xun's figure completely disappeared from sight. Only then did she withdraw her gaze and silently return home, her tiny figure appearing exceptionally lonely.

Some of the villagers wanted to invite Xia Zhi to stay with them. After all, with Lin Xun gone, there would be no one to prepare her meals. It was far too heart-wrenching for a little girl to live all alone.

However, they were stopped by Xiao Tianren. He shook his head and said, "There's no need to do so. Xia Zhi is different from others. We only need to keep watch from afar."

The villagers understood after some thinking. Xia Zhi was very unique and completely different from the other children; even Lin Xun was not her match. Moreover, she gave off a very distant and indifferent aura that made the villagers afraid of approaching her rashly.

"We can only hope that little brother Lin Xun will return as soon as possible." Xiao Tianren sighed deeply.

.....

Boundless mountains rose and fell like the earth's spine with rivers and creeks flowing among them. At a glance, all a person could see was the endless wilderness.

This was the Three Thousand Great Mountains, located at the Ziyao Empire's southwest border and was also known as heaven's border since ancient times.

The Three Thousand Great Mountains was home to numerous sinister and terrifying savage beasts and was filled with countless danger zones. Any ordinary person who stepped into this place would be faced with almost certain death.

Rumble~~~

The scaled horse galloped across the land, raising clouds of dust from its four hooves. A leather bag that was more than ten-feet-tall sat on the scaled horse's back, weighing at least several hundred pounds.

Inside it was many savage beast skins, fur, bones, claws, and other ingredients. The bag also contained aeth herbs and plants which grew deep in the mountains.

Of course, the valuable goods were stored in Lin Xun's storage ring—three hundred pounds of Feiyun Fire Copper!

These were not ores but pure processed Feiyun Fire Copper that would fetch a shocking price.

Lin Xun chose not to rush at full speed. The Three Thousand Great Mountains was far too dangerous, and any negligence might lead to disaster.

In addition, it was the first time Lin Xun was journeying to the Qingyang Tribe and he only roughly knew that he should reach his destination in three days if he headed north. The detailed path, however, was a mystery to him.

Under such circumstances, Lin Xun naturally intended to practice a little more caution.

Fortunately, besides meeting a few ferocious beasts, he did not encounter any danger all the way till noon.

The hot sun burned the land, the scaled horse panting heavily under its merciless rays. Lin Xun decided that it was not wise to continue and nudged the horse to slow down. He soon found a lush mountain forest where he dismounted to take a break.

He retrieved some jerky to replenish his energy as he made plans for his eventual arrival at the Qingyang Tribe.

An incense stick of time later.

Lin Xun saw that the scaled horse was rested and ready. He quickly flipped himself back onto the horse to continue their journey.

Rumble!

The ground violently shook as if there was an earthquake while giant boulders tumbled down a mountain in the distance.

Animal cries sounded from the forest, filled with panic and terror.

Even the scaled horse below him grew agitated.

Lin Xun's heart shivered as he felt intense danger. He rapidly scanned the surroundings but he failed to discover anything.

What was going on?

A beam of dazzling golden light suddenly erupted from an extremely faraway mountain. Amidst the glaring light, Lin Xun could just barely make out what seemed to be a giant golden claw!

[Chapter 50: Magpie Occupies another Bird's Nest](#)

The giant claw looked as if it had been cast from gold, blotting out the entire sky as it rose into the air!

Lin Xun's entire body went cold. What the hell was that?

However, the giant golden claw disappeared a moment later. The golden light vanished, the sky returned to its original blue and the ground stopped shaking.

It had been far too sudden. Lin Xun could not fathom why such an astonishing scene had suddenly occurred.

Only after regaining his composure did Lin Xun steer the scaled horse forward. However, he was now even more cautious than before.

The Three Thousand Great Mountains was full of immeasurable dangers as expected. He had already encountered such a frightening scene less than a thousand miles from Feiyun Village. Lin Xun guessed that it was likely some kind of unimaginable savage beast.

After a dozen miles, he found the mountain's remains. Numerous rocks were scattered about, and they ranged from ten thousand pounds to several tens of thousands of pounds.

The surrounding area was horrifying. The ground had been scorched black and not even a single blade of grass remained. It was a huge contrast to the lush mountain forest some distance away.

One side was abundant with life and flourishing flora, while the other contained only the aura of death and destruction. There was basically nothing here, making the place appear eerie and desolate.

Lin Xun recalled that the giant golden claw had risen from somewhere around here. However, he could not ascertain exactly where it had come from.

After reaching this location, the scaled horse began to grow restless again. Its legs nervously trembled as if it was about to crumple to the ground.

Lin Xun's heart also began to beat faster as the hairs on his body stood on end. He did not dare to stay a moment longer and immediately began to return from the path he had come from, before carefully making a detour around the area.

After creating a distance of more than ten miles, Lin Xun's throbbing heart finally calmed down. The scaled horse also returned to its docile and composed self.

"How bizarre." Lin Xun could not come up with an explanation despite mulling over it for a long time. In the end, he shook his head and continued on his journey.

Night began to approach as a river appeared within his sights. Water raged ferociously in the vast river as it rushed through the mountains.

The setting sun dyed its waters orange like burning blood, creating a spectacular sight.

Lin Xun dismounted and walked to the river bank where he found a safe spot near some rocks. He planned to rest for the night and set off again the next morning.

He caught two fish from the river, started a bonfire, and began to prepare dinner for himself. The scaled horse was already lazily lying beside the bonfire, snoring in its sleep.

The atmosphere was exceptionally silent.

Meanwhile, a dozen miles from Lin Xun's location, a group was rushing through the area. They were led by a young man in embroidered clothes, who had narrow eyes, an aquiline nose, and a sinister aura.

There were roughly ten experts following him, each one an extraordinary individual. The most prominent among them was an elder in gray clothes. Although he looked shriveled and thin, purple lightning flowed in his eyes and his aura felt oppressive to the extreme like an abyss or a prison.

However, the elder's face was somewhat pale, and there was a glaring, horrifying wound on his shoulder. His flesh was mangled, revealing the white bone within.

Although the wound was not bleeding, wisps of golden light burned within it, making recovery impossible.

"Haha, it's mostly thanks to Elder Xing Teng that we managed to steal the supreme treasure from that animal. When we return, I will definitely tell father to reward you properly!"

The young master suddenly laughed gleefully, sounding very pleased and excited.

“Young master praises me too highly, this old man does not dare to accept.”

The elder in gray forced a smile. From his waxy pale face, the golden flames burning the wound on his shoulder, and his tightly knit brows, anyone could see that he was clearly suppressing the pain.

The young man asked in concern, “Elder Xing Teng, is your injury really okay?”

“Although the mythic freckle’s true flame is incomparably vicious, I am confident of erasing its power given some time. However, it also causes me to be incapable of flight for the time being and I am ashamed to have delayed my young master’s journey as a result.”

The elder in gray, Xing Teng, was extremely respectful and deferential towards the young man.

“Some delay is no matter. What’s more, we’ll likely be found by that animal if we fly. If it pursues us, there will only be endless trouble.”

The young man suddenly recalled something and smiled in a pleased manner again, “Elder Xing Teng, do you think this supreme treasure is the treasure mentioned by the stargazing platform’s master?”

Xing Teng thought for a moment and replied, “Young master, the supreme treasure’s origins are fishy and it likely did not belong to that animal. From what I can deduce, you might be correct.”

The young man laughed, “Regardless, this treasure affair has drawn numerous powerful individuals from the Forbidden City, and it could even be called a gathering storm that has drawn the world’s attention. But since we’re the ones who succeeded in obtaining the treasure, all of them are fated to have wasted their time and effort!”

Xing Teng frowned and reminded, “Young master please watch your words. No one else can ever know of this or others might begin to have certain unsavory thoughts.”

The young man nodded repeatedly, “Right, right. Elder Xing Teng is extremely correct.”

Iceiness suddenly flashed in his eyes as he looked over at his other followers, “Have all of you heard what Elder Xing Teng said? No one shall speak of this matter. If I find that it has been leaked, don’t blame me for being merciless!”

The followers hurriedly acknowledged.

A vast river soon appeared in their sights.

Xing Teng suddenly suggested, “Young master, it’s getting late. Shall we rest here and set off again tomorrow?”

“Sounds good.” The young man agreed after some thought. Xing Teng’s cultivation was the highest in their group and he possessed Spirit Sea level fighting power. However, he had received substantial injuries today and since he suggested resting, there was naturally no way the young master could object.

“Young master, there seems to be someone else here!” One of the followers pointed towards the opposite bank of the river, where they could see a bonfire far away.

A tense atmosphere immediately enveloped the group. Those who dared to travel in the Three Thousand Great Mountains were definitely no ordinary people.

Moreover, there were currently many powerful individuals in the Great Three Thousand Mountains. The situation did not bode well in the off chance they encountered any of these individuals.

Xing Teng's eyes scanned the opposite bank, instantly finding several hints that led him to nonchalantly declare, "Don't panic everyone, it's only a True Martial fourth layer youngster."

"Oh, then let's go over and take a look." The young man immediately relaxed and led the group across the river using qigong.

Sure enough, it was exactly as Xing Teng had said. They found a thirteen-year-old youngster dressed in a worn hemp garment. Although he looked clean and tidy, he appeared beggarly in the group's eyes.

The youngster was naturally Lin Xun, who had also just sensed the other party. When he saw them approach, he could not help but feel shocked and alarmed.

If he was not wrong, nearly everyone in the entire party had Spirit Dipper stage cultivation. Wisps of spirit dipper qi diffused from their bodies, showing that they were genuine Spirit Dipper experts.

Moreover, there was an old man in gray who gave off an even more terrifying aura!

Such a group appearing in the desolate mountains immediately put Lin Xun on full alert.

"Heh, it's a little native of the Great Thousand Great Mountains." The young man chuckled in amusement after doing a quick scan of Lin Xun. Disdain appeared on the young man's face as he waved his hand, "Little fellow, we're going to rest here for a while. If you have nothing to say then get lost at once. This young master is feeling good today so I shall not make your life difficult."

The young man's followers laughed.

The elder frowned but ultimately said nothing. There was no need to be overly concerned over a mere kid.

"Tha...thank you everyone," stammered Lin Xun with a terrified appearance. He quickly pulled the scaled horse with him and fled.

His fearful appearance made the young man and his group roar with laughter again.

"He truly is a country bumpkin that has never seen much of the world. A single sentence from the young master has made him flee in fear. Hahaha." One of the followers immediately took the chance to flatter the young man, causing him to laugh as well. "At least he was smart and knew he would suffer if he didn't leave. Although...he really is too cowardly."

"No matter how courageous he is, he can only wag his tail and hide when he sees our young master." The flattery made the young man chuckle gleefully.

Only Xing Teng continued to frown, although there was nothing he could do about this. Their young master was the pampered eldest son of the southwest district city governor, Liu Wudiao. However, the young master was extremely domineering and even Xing Teng did not dare to say too much.

No one noticed that the anxiously fleeing Lin Xun suddenly stopped a dozen miles away and climbed onto a big tree. His eyes glimmered like cold stars as they were cast towards the riverbank.

There was no longer any fear on Lin Xun's now cold and calculating face as his fingers grasped a giant bone-white bow. *NovelNext.com*

Lin Xun might have seemed to have fled in terror after being humiliated and chased away, but he was actually furious inside.

However, he had no choice. Compared to the group, his current cultivation was really nothing to look at. If he chose to go against them, it would only be akin to smashing an egg into a rock and he would likely lose his life for nothing.

"How unfair..." mumbled Lin Xun. He understood that there was most likely no chance to teach those people a lesson even if he camped here. However, he could not bring himself to just swallow this humiliation and leave.

The land and sky in the distance suddenly shook as a dazzling flash of gold soared into the sky, arcing through the darkness.

It was the sky-covering claw he had seen previously!

Lin Xun's eyes immediately shone as a strange smile rose from the corners of his lips. The claw seemed to have appeared at the riverbank!

Misfortune was going to befall those fellows!

Lin Xun nearly laughed out loud. The heavens were watching after all.

He swiftly jumped off the tree and approached the riverbank like a gust of wind.

Lin Xun wanted to see what was going to happen to those guys. At the same time, he was also curious to find out what kind of terrifying creature the giant claw belonged to.

He soon came to a stop once again as shock flooded his face.

Lin Xun finally saw an incomparably enormous golden beast swooping down from the darkness like a mountain. Golden light flared around it, illuminating the entire area!