

Prodigies 51

[Chapter 51: A Storm Arises](#)

Golden light illuminated the land like fire.

The giant mountain-like creature was enormous beyond imagination. It seemed to gallop through the air like a mythic beast from ancient times, an existence that could cover the moon and sun and part the mountains and rivers with a roar!

Even from a far distance, Lin Xun could feel a stabbing pain in his eyes. Every fiber of his being trembled uncontrollably as an oppressive pressure suffocated his soul.

The creature resembled a deer but was not a deer, like a horse yet not a horse. It had the head of a dragon, a tail like a flowing rainbow, and was covered in golden fur while intense light seemed to burn from its four hooves.

It galloped through the sky, leaving a trail of flowing golden light. Divine flames rolled through the air, sweeping towards the land like a tsunami. Mountains burned and forests were turned to ash, creating a fear-inducing scene of destruction.

Its opponent wielded a spear that danced in the sky and shot out frightening spear shadow after shadow. However, he was clearly outmatched and was repeatedly forced to dodge during each exchange.

Lin Xun instantly identified the giant creature's opponent. It was the old man in gray from the group he had met earlier.

So it is them!

A strange smile hung from the corners of Lin Xun's lips. It would be a lie if he said he wasn't gloating.

Despite this, the elder's aerial battle power still astonished Lin Xun. The old man was clearly another Spirit Sea expert.

Together with Xie Yutang, the brute warrior, and the Stone Cauldron Alm's first young master, Shi Xuan, this was the fourth Spirit Sea expert Lin Xun had seen.

From this, it was obvious that many powerful experts had been drawn to the Three Thousand Great Mountains for the so-called 'great treasure'.

However, none of this mattered to Lin Xun at the moment. His cultivation was still insignificant to Spirit Sea existences and it was impossible for him to be part of the brewing storm.

Lin Xun's attention was soon drawn by the giant golden creature again. Was the old man and his group the ones who elicited the golden claw in the afternoon?

But what did they do to make the giant creature so angry?

Rumble!

The land shook as light rained from the sky like a meteor shower and smashed into the ground. Forests burned, mountains were pushed over, and the ground was turned to scorched earth inch by inch.

It was a horrifying sight. Only death awaited anyone who was caught up in it.

Lin Xun did not dare to stay a moment longer and immediately turned around to leave.

His anger had already been dispelled after ascertaining that disaster had befallen the elder and his group. If he didn't leave now, he would be gambling with his life.

Thud!

Before Lin Xun had made a mile, he heard the rustle of rushing wind. Soon after, the sound of something heavy hitting the ground was heard from the forest nearby. A groan soon followed.

Lin Xun was taken aback. What a familiar voice.

He cautiously approached and discovered a bloody figure miserably lying on the ground.

Despite this, Lin Xun immediately recognized the figure from his clothes. It was the young master from the earlier group!

Lin Xun was overjoyed. It seemed that the heavens were heavily favoring him today. Not only had a giant creature been dispatched to trample over the group to avenge him, but even the main offender had been sent straight to him!

Of course, Lin Xun understood that this was merely delusional thinking from him. He turned his head to check that the battle was still ongoing.

If Lin Xun was not wrong, the young master had been thrown out of the battlefield by the elder in gray to prevent such an important person from being caught up in the battle and dying.

However, the unlucky fellow just had to land right in front of him.

"Young master, we meet once again."

Smiling, Lin Xun walked forward. The other party was heavily injured and was no different from a cripple in spite of his Spirit Dipper stage cultivation.

"You..." The young man struggled to open his eyes. When he finally saw Lin Xun, he yelled, "Peasant! Quickly take me away from here. When I'm safe, I will guarantee you a life of endless riches and glory!"

His hoarse voice was filled with urgency. Towards the end, he even coughed out a few mouthfuls of blood.

"Young master, I don't want glory or riches." Lin Xun shook his head, still smiling as he said, "Seeing you like this has already satisfied me. Goodbye."

After speaking, he turned around to leave.

"Please wait!" The young master called out, "Little brother, what can I do to make you promise to help me this one time? Say your conditions. I, Liu Yukun, will agree to all of them!"

Lin Xun turned around. He looked into the young master's desperate eyes and sighed, "Young Master Liu, you chased me away earlier like a magpie occupying another bird's nest. It's already generous of me to have not killed you. Are you really going to push your luck?"

Liu Yukun cried out, "Little brother, I was at fault earlier and apologize to seek your forgiveness. Please be magnanimous and save me this once."

He was already begging at this point.

Towards the end, he coughed violently and his entire body trembled before going limp on the ground. Even his presence was growing increasingly weak.

Lin Xun was silent for a while before he walked forward and said, "Fine, there was no major grudge between us anyways. I shall save you this once."

He bent down and reached out toward Liu Yukun.

Swoosh!

A cold and ruthless glint suddenly flashed in Liu Yukun's eyes as his originally limp body suddenly sprung up. His arm thrust forward, trapping Lin Xun's neck. A short sword appeared in Liu Yukun's hand and was placed at Lin Xun's throat.

Liu Yukun smiled sinisterly, "Little mongrel! You'd better obediently listen or this sword will take your life!"

Lin Xun remained still, but there was no trace of panic in his expression. Instead, he smiled and said, "As I expected. I knew that someone like you would be up to no good even while seeking help."

Liu Yukun coldly said, "What are you trying to say?"

Thud!

Lin Xun's shoulder muscles suddenly expanded, releasing a huge ripple force that instantly blew away the arm Liu Yukun had placed on Lin Xun's neck.

At the same time, he pulled his head back as his wrist flipped in a strange manner to firmly trap Liu Yukun's arm, before giving it a forceful twist.

With a crack, Liu Yukun's arm was dislocated, causing him to lose his grip on the short sword and it fell to the ground.

Piak!

Lin Xun slapped the other party's face, causing him to cry out in pain. Several teeth had been dislodged and fell from his mouth.

"How is this possible, you..."

Liu Yukun was alarmed and frightened. How was it possible for the person he had already subdued to turn the tables on him in an instant?

All of this was thanks to the Joint Disruption Art Lin Xun had learned from the battles with Xia Zhi. In close combat situations, this technique was definitely far too enigmatic and near impossible to guard against.

Unfortunately for Liu Yukun, he had assumed that Lin Xun was only an ordinary True Martial fourth layer practitioner. As a result, Liu Yukun had only been on guard against Lin Xun's aeth power, completely ignoring the terror of his physical prowess.

"Young Master Liu, I was kind enough to try and save you and this is how you repay me?"

Lin Xun sighed and picked up the short sword. He pierced Liu Yukun's throat without hesitation, causing blood to spurt out.

Lin Xun observed the shock and resentment in the other's eyes and smiled, "Young Master Liu, although I'm just an unremarkable little peasant, I know how to distinguish between love and hate. Once given the chance, I can also kill scum like you without any hesitation. If you want to blame someone, you can only blame yourself. Isn't that right?"

All Liu Yukun could do was make gurgling noises as he slowly choked on his blood. In the end, he unwillingly collapsed to the ground and died.

Lin Xun withdrew his smile and turned his head again to check on the battle. His heart immediately shivered when he realized the battle had already ended at some unknown time.

His hands swiftly scoured Liu Yukun's corpse, but only managed to find a purple jade belt.

It was likely some kind of storage artifact. Lin Xun did not look at it and hurriedly turned to flee.

The scaled horse soon began to gallop away, carrying Lin Xun as they swiftly disappeared into the night.

He needed to leave as soon as possible!

Lin Xun clearly understood that Liu Yukun, who had a Spirit Sea expert bodyguard, absolutely did not have an ordinary identity. As such, his death would most certainly result in a lot of trouble.

Roar~~

An earth-shaking roar suddenly thundered from far away, alarming and agitating the scaled horse as it neighed in fear.

Lin Xun twisted his neck and saw an enormous golden creature roaring in the sky. Its roar was filled with rage.

Endless flames poured down in streams, turning the land into a burning hellscape.

Too terrifying!

Lin Xun secretly rejoiced. If he had left just a little later, he would have been caught up in the destruction and met his end.
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However, Lin Xun could not ascertain whether the elder and the rest of the group had died in battle.

"No matter what, I need to leave this place as fast as possible."

Lin Xun took a deep breath and urged on the agitated and uneasy scaled horse.

“Golden flame beast!”

“To think that it’s that creature, could it be that...”

“How many years has it been? Who could have expected that a golden flame beast has been hiding in the Three Thousand Great Mountains? It’s a variant that has a sliver of the ancient divine beast, fire qilin, bloodline!”

“This place is not simple at all. It seems that we’ve underestimated the Three Thousand Great Mountains. This is the first time such a creature has been discovered in nearly a thousand years.”

“Quickly go over and take a look. The creature’s appearance might be related to the prophesized treasure.”

Meanwhile, at various areas in the Three Thousand Great Mountains, the golden flame beast’s earth-shaking howl drew the attention of the many peak experts that had come searching for the prophesized treasure.

The Xie Clan’s ninth young master, Little Sword Lord Xie Yutang, the Stone Cauldron Alms’ first young master Shi Xuan...

It was certainly not going to be a peaceful night for Lin Xun and the many cultivators that had gathered in the Three Thousand Great Mountains.

However, Lin Xun would remain unaware that Liu Yukun’s burnt corpse would soon be discovered and cause a giant ripple.

That was the southwest city governor, Liu Wudiao’s, eldest son!

Liu Wudiao was a Heaven Ascension stage expert and was well-known in the empire’s cultivation world.

He was a cold-blooded and heroic military man, who had been stationed at the empire’s southwest province for nearly fifty years. He was a famous cultivator with great influence.

With Liu Yukun dying in the Three Thousand Great Mountains, how could his father, Liu Wudiao, ever leave this matter alone?

[Chapter 52: Bronze Treasure Chest](#)

When daybreak was nearly about to arrive, the scale horse finally reached its limit after an entire night of running. All four hooves staggered and it crumpled onto the ground, panting heavily.

Lin Xun flipped off the horse and stably landed on the ground. He could not help but feel a wave of shame wash over him when he gazed at the profusely sweating scale horse. His single-minded focus on escaping had left the scale horse exhausted, making him feel somewhat indebted to it.

“Sorry, brother horse.” Lin Xun retrieved some aeth resources and shoved them towards the scale horse, finally smiling a little as he watched it happily chomp down.

The scale horse was a ferocious beast, but it became extremely docile after being tamed. It was also absolutely necessary for any future trips between the Qingyang Tribe and Feiyun Village.

Lin Xun also found a spot to rest, took out a bottle of aeth-infused water, and gulped a big mouthful. Only then did he retrieve the purple jade sash he had taken from Liu Yukun's corpse.

It was a valuable storage artifact. Not only were there numerous elegant runes carved onto its surface, but it also had pearl and jewel fragments embedded all over it. It was definitely more luxurious than the usual high-end product.

However, in Lin Xun's opinion, such decorations felt very hollow. If it was him, he would never make his storage artifact so eye-catching because it would only end up drawing the wrong attention.

He opened the purple sash, revealing the storage space inside. Lin Xun was surprised to find only a single foot by foot square copper chest in the large space. There was nothing else besides it.

Although slightly disappointed, his gaze could not help but be drawn to the copper chest.

The chest had an age-old luster and four runes had been inscribed onto its four corners: a cloud rune, a landscape rune, a mythic beast rune, and a sun moon rune. Mysterious rune arrays had also been drawn onto its four sides which gave off cryptic and heart-palpitations auras.

"It seems to be a rune array that specializes in sealing."

Surprise flew across Lin Xun's eyes. Although he could not fully decipher the runes at his current level, he could roughly tell from their auras that they possessed sealing power!

Only rune masters could carve rune arrays. Who would invest such a gargantuan effort to carve a specialized sealing rune array on a mere bronze chest?

The costs involved would be insane!

However, this also told Lin Xun that the bronze chest must have been constructed to seal an extremely valuable treasure.

At this thought, Lin Xun's heart stirred. Anyone could tell that Liu Yukun was no ordinary person at a glance, and his group had been frantically pursued by the giant golden beast last night. Could the bronze chest's contents have led to this chase?

What was hidden in the bronze chest?

Lin Xun continued to inspect the chest and gasped moments later. He had discovered an extremely frightening rune restriction around the chest's lid.

A rune restriction was an array used to forbid things, and was something only those called rune grandmasters could set up!

A rune grandmaster was a more respected and superior existence than a rune master.

Not only did the bronze chest have a specialized sealing array, but there was also a rune restriction around its lid. The value of this chest alone had reached an astronomical number!

What kind of treasure was sealed in this bronze chest?

Unfortunately, Lin Xun had no way to open it. Let alone him, even a rune grandmaster would be powerless without knowing the true essence of the rune restriction.

“Never mind, I can always wait for an opportunity to open it in the future.” After contemplating for a long time, Lin Xun ultimately gave up. He might currently be a little better than a regular rune apprentice, but he was still not a proper rune master. It was a tall order for him to open the box.

It was actually rather simple to be acknowledged as a rune master: single-handedly complete a rune array. However, a rune array was not easy to draw. It was very difficult without at least Spirit Dipper stage cultivation.

A True Martial stage cultivator just didn’t have sufficient aeth power and spirit sense to draw an entire rune array.

Of course, this only applied to ordinary cultivators. There were always special existences in this world that surpassed common sense.

For example, Lin Xun had once heard a drunk Mister Lu let slip that he was already able to proficiently draw a complete rune array at the True Martial eighth layer, allowing him to become one of the youngest rune masters back then.

Since Mister Lu could do it, Lin Xun believed that he could also achieve the same as long as he worked hard.

Lin Xun quickly put aside his thoughts and took the bronze chest out of the sash.

Thud!*novelnext.com*

He was immediately shocked by the chest’s insane weight, which was at least ten thousand pounds. The moment he tried to take it out, it heavily slammed into the ground, creating a slight depression.

This only made Lin Xun increasingly certain that some amazing treasure must be sealed in the chest.

He then shifted the chest into his storage ring without any hesitation and breathed a deep sigh of relief.

After resting for two hours, the scale horse recovered its strength. Lin Xun checked their bearings before beginning the journey again.

The pair did not encounter any dangers this time. When they passed by a volcano, Lin Xun made a special pitstop to throw the purple jade sash into the churning lava.

He would never keep the sash on him and did not touch a single jewel on it. He did this to prevent potential repercussions.

Although it was a valuable treasure, it was, after all, something that had belonged to Liu Yukun and might contain some lingering trace of him. If this was somehow discovered by the faction behind him, endless troubles would surely follow.

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Sunset Plain.

This was a plain in the Three Thousand Great Mountains, which was surrounded by mountains on three sides. If a person headed north from the plain, he or she would eventually reach Donglin City, which lay on the Ziyao Empire's southwest border.

A river flowed down from the mountain range, snaking through the plain like a jade sash as it irrigated numerous rich aeth fields.

The Qingyang Tribe was located on the Sunset Plain.

If someone researched the tribe's origins, they would discover that it was originally a tribe of mountain people. However, as the Ziyao Empire expanded its borders, the Qingyang Tribe was colonized and became part of the empire's territory. It was now rare to find any descendants of the original Qingyang Tribe mountain people.

Rather than a tribe, it was more apt to call the place a bustling town. It was also a foothold that connected the Ziyao Empire, Donglin City, and the Three Thousand Great Mountains.

Most of the beast skins, fur, bones, spirit medicine, aeth resources, and other produce of the Three Thousand Great Mountains would first gather in the Qingyang Tribe before flowing into Donglin City.

Due to its unique location, numerous merchant groups from various places in the empire and adventurers would select the Qingyang Tribe as their base of operations.

This was how the Qingyang Tribe had reached its current state.

In the evening, the setting sun bathed the land in a beautiful glow.

A travel-weary scale horse arrived in front of the Qingyang Tribe.

Tall and thick walls were built around the Qingyang Tribe to defend against savage beast attacks from the mountains. There were city gates on the north and south sides of the walls which allowed people to enter and exit.

As the scale horse approached, the guards stationed on the two sides of the gates were finally able to see the thirteen-year-old youth in gray clothes and the sack which was as tall as a person.

One of the guards walked forward and said, "It costs three copper coins to enter."

"Alright." Lin Xun dismounted. Smiling, he retrieved three copper coins and handed them over.

The guard nodded and waved his hand to permit Lin Xun entry.

The Qingyang Tribe was a messy mix of characters and there were no strict rules or laws. It was akin to a temporary accommodation where new and old faces would appear and disappear every day.

No one would be satisfied staying here their whole lives. After all, the Qingyang Tribe in the Three Thousand Great Mountains was a far cry from the flourishing Ziyao Empire. It was too backwater and dangerous; anyone who lived here always had to be on guard for savage beast attacks from the mountain.

Lin Xun led the scale horse through the city gates and disappeared into the busy streets.

The guard watched Lin Xun leave and suddenly waved his hand to call over a man dressed in black, who had a protruding mouth and cheeks. The guard instructed in a low voice, "Go inform the Wu Corporation manager that Feiyun Village's Lian Rufeng's steed has appeared. Tell him exactly what you saw just now."

"Sure." The man nodded and hurriedly left.

"Wu Corporation has waited so many days only for a single boy to show up. It seems that he will be the only way they can find out what happened to Wu Henshui." The guard contemplated for a while before shaking his head. These matters had nothing to do with him. He was only tasked to report some news.

Lin Xun was unaware that someone had already taken notice of his entry into the city. He walked along the street, advancing through the busy crowd.

There were many people and it was very lively.

Strong men dressed in leather were doing manual labor, transporting various goods. Several peddlers were lined up on both sides of the street, selling unique produce from the mountains such as plants, herbs, animal skins, ores, and other similar products.

Well-dressed merchants could also be seen from time to time, riding their carriages through the streets. There were also weapon-carrying cultivators hurriedly traveling through the crowds.

Row upon row of stone buildings lined both sides of the street: restaurants, medicine stores, weapon shops, inns, merchant associations, brothels...and all kinds of businesses.

As the saying went: though the sparrow was small, it still had all its vital organs. Although the Qingyang Tribe was not large by any standards, it definitely won in the busy aspect. Various people moved amongst the crowd, painting a picture of a bustling town.

This was the first time Lin Xun had entered such a populated place and a mixture of feelings involuntarily surged within him. There was curiosity, amazement, excitement, and many others.

Lin Xun had grown up in a prison mine, and the first place he entered in the Ziyao Empire was the poor and remote Feiyun Village. No matter how mature he was, Lin Xun was still a thirteen-year-old boy. As such, the vibrance and hecticness of the town overwhelmed him for a time.

If a mere Qingyang Tribe was already this lively, what kind of grand sight awaited him if he were to enter one of the Ziyao Empire's cities?

[Chapter 53: Old Crow Inn](#)

As Lin Xun strolled along the street, he found several gazes glancing at him; some of these looks contained a sliver of unconcealable greed.

Lin Xun understood that the giant leather sack on the scaled horse was a little too conspicuous. An experienced veteran would only need a single glance to identify what was hidden within it. A few sniffs would tell anyone the quality of the items and their value.

In addition, he appeared to be all alone, which naturally made him seem like an easy target.

A disturbance suddenly spread in the distance, drawing many people's attention. When Lin Xun arrived, he saw a man in leather clothes fail to avoid a fatal swing from a cultivator. The man's head was lopped off, causing blood to spurt out from his neck.

Instead of panicking, the watching crowd cheered as if wishing there was more action.

"How dare you steal from me. You're basically asking for death! Puih!" The cultivator kept his blade and viciously glared at the corpse before swaggering away.

This was murder on the street!

However, no one moved to stop it. Evidently, the people here were already accustomed to such things.

Two figures, who looked like guards, soon arrived and hurriedly cleaned up the mess. The street quickly returned to its usual busy atmosphere as if the earlier murder had never happened before.

Lin Xun could not help but narrow his eyes. He could already tell that there were no laws in the Qingyang Tribe. Strong martial force was definitely one of the necessary conditions to establish a foothold here.

It did not take long for him to come across another two people who seemed to be fighting over some goods. However, they were soon stopped by a cultivator. The cultivator's method was very simple and violent: kill the two individuals which instantly resolved the dispute while also working to intimidate the crowd.

There is always murky darkness hidden under the vibrance of a place.

Lin Xun suddenly recalled what a prisoner had said in the mine prison, which he had been too young to comprehend back then.

As he moved through the Qingyang Tribe and observed the many hidden greedy gazes amidst the bustling atmosphere, Lin Xun instantly understood the true meaning of the prisoner's words.

However, Lin Xun was not afraid. After observing the crowds so far, he was quite certain that there were far fewer cultivators than ordinary folk. In addition, most of them were at the True Martial stage, and he would rarely catch sight of Spirit Dipper stage cultivators.

If someone was ballsy enough to have designs on his merchandise, Lin Xun did not mind giving them a memorable lesson.*novelNext.com*

Regretfully, Lin Xun's luck seemed to be pretty good today. Although he felt several avaricious gazes, no one came forward to cause trouble.

The sky soon darkened as night descended.

Lin Xun found himself standing in front of a building called the Old Crow Inn. He tossed two copper coins to an attendant to let him take care of the scale horse before stepping into the inn. Lin Xun planned on heading to the Stone Cauldron Alms branch the next morning to exchange his wares.

There were numerous tables in the inn and it was exceptionally busy at this time. Many figures were reveling in their food and drink and conversing in loud voices, making the place extremely noisy.

The owner was a one-eyed giant of a man. He had a scary face and was currently lazily enjoying his alcohol.

Several pairs of eyes in the tavern brightened at Lin Xun's entry, their gazes darting towards the giant leather sack in his hands.

Greed began gleaming in their eyes when they did a double take on Lin Xun.

However, there was also a portion who tactfully withdrew their eyes. This was a thirteen-year-old boy who dared to appear alone with a hundred-pound sack despite how attention-drawing it would be. Any half-wit could guess that he was certainly no pushover.

The one-eyed man behind the counter nonchalantly asked, "Looking for lodging?"

"Yes." Lin Xun smiled and nodded.

"Twenty copper coins a night." The one-eyed man glanced at Lin Xun, his words immediately drawing unrestrained laughter from the room.

"One-eyed Dragon, have you started slaughtering guests again? Don't you remember how you lost your eye?"

The one-eyed man ignored the laughter. He only stared at Lin Xun without explaining anything.

"Alright." Lin Xun retrieved twenty copper coins and passed them over, "Where's the room?"

"That room is yours tonight." The one-eyed man pointed at the corner of the second floor before resuming his drinking.

Lin Xun smiled, "Thank you."

He turned around, picked up his sack, and walked up the stairs.

As Lin Xun headed towards the room, a half-drunk fatty suddenly walked to the counter, "What a rare little fat sheep. He has many nice things on him which are at least worth this much."

He extended four fingers and wiggled them in front of the one-eyed man.

The one-eyed man seemed unconcerned and continued to focus on his alcohol. After a long time, he finally glanced at the fatty and said, "Fatty Xiao, it's been roughly six years since you've come to the Qingyang Tribe, right? Do you plan on staying here your whole life?"

Fatty Xiao's expression abruptly changed, "What are you trying to say?"

The one-eyed man sighed, "Heed my advice and forget this matter. That young man is not someone you should mess with."

After some consideration, he added in another sentence, "No, he's definitely someone you should not mess with at all."

Fatty Xiao's expressions rapidly fluctuated. A long time later, he smiled bitterly and said, "I understand."

He then turned around and left.

The one-eyed man narrowed his eyes as he watched Fatty Xiao walk out of the inn. He had already said what he could, whether or not the fatty listened was not his business.

The old-eyed man picked up his cup. He stared at the rippling amber liquid and mumbled, "It hasn't been peaceful recently..."

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Meanwhile, at the Wu Corporation.

As one of the leading merchant groups in the Qingyang Tribe, the Wu Corporation was known to be a rich and overbearing faction with solid foundations. The boss of the corporation was said to be one of Donglin City's influential figures.

Amidst the darkness of the night, the Wu Corporation rear hall was brightly lit.

Wu Deyong silently sat in the head's chair with a stormy face.

He was the chief manager who had been dispatched to the Qingyang Tribe to oversee the Wu Corporation for the past four years and was currently in his prime. He hailed from the Dongling City Wu Clan, possessed True Martial seventh layer cultivation, and was well-known in the Qingyang Tribe.

The corporation managers sat below Wu Deyong. All of them were silent, not daring to make even the tiniest noise.

"Three days have passed since the deadline given by Chief Steward Wu Henshui, but not a single piece of news has been sent back. May I ask about everyone's thoughts on this matter?" Wu Deyong's deep voice broke the stifling atmosphere in the hall.

A person cautiously answered, "Feiyun Village is more than two thousand miles away. The chief steward might have met with some delays."

Wu Deyong icily said, "Humph! Even if he encountered some delays, someone as meticulous as the chief steward would have sent a subordinate back here to report. However, there has been zero news till now. Do you feel that this is normal?"

Another person could not help but ask, "Chief Manager, do you think that something has happened to the chief steward?"

Wu Deyong was silent, his expression dark and stormy. That was precisely what he was thinking.

At this moment, a servant rushed into the hall and reported, "Reporting to the managers, the city guard has informed us that they saw a youngster riding Lian Rufeng's scale horse in the evening, and he has already entered the Qingyang Tribe.

Wu Deyong's eyes immediately brightened at these words. He remembered Lian Rufeng; he was the Feiyun Village's guard leader.

Wu Deyong asked, "Where is that youngster now?"

The servant swiftly replied, "According to our informants, the youngster is lodging at the Old Crow Inn."

One of the men in the hall frowned and said, "Something is amiss. If the youngster was dispatched by the chief steward, he should have headed straight to the Wu Corporation. However, he instead went to the Old Crow Inn. There's clearly something fishy about this."

Wu Deyong's eyes flickered in thought. After some consideration, he waved his hand and commanded, "Send a few of our men to the Old Crow Inn and bring back the youngster at any cost!"

The servant immediately accepted the order and left to give instructions.

Wu Deyong pondered for a while before he changed the topic, addressing the managers present, "Everyone, the Three Thousand Great Mountains have not been peaceful recently, and numerous powerful figures from the empire have gathered here. Make sure to be extra careful over this period and don't cause any problems. Otherwise, even I won't be able to save you!"

The group solemnly nodded.

They naturally understood the importance of this matter. Many unfamiliar faces had arrived in the Qingyang Tribe recently, with several extremely powerful and noble figures among them. In such circumstances, local powerhouses like them had no choice but to keep their heads down for the time being.

Wu Deyong waved his hand, "Alright, dismissed. When the youngster is brought back, I will find out what happened and inform everyone."

Since they now had a lead, there was naturally no need for everyone to be gathered.

Most importantly, Wu Deyong was certain that dispatching a few men would easily deal with a mere youngster from Feiyun Village.

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The second-floor room of the Old Crow Inn.

Lin Xun immediately began inspecting the room after entering. After making sure that there was nothing suspicious, he threw the leather bag into his storage ring.

He had to show the bag outside as a cover for his storage artifact. Since there was now no one else present, it was no longer necessary.

He would take out the bag again when he left the inn.

Lin Xun crossed his legs on the bed and fell into thought.

I wonder if the Wu Corporation has noticed that I rode Lian Rufeng's scale horse into the Qingyang Tribe. No matter, this problem will have to be resolved sooner or later.

He knew that the Wu Corporation would not let him off due to Wu Henshui's death. Rather than give them the initiative and allow them to head to Feiyun Village, he would prefer to settle the issue here in the Qingyang Tribe.

This was why Lin Xun had so openly rode Lian Rufeng's steed into the Qingyang Tribe. I hoped to draw all of the Wu Corporation's attention.

Although it was a dangerous move, Lin Xun had his own plans and did not feel nervous.

While he was contemplating this matter, a few men in gray walked into the Old Crow Inn.

[Chapter 54: Mad Dog Wu Jie](#)

The one-eyed man behind the counter narrowed his eyes when the group of five entered the Old Crow Inn. A flash of nearly undetectable resentment flitted across his eyes as he looked towards a certain young man.

The young man looked slim and capable. He had a pair of long and narrow eyes, wore a leather robe, and gave off a prideful but sinister aura.

The one-eyed man said in a low voice, "Wu Jie, what do you want?"

The noisy atmosphere in the hall instantly fell silent; the guests fidgeted uncomfortably as if they were afraid of the young man called Wu Jie.

Mad Dog Wu Jie was a well-known individual in the Qingyang Tribe. He was a cruel, blood-thirsty, and crazy man who was backed by the Wu Corporation.

At least a hundred people had lost their lives to Wu Jie over the years, and he had offended far more. He could only live so freely because of his backer, the Wu Corporation.

For example, the Old Crow Inn's boss, One-eyed Giant, had his eye dug out by Wu Jie two years ago!

Wu Jie giggled and said, "Old One-eye, you'd better obediently sit there. I'm only here to take someone away."

He turned his head towards one of his companions and asked, "Which room is the kid in?"

"Second floor, southwest corner!"

"Go." Wu Jie placed his hands behind his back and leisurely walked toward the second floor.

The one-eyed man's expression fluctuated indeterminately as he watched the group swagger past him. In the end, he restrained himself and did not say anything.

The one-eyed man soon recalled something, causing him to suddenly jerk his head upwards as the image of a gentle-looking youngster appeared in his head.

It seems that the youngster is not ordinary after all. However, offending the Mad Dog Wu Jie will likely be the end of the road for him.

The one-eyed man downed a cup of alcohol as he sighed inwardly.

Mad Dog Wu Jie's cultivation was at the True Martial fourth layer. Although such strength was not considered top-tier in the Qingyang Tribe, he had the backing of the Wu Corporation. He also made sure to only kill ordinary folk and never offend anyone he could not afford to. As such, no one could do anything about him.

The guests in the tavern also realized that Mad Dog Wu Jie seemed to be after the unfamiliar youngster, causing them to break out into whispers.

"From what I can see, it's the youngster's first time in the Qingyang Tribe, and that giant sack he carried was clearly filled with valuable goods. What a pity, he's dead for sure now that he's being targeted by the infamous Mad Dog."

"A pity? You're referring to yourself, right? I saw that you couldn't stop thinking about that little fat sheep earlier and was constantly on the lookout for an opportunity to act!"

"Humph! Don't point your finger at me, look at the others in the tavern. Who wasn't thinking about that little fat sheep?"

Various expressions could be seen in the crowd, but the majority were regretful. They did not feel bad for Lin Xun but instead found it a pity that the little fat sheep was going to be eaten by a mad dog.

Amidst the discussions, the second floor southwest corner room door was opened. Wu Jie and his group entered and closed the door, stopping anyone from seeing what was going on inside.

"Fatty Xiao, why have you come back?" The one-eyed man suddenly caught sight of Fatty Xiao returning with four others.

When the one-eyed man was finally able to make out their appearances, he couldn't help but display a strange expression. These four individuals were known to be vicious, dangerous and cruel characters in the Qingyang Tribe.

However, they were a far cry compared to Mad Dog Wu Jie.

Fatty Xiao grinned in a pleased manner and explained in a hushed voice, "After thinking about it, I couldn't just let such a fat sheep pass by without trying to take a bite. Hence, I invited some friends over to help out."

The one-eyed man chuckled, "You're late, someone else has already swooped in."

Fatty Xiao's expression changed, "Which disrespectful bastard?"

Before the one-eyed man could reply, they all heard a loud thump. The second floor southwest corner room door flung open as a shadowy figure was thrown out. The figure crashed into one of the tables, shattering the cups, plates, wine pot, and even the entire table itself. The drunkards at the table jumped back in shock, nearly falling to the ground.

Numerous shrieks rang out as the place descended into chaos.

The figure was one of Mad Dog Wu Jie's subordinates. However, his neck had been twisted, turning him into a corpse whose eyes were still filled with fear and panic.

The entire tavern fell deathly silent.

That's Wu Jie's subordinate!

Fatty Xiao's expression changed drastically, finally realizing who had beaten him to the punch. However, he would never have foreseen that he would be seeing the corpse of someone else instead of that little fat sheep!

The one-eyed man was utterly shocked and could not help but look toward the second floor.

Thud!

Another body was thrown downstairs and was revealed to be another of Wu Jie's lackeys. Several people shrieked in alarm as everyone's expressions changed.

The second person had died an even more grisly death. His arms had been twisted together like twisted bread and his chest was caved in as if a bull had viciously trampled over him. It was a miserable sight.

Fatty Xiao's face twitched violently as he gasped. He finally realized how right the one-eyed man's warning had been. That youngster was no sheep but a ferocious wolf in sheep skin!

Fatty Xiao could not help but ask, "Is Wu Jie also up there?"

Still in shock, the one-eyed man numbly nodded. It was definitely not normal to kill two of Wu Jie's underlings in succession while he was present.

Thud! Thud!

Two figures were soon thrown down again. One had his head split open with his blood and brain juices still spurting out. The other's throat had been cut; blood gurgled out, quickly creating a pool of blood on the ground.

The guests' bodies trembled uncontrollably at the gruesome and bloody sight, and the greed originally in their hearts vanished completely.

This is too horrifying!

Despite the obvious results, not even a single sound of battle had been heard from start to end. Mad Dog Wu Jie's four underlings had been turned into corpses and thrown out. This was a feat that no ordinary person could possibly achieve.

Although they were horrified, not a single person left. Everyone turned towards the second floor southwest corner room one by one as if waiting for something.

The one-eyed man was no exception. Mad Dog Wu Jie and the boy should be the only ones left in the room. Everyone wanted to know: who was ultimately going to lose this clash?

As for Fatty Xiao and his group, they had long been scared silly. They were also secretly glad that Mad Dog Wu Jie had beaten them to the punch. If it had been them instead, they would now be cold corpses on the ground.

No more bodies were thrown out. As the crowd grew increasingly uneasy and anxious, they finally saw a young figure walk out of the room.

He was dressed in simple gray clothes, with his long hair casually tied up behind him. He had a good-looking and friendly face, black and clear eyes, and a straight raised nose. There was a hint of immaturity between his brows which was unique to young people, while a slight smile hung from the corners of his lips. All of this paired with his thin figure made him look completely harmless.

A huge sack had been slung over his shoulder while a bloody bag hung from his hand. Pearls of blood oozed out from its surface and dripped on the ground, creating a strangely horrifying sight.

There was no need to guess. The youth was Lin Xun and the bag in his hand contained a human head.

The entire tavern was so silent that you could even hear a needle drop on the ground. The only sound was that of Lin Xun's unhurried footsteps.

The one-eyed man's hand trembled, spilling the alcohol in his cup. However, he was oblivious because his heart was drowning in shock.

Although he had already determined that Lin Xun was no ordinary person, the one-eyed man had not expected Mad Dog Wu Jie to die at Lin Xun's hands!

Fatty Xiao, his group of four, and the other patrons of the tavern were dumbstruck as unconcealable fear flowed out in their eyes.

There were many formidable individuals in the Qingyang Tribe. If a person was not strong, it was impossible to survive in this lawless place.

That was precisely why after witnessing Lin Xun's swiftly massacre Wu Jie and his lackeys, everyone present understood that there was a new person in the Qingyang Tribe to look out for, one who was far more formidable than the norm.

Lin Xun arrived at the counter and smiled helplessly, "Boss, I'll have to return the room."

The one-eyed man's entire body shivered. He immediately retrieved twenty copper coins and passed them over, "This is the room fee."

Lin Xun took fifteen, leaving five behind, "There were some accidents today which destroyed quite a few things in the tavern. Take the money on the corpses as compensation."

Soon after, Lin Xun thoughtfully looked at Fatty Xiao and chuckled, "Brother, you've wet your pants."

Fatty Xiao was taken aback and instinctively looked down, finding warm liquid flowing down his legs and a puddle at his feet. His face burned with embarrassment, and he wished he could hide in a hole.

Lin Xun left and the stifling atmosphere in the tavern swiftly dissipated. The crowd quickly noticed Fatty Xiao's embarrassing situation which caused them to burst into laughter. Fatty Xiao actually wet himself in fear!

The one-eyed man, on the other hand, had no smile on his face. He knew that since Mad Dog Wu Jie and his lackeys had been murdered, it would not take long to incite the Wu Corporation's wrath. The consequences were dire!

"I can only hope that youngster can somehow turn this perilous situation around." The one-eyed man sighed. Lin Xun's act of killing Wu Jie was equivalent to avenging the one-eyed man. As such, he naturally did not wish for Lin Xun to be destroyed by the Wu Corporation.

Unfortunately, the one-eyed man understood that the youngster would likely not live the night given the Wu Corporation's influence in the Qingyang Tribe.

.....

I did not expect them to be so impatient and act tonight. It seems that I'll need to change my plan and head to the Stone Cauldron Alms tonight. Lin Xun thought as he led the scale horse through the street.

Killing Mad Dog Wu Jie had essentially focused all of the hatred on himself. However, this was precisely what Lin Xun wanted to see.

Grievances must be avenged and debts must be paid. Since Wu Henshui did not care about the Feiyun villagers' survival and sought to take everything from them, there was already no room for mediation.

Lin Xun would not sit by and watch the Wu Corporation unleash its rage on the Feiyun villagers due to Wu Henshui's death.

However, Lin Xun did not expect the other party to act so quickly, leaving him no choice but to make last-minute adjustments to his plans. *NovelExt.com*

He knew that Wu Corporation would quickly find out about Mad Dog Wu Jie's murder the moment he left the Old Crow Inn.

Hence, he needed to settle this affair tonight or he would be in danger.

[Chapter 55: Endless Suspicions](#)

The Qingyang Tribe was lit up by lanterns at night. Although it was not as busy as the day, there were still numerous people passing through the streets.

Stone Cauldron Alms was located in the Qingyang Tribe's central district and occupied more than two hectares of land. Constructed from cut limestone blocks, the majestic building was three stories tall. It towered over the nearby buildings, making it particularly attention-grabbing.

When Lin Xun arrived, contrary to his expectations, he found the entrance rather busy as the store wasn't closed. Numerous carriages were parked nearby and several cultivators could be seen entering and exiting.

Lin Xun tied the scale horse to a corner and walked into Stone Cauldron Alms with his giant leather sack.

The building's interior was luxuriously designed and very spacious. Row after row of white stone exhibits stretched into the distance, and the place was divided into various sections such as medicines, ingredients, weapons, equipment, and other cultivation necessities.

Many attendants shuttled between the visitors in a respectful and professional manner.

There were also several guards scattered throughout the premises, calmly breathing as their sharp eyes vigilantly watched the surroundings. Their cultivation ranged between the True Martial fourth layer and sixth layer. An elder seated behind a counter in the hall stood out the most; a faint but oppressive dipper qi flowed around his body, showing that he was a Spirit Dipper stage existence!

This only emphasized the Stone Cauldron Alms' foundations and how formidable they were.

Lin Xun silently took everything in as he inwardly sighed in amazement. He did not know that Stone Cauldron Alms was considered a first-class merchant group even in the Ziyao Empire, nor was he aware that its boss was a legendary figure known as Fortune God Shi.

However, from the many details Lin Xun had gleaned, he could tell that Stone Cauldron Alms was no ordinary merchant group.

An attendant soon approached and after some inquiries, brought Lin Xun to an exchange section. The section was comparatively empty and there were only a dozen figures scattered about the place.

"May I ask what the young master wishes to sell?" A middle-aged man in an embroidered gown stepped forward with a smile. He did not look down on Lin Xun or brush him off due to his age. However, the middle-aged man was also not very friendly, only showing courtesy where he needed to like a professional.

Lin Xun smiled and said, "I want to see your manager."

The middle-aged man frowned, "Apologies, the manager is busy at the moment and can't come out to meet with the young master."

A thirteen-year-old boy who was wearing simple hemp clothes wanted to see their manager? This felt a little too arrogant and ignorant. Did the boy think just anyone could easily meet a Stone Cauldron Alms manager?

"Oh, that's fine. I can wait." Lin Xun casually said as if he was oblivious to the change in the middle-aged man's attitude.

The middle-aged man's frown grew deeper and his attitude became colder, "Young master, may I enquire what kind of rare treasures you have that require our manager to come personally?"

Lin Xun chuckled, "You feel that I don't have the qualifications to meet your manager?"

The middle-aged man indifferently replied, "How would I dare to. I merely feel that the young master's goods aren't that valuable. If you wish to sell them, there's no need for our manager to come personally."

As he spoke, he pridefully pointed at Lin Xun's large sack, "If my observation is correct, your bag contains thirty-one pieces of savage beast skin, some bones, claws, and other similar articles. There are also a dozen types of aeth resources, am I right?"

Surprised, Lin Xun said, "Good eye!"

The middle-aged man nonchalantly said, "Young master, those in our line of work have excellent eyes and sharp noses. You might feel these goods have high value, but in our Stone Cauldron Alms' eyes, these goods will only add up to four thousand copper coins, an amount that could buy an ordinary aeth tool."

After a slight pause, he continued, "So have you changed your mind young master?"

Lin Xun shook his head, "I feel that it will still be best for you to notify your manager. It's not that I don't believe you, but I have another matter to discuss with him."

Upon seeing that the youngster appeared completely unteachable despite his patient explanation, the middle-aged man immediately became unhappy. With an icy snort, he said, "Please leave, we will not be sending you off!"

This was essentially chasing Lin Xun away.

Lin Xun was taken aback. He helplessly said, "Uncle, I don't know why you must become so angry, but isn't it a little too petty of you to do this?"

The middle-aged man in embroidered robes laughed in anger, "A mere youngster dares to call me petty?"

There was now a certain intensity in his voice.

Lin Xun smiled, "I just think that you can try to inform the manager first. If it turns out that I was really here to cause trouble, you guys can chase me out then. Isn't that right?"

The middle-aged man was clearly out of patience. He ignored the proposal and waved his hand, "Someone come and escort this young master out!"

Two cultivators, who were stationed nearby, immediately began walking toward them.

Lin Xun felt helpless. He had already expressed his sincerity and did not expect the other party to completely ignore his request.

Lin Xun sighed, "Uncle, I feel that you'll definitely regret this."

The middle-aged man's expression darkened and he raised his voice, "What are you waiting for? Throw this arrogant brat out!"

The two cultivators exchanged a look before abruptly lunging at Lin Xun from the left and right, their arms reaching out to grab him.

Thump!

Although they were fast, Lin Xun was faster. He suddenly stepped forward, hooked his arm around the middle-aged neck, and shouted, "I'll snap his neck if anyone dares to try anything!"

The two cultivators immediately hesitated.

Despite being taken hostage, the middle-aged man was unafraid. Instead, he angrily roared, "Someone has come to cause trouble in our Stone Cauldron Alms!"

An uproar swept through the neighboring sections as numerous guards began to rush over. They surrounded Lin Xun, but no one dared to approach because of the hostage.

"Young man, this old man advises you to stop now and don't make things worse for yourself!" An elder split the crowd and approached. It was the Spirit Dipper cultivator, who had been stationed in the main hall.

Lin Xun's expression remained composed. He even chuckled and said, "Will you believe me if I said this was a misunderstanding?"

The elder was clearly taken aback, "Eh? What misunderstanding, let us hear about it."

The middle-aged man swiftly cut in, "This punk only had some lousy goods but he wanted the manager to come out and meet him. Is this not trying to cause trouble?"

The elder's eyes scanned the giant sack beside Lin Xun and frostily said, "Young man, is this the misunderstanding you were referring to?"

Lin Xun earnestly said, "Is wishing to meet your manager trying to cause trouble?"

The elder was stunned. "Regardless, let him go first."

Lin Xun shook his head, "I cannot agree unless your manager comes."

Murder flashed in the elder's eyes, "It seems that you're determined to reject my kind intentions?"

Lin Xun smiled, "Apologies old uncle, I'm not the type to be scared by threats."

His fingers tightened around the middle-aged man's throat, choking him till his face turned red. The threat was clear.

The middle-aged man urgently shouted, "No need to care about me, kill this punk!"

A stern and dignified voice rang out, "Making such a din, aren't all of you ashamed of yourselves?"

The manager is here!

Respect immediately appeared on everyone's faces, and even the elder was quiet.

"It seems that there's really no way to meet the manager without creating a big enough commotion..."

Lin Xun muttered to himself before looking in the direction the voice had come from.

He saw a man in a long navy-blue gown approaching. He had a mustache that pointed downwards and a beard, forming the shape of a trident. His face was scholarly and there was a certain dignity in every movement he made.

This was the Stone Cauldron Alms manager, Yan Zhen.

"Young man, let him go." When Yan Zhen appeared, he indifferently said, "I will give you an opportunity to explain."**NovelNext.CoM**

"That works." Lin Xun understood when to back down and released his hostage, making it seem as if he was not the least bit worried he would be killed immediately without one.

This surprised Yan Zhen. He waved his hand to tell everyone to withdraw before he said, "I hope your explanation will not disappoint me."

Lin Xun chuckled. Instead of explaining, he tossed the manager a token, "Have a look."

Yan Zhen frowned but his eyes immediately widened when he saw the token. An almost unnoticeable change occurred in his expression as he asked, "Where did you get this token?"

The nearby crowd was stunned. Did the token have some kind of astonishing origins?

Lin Xun's reply was simple, "It was a gift."

Yan Zhen was silent for a long time. He suddenly took a deep breath as sternness flashed in his eyes, "A gift? Do you think I'll believe that? This token is not something a youngster like you can possess! Quickly tell me the truth or I will no longer be so civil!"

Yan Zhen was certain that the token was real because the unique symbol on it could not be faked. However, he did not believe this token would be given to a mere teenager.

Evidently, Yan Zhen already viewed Lin Xun as a despicable scammer.

Lin Xun could not help but feel somewhat angry. First, the middle-aged man had declared he had no right to see the manager and had come here to cause trouble. When Lin Xun was finally able to meet the manager, the other party suspected him of being a swindler. How could Lin Xun possibly remain composed?

Despite this, he maintained his smile and sighed, "It seems that Shi Xuan lied. His token is completely useless."

Shi Xuan!

That's the First Young Master's name!

Yan Zhen's expression changed slightly again and he began to doubt himself, "Young man, did the First Young Master send you?"

Everyone present was also shocked. This shabby boy knew their First Young Master Shi Xuan?

Impossible!

He must be trying to trick them!

Who was their First Young Master? How could he possibly be friends with a poor youngster?

Lin Xun was speechless. Did he look like some kind of messenger boy in their eyes?

Although they were not looking down on him, they clearly were not treating him seriously!

However, Lin Xun could understand their perspective. There were many people like this in the world and it was not something he would get angry about.

Lin Xun fell silent for a moment. Just as he was about to speak again, he inadvertently saw a familiar figure in the distance, causing a faint smile to appear from the corners of his mouth.

[Chapter 56: Big Sister Wansu](#)

Mu Wansu had returned to the Qingyang Tribe alone two days prior to search for news about the Little Sword Lord Xie Yutang.

The Qingyang Tribe was undoubtedly the most optimal place to find news regarding Xie Yutang.

In Mu Wansu's opinion, since Xie Yutang had come to the Three Thousand Great Mountains, he would have also chosen the Qingyang Tribe for temporary lodging.

Thus, she only needed to check if anyone had seen Xie Yutang recently to verify when he arrived at the Three Thousand Great Mountains.

Of course, this was all Shi Xuan's idea.

Mu Wansu did not understand why the First Young Master wanted to meet Xie Yutang so urgently. Could it merely be to witness the uniqueness of the Ruling Sword Art?

Or perhaps the First Young Master believed that Xie Yutang had already found the prophesized treasure?

Regardless, it was something Mu Wansu needed to do. It had already been two days since she arrived in the Qingyang Tribe, but she had yet to find any news about Xie Yutang.

This made Mu Wansu feel rather helpless. It was almost impossible to even catch a glimpse of someone like Xie Yutang, so how could it possibly be easy to find news about him?

Fortunately, Mu Wansu received news tonight that a golden flame beast had appeared at a river that was a thousand miles from the Qingyang Tribe. Such a creature had never appeared in the past hundred years and was likely related to the prophesized treasure.

Moreover, the empire's southwest city governor's first son, Liu Yukun, had lost his life to the beast!

This was an astonishing piece of news that could create giant waves.

Mu Wansu had already decided to go searching for the golden flame beast's whereabouts the next morning.

However, before she could discuss some matters with the Stone Cauldron Alms manager, Yan Zhen, as she had originally planned, Mu Wansu was surprised to find a certain hateful, shameless, and despicable youngster had appeared!

Mu Wansu had been watching from afar. At the sight of Lin Xun being suspected by Yan Zhen and surrounded like a lamb waiting for slaughter, Mu Wansu suddenly felt an unexplainable surge of glee.

Little bastard, to think this day had finally come for you.

Mu Wansu could not wait for Yan Zhen to teach the shameless youngster a lesson on behalf of her.

The moment this thought appeared, however, she noticed the little bastard looking toward her.

Mu Wansu's heart jumped and she quickly tried moving out of sight, but it was already too late.

The little bastard's face practically lit up as he waved his hand and called out, "Big Sister Wansu, your timing is great. Quick come and tell them about the token. Big Brother Shi Xuan never said that taking this token into the Stone Cauldron Alms would make them treat me so coldly."

Mu Wansu was speechless as she placed a hand on her forehead. To think that he would so shamelessly call out to her in such an intimate manner. Others might actually believe that they were well acquainted!

She really wanted to pretend she did not know him and leave. However, when she thought about how the token was indeed a gift from First Young Master Shi Xuan, she knew that she would not be able to explain this if he were to somehow find out. *novelnext.com*

What should I do?

Mu Wansu hesitated. If possible, she really wanted to go over and yank that little bastard's ear. This is far too infuriating. Why does he look so righteous when he is the one asking for help?!

Another wave of confusion washed over Yan Zhen and the others as they looked around only to immediately catch sight of Mu Wansu.

She was dressed in a black dress and her beautiful hair was tied up in a bun. She had pretty and delicate features, an excellent figure, and a pair of straight black brows that gave off a fierce and sharp aura. She resembled a wild rose blossoming on a cliff, beautiful but thorny.

Yan Zhen's pupils abruptly shrank as he stammered, "Miss Wansu, do you...know this young man?"

The others were also doubtful.

Mu Wansu sighed inwardly. She could only walk over and try to downplay as much as possible, "This token was indeed given by the First Young Master."

She did not answer directly but the meaning behind her words was obvious.

All of Yan Zhen's doubts disappeared in an instant. Mu Wansu was the person in charge of the Donglin City Stone Cauldron Alms branch, and even Yan Zhen was far below her in status.

Most importantly, Yan Zhen was well aware that Mu Wansu had been helping the First Young Master with some matters over the past few days. How could she possibly be lying?

It seemed that they had wrongly accused this youngster.

With such thoughts in mind, Yan Zhen's gaze changed when he looked toward Lin Xun again. He did not know why their First Young Master would give such an important token to the young man, but since he had done so, there must definitely be a reason.

The expression of the middle-aged man in an embroidered gown rapidly fluctuated. This youngster is the First Young Master's friend? If the First Young Master found out what happened today...

He did not dare to complete the thought.

The middle-aged man felt regretful. His earlier actions did seem a little too rude, but how could he have known that this shabby-looking youngster would have such an astonishing relationship?

The middle-aged man suddenly noticed Lin Xun turn around and look at him, causing his heart to jump in his chest; he was under the impression that Lin Xun was preparing to take revenge.

Who could have imagined that Lin Xun would cup his fists together in apology, "I was too rash earlier and was indeed the one at fault. Sorry uncle, I hope that you can forgive me."

The middle-aged man was stunned and instinctively replied, "No matter, no matter. It was merely a misunderstanding earlier. The young master need not concern himself over it."

Lin Xun smiled and did not say anything else.

Upon seeing this, Yan Zhen waved his hand and said, "All of you are dismissed."

As he spoke, he led Lin Xun and Mu Wansu along a long corridor that ended at an elegant room where everyone quickly took a seat.

"May I ask for the young master's name?" Yan Zhen's attitude had become proper and friendly. His scholarly appearance with his gentle tone paired with his perpetually smiling face was akin to a spring breeze.

"Elder is too courteous. This junior's surname is Lin and my name is Xun." Lin Xun smiled and cupped his hands together.

Mu Wansu was seated to the side, absently-mindedly playing with an exquisite teacup as if she did not wish to be part of the conversation.

Her attitude felt odd to Yan Zhen, but he maintained his smile and said, "So it's Young Master Lin Xun. Today's matter was due to the inadequacy of my Stone Cauldron Alms. I hope the young master does not take it to heart."

His words were courteous but Lin Xun was even more polite. He hurriedly rose to his feet and cupped his hands together, displaying an ashamed and apologetic appearance, "Elder is too polite, I was the one who was originally at fault. How can I possibly blame others?"

Yan Zhen found himself unable to read Lin Xun's intentions. The kid had been so forceful and unyielding earlier, so why had he suddenly become so accommodating?

With such thoughts in mind, Yan Zhen asked, "If I may be so bold as to ask if the young master had immediately shown the token earlier, wouldn't we have avoided this misunderstanding..."

Before he could finish, Lin Xun embarrassedly said, "Elder might not know but it was an emergency situation earlier. In addition, I was not certain of the token's effectiveness. Hence, my plan was to make a big enough commotion to draw the elder's attention."

Yan Zhen was at a loss for words. The kid was honest and had come clean about everything, making Yan Zhen feel that the kid's character was not bad.

He had unwittingly begun to view Lin Xun in a slightly more favorable light. It was honestly rare to find such a wise thirteen-year-old youngster nowadays.

Most importantly, he knew when to stand his ground or back down. If Yan Zhen had not personally witnessed the earlier affair, he would have suspected Lin Xun to be a very shrewd adult.

“Was that really what you were thinking back there?” Mu Wansu suddenly asked, her eyes staring at Lin Xun like knives.

She could tell at a glance that the little punk had been talking rubbish since he entered the room. He made himself seem meek and truthful, making it impossible to find any fault with him. This brat is way too devious.

Given Lin Xun’s intelligence, Mu Wansu knew that he definitely would not have made such a huge commotion in public just to draw out Yan Zhen. There was likely some other goal behind these actions!

Lin Xun chuckled bitterly and sighed, “Big Sister Wansu, this is the first time in my life that I’ve left the mountain village and I have no knowledge or experience about the outside world. If there’s anything I’ve done wrong, I hope that you will be generous with your guidance.”

He bowed at Mu Wansu with a sincere and earnest attitude, making it impossible for her to find any fault with him despite knowing that it was all an act. Otherwise, it would only make her appear petty.

This punk is becoming more and more crafty!

Mu Wansu was fuming inside, but she retained a lovely smile on her face, “Alright, since the matter has passed, we shall not bring it up anymore. Moreover, you’re someone who the First Young Master thinks highly of. Even if you made a mistake, it can be forgiven.”

“Haha, Miss Wansu is right. We shall not mention this matter again.” Yan Zhen laughed heartily, “Right then, we still do not know why the young master has come to our Stone Cauldron Alms.”

Lin Xun’s expression immediately turned solemn as he cupped his hands together, “Truth be told, I came here because of two matters.”

Yan Zhen stroked his mustache and smiled, “Feel free to tell us.”

“First, I’m here to sell some goods and exchange some living necessities for our Feiyun villagers. At the same time, I’m also hoping to sign a trade contract with Stone Cauldron Alms.”

Lin Xun swiftly explained, “Elder probably does not know yet, but Feiyun Village is currently able to produce some Feiyun Fire Copper, which I believe is a resource needed by Stone Cauldron Alms. I plan to sign an exclusive trading contract with Stone Cauldron Alms to collect the Feiyun Fire Copper and secure a long-term trading route for the village.”

Yan Zhen raised his brow, “Feiyun Fire Copper?”

Lin Xun smiled, “Correct, Big Sister Mu Wansu and the First Young Master saw it when they were guests at Feiyun Village.”

He instantly implicated Mu Wansu, causing her to glare at him. In the end, she nodded, “He’s right.”

Yan Zhen immediately put aside his worries and smiled, “Great, I can agree to this contract. After all, it’s mutually beneficial.”

Lin Xun chuckled, "Thank you, elder, for allowing it."

Once this matter was settled, anyone who dared to have designs on the Feiyun Fire Copper in the future would have to first get past Stone Cauldron Alms.

At the same time, Stone Cauldron Alms would not dare to try and cheat the villagers on account of his relationship with Shi Xuan. Hence, Lin Xun would not need to worry about this after he left Feiyun Village in the future.

Moreover, selling Feiyun Fire Copper would create income for the village and gradually improve the villagers' lives. They would no longer need to fret over their livelihoods.

This was called killing two birds with one stone. Lin Xun had already begun to plan this when he arrived at Feiyun Village and finally seeing it succeed made him breathe a sigh of relief inside.

Yan Zhen asked, "Young master, may I inquire about the second matter?"

Lin Xun glanced at Mu Wansu before looking back to Yan Zhen and suddenly revealed a bitter smile.

Before Lin Xun spoke, Mu Wansu's heart sank as she cursed inside. This punk is full of evil thoughts, he's most definitely going to use this chance to raise some troublesome matter!

[Chapter 57: Eliminate Troublemaker](#)

Mu Wansu unconsciously spurted out, "Don't say it!"

Yan Zhen looked bewildered. What's the matter?

He had always had the impression that Mu Wansu would rarely lose her temper. She was beautiful, intelligent, capable, and was well-known in Donglin City. She didn't earn her nickname "Black Rose" for nothing.

Ever since Mu Wansu had met Lin Xun, she came to realize that all the abilities and skills she possessed were useless. She felt doomed every time she saw Lin Xun and she had been used by him repeatedly. She couldn't vent her indignation and had to suppress her anger.

Mu Wansu felt greatly aggrieved and so she couldn't contain her anger anymore when she saw Lin Xun putting on a pitiful look and trying to deceive people again.

However, Lin Xun seemed to not notice her fury as he turned around and sighed. "Older Sister Wansu, Elder Yan Zhen must know about the matter. Otherwise, I'm worried it will lead to misunderstandings."

Mu Wansu was dumbfounded. What does that mean? Does he think I already know what he wants to say?

However, Mu Wansu very quickly understood Lin Xun's purpose in saying those words.

Yan Zhen assumed a serious expression and said, "Since Miss Wansu already knows then I respectfully ask you to tell me directly. Don't worry about creating any misunderstandings. Even if it's a major problem, we can always discuss a countermeasure."

Mu Wansu was utterly speechless at Yan Zhen's complete cooperation with Lin Xun.

Solemnly, Lin Xun drew a deep breath, and he was about to speak when someone knocked on the door.

Lin Xun couldn't help but frown, but Mu Wansu raised her brows in surprise and beamed with joy. Even the heavens are on my side!

Yan Zhen got up, saying, "It must be an urgent matter for someone to knock at this hour," and he opened the door.

Standing at the door was a panicked attendant.

"What happened?" Yan Zhen bluntly asked.

"Manager Yan, Wu Deyong from the Wu Corporation brought a large group of people here and demanded we hand someone to them," explained the attendant urgently.

Confused, Yan Zhen's face darkened. "Hand over who? Did Wu Deyong come to pick a fight?"

Lin Xun got up and said helplessly, "Elder, they must be here for me."

Mu Wansu's smile froze on her lips. How could she not realize that the second matter that Lin Xun wanted to speak about was related to the Wu Corporation.

That bastard tricked me again!

Mu Wansu gnashed her teeth.

Yan Zhen exclaimed in shock, "For you? What for?"

Lin Xun quickly ran through the matters between him and Wu Henshui. He firmly claimed that Wu Henshui forcibly tried to occupy all the aeth fields and Feiyun Fire Copper in Feiyun Village so he was killed by the villagers who were pushed to the dead end.

He also mentioned how the Wu Corporation had hunted him down when he first arrived at the Qingyang Tribe and he had no choice but to turn to the Stone Cauldron Alms for help.

Yan Zhen frowned. "I see."

He realized that the matter was a little tricky to handle because the master of Wu Corporation was an influential figure in Donglin City and even the Stone Cauldron Alms was reluctant to become on unfriendly terms with the local tyrant.

Yan Zhen knew that he had to help Lin Xun due to Lin Xun's relationship with the first young master, Shi Xuan, but they no doubt would have to pay a huge price to do so.

Suddenly, Yan Zhen couldn't help but feel hesitant. His gaze shifted over to Mu Wansu.

Mu Wansu felt her head throb with pain. That little bastard is so good at creating trouble. He stirred up such trouble when he just arrived at the Qingyang Tribe. If the First Young Master learns about this matter, would he regret giving him his badge?

Mu Wansu hated the fact that she couldn't just hand over Lin Xun, the troublemaker, to Wu Corporation. That way, she could also vent her pent-up anger.

But the current situation didn't allow her to do so.

Mu Wansu sighed inwardly. Fine, I will help him this one last time. If that bastard continues to push his luck, I will draw a line with him even if the eldest young master disapproves!

Mu Wansu's eyes suddenly glinted fiercely and her face bore a look of determination. "Yan Zhen, go tell them that Lin Xun is part of the Stone Cauldron Alms and tell them that they should watch what they do!"

Yan Zhen nodded and hurried off.

"Sister Wansu, my safety doesn't matter." Lin Xun couldn't help but interject when he saw what was happening. "It's the safety of the villagers in Feiyun Village that I'm worried about. If they are going to vent their anger on Feiyun Village instead, then I would rather not accept this help."

His expression became resolute.

Mu Wansu stared at him for a long moment and eventually nodded. "Although I don't have a good impression of you, I can promise you that this matter won't affect Feiyun Village."

Lin Xun gave her respectful cupped fist salute. "Thank you very much, I will remember your kindness and repay you tenfold in the future!"

Mu Wansu found Lin Xun's serious and honorable attitude a little uncomfortable. She waved dismissively, saying, "I don't need you to repay me, just stop giving me trouble."

Lin Xun nodded.

He knew it was wrong to demand a great favor from a mere acquaintance and that he was burdening the other person, but he had no other choice.

It was for the villagers in Feiyun Village and for the sake of finding a temporary shelter for himself.

Not long afterward, Yan Zhen returned with a smile. "The matter has been resolved. Given Wu Deyong's courage, even if he has the great influential person in Donglin City behind him, he has to tolerate our Stone Cauldron Alms."

Lin Xun stood up again and repeatedly thanked Yan Zhen. Soon after, he took his leave.

As soon as Lin Xun left, Yan Zhen couldn't help but ask, "Miss Wansu, what is the relationship between that young man and the eldest young master?"

Mu Wansu looked distracted as she explained, "First Young Master said that the kid has a very promising future. Besides that, he didn't say anything else, and I still don't understand what he means."

Yan Zhen was a little taken aback. He originally thought that Lin Xun and the eldest young master had a deep friendship but it turned out to be such a bizarre relationship.

Mu Wansu drew a deep breath and instructed, "Let's not talk about him. In two days, First Young Master might return to the Qingyang Tribe. You should make preparations."

She got up and left, but Lin Xun's face inexplicably flashed in her mind. I wonder if that kid understood what I meant. I hope he won't ever use First Young Master's name to intimidate people. Otherwise, I won't spare him!

.....

By the time he left Stone Cauldron Alms, it was already late at night and the pedestrians on the street were sparse. The glow of faint yellow light illuminating the street made it appear even quieter and deserted.

Lin Xun left on his scaled horse and encountered no ambushes along the way. It seemed that the Wu Corporation really had retreated a step after receiving a warning from the Stone Cauldron Alms.

The clash between two top forces was resolved seemingly silently, and it made Lin Xun realize the importance of top forces.

In the Old Crow Inn.

When Lin Xunzhong returned to the inn, the innkeeper, One-Eyed Giant, was sleeping behind the counter.

However, he jolted awake upon Lin Xun's return and his expression was a mixture of shock, fear, and awe.

"Excuse me, sorry to disturb you again but can I book a room?" Smiling, Lin Xun handed him twenty copper coins.

"No, no, it's only five copper coins." One-Eyed Giant hurriedly declined.

The matter that happened that night had stirred the entire Qingyang Tribe. Everyone was waiting to watch the youngster put up a good show but the result astounded everyone — Wu Corporation admitted defeat!

One-Eyed Giant realized that Lin Xun had some sort of deep relationship with Stone Cauldron Alms and the reason that Lin Xun dared to kill Mad Dog Wu Jie and the others was because he had a strong backing.

Lin Xun happily took back the fifteen copper coins and was led to a room by an attendant, who seemed eager to please Lin Xun.

Lin Xun's smile faded from his lips the second his room door was closed. He stood in a daze in front of the window, gazing at the vast night sky. A rare trace of loneliness crossed his gentle and pure face.
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After a long while, he shook his head, blew out the candles, and lay on the bed in the dark.

That night, it was the first time that Lin Xun didn't practice his cultivation arts.

.....

Early in the morning, when Lin Xun left the Old Crow Inn, his usual warm smile was on his lips again. He was in glowing spirits.

During the day, the Qingyang Tribe was bustling with people shuttling in and out. The noises and activity from everywhere created a clamorous atmosphere.

As Lin Xun strolled along the streets, he drank a bowl of milk made from green aeth beans and devoured ten steamed buns filled with wild bull meat. Rubbing his full belly with a satisfied face, he headed towards Stone Cauldron Alms.

The person who welcomed him this time was the same middle-aged man in silk robes. He was called Xue Liang and was an experienced treasure appraiser.

Xue Liang was much more friendly and enthusiastic compared to the last time. After appraising the goods in Lin Xun's animal-skin bag, he personally handed Lin Xun forty-three silver coins, which was equivalent to 4300 copper coins.

Xue Liang was not only giving him a fair price but it was also borderline on the excessively generous side. Lin Xun obviously knew the reason.

However, Lin Xun didn't decline the offer, but when he brought out the 150 kilograms of Feiyun Fire Copper concealed in his storage ring, he insisted that the appraiser pay the market price.

Xue Liang wasn't only surprised by Lin Xun's insistence, but it also changed his impression of Lin Xun. The ill-feeling he had towards him had completely vanished.

In the end, the 150 kilograms of Feiyun Fire Copper were exchanged for 550 silver coins, which was equivalent to 55,000 copper coins.

It was an astonishing amount!

Lin Xun only finally understood the purchasing power of such an amount when he went shopping afterward.

The amount he had spent on living supplies for the villagers totaled to 1,500 copper coins, which was only fifteen silver coins.

The batch of living supplies that he bought was enough to last the villagers around half a year!

In addition, Lin Xun ordered a batch of aeth concoctions from Stone Cauldron Alms, including qi-drawing pills, inner strengthening pills, organ opening powder, and orifice unlocking liquid. Although the aeth concoctions were ordinary, they were essential for True Martial Stage cultivators.

He bought them to prepare the children in the village for their cultivation paths.

Additionally, Lin Xun bought some rune ink, which was necessary to engrave rune patterns, and also bought clothes for Xia Zhi and himself.

All the items totaled to only four hundred silver coins, which clearly demonstrated the astonishing purchasing power of the empire's money.

However, making money was extremely difficult.

For example, if Lin Xun hadn't sold the 150 kilograms of Feiyun Fire Copper, he couldn't possibly have bought so much stuff.

[Chapter 58: Imperial Examinations](#)

When Lin Xun walked out of Stone Cauldron Alms, he had one hundred and three silver coins left after spending a huge amount on aeth concoctions and rune inks.

His huge expenditures couldn't be helped. The items required for cultivation were all costly and simply unaffordable to ordinary people.

Lin Xun had heard that many gifted people failed to set foot on the cultivation path due to their poor background and lack of financial support. In the end, they remained as ordinary people among the mass of common people.

Fortunately, Lin Xun had no such worries yet.

When noon neared, Lin Xun decided to set off to return to Feiyun Village. Xue Liang sent two guards to escort Lin Xun and help transport his goods back.

The two guards were also given the task of purchasing Feiyun Fire Copper, and so they came with Lin Xun to scout out Feiyun Village beforehand since they would need to go there to purchase Feiyun Fire Copper every month.

With that arrangement in place, Lin Xun wouldn't have to worry that no one would help the villagers of Feiyun Village deliver and exchange goods even when he left the village.

Lin Xun knew that was Yan Zhen's arrangement, which indicated that the people in Stone Cauldron Alms indeed kept their promises.

As long as Stone Cauldron Alms remained in the Qingyang Tribe, and as long as Lin Xun was still alive, he wouldn't need to worry about someone breaking the agreement.

Moreover, now that he had the Stone Cauldron Alms as a backer, he could guarantee that no one would dare touch the wealth that belonged to Feiyun Village.

Xue Liang personally saw Lin Xun out of the Qingyang Tribe, drawing countless attention along the way. But they all retracted their gazes when they recognized him to be part of Stone Cauldron Alms.

"Young Master Lin Xun, given your age and cultivation level, why don't you participate in the district examination in Donglin City?"

As they exchanged conversations along the way, Xue Liang learned that Lin Xun was only thirteen years old and, besides feeling surprised, he couldn't help but encourage him to take the examination.

Lin Xun exclaimed, "District examination?"

Xue Liang patiently explained, "Every other year, the empire will conduct a selection process to recruit outstanding talents from all over the world."

According to Xue Liang, the Ziyao Empire had established a series of examinations to select the best talents: district examination, prefectural examination, provincial examination and national examination.

It was understandable given the Ziyao Empire's vast territory. Besides the Forbidden City, the empire's capital, the other land was divided into a further thirty four provinces, and each one was further divided into prefectures. Each prefecture was also further divided into districts.

In short, the districts, prefectures, provinces and the imperial capital made up the vast territory of the Ziyao Empire.

The district examination, prefectural examination, provincial examination and national examination corresponded to different levels of assessment and selection.

The district examination was the lowest level and the conditions to participate was very simple: Participants had to be under fifteen years old and possess a cultivation base.

Those who met those two conditions would successfully pass the district examination.

The prefectural examination was more strict in that participants would have to undergo an assessment of their qualifications, power of understanding and foundation. Only the most outstanding could pass the examination.

The provincial examination could no longer be described as strict, but harsh instead. Even Xue Liang didn't know about the specific details of the examination, only that those who passed were considered one of the best in the world!

As for the national examination, it was too distant. It could be classified as the top assessment in the Forbidden City. Anyone able to participate was a superb cultivator selected from a million people. It was not an exaggeration to call them the pride of heaven.

It was worth mentioning that the district examination, prefectural examination, provincial examination and national examination were a series of selections.

An examinee not only had to be less than eighteen years old to participate in the national examination but also had to pass the district examination, prefectural examination and provincial examination!

Lin Xun couldn't help but marvel at this. He wondered how many peerless cultivators would emerge in each year's examination. The ones able to rise above the others in the series of examinations would undoubtedly become the pillars of the Ziyao Empire and display their splendor.

However, Lin Xun realized a problem. He asked, "Uncle Xue Liang, are there any specific benefits in participating in the examinations?"

Xue Liang was struck dumb for a minute before he answered Lin Xun, "There are many. Besides fame, successful participants would encounter many opportunities to climb and be promoted to a higher position. Most importantly, it brings great benefits to their cultivation path."

After a pause, he continued, "For example, those who pass the district examination would be noticed by many sects, clans, chambers of commerce and even the military and top academies. They would try to draw them over to their side with various means and even provide them with money and cultivation resources."

Lin Xun said in puzzlement, "Why is that?"

Xue Liang smiled. "It's simple. Although it's only the district examination, many participants are under fifteen years old and possess a strong cultivation base. They are akin to good seedlings with huge potential and thus, in the future, could bring huge benefits to the sects and forces that drew them to their side."

Lin Xun nodded thoughtfully. "I see, then there's no other benefit if one doesn't want to join any sects or forces?"

"Of course not. The empire would reward those successful with a prize and grant them the eligibility to participate in the prefectural examination. Those who pass would receive even greater benefits. For example, greater sects and forces would focus their attention on them."

"It's even better to pass the provincial examination. Even if you don't have the opportunity to participate in the national examination in the future, you can enjoy an extremely high status, endless wealth, and cultivation resources. As for the national examination—those who pass would be able to step into the halls of Qinglu Academy! It is the most famous academy in the empire and also the sacred cultivation place that countless cultivators dream to study in!"

Xue Liang's voice trembled with emotions and admiration.

He only restored his calm state after a while. He smiled bitterly. "But it's not easy to enroll into the Qinglu Academy because it only accepts one hundred students every year and 99% of participants in the national examination would fail."

Lin Xun slowly digested what Xue Liang said. In the end, he couldn't help but sigh emotionally. "The Qinglu Academy is indeed amazing. At least, its symbol is engraved on the imperial coins circulating around the empire."

Xue Liang had the same thought. "I can't agree with you more. Anyway, each of the series of examinations for the selection of talent isn't simple. A cultivator must possess deep knowledge to pass each one. If you're interested, you can find out more in Donglin city. I heard that the district examination in Donglin City will begin in two months."

Lin Xun nodded. "I will seriously consider it."

While they conversed, they arrived on the outskirts of the Qingyang Tribe.

There, Lin Xun bid farewell. "Uncle Xue Liang, you don't need to walk me any farther."

Xue Liang nodded. "Okay, take care of yourself on the way."

Lin Xun smiled, mounted the scaled horse, turned the horse around and clattered away. The two guards from Stone Cauldron Alms, who were responsible for escorting goods, also followed after him.

"That little guy seemed to have acted recklessly last night, but he's actually quick witted and intelligent. Also, he's far-sighted. Unless something unexpected happens, he surely will achieve success in the future. It's a pity that he was born in a remote and poor place. He lacks knowledge and experience, and as a result could run into many twists and turns in his life..."

Xue Liang stared into the distance until Lin Xun and the others vanished from his sight. He then withdrew his gaze and returned to the Qingyang tribe.

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At the same time, at the Wu Corporation.

Wu Deyong sat dully in the main hall, his eyes bloodshot and his face overcast.

He couldn't understand how a kid from Feiyun Village could become a distinguished guest of Stone Cauldron Alms, and why the Manager of Stone Cauldron Alms would stand up for him. And because of that, Wu Deyong couldn't vent his anger and had to swallow it.

The power of Stone Cauldron Alms was too terrifying. Let alone Wu Deyong, even the Wu clan behind Wu Deyong wouldn't dare to offend the Stone Cauldron Alms.

Compared with Stone Cauldron Alms, they were akin to tiny ants before a towering tree. If the Stone Cauldron Alms wanted to give them trouble, they could effortlessly crush them between their fingers!

Therefore, they had to tolerate Lin Xun.

An attendant urgently rushed over to report to him. "Boss, the kid has left the Qingyang Tribe accompanied by two guards from Stone Cauldron Alms."

The last trace of stubborn refusal to accept defeat finally vanished from Wu Deyong's heart. His face clouded over. The Stone Cauldron Alms actually sent guards to accompany him?! It's clearly a warning to the Wu Corporation!

"Manager, do we really just leave the matter at that? That kid killed Mad Dog Wu Jie and the others. Who in the Qingyang tribe doesn't know about that incident? If we don't teach him a lesson, how can we lift our heads high in the Qingyang tribe?"

A middle-aged man on the side of the hall fumed, drawing the others to nod their heads in agreement.

Wu Deyong thundered, "Don't tell me you want to get revenge? Do you want the Stone Cauldron Alms to find an easy excuse to get rid of us all?"

Everyone fell silent.

After several breaths, Wu Deyong restored his calmness and said, "This matter has ended. Don't bring it up again!"

Someone couldn't help saying, "But we still haven't heard any news about Chief Steward Wu Henshui. Do we have to forget about that matter too?"

The mention of Wu Henshui made Wu Deyong's lips twitch. He hissed through gritted his teeth, "Idiot, that boy single-handedly carried out a massacre in the Qingyang tribe. Do you think Wu Henshui would still be alive?"

Everyone fell silent again. They had already known that Wu Henshui's situation looked grim but they were unwilling to let Lin Xun go so easily.

That matter not only concerned their faces, but also the Wu Corporation's reputation within the Qingyang Tribe!

After a while, someone suggested, "It might not be inconvenient for us to act, but we can find someone else to take care of it. Why don't we hire someone to do it?"

However, Wu Deyong slammed the table and smoke almost rose from his head. He snapped, "Have you forgotten what Yan Zhen said last night? If something happens to the kid, the Stone Cauldron Alms will get rid of us whether or not we did it! Do you know what that means? Even if the kid dies in the jaws of a beast, the Stone Cauldron Alms will take revenge on us! You bunch of idiots! Use your brain!"

Everyone slumped down and their hearts almost exploded from their suffocating feelings. The Stone Cauldron Alms has gone too far!

Seeing that no one said anything in a long while, Wu Deyong took a deep breath and said, "Of course, we have to get revenge, but now isn't the time. Don't forget that Lian Rufeng, the guard leader of Feiyun Village, also left with Wu Henshui. I remember his son Lian Fei is now training in Donglin City. The opportunity will come in the future. Lian Fei may be of great use to us..."

His voice suddenly turned chilly and sinister.

[Chapter 59: Life Aeth Crystals](#)

An endless stretch of mountains seemingly rose and fell like waves.

As his horse galloped across the road, Lin Xun thought about his gains from the trip to the Qingyang Tribe. His heart tumbled with complex feelings.

He felt at ease but also somewhat uneasy.

However, what happened was in the past. He had decided to leave Feiyun Village with Xia Zhi once he had everything settled.

He knew that there would be a broader world in the cities of the Ziyao Empire and that the move would be beneficial to them both!*novelnext.com*

He couldn't stay in Feiyun Village his entire life; he had to move for his cultivation path and to find the enemy who stole his Origin Aeth Artery.

"Early this morning, I heard that Little Sword Lord, Xie Yutang, had killed the Golden Flame Beast and took its Life Aeth Crystal inside its body."

"Life Aeth Crystals are extremely valuable and rare. It is said to be a core treasured material in making rune armaments."

"Rune armament? What is that?"

"It's a kind of powerful equipment required in battle and can only be made by a rune master. But unfortunately, the construction of such a powerful and peerless armament also has a strict requirement of rune materials. Also, the process is extremely complex and difficult, so the rate of failure is very high. Even rune masters will require ample luck and opportunity to successfully construct one."

"If that's the case, wouldn't a rune armament be extremely powerful once successfully refined?"

"Of course, it's a rune armament! Its power is undoubtedly earth-shattering and unfathomable!"

Suddenly, a conversation caught Lin Xun's attention and made his heart flutter.

The conversation was between the two guards who were escorting Lin Xun to Feiyun Village. They were from Stone Cauldron Alms and were both at the fourth-layer True Martial Stage. One was called Gao Guiyong and the other was called Zhou Quan.

"Little Sword Lord killed the golden flame beast?" asked Lin Xun.

He had heard stories about the golden flame beast when he was in the Qingyang Tribe and had long deduced that the so-called golden flame beast was the giant golden beast he had seen a few days ago.

"That's right." Gao Guiyong quickly answered.

Naturally, he didn't dare to treat Lin Xun with any disrespect given Lin Xun's relationship with Yan Zhen.

Zhou Quan added, "Although the golden flame beast has been slaughtered, Liu Yukun couldn't be saved."

Lin Xun's eyes narrowed imperceptibly. Then, he exclaimed, "Liu Yukun?"

"Yes, the eldest son of Liu Wujun, the governor of the southwestern province of the empire. It is said that Liu Yukun and his people all met their death at the jaws of the golden flame beast. I heard that Liu Yukun's corpse was burned to charcoal. He suffered such a tragic end."

Zhou Quan sighed. "This matter will likely spread to Governor Liu Wujun within the next few days. I wonder how many storms it will stir up."

Only then did Lin Xun learn about the remarkable background of Liu Yukun who had died in his hands. He couldn't help but feel a little strange and in disbelief that he killed the son of a governor.

However, Lin Xun wasn't particularly worried. At least no one knew that he was the one who killed Liu Yukun.

As night quickly descended, Lin Xun and the two guards found a cave to rest for the night.

Gao Guiyong and Zhou Quan ate some rations and then acted according to their plan. They had decided to take turns to guard the cave. One of them was responsible for the first half of the night and the other took care of the other half. Many beasts were found in the barren mountains so they had to be vigilant.

Seeing that the two had such an arrangement, Lin Xun was able to relax and concentrate on his training.

First, he practiced the Yuan Holding Art and guided his aeth power seventy two times around his body. Once he completed the cycles, he immediately moved on to practice the Little Divine Meditation Art.

He meditated until it became late at night. He opened his eyes and scanned the surroundings for danger. Only then did he gather his perception and enter the Omega Secret Realm. He wanted to challenge the Thousand Heavy Wave Sea for the fourth time.

In the end, Lin Xun failed without any suspense.

Lin Xun had already predicted such an outcome, and so compared to that, he was more concerned about the improvements to his physical strength.

As expected, after a careful examination, he found that his skin, flesh, blood, muscles and bones had been tempered once again. In addition, his strength had tripled.

All his improvements were attributed to the rune battle realm—Thousand Heavy Wave Sea. Although he had failed every time, it still had a tremendous body-tempering effect.

However, Lin Xun found that his physical strength had reached its limit. His body strength had to undergo a complete transformation if he wanted to increase it further.

“It seems that I have to start from my cultivation base.”

Lin Xun fell into deep thought. Despite his little knowledge in body tempering, he speculated that a cultivator’s physical strength was closely linked to their cultivation base.

A cultivation breakthrough was an internal transformation, while a physical breakthrough was an external transformation. Now that his physical strength had reached a plateau, he had to target it from the internal to the external in order to initiate another breakthrough.

Lin Xun’s aeth power had reached the Orifice Unlocking layer, the fourth layer True Martial Stage, and he was one step away from reaching the pinnacle to break through to the Essence Refining layer, the fifth layer True Martial Stage.

However, Lin Xun wasn’t too worried. He estimated that he likely could smoothly break through to the fifth-layer True Martial Stage with the help of the power from the Blood Essence Sand and the Four Seasons Brew.

At that time, his internal cultivation base would undergo a breakthrough, and subsequently break the limit of his physical strength. As a result, his physical strength would reach a new height.

He had little worry about his physical strength and cultivation base, but he was concerned about his cultivation of runes and spirit.

He had been relying on the Star Cycle of the Little Divine Meditation Art for the cultivation of his spirit but the progress wasn’t as fast as he had hoped. He still hadn’t illuminated the second star in his mind-sea.

He had only touched upon the door of the Star Cycle, one of the three great stages of the Little Divine Meditation Art.

Moreover, his cultivation in runes had stagnated for several months due to the lack of rune ink.

Fortunately, he had purchased many different varieties of rune inks from the Qingyang Tribe to solve that problem.

In addition to body tempering, cultivation base, spirit cultivation and the art of runes, there was also martial arts training.

His grasp of the Marching Army Fist had stilled at the Precise Realm, and despite him being only one step away from the Perfect Realm, he had repeatedly failed to break through.

Additionally, his grasp of the Six Word Blade had only reached the Elemental Realm.

A cultivator could only fully master a combat art after the art progressed through the four realms, Inkling, Elemental, Precise and Perfect.

Lin Xun had to admit that he still hadn't fully mastered the two arts, Marching Army Fist and the Six Word Blade, to the Perfect Realm.

What Lin Xun didn't know was that although the Marching Army Fist seemed to be a basic art, only very few people in the world could grasp it to the point of precise, let alone perfect.

Similarly, Lin Xun didn't know about the Six Word Blade's origin, but Mister Lu would be deeply astonished if he knew he had learned the blade art to the Precise Realm.

In short, Lin Xun thought this was due to his lack of knowledge and martial arts experience.

After all, he grew up in a dark mine prison and had almost solely focused on the art of runes his entire life. Mister Lu had never taught him any martial arts, and even if he imparted him with the Marching Army Fist and the Six Word Blade, it was with the intention of tempering Lin Xun's body and improving the flexibility of his wrist to better engrave runes.

Moreover, Lin Xun had little chance to learn more about martial arts ever since he moved to Feiyun Village as he had only encountered ordinary people there.

All that contributed to his misunderstanding in martial arts training.

After Lin Xun had truly set foot into the Ziyao Empire and entered the vast world where cultivators were as many as clouds and where powers stand in great numbers, his misunderstandings would be swept away.

Experience and insight couldn't be taught, imparted or learned. A cultivator had to explore and comprehend them on their own.

As the saying goes: those who travel ten thousand miles know more than those who read ten thousand books.

.....

When Lin Xun opened his eyes, dawn was breaking and a morning breeze whistled into the cave, bringing a refreshing feeling to the spirit.

After the night-long practice, Lin Xun felt energetic and refreshed. As he walked out of the cave, he saw Gao Guiyong and Zhou Quan were all packed and sitting on the horse waiting for him.

Lin Xun didn't dither. He immediately leaped onto the scaled horse and continued the journey.

It was just that Gao Guiyong and Zhou Quan wore puzzled expressions mixed with a hint of awe when they looked at Lin Xun.

Perplexed, Lin Xun found an opportunity to ask them. "Guys, did something happen last night?"

Gao Guiyong shook his head, but Zhou Quan hesitated for a moment and replied, "Young master, during your training last night, you suddenly stopped breathing and we couldn't detect your existence. We

were so frightened that we thought an enemy had come to attack. It turned out to be just a false alarm.”

Gao Guiyong interrupted, “Yes, it was indeed a false alarm. It seemed that the young master was practicing some extremely unique art that has the mysterious effect of concealing his breathing.”

His voice was filled with amazement and admiration. No ordinary person could possess a cultivation art that could cover up one’s breathing!

Lin Xun’s eyes were suddenly filled with a realization of what happened. He was challenging the Omega Secret Realm then. However, he didn’t explain much to the two guards.

What Zhou Quan said made Lin Xun realize something—If he encountered an enemy he couldn’t defeat, he could find a hiding spot and enter the Omega Secret Realm to prevent the enemy from detecting his presence.

The only drawback was that he would also lose his perception of the outside world, and even if he was discovered, he could die without himself knowing.

Therefore, it was best to avoid resorting to such a method.

While Lin Xun and his people hurried on with their journey, in a secret chamber of Stone Cauldron Alms in Qingyang Tribe, Shi Xuan set down the tea cup in his hand and said with a smile, “As soon as I came back, I heard that Lin Xun single-handedly took down four subordinates of the Wu Corporate and caused a sensation. Is that right?”

[Chapter 60: Scarlet Butterfly Jade Armor](#)

Mu Wansu immediately became irritable at the mention of Lin Xun’s name.

She took a long, slow breath and said, “It’s true, but that kid will get into trouble soon and our Stone Cauldron Alms will have to help clean up after him. He is so hateful.”

Shi Xuan was surprised by her response. “How can you say that?”

Mu Wansu didn’t conceal the matter that happened that day. She briefly recounted the events and afterwards, she smiled coldly. “First Young Master, don’t you think that kid is particularly hateful? He’s just a fox exploiting the tiger’s might!”

Shi Xuan appeared lost in thought, and it was only after a long moment that he clapped his hands and laughed aloud. “Lin Xun, nice one. I only thought he was a good seedling, but I seemed to have underestimated him. He’s only around thirteen to fourteen but he’s so shrewd and capable already. It’s hard to find someone like him!”

His voice was filled with admiration.

Mu Wansu almost thought that she had heard him wrong, and couldn’t help but ask, “First Young Master, that kid has no sense of shame. He’s so crafty and deceitful, why do you always blindly praise him?”

Shi Xuan's smile faded from his lips and he sighed. "Let me ask you a question. Was it his first time in the Qingyang Tribe that day?"

Mu Wansu said, "Indeed."

"Let me ask you again. Do you know why he killed Mad Dog Wu Jie and the others in public rather than keep a low profile when he just came to the Qingyang Tribe?"

"We don't need to make guesses. He must have long decided to force our Stone Cauldron Alms to stand up for him. This is why he dared to be so arrogant." Mu Wansu sounded indignant.

Shi Xuan smiled. "Yes, but you made a mistake. I gifted him that badge. If he doesn't use it, what's the value of the badge in his hands?"

Mu Wansu looked taken aback, but she immediately frowned and said, "But even if he wanted to ask the Stone Cauldron Alms to help him, he could have let us know first. Instead he took action before thinking about the consequences and made our Stone Cauldron Alms fall into a passive position. How ridiculous is that?"

After a pause, she hissed through gritted teeth. "The most hateful thing about him is that he didn't try to humble himself when he came to the Stone Cauldron Alms. Instead he got into a huge fight and created a huge scene. If I wasn't present, it would have turned into a huge mess."

Shi Xuan sighed. "That was his intention."

Mu Wansu's frown deepened. She realized that no matter what she said, it didn't change the first young master's view of Lin Xun. Instead it made him admire Lin Xun even more.

Mu Wansu responded with an aggrieved tone. "I know he did it intentionally and his goal was to attract the attention of Manager Yan Zhen!"

Shi Xuan shook his head. "That's only one of his goals. What's more important for him was to tell everyone that he was in the Stone Cauldron Alms!"

Mu Wansu was utterly perplexed. "Why would he do that?"

Shi Xuan asked, "If Lin Xun had suddenly turned up and asked our Stone Cauldron Alms to deal with Wu Corporation for him, would you and Yan Zhen agree?"

Mu Wansu was hesitant to answer. She knew she wouldn't agree, and she had to admit it. "I don't think I would. He's just a country boy. Even if he held your badge, it wouldn't benefit the Stone Cauldron Alms to be on unfriendly terms with Wu Corporation just for him. We would have at most protected his life."

Shi Xuan nodded. "Yan Zhen no doubt would have done the same as you. This was why Lin Xun played an unexpected move. His move drew the people from the Wu Corporation to the Stone Cauldron Alms and forced you to make that decision."

"If the people of the Stone Cauldron Alms had retreated, we would have become the laughingstock of the Qingyang Tribe and that would tarnish the entire Stone Cauldron Alms' reputation. If our Stone Cauldron Alms had chosen to quiet down the matter so as to avoid any trouble and protected only Lin

Xun, we would appear weak. If people think our Stone Cauldron Alms are afraid of the Wu Corporation, it would be detrimental to our reputation.”

Shi Xuan couldn't help but laugh. “You all saw the result. Wu Corporation was forced to admit defeat and Lin Xun became the final winner.”

Mu Wansu recalled Lin Xun's actions that night and she matched them up with Shi Xuan's explanation. Inexplicably, a slither of terror crept to her heart. “First Young Master, would you have overestimated him?”

Shi Xuan said calmly, “I know you are biased against Lin Xun, but if you calm down and think about it, you won't think the same.”

Mu Wansu fell silent, but she couldn't calm down for a good while. She quietly pondered over Lin Xun's actions but she still found it difficult to approve of them.

“Don't forget that he's just a kid from a remote mountain village. He's only thirteen to fourteen years old yet he managed to cause a storm the first time he arrived at a place like the Qingyang Tribe. He achieved that by just relying on a useless badge that I gifted him,” Shi Xuan marveled, “He's not ordinary.”

Mu Wansu clearly looked frustrated and unconvinced. “It's a badge from you, First Young Master, how could it be useless? He would have been hacked into eight parts if he didn't have your badge.”

Shi Xuan glanced at Mu Wansu, frowning. “If Lin Xun didn't have that badge, he would have thought of another way given the ability and intelligence he had demonstrated. At least, he wouldn't expose his identity to Wu Corporation so soon. Remember, never let your emotions affect your decisions. Otherwise it could lead to huge mistakes.”

A look of fear washed over Mu Wansu's face. She nodded, saying, “I will remember First Young Master's lesson.”

Shi Xuan thought for a moment and suddenly he asked, “Wansu, have you been to the Forbidden City?”

Mu Wansu shook her head. “That's the empire's capital. I likely won't ever have the chance to go there in my lifetime.”

Shi Xuan continued, “If you have the opportunity to enter the Forbidden City one day, but your enemies, who were much stronger than you, saw you enter the city and they want to kill you, what would you do then?”

Mu Wansu pursed her lips. “Either run away or seek the help of others.”

“But if others don't want to offend your enemies, what would you do?”

Mu Wansu's expression changed dramatically.

She realized that Shi Xuan was comparing her with Lin Xun.

Indeed, the circumstances in which Lin Xun, who was from a remote mountain village, came to the Qingyang Tribe would be similar to Mu Wansu entering the Forbidden City from Donglin City. If she were to face a similar situation to that of Lin Xun, what would she do?

Understanding dawned on Mu Wansu's face as she drew a deep breath. She then bowed respectfully, "Thank you, First Young Master, for your lesson."

But in her heart, her prejudice towards Lin Xun remained. He had taken advantage of her too many times and had humiliated her time and time again. How could she forgive him completely?

Mu Wansu had come to a decision — First Young Master may admire Lin Xun, but if I run into Lin Xun again, I won't give him the chance to take advantage of me!

Shi Xuan smiled while waving his hand. "This is just a small matter. Just pay more attention to it in the future. After all, Lin Xun is still very young and lacks experience. It will take a long time for him to rise to the top. If he could set foot into the Forbidden City someday, I might personally ask him to join Stone Cauldron Alms. As for now, we should maintain a good relationship with him. Whether he becomes a dragon or a snake will depend on him."

Mu Wansu nodded repeatedly. "Quite right."

Shi Xuan glanced at her and couldn't help shaking his head. He knew that it would be difficult to resolve Mu Wansu's prejudice towards Lin Xun so he didn't try any more.

Suddenly, Shi Xuan remembered something and said ruminatively, "Now that Xie Yutang had slaughtered the golden flame beast and likely took the Origin Aeth Crystal, he will ask the elders of his family to help him construct a rune armament. If he succeeds, his strength will become even more terrifying. At that time, the ranking of the top thirty in the empire will no doubt change..."

Mu Wansu exclaimed, "A rune armament is that powerful?"

Shi Xuan nodded. "It's the secret skill of the Xie Family from the Black Cloth Alley. A Rune Armament can produce unbelievable power with the Xie Family's skill."

He suddenly stood up and his face bore a look of determination. "I should make a trip home. Xie Yutang has found his opportunity, but I won't just give up."

Mu Wansu quickly asked. "First Young Master, what about the peerless treasure? Are we just going to give up like that?"

Shi Xuan shook his head. "There is no need to investigate anymore. If my speculation is correct, the treasure might not exist at all. Even if it does, it most likely has been taken already. Don't forget that the peerless treasure was originally just a conjecture from the Heavenly Seer, the imperial stargazing platform. If it's not true, it isn't worth us wasting more energy."

While speaking, he had already pushed open the door, and he then left.

On that day, not only Shi Xuan gave up the search, many top influential figures in the Great Three Thousand Mountains were also discouraged to have found nothing and left as a result.

This storm brought about by the peerless treasure silently came to an end after Xie Yutang killed the golden flame beast.

But the storm in the Great Three Thousand Mountain hadn't ended because the huge waves brought about by Liu Yukun's death had only just begun.

But for now, all of that seemed to have nothing to do with Lin Xun.

After traveling for around another day, Lin Xun finally saw the familiar outline of Feiyun Village in the evening. It was only then that he could completely relax.

Other than a few attacks from wild beasts along the way, he had encountered no more obstacles.

"Uncle Lin Xun is back!"

The children playing at the village entrance broke into cheers upon seeing Lin Xun's figure, and a kid rushed into the village to spread the news.

Not long afterwards, Village Chief Xiao Tianren came out with a group of villagers. They all beamed with excitement and joy.

Lin Xun felt a warmth in his heart. Perhaps only in Feiyun Village would he feel such precious warmth.

Lin Xun somersaulted off his horse and introduced Gao Guiyong and Zhou Qian to Xiao Tianren. After a brief chat about the goods, he hurried home alone.

He didn't see Xia Zhi among the villagers. Even though he was only gone for around four to five days, he was deeply worried about how the little girl was doing.

When he pushed open the courtyard door, he saw Xia Zhi eating alone at the stone table under the weeping willow tree.

The setting sun sprinkled onto the little girl's body, bathing her in a tranquil and sacred glow.

When Xia Zhi saw Lin Xun, she got up and retrieved a pair of chopsticks from the kitchen. Then, she scooped Lin Xun a bowl of rice and set it on the opposite side of the table and said, "Let's eat."

There was no excitement and no cheering, and she didn't even ask how he was doing.

However, Lin Xun smiled and warmth filled his heart. If he remembered correctly, it was the first time that Xia Zhi got him a bowl and served him food ever since she came into his life.

This was how Xia Zhi welcomed him, which was as unique as herself.