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As Lin Zhong clasped the spear, he stood tall and straight while surrounded by obscure gray rune patterns and arrays. Although he had been peerless in the past, now, he exuded a chilling and powerful aura.

That was the sign of a perfect rune armament!

The spear seemed different from other aeth tools and aeth treasures in the world. It had transformed into an armor in a cultivator's hand and made their strength and aura soar to an earth-shaking level!

That was the origin of the name 'rune armament.'

The audience fell utterly silent, the powerful figures' eyes blazed with amazement, and the rune masters lost their composure.

Unquestionably, it was a perfect rune armament, and its unique aura vividly demonstrated the meaning of perfection.

Swoosh!

A figure suddenly came onto the stage and aimed a sword at Lin Zhong.

It was a stern-looking man in black. The Stone Cauldron Alms had specially sent out a Heaven Ascension cultivator to test the power of the rune armament.

The black-robed man's sword was bright-red like fire. It was a rare, precious and valuable heaven-grade treasure from the Stone Cauldron Alms.

Hua—

With a flash, the sword transformed into a shower of flames and lashed down.

Every flame tongue had been transformed from unrivaled sword intent and filled with fire imago power.

Millions of flames poured down in every direction like a swarm of hornets. Its power seemed capable of incinerating everything in its way.

"Ma Teng! Fire Rain Sword Art!" someone exclaimed.

They had recognized the black-robed man and also the attack, which was a fierce sword art.

The exclamation was quickly followed by an unbelievable scene.

Just as the flame shower was about to cover Lin Zhong, a gush of gray hazy light rushed out and obliterated it!

It was as effortless as the marks of chalk on a chalkboard being removed with plain water.

Everyone gaped. Lin Zhong had countered Ma Teng's strong attack without any visible movement.

This was the power of the rune armament!

Ma Teng launched a more terrifying follow-up attack. It gathered all his strength and many cultivators of the older generation couldn't help but marvel at the powerful strike.

At that moment, Lin Zhong finally made a move. He lightly drew the spear across the air.

Everything stilled as though time had stopped.

A giant invisible hand seemed to have caught the ferocious, dragon-like sword intent as it froze in the air.

Kacha!

Frightening shattering noises filled the air as the area around Lin Zhong collapsed and crumbled like a mirror.

That...

Everyone's eyeballs almost fell out of their sockets. The air collapsed! What kind of terrifying power is needed to achieve that?

Rumble!

The air continued to collapse like crashing tidal waves, only that the waves were formed from the turbulence in the air.

Unsurprisingly, the fiery, dragon-like sword intent disintegrated and disappeared like a lone boat drowning silently in a stormy sea.

Everyone widened their eyes again. Even terrifying figures such as Steel-Blood King and Fortune God Shi couldn't stop their expressions from changing.

The destructive power contained in that blow had reached an unimaginable level!

Boom!

In the end, the sword in Ma Teng's hand shattered and scattered like rain.

An uproar erupted from the audience, and many people sprang up. The turbulent air formed from the explosion had engulfed the stage and was on the verge of drowning Ma Teng!

It was at that moment when the spear quivered in Lin Zhong's hand and a blast of invisible aura burst forth and silently stilled and dispersed the destructive explosive force.

The terrifying scene of destruction vanished in an instant! Many people almost vomited blood from the shock!

Ma Teng was drenched in cold sweat, and his face was deathly pale.

Although he knew in advance that he was here to test the power of the new rune armament, he had distinctly sensed the aura of death and couldn't fight back in the slightest. Utter despair and helplessness had descended upon him earlier.

Everyone was aghast, including Luo Feng, Lady Baohua and other rune masters, as well as the powerful figures with pinnacle power.

It became so deadly silent that the drop of a pin could be heard.

Clang!

Lin Zhong stored the rune armament back in the bronze box.

At the same time, Li An reappeared on the stage and said out loud, "The spear is called Shattered Tragedy, and its power is secret."

Its introduction and description might be simple, but it was incredibly powerful!

Shattered Tragedy Spear!

Everyone had to admit that it was a unique rune armament as they recalled the earth shattering scenes of the tidal-wave-like explosion and the scalp-numbing aura of destruction.

It was incredibly unique, like a blade of destruction, obliterating everything in its way!

After a moment of silence, heated discussions broke out in the audience.

Everyone who had witnessed the heaven-defying destructive power of Shattered Tragedy would agree that it was unique.

Moreover, it had only demonstrated a small part of its true power. Perhaps only Lin Xun and Lin Zhong knew of its true ability.

Even so, the treasure was unrivaled and was in no way inferior to many of the top prestigious rune armaments in the empire.

"The empire has gained another peerless treasure."

"Undoubtedly, the appearance of Shattered Tragedy will quake the world like its destructive power."

"Amazing, it's amazing! Lin Xun is so young, but he already has the ability to cast rune armaments. He has a boundless future." Clamors of discussion erupted.

Lady Baohua seemed to have calmed down. She sat there quietly, lost in thought. Despite the calmness on her face, her heart was still churning because, unlike the others, she, as a rune founder, understood the uniqueness of Shattered Tragedy.

This wasn't because of its terrifying power but its crafting method. It basically defied heaven's laws and even contained wisps of the power of creation!

She couldn't imagine how Lin Xun made the spear or who imparted such a secret crafting technique to him but it somehow felt familiar.

She fell into contemplation.

"Sword of Apocalypse..."

Lady Baohua's eyes suddenly lit up. It dawned on her that the Shattered Tragedy Spear was very similar to the empress' Sword of Apocalypse in terms of aura.

"Teacher, the Sword of Apocalypse has already been repaired by Lin Xun. Did you notice something?" Feng Qingyou asked curiously, finding that her teacher was acting a little different compared to usual.

"I understand." Lady Baohua's expression turned complicated as she had a faint idea who Lin Xun's master was.

"Qingyou, do you want to follow Lin Xun and learn from him?" Lady Baohua suddenly asked.

Feng Qingyou stared at her blankly then her dark eyes widened. "Teacher, do you want me to learn from him?"

Lady Baohua nodded before she said in a distracted manner, "You can think about it."

Feng Qingyou lightly bit her plump lips, feeling a little glum. Lin Xun was younger than her so it would be embarrassing for her to study under him!

Even if she knew that Lin Xun was remarkable and that she couldn't compare to him, she couldn't bow down to him because of her strong pride.

Discussions continued within the audience, and not a single person had left because they knew that the conference had only just begun. Lin Xun's appearance was the true highlight of the conference!

They were all powerful figures who could shake the world, but why were they all gathered together?

In addition to seeing a newly-born rune armament, they wanted to compete for an opportunity.

"Didn't someone just now say that Lin Xun was showing off? Now, I want to ask, is Lin Xun showing off or was someone acting condescending because of his age?" Old Mo remarked aloud, reminding everyone of the recent dispute.

As expected, Luo Feng's face darkened, but he managed to maintain his composure and said calmly, "The doubts only make the treasure more unique and extraordinary. Old Mo, you are too petty."

After a pause, he continued, "Moreover, you all know that luck is very important when casting a rune armament. Even if Lin Xun succeeded this time, it doesn't mean that he will successfully craft similar treasures every time in the future."

Luo Feng believed that Lin Xun was only able to make the Shattered Tragedy Spear out of luck, and he wouldn't be as lucky every time.

However, Luo Feng was right because there were many similar examples in the past. The crafting of a rune armament was associated with a high failure rate, and even rune founders had frequently failed in the past.

Otherwise, how would rune armaments be so rare and precious?

However, it sounded different when it came from Luo Feng's mouth. Anyone who wasn't stupid could tell.

Old Mo's face also darkened. In his opinion, Luo Feng's words were too vicious. He is cursing Lin Xun!

Before Old Mo could retort, a calm and indifferent voice rang out—

“So, Master Luo Feng, are you certain that I won't be able to make another rune armament in the future?”

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The elegant figure was clothed in a moon-white robe, and his long black hair was loosely tied behind his head, highlighting his handsome, warm face and clear, deep eyes.

All gazes shifted to the stage when Lin Xun appeared and disbelief shone in their eyes.

He's so young!

He looked like the son of an ordinary next-door neighbor. Most youngsters of his age would still be training hard and trying to improve themselves. They might be full of youthful energy, but they needed time to ferment to stand out from the crowd.

However, Lin Xun was different. He had greatly surpassed his peers in terms of achievements and shocked the whole world.

Who would have imagined that a teenager would reach a transcendent stage in the art of runes, surpass his seniors, and put many older generation rune grandmasters to shame?

Who would have thought that the youngster would rise like a star and remain standing tall and never be knocked down in the many storms and hardships he had been through?

What was a heaven pride?

He was!

He excelled above the rest, had unrivaled talent, and was different from the world!

Everyone couldn't help but have the same thought—If a monster-like teenager like him was given enough time to rise, what sort of dazzling brilliance would bloom from him?

Only Luo Feng's face was overcast with a frown. Lin Xun's words felt a little rude to him.

“Haha, what I said is true. Since ancient times, no rune master could guarantee success when casting a rune armament. Little friend, you are amazing, and I also appreciate talents but you are still too young and so you might not know much about rune armaments.” Luo Feng chuckled as he spoke calmly, showing the demeanor of a rune master. But his second half of the sentence was clearly a jab at Lin Xun.

He implied that although Lin Xun was amazing, he was too young and had much more to learn!

Lin Xun smiled on the stage. “I heard you say that Old Mo is not qualified to ask you to explain anything, but now I want to say to you that, although I am young, I have made a rune armament. Do you think you are qualified to give me advice?”

Everyone's twitched, surprised that Lin Xun would bite Luo Feng the moment he appeared on the stage!

Who was Luo Feng?

He was one of the few great rune founders from the Divine Workshop and enjoyed a lofty and transcendent status, respected by the rune masters all over the world.

Lin Xun's direct and impolite words shocked everyone.

However, after a thought, everyone sighed. Who in the Forbidden City didn't know that Lin Xun was a fearless and perverse young man?

He disregarded even the imperial family and the high clans such as Chi Clan, the Zuo Clan and the Qin Clan, so how would he be afraid of Luo Feng?

Luo Feng's face darkened. The fact that a young junior had questioned him in front of everyone was undoubtedly a provocation to him and an insult to his authority and dignity.

"Lin Xun, it is understandable that youngsters like you are more arrogant, but if you think you can act lawlessly and disregard everyone because you made a rune armament then you are wrong!" Luo Feng said in an intimidating manner.

"Luo Feng, what do you mean by that? When did Lin Xun act lawlessly? Don't put that label on him for no reason. This all started because you took advantage of your seniority to patronize other people. Lin Xun only retorted once, but it already made you so furious," Old Mo snapped.

He knew that words could sometimes destroy a person. Luo Feng had a lofty status in the world of runes, so his words would no doubt create rumors and spark hatred for Lin Xun.

That would be a serious blow to the youngster's reputation.

"Old Mo, please pay attention to your identity. You are still working for the Divine Workshop of the empire. Do you think I won't dare to punish you for disrespecting your superiors?" Luo Feng responded in an imposing tone.

He was truly infuriated. All famous figures had gathered today, but Lin Xun and Old Mo had repeatedly provoked him and embarrassed him. How could he stand them?

"Are you threatening me?" Old Mo's face was overcast with a fierce frown.

Lin Xun suddenly laughed out loud. "I would have almost forgotten this if you didn't remind me, but it's not too late now. Now, I officially invite Old Mo to join Mind Cleansing Peak of the Lin Family." His expression turned completely serious.

He had long wanted to work with Old Mo and now that Luo Feng threatened Old Mo, he wouldn't be polite to him.

His words caused an uproar in the audience. It was just a conference, but it brought up a grudge between Old Mo and Luo Feng. No one had expected that.

Old Mo's lips quivered. He knew that Lin Xun suddenly appeared and confronted Luo Feng to help him!

"Ridiculous! Young man, you are too arrogant! How can you take away a rune master of the Divine Workshop as you wish?" Luo Feng laughed out loud. "Masters like Old Mo who made the new type of

Violet Hero Battleship have an extremely important role in the empire. I believe no one will allow Old Mo to leave.” He said resolutely, giving no chance for Lin Xun to speak.

Everyone nodded secretly. The Divine Workshop held an extremely important place in the empire and was under the direct control of the imperial family and the military.

It is indeed very difficult for Lin Xun to take Old Mo.

However, Lin Xun stated coldly, “You are wrong. The new Violet Hero Battleship was designed and developed by me and Old Mo. You guys forcibly took Old Mo away. He didn’t want to serve you all. I also would have been captured already if Old Mo hadn’t protected me. I haven’t settled this with you yet!”

His announcement shocked the audience!

No one had ever thought that Lin Xun had contributed to the new Violet Hero Battleship!

But they were more shocked that the people from Divine Workshop had attacked Lin Xun and Old Mo!

For a good while, it was utterly silent and everyone donned complicated expressions.

“Nonsense!” Luo Feng raged, his hair sticking up in anger.

“You know best if this is true or not. I don’t have time to argue with you. I will seek justice in the future.”

Lin Xun’s expression was calm, but his dark eyes flashed coldly. He had suppressed this matter in his heart for many years and now that everything had been brought to light, he wouldn’t be polite any more.

He had to do so to repay Old Mo for his kindness back then.

“Are you challenging the Divine Workshop?” Luo Feng’s eyes were filled with chilling rage.

“The Divine Workshop serves the empire and does not belong to you. You are not qualified to represent the Divine Workshop.” Lin Xun’s expression became calmer. “I am doing this to find the culprit and get justice for Old Mo.”

“How ridiculous! This is too ridiculous.”

Luo Feng sprang up angrily. “You’re just a junior. Do you really think you can take Old Mo away from the Divine Workshop?”

The situation had become much more tense and was almost spiraling out of control.

“Brother Luo, be quiet. What happened back then only involved you, Old Mo and I, so don’t let others see us as jokes.” Lady Baohua suddenly sighed, and a tinge of frustration crossed her elegant and beautiful face.

Everyone was shocked again. They realized that the conflict involved some secrets that no one knew about.

“Yes, this matter started because of the three of us. Lin Xun, you don’t need to interfere. Let me settle it myself. I have been a fool for half my life, but if I don’t personally put an end to this grudge, I will die with regret!” Old Mo said unwaveringly.

He cast a pleading look mixed with gratitude at Lin Xun, which made Lin Xun's heart tremble.

He looked taken aback and finally sighed and didn't say another word.

"Hmph!" Luo Feng snorted coldly, flung his sleeve, and stormed away.

Everyone looked at each other in bewilderment. No one expected that a high and mighty rune founder of the Divine Workshop would storm away in a rage.

What kind of relationship was there between him, Old Mo and Lady Baohua?

No one knew.

Not even Lin Xun.

However, there was no doubt that Lin Xun's interference had brought the grudge between them back up and an end to it would occur soon.

"Old Mo, no matter what, I will always stand by your side if you need me. Let's see if Luo Feng dares to do anything to you!" Lin Xun whispered to Old Mo.

Old Mo's expression was complicated.

This little disturbance came to an end.

The atmosphere wasn't as joyous and lively as before, but when Lin Xun announced that he would personally craft a rune armament to anyone with the antidote to the Demon Tribulation Poison, everyone became stirred up.

In truth, many people had previously heard the news but only then did they receive confirmation from Lin Xun and knew that it wasn't a joke.

Demon Tribulation Poison!

It was an extremely rare poison and was deadly and mysterious. It was rumored to come from the Darkness Race. Once inflicted, a cultivator's cultivation base would be blocked, and demons would infiltrate their hearts.

All the powerful figures present began to rack their brains. They had already made the decision to do everything they could do to search for an antidote for the Demon Tribulation Poison after the conference ended.

"Of course, you will have to prepare the rune materials for the rune armament yourself. I can't afford them because I am now very poor after crafting the Shattered Tragedy Spear." Lin Xun shrugged.

A burst of friendly laughter sounded from the audience.

Not long after that, Lin Xun stepped off the stage and left the rest of the conference for Li An to preside over.

"Everyone, our Stone Cauldron Alms have obtained Master Lin Xun's consent and will provide a special benefit to those in attendance. On this special occasion, we will auction a special place!" Li An's words captured everyone's attention.

“The lucky person who wins the auction will have the opportunity to commission Master Lin Xun to craft a rune armament for them!”

The audience buzzed with excitement. Many people’s spirits were lifted. The opportunity that they had been waiting for had come!

Correct, Lin Xun’s special place was like an opportunity to them.

This was because it was related to rune armament!

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“Everyone, as a significant place is on the line, there is something that has to be said.” Li An assumed a solemn expression as he said aloud on the stage, “Those connected with the Chi Clan, the Zuo Clan and the Qin Clan are not allowed to participate in the auction.”

The audience suddenly fell silent. The meaning of the instruction was too obvious—It was an announcement to the world that Lin Xun wouldn’t make any weapon for those three high clans!

“Similarly, after the auction, if our Stone Cauldron Alms finds out that the place has fallen into the hands of people connected to the Chi, Zuo and Qin Clans, we have the right to withdraw it.”

Li An’s words also represented the stance of the Stone Cauldron Alms, so it inevitably caused another uproar among the powerful and influential figures.

Stone Cauldron Alms had decided to stand behind Lin Xun and wouldn’t mind offending the three high clans to do so!

Many people couldn’t help but sigh to themselves. Lin Xun is indeed completely different from before. His rapid rise has made behemoths such as Stone Cauldron Alms state their stance and support him publicly.

The auction started not long after that. The reserve price was thirty thousand gold coins—the cost of a brand new Violet Hero Battleship! However, everyone felt it was well worth the price after seeing the wonderful power of Shattered Tragedy Spear.

“Fifty thousand!”

The price instantly jumped to fifty thousand gold coins, which made many people inhale sharply.

The gold coins of the empire were extremely pure, and fifty thousand was a huge amount even to a major clan.

The auction of a rune armament had started such crazy bidding! Even the influential figures who were eager to bid started to hesitate.

“Sixty thousand!”

Steel-Blood King Ning Bugui shouted out, causing East Sea King Ye Qingtian to frown and mutter, “Old man, what are you doing?”

A crafty look came to Ning Bugui's eyes and then quickly dissipated as he whispered back, "You might not know, but I am helping Lin Xun earn more. There are many big, fat lambs here. It would be a waste to miss such a good opportunity to trick them into bidding higher."

Ye Qingtian smiled. "Then I'll join in the fun too."

But before Ye Qingtian could make an offer, someone made a sky-high bid. "One hundred thousand gold coins!"

It suddenly quieted down, and many people's faces turned overcast. For many, one thousand gold coins might not be an excessive amount, but it was an astonishing bid for a commission.

After all, Lin Xun wasn't the only one in the world able to craft a rune armament.

Immediately, many withdrew from the auction because they realized that the bid was made by the Xie Clan, one of the seven high clans!

Undoubtedly, the auction would soon become an arena for the behemoths. The other less powerful clans and sects would likely not be able to intervene at all.

Ning Bugui and Ye Qingtian exchanged glances with each other and grinned. They planned help, but the situation had changed too rapidly and they were no longer needed.

"One hundred and ten thousand."

"One hundred and thirty thousand!"

"One hundred and fifty thousand!"

As everyone predicted, the bids were all made from incredibly powerful forces such as the Xie Clan, the Hua Clan and the Song Clan. Even the marquis of the imperial family, the military, and Rune Master Association took part in the auction.

"Two hundred thousand."

The representative from the Hua Clan frowned irritably.

The eye-popping bid made everyone fall silent.

Suddenly, a gentle voice sounded. "Three hundred thousand."

Whoa!

An uproar erupted from the audience. It was an incredibly astonishing amount as it was enough to purchase a large-scale battleship from the empire.

However, everyone was more surprised to find that Lady Baohua from Qinglu Academy was the one who made the bid!

However, after a thought, it made a lot of sense. As a senior rune founder, Lady Baohua wouldn't have shallow pockets!

A saying had been circulating the empire for the longest time—an endless stream of golden sand flowed between the fingers of rune masters.

“When one’s status and cultivation reach a certain level, gold and money in the secular world become worthless. Can money be exchanged for an inheritance art? Can money be exchanged for a chance for immortality? No!” someone sighed and many people echoed the words.

“So, I am determined to win the auction.”

Suddenly, a hearty laughter rang from the audience followed by an astonishing bid. “Five hundred thousand!”

“Sea Subdue King! It’s Sea Subdue King!”

“Hey, there’s going to be a good show. Even the great figures of the imperial family can’t sit still anymore,” someone whispered.

Sea Subdue King Zhao Jiuxiao was a legendary figure. Before him, even Ning Bugui and Fortune God Shi were particularly modest, and it wasn’t due to fear but out of respect.

Lady Baohua contemplated for a moment and shook her head, signaling her withdrawal from the auction. Half a million gold coins was already a crazy amount.

Regardless of how wealthy she was, she had to weigh up whether the amount was worth it.

“Six hundred thousand!”

The representative of the Hua Clan bit his lips and made another terrifying bid through gritted teeth. He was determined to outbid the others. Among the seven high clans, only the Hua Clan lacked a rune armament, so they couldn’t miss out on such a good opportunity.

They wouldn’t back down even if they were up against figures from the imperial family such as Zhao Jiuxiao.

“Seven hundred thousand!”

However, the Hua Clan representative’s heart sank when a different person interfered.

It was the Xie Clan!

“I’m sorry, but our ninth young master is about to train in the Ancient Wasteland Domain so we urgently need a good rune armament. We are also determined to win the commission place,” a powerful figure of the Xie Clan said with a smile.

The ninth young master of the Xie Family was, of course, Little Sword Lord Xie Yutang!

“Haha, it seems like everyone has the same goal. My nephew is also planning to go to the Ancient Wasteland Domain. As an elder, I plan to give him a treasure that will protect him there.” Zhao Jiuxiao chuckled heartily before making another sky-high bid of eight hundred thousand gold coins.

Many people couldn’t calm down as they realized that the auction had become a bloody and intense battle. It was many people’s first time witnessing such a crazy and shocking scene.

“Nine hundred thousand!” the Hua Clan representative said through gritted teeth.

“One million!” the Xie Clan representative said resolutely.

“One million and one hundred thousand!” Zhao Jiuxiao was even more determined.

Crazy!

The eye-popping numbers one after another struck many people dumb. They had never come across such an intense auction.

In the end, Sea Subdue King outbid everyone with a tremendous bid of one million and six hundred thousand. The audience became deathly silent, and even Li An froze on the stage from the shock.

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On that day, the news that Lin Xun’s rune armament commission was auctioned for an unbelievable amount of one million and six hundred thousand gold coins caused another sensation in the Forbidden City.

Discussions about the Shattered Tragedy Spear filled every corner of the city. Many people were curious about the mysterious power of the rune armament that survived a lightning tribulation after learning about the intense auction.

The true power of the Shattered Tragedy Spear was kept secret, but everyone who attended the conference was determined that it was a unique peerless treasure and no other rune armament in the world could rival it.

Many people couldn’t help but debate whether the sky high price of one million and six hundred thousand gold coins from Sea Subdue King was worth it.

“It’s worth it!”

That was the view of Lady Baohua of Qinglu Academy. Her simple response had incredible persuasive power.

Meanwhile, Lin Xun rose to fame from the conference, and he became the only rune founder of the younger generation, attracting the attention of the entire world!

A rune grandmaster who could craft a rune armament by himself no longer needed to be certified. He justifiably deserved the title rune founder!

His masterpiece Shattered Tragedy Spear became another amazing treasure of the empire and made countless rune masters go crazy.

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Lin Xun was unaware of all that as he and Lin Zhong had already left through a secret passage under the arrangement of Stone Cauldron Alms when the auction started.

Therefore, he didn’t see the intense auction with his own eyes, and, naturally, he didn’t know that someone offered one million and six thousand gold coins for his commission.

Lin Xun was sitting in a carriage with Lin Zhong and headed for Mind Cleansing Peak.

He hadn't returned to Mind Cleansing Peak for a long while, and he had some matters to discuss with Spirit Vulture and the others.

"Third Old Zhu has already gone to train in the Cyclic Derivation Tower in the depths of the palace. If there is no accident, it should not be long before he breaks through into the Cyclic Derivation Stage...At the conference, I also announced that I am searching for the antidote for the Demon Tribulation Poison. Once we have the antidote, it will solve Spirit Vulture's pain and suffering and he will regain his former powers..." Lin Xun muttered as he pondered his next step.

As Lin Zhong gazed at the handsome young man beside him, he suddenly felt a little melancholy. Young Master is only sixteen years old. Outsiders only see his beautiful side. Who knows how much pressure and danger he has endured over the years?

Boom!

Suddenly, a terrifying wave of explosion sounded from afar, snapping Lin Xun and Lin Zhong out of their deep thoughts.

"What happened?" asked Lin Zhong.

"There is an ambush. Distinguished guests, don't worry. The Stone Cauldron Alms have dispatched enough people to ensure that you two are safely returned to Mind Cleansing Peak." The driver of the carriage was a gray-haired man from Stone Cauldron Alms who was ordered to escort Lin Xun and Lin Zhong home.

"It seems like they can't hold back anymore," Lin Xun said calmly and ruminatively.

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Clouds had suddenly come down, and it started to drizzle. Fog suddenly started to form, and there was a dampness in the air.

A jeweled carriage carrying Lin Xun and Lin Zhong navigated through the cobweb-like streets at a leisurely pace.

Along the way, they occasionally heard screams and thunder-like deafening sounds of battle.

However, they quickly ceased like nothing had happened.

Lin Xun calmly sat in the carriage because he didn't need to guess to know that the ambushes along the way were from either the Chi, Zuo or Qin Clans.

Or perhaps, all three clans had joined forces.

They lay in ambush because they knew that Lin Xun would hold a conference in Stone Cauldron Alms.

Lin Xun just didn't expect them to be so impatient. They had clearly realized that he had become a huge threat to them due to his rapid rise, and they couldn't allow him to grow anymore.

“Fortunately, Stone Cauldron Alms has dispatched many people. Otherwise, we would have to face unpredictable fierce battles along the way...”

Lin Xun lifted the curtain inside the carriage and peered into the distance. He happened to see a blood-red flower blooming afar—it was tragic but somehow beautiful.

Lin Zhong reminded him, “Young Master, don’t let your guard down. They must have come prepared.”

Lin Xun nodded, “Uncle Zhong, in the empire’s history, has a top aristocratic clan ever been destroyed?”

“I don’t think so.” Lin Zhong shook his head.

Then, he suddenly smiled bitterly. “Young Master, have you forgotten that our Lin Clan was also one of the high clans five hundred years ago, but now...”

Lin Xun fell silent, falling into deep thought.

The jeweled carriage continued to clatter along the streets. Although it was calm along the way, they both knew that bloody battles were breaking out in places they couldn’t see.

Chi!

Suddenly, the carriage screeched to an abrupt halt and the wheels rubbed fiercely against the ground. At the same time, the driver cried out, “Watch out!”

Boom!

A terrifying power struck, creating a destructive force. Caught in the storm, the jeweled carriage was being crushed to smithereens.

Without any hesitation, Lin Xun and Lin Zhong darted out of it.

At the same time, the jeweled carriage densely covered with runes exploded into pieces.

Lin Xun’s eyes narrowed.

Fortune God Shi had personally arranged the jeweled carriage for Lin Xun, and it was strong enough to withstand a full-strength attack of a Heaven Ascension cultivator, which meant that the attacker had to possess Cyclic Derivation strength!

As expected, a fierce battle was taking place in the distance. The old man driver was battling a black-robed figure.

It was a battle between great cultivators of the Cyclic Derivation Stage. The techniques, skills and attacks were all utterly terrifying as it drew upon the power of the great Dao.

Lin Xun’s heart sank. Although Stone Cauldron Alms had dispatched secret forces to protect him, the enemies had sent out terrifying cultivators to kill him.

Cyclic Derivation cultivators!

They were regarded as pillar-like existences of the aristocratic clans and wouldn’t be dispatched rashly.

Shua!

Suddenly, a shaft of blinding sword light flashed across the sky, brimming with murderous intent.

At that moment, an indescribable sense of danger rushed to Lin Xun's heart. His pupils rapidly shrank, and he felt stinging pain all over his skin.

Another Cyclic Derivation cultivator!

More than one great cultivator of the Cyclic Derivation Stage had been dispatched!

"You want to die!" Lin Zhong thundered as he soared into the sky.

Then, with a clang, Shattered Tragedy Spear rose into the sky, pouring out a hazy gray aura to shroud Lin Zhong.

Rumble—

Another fierce battle broke out.

Meanwhile, Lin Xun noted that the owner of the blinding sword light was also covered in black robes with their face concealed.

They were in the Forbidden City, the capital of the empire. Although they were on the deserted borders, it was still within the territory of the Forbidden City.

However, the enemy dared to wait in ambush and even dispatched powerful Cyclic Derivation cultivators. That suggested that they would risk everything in order to kill Lin Xun.

"It will be troublesome if another great cultivator of the Cyclic Derivation Stage comes..." A grave expression crossed Lin Xun's handsome face.

As if fulfilling Lin Xun's worries, an unfortunate thing happened. His vision blurred before four pillars of light descended from the sky!

In an instant, everything before him changed. He had fallen into an illusion, a vast expanse of whiteness with only four stone pillars towering into the sky, each occupying the four poles.

Each one was covered with inscriptions of ancient diagrams and patterns and emitted a terrifying sealing force.

Shua!

Lin Xun instantly performed the Hornless Ice Dragon Step, attempting to break free. But regardless of how he maneuvered, he couldn't escape the seal of the four stone pillars!

In other words, the illusion had imprisoned Lin Xun like a cage.

"Time is precious. Little guy, it's time for us to talk."

Suddenly, a figure emerged, also clad in a black robe. Spirals of black light rose from their body and blurred out their face.

As expected, it was another Cyclic Derivation cultivator!

Lin Xun's heart felt incredibly heavy. He knew a life-threatening danger had descended upon him.

“You won’t be so lucky anymore. Under the imprisonment of the Four Coiling Dragon Pillars, even a Life Death Stage King won’t be able to do anything for a good while.” The black-robed man’s voice was gravelly with a touch of cold detachedness.

“What do you want to talk about?”

Lin Xun instantly regained his composure as he could tell that the other party did not intend to attack him right away.

“It’s very simple, release your spirit power and restrain your spirit. If you do as I say, not only can I guarantee that you will live, but you will also live well.”

The black-robed man clasped his hands behind his back as his tall and figure stood spear-straight. He resembled a king of hell with the frightening black light swirling around him.

“Do you want to control me?” Lin Xun scrunched his brows.

The black-robed man scoffed condescendingly. “This is your only way to continue living. Otherwise, do you think I would negotiate with you instead of killing you immediately?”

He seemed very conceited as though he had absolute control of the situation and wasn’t the least worried that Lin Xun could play any tricks.

“What if I don’t agree?” Lin Xun’s calm eyes flashed with a cold light.

“Don’t try to stall for time. You will have to agree today—”

The black-robed man vanished from the spot, and when he appeared, he was right in front of Lin Xun, clutching his neck and lifting him up.

The speed was too incredible. It was as though he was a ghost or he had teleported. He perfectly demonstrated the power of the Cyclic Derivation Stage and allowed Lin Xun no chance to struggle let alone fight back!

“If I apply even the tiniest bit of force, your life will end in a split second. Little guy, let’s face it, even if you have heaven-defying talent, you haven’t fully grown yet. Killing you is as easy as slaughtering a chicken,” remarked the black-robed man leisurely.

He didn’t try to insult Lin Xun, but instead unintentionally looked down on him.

To a great Cyclic Derivation cultivator, a Spirit Sea teenager was indeed very insignificant.

However, Lin Xun seemed unusually calm even if a hand was around his throat, and he was about to suffocate. “Do you know the consequences of doing this?”

Crack!

Before his voice faded, he grunted in agony, color drained from his face, and his forehead beaded with cold sweat. The black-robed man had snapped his left arm.

Unquestionably, the black-robed man was a cruel person. His threats were direct and his means of forcing Lin Xun to submit were ruthless!!

The black-robed man chuckled. "Little guy, you are too naive. You must know that I have already considered the consequences since I dared to take action today."

Lin Xun only saw the enemy's white teeth, which made them look even more frightening.

"It seems that whatever I say today will be useless. I either submit or die, is that right?" Lin Xun endured the pain and squeezed out a smile.

"Correct, you are a smart kid so I believe you will make a choice that is good for you and me." The black-robed man nodded.

"Pah!" Lin Xun spat out a mouthful of saliva at the man's chin. It scratched his skin and left a trickle of crystal clear liquid.

"Old man, your delusions are so beautiful." Lin Xun's smile became brighter.

The black-robed man didn't respond but it was obvious that the spat had completely enraged him.

Perhaps, he had never thought that someone would spit in his face ever since he started cultivating so he couldn't contain his anger.

A young man awaiting his death dared to humiliate him in such a despicable way. Even an immortal would be provoked!

Bang!

Lin Xun was blasted to the ground, and his bones almost shattered. He couldn't help but let out an agonizing grunt again.

The black-robed man grinned sinisterly. "There's no hurry. I still have a lot of time to torture you before you submit!"

He stomped on Lin Xun and crushed his left hand with a crackle. Bright-red blood flowed down his left arm.

The black-robed man let out a satisfied groan as he listened to the shattering bones and sputtering blood. Then, he raised his foot and aimed for Lin Xun's right hand.

Lin Xun swiftly rolled to the other side.

The black-robed man tutted. "Look, a maggot is writhing on the ground, but unfortunately, I can't stop until I am done venting my anger."

As he was speaking, he stepped on Lin Xun again to utterly humiliate and torture him.

"Old thing—! You think I don't dare to kill myself?" Lin Xun roared, forcing himself to sit up.

The black-robed man looked taken aback.

Suddenly, a black puff shot out from Lin Xun's hand.

The black-robed man casually stretched out his hand and caught the black light.

“Haha, you are still trying to launch a sneak attack? Kid, your bones are really tough! I hope a young man with tough bones like you will be satisfied with torture!” The black-robed man laughed. When he opened his hand and saw a bead of grain-sized worms, he laughed even louder.

The black robed man taunted, “Worms? Haha, do you think you can turn the situation around with these worms?”

However, Lin Xun nodded seriously. “Of course.”

While the black-robed man stared at Lin Xun blankly, the insects in his palm seemed to be awakening from a deep slumber as they burrowed into the skin and flesh of his palm before tunneling into his bloodstream!

They—

The black-robed man trembled inwardly and his face blanched. His years of battle experience helped him sense extreme danger.

He frantically mobilized his power to drive the insects out of his body.

To his surprise, even if his Cyclic Derivation cultivation allowed him to smash mountains and split seas, he couldn’t do so.

The insects seemed invisible and not real. They penetrated everything and couldn’t be stopped or blocked!

No!

The black-robed man shuddered. What kind of damn insects are they? Why are they so mysterious?

Before he could understand what was going on, he felt a sudden, sharp pain in his mind-sea, as if it was being torn apart by a bolt of lightning. He shrieked and writhed around wildly.

That wasn’t all. The insects raced toward his mind-sea like sharks smelling blood and constantly gnawed at and tore at his Spirit.

Even if the Spirit of a Cyclic Derivation cultivator was powerful, it couldn’t fend off such an attack.

“No, no, no—!”

He frantically clutched the sides of his head as he screamed. His body violently twitched from the agonizing pain like he had gone crazy.

Even Lin Xun was horrified. They were the God Devouring Insects that he acquired from the forbidden area of the Blood Wasteland in the Ancient Spirit World. He had brought them back by sealing them in his body.

However, he had never expected them to be so frightening. Not even a great cultivator of the Cyclic Derivation Stage was able to fend them off!

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Chapter 515

"I'm going to kill you!" the black-robed man roared like a madman.

Blood started to seep out from his seven orifices, and his body violently twitched from the sharp agonizing pain.

He had come to slaughter Lin Xun, so he had to take the youth down with him even if he were to die.

He was a Cyclic Derivation cultivator! Even if his Spirit had been severely damaged, he was still terrifying if he went berserk.

Boom!

Black light flooded the sky and caused the air to explode. The power of the great Dao it contained was like the wrath of heaven, filled with destructive energy that could wipe out the world.

Naturally, Lin Xun couldn't just sit still and do nothing. He bolted into the distance with all his strength using the Hornless Ice Dragon Step. His body was ablaze with bright azure light and looked as ethereal as a beam of illusory light.

Shua!

Images of Lin Xun constantly flickered in the air as he sped away.

The Hornless Ice Dragon Step allowed him to navigate the ninth heaven, maneuver inside of inches of space, and hide between dust.

However, the Four Coiling Dragon Pillars had imprisoned him and made it impossible for him to escape.

The black-robed man's attacks were on the verge of drowning him.

Even so, he managed to grasp a chance to squeeze through the slimmest gap and narrowly avoided the attacks.

If not, he would have died an instant death!

After all, that was the power of the Cyclic Derivation Stage, a higher cultivation stage than the Heaven Ascension Stage. A Spirit Sea cultivator couldn't possibly withstand such destructive power.

Fortunately, the black-robed man's Spirit started to collapse, and his attacks grew increasingly disorderly and confused, allowing Lin Xun an opportunity to barely escape the perilous situation.

"Little trash, get out here!" the black-robed man roared like a demon going on a rampage.

Frightening Dao power was released with his roar. Even if Lin Xun had escaped, he still felt a chill in his heart. It was as though he was dancing on the tip of a blade.

Too terrifying!

Even though he was said to possess heaven-defying strength for a Spirit Stage cultivator and could kill even Heaven Ascension cultivators, he still felt suffocating oppressive power in the face of a Cyclic Derivation expert.

The difference in strength between them was too tremendous, and the cultivation levels between them was too great. He felt that he would be no match against the black-robed man even if he wielded the Shattered Tragedy Spear!

Boom!

Lin Xun had no time to think about it any more as the black-robed man's attacks became increasingly crazy and chaotic.

Several times, he was swept into a blast of strong wind while dodging the attacks. His muscles and bones almost shattered, and his blood and qi tumbled violently in his body. It was as if lightning had struck him.

That was undoubtedly the greatest crisis that Lin Xun had encountered ever since he had embarked on the cultivation path. Worst of all, he was imprisoned in an illusionary-like area and isolated from the outside world. He couldn't charge out of it nor could anyone come in. All he could do was dodge with all his strength.

He seemed to be wandering on the path of death—He could lose his life with the slightest bit of carelessness!

"Lin Xun, do you know who I am? You can't kill me, you will be condemned for killing a family member," the black-robed man screamed wildly, his voice becoming hoarse and his black robe tearing apart, revealing his bloodied wrinkled face.

"Old bastard, you should close your eyes and reincarnate as soon as possible!" Lin Xun smirked.

"Ah—Ah—"

The black-robed man dropped to his knees and buried his head in his hands and unleashed an ear-piercing scream. He writhed in agony and twitched constantly. He couldn't bear the pain anymore.

However, Lin Xun didn't dare to let his guard down. He mobilized the Hornless Ice Dragon Step with all his strength.

A counterattack from a Cyclic Derivation expert before his death was no doubt terrifying. Lin Xun wouldn't want the black-robed man to drag him to death with him.

Suddenly, the black-robed man raised his head and glowered at Lin Xun like a berserk beast. His bloodshot eyes were filled with endless hatred and unwillingness.

"I'm going to kill you unworthy descendant!" His voice echoed like a curse and resentment pervaded the air.

In the end, he fell with a thud to the ground. The violent and crazy aura dissipated from his body as he lay there still and silent.

Lin Xun stood guarded from afar.

Swoosh!

Not long after that, streaks of black light shot out from the black-robed man's head. They were God-Devouring Insects!

To Lin Xun's surprise, the insects raced towards him right away.

What a bunch of ungrateful beasts! Lin Xun cursed inwardly.

He didn't try to dodge them, but instead drew a deep breath, discarding all distracting thoughts from his mind. He operated the Little Divine Meditation Art and visualized the Star Cycle.

After a moment, the God Devouring Insects that rushed into his mind-sea were subdued and fell still like they did the last time.

The only difference was that Lin Xun sensed that the sixteen God-Devouring Insects had grown significantly. Their bodies resembled illusory black spots of light, and an ice-cold aura emitted from them.

"Could it be that they can transform and grow themselves after devouring Spirit power?" Lin Xun said thoughtfully.

He carefully sealed the terrifying ancient insects. They deserved full credit for turning his situation around and could be very useful as trump cards in the future.

They are very terrifying and mysterious since they can destroy even a great cultivator of the Cyclic Derivation Stage.

Lin Xun ripped the black cloth off the black-robed man's face and saw that it was an old man with silvery hair and beard.

However, his unkempt face was livid and contorted. Even at death, his face was still painted with hatred and unwillingness.

Whew—

Lin Xun breathed a sigh of relief, and he couldn't help but kick the man in the face.

He still had an indescribable amount of anger and resentment he wanted to vent. He had almost lost his life, so how could he not harbor hatred?

His left arm was broken, his bones had snapped, and his flesh was mangled beyond recognition. All that was thanks to the black-robed man!

Buzz!

The four stone pillars within the illusionary world suddenly flickered, dimmed and blurred. The Four Coiling Dragon Pillars was losing its power without the black-robed man there to control it.

Following a deafening rumble, the illusion exploded and vanished in a shower of light. The four stone pillars turned into four bronze mirrors and clattered to the ground.

With a wave of his sleeve, Lin Xun put away the four bronze mirrors.

Each bronze mirror was only nine inches long yet weighed thousands of pounds!

Diagrams of ancient mythical beasts were engraved across their surfaces. There was an azure dragon roaming a starry river, raising its head and roaring. There was a vermilion bird dancing across the ninth heaven and spewing out seas of flames. There was a beast with a dragon head, a turtle body and a snake tail sitting upright in the sky and looking up to the universe. There was a white tiger treading on mountains of corpses and seas of blood and slaughtering gods and demons across the world.

The four diagrams represented the mighty power of the four divisions, and each one was surrounded by peculiar, mysterious runes of the ancient times.

The Four Coiling Dragon Pillars!

It was a group of secret treasures that had survived endless years. Many parts of it were rusty, mottled and time-worn.

“Not even a Life Death Stage King can break out of it in a short while. They are incredible treasures.”

Lin Xun put them away to investigate further when he had time. Perhaps, they can be used as self-defense treasure in the future.

He finally saw the outside world.

Fierce battles were still happening in the outside world. The old man driver had restrained one of the men in black.

On the other side, Lin Zhong was locked in a fierce battle with another man in black.

However, the two men in black trembled when they noticed the Four Coiling Dragon Pillars had disappeared and Lin Xun had come out alive.

“The mission has failed, leave!”

“Go!”

The two men in black vanished.

They realized that it would be difficult to kill Lin Xun today, so they decisively chose to retreat.

The old man driver and Lin Zhong didn’t give chase as they were worried about Lin Xun’s safety and feared it would be a lure.

“Young Master, I’m so glad you are alive!”

Lin Zhong landed on the ground, his voice trembling with emotion. He had gone all out in the fight and almost went crazy because he was worried about Lin Xun.

Imaginably, he was overjoyed to see Lin Xun still alive.

“I’m fine, Uncle Zhong, do you recognize this person?” Lin Xun pointed to the corpse on the ground.

Lin Zhong glanced at the body, and his expression dramatically changed and his eyes bulged wide open. “Why would it be him?!”

A bad feeling flooded Lin Xun's heart. Lin Zhong's reaction reminded him of the crazy words that the black-robed man had said before his death.

Shua!

Almost subconsciously, Lin Xun put away the body with a wave of his sleeve and then said solemnly, "Uncle Zhong, we shouldn't linger here too long. We should go back first."

Lin Zhong nodded heavily. His face was still dazed like he had just woken up from a dream. The black-robed man's identity seemed to have shaken him to the core.

They darted away and disappeared into the misty rain.

.....

On the same day that the conference ended, news about Lin Xun's assassination attempt spread like wildfire and set off huge waves in the Forbidden City.

Many cultivators felt their hearts palpitating at the news. Lin Xun was a well-known young rune founder, but he had encountered a bloody attack on the day he released the Shattered Tragedy Spear. Who was the culprit?

Naturally, the three high clans, the Chi, Zuo and Qin Clans, were the main suspects because everyone knew that there was an unresolved grudge between them and Lin Xun.

However, no one could be certain because it involved too much. The power of a high clan was enough to make any cultivator feel frightened and dare not make speculations.

Regardless, the assassination attack on Lin Xun attracted the attention of all sects and clans and affected the mental state of everyone in the Forbidden City!

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Chapter 516

Mind Cleansing Peak.

It was drizzling and misty.

Only four people were in the Mind Cleansing Hall—Lin Xun, Lin Zhong, Spirit Vulture and Xiaoke.

Lin Xun's left arm injury had already been treated. His body was full of vitality after being tempered by the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead several times, so he would recover within a few days even without applying medication.

"Lin Feifeng, I never thought it would be him..." Spirit Vulture muttered.

An ice-cold corpse was lying on the ground. It was the black-robed man who died after the God Devouring Insects corroded his Spirit.

No one, including Lin Xun, would have imagined that the black-robed man was Lin Feifeng, the Patriarch of the Flying Peak Lin Clan!

Based on seniority, Lin Xun should have addressed him as Fourth Grandfather!

The atmosphere in the hall became heavy.

Lin Xun finally understood the reason why Lin Feifeng had yelled at him, calling him an unworthy descendent just as he was about to die!

"He must have already known about Young Master's identity but he had no scruples to capture and kill him. Isn't that heartless and cruel? He is worse than a beast! He is not worthy of being in the Lin Clan! He is an embarrassment!" Lin Zhong thundered, and his eyes almost popped out from anger.

He had completely lost his composure as he didn't expect a member of the Lin Family would attack Lin Xun!

How ruthless was it for an elder to try to kill a junior of their family?!

"Fortunately, Young Master is safe and sound. If anything were to happen to him, I would massacre the entire Flying Peak Lin Clan no matter what!"

Lin Zhong was so livid that he couldn't control himself.

"Uncle Zhong, please calm down. I already knew that such a day would come, but I just didn't expect it to come so quickly." Lin Xun said aloud, his expression unusually calm and without a ripple of emotion.

However, that only made Lin Zhong's heart ache even more badly.

Young Master wholeheartedly wanted to restore the Lin Clan to its former glorious times, but his own clansmen came to attack him instead!

"Why...why did they do that? Can they really not accept the fact that Young Master has taken charge of the Lin Family?" Lin Zhong murmured.

"It's very simple. The rapid and strong rise of Lin Xun made them feel uneasy. If they don't do anything soon, they fear that they will never have the chance to eliminate Lin Xun."

Spirit Vulture seemed particularly calm as he analyzed the situation. "However, other major forces have to be behind their assassination operation. They would never have the courage to launch such a crazy attack because there would be unbearable consequences if they failed."

Lin Zhong looked taken aback. "Master Spirit Vulture, do you mean that the three high clans, the Chi, Zuo and Qin Clans are behind the assassination operation?"

Spirit Vulture nodded.

"How dare they!" Lin Zhong almost crushed his teeth in fury. The three collateral branches of the Lin Clan had colluded with outsiders in the past to take shares of the Lin Clan's properties and wealth. They hadn't settled that with them yet, but they worked with enemies again to assassinate the head of the Lin Clan. They deserved to die!

Spirit Vulture looked at Lin Xun. "Now that Lin Feifeng has died, the Flying Peak Lin Clan is left without a leader. Now is the best time to deal with them."

Lin Xun shook his head. "I promised them that I would give them three years to consider, so I won't do anything during that period."

“Young Master, but they’ve gone too far and never cared about you. They only want to get rid of you as soon as possible. We can’t sit here and do nothing!” Lin Zhong said indignantly.

“Lin Xun is too kind. He doesn’t want to start killing people and hopes the clansmen will change and get back on the right path,” Xiaoke sighed out loud.

She understood Lin Xun the best. He wouldn’t hold back when dealing with enemies, but he couldn’t help but be forgiving to the members of his own clan.

“This might be good.” Spirit Vulture unexpectedly said aloud. “Lin Feifeng’s death would no doubt alarm the three collateral branches of the Lin Clan and make them realize Lin Xun’s strength. Even if they hate Lin Xun, they wouldn’t dare to act recklessly again.”

Lin Zhong frowned. “But what if they have help from the Chi, Zuo and Qin Clans?”

Spirit Vulture smiled slightly, his clear eyes sparkling with wisdom. “They have missed out on the best opportunity to assassinate Lin Xun already. They wouldn’t dare to make another move unless Lin Xun leaves the Forbidden City.”

“Why is that?” Lin Zhong asked in puzzlement.

“Because Lin Xun has proven his worth to the whole world. He is now a rune founder who can craft rune armaments!”

“The imperial family, Qinglu Academy, and other major forces won’t tolerate Lin Xun being attacked again!” Spirit Vulture spoke calmly. “If my guess is correct, the empire will express their stance on this matter and make a clear statement today!”

Lin Xun and Xiaoke fell into deep thoughts.

.....

Just as Spirit Vulture predicted, on the same day, the imperial family issued a notice to the entire world, stating that whoever dared to use violence in the capital of the empire without authorization would be severely punished!

The meaning of the announcement couldn’t be made more obvious, especially since the notice was issued right after Lin Xun had encountered an assassination attempt. It was a warning to everyone that anyone who dared to touch Lin Xun again would bear the wrath of the imperial family!

It sparked commotions!

Many people thought that Lin Xun had offended the imperial family by forcing the Marquis of Rising Sky to kneel!

Who would have imagined that the imperial family would forgive and forget the past and take the initiative to condemn the assassination attempt on Lin Xun?

It was too unexpected.

However, it also made everyone realize that Lin Xun wasn't the same as before. After all, he had crafted a rune armament. His worth and value was so great that the imperial family had changed their attitude towards him!

On the same day, the Rune Master Association headquarters, Qinglu Academy, Stone Cauldron Alms, as well as the Steel-Blood King's Ning Family, the Never Falling Geezer Gong Clan, the East Sea King's Ye Family...and many other colossal clans successively issued statements regarding the assassination. They strongly condemned the attack and made it clear that they supported the imperial family's decision and wouldn't tolerate a similar incident from happening.

Those successive statements were like one clap of thunder after another and sent the Forbidden City quaking everytime.

It was extremely rare for so many major forces to express their firm stance to protect someone in the history of the empire!

Who would have imagined that Lin Xun, a young man who had been in the Forbidden City for less than a year, would have built such a tremendous prestige already?

Everyone realized that Lin Xun had completely risen. He was no longer the same as he was in the past. Now, he was able to make many great clans support him and had the imperial family change their attitudes towards him. His name resounded throughout the capital!

"In the future, the Lin Clan of Mind Cleansing Peak will rise in the Forbidden City with Lin Xun..."

"Based on the circumstances, the Chi, Zuo and Qin Clans wouldn't dare to act rashly anymore." Many people had the same view.

.....

That day, it was all doom and gloom in the West Creek, Cloud Weight and Flying Peak, the three collateral branches of the Lin Clan. The clansmen all felt uneasy and started to panic.

Perhaps, they never expected Lin Xun to have such an influence on the major sects and clans in the empire.

They didn't know whether Lin Xun would suddenly come out to settle accounts with them, and they didn't know how their clansmen would be impacted from this.

However, they were all well aware that they had lost the support and strength to deal with Lin Xun, and their days would no doubt be difficult from then on...

.....

That day, the Forbidden City became a stage for Lin Xun!

The conference, the assassination attempt, and the statements from the imperial family and other major clans set off endless commotions in the capital like giant waves.

Lin Xun!

The name seemed to have magical power. It had never dimmed once ever since it made an appearance in the Forbidden City.

.....

Lin Xun returned to Qinglu Academy ahead of schedule.

He had no other choice. Many clans and sects were sending representatives to Mind Cleansing Peak with gifts after learning that he had gotten injured during the failed assassination attempt.

In addition to the Stone Cauldron Alms, the Ning Family, the Ye Family, the Gong Family, many other clans that he had never had contact with in the past also took the opportunity to visit him.

There were too many visitors. It would be too time-consuming to greet them one by one. With no other choice, Lin Xun chose to leave everything to Lin Zhong and Spirit Vulture.

However, when he returned to Qinglu Academy he found that it wasn't as peaceful as he had thought. As soon as he returned, Shen Tuo was delighted to tell him that the entire Rune Department unanimously decided to elect him deputy head of the Rune Department.

For a teenager, it was an incredible honor.

After all, in the history of Qinglu Academy, no one as young as Lin Xun had ever assumed the role of deputy head!

However, Lin Xun unhesitatingly rejected the role. A man dreaded fame as much as a pig feared becoming fat. He would gather more attention if he took on the role of deputy head of the Rune Department at such a time.

Shen Tuo left in disappointment.

Lin Xun smiled bitterly. He wanted to keep a low-profile as much as possible for a period and didn't want unnecessary attention or start any more heated discussions.

However, he found that was too difficult because not long after Shen Tuo left, Zhao Tailai arrived with Princess Jingxuan, who was disguised as a man.

Almost at the same time, the unexpected visit of an influential figure startled him.

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Chapter 517

Zhao Tailai and Princess Jingxuan were waiting patiently in a hall of the Rune Department. There was no need to guess to know that their visit was related to the crafting of the Nine Dragons Cauldron.

Lin Xun had already agreed to make the rune armament, so he had to come out to see them.

It was just that when he just arrived in the hall, an unexpected influential figure also came in and startled him.

Zhao Tailai and Zhao Jingxuan were also taken aback and hurriedly rose to their feet and bowed respectfully.

The man's face was thin, and his bearing was ordinary. He was like a wild crane wandering the clouds, detached from the world of mortals.

Naturally, he was the principal of Qinglu Academy!

Lin Xun didn't expect that such a mysterious and legendary figure would come to find him.

"Can you two give me a minute? I have a little matter to resolve with Lin Xun," the principal said quietly, but there was strong persuasive power in his tone.

Even if Lin Xun was perplexed, he wouldn't refuse so he left the hall with the principal.

"Even the principal personally came to speak to him. It seems like the kid is more important than I thought..." Zhao Tailai sighed.

"Ninth Uncle, do you know how far the principal has reached in his cultivation?" Zhao Jingxuan asked softly.

She was dressed in her usual purple robe and looked as elegant, gentle, and confident as always.

After a long thought, Zhao Tailai spat out a sentence, "As great and unfathomable as an abyss."

Zhao Jingxuan raised her brows and trembled inwardly.

.....

Shua!

The principal led the way in front and as he took one step, Lin Xun felt like stars were changing positions before him and he was shuttling through a time portal.

By the time his vision was restored, he was standing before a beautiful and lush green hill cloaked in mist. A river flowed through the green foliage and beside it was a simple straw hut that could at most provide temporary shelter from the wind and rain.

Lin Xun stared blankly at the scenery and suddenly blurted out, "Elder, was that the teleportation art?"

It was too unbelievable.

He had been in the Rune Department, but in a split second he was now standing among a group of tranquil hills and seemed to be isolated from the world.

With the flick of a finger, he had arrived in another world. It was no different from the legendary teleportation art.

"It's just a little technique and only a little superficial knowledge of the secret of the teleportation art. You will touch upon this art when you step into the Cyclic Derivation Stage," the principal replied casually and then pointed to the straw hut by the river. "Someone is waiting for you there."

Only then did Lin Xun realize that it wasn't the principal who summoned him, but someone else!

Who could it be?

Lin Xun stepped towards the hut.

The straw hut was simple, but it was peaceful and beautiful among the mist-covered rolling hills.

Lin Xun came to a stop before the straw hut and said in a low voice, "I am Lin Xun. I pay my respects to elder."

"Come in. You don't need to be so polite," a kind voice responded from inside.

Quivering inwardly, Lin Xun pushed open the door and, as he had thought, saw a familiar figure!

It was an old man in formal attire. His hair looked like strands of silver, and his back was spear-straight. Even if he was cross-legged on a mat, he was sitting upright and had impeccable manners.

The old man who always accompanied the Queen of the Dark Night was here!

"Elder, it's you?" Lin Xun exclaimed.

He had heard that the Queen of the Dark Night was going to challenge the first tribulation of immortality and so she had left with the Black Glory Sacred Hall to avoid enemies ruining her chances of success.

He thought that he wouldn't see the old man for a long while. Who would have thought that he would appear in Qinglu Academy!?

"Take a seat. I don't have much time. I am only an apparition and will disappear soon," the old man said with a smile as gentle and kind as always.

Lin Xun nodded and sat down cross-legged opposite them. Only then did he sense the old man's aura was indeed different from usual. It was a little illusory and untraceable.

Is this a doppelgänger formed from one's own will?

Lin Xun quivered inwardly. What kind of terrifying cultivation must one possess to learn such an amazing ability?

"You may have heard that Miss has left the Ziyao Empire a while ago and traveled to a mysterious place to challenge the first tribulation of immortality." The old man quickly got to the point. As he had said, he didn't have much time before the apparition of will would disappear.

"Unfortunately, she failed in the end. She didn't fail to the heavens nor to herself but to the enemy!" The old man sighed, his voice filled with bitterness.

Lin Xun's expression dramatically changed. The first tribulation of immortality ended in failure?

Does that mean the mysterious Queen of the Dark Night is...

"Miss isn't dead," the old man suddenly said.

"Because Miss was already in a perilous situation before the real immortality tribulation descended, she fled using the Golden Shedding Cicada Art. Luckily, she survived, but she will be unconscious for a long period of time."

Lin Xun breathed a sigh of relief while the image of the Dark Night Queen appeared in his mind.

She was an incomparably graceful woman. Her long hair was always rolled up in a high bun and secured with a black wooden phoenix hairpin. She looked very young and had soft and fair skin, but her piercing blue eyes were always filled with superior indifference.

What left the deepest impression on Lin Xun was the black gemstone ring she wore on her right pinky. The ring was shaped like an opened eye and seemed capable of harvesting all souls like a devil from hell.

Undeniably, she was a traditional, elegant and beautiful woman who radiated a majesty unique to superiors.

No one had ever seen her true appearance because she was like a shadow always bathed in darkness. The darkness seemed capable of drowning everything in the world!

Even though Lin Xun didn't have much interest toward the Dark Night Queen, he had to admit that she was too unique and powerful. He could remember every little detail about her!

Her enemies had actually managed to disrupt a mysterious queen like her and ruined her chances of passing the immortality tribulation. The news would plunge the entire world into a state of shock if it spread.

Suddenly, while thoughts were racing across Lin Xun's mind, a wave of energy snapped him out of his thoughts. Without him knowing, the old man had brought out a black jade stone around ten feet tall.

At first glance, it looked like a coffin. It was as dark as night and was covered with wisps of ice-cold aura.

However, that wasn't the most important thing because Lin Xun's eyes were drawn to the inside of the black jade.

There was a little girl inside. She was dressed a black cloak that covered most of her face and only a small part of her slender and fair chin peeped out.

Her hands were folded in a strange hand seal above her lower abdomen as she lay there peacefully like she was in deep slumber.

Xia Zhi!

Lin Xun trembled and his pupils enlarged. He never thought that he would meet Xia Zhi again in such a way!

It had almost been three years since the Queen of the Dark Night took the little girl away.

Ever since then, she seemed to have vanished from the world.

Now that they were reunited....she was sealed in a piece of black jade!

What happened?

Could something have happened to her?

All of a sudden, Lin Xun's heart churned turbulently and he became agitated. "Elder, what's going on?"

"She's fine. She's just undergoing transformation," the old man softly explained.

“Transformation?”

“Yes, transformation.”

The old man calmly reassured him, “Xia Zhi has inherited the mantle of Miss. Since entering the Castle of Darkness, she has started to practice the Nine Cycles of Obliteration. With every awakening of power will be accompanied by a cycle of death-like obliteration, resulting in a transformation similar to reincarnation.”

“Not long ago, Xia Zhi reached the Cyclic Derivation Stage and began her first reincarnation. All her cultivated power was transformed into a sort of secret power, which made her body, bones and talents undergo transformations.”

“However, when she awakens, she will embark on a new cultivation path. In other words, her cultivation base and knowledge before obliteration-reincarnation will no longer exist. It will be turned into hidden power and become her cultivation foundation.”

Lin Xun shuddered. What kind of art is that? Why is it so abnormal?!

One cycle of obliteration would sever and eliminate all her previous skills and abilities, and she would have to restart her cultivation again. Lin Xun couldn’t believe such a mysterious art existed in the world.

“Before this obliteration, Xia Zhi said that she must train by your side after the transformation. Otherwise, she would rather fall into eternal obliteration,” the old man said with a complicated expression.

Lin Xun felt an indescribable warmth and guilt in his heart. The little girl has always been thinking about me.

But Lin Xun was a little puzzled and asked, “She...why would she do that?”

“Because every obliteration not only severs and eliminates one’s skill, abilities and cultivation, but the person also loses the memory of the past. She...is afraid of forgetting you,” the old man finally stated the true reason.

Lin Xun’s pupils suddenly shrank. Lose her memory!

Lin Xun felt heart-wrenching pain at the thought that Xia Zhi would no longer remember him or the past.

What kind of ridiculous art is that?!

It might be unbelievable and give heaven-defying powers, but it also made people lose their memories with every obliteration. How cruel was that?

Lin Xun’s face clouded over. If he had known this earlier, he wouldn’t have let the Queen of the Dark Night take Xia Zhi away.

An apologetic look crossed the old man’s face, and just as he was about to say something, sharp cracks pierced the air.

The ten-foot tall black jade stone was shattering!

Xia Zhi had completed the transformation!?

Lin Xun's heart tensed up. He didn't want to face reality as he was afraid that Xia Zhi would have forgotten everything and regarded him as a stranger...

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Kacha!

The black jade suddenly exploded and sputtered dust everywhere. At the same time, Xia Zhi stood up.

Her figure was slender and unchanged from before. She was dressed in a black cloak that concealed her face. As she stood there silently, she exuded a faint, almost imperceptible, aura of darkness.

"It's about time she wakes up." The old man's face was alight with relief.

Xia Zhi stood there silently like she didn't notice him.

Lin Xun was stunned. He opened his mouth and wanted to greet Xia Zhi, but he was very worried that she wouldn't recognize him. That would be an incredibly painful blow to him.

His face clouded, and he looked conflicted. If she lost her memories, would she still be the Xia Zhi that I know?

It became silent and still in the straw hut for a long while.

The old man sighed softly, and seemed to sympathize with how Lin Xun was feeling. "You don't need to be so upset. From what I know, the memory of the past will be regained after the nine cycles of obliteration and will be turned into various knowledge and insights for her."

Lin Xun's face was glum. Nine cycles of obliteration? How long will that take?

What if Xia Zhi failed during a cycle? Will she still remember me then?

Suddenly, Lin Xun froze as he noticed Xia Zhi turned her gaze to him. Then, she said aloud, "Lin Xun, I'm hungry."

Her voice was as crisp, tranquil and ethereal as ever.

However, her few words shook Lin Xun and the old man. They couldn't believe their ears. Xia Zhi...called Lin Xun by his name!

Does that mean she remembers Lin Xun?!

Lin Xun's frustration, anger and gloom was completely replaced by delight and surprise. "Xia Zhi, do you remember me?" he asked in a trembling voice.

Xia Zhi frowned in puzzlement. "When did I ever forget you?"

Lin Xun beamed, his smile unusually bright. He sprang up and lifted her into the air, laughing, "Hahaha, you still remember me! Thank heavens! I was so worried, hahaha!"

However, the old man was baffled. Did the obliteration fail? Why does Xia Zhi still retain the memory of Lin Xun?

Being picked up by Lin Xun and seeing him grinning like an idiot, Xia Zhi couldn't help but scrunch her beautiful brows. "Lin Xun, when did you become so childish?"

Childish...

Lin Xun stiffened at first, but then his smile deepened. Isn't this how Xia Zhi always spoke? She has always been so quiet and independent unlike people her age.

The old man couldn't help asking, "Xia Zhi, did you make a mistake when you were practicing the Nine Cycles of Obliteration Art."

Xia Zhi's voice suddenly turned cold, "Lin Xun, who is he?"

Both the old man and Lin Xun were taken aback by her response. "You don't recognize him?"

Xia Zhi shook her head. "I don't know him."

Lin Xun put Xia Zhi down and said softly, "Xia Zhi, can you tell me what you still remember?"

Xia Zhi thought for a moment and said indifferently, "I have forgotten everything. Except for things related to you," Her voice sounded empty, like what she was saying wasn't important.

Perhaps, in her opinion, as long as she remembered Lin Xun, it didn't matter even if she forgot everything in the world.

Lin Xun couldn't help but grin again. He realized that Xia Zhi didn't mind not remembering everything else as long as she remembered him.

"Let me check on you."

The old man stepped forward and reached to grab Xia Zhi's wrist, but Xia Zhi broke out of his grip with lightning speed and aimed her slender finger toward the old man's eye.

Simple! Direct! Ruthless!

Lin Xun suddenly cast his mind back to when they were at Feiyun Village. At that time, Xia Zhi also used the same fighting method when slaughtering beasts and when training with him.

The attack was instinctive, but it was terribly accurate and precise!

Xia Zhi had forgotten the old man and regarded him as a stranger, so she fought back fiercely and ruthlessly when the old man approached her!

However, her counterattack was futile as the old man easily blocked her attack. At the same time, Lin Xun cried out, "The old man is not a bad person. He is just checking your condition."

Old man!?

The old man wanted to roll his eyes, but he forgave Lin Xun when he saw that Xia Zhi had calmed down and stopped resisting.

After a while, the old man let go of her hand, looking bewildered.

"Elder, how is she?" asked Lin Xun.

"There is no problem, the first transformation has been completed and the Nine Cycles of Obliteration Art has become an inherent ability and left no traces. It's just that..."

The old man frowned. "How would she still remember you?"

"Isn't it better this way?" Lin Xun beamed.

The old man sighed, feeling a little confused. Perhaps, they would only receive a clear explanation when the Queen of the Dark Night awakened.

"Lin Xun, I'm hungry." Xia Zhi stated again, her voice was as clear and pleasant as the sounds of nature.

Lin Xun didn't care about anything else and said excitedly, "I'll go and grill some fish for you!"

He rushed out of the hut, collected some materials, caught a dozen of plump fish from the nearby river, set up a campfire, cleaned and fileted the huge fish, skewered them onto a sword, and began to roast them.

There was no seasoning, but the fish contained traces of aeth power and so had a refreshing aroma and unique flavor when cooked.

Xia Zhi came out of the hut and sat quietly beside Lin Xun with her hands around her knees. The sunset glow dyed the hills and sky a beautiful red.

The campfire crackled by the clear stream. The grilled fish browned and crisped up, releasing an appetizing aroma. The scene of Lin Xun and Xia Zhi sitting together was very beautiful.

The old man watched them from the straw hut and finally a relieved smile spread across his face. Perhaps, it would be a completely different experience for her to stay and train with Lin Xun.

"Are you leaving?" The principal had appeared in front of the straw hut without anyone knowing.

The old man nodded. "Before Miss fell into a slumber, there was a warning sign. She had a premonition that the great Dao of heaven and earth had begun to change. Maybe it won't be long before an earthshaking war breaks out. If you are interested, you can prepare in advance. The Ziyao Empire will eventually be abandoned by the great Dao..."

"There's no rush. There's still a long time till the earthshaking war. Compared to the Ancient Wasteland Domain, this place is small, but it's not as simple as it looks on the surface. Otherwise, the Miss of your family wouldn't have lingered here for so many years," the principal said calmly.

"Before I leave, I have a presumptuous request. Please don't meddle in her training." The old man glanced at Xia Zhi who was sitting by the fire.

"She is too deeply entangled with your Dark Night Sacred Hall. I won't be so reckless to meddle in her practice," the principal readily agreed.

"Thank you." The old man's figure suddenly blurred before he faded into a shower of light and vanished into the air.

He had completed his mission. Although Xia Zhi had retained memories of Lin Xun after undergoing the first transformation, that wouldn't affect her practice.

That was enough.

"Fellow cultivator, take care."

The principal saluted from afar, his profound eyes glowing as if able to fathom the mysteries of the nine heavens. Immediately, his gaze landed on Lin Xun and Xia Zhi again, and he fell into contemplation.

Finally, he shook his head and sighed.

Not only Xia Zhi, but he also wouldn't interfere in Lin Xun's cultivation path. Ever since he saw Lin Xun's uniqueness in the Spirit Sea Overall Rankings, he came to realize that Lin Xun had his own path to walk. There was no room for his meddling.

At most, he could quietly protect him in Qinglu Academy. After all, Lin Xun had an inseparable relationship with Qinglu Academy.

.....

Xia Zhi looked very graceful when she was eating, but that didn't mean she ate slowly.

She skilfully tore the crystal-like flesh off the fish and nibbled at them. Every time she finished eating a fish, Lin Xun would finish cooking another. The timing was very coordinated.

Her little stomach was like a bottomless pit. She devoured the dozen fish and wiped her lips. "Lin Xun, they were a bit bland. Remember to add more salt next time."

Lin Xun stared at her, speechless. Xia Zhi was always so blunt.

He suddenly slapped his forehead and sprang up. "I forgot something."

Night fell.

In the main hall, Zhao Tailai grumbled, "Even the tea has become tasteless sitting in the tea leaves for so long. That kid is too rude. Why is he not here yet?! This is ridiculous!"

However, Zhao Jingxuan calmly smiled and said, "Ninth Uncle, how can the tea be tasteless?"

Zhao Tailai flushed with embarrassment. "Nonsense, why would you ask that?"

Zhao Jingxuan teased. "Are you not worried that I will tell Father?"

At that moment, Lin Xun appeared and Zhao Tailai immediately changed the subject. "Boy, you are a bit rude and unkind to just leave us waiting here!" he fumed.

"The principal asked me to take care of something. How would I dare to neglect you two?" Lin Xun shrugged.

Zhao Tailai rolled his eyes. He couldn't say anything when Lin Xun took out the principal's name. How would he dare to blame the principal of Qinglu Academy?

That would be the same as seeking death!

"Fellow cultivator Lin Xun, it's getting late, so I'll make it short. You must already know what we're here for. I wonder when you plan to start?" Zhao Jingxuan stood up and said with a smile.

Both her appearance and talents were unrivaled. Even if she was disguised as a man, she couldn't conceal her graceful and pure beauty.

Lin Xun said frankly, "In seven days. Before then, I will make some preparations."

"That's good." Zhao Jingxuan's eyes glistened with admiration.

Only Zhao Tailai found it strange. When did the cunning little boy become so easy to talk to?

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In the end, Zhao Tailai handed a storage bag and a book to Lin Xun.

The storage bag contained over a thousand types of rune materials that were required to craft the Nine Dragons Cauldron, of which over one hundred were considered precious treasure-level rune materials.

The book contained the design and instructions for crafting the Nine Dragons Cauldron. It was yellow and old with rusty spots and smudges, and it had seen better days.

According to Zhao Tailai, the founding emperor had once owned a Nine Dragons Cauldron. Unfortunately, it was destroyed in a battle.

Since then, the imperial family had hoped to own another. Unfortunately, the crafting of the cauldron required many difficult conditions, and no one had been able to make one to this day.

Lin Xun skimmed through the book and was immediately captivated by the wonderful designs and ideas inside.

After a long moment, he finally returned to reality and exhaled a long breath. "The design of the cauldron is one of the most marvelous I have seen. It is simply a work of art. I'm so glad to have had a look at it. It has enlightened me!"

He suddenly glanced at Zhao Tailai and Zhao Jingxuan. "Aren't you two worried that I will leak the design to the world?"

Zhao Tailai smiled contemptuously as though saying, Kid, you are so ignorant.

Even Zhao Jingxuan couldn't help but smile and explain, "The design will be nothing but a stack of paper in other people's hands. Firstly, only rune founders would have the ability to craft the cauldron, and secondly, the rune materials required to make the cauldron are incredibly rare. Even the imperial family only barely managed to acquire all the required rune materials over many years."

Lin Xun's face lit up with understanding, and he sighed inwardly. That's right, the Nine Dragons Cauldron is an unparalleled rune armament. The majority of people in the world wouldn't have the power to even gather the rare rune materials it needed!

Based on that, even if the design was lost, it wouldn't be much of a problem..

Lin Xun returned to studying the design of the rune armament. It was only after a long moment that he nodded and said, "I am very interested in crafting the cauldron, but it will likely take some time."

"It doesn't matter. I can wait for however long it takes." Zhao Jingxuan's eyes were alight with delight.

"Fine, but it would be best if you can finish it within three months. Soon, my nephew will leave the empire and return to the Ancient Wasteland Domain," Zhao Tailai said ruminatively.

"It shouldn't be a problem." Lin Xun agreed after a thought.

"Fellow cultivator Lin Xun, sorry to trouble you." Zhao Jingxuan gave him a cupped fist salute.

"Just call me Lin Xun." Lin Xun smiled brightly. Zhao Jingxuan left a very good impression on him. Although she was a woman, she wasn't inferior to any man in the world in terms of generosity, dedication, and vision for the future.

Zhao Jingxuan nodded, her clear and bright eyes staring at Lin Xun. Then, she suddenly chuckled out loud, revealing her pearl-white teeth. "Although I know you've already seen through my disguise, you should still call me Zhao Xuan."

She was bright, pure and graceful even though she was disguised as a man. When she smiled, she exuded a unique, unpretentious but captivating beauty.

"Okay." Lin Xun also smiled.

Zhao Tailai couldn't stand watching this anymore. He coughed out loud and said angrily, "Okay, it's decided, we will leave now." He found Lin Xun's smile extremely perverted, he felt like the youth was deliberately trying to get close to Zhao Jingxuan. The young rune founder's perverted face made him want to beat him up.

He pulled Zhao Jingxuan by the sleeve and hurriedly left without turning around.

"Lin Xun, then I'll be waiting for good news from you." Zhao Jingxuan waved.

Lin Xun nodded with a smile and watched them leave. Then, he murmured, "The princess is so beautiful..."

Immediately, he shook his head. Zhao Jingxuan had such a transcendental identity. She was like the moon in the sky. Her father was the emperor, and her mother was the empress. Even her sect was an ancient, mystical place in the Ancient Wasteland Domain.

If he dared to have any thoughts about the princess, the entire imperial family would hunt him down.

.....

From that day on, Lin Xun always had Xia Zhi by his side just like their days in Feiyun Village. He felt an indescribable peacefulness, and his mind was at ease.

He soon retreated to the ninth floor of the Refinement Tower. But unlike the last time, Xia Zhi was with him.

The heated discussions and storms on the outside seemed to have subsided as they could no longer affect Lin Xun's state of mind.

Days flew by.

He maintained a very calm and peaceful state as he crafted the Nine Dragons Cauldron, working at a relaxed pace. When he was wrapped up in his work, he would forget to eat and sleep, but in his free time, he would chat with Xia Zhi. He lived a very fulfilling and peaceful life.

On the other hand, besides eating, Xia Zhi only slept. When it was quiet, she wouldn't say a word and was particularly well-behaved.

Although her previous cultivation base had been severed, Lin Xun could still sense that her power was climbing steadily every moment!

It was too astonishing.

It had been only three years since the two of them had been separated, yet she had already reached the Cyclic Derivation Stage. It was very bizarre.

According to the old man from the Dark Night Sacred Hall, the first obliteration of the Nine Cycles of Obliteration would transform her previous cultivation base, skills and knowledge into hidden power and allow her to undergo a transformation.

Imaginably, under those circumstances, Xia Zhi's cultivation was different from ordinary people's.

Lin Xun couldn't help but sigh. Everyone called him a monster, but compared to Zhao Jingxuan or Xia Zhi, he had nothing to be proud of.

Fortunately, Lin Xun had a firm heart compared to ordinary people, and he knew that he wouldn't be inferior to anyone if he continued to train.

Who would be the first to attain the great Dao?

Wait and see!

It was still too early to say!

As time passed, the heated discussions about Lin Xun gradually subsided and calmness was restored to the world. That was nature.

Everyone in the world recognized Lin Xun's strength and reputation. In the coming years, Lin Xun would be as splendid as the shooting stars and shine like the blazing sun.

The outside world was constantly changing, and there was never a lack of sensational incidents. A person couldn't possibly dominate the stage forever.

Recently, a storm of discussions about the Ancient Wasteland Domain erupted in the Forbidden City and swept the capital.

"Have you heard that twenty disciples from Qinglu Academy, including Gu Yunting, have been sent to train in the Ancient Wasteland Domain?!"

"Not only them, but some geniuses of the younger generation from the seven high clans and other monstrous sects have also left the empire."

"Why is that?"

"I heard that it is because of the weakening of the Great Dao in our empire. This situation will only worsen in the future and will seriously impact everyone's cultivation path!"

"I've also heard that it will be difficult for Heaven Ascension cultivators to break through to the Cyclic Derivation Stage if they don't move. That has nothing to do with talent and foundation, but because of the impact of the damaged Great Dao."

"Is the world going to change?"

"Don't talk nonsense, that's just rumors. No one knows if it's true or false. But if a cultivator could train in the Ancient Wasteland Domain, it is a rare blessing. I heard that it is a vast and incomparable pure land of cultivation with countless immortal traces!"

There were similar discussions all over the Forbidden City, and no one knew whether the rumors were true.

But there was no smoke without fire. Everyone in the Forbidden City had known that the Xie Family's Little Sword Lord Xie Yutang, the Song Family's eldest son Song Yunji, Qinglu Academy's Gu Yunting, Stone Cauldron Alms' eldest young master Shi Xuan and other geniuses of the younger generation have left the empire to train in the Ancient Wasteland Domain.

It made many people wonder if the rumors were true!

The rumors caused a state of disturbance in the empire. In the end, the imperial family had to come forward to suppress the turmoil.

However, that didn't stop the discussions from happening in secret, and perhaps when the time came, they would completely break out.

Naturally, Lin Xun was unaware of any of this. He had been on the ninth floor of the Refinement Tower all along and seemed to be isolated from the world. But his life wasn't the slightest bit boring.

He somewhat enjoyed a carefree and peaceful life. He only needed to concentrate on his work and training.

Two months later.

A dragon-like roar from the ninth floor of the Refinement Tower shook the area and alarmed many people.

However, it quickly subsided and didn't draw too much attention.

On the ninth floor of the Refinement Tower were nine azure dragon images holding their heads high and shuttling back and forth, unleashing deafening roars that rippled the air. In the center of the nine dragons stood a grand-looking cauldron with three legs and two handles. Its surface was flickering with mysterious flowing rune patterns.

In the end, the nine dragon images faded into the cauldron, and the spectacular vision disappeared.

Upon a closer look, the cauldron seemed capable of swallowing the universe in one mouthful. Its two handles seemed to contain the yin and yang, and its three legs looked like they could create all things on earth. It watched over the universe and supported the sky and earth with its mighty power.

Success!

Lin Xun looked fascinated. That's the Nine Dragons Cauldron, the legendary rune armament of the founding emperor of the empire. It exudes such tremendous and majestic power.

"Lin Xun, this cauldron contains the energy of the imperial way. It will display incredible power if controlled with the qi of the emperor."

Xia Zhi was also alerted. She couldn't help but stare at the Nine Dragons Cauldron. "But, it's not suitable for you. You better not think about using it, otherwise, it will hinder your path."

Her remark took Lin Xun aback. This little girl knows so much.

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Chapter 520

Xia Zhi was indeed right.

The Nine Dragons Cauldron was tailored for those who cultivated the imperial way, and so only descendants of the Emperor such as Zhao Jingxuan could perfectly control it.

Although Lin Xun coveted such a treasure and envied Zhao Jingxuan, he also knew that the treasure clashed with his own way and was not suitable for him.

Clang!

Suddenly, Lin Xun brought out a jet-black broken blade and applied force to his palm. The blade erupted with dazzling starlight as if a fierce and malicious spirit had awakened inside it.

Rumble—

As though provoked, the Nine Dragons Cauldron cast out images of nine dragons from its body. Each one threw its head skywards as it roared and produced a power that could shake the universe.

The two divine weapons seemed to be competing. The cauldron and blade were attempting to oppress each other. Starlight swept the ninth floor of the Refinement Tower like a mighty sea, and dragon roars shook the tower like claps of thunder.

Lin Xun watched the rare clash with unblinking eyes.

Boom!

The broken blade seemed enraged that it failed to do anything about the Nine Dragons Cauldron as it suddenly erupted in a blaze of terrifying starlight and crushed everything in all directions.

All of a sudden, there seemed to be millions of stars spreading across and suppressing the Nine Dragons Cauldron.

On the other hand, the Nine Dragons Cauldron was overflowing with immeasurable imperial power. Nine dragons soared into the air, tearing the universe as it fended off the sea of stars.

Seeing the conflict intensifying and the violent competition about to drown the ninth floor of the Refinement Tower, Lin Xun stepped in without hesitation, ending the conflict.

The broken blade let out an unwilling grunt as it tried to wrestle free from Lin Xun's grip. It hated the fact that it couldn't charge out and slash the Nine Dragons Cauldron.

The blade's extraordinary spiritual intelligence attracted Xia Zhi's attention from afar. Her clear, black jewel-like eyes narrowed.

At the same time, the Nine Dragons Cauldron buzzed and released a dragon roar. Lin Xun, the creator, also couldn't help but marvel at its spiritual intelligence. The treasure is indeed worthy of being a treasure of the imperial way. It is completely different from other rune armaments.

However, what surprised Lin Xun more was the broken blade, which he had obtained from the Treasure Drop Blood Plain of the Ancient Spirit World. It had a mysterious origin, but its frightening power unquestionably defies heaven.

The first time that Lin Xun laid eyes on the blade, it had slaughtered several cultivators and drove Heaven Ascension experts to flee in embarrassment.

This was done without the control or manipulation of anyone. That alone showed that the broken blade had an incredibly strong spiritual intelligence.

A while ago, Lin Xun also put the broken blade against the Shattered Tragedy Spear, and the result greatly surprised him. Even the Shattered Tragedy Spear, which possessed terrifying destructive power, failed to shake or subdue the blade!

Lin Xun finally came to a clear conclusion after comparing the blade with the Nine Dragons Cauldron—

The broken blade that had survived since ancient times was in no way inferior to any other rune armament in terms of power and spiritual intelligence.

Its only flaw was, perhaps, that it was just an ancient treasure and couldn't be transformed into armor to assist a cultivator.

But then again, it was only a broken blade. It was incomplete yet it stood its ground against the Shattered Tragedy Spear and the Nine Dragons Cauldron. Imaginably, it would be even more terrifying if it was undamaged.

"I must find an opportunity to repair the blade in the future..." Lin Xun said resolutely.

Although he already possessed the skills and abilities of a rune founder, he still couldn't fathom the mystery of the blade or couldn't identify the materials that made up it. Everything about the broken blade was very mysterious.

He looked forward to the day that he could repair the broken blade!

"Lin Xun, where did you get that ancient treasure? I sense the aura of ancient times from it. Judging from that, it must have been in this world for at least a hundred thousand years," Xia Zhi suddenly said aloud. She went over to Lin Xun and lifted her face as she spoke.

Only when there were no outsiders around would she reveal her perfect face concealed under the hood of her cloak.

That was done after Lin Xun had suggested it because she was too flawlessly beautiful. Her skin was fair and almost translucent, and her facial features were too delicate and perfect like the masterpiece of God. Her captivating face could make everything in the world dim!

If she didn't conceal her unparalleled beauty, it could bring her disturbances and disasters. This was not an exaggeration as beautiful women were said to cause the downfall of a country since ancient times. Xia Zhi was still young, but who knew what kind of peerless beauty she would become when she grew up?

"A hundred thousand years?"

Lin Xun stared at her blankly and then he said in surprise, "You...can you also tell?"

Xia Zhi nodded while her eyes were still fixed on the broken blade in Lin Xun's hand. "I can feel that it is a very terrifying treasure. You wouldn't be able to control it if it wasn't broken."

The corners of Lin Xun's lips twitched. Is she commenting on the broken blade's amazing power or is she trying to attack me for my weakness?

Clang!

Suddenly, Xia Zhi raised her hand and summoned a twelve-foot-long bone spear. An excited look flickered across her clear eyes as she said, "Lin Xun, I want to test the broken blade."

The sparkling white spear had been with Xia Zhi ever since Lin Xun met her, and only she was able to mobilize it. It was as though it was a part of her.

"No."

Lin Xun downright refused and quickly put away the broken blade. "They are both amazing treasures! What if one of them gets damaged?"

Xia Zhi rolled her eyes, which she seldom did. "So petty."

Lin Xun laughed. "Do you want me to help you make another weapon?"

Xia Zhu unhesitatingly declined. "No need."

She put away the spear, walked to the corner by herself and lay on the little bed. As soon as she closed her eyes, she fell asleep.

It was Xia Zhi's nap time again. Not even a rumble of thunder would wake her up.

Lin Xun stepped forward and quietly watched her sleep. Even though they saw each other all the time, he couldn't help but be captivated by her tranquil and stunning face.

Her beauty did not belong in the world. She was so perfect that she felt unreal and could turn the world upside down.

After a long moment, Lin Xun smiled, lifted Xia Zhi, gently covered her little face with the brim of her hood and left the ninth floor of the Refinement Tower.

He had successfully crafted the Nine Dragons Cauldron after two months, and it was time to leave.

Lin Xun already had a plan in mind. After he handed the Nine Dragons Cauldron to Zhao Jingxuan, he planned to focus on his training and make preparations for attacking the Heaven Ascension Stage.

A few months ago, he had already reached the pinnacle of the Spirit Sea Stage, and his cultivation base, spirit and physique were tempered to a perfect state. He had reached the limit of his foundation and potential.

In other words, if he wanted to, he could ascend into the Heaven Ascension Stage at any time!

However, through a lucky coincidence, Lin Xun had comprehended a trace of water imago power from Sky Stairs Mountain!

It made him feel a sense of incompleteness, so he chose to not break through.

In his view, his cultivation, spirit and physique had indeed reached the limit of perfection, but the addition of water imago power changed his power in the Spirit Sea Stage. Although it made him stronger, it also made his cultivation in the Spirit Sea Stage incomplete.

Perhaps, he would only achieve true completeness and perfection when he could manipulate the trace of water imago power!

Other cultivators would become crazy if they learned about his plan.

Any other Spirit Sea cultivators would wish to break through to the Heaven Ascension Stage as soon as possible, but Lin Xun wanted to wait until his cultivation, Spirit and physique had been tempered to the limit.

Now, he wanted to perfectly control the trace of water imago power before he broke through to the Heaven Ascension Stage. How would other people not be shocked?

The most unbelievable thing was that, among all Spirit Sea cultivators in the world, no one else had been able to comprehend let alone control the imago power of the great Dao before they reached the Heaven Ascension Stage!

Lin Xun had broken past conventions and created a new miracle. It would cause a sensation if it spread out.

Of course, at present, only Lin Xun knew about it. It was a secret that belonged to him alone.

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Lin Xun didn't notify anyone that he was leaving the Refinement Tower but, to his surprise, Zhao Tailai was already waiting for him outside.

It turned out that Zhao Tailai had come a few days ago and hadn't left since.

He was waiting for good news from Lin Xun.

When Lin Xun tossed the sealed box with the Nine Dragons Cauldron inside to Zhao Tailai, his breathing stopped for a moment.

He succeeded!

Although he had confidence in Lin Xun, he was still filled with indescribable shock and excitement when he learned that the young rune founder had succeeded in crafting the Nine Dragons Cauldron.

For thousands of years, a treasure that many runemasters had been unable to create had finally been born in the world. How could Zhao Tailai not tremble with excitement?

If the outside world learned that Lin Xun had crafted a second rune armament only two months after his first, what sort of storm would it set off again?

Of course, neither Lin Xun nor Zhao Tailai would disclose the matter. The Nine Dragons Cauldron was an important weapon of the imperial family and shouldn't be leaked otherwise everyone would covet it.

"Good! Very Good!" Zhao Tailai exclaimed and danced with joy, his chubby cheeks bouncing up and down.

He clapped Lin Xun on the shoulder. "Kid, you have done a great job this time!"

"Then, do you think I should receive an extra reward?" Lin Xun asked with a smile.

Zhao Tailai immediately put his guard up. He cleared his throat and said, "Don't worry, the imperial family will remember your favor! Okay, that's all, I'll head back now. Maybe Her Highness Princess Jingxuan will come to thank you in person later."

Before his voice faded, he already darted away in a cloud of dust.

Lin Xun stood there speechless for a while. That fatty is so cunning. It's more difficult to take advantage of him than to ascend to the sky.