

Prodigies 71

Chapter 71 The Storm Caused by a Blade

The next morning, Wang Lin left the Stone Cauldron Alms in a hurry and headed towards Great Eight Hundred Street.

He was a little distracted as he was constantly thinking about the Golden Jade Hall's background and how they dared to lie about having a peerless treasured blade for sale.

Why haven't I heard about a store called the Golden Jade Hall on Great Eight Hundred Street?

When Wang Lin heard the news that caused quite a stir, he, at first, thought it was a tactic made by an unscrupulous businessman to draw people's attention, but after a deeper thought, he realized that the Golden Jade Hall was quite extraordinary.

A little unknown store had become famous in just one day and had caused a huge sensation. This itself was already abnormal.

In Wang Lin's view, the "peerless treasured blade" was just a promotion tactic but no ordinary businessmen could think of something like that.

So, Wang Lin had to check out the Golden Jade Hall.

The Golden Jade Hall had announced that they would reveal the true face of the "peerless treasured blade" at noon, and so, Wang Lin wanted to find out who the owner of the store was and whether the rumors regarding the blade were true.

A gorgeous, jewel-adorned carriage pulled by four golden-mane white deer clattered across the street and came to an abrupt halt next to Wang Lin.

The curtains inside the carriage were lifted up, revealing a kind-looking middle-aged man. He said with a smile, "Aren't you Brother Wang Lin from Stone Cauldron Alms?"

Wang Lin indifferently gave him a cupped fist salute. "Nice to see you here, Manager of Boundless Treasure Pavilion."

The kind-looking middle-aged man was called Xiao Yuanzhong and he was the boss of Boundless Treasure Pavilion, one of the largest mercantile businesses in Donglin City. He was known for being shrewd and unscrupulous.

In addition, Boundless Treasure Pavilion and Stone Cauldron Alms were competitors, and so Wang Lin and Xiao Yuanzhong weren't on friendly terms.

"Haha, could Brother Wang Lin also be making a trip to check out Golden Jade Hall?" Xiao Yuanzhong said with a smile.

"Yes." Wang Lin nodded calmly. "Golden Jade Hall has caused quite a stir yesterday and even I couldn't help but feel a little curious."

Xiao Yuanzhong agreed. "That's right. I heard that Golden Jade Hall only opened a few months ago. I thought it was just a little shop. Who would have thought that the owner would be that extraordinary?"

Xiao Yuanzhong continued meaningfully, "Everyone of the same trade in Donglin City has been alarmed. Brother Wang Lin, you should know that having one more powerful competitor is equivalent to competing with one more hungry wolf. I wonder what Miss Wansu would think about this situation?"

Wang Lin shook his head. "I can't read Miss Wansu's mind."

Xiao Yuanzhong acknowledged his response with a nod and then he smiled and bid farewell.

"It seems that Golden Jade Hall has already made other merchant businesses increase their vigilance. It likely won't be easy for Golden Jade Hall to gain a foothold in the future," uttered Wang Lin ruminatively.

Today, Great Eight Hundred Street was particularly bustling. In addition to ordinary people, cultivators were also flocking to Golden Jade Hall.

All that Wang Lin heard along his way were discussions about the peerless treasured blade. It seemed that not everyone believed in the rumors and some were doubtful, but that only made people more curious.

Besides Xiao Yuanzhong of Boundless Treasured Pavilion, Wang Lin also ran into many influential figures of other trading businesses, all of whom were well-known in Donglin City.

For example, Wu Yongtai from the Wu Corporation and Shi Wenfeng of Profound Gold appeared to be mere business owners on the surface but a strong clan was supporting them both from behind.

In addition to businessmen, Wang Lin also saw many Spirit Dipper cultivators, some of whom were high-ranking figures in Donglin City, such as Lei Qigong, a senior teacher of Donglin Academy, and Sun Zhan, the chief instructor of Violet-Gold Martial Arts Hall.

Wang Lin sighed inwardly. The boss of Golden Jade Hall is indeed impressive to manage to attract so much attention with a little promotion tactic. He must be an expert businessman.

However, Wang Lin also knew that there would be consequences if the so-called "peerless treasured blade" turned out to not exist.

The foundation of a business was credibility. If Golden Jade Hall dared to deceive the public in front of everyone, it would be impossible for them to gain a foothold on Great Eight Hundred Street!

Wang Lin soon arrived at Golden Jade Hall.

Everywhere was packed with people, and impenetrable crowds had long surrounded the store and filled the street with ceaseless clamor like the roaring of waves.

"Peerless treasured blade? What grade could it be? Human, earth or heaven? It can't be a pure yang aeth tool because that's a supreme treasure that only Cyclic Derivation cultivators could control!"

"I think the peerless treasured blade can't be classified according to the known grades. The reason why it's called peerless may be that it has a very unique mysterious effect and power."

"Hmph, it's too early to say. The Golden Jade Hall isn't huge, but the people there talk big. The peerless treasured blade is most likely a lie!"

“How is that possible? Which business would dare to joke around with that kind of thing? If it turns out to be a lie, Golden Jade Hall wouldn’t be able to bear the consequences.”

Standing on the periphery of the crowd, Wang Lin intently listened to the discussions and he grew increasingly curious about how the owner of Golden Jade Hall would deal with the situation.

The Golden Jade Hall had soared to fame but would it gain a foothold in Dongling City or did it stage a farce and end up packing up in embarrassment?

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Meanwhile, Lin Xun left his house and navigated the twists and turns of the dark alleys, leaving the chaotic slums.

He was planning on stocking up on ordinary tools and rune ink to pave the way for him to continue in making aeth tools.

The profit margin in making tools was tremendous. Additionally, the process of making aeth tools could help Lin Xun hone his rune art skills, which was extremely beneficial for him as he hoped to become a true rune master. It could be said that he was killing two birds with one stone.

From what Lin Xun knew, some rune masters would choose to take refuge with major forces because they could hone their rune art skills while making aeth tools for them and get paid at the same time.

Along the way, Lin Xun had heard news about the Golden Jade Hall’s upcoming sale of a peerless treasured blade and he couldn’t help but feel a little baffled.

He had seen that Golden Jade Hall had limited financial powers and a weak foundation, and it was akin to an empty shell, so how would it have a peerless treasured blade for sale?

Lin Xun was still perplexed after thinking about this deeply. Although he had sold an Explosion Blade to the Golden Jade Hall yesterday, it was just a lower human grade aeth tool and couldn’t possibly be related to the “peerless treasured blade”.

Lin Xun shook his head. He had no interest in wasting time in following the crowds.

Moreover, given Lin Xun’s current financial situation, there was no way he could purchase the peerless treasured sword even if Golden Jade Hall had one for sale.

Lin Xun walked into a shop on the corner of the street that specialized in selling ordinary tools.

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Meanwhile, inside Golden Jade Hall.

Gu Liang was restless. It wasn’t due to nervousness but excitement. The street outside their store was packed with people and the buzz in the street was sweeping into the store like waves. It made his blood bubble and he all fired up.

He clenched his fists. Today will determine whether or not our Golden Jade Hall can establish itself and become famous!

“Is such a scene worth being so excited for?” Gu Yanping walked out from the inner room holding a delicately beautiful jade box. He couldn’t help but shake his head when he saw his son’s expression.

“Uh—” Gu Liang scratched his head in embarrassment.

“When you gain more experience in the future, you won’t lose your composure so easily. As they say, sages are calm even in major events. A qualified business cultivator must also possess such a character.”

Gu Yanping wore a calm expression on his average face and said leisurely.

Business cultivator!

The title for a cultivator who entered the Dao through business and pursued the cultivation path with wealth!

This title stunk of money and was often despised and spurned by true cultivators, but in the young Gu Liang’s eyes, business cultivation was the most sacred path!

His father was a business cultivator and also the person he admired the most.

In Gu Liang’s view, only one person in the entire empire could be compared to his father—the renowned master of Stone Cauldron Alms, Fortune God Shi!Novelnext.com

“Let’s go, don’t let our customers wait too long.” Gu Yanping turned around and strode out of the shop.

Gu Liang hurriedly followed him.

“They came out!”

“Is that the boss of Golden Jade Hall? I thought he would be very capable. He’s just an average middle-aged man.”

“Look at the jade box in his hands. Could it be housing the peerless treasured blade?”

When Gu Yanping and his son emerged from the shop, the crowd that had been waiting in front of Golden Jade Hall for ages broke into clamor.

Wang Lin narrowed his eyes and carefully studied Gu Yanping, only to find that he was very unfamiliar looking. He didn’t recognize him.

However, his relaxed and calm bearing was indeed superior to that of ordinary people.

Wang Lin was also full of anticipation. Could the boss of Golden Jade Hall really have a peerless treasured blade?

It wasn’t only Wang Lin, Xiao Yuanzhong and other influential figures from major businesses in Donglin City were also furtively watching the scene.

As Gu Yanping waved his hand, the buzzing atmosphere immediately calmed down.

Without any opening remarks, Gu Yanping directly opened the jade box and took out an aeth blade glistening all over with a scarlet luster.

The blade was three feet and four inches long and around three fingers wide.

Shua!

All eyes were fixed on the blade, but when everyone saw the blade and the aura around its edge, the atmosphere instantly stilled. Many people's expressions changed, turning to surprise and disbelief.

Before Gu Yanping could say anything, someone thundered, "What an unscrupulous businessman! Is this the peerless treasured blade you spoke about? It's clearly just a common Explosion Blade!"

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That voice was loud and full of anger as it instantly broke the silence and calmness. Many people followed his example and cursed out loud.

"What are you playing at? You think you can get away with an ordinary Explosion Blade? Do you think we're idiots? Get out of Donglin City!"

"You went too far! The Golden Jade Hall is definitely an unscrupulous business. You tried to deceive people with an extremely low grade aeth tool. Your intention is evident!"

"Leave Donglin City now. Our city doesn't welcome unscrupulous businessmen like you!"

"Leave Donglin City!"

Many ordinary people who didn't understand the situation also yelled out loud.

It was understandable that they were disappointed. They thought the peerless treasured blade would be magnificent but it turned out to be an Explosion Blade, which were commonly seen on the market. The Golden Jade Hall not only lied to them but played them like monkeys!

Even the bosses of major businesses were a little surprised. The owner of Golden Jade Hall doesn't look stupid, so why would he do something so stupid and dig his own grave?

However, some influential people were shrewd enough to realize that the situation wasn't as simple as it seemed. Therefore, they didn't get angry and simply watched on.

If Golden Jade Hall disappeared from Donglin City, they would lose a competitor.

However, what if that wasn't the case?

It was best to not express an opinion until a definitive conclusion was reached.

Wang Lin was also among those people, but he was different in that he was struck dumb when he saw the Explosion Blade.

It wasn't because the blade was magnificent but that he had personally appraised it in the past!

The blade was precisely the Explosion Blade that Lin Xun brought to Stone Cauldron Alms for sale. He was certain that he wasn't mistaken because when he appraised the blade, it exuded a unique aura despite it being an Explosion Blade.

Unfortunately, before Wang Lin could examine the blade further, Mu Wansu had ordered him to turn Lin Xun away.

Although reluctant, Wang Lin had to follow Mu Wansu's orders, particularly since she was unyielding in her decision.

Who would have thought that the Explosion Blade would reappear in Golden Jade Hall?! Furthermore, the owner of Golden Jade Hall was promoting it as a peerless treasured blade!

Thinking of this, Wang Lin felt humbled. He was certain that the owner of Golden Jade Hall was not an ordinary person or an unscrupulous businessman as everyone had said. He came to such a conclusion based on the buzz that the owner had created through impressive means.

The fact that he dared to bring out the blade in public suggested it differed from other Explosion Flame Blades and had an extremely unique effect!

What wonderful effect could it have?

Besides feeling humbled, Wang Lin grew increasingly curious.

The shouting rang like waves, and all sorts of foul words came out. The situation had become extremely chaotic and was almost spiraling out of control.

Gu Liang was standing on the steps and saw the entire scene. He suddenly reddened with fury and indignation as he had never experienced such a situation.

Those short-sighted guys started to scold and curse without learning the specific details. They have gone too far!

Gu Liang was about to refute when his father Gu Yanping stopped him.

Gu Yanping remained calm and without a ripple of expression on his face. It was as though he was unaffected by the situation.

His bright and sharp eyes swept the crowd like a knife as he said in a deep, "Whether it's real or not and whether or not it deserves the name of peerless treasured blade will be clear after examination."

Although his looks were exceedingly average, when he spoke, it was akin to a thunder striking down upon the world. His voice reverberated across the street and halted the clamor. Many ordinary people felt their ears buzz and blood bubble. Their expressions subsequently changed.

The atmosphere also instantly stilled.

That guy has a strong aeth power cultivation base—he is clearly a Spirit Dipper cultivator!

Many cultivators present were utterly dumbfounded. They suddenly realized that Gu Yanping was extraordinary. It was rare to see a shop owner with such an impressive cultivation base.

His one sentence overawed the crowd and even Gu Liang was filled with admiration.

"Friend, dare I ask how you plan to verify the blade?" asked someone. It was a cultivator who exuded dipper qi from all over his body. He was clearly someone powerful.

Gu Yanping smiled and said confidently, "It's very simple. I know there are many people present that are in the same trade as I am. I want to invite them to take a look at the blade and then tell everyone the truth. I believe that no one will doubt my words after that."

Many people couldn't help but nod. The suggested method was indeed pretty good.

At the same time, many people cast glances to different areas, where the owners of major businesses stood such as Xiao Yuanzhong from Boundless Treasure Pavilion and Wang Lin.

Wang Lin stood forward and was the first to speak. "If that's the case, we will accept your suggestion."

Many people recognized Wang Lin as a well-known treasure appraiser from Stone Cauldron Alms and agreed that it would be fair if he came forward to appraise the Explosion Blade.

"I also don't mind taking a look to see what's so magnificent about the peerless treasured blade." A chubby, friendly-looking, middle-aged man stepped forward.

It was Xiao Yuanzhong, the owner of Boundless Treasure Pavilion!

Everyone was stirred once again when he stood forward.

"How can our Wu Corporation be missing from such an event?"

"Haha, our Profound Gold also don't mind helping out to find the truth for everyone!"

More and more people came out, all of whom were well-known figures from major businesses in Donglin City.

Everyone felt much more at ease when they saw so many experts coming forward to verify the treasure. However, they couldn't help but wonder whether the ordinary Explosion Blade really concealed an earthshaking secret?

"Everyone, please wait a moment. The answer will be revealed to you soon!"

Gu Yanping gave a cupped fist salute to the crowd before he turned around and entered the Golden Jade Hall with Wang Lin and Xiao Yuanzhong.

Except for Wang Lin, the rest couldn't help but sneer inwardly when Gu Yanping led the way in. You want to use us to help you solve your predicament?

Impossible!

As the representatives of major businesses in Donglin City, they naturally didn't want any more competitors.

They had already decided to use the chance to make Golden Jade Hall disappear from Donglin City if they weren't satisfied with the result from the verification!

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The area outside of Golden Jade Hall was packed with people eagerly anticipating the result.

As Gu Liang stood in front of Golden Jade Hall's entrance, his heart pounded strongly. He somehow felt that his father's approach wasn't quite right. How would the businessmen in Donglin City help us? They keenly hope to see Golden Jade Hall become a laughingstock.

However, out of respect and confidence for his father, Gu Liang didn't panic in such a situation.

Time passed bit by bit, but there was still no movement within Golden Jade Hall, and that made the crowd a little restless.

Why would it take so long to examine an Explosion Blade?

While everyone was losing their patience, movements were heard from within Golden Jade Hall and the first to step out was Xiao Yuanzhong, the owner of Boundless Treasure Pavilion.

However, his mind seemed to have drifted away and his brows were furrowed. His usual kind face had changed into a solemn one.

He walked out the store without uttering a word, squeezed his way through the crowd under the protection of guards, got into his carriage, and left in a hurry.

Everyone stood dumbstruck. What happened inside Golden Jade Hall?

Not long afterwards, the manager of Profound Gold, the manager of Wu Corporation, and a few other people came out. Every person wore strange expressions—overcasted, perplexed and pensive.

Like Xiao Yuanzhong, they also left without a word.

Many intelligent people were able to guess what happened from their actions, though they couldn't be certain. But the majority of people were a little perplexed by the verification's result.

At that moment, Gu Yanping and Wang Lin walked out side by side. Gu Yanping looked relaxed and was talking cheerfully while Wang Lin shook his head from time to time.

"I really didn't expect it. You have such discerning eyes to have obtained such a remarkable treasure," exclaimed Wang Lin.

"Thank you for the compliment. I don't deserve your praise." Gu Yanping smiled as he gave a cupped fist salute.

"Ahhhh"

Wang Lin sighed again, and just when he was about to leave, a voice rang from the crowd. "Fellow cultivator Wang Lin, what was the result from the treasure verification?"

Many people shifted their gazes towards Wang Lin.

Wang Lin was silent for a while before he replied, "It's a well-deserved name. It's worthy of the name 'peerless'". With that, he turned around and left.

The crowd broke into an uproar.

An ordinary Explosion Blade could actually be called peerless?

Gu Liang couldn't help but smile when he saw the look of astonishment and confusion on everyone's faces. The indignation and anger in his heart were instantly swept away and replaced by delight.

Gu Yanping was as calm as always. Such a disposition was incredibly rare.

Clang!

A blade's cry rang throughout the streets as Gu Yanping drew the Explosion Blade. The blade was flowing with a dazzling fiery light.

It drew the attention of everyone present. They were all eager to see how magnificent the blade was and whether or not it deserved the title of 'peerless'.

"The mysteriousness of this blade can't be easily described but I can assure you that it is twenty percent stronger than other Explosion Blades and is even comparable to aeth tools at the intermediate human grade!" Gu Yanping stated confidently.

Twenty percent more powerful!

His one sentence stunned the many cultivations present. As cultivators, they knew what it meant when an ordinary lower human grade aeth tool was twenty percent more powerful than usual.

Most importantly, the blade was a lower human grade aeth tool yet it contained power comparable to that of an intermediate human grade aeth tool!

This was indeed a rare sight to see, especially since the Explosion Blade was only an ordinary aeth tool. Yet, it could paradoxically exhibit unique powers. It undoubtedly deserved to be called peerless.

At the very least, no similar aeth tool could be found in the entire empire!

But everyone was more curious about who could create such a unique aeth blade.

It was impossible for ordinary rune masters to achieve that. Rune masters could make high-grade aeth tools but it was extremely difficult to create an ordinary aeth tool of the lower human grade that was more powerful than others.

Could this Explosion Blade be the work of a rune master?

Only someone of a supreme level could possibly create a completely different kind of Explosion Blade?

Many people thought to themselves.

However, the thought that the creator of the Explosion Blade was an unknown rune apprentice had never crossed their minds.

Chapter 73 Name that Shook the City

Around three o'clock in the afternoon, the storm brought about by the peerless treasured blade finally came to an end at the entrance of Golden Jade Hall.

After confirming the magnificence of the Explosion Blade, many people participated in a bidding session on the spot. Some people were even willing to purchase the blade for eight hundred silver coins but a Spirit Dipper cultivator successfully bought it for three hundred silver coins in the end.

Three hundred silver coins was already a ridiculous and unbelievable amount for a lower human-grade aeth tool.

After all, aeth tools of that grade were generally worth around thirty to eighty silver coins on the market. Three hundred silver coins were enough to buy a high human-grade aeth tool.

But anyone who understood the magnificence of the blade would know that the price of three hundred silver coins was worth it because the blade was unique and another one couldn't be found in the entire empire.

Things that were rare were more precious. When an ordinary aeth tool possessed unique attributes, it would no longer be considered ordinary.

Eight hundred silver coins was an enormous amount to Gu Yanping. After all, the Explosion Blade was an ordinary aeth tool and he was happy enough to sell it for three hundred silver coins.

His action won praise from everyone present and built a good impression of him. The credibility of Golden Jade Hall also increased as a result.

After today's incident, Golden Jade Hall had opened up new prospects in Donglin City, but if it wanted to truly stand firm, it had to carry on.

All that was thanks to the Explosion Blade.

As Gu Yanping sat in the inner room of Golden Jade Hall, he couldn't help but think about Lin Xun again. He muttered, "Stone Cauldron Alms had made an error of judgment and made me obtain a treasure that reversed my situation in Donglin City."

"Father, I have contacted the suppliers and they decided to sign an agreement with us!" Gu Liang exclaimed as he rushed in.

"Uh-huh." Gu Yanping nodded in a distracted manner and then he said, "Liang'er, although we have opened up our paths, troubles will undoubtedly follow. The people in the same trade won't let our business grow."

Gu Liang frowned, and the look of joy faded from his face. "Father, in your opinion, what should we do next?"

Gu Yanping said calmly, "Do you remember the young master who sold us the Explosion Blade?"

Gu Liang said without hesitation, "Of course I remember him."

Gu Yanping drew a deep breath and said, "Your next mission is to find the young master and ask him to come to Golden Jade Hall for a chat."

A thought struck Gu Liang's mind. He vaguely understood his father's plan and so he nodded firmly. "Father, don't worry. The young master is our savior, I will definitely complete the mission."

Gu Yanping nodded. Then, he suddenly sighed, "A treasure can only bring us temporary popularity. We have to have more treasures if we want to carry on our business and compete with people in the same trade. But things are easier said than done."

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Although the matter had come to an end, everything that had happened in Golden Jade Hall had only just started to ferment.

In almost a few hours, the entire Donglin City had learned that the so-called peerless treasured blade that Golden Jade Hall sold was an Explosion Blade.

However, it was that common Explosion Blade that made the representatives of top businesses, including Boundless Treasure Pavilion, Profound Gold and Wu Corporation, speechless and return in low spirits.

The Explosion Blade had sparked fierce competition between cultivators and was finally sold for an astonishing price of three hundred silver coins!

Golden Jade Hall had risen to fame!

In just one night, its name resounded throughout Donglin City and sparked countless discussions and caused a commotion.

The discussions about the uniqueness of the Explosion Blade even ran rampant, and many cultivators who knew the truth about the blade were full of praise. They even gave the unique Explosion Blade a name—Flame Blade!

As for the major businesses in Donglin City, they were more concerned about whether or not it was a rune master who created the Flame Blade and whether or not the rune master was working for Golden Jade Hall!

If they could find the answers, then they could get to the bottom of Golden Jade Hall's foundation and perhaps could prepare precautionary suppression measures against Golden Jade Hall.

Some businesses even planned to spend a huge amount of money to invite the mysterious rune master in Golden Jade Hall to work for their business instead!

In the afternoon of the same day, the businesses each sent out their own spies to find out more about the mysterious rune master who made the Flame Aeth Blade. Although the investigations were carried out secretly, it still attracted much attention.

As a result, discussions about the mysterious rune master became a popular topic in Donglin City.

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As for the initiator of this incredible situation, Lin Xun had no idea of everything that was happening.

He had just purchased a dozen rune inks and aeth tools. He still had to pay one hundred and twenty coins in total despite negotiating heavily with the boss.

Lin Xun only had nine silver coins left on him when he came out of the store. The way he spent money like water made his heart ache a little.

"I hope the treasures made from these things can sell for a good price..." Lin Xun let out a long sigh and headed towards the slums.

When he passed by a busy teahouse, he happened to hear about what happened in front of Golden Jade Hall. His expression involuntarily changed when he heard that the so-called peerless treasured blade was just an Explosion Blade.

He vaguely remembered that he didn't see another Explosion Blade in Golden Jade Hall when he sold his blade. Could it be...

Lin Xun spaced out. Three hundred silver coins!

He only managed to calm down a little when he returned home. So what if the Explosion Blade came from me? I sold it to Golden Jade Hall yesterday so even if they sold it for a ridiculous price it should have nothing to do with me.

"You finally came back. This is the intelligence that Fatty Diao collected." Xia Zhi walked out of the house and handed Lin Xun a beast skin scroll.

Xia Zhi took out a beast skin pouch that was rattling with coins, and Lin Xun immediately focused his eyes on the pouch.

"These are the spoils. A total of two hundred silver coins," said Xia Zhi casually.

Lin Xun was a little perplexed. He pointed to the beast skin scroll in his hand and then to the beast's skin bag containing silver coins. "Where did these come from?"

Xia Zhi thought about it and immediately realized that Lin Xun was training last night and might not have heard what she said.

Xia Zhi explained to him.

The corners of Lin Xun's lips twitched uncontrollably. Not only did Xia Zhi go out late at night to kill a gang leader but she also took in a group of underlings, obtained a lot of booty, and sent Fatty Diao to help him collect information about the Wu Clan!

It was only after a long while that Lin Xun could digest the information. "Be careful for your safety."

Xia Zhi nodded and said, "I'm hungry."

"I'll go and cook."

With complex emotions swirling in his heart, Lin Xun turned around and walked into the kitchen. Xia Zhi had once again done something unexpected so he didn't know what to say.

As Xia Zhi watched Lin Xun busy away in the kitchen, her lips quirked into a smile that faded the next second.

She went back into the room while muttering a name in her mind "Azure Wolf", which was the nickname of a gang leader in another area of the slums.

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After dinner, Xia Zhi left again.

Lin Xun didn't stop her. He had changed his views and no longer treated Xia Zhi as a child.

Lin Xun sat down at the desk and opened up the beast skin scroll, which listed information about the Wu Clan.

In Donglin City, there were three local forces, namely the Wu Clan, the Xiao Clan and the Jin Clan.

The Wu Corporation, Boundless Treasure Pavilion and Profound Gold were the top businesses in Donglin City and took almost half of the commercial profits in the city.

According to the intelligence, the Wu Clan consisted of hundreds of clansmen and thousands of guards. They owned thousands of acres of aeth fields and dozens of mines. It firmly controlled the trade of aeth grains, and almost all aeth grain merchants in the city had to get goods from the Wu Corporation.

Additionally, three Spirit Dipper cultivators watched over the Wu Clan!

Spirit Dipper cultivators were perhaps not the most outstanding existences in the entire Ziyao Empire; however, they could be called top influential figures in a city in the southwestern province.

The current clan leader of the Wu Clan was Wu Chaoqun, a cultivator of the Aeth Transformation, the ninth layer True Martial Stage. He was shrewd, capable and cunning, and so was considered an extremely powerful character.

The First Elder of the Wu Clan was Wu Yunshan, an expert of the intermediate Spirit Dipper Stage.

The second elder, Wu Yushan, was an expert at the initial Spirit Dipper Stage.

The third elder, Wu Lanshan, was also an expert at the initial Spirit Dipper Stage.

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Lin Xun quickly learned the power and foundation of the Wu Clan, which surprised him a little.

He didn't expect the Wu Clan to possess power of that scale. The Wu Clan could be called an overlord-level existence in Donglin City.

In addition to such information, the beast skin scroll also contained intelligence on Lian Fei, but the majority of that wasn't useful to Lin Xun.

"Wu Clan...Lian Fei..."

Lin Xun fell into deep thought.

After a long ponder, the only thing that Lin Xun could confirm was that he couldn't possibly threaten the Wu Clan. However, the Wu Clan feared the Stone Cauldron Alms due to its power and thus could only deal with Lin Xun in the dark. Because of that, it could only mobilize limited powers.

Lin Xun made an important assessment of his situation. He knew he shouldn't panic because there was enough time and opportunity to prepare countermeasures.

However, if the Wu Clan found out that Mu Wansu had drawn a line with Lin Xun, he would be in great danger.

"It seems that I can't waste any time!" Lin Xun took a deep breath, and the bright candlelight cast a warm glow of light on his handsome and shapely face, making him look even more determined.

[Chapter 74: The Fury of a Beauty](#)

On the same night, Mu Wansu had just returned to Stone Cauldron Alms from a banquet organized by the owners of major businesses. Only the leaders of the top chamber of commerce in Donglin City had received the invitation.

Mu Wansu was under the impression that something huge had happened but who would have thought that the conversations in the banquet centered around Golden Jade Hall?

The previously unknown shop had created a sensation in the city over the past two days. However, today, many business leaders couldn't maintain their composure anymore and gathered together to discuss countermeasures.

Donglin City wasn't particularly huge and the local territory had long been cleanly divided but Golden Jade Hall had suddenly emerged to compete with them. The other businesses naturally couldn't tolerate this.

Unfortunately, the business leaders couldn't come to a unified countermeasure at the banquet. They each had their own plans and there weren't enough benefits for them to unite. How could they stand on the same side?

Most importantly, Golden Jade Hall had emerged too suddenly. It had managed to create such a huge sensation in just two days, making it difficult for other businesses to effectively guard against it. It was already too late to stop Golden Jade Hall from rising.

However, Mu Wansu had no interest in suppressing Golden Jade Hall. She knew very well that Stone Cauldron Alms was only regarded as an outsider in the eyes of the three local great forces, Wu Corporation, Boundless Treasure Pavilion and Profound Gold, and they had a cruelly competitive relationship.

Therefore, Mu Wansu was in no mood to get involved.

When she returned to Stone Cauldron Alms and came to her residence, she was surprised to see someone waiting for her.

"Wang Lin, what happened?" asked Mu Wansu.

It turned out the man who had been waiting was Wang Lin. His expression turned complicated when he saw Mu Wansu. "Miss Wansu, have you heard about what happened in front of Golden Jade Hall today?"

Why is it about Golden Jade Hall again!?

Mu Wansu frowned, looking a little distracted. "Yes. What's wrong?"

Wang Lin took a deep breath and asked tentatively, "Miss Wansu, do you know about the Flame Blade's origin?"

Mu Wansu's face suddenly lit up with interest. She invited Wang Lin into her room and asked, "Do you know who the owner of the aeth tool is?"

After what happened at the banquet, Mu Wansu began to grow curious about who could make such a unique blade.

The blade was given a new name—Flame Blade because of the power upgrade. This was a great honor for a certain rune master.

Just like the owners of other businesses, Mu Wansu was planning to do everything possible to make the rune master join Stone Cauldron Alms!

Wang Lin shook his head. “I don't know who made the Flame Blade, but I do know who sold it to Golden Jade Hall.”

Mu Wansu's spirits were lifted and her eyes glistened as she said, “Oh, let's hear it.”

Seeing her response, Wang Lin hesitated for a moment before whispering, “Miss Wansu, do you remember that Lin Xun came to Stone Cauldron Alms yesterday?”

Mu Wansu looked displeased. “Why are you mentioning that boy at such a time? Wait, could it be—”

Her beautiful face abruptly changed. “Don't tell me it's that bastard Lin Xun?”

Wang Lin nodded bitterly.

Mu Wansu's mood instantly changed. Her bright and beautiful face grew overcast. It was only after a long while that she said out loud, “You mean that the aeth tool he came to sell to Stone Cauldron Alms yesterday is the Flame Blade that stirred the entire city?”

Although Wang Lin could tell that Mu Wansu wasn't in a good mood, he finally nodded, “Yes, I personally examined the blade yesterday. I can confirm that it is the same as the one I appraised in Golden Jade Hall. It is absolutely the one that Lin Xun brought to Stone Cauldron Alms yesterday.”

Bang!

Mu Wansu crushed the teacup in her hand. Her full, seductive chest heaved up and down, which showed how great her emotions were fluctuating.

Indeed, she had never expected such a coincidence. She had smugly driven Lin Xun out of the store and drew a line with him.

However, she learned that the little bastard in her eyes was the one who helped Golden Jade Hall rise to fame!

The thing that annoyed her the most was that the Flame Blade would have belonged to Stone Cauldron Alms if she hadn't made that decision yesterday!

“Why didn't you say so earlier?” Mu Wansu gave Wang Lin a cold-eyed stare.

Wang Lin smiled wryly. “I came to an agreement on price with Lin Xun yesterday but Miss Wansu—you were very determined so I—”

Mu Wansu snapped, “You didn't tell me the Explosive Aeth Blade was that amazing!”

Indignant from the reprimand, Wang Lin retorted, "I told you yesterday but you said that it's just an Explosion Blade and is worthless no matter how unique it is."

Mu Wansu suddenly remembered that she did indeed say something along those lines yesterday. She couldn't help but feel humiliated.

She didn't care about the Flame Blade, but she was more concerned about the rune master who made the Flame Blade!

If they could hire the rune master to work for Stone Cauldron Alms, it would bring immeasurable benefits to Stone Cauldron Alms!

Since Lin Xun was the one who sold the blade, he had to know the blade's origin but Mu Wansu had ruined everything with her own hands.

Mu Wansu was full of regret. She wouldn't have drawn a line with Lin Xun yesterday if she had known about this.

That bastard is so annoying! Mu Wansu cursed in her mind. She found that she always suffered bad luck when she ran into Lin Xun. She originally thought that she had gotten revenge for previous issues but who would have thought that karma would come back to her?

Could that little bastard be my nemesis?

Mu Wansu felt a headache coming on, and with nowhere to vent her fury, her bright and beautiful face reeked with anger.

Wang Lin couldn't help but say, "Miss Wansu, this might be a good thing. In Donglin City, likely only Golden Jade Hall and we know that the Flame Blade came from Lin Xun. This works to our advantage. As long as we can find Young Master Lin Xun, we can find the mysterious rune master who made the Flame Blade. Then, we can immediately invite the rune master to work in Stone Cauldron Alms. It would be a great blessing!"

Mu Wansu said hesitantly, "You mean you want me to clear the air between that kid and I?"

Wang Lin said in surprise, "Miss Wansu, do you have some deep-rooted hatred towards Young Master Lin Xun?"

"No." Mu Wansu shook her head. There is no deep hatred, just...personal grudges!

Wang Lin smiled. "In that case, I will pay Young Master Lin Xun a visit on behalf of Miss Wansu. I believe that as long as we show sincerity, Young Master Lin Xun wouldn't mind about the past."

Mu Wansu felt flames of fury surging in her heart at the thought of bowing her head to Lin Xun. She suddenly raised her eyebrows and waved her hand. "No!"

Wang Lin froze.

Mu Wansu said coldly, "Lin Xun is only at the fifth layer True Martial Stage and he came from the remote Feiyun Village. Given his identity, how could he have anything to do with the mysterious rune master?"

He must have gotten his hands on the Flame Blade by accident. It's not worth wasting any effort on him."

Wang Lin disagreed. "But what if—"

Mu Wansu continued, "Even if he knows the mysterious rune master, we can deal with this matter in the future. Our priority now is to watch the situation and see whether Lin Xun played a role in all this."

Mu Wansu had long regained her self-confidence. You want to make me, Mu Wansu, bow my head? Impossible!

Wang Lin sighed inwardly. He got up and was about to take his leave.

"Send someone to watch Lin Xun's movements tomorrow and note down who he comes into contact with him every day. Perhaps we can obtain clues about the mysterious rune master that way." Mu Wansu ordered.

Wang Lin nodded and left.

Everything they talked about revolved around the mysterious rune master but they would have never expected the mysterious rune master to be Lin Xun.

In truth, how could Lin Xun, who only possessed a fifth layer True Martial Stage cultivation base, create an aeth tool?

In the history of the Ziyao Empire, there had been rune masters at the True Martial Stage able to make aeth tools but only a very few existed. Only one was seen in hundreds of years.

How could Lin Xun possibly be one of those unrivaled rune masters?

Neither Mu Wansu nor Wang Lin believed he could.

Furthermore, the Flame Blade was particularly unique in that its power was twenty percent higher than that of ordinary lower human grade aeth tools. How could an ordinary True Martial Stage boy make it? It was impossible for even ordinary rune masters!

Therefore, not only Mu Wansu and Wang Lin, but even Gu Yanping from Golden Jade Hall had also thought that Lin Xun and the mysterious rune master were two separate people.

Wang Lin had left, but Mu Wansu was inexplicably irritable. Lin Xun's figure constantly flashed to her mind like a ghost haunting her.

Mu Wansu bit her plump red lips, and her beautiful and delicate face changed indefinitely. Sometimes, she gritted her teeth, sometimes she frowned in worry, and sometimes she spaced out.

"That little bastard is sent here to torture people!"

In the end, Mu Wansu let out a faint sigh.

.....

At night, Lin Xun successfully made another Flame Blade, but he wasn't as surprised as he was compared to the first two times he tried.

The only thing now was that he was very pleased and satisfied with the fact that his perception power had increased a level after illuminating the second spirit star. It was much sharper and more sensitive compared to before, and it was much easier to control when he was engraving rune patterns.

Soon, Xia Zhi returned home and saw Lin Xun sitting quietly and cultivating on the bed. She didn't disturb him and boiled water by herself. After washing herself, she lay on the bed gazing deeply at Lin Xun's sharp and angular face.

Xia Zhi also had looked at the intelligence about the Wu Clan from Fatty Diao. She knew that the matter was a little tricky for Lin Xun to handle so she had decided to do something.

Lin Xun's eyes suddenly snapped open and he said, "I don't object to you fighting in this area but I already have a plan regarding the Wu Clan. I won't let you take any risks."

His expression was unusually serious and even a little stern.

Xia Zhi's huge black, crescent-shaped eyes widened before she stared at Lin Xun for a long moment. She hummed gently and closed her eyes. But there was a strange feeling in her heart. What was she actually thinking?

Xia Zhi didn't even realize that there was an imperceptible smile on her lips. She seemed to be very happy...

Chapter 75 Plan Ahead

Early in the morning, fluffy snow whirled in the air like plump goose feathers and rows of arm-thick icicles hung under the eaves of the house. The cold air made people shudder.

Shua!

Blades flashed across the courtyard, rolling up waves of snow.

Lin Xun's upper body was bare and his swift movements made his figure appear like temporary illusions. His Skybreaker Blade glinted as it constantly swung about and not a splash of water could pass through.

He had become slender and tall, and the muscles on his upper body resembled tempered blocks. He didn't look bulky and instead exuded a well-balanced sense of beauty.

More than half a year had passed since Lin Xun left the mine prison. He had been thin, weak, and pale but now he had become much more elegant and even exuded a tranquil calmness.

His originally handsome and sharp face now had an extra glow.

Shia!

A bone spear drilled out from the ground and charged straight into the shadows of blades. Direct, simple, and swift, it struck the weakest point of the blade shadows.

With a loud bang, Lin Xun stumbled and staggered while the Skybreaker Blade was buzzing in his hand.

"That blade technique is amazing but you haven't quite mastered it and you are unable to show its essence."

Xia Zhi was standing in the snow afar. She was dressed in a black windproof robe and was wielding a bone spear with a calm and peaceful expression.

"I know."

Lin Xun withdrew his blade and exhaled. Then, he went to wash up.

He was practicing the Six Word Blade, which he had only reached the Elemental Realm in. Although he was beginning to grasp the blade art's essence, it was still difficult to bring out the true power of the essence.

Lin Xun knew that he had to further practice this blade art and that he should practice it in real fights and battles.

"Are you not going out today?" asked Xia Zhi as she put away the bone spear.

"Not now." Lin Xun put on clothes to cover his bare upper body and went to prepare breakfast.

He had made two more Flame Blades in the past two days, but because Golden Jade Hall had stirred the city from selling the blade, he noticed that many people were searching for the mysterious rune master who made the blade. He felt it wasn't a suitable time to sell the two newly made aeth tools.

However, Lin Xun believed that Golden Jade Hall wouldn't let the matter end after selling a Flame Blade for three hundred silver coins. Sooner or later, Gu Yanping would come to find him.

Furthermore, Lin Xun finally realized that his current situation didn't look favorable after reading the intelligence that Fatty Diao brought back.

Lin Xun felt he had to do something whether it was in dealing with the Wu Clan or being vigilant of revenge from Lian Fei.

Lin Xun had analyzed his current situation for a long time and had decided to take advantage of all available resources to improve his strength!

Lin Xun told Xia Zhi about his plan over breakfast. "We can't sit and do nothing. We must make some preparations and act soon."

Xia Zhi listened quietly.

"The Wu Clan wants to borrow Lian Fei's hand to get rid of me because they're worried about angering the Stone Cauldron Alms. But Stone Cauldron Alms will no longer help us, so we have to depend on ourselves now."

Xia Zhi suddenly lifted her head and said seriously, "You've already said this a few days ago. Just tell me what to do."

Lin Xun looked embarrassed. "Did I say that already?"

"Uh-huh."

"Well, I plan to find an opportunity to get rid of Lian Fei and his men."

Xia Zhi asked, "And then?"

A ruminative expression crept into Lin Xun's dark eyes. "Once Lian Fei dies, we can see how the Wu Clan regards this matter, and if they still won't hesitate to deal with us, we will have to go into hiding."

Xia Zhi frowned. "Hide?"

Lin Xun nodded. "Yes, they likely already know where we are living so it's incredibly dangerous."

After a pause, he continued. "The Wu Clan has a huge household and a huge business. There are thousands of guards under the Wu Clan's command. The Wu Clan is a tyrant in Donglin City. If we want to fight against them, we have to use tactics such as sneak attacks. As long as we don't get caught, we can definitely wear the enemies out."

He then added, "But such tactics are extremely dangerous and if we are caught or exposed, we would have to fight to the death."

After a thought, Xia Zhi said, "If it's a sneak attack, I can at most kill cultivators at the initial Spirit Dipper Stage."

Lin Xun was dumbstruck. It was the first time that Xia Zhi spoke about her true strength. But what shocked him the most was that Xia Zhi could kill initial Spirit Dipper experts!

The Spirit Dipper Stage!

An extraordinary existence in many people's eyes!

At that cultivation stage, where a cultivator refined one's spirit to stars of the Big Dipper, they could absorb the aeth qi of heaven and earth and could open up a mysterious aeth power reservoir in their sea of qi. A True Martial Stage cultivator's strength simply couldn't be compared to a Spirit Dipper cultivator's.

There was a saying that only when a person reached the Spirit Dipper Stage would they truly step upon the cultivation path. Not only would their strength exceed the limit of the human body, but their life, spirit and entire body would also undergo transformations!

In the eyes of true cultivators, the nine layers of the True Martial Stage were nothing more than laying the foundation to embark on the cultivation path.

But Xia Zhi was confident that she could kill cultivators at the initial Spirit Dipper Stage. Even if she needed to rely on sneak attacks, it was still incredibly shocking.

Who would believe that a little girl around five to six years old could possess such powerful combat strength?

It was only after a long moment that Lin Xun could calm down from his shock and say, "That's even better."

Xia Zhi said with a frown, "Is that good? Give me three months and I can kill a cultivator at the initial Spirit Dipper Stage head-on."

"..."

He originally thought that he was improving at an incredible speed in the past half a year since he had made several breakthroughs and had progressed from the second layer True Martial Stage to the fifth layer True Martial Stage.

Who would have thought that Xia Zhi was even more impressive?

This little girl—I really don't know what to say about her...

Lin Xun rubbed his forehead. "We don't have much time. We are just preparing for the worst. If we are forced into a desperate situation, we could just leave Donglin City. There will always be an opportunity to come back."

Xia Zhi lifted her head and said in a serious voice, "But I don't like to tolerate others and run away."

Lin Xun shrugged his shoulders. "That's just in the worst-case scenario. The chance of it happening is slim."

While they were discussing, there was a knock at the door with a unique rhythm.

Xia Zhi seemed to know who it was and continued to eat.

Very soon, the courtyard gate was pushed open. Fatty Diao and Beanpole Ma rushed in, each carrying a huge box.

"Paying respect to Master Chopstick!"

Fatty Diao and Beanpole Ma were taken aback when they saw Lin Xun. They immediately put on an unctuous smile and bowed respectfully.

Lin Xun's lips twitched imperceptibly. It seemed that he still couldn't reject the bad nickname...

"Leave the stuff there and you can go," instructed Xia Zhi.

Fatty Diao quickly nodded and placed the two boxes in the corner before leaving respectfully.

"What is that?" asked Lin Xun.

Xia Zhi got up, saying, "I led some people to wipe out another gang last night. That's the spoils from that."

She opened one of the wooden boxes and saw it was filled with around five hundred shining silver coins.

Xia Zhi just took a glimpse and then opened another box, which contained some bottles and jars of aeth decoctions. Evidently, they were very valuable.

Lin Xun couldn't help but exclaim when he saw the box of silver coins and aeth decoctions. "The spoils is a little too much, isn't it?"

Xia Zhi said indifferently. "Gangs have been operating in the slums for years, and they often rob, blackmail and steal other people's property. Do you think they would be short of money? These spoils are only a part of it. The rest have already been distributed to the other gang members of the Chopstick Gang."

Chopstick Gang!

Lin Xun could only say helplessly, "So, now the...Chopstick Gang has also become a criminal gang?"

Xia Zhi nodded and then immediately added, "There is a foul atmosphere in the slums and there are all kinds of people. It's impossible to eradicate all underground forces. However, under my control, the Chopstick Gang will not operate shady businesses such as stealing, robbing and murdering."

Lin Xun asked in puzzlement. "Will they agree? This is the same as destroying the means they rely on to survive."

Xia Zhi said, "They have already agreed because I took them to take over other gangs' territories and gave them unimaginable benefits."

Dumbstruck, Lin Xun didn't ask any more questions.

"I told my underlings to select these aeth decoctions. They are very beneficial to cultivators at the fifth layer True Martial Stage."

Xia Zhi continued, "There are also five hundred silver coins in the box, which we can use for daily essentials. You don't have to work so hard to make aeth tools to earn money anymore."

She turned around and went into the room. She was going to sleep again.

Complex emotions surfaced in Lin Xun's heart. Fighting and robbing are indeed one of the most effective ways to gain money!

In just two days, Xia Zhi had wiped out two major gangs in the slums and pocketed a total of seven hundred silver coins and a load of aeth decoctions. Compared to that, the profit that Lin Xun made from selling aeth tools wasn't worth mentioning.

However, Lin Xun didn't plan to give up on making aeth tools. After all, robbing and taking over other territories were only temporary, and also too dangerous. The spoils obtained also reeked of blood.

Making aeth tools was different because it not only brought money but more importantly, he could also hone his rune skills!

From this day on, Lin Xun didn't go out and made full use of his time to engrave rune patterns, create aeth tools, temper his cultivation, sharpen his spirit, and practice martial arts...

Every three days, he would enter and challenge the rune battle realm—Thousand Heavy Wave Sea. Although he failed every time, he could see visible improvements in his physical strength.

As for Xia Zhi, she slept during the day and disappeared at night. Every other day, she brought back abundant loot, either silver coins or aeth decoctions, that were very useful to Lin Xun's cultivation.

If it weren't because of the Wu Clan, Lin Xun would even have loved his rare peaceful life.

Unfortunately, his life was destined to be not peaceful forever.

Ten days later, an assassination plot on Lin Xun was quietly happening...

[Chapter 76: Terrified Assassins](#)

Late at night, the piercing cold wind howled.

Inside the house, Lin Xun was cultivating in a cross-legged position. After ten days of painstaking training, coupled with the benefits from various aeth decoctions, he had reached the perfection of the fifth layer True Martial Stage. The aeth power within his body was not only as pure as clear liquid, but also contained incomparably terrifying power.

Although the four aeth power vortexes in the four heart acupuncture points could continuously improve the grade of his aeth power, it came with one problem—his aeth power would become sparser as it was tempered.

Therefore, if Lin Xun wanted to raise his cultivation base to perfection, he needed more aeth power and had to put in more effort than his peers.

Fortunately, the spoils delivered to him every day consisted of huge amounts of aeth herbs and decoctions that improved cultivation base; Lin Xun didn't have to worry about that problem.

"I'm close to a breakthrough..."

Lin Xun ended his training and assessed the changes in his body of qi. He knew he was one step away from reaching the sixth layer True Martial Stage.

In addition to his diligent and painstaking training, there was another reason that contributed to him reaching the sixth layer True Martial Stage so quickly. His physical cultivation was growing stronger with each day!

The so-called ninth layer True Martial Stage was originally a process to temper a cultivator's body and to accumulate aeth power. The tempering and improvement of a cultivator's body weren't independent but related with the inner body cultivation base.

Similarly, the improvement in a person's inner body cultivation base had an effect on physical cultivation.

For example, at the fifth layer True Martial Stage, the improvement in a cultivator's physical strength tempered a cultivator's muscles and bones and unblocked a cultivator's muscles and marrow. This was all to allow a cultivator's inner body cultivation base to smoothly improve.

In the same way, the improvement in a cultivator's inner body cultivation base would open up more potential in the body, thereby removing the obstacles in physical cultivation.

In short, body tempering was external and aeth power was internal. The two complemented each other and not a single one could be omitted.

The descendants of some large clans often practiced body tempering arts when cultivating aeth power. It could be said to kill two birds with one stone since it consolidated their foundations and benefited their cultivation.

Although Lin Xun had no body-tempering art, he obtained immeasurable body-tempering benefits from entering the rune battle realm every three days.

Naturally, all of that had an enormous positive effect on his aeth power cultivation.

Lin Xun suddenly awakened.

He saw Xia Zhi, who was lying on the bed, open her eyes as she whispered. "People are lurking in our courtyard."

Lin Xun felt a chill in his heart. He quickly got up and hid.

It was already late at night, and the area around Courtyard No. 49 was completely still and silent except for a few wild dogs barking.

"How many?" Lin Xun asked quietly. At the same time, his perception spread out, but he found no traces of the enemy. Clearly, the opponents were either masters of stealth or that they weren't that close to them yet.

"Three." Xia Zhi got up and methodically got dressed. When she got out of the bed, she was already clasping a two-meter-long bone spear.

The bone spear was very special. It emitted a lustrous shine that resembled starlight in the dark. It looked particularly mysterious and chilling.

Lin Xun looked at it closer and was certain that it was an aeth tool. However, he couldn't see any traces of a rune pattern on the spear.

According to Xia Zhi, the spear had been with her since she could remember and she also knew nothing about its origin.

This made it even more mysterious. Lin Xun couldn't imagine what kind of aeth tool in the world would give off such a mysterious and rare effect.

"They're approaching now. I'll go out and take a look."

Before Lin Xun could stop Xia Zhi, she had already opened the door and silently disappeared into the darkness. Even her aura had completely vanished.

Lin Xun frowned and drew a deep breath. Like an agile leopard cat, he darted out of the room and concealed himself in the shadows of the courtyard.

.....

Outside the courtyard.

"Guys, we are just dealing with a child at the fifth layer True Martial Stage. Do we need to be this careful?" A sloppy man with sunken cheeks smiled frivolously.

"Du Xiao, then why don't you act alone?"

In the darkness of the alley stood a woman in a tight black leather dress. Her snow-white legs were long and shapely, and her slim waist highlighted her ample bosom. Her plump and bright red lips looked particularly dazzling in the dark.

Next to the woman stood an old man who was wearing a troubled look and had his hands clasped behind his back. He glanced at the sky from time to time. He didn't look particularly astonishing.

The man called Du Xiao chuckled. "I'm not interested in children. I only like coquettish women like you." He licked his lips and his eyes glinted with a crazed lust.

"Oh really, do you want to play now?" The woman smiled seductively and deliberately puffed out her chest but there was an icy chill in her eyes.

"Well, I don't want to die. Who doesn't know that you won't see the sun tomorrow if you get into the Black Widow's bed?"

Du Xiao shook his head and brazenly glanced at the woman's ample bosom. He looked captivated as he said, "Hey, I haven't seen you for a few days but your breasts seem much bigger than before. I see you have harmed many men again."

Annoyed, Black Widow said disdainfully, "You don't have the guts to go into the bed but you dare look, are you a man?"

"You think I don't dare to?" Du Xiao's face darkened.

"Have you two argued enough?"

The frowning old man said aloud. His voice was hoarse, but there was an unquestionable authority. "If the target is so easy to deal with, there wouldn't be a need to ask all three of us to handle the operation."

The two felt a chill. The old man never spoke nonsense, so the operation had to be quite difficult if he said so.

"Let's go!"

The old man's figure flashed in mid-air like a bat. He glided across the air and silently stepped on the courtyard wall before vanishing.

He was extremely skilled in Qinggong and landed without the slightest noise. He evidently had mastered it for years.

Black Widow waved her hand and a whip swung out in mid-air. It wrapped around a corner of the eaves as she suddenly bounced up and into the courtyard.

Du Xiao seemed to be fooling around, but once he acted, he was extremely vigilant. He climbed up the wall like a gecko. Although he seemed slow, he disappeared in the blink of an eye.

The courtyard was pitch-dark, and the cold wind was howling. The old locust tree in the courtyard swayed and rattled, creating an even more chilling and still atmosphere.

It was unknown when the barking of wild dogs had disappeared. It was as though the wild dogs had sensed danger lurking and fled with their tails between their legs.

The three entered the courtyard and moved forward in a triangular formation. All three had rich combat experience and had carried out various assassination operations, but they felt a tinge of fear when they stepped into the dark courtyard.

It was as though someone was watching them in the dark.

"It doesn't feel right. My spirit sensing power can detect things within a radius of five feet. I can confirm that the target isn't in the room," Black Widow suddenly said. Her voice was as quiet as a mosquito's cry but it rang clearly in the other two's ears. "In other words, I haven't been able to locate the target's position yet."

Her face grew overcast. Assassins were supposed to kill opponents by surprise, but she failed to even locate the target. Their situation was a little serious.

"Could there be something wrong with the intelligence?" Du Xiao's eyes flashed with a cold blade-like light.

"No, the source of the intelligence is trustworthy. The target hasn't gone out in ten days." The old man's expression was dark and there was a hint of puzzlement in his eyes. "In my opinion, the target has discovered us and avoided our investigation."

"Huh?" Du Xiao's heart trembled. Black Widow abruptly halted.

Chi!

Amidst the cold wind, a sound pierced the air.

"Be careful!"

The old man's complexion suddenly changed. He mobilized all his strength and reached out to grab the bronze shield in front of him.

The other two also weren't too slow to react. They simultaneously drew their weapons and defended their bodies.

Bang!

A thunder-like impact reverberated and almost burst everyone's eardrums. The bronze shield in the old man's hand suddenly exploded into pieces as if it were only a piece of paper while he was propelled into the distance.

The old man's fierceness was fully demonstrated in that moment. He suddenly leapt up and glided to one side like a frightened bat.

Black Widow and Du Xiao also realized that something was wrong. One of them swung a whip and wrapped it around a branch of the old locust tree and then somersaulted across the air. The other swiftly rolled across the ground.

Boom!

A spear blasted a huge hole into the place where the three were standing.

They were all struck with terror. How could a youngster at the fifth layer True Martial Stage possess such power?

A trap!

We've fallen into a trap!

The same thought flashed in all of three of their minds. The power from one strike had struck fear into their hearts. The opponent's strength is too terrifying.

Evacuate!

The three had worked together for years and so they coordinated very well with each other. They decisively gave up on the operation and rushed out the courtyard.

The pitch-dark courtyard and the piercing cold wind had become terrifying in their eyes. A bone chilling coldness was spreading uncontrollably in their hearts.

The endless murderous intent lurking in the darkness turned out to be a trap!

Bang!

Suddenly, a miserable scream rang out. The old man's body shot across the darkness as though he had been struck by a cannonball. The wall crumbled down and there was no more movement.

"Quickly run!"

Du Xiao felt as if his soul had left his body. It was then that an azure blade emerged in the darkness, dazzling his eyes.

"As I thought, it's an ambush and there is more than one enemy!" Du Xiao roared as he thrust forward the slim awl in his hand.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Sounds of collision rang in the darkness and sparks sputtered in all directions of the courtyard.

Du Xiao was trapped!

Black Widow didn't need to look back to know that Du Xiao's situation was extremely bad. But she didn't care. The old man was already dead and Du Xiao was about to die. She had to escape!

She believed that she could definitely carve a way out if she escaped from the terrifying courtyard.

Whoosh!

She swung her body and flew away, feeling slightly relieved.

This operation was definitely the most dangerous one they had taken in years. Even now, she hadn't even caught a glimpse of the opponent's shadow. The trap filled her with terror.

"Your comrades have all stayed. Are you going to leave?"

Suddenly, a quiet voice sounded. It seemed particularly ethereal in the dark night.

Black Widow's heart sank to the bottom of her stomach.

[Chapter 77: Breakthrough in Battle](#)

A slim and young figure emerged from the darkness.

It was clearly a little girl. Her fair chin glowed with a lustrous sheen under the dim starlight.

Could the opponent be a little girl?

Black Widow was in disbelief.

Shua!

Her vision suddenly blurred and a pain shot through the back of her neck. She felt as if a pair of iron clamps had gripped her neck and she lost all the strength in her body. Then, she was lifted up.

She couldn't react at all!

A wave of terror surged in her heart. She possessed a cultivation base of the seventh layer True Martial Stage and was a well-known assassin in Donglin City. She had rich combat experience but it was the first time that she was so easily defeated. Moreover, her opponent was just a little girl!

How is that possible?

Black Widow was full of dread.

Soon, Xia Zhi returned home carrying Black Widow. She casually tossed Black Widow to the ground and cast her gaze to the courtyard's center.

There, Lin Xun was fighting with Du Xiao. The battle was incredibly fierce; the air was constantly buzzing and dust whirled in the air.

Lin Xun swung the Skybreaker Blade vertically and horizontally. The gorgeous azure blade glowed a fierce light as it performed the Six Word Blade to its peak. It was ruthless, swift, and direct.

But his opponent Du Xiao clearly wasn't an ordinary person. He was much fiercer and more ruthless than Lin Xun like he was unafraid of death.

Wielding a thin awl, Du Xiao used moves that were fast and sly, which were extremely difficult to deal with. Lin Xun was forced to constantly dodge and take a defensive stance.

Xia Zhi stood at the courtyard's side and watched quietly, showing no intention of helping.

Black Widow stood next to her and had completely given up on the thought of running away. Her expression changed indefinitely as she watched the battle.

"Who do you think will win?" A voice rang in Black Widow's ears, which terrified her. She glanced at Xia Zhi, and even if she couldn't see her face clearly, she somehow felt the little girl was like a mountain suppressing her to the point of suffocation and made her dare not to move a finger.

Black Widow drew a deep breath, gritted her teeth, and said, "Du Xiao is at the seventh layer True Martial Stage, and he has reached the precision realm of martial arts with the combat technique Cirrus Cloud Thorn. The kid is only at the fifth layer True Martial Stage. Although he has a deep mastery of the blade, he clearly lacks experience. If everything goes as expected..."

Black Widow didn't dare to say anything else.

In her opinion, even if Du Xiao won the battle, he wouldn't be able to escape death because there was the mysterious but powerful little girl standing next to her!

Black Widow couldn't help but feel despair. Not only would Du Xiao die, but she also wouldn't be able to stay alive.

She unwittingly glanced at the corpse in front of a collapsed wall in the corner of the courtyard.

It was her other comrade, "Frowning Oldy".

This made Black Widow's heart tumble again. Frowning Oldy was at the eighth layer True Martial Stage and possessed tyrannical strength. He wasn't an ordinary person and had even successfully assassinated a cultivator at the ninth layer True Martial Stage, which made him rise to fame. Everyone's faces usually paled at the mention of this veteran assassin in Donglin City.

But now...Frowning Oldy, who had made countless people feel uneasy, had turned into a corpse!

How could this little girl possess such terrifying strength?

Uncontrollable confusion filled Black Widow's heart.

"If everything goes as expected, your comrade will lose this battle."

Xia Zhi stated calmly as she fixed her eyes on the battlefield. "Can't you see that Lin Xun has gradually adapted to the battle, and he is about to break through?"

Breakthrough?

Black Widow's heart trembled violently. She shifted her gaze to the battlefield and found that, although Lin Xun was suppressed, his blade skills were becoming increasingly concise as the battle continued. Furthermore, his bearing was more and more imposing.

In particular, the qi around his body rushed into the sky like smoke signals and then tumbled down like torrents. A clap of thunder reverberated every time he exerted strength.

Wisps of white mist spiraled around his body, a sign that his blood and qi were about to ignite and he would soon break through to Blood Igniting, the sixth layer of the True Martial Stage!

"He is actually making a breakthrough in battle. This can only be achieved when a person has developed an extremely deep cultivation foundation!" exclaimed Black Widow.

She had only noticed Xia Zhi's terrifying strength and didn't pay much attention to Lin Xun. She only now realized that she had underestimated Lin Xun when she saw such a scene.

He was only at the fifth layer True Martial Stage yet he was able to survive against Du Xiao until now. This fact alone was already incredible. Other ordinary fifth layer True Martial Stage cultivators would have been killed already.

From the fighting spirit he had demonstrated, it seemed that he was about to breakthrough in battle. Almost all those who had done the same were regarded as unparalleled geniuses in the world!

Black Widow had heard that Wu Lingcong, who came second in the imperial national examination three years ago, also broke through to the Spirit Dipper Stage in battle. Even the current emperor of the empire had praised Wu Lingcong. He said, "The second best in the examination is destined to occupy a place in the martial arts world."

In that year, the champion of the national examination was Little Sword Lord Xie Yutang and the third was Song Xinglie. Both were well-known in the world but only Wu Lingcong received such praise from the emperor!

Although Lin Xun possessed only a cultivation base of the fifth layer True Martial Stage and he couldn't be compared to a pride of heavens such as Wu Lingcong, the fact that he showed signs of breakthrough in battle was already enough to shock the world.

Black Widow's heart rose and fell in waves. The boy and girl are both terrifying. She couldn't help but feel defeated when she compared herself to them.

I really can't compare to them!

"Your comrade is about to lose."

Xia Zhi suddenly spoke and made Black Widow snap to her senses. When she looked at the battlefield, she saw that Du Xiao's attacks were still extremely fierce but he was gradually failing to suppress Lin Xun.

Du Xiao constantly roared in fury. His sunken cheeks reddened with shock and anger, as though he couldn't believe that his opponent was that tenacious and difficult to deal with.

Boom!

Du Xiao made a long cry into the air as he thrust the awl forward in his hand like he was making a final desperate struggle.

Lin Xun's entire body suddenly glowed a dazzling red like a blazing furnace had suddenly erupted in his body.

Instantly, the aura around him rose dramatically, as if he was being reborn and turned into another person.

He broke through!

Black Widow gasped in her heart, and her soul almost left her body. The youngster actually achieved it...

"Impossible! You...you..."

As though terrified by the scene, Du Xiao's fierce face contorted with endless bitterness.

Bang!

At the same time, Lin Xun's blade flashed like lightning in his hand as it struck the awl in his opponent's hand. Du Xiao's wrist cracked and snapped from the tremendous power. Then, he let out a tragic scream as he was sent flying across the air.

Pu!

Lin Xun stepped forward and directly pierced Du Xiao's throat. Bright red blood splattered everywhere in the dark night. It was both beautiful and terrifyingly sad.

Hu—

Lun Xun's breathing was labored and rapid. He looked at Xia Zhi and sat down cross-legged on the ground.

The battle had not only gone on for a long time, but it was also full of danger. It had simply been a battle of life and death.

Even Lian Xun had to admit that Du Xiao was the strongest opponent he had faced since he started his cultivation journey. Not only was Du Xiao's strength two levels above his, but he also had rich combat experience. Ordinary cultivators couldn't compare to him.

Near the end of the battle, Lin Xun had almost exhausted his aeth power and he fell into an extremely dangerous situation.

Fortunately, he grasped the opportunity to make a breakthrough at the critical juncture and turned his situation around.

Now, Du Xiao was dead and he had made a breakthrough in battle, but his blood was blazing and bubbling like a stove in his body and his aeth power was soaring and rampaging around his body like a wild horse that refused to be bridled. If he didn't soon regain control, he would be at risk of losing himself.

Under the night sky, Lin Xun's expression was serious and calm. He was completely absorbed into the cultivation world.

Black Widow ignored him and just stared dazedly at Du Xiao's corpse. Her beautiful face looked particularly dispirited and helpless in the darkness.

Frowning Oldy and Du Xiao are both dead...

If I had known about this, I wouldn't have accepted this assassination request!

Black Widow thought bitterly. It's my turn next, isn't it?

"If you tell us who sent you here, I will let you go immediately." Xia Zhi said softly, her voice as ethereal as before.

But Black Widow felt a chill run through her body when it fell in her ears. She knew death was approaching.

"I'm just an assassin who helps the employer to assassinate the target. We don't know about our employer's identity. Kill me if you want." Black Widow's face was deathly pale and her voice was low.

She indeed knew nothing about the employer's identity. She had nothing to say if Lin Xun and Xia Zhi didn't believe her. From the moment she became an assassin, she was ready to accept death after the failure of a mission.

This was the test that every qualified assassin must face.

Xia Zhi pondered for a moment and said, "You can go."

For a moment, Black Widow almost thought that she had heard it wrong. She stared at her blankly and finally cried out, "You want to let me go?"

"There's no point in killing you," said Xia Zhi indifferently.

Black Widow thought that Xia Zhi was softhearted but when she heard the reason, she came to realize the bitter truth that Xia Zhi attached no importance to her.

What do you mean no point?

In other words, even if you die, it's worthless to others!

"Thank you."

Black Widow was silent for a long moment before she got up and bowed to Xia Zhi. Then, she pointed to the corpses of Du Xiao and Frowning Oldy, asking, "They're already dead, can I bring their bones back and bury them?"

Xia Zhi cast a surprised glance at her and then nodded. "That would be good."

Black Widow bowed deeply at Xia Zhi again and swiftly disappeared into the darkness with the two corpses.

"The Wu Clan? Or could it be Lian Fei?"

Xia Zhi quietly guarded Lin Xun. She stood there silently in the darkness, her jet-black eyes were filled with coldness and indifference.

In the past ten days, she and Lin Xun had been waiting for an opportunity to kill Lian Fei, but unfortunately, according to the intelligence brought back by the spies sent by Fatty Diao, Lian Fei had never left Donglin Academy.

However, unexpectedly, before she and Lin Xun had acted, the enemies couldn't hold back and sent assassins for them.

"Whoever it is must pay the price of death!"

As the little girl raised her head, a few strands of jet-black hair under the hat's brim escaped into the cold wind and fluttered over her forehead. Her tranquil and beautiful fair face flashed murderous intent in the darkness.

[Chapter 78: Before the First Wave Subsides](#)

Donglin Academy.

In the early morning, the sun was shining down the lush grass and trees. Students in navy blue school uniforms rushed to the cafeteria in groups of twos and threes.

When Lian Fei stepped out of his dormitory, his eyes were bloodshot and his brows were furrowed together.

He had stayed up all night waiting for a message, but he still hadn't received any.

Could something unexpected have happened last night?

This question struck Lian Fei's mind from time to time and tormented him the entire night.

“Lian Fei, how are the preparations going?”

A pretty girl in a perfectly tailored uniform came over from the distance. Her footsteps were light and she seemed to be in high spirits.

“Prepare for what?” Lian Fei was perplexed. The girl was called Yao Susu and was Lian Fei’s classmate. She had admired him for a long time.

“Have you forgotten that the district examination is in ten days?!”

Lian Fei hummed and slapped his forehead. He then said with a smile, “What is there to prepare for? It’s just a test of age and cultivation. I can definitely pass.”

Yao Susu and Lian Fei walked side by side. She explained, “Don’t be so careless, you are fifteen years old this year, so you won’t have an advantage in age. I heard that there are 3,000 people alone from Donglin Academy who want to participate in the district examination. However, there are only 1,000 people admitted. The elimination rate is even higher if you also consider the other applicants in Donglin City,”

Lian Fei responded in a distracted manner, “My age is definitely my weakness but I am already at the fifth layer True Martial Stage and that’s undoubtedly an advantage over the others. I believe I won’t be eliminated at the district examination.”

Yao Susu giggled. What she liked most about Lian Fei was his confidence.

While the two were talking, they arrived at the cafeteria. The huge cafeteria was already full of students, and the breakfast also looked fine. It was a vegetarian dish that consisted of a special eight treasure aeth porridge and was paired with several kinds of aeth vegetables. It also tasted pretty good.

The students in Donglin Academy were all very young, with the youngest at five and the oldest fifteen years old.

Donglin Academy was an official school and not a local force. It was established to select talents for the empire’s district examination.

Students over fifteen years old were not allowed to participate in the district examination and so wouldn’t be accepted into Donglin Academy.

Many students in the cafeteria were talking while eating breakfast. The cafeteria was very lively, and almost all topics centered around the district examination that would begin in ten days.

Uninterested in the topics, Lian Fei lowered his head and ate quietly.

Yao Susu noticed that something was wrong with Lian Fei and couldn’t help but ask, “Do you have something on your mind?”

Lian Fei hummed and then patiently explained, “Don’t worry, it’s just a small matter.”

Yao Susu had an impressive family background. Her family controlled a lot of power in Qingfeng County. Qingfeng County ruled over twelve prefectures and Donglin City was one of them.

In other words, Donglin City was also under the rule of Qingfeng County.

Lian Fei planned to participate in the prefectural examination in Qingfeng County in the future. Given Yao Susu's infatuation with him, he naturally would be well-treated there.

Yao Susu said in a concerned voice, "Lian Fei, if you have trouble, you can tell me. Although my family isn't in Donglin City, we still have many connections here."

Lian Fei smiled. "Don't worry. Don't you believe in the man you like?"

Yao Susu's pretty face blushed, and she softly spat out, "You're a smooth talker."

After being interrupted like that, Yao Susu forgot what she wanted to ask.

The two finished breakfast and walked out of the cafeteria when a middle-aged man rushed in anxiously.

When he saw Lian Fei, he wanted to say something but Lian Fei stopped him with an eye signal. Lian Fei smiled at Yao Susu. "A friend is looking for me, why don't you wait for me inside?"

Yao Susu nodded and left.

The smile on Lian Fei's face instantly faded when the girl disappeared. He said to the middle-aged man, "Why are you here now?"

While asking, he brought the middle-aged man to a quiet corner.

The middle-aged man was called Xue Yong and was an informant sent by the Wu Clan to pass a message to Lian Fei.

"I just received a message." Xue Yong sighed. "This morning, Black Widow returned twice the deposit and confirmed that the mission had failed."

His one sentence made Lian Fei freeze and his expression changed indefinitely. The worst result had come!

"How is that possible?"

Lian Fei forcibly suppressed his worry. "That kid is only at the fifth layer true Martial Stage. We have spent so much money to invite Black Widow, Du Xiao, and Frowning Oldy to take on the mission together. They could kill a ninth layer True Martial Stage cultivator let alone deal with a kid. How could they fail the mission?"

Xue Yong's face was overcast as he explained, "This matter is no doubt true. I heard that Du Xiao and Frowning Oldy have met with an accident and will never appear again."

Lian Fei gasped and felt a chill run down his spine. He stood there in a trance for a long while and then, a thought flashed across his mind. "Could that kid have a master helping him?"

"Although Black Widow didn't say so, that should be the case."

Lian Fei asked anxiously, "Could it be Stone Cauldron Alms?"

He was most afraid of the Stone Cauldron Alms since it was one of the strongest powers in the empire and no one in the entire Donglin City would dare to anger the Stone Cauldron Alms.

From what he knew, Stone Cauldron Alms didn't hesitate to ruin their relationship with the Wu Clan in order to protect Lin Xun. And as a result, the Wu Clan didn't dare to act recklessly.

If it weren't because of them, then the Wu Clan wouldn't have pushed Lian Fei out to take the lead to deal with Lin Xun!

Lian Fei knew that the Wu Clan was using him, but he had no other choice in order to avenge his father. Moreover, he needed help from the Wu Clan. As a little student of Donglin Academy, he couldn't possibly shake the great mountain that was Stone Cauldron Alms.

Xue Yong's pupils shrank when he heard the name Stone Cauldron Alms.

Lian Fei pondered for a moment and then he coldly snorted in his mind. Given the Wu Clan's usual way of shirking responsibility, I would have to bear the consequences alone if the people from Stone Cauldron Alms got mad.

This was an agreement that Lian Fei had already reached with the Wu Clan.

However, Lian Fei was unwilling to be used. After taking a few deep breaths, he gritted his teeth and said, "The matter has already happened, and so they must be on the alert. If it was up to me, I will immediately send more people to end the matter once and for all!"

When Xue Yong heard this, the overcast expression suddenly faded from his face, and he laughed. "I heard that Wu Deyong, the manager of the Wu Clan, also thinks the same way. So it's true that heroes see the same thing."

Lian Fei snorted again in his mind. What nonsense that heroes see the same thing. It's obvious that they have already figured out a countermeasure, but they just want me to come forward and take care of it!

Lian Fei said bluntly, "Since that's the case, what else did Shopkeeper Wu Deyong say?"

"We can no longer hire assassins. The death of Du Xiao and Frowning Oldy have stirred up many waves. Assassins won't dare to take part anymore."

After a pause, he changed the topic. "However, although we can't use assassins, we can use some gangsters."

Lian Fei asked thoughtfully, "What do you mean by that?"

Xue Yong smiled meaningfully. "Lin Xun is now living in the slums, where there are many underground gangs. Coincidentally, the leader of one of the biggest gangs is Old Tiger Lu. I heard that he is a ruthless character who only cares about money. What's especially good is that Old Tiger Lu is a true initial Spirit Dipper expert!"

Lian Fei's heart trembled. "We are going to ask a Spirit Dipper expert to act? This is going to cost a lot of money, right? Is it worth it?"

Xue Yong's face grew fierce and ruthless. "Du Xiao, Frowning Oldy and Black Widow acted together, but they failed to get rid of the boy. We have no choice but to ask Old Tiger Lu. This matter must be quickly ended. The longer it drags on, the more disadvantaged we are."

He suddenly realized something and said with a smile, "Of course, it depends on whether you, young master, agrees or not."

Would Lian Fei dare not to agree? He said coldly, "It's the best option given the circumstances. It depends on whether Old Tiger Lu is a real tiger or not!"

Xue Yong immediately left with a smile.

Lian Fei's lips curved in a mocking smile as he watched Xue Yong leave. What bullshit is the Wu Clan? They are afraid of the Stone Cauldron Alms' power and are just using me as their knife. When I rise to the top, the first thing I will do is get rid of the Wu Clan!

He returned to the academy and saw that Yao Susu had already saved him a seat. Lian Fei couldn't help but smile brightly when he saw her pretty face.

Whether or not he could rise to the top would depend on Yao Susu...

.....

Courtyard No. 49 in the slums.

Clasping a cup of warm tea, Lin Xun sat under the old locust tree. He exclaimed in surprise, "You let Black Widow go?"

Xia Zhi was sitting quietly opposite him, flipping through the book "Records of the Empire's Past Conquests". The warm winter sun shone on her tranquil and beautiful little face and cast her in a sacred aura

"Well, they are just assassins who work for money. It doesn't make sense to kill them," Xia Zhi casually explained.

It indeed didn't make sense.

Lin Xun thought it over. He really admired Xia Zhi's approach. She knew that there were things that must be done and things that must not be done. Her decision clearly showed her nature.

"The district examination is in ten days." Xia Zhi suddenly raised her head and looked at Lin Xun.

"Yes." Lin Xun said with a smile, "I will be fourteen years old this year. Also, I broke through to the sixth layer True Martial Stage last night. I don't think there would be a problem in passing the district examination."

He suddenly asked, "By the way, do you want to participate too?"

Xia Zhi shook her head. "I have no interest."

Lin Xun acknowledged her decision and didn't try to force her. Xia Zhi always had her own opinion. Although she would listen to him, he didn't want Xia Zhi to go against her own heart.

"What are you going to do with the Wu Clan? They must be the people behind what happened last night?" asked Xia Zhi.

“Lian Fei hasn’t left Donglin Academy these days. He’s extremely smart. I’m afraid we can’t get rid of him first.”

Lin Xun looked a little surprised. He was the one who killed Lian Fei’s father and so he was Lian Fei’s enemy. Lin Xun was surprised that Lian Fei could suppress his hatred and obediently stay in Donglin Academy. His patience and intelligence wasn’t simple.

While they were talking, someone came to visit. Lin Xun opened the door to see a beautiful woman with a hot figure standing in front of him. Moreover, she was wearing a short black leather dress.

Black Widow!

Lin Xun narrowed his eyes. Why is she here?

[Chapter 79: Armed From Head to Toe](#)

Black Widow didn’t come for revenge; on the contrary, she came to pass them a message.

“I heard that Old Tiger Lu will send a group of subordinates to deal with you two tonight. If you believe me, please leave here as soon as possible.”

Black Widow left in a hurry after saying those two sentences.

Her appearance surprised Lin Xun. He closed the door and said emotionally, “This woman knows how to repay a favor. It’s a shame that she became an assassin.”

Xia Zhi said seriously, “It seems that their failure yesterday didn’t make them exercise some restraint, but instead made them more determined to eradicate us.”

Lin Xun’s expression turned serious, and he frowned. “I’m curious who this Old Tiger Lu is?”

“I know.”

Xia Zhi said casually, “He’s one of the few Spirit Dipper cultivators in the slums and also the leader of Black Tiger Gang, the largest gang in the slums. He has thousands of gang members under his command and among them, there are over three hundred cultivators.”

She took a sip of tea before she continued, “I originally planned to swallow up the Black Tiger Gang. I didn’t expect them to come to my door on their own initiative.”

Lin Xun raised his eyebrows. “I see. In order to deal with us, the Wu Clan has hired a gang leader who is also at the Spirit Dipper Stage. They think so highly of us.” *nOvElnext.com*

Xia Zhi said disdainfully, “Old Lu Tiger is nothing, I heard that he only broke through to the Spirit Dipper Stage in his fifties, which clearly shows his poor aptitude in cultivation. He is known to only care about money and not his life so it’s not unexpected that the Wu Clan hired him.”

For the first time, Lin Xun realized that Xia Zhi’s decision to establish the Chopstick Gang and swallow up two nearby gangs wasn’t a mistake. She had not only obtained abundant loot but also gained access to various related information.

The information made Lin Xun learn about the specific forces of the Wu Clan in the shortest time and also provided background information on Old Tiger Lu.

“Do you believe in Black Widow’s intel?” Lin Xun asked.

Xia Zhi stood up and said, “I’ll send someone to check on Old Tiger Lu’s area, and we’ll know whether she told the truth or not.” She was already walking out of the courtyard as she spoke.

After just the time it took to burn one stick of incense, Xia Zhi had returned. The news was confirmed to be true. Old Tiger Lu was mobilizing and gathering people. Clearly, he was going to carry out a huge operation. Anyone who wasn’t blind could tell.

When Lin Xun learned about that, he urged, “It seems that it’s best to leave this place soon. There will be a fierce battle here tonight.”

Xia Zhi asked, “Are you scared?”

Murderous intent flashed in Lin Xun’s dark eyes. “They’ve come one after another. If I don’t strike back, I’ll be seen as too useless!”

Xia Zhi nodded. “I think so too.”

.....

That evening, Lin Xun was fully prepared.

He was still dressed in a coarse hemp garment, but it was another story inside!

Under his outer garment, he wore a pair of dark gray shoulder guards called Cloud Mountain, which were engraved with an earth guarding rune and had incredible defensive power.

A pair of azure wristbands called Ton Breaker were attached to his wrists. They were engraved with a water current rune, which not only protected the wrists but also allowed a person to mobilize the aeth power in their body much more effectively when used with a suitable weapon. Additionally, it increased the aeth power released.

A flexible armor called Stacked Scales protected his upper body. The layers of fine iron fully covered him, and coupled with the thousand whirlpool rune, he could easily absorb and neutralize an opponent’s attack. It was also a defense aeth tool.

On his feet were the Flying Spirit Boots, which were engraved with the swift wind rune. They could greatly improve a person’s flexibility and speed.

Additionally, Lin Xun was carrying a huge bow. Its entire body was jet-black and rough. It was made from more than ten kinds of metals, while the bowstring was constructed from the backbone of a thorn-tailed mammoth.

This bow was called Spirit Arm and was engraved with a gold splitting rune!

In addition, Lin Xun had thirty Blazing Sun Arrows engraved with the Explosive Flame Rune hidden in his storage ring.

Finally, strapped at his waist was the Flame Blade!

These pieces of equipment were all standard aeth tools that were commonly found on the market, but since they were aeth tools, they naturally were valuable.

However, Lin Xun had made all those aeth tools himself in the past ten days and so he didn't need to spend much money for them. He only had to consume a large quantity of aeth tools and rune ink.

It was worth mentioning that Lin Xun only failed once in making those tools, and the reason for the failure was that a mouse suddenly ran into the room and distracted him. That resulted in a little mistake in the rune engraving.

If other rune masters knew about his near-perfect success rate, they would likely go crazy.

But Lin Xun was used to it and wasn't surprised by the result.

The sun was beginning to set, and Lin Xun was ready to set off. He had armed himself from head to toe.

Xia Zhi was dressed much simpler. She carried a bone spear as always and was wearing a black wind-proof robe and a hat that covered her stunning face.

"Let's go." Lin Xun took a deep breath and walked outside.

"Wait a minute, someone is coming," Xia Zhi said, frowning. Her ethereal voice was filled with killing intent.

.....

Gu Liang walked along the narrow and dark alley, feeling a little annoyed.

A few days ago, his father Gu Yanping had instructed him to find the young master who sold them the Flame Blade. He thought it would be an easy task but he hadn't made much progress despite traveling all over the prosperous areas of Donglin City.

Gu Liang didn't dare to ask anyone for help because he knew that all major businesses in Donglin City were watching movements from Golden Jade Hall. Even Xiao Yuanzhong, the owner of Boundless Treasure Pavilion, had said that he was willing to spend a huge amount of money to find the mysterious rune master!

Under those circumstances, Gu Liang was certain that many spies in the city had fixed their eyes on Golden Jade Hall because only they knew who the Flame Blade came from!

Therefore, Gu Liang was extremely careful to avoid being followed whenever he went out. But it was only today that he realized that he used the wrong searching approach!

This was thanks to his father's reminder. According to Gu Yanping, Lin Xun was clad in the most ordinary hemp garments and clearly wasn't from a wealthy family.

Moreover, as a cultivator, Lin Xun showed no hesitation when he sold the Flame Blade, which suggested his living must be somewhat difficult.

Those little details indicated that Lin Xun wasn't residing in a prosperous area but the slums!

Sure enough, based on his father's deduction, Gu Liang soon found out that a new tenant, also a youngster, had recently moved into Courtyard No. 49 deep in a certain alley in the slums!

This confirmed Gu Liang's speculation but it was also the reason why he was annoyed. If he had paid more attention to little details, he wouldn't have had to work so hard for nothing these days.

Very quickly, Gu Liang expelled the annoyance in his heart. He came to Courtyard No. 49 and immediately knocked on the door.

The door was opened and a familiar face made Gu Liang lit up with joy and excitement. It's indeed right!

"I am Gu Liang, the owner of Golden Jade Hall is my father. I pay respects to Young Master." Gu Liang bowed respectfully.

Lin Xun looked at him blankly. He never thought the son of the owner of Golden Jade Hall would come looking for him at such a time.

He immediately understood what Gu Liang had in mind and said, "You must be here to buy aeth tools, right?"

Gu Liang was a little taken aback by Lin Xun's directness. He immediately smiled. "Young Master, You have sharp eyes. My father has entrusted me to come here regarding that matter."

Lin Xun said after a thought, "I'm not free now. I have an urgent matter to deal with today. How about I pay your Golden Jade Hall a visit another day?"

It wasn't easy for Gu Liang to find Lin Xun, so how would he be willing to leave? "Oh, why don't I just stay here and wait for Young Master to return?"

Lin Xun frowned. "I advise you to quickly leave. It won't be long before many changes happen at this place. There are likely going to be fatal disasters here."

Gu Liang's heart trembled. Lin Xun didn't seem to be joking from his expression so he finally nodded after a long thought. "If that's the case, then I'll come back tomorrow."

He turned around and left.

The moment he left, Lin Xun closed the door and leaped over the backyard wall with Xia Zhi. They sped along an alley and quickly disappeared.

It was dusk and the setting sun was red as blood like the sky was ablaze. A murder of crows was cawing in the air, their voices piercing and chilling.

As night was about to fall, the area around Courtyard No. 49 became completely deserted. Not even the barking of wild dogs could be heard.

Only the biting cold wind that was as cold as a blade whimpered like it was complaining.

Before long, the sound of footsteps broke the deathly silence. If one looked down from above, one would see a dense crowd of people rushing towards Courtyard No. 49 from all directions like a tide.

There were a lot of people, and every single one of them was in armor and wore fierce expressions. There were around five to six hundred people and among them many were cultivators!

There was no need to guess to know that those people were members of the Black Tiger Gang!

As night fell and darkness shrouded Courtyard No. 49, Old Tiger Lu also appeared.

Although Old Tiger Lu was in his sixties, he was tall and burly. His long gray hair was neatly combed but the numerous scars on his face made him look extremely ferocious and his hazel eyes were as fierce and cunning as a wolf's.

The Black Tiger Gang was the most powerful among the underground forces in the slums. Old Tiger Lu had the highest status within the Black Tiger Gang and he could even be called the king of the underground forces in many people's eyes!

Old Tiger Lu clasped his hands behind his back as he surveyed the closed door of Courtyard No. 49. The corners of his lips curled in a cold and cruel smile.

Someone had offered him the finest aeth tool and a thousand silver coins to kill a young man called Lin Xun.

Old Tiger Lu readily agreed, but he wasn't stupid so he knew that the target was no doubt difficult to deal with given the remarkable price.

Therefore, he didn't come alone, but brought five hundred gang members with him!

Old Tiger Lu believed that he could demolish the entire slums with such force, and so it had to be more than enough to deal with a teenager.

"Gang Leader, the brothers who are watching nearby have reported that the target hasn't left the house today. He must still be at home." A scout came forward and quickly reported.

Old Tiger Lu nodded and motioned his hand, "Let's act!"

His chilling and cruel voice was like a signal that lifted the curtain of the battle on this dark night.

Chapter 80 Surprise Fire Attack

Boom!

The tightly closed door was blasted open and a group of ferocious Black Tiger gang members stormed in.

At the same time, hundreds of people split up and surrounded Courtyard No. 49. Even a fly couldn't escape, let alone a person.

Old Tiger Lu nodded in satisfaction. His subordinates were all elites within the gang. They were shrewd, ruthless, and sharp-witted, and so they always handled matters efficiently.

Old Tiger Lu didn't charge into the courtyard. Although the target was only a teenager, he knew the target wasn't easy to deal with given the fact that the employer offered the enormous price of one thousand silver coins and an aeth tool.

Based on the circumstances, Old Tiger Lu naturally wouldn't take any risks before he understood the situation.

Time passed by.

Old Tiger Lu suddenly frowned. His subordinates had already stormed the target's house, but there still wasn't any noises of fighting.

Could something unexpected have happened?

As this thought flashed through Old Tiger Lu's mind, one of his subordinates darted over to him and reported, "Leader, the target isn't at home!"

Old Tiger Lu's face darkened. "Have you searched carefully?"

The subordinate said irritably, "I've looked everywhere. There isn't even a single coin let alone a person! The target must have heard and fled the moment the situation looked bad!"

All the people who charged into Courtyard No. 49 returned with disappointment across their faces.

A tinge of bad feeling surged in Old Tiger Lu's heart. His voice turned ice-cold as he fumed, "What a bunch of useless trash. Go and kill all the spies who were supposed to keep watch here. How dare they ruin my great plan!"

"Yes."

A dozen of experts immediately accepted the orders.

"Leader, it seems that the target has indeed left long ago. We are going to have to return without accomplishing anything," someone sighed.

Old Tiger Lu's face was dark and unpleasant. He had brought hundreds of people with him and stormed the courtyard in a mighty and murderous manner. But he failed to achieve what he wanted to so it was natural that he felt disgruntled.

Do we have to admit defeat?

Old Tiger Lu felt extremely bitter.

"Leader, it's not good! It's not good!"

Suddenly, a panicked voice rang from the distance. A scout staggered over, making many people restless.

The target has already escaped, could there be worse news than that?

Fury surged in Old Tiger Lu's heart. He lashed out at the scout with a kick and scolded, "Why are you so flustered? Are you here to report or announce death?"

Visibly in pain, the scout writhed on the ground and wailed, "Leader, it's really bad!"

Old Tiger Lu was so furious that he wanted to kill the useless trash with one slash of his blade. He hissed through gritted teeth, "What the hell is so bad?! Do you want to find out what death is like?"

The scout grimaced and said trembling, "Our... our den has been attacked!"

What?!

Old Tiger Lu's face changed dramatically as if he had been struck by lightning.

The other gang members' faces also blanched. The same thought came to their minds, Someone dared to take advantage of the situation to attack our den?

Who in the slums ate the guts of a bear and attacked the Black Tiger Gang?

"Damn it. It seems that someone is tired of living! They want to take advantage of the chance that we are away from the den to pick up a huge bargain!"

"Could it be Barbarian Hu from the Green Bamboo Gang? He has always made things difficult for our Black Tiger Gang. It might be him!"

"Barbarian Hu wants to die!"

Roars of anger rang out from the crowd and turned the scene chaotic. That moment revealed that those gangs were, after all, a group of outlaws who couldn't be seen in public. They couldn't be compared with the military which had strict discipline. They were nothing more than a group of individual mobs.

"Shut up!" A thunder-like roar resounded in all directions and frightened everyone.

Old Tiger Lu was ferocious and a murderous rage covered his face. He hissed through gritted teeth, "What are you waiting for? Hurry up and come with me! Don't tell me you want to wait until our den is completely taken over?"

Everyone was jolted to their senses.

.....

The time before Old Tiger Lu led his subordinates to Courtyard No. 49.

In a spacious area in the southwest of the slums stood a grand building like a castle rising from the ground. Compared with the cramped and dilapidated houses nearby, it was incredibly eye-catching akin to a crane in a flock of chickens.

It was the den of the Black Tiger Gang. Ordinary people wouldn't dare to take a step near there.

It was getting dark, and the lights in the Black Tiger Gang's den were brightly lit making it seem like daytime. Although Old Tiger Lu had brought five hundred gang members with him, there were still hundreds of guards guarding the den.

Lin Xun carefully concealed himself on the roofs of the houses opposite the old den. He surveyed the Black Tiger Gang's den from several dozen meters away and whispered, "Have you hid away all the valuable things in the house?"

"Uh-huh."

Xia Zhi's voice sounded in the dark. It sounded so ethereal that even Lin Xun couldn't locate her exact location with his current spirit power!

The way she concealed her breathing and made herself invisible was astonishing.

Lin Xun even felt that Xia Zhi belonged to the darkness—She was ethereal, elusive, and impossible to predict.

“We don’t have much time. We should act now,” Xia Zhi reminded.

As Lin Xun took a deep breath, a murderous intent flashed in his dark eyes. “Let’s do it!”

Shua!

Before his voice faded, he drew the Spirit Arm Bow, crouched down, gathered strength in his arms, and pulled back the bowstring until the bow bent into a half-moon shape.

His series of actions was as smooth as flowing water and completed in one breath!

In an instant, a figure that was standing guard by the second floor window collapsed to the ground and died on the spot as if he had been struck by lightning.

At the same time, a blaze of fire exploded at the same location. The fire blazed up. It was the power from the explosion of a Blazing Sun Arrow. The flames could spread across tens of feet and was an extremely vicious attack.

The fire flared up and many people cried out in panic. The guards scattered around the Black Tiger Gang’s den broke into an uproar.

On the roof of a house in the distance, Lin Xun was still very calm. He didn’t stop after shooting the first arrow. He waited for an opportunity to quickly follow up with another ten arrows.

Beng! Beng! Beng!

The Blazing Sun Arrows screeched across the night sky like meteors, almost bursting many people’s eardrums. The arrows all took different routes and instantly penetrated the Black Tiger Gang’s den.

There, everything fell into chaos. Numerous figures scampered about like headless flies. They were at a loss on what to do without Old Tiger Lu leading them.

That gave Lin Xun the best chance to kill.

Each Blazing Sun Arrow produced a loud thunderous boom as it struck someone with one hundred percent accuracy. It was as though the raging sun was wreaking havoc!

In the blink of an eye, the Black Tiger Gang's den had become a sea of flames. Everywhere were tragic cries, furious roars, and raging flames.

The majority of the Black Tiger Gang members were ordinary people and only a small number were cultivators. Moreover, Old Tiger Lu had brought all the elites in the gang with him; consequently, the den was left in an extremely vulnerable state.

One round of a shower of arrows had thrown them into disarray and made them flee in panic. However, a small number of cultivators remained calm in comparison. They had encountered an enemy attack in the past.

Those cultivators hid, ready to strike back.

They knew that Gang Leader Old Tiger Lu would surely return as quickly as possible after receiving the news. They only needed to persist for a while, and when he returned, regardless of how many enemies there were, they would be struck with the most brutal attack!

“Listen! Carefully hide, and if you encounter any invading enemies, kill without mercy!” roared a burly middle-aged bearded man.

He looked muscular and fearsome as he clasped a double ax and stood behind a giant stone pillar like an iron tower.

A fire raged around the main entrance and flames danced in the air but a young figure in black strode through the inferno.

She was holding a bone spear and was wearing a black wind-proof robe. The brim of her hat covered most of her face, and only a small part of her beautiful and fair chin was exposed, making her look particularly mysterious.

A little girl?

The burly man frowned, not expecting the enemy to be a little girl.

But soon, he controlled his emotions and assumed a fierce look. It doesn't matter who it is. Anyone who dares to break in must die!

Xia Zhi seemed unconcerned about everything around her as she only walked straight ahead. Her pace seemed slow but she arrived at the hall in the blink of an eye.

When she came to a stone pillar, a roar suddenly boomed out—

“Die!”

Amidst the roar, a bright and sharp giant double ax swung down. But just as it was about to strike, Xia Zhi was no longer there.

The burly man's pupils rapidly shrank. He realized the situation was very bad but it was already too late.

With a pop, a bone spear skewered right through his chest from behind and pulverized even his heart.

The burly man dropped to the ground with a loud thud, his eyes bulging, and he couldn't rest his eyes even in death.

“Hall Master Liu is dead!”

“Who was that little girl? Why is she so terrifying?”

“Where is she? Where did she go?”

The cultivators hiding in different places in the hall were frozen with terror and their hair stood on end when they saw the burly man being killed in a single attack.

It was too terrifying!

They would have thought that it was an illusion if they hadn't witnessed it with their own eyes.

They didn't dare to move rashly. Instead, they increased their vigilance and just prayed that their gang leader would hurry back. Otherwise, they likely wouldn't be able to survive.

"Ah—"

Suddenly, a tragic scream rang out and a cultivator hiding on the roof beam tumbled to the ground. His throat had a hole pierced through it and it was spewing out blood.

That scene again filled the other cultivators with terror and left them trembling. Before they even saw what happened, another comrade of theirs had been slain!

Is she a ghost?

Boom!

Very soon, one side of the main hall crumbled down, whipping up dust and smoke. A cultivator's body lay among the collapsed wall. His bones were crushed and his flesh mangled. It had been a miserable death.

Seeing this, the cultivators, who were hiding in other places, were unable to bear the terror anymore. They jumped out screaming. They had decided not to scatter around the hall but gather together.

The enemy was too terrifying. They could neither see nor perceive what happened. The enemy seemed able to disappear without a trace and their comrades were instantly killed one after another.

Who could bear this?

A dozen cultivators huddled together, their eyes blazing wild with fear. Although trembling in fear, they were extremely vigilant of their surroundings. The firelight flickering indefinitely in the distance highlighted their fierce faces.

Where is the enemy?

Where is the enemy hiding?