

It's Not Easy to Be a Man After Travelling to the Future

Chapter 16: Little Four Wants to Earn Money

Little Four rolled around the floor once sheepishly, before rolling over to Ling Lan's side. "It's okay. After fighting with you, I feel much better. I was really very unhappy before ..."

"How so?"

"When we were in the hover car earlier and Ling-Zero-Seven spoke, I had thought that this world had someone like me. I was so happy ... since leaving Mandora, I have never met another of my kind, I was so lonely ... but, after secretly talking to Ling-Zero-Seven, I found that Ling-Zero-Seven is not the kin I'm looking for. Although he is very similar, but it's just ... different ... not the same ... do you understand what I'm saying?" Little Four asked, somewhat incoherently, his face full of hope. He couldn't be blamed for his confusion; his mental intelligence was at the level of a five to six year old child at the moment.

Ling Lan replied jokingly, "Just like a human and a monkey?"

Little Four's eyes brightened and he nodded vigorously, saying, "Yeah, just like that."

Ling Lan patted Little Four's head affectionately. "Little Four, you forget, I am also a solitary existence in this world. Since you are also alone, and I am also alone, let us continue walking forward as companions."

Little Four was puzzled. "You are my host, of course I will continue to be bound to you in contract and never leave."

Ling Lan pulled Little Four into an embrace, saying softly, "That's not what I'm saying. I mean like family, like siblings, like the best of friends. Let's entrust our backs to each other, and become each other's most trusted person." Ling Lan was willing to put her faith in Little Four, for Little Four was the one who had accompanied her through the end of her last life, and he was also the one who had given her this new life. All these experiences had made Ling Lan accept Little Four, viewing him as a younger brother.

Ling Lan was determined to compensate for the regrets of the past life with her new life, and so she wanted a healthy body, freedom and space, and also a friend she could talk to about anything. A younger brother who trusted her, who she could also trust in return ...

Laying in Ling Lan's arms, Little Four was a little lost. He could not understand — his core dictated that he must be loyal to his host, so why did Ling Lan say they should

become each other's most trustworthy person? Did they not already have that sort of relationship?

This was the first time Little Four was thinking with his full processing power — even if his core chip became overheated, even if his processes started to slow, he still wanted the answer to this question. Because of this, he knew what it was to want for the first time. He did not want to see Ling Lan disappointed. Even though he knew this was against regulations, he wanted to be selfish just this once.

It was now two months after the fight, and during this time, Little Four had managed to infiltrate this world's internet through the bed's equipped network. Under Little Four's clarifications, Ling Lan had learned that the virtual net here was already very developed, fully able to stand as a secondary world on its own.

Ling Lan highly suspected that her mum was able to confine herself at home most likely because of the existence of this virtual network, allowing her to do whatever she wanted to without needing to step foot out of her home. Moreover, she wouldn't have to worry about her identity, and could choose to live freely.

From the information he gleaned on the internet, Little Four had discovered the true value of the gene stimulating agents, and had also found out the typical absorption rate of the infants here. After Ling Lan was informed, she thought back to her first session with fear — they had overdid it with the absorption of the agent that time after all. Fortunately, throughout history, there were still a few babies who had absorbed even more agent than her, so at least she wasn't breaking any records.

The two of them conferred, coming to a decision that no matter how many tubes of agent the military brought next month, they would only absorb ten.

Actually, Ling Lan didn't even want to absorb ten tubes. She only wanted to absorb about six or seven tubes, an amount which would match up with her original assessment results. However, Little Four was firmly against it. Because from the information he had gathered, as they grew, the number of tubes an average baby absorbed would only increase rather than decrease after their first time. Only after they had matured would the number gradually fall and taper off, ending when they could finally no longer absorb any.

Since Ling Lan had already absorbed ten tubes her first time, it would make no sense for the number to decrease the second time. Rather than risk looking even more abnormal, she might as well continue absorbing ten tubes. After all, that number had already been established the first time, so it wouldn't be any more surprising to the military. Furthermore, Ling Lan's body really needed that agent — Little Four had found that ever since Ling Lan started training in physical skills, her spiritual power had started

growing at an even more rapid pace. Little Four was worried that Ling Lan's body growth would not be able to keep up with the growth of her spiritual power.

After some internal debate, Ling Lan decided to accept Little Four's suggestion. Meanwhile, to better support Ling Lan, Little Four was struggling over how to earn money on the internet. This was because he had discovered suppliers for the agent on the net, and although the impurities in those agents were much higher than the ones provided by the military, that was not a problem for Little Four who could clear away those impurities as easily as he could eat a carrot.

Erm, well, he couldn't really eat human food, so ... alright, let's just assume it's a virtual carrot. The point is, it was very easy for him.

For this grand ambition, Little Four had even secretly created a bank account by hacking into the system of the Centre of the Federation Banking Alliance. Naturally, bypassing the defences of the system was like child's play to him, as easy as eating a virtual carrot. To ensure the security of the account, without any approval, he had set the account's level to triple-S. It wasn't that he didn't want to set it higher, but only one five-S account existed at the moment, which was the account of the Prime Minister of the Federation, so Little Four knew he couldn't go that far.

Ling Lan observed as Little Four did all this and finally understood how amazing Little Four actually was — in the virtual world, Little Four was a god.

However, no matter how amazing Little Four was, he still had no clue how to go about earning money, and so could only turn to Ling Lan for advice. Unfortunately, Ling Lan was also clueless about this. Think about it, her previous life was pretty much spent on a sickbed — other than learning about the world and getting information from the internet, she had basically spent the rest of her time reading novels and comics ... If she had known this day would come, she would have spent that time learning how to do business and looking up financial information instead ...

Thump thump thump! Ling Lan was startled by the sudden sounds beside her. Lifting her head, she was stunned by the pile of books that had appeared in the great hall of the mind-space ... Ling Lan picked up a random book from the pile. The cover read . Looking at the titles of the other books in the pile, Ling Lan's face turned black.

Little Four looked at her with a face begging for praise, so proud of himself as if he had done a great thing.

Ling Lan said through gritted teeth, "Why did you bring out so many financial books? And where did you get these?"

Little Four said smugly, "Weren't you thinking about how you wanted to read more about these things? Luckily while you were in your previous body, I had downloaded and

stored all the books I could get from the internet there. No matter what you want, I have it ...”

Ling Lan blew up. “You think if I finish reading these I can become a business expert overnight? I think you’re dreaming! What good can books do?!”

Little Four drooped. “Are they useless?”

“Of course they are! It’s all theory. It’s not that easy in the real world — the most these books can do is just provide some entertainment,” said Ling Lan, resigned. She knew very well that she had no talent in this area.

Little Four was very disappointed. With low spirits, he said, “So they are only for human entertainment. Looks like I’ve wasted my time. To get all these books, I have spent so much time ...”

Seeing this, Ling Lan felt sorry for Little Four, and quickly reassured him, “No no, there could still be some precious books in your collection. And some people who want these books may never be able to get them anymore ...”

A flash of inspiration rushed through Ling Lan’s mind, but remained just out of her grasp.

Little Four sighed, “In your previous world, all these books were freely available on the internet, who wouldn’t be able to get them? Stop trying to make me feel better ...”

“My previous world? 10000 years ago ...” Ling Lan finally caught hold of that spark. Excitedly, she said, “Little Four, I have figured out how we can earn money!”

Chapter 17: Redemption of Honour Points?

Little Four asked excitedly, “What is it?”

Ling Lan laughed and said, “After these ten thousand years, even if there are cloud drives and other sorts of storage methods, I don’t think all books would have been preserved till now ... why don’t you go look and see if there are any requests for old books on the internet?”

Little Four was a little hesitant — even if there were such requests, there wouldn’t be many, which would only result in chump change. For his purpose of buying Ling Lan more gene stimulating agent, he would need a lot more money, the more the better, so this little amount would not even be a drop in the ocean.

Exasperated, Ling Lan flicked Little Four’s forehead, saying, “Don’t look down on this little bit of money. We just need to get started and collect some seed money first before

looking for other ways to earn money. Otherwise, even if an opportunity appears, we won't be able to do anything.”

With this, Little Four understood, and abruptly felt the weight on his shoulders grow exponentially. He stood up tall and thumped his chest, saying, “You can count on me.” Looking at his seriously adorable ‘believe-in-me-you-will-not-regret-it’ face, Ling Lan couldn't help but snicker in her heart. She found herself thankful once again that she had Little Four at her side, who was willing to work hard for her benefit.

After some discussion, the two of them decided that Little Four would be fully responsible for all matters on the virtual network. That said, safety was the top priority — they'd rather take things slow and gradually accumulate their seed money, as long as they could keep things as covert as possible. Honestly, they really didn't need to rush. Even if they could buy the gene stimulating agents right now, who would be able to use them? Little Four was a virtual being, while Ling Lan was still a baby who could not even crawl properly yet.

After passing on the follow-up tasks to Little Four, Ling Lan happily went to bed without giving any further thought to the matter. Left alone, a fired-up Little Four rushed into the virtual world and started doing as Ling Lan said, slowly accumulating cash.

Ling Lan was someone capable of putting her full trust in others, so she did not pay any further attention to the matter after entrusting Little Four with it, not even asking for a progress report. Little Four was touched by this show of trust — oh how much faith did his lord have in him — so he decided he must do his best to serve her until his death.

A while back, Little Four had consumed several hundred thousand words of the entire Romance of the Three Kingdoms when fulfilling the request of a client. After that, he had become obsessed, and this was reflected in his method of addressing Ling Lan — instead of the original ‘host’, he now called her ‘lord’. Every time Ling Lan heard that form of address, her head would throb — why did this silly child love cosplay so much?

It had to be said that Little Four was really very innocent. He had no idea that Ling Lan's ‘show of trust’ was actually just blithe unconcern. In Ling Lan's opinion, while it would be great if they could earn money, it was also fine even if they didn't manage to earn any. After all, Little Four was the one who was gung-ho about it, and it was a zero-cost business, so it really didn't matter whether the results were good or bad. She was just glad to see Little Four in high spirits, no longer looking as lonely as he was before.

Alright, to be honest, Ling Lan had assigned this task to Little Four as a way to distract him and cheer him up — and poor Little Four had fallen for it hook, line, and sinker.

Time passed by quickly, and Ling Lan finally became a toddler capable of moving about on two feet. During this time, she had received one more round of agent injections, and

as discussed, they stopped absorbing at the tenth tube like before. As for the military people, it was the same group as before, and they seemed to have come mentally prepared this time, remaining calm throughout the whole procedure. In fact, they were even gaining the mistaken impression that absorbing ten tubes was a completely natural phenomenon, not deserving of any surprise whatsoever. It had to be said that the military was certainly made up of extraordinarily mentally resilient and adaptable people.

One day, during Ling Lan's sixteenth month of life, she was practising her bendy poses as usual, diligently going through all nine stances one at a time. She had actually managed to learn all nine stances by the time she was just a little over fifteen months old, and since then, she had made sure to practise all nine stances in order every day. Of course, there were still inconsistencies and mistakes, but Ling Lan would correct them as she progressed, gradually converting the nine stances into basic instinct.

This time, when Ling Lan completed the ninth stance, she suddenly felt a surge of heat run through her body. It was so comfortable that she couldn't help but moan in pleasure. This was something that had never happened before — although she would also feel slightly warm and her body would be loose and comfortable after finishing the nine stances, she had never felt this sort of euphoric floaty feeling before.

Ling Lan laid comfortably on her bed, still basking in the echoes of contentment, when she abruptly found that her consciousness had been drawn into the learning mind-space.

Before this, she had always chosen to enter actively — this passive access was new.

Before Ling Lan could protest the learning space's high-handedness, an aloof man had appeared out of thin air right in front of her.

Ling Lan jerked in surprise, but immediately straightened up to say, "Hello, Instructor Number One!" She definitely must not let this formidable man notice her annoyance. Ling Lan intuitively knew that if she angered him, she would lose a layer of skin even if she didn't die.

"Firstly, congratulations on your perfect completion of the foundation chapter of the advanced physical skills course," said Number One, his face as emotionless and tone as cold as ever.

Despite that, for some reason, Ling Lan just felt that Instructor Number One was actually in a very good mood.

"Now you shall receive your reward," continued Number One.

Ling Lan felt excitement stir within her — what kind of reward would Instructor Number One give?

At this moment, an extremely mechanical voice piped up beside Ling Lan's ear, "Reward: first item, time remaining from deadline: 49 days, awards 49 honour points; second item, assessment results: perfect, awards 100 honour points. Total of all items: 149 honour points. Please confirm receipt."

Facing Number One this time, Ling Lan finally realised that the mechanical voice she had heard before had not come from Number One, but seemed to be the voice of the learning space's system.

Ling Lan chuckled dryly. Hindsight is truly 20/20 — she only noticed now that although Number One's voice was very cold, it was also crisp and clear, with none of the mechanical inflections of the system's voice. It was a shame that Instructor Number One had appeared behind her that first time, causing her to mistakenly attribute the mechanical voice to him.

Instructor Number One's voice rang out once more, "Now I shall explain the usage of honour points. Other than the core compulsory courses, the learning space also provides many additional supplementary courses which require honour points to unlock, and of course there are also games and other types of entertainment available. You may freely choose how you would like to use these honour points."

"Use? Does this mean that honour points are not that easy to get?" asked Ling Lan calmly. She knew very well that Number One's words may have some hidden meaning — it could even be another test — so she couldn't just take things at face value.

Unfortunately, her questioning was not fruitful this time round. Number One did not answer, merely keeping his silence, though Ling Lan could sense a very light trace of humour in his eyes. Perhaps she had guessed correctly that honour points were indeed very precious. Or perhaps this first seemingly generous award of honour points was another trap, trying to fool people into thinking honour points were easy to get so they would spend them thoughtlessly.

A large screen suddenly appeared in front of Ling Lan. On the screen, there were many general category selections. It looked like these were the things that she could redeem with her honour points.

"Do I really have to choose right now?" Ling Lan asked doggedly. Since she already knew that honour points were important, she didn't want to use them recklessly.

Number One said, "You must. This is also one of your lessons." Number One smashed her hopeful plans, and continued, "You must choose within ten minutes, or else the system will enforce a random draw."

At these words, Ling Lan's heart thumped. Something niggled at her mind, so without wasting anymore time, she opened the redemption window.

Chapter 18: Between a Rock and a Hard Place

Ling Lan flicked through the options on the screen. There really were all sorts of courses, from harp-playing to chess and various art and literature courses, even embroidery was included. Of course, there were also all sorts of martial combat skills, and even some really strange and bizarre courses she had never heard of before. The points to redeem these courses ranged from one point to several hundreds of points, while some even required up to one or two thousand points and perhaps even more.

The gaming and leisure options were noticeably more expensive, starting from a base redemption amount of 50 points, with the more expensive options reaching up to 5000 points to 10000 points. Of course, this section also had a smorgasbord of options. Take games for example — there were traditional games with retro designs, magic and sorcery games, futuristic apocalyptic games, galactic mecha games, martial combat games, and they actually even had dating simulation games ...

As for the other leisure options, anything you could think of as recreation could be found there. When she had tapped into that category, Ling Lan hadn't even known where to look. There were just too many options.

Hell, was this still a learning space meant for the cultivation of young talent? Why did she feel a corrupting influence emanating from these options?

Ling Lan decisively exited from the recreational categories, and opened up the learning courses. Time was counting down, so she did not have a moment to lose. Since she had to redeem something, she might as well use the honour points she had now to redeem something she needed most at present.

With a rough idea of what she wanted, Ling Lan clicked open the combat category, and then chose the subcategory of defence.

Countless defensive combat techniques and skills immediately popped up on the screen. Ling Lan selected the option to list the skills and techniques according to honour point requirement in ascending order, from the lowest to the highest.

The first skill she saw cost only 1 honour point — Iron Skin. The description below it explained that the skill could turn the skin of a person's entire body into iron, capable of withstanding heavy blows. With mastery, the practitioner's skin would become a metallic colour. Without any hesitation, Ling Lan immediately sent the option flying — how could a soft and delicate girl like her allow her skin to become metallic in colour? It's not like she wanted to become Iron Woman.

Next were the skills that required 10 honour points to redeem. There were a few more than those requiring 1 point, but when she counted them, there were only about 10 options. Ling Lan found that interesting — there was one skill which cost 1 honour point,

and ten skills which cost 10 honour points ... did that mean that there would be fifty skills which cost 50 honour points?

Of course Ling Lan was just thinking about this idly; her full attention was actually upon these ten options before her. She only had ten minutes after all, there was no time to waste.

Eagle Claw? What, mastery meant having claw-like hands? No can do.

Iron Head? She needed to bang her head against hard objects every day? That was just asking for pain and suffering. Dismissed.

Golden finger? Practise by jabbing her fingers at trees every day? Ridiculous. Ignored.

Crippling Legs? Mastery meant legs with exposed veins? Dear god that would be terrifying. No way.

Long-ape Arms? What, mastery meant one's arms would become as long as an ape's? Dammit, even though she would have to live this life as a man, she still didn't want to live as an ape-man. That would be too tragic — no way in hell.

...

Why did all these skills either change a person's appearance or require self-mutilation to achieve mastery? Ling Lan complained internally. Just as Ling Lan was about to give up on redeeming any of the 10-point skills, she noticed the final skill on the list — Rabbit Sky Leap.

Rabbit Sky Leap: A conditional skill. Requires a high degree of body flexibility. Minimum requirement of B-rank flexibility, but A-rank and above flexibility recommended.

This skill does not change one's appearance after mastery, but will increase overall strength by three times or more. Precise increments will depend on practitioner's flexibility and intensity of practice. Please observe changes and adjust accordingly.

Practice method: ...

This Rabbit Sky Leap skill captured Ling Lan's heart immediately — it seemed like a perfectly normal skill, no torture or mutilation mentioned in its training method. Besides that, the condition seemed tailor-made for her. The basic nine stances she had been practicing had focused specifically on increasing a body's flexibility. Instructor Number Nine had clearly stated that once she mastered the nine stances, her body flexibility would be at A-rank.

In general, babies were born with a flexibility of B-rank, but if they didn't practise any sort of physical skill such as the nine stances, their flexibility would decline as they grew older. A regular adult would have a flexibility between D-rank to F-rank.

If one trained in offensive physical skills, flexibility would drop even more, perhaps not even reaching D-rank. Meanwhile, a practitioner of the Balanced Series of physical skills would at most be able to maintain a flexibility of C-rank, with exceptional cases being able to achieve B-rank.

As for the Defensive Series, there were two branches within the set itself — the Endurance Series and the Flexible Series. The Endurance Series focused on increasing a body's toughness, hardening it to increase defensive ability, thus reducing flexibility, which would result in a body flexibility similar to those practicing the Balanced Series. Only the Flexible Series, as its name implied, focused on training up a body's flexibility, and would allow practitioners to achieve a flexibility of A-rank and above.

The basic nine stances that Ling Lan learned were from the Flexible Series. The learning space had automatically assigned the Flexible Series to Ling Lan because she was a girl, and because her natural flexibility had already been very high.

It looked like the learning space also had some recognition of gender, and had been unwilling to produce an iron-muscled woman.

At this point, Ling Lan had already made her decision, but she still cautiously browsed through the skills which required 50 honour points. The quality of the skills naturally increased as the cost of the skills increased, but the associated restrictions and conditions also got increasingly tougher. Many of the skills required a certain level of body strength, resilience, or flexibility, as well as a certain level of physical skill. Ling Lan knew that even if she redeemed these skills now, she still wouldn't be able to practise them for three to five years. After all, her body was just not at that level yet, there was still much more training she had to do first.

Just then, Number One reminded, "There is not much time left, have you chosen?"

Ling Lan smiled and said, "Yes, I choose the Rabbit Sky Leap."

Number One warned her, "The Rabbit Sky Leap only requires 10 honour points. You still have 139 points, what else will you choose? Please choose immediately."

Ling Lan shook her head. "I only want this one. I don't need anything else right now."

Number One sniffed. "You still have so many honour points left. Do you really want to waste them?"

Ling Lan smirked like a little fox. "Will they really be wasted?"

Number One just stared at her placidly. His gaze was steady and indifferent, as if telling her that if she really chose only the Rabbit Sky Leap, all her remaining honour points would be cleared away.

Ling Lan's resolution started to waver under Number One's stare — should she just redeem all her honour points now, and just wait to learn those skills later on when she met their requirements?

But then that was also a problem ... Since she had no idea what the learning space would assign her next, if she redeemed her points now and chose something that was unsuitable for her later on, that would also be a waste.

Should she gamble now? Or gamble for the future? Ling Lan struggled over her decision. She lifted her head to look at Number One, hoping to get some sort of hint from him. After all, the reason she wanted to save her honour points to begin with was because of Number One's earlier words. Had she misunderstood what he was saying?

Chapter 19: The Powerful Cheat Code

Translator: ryuxenji **Editor:** mjn0898

So that she could hold onto the free treatment provided by the country in her past life, over her 24 years of illness, Ling Lan had learned how to observe body language and react accordingly. She had learned how to appeal to the doctors and nurses around her, acting cute and being well-behaved. The quota for free treatment was limited, and there were always plenty of other patients waiting in line, so she knew she had to get the researchers and caregivers to like her and care for her personally. This way, subconsciously, they would want to keep her around and would put in a good word for her when necessary.

Her skills in this area were no use here against Number One, however. He was a battle-hardened veteran warrior — how could little inexperienced Ling Lan hope to glean anything from his body language? The more Ling Lan stared at Number One, the more helpless she felt, until the point where she felt that it might be better to just redeem all her points now after all. It'd be better than letting them all go to waste.

Just as she was about to ask to continue redeeming, the system announced, "Time's up. Exchange 10 honour points for Rabbit Sky Leap, successful!"

Ling Lan was abruptly jolted into awareness. Unconsciously, it had already been ten minutes. Knowing that there was nothing else she could do, Ling Lan resolutely pushed aside all her anxiety. Since God had already helped her decide, there was no point having regrets even if she was going to lose all those honour points. It had to be said that Ling Lan was a very mature and adaptable girl — perhaps those 24 years of torment due to illness had taught her that there was no point in obsessing over the unobtainable.

The system continued to announce, “One redemption successful. Redemption mission completed, 1 honour point awarded. Remaining honour points: 140 points. Shall be reserved for the next redemption.”

Ling Lan was ecstatic. She had guessed correctly! As expected, honour points could be saved up — Number One’s words had been a hint after all. The word ‘use’ had been a subtle hint that honour points were precious, while the following statement that a random draw would be enforced after ten minutes indirectly implied that only one exchange was required.

This seemingly simple statement was actually rife with meaning. The cost of the items that could be redeemed ranged from 1 point up to several tens of thousands of points, and though Ling Lan only had 149 points, the things she could redeem were numerous. This presented a problem — if the enforced draw by the system randomly selected an item that only cost 1 point or 10 points, or perhaps even 50 points, what would happen to the rest of the unredeemed honour points?

Number One’s explanations had not covered any of that. Based on her previous experience, Ling Lan had quickly sensed something strange about the scenario, fearing that this was yet another trick. Perhaps this forced redemption was actually just a way for the system to teach new users how to redeem their honour points, just like how an instructor makes you practise a skill once in front of them right after they finished teaching you.

Of course Ling Lan knew that every little action of the learning space was not as simple as it seemed, so the forced redemption must have some deeper meaning beyond that. However, Ling Lan didn’t think it was necessary to spend much time and effort to figure it out.

So she chose the Rabbit Sky Leap which was most suitable for her. Not only could she practise it immediately, it was also a very subtle skill. Ling Lan was very satisfied with her choice. As for whether it was the best choice, Ling Lan was not overly concerned about that. She didn’t expect the best things to just appear in her path randomly, as if she were the ‘main character’ in a story, but was content to just take things as they came.

Instructor Number One was extremely pleased with Ling Lan’s performance this time as well. Without further ado, he switched places with Instructor Number Nine, who proceeded to instruct Ling Lan in the Rabbit Sky Leap as well as the next chapter of her physical skills training — the Body Refining Nine Stances.

Training for the Body Refining Nine Stances was a hundred times more difficult than training for the Basic Nine Stances. For the following month, Ling Lan trained laboriously to master the first stance with little to no effect — she couldn’t even get the positioning of a single arm right.

Ling Lan felt that this was a miserable mission. Judging by her current progress, she would never be able to accomplish it within the given deadline of five years. Fortunately, Ling Lan had a positive attitude. Even if it felt like an impossible mission, she wasn't anxious or impatient. Every day, she worked hard to conquer it little by little, in hopes that when the deadline arrived, she wouldn't be too far off the mark. Ling Lan had deduced from the first reward of honour points that the system's punishment would most likely be based on a similar principle — the less she was behind, the lighter the punishment she would receive.

Very soon, it was once again the time for a session of gene agent injections. Ling Lan had assumed that this third session would be very much like the first two sessions, where she would just be laid on the bed to rest right after.

Unexpectedly, when all the military personnel had left, Ling Lan's mother Lan Luofeng had picked her up and had walked through several hidden passages to arrive at a small room. There was almost nothing in the room — only a small single bed by one of the walls and a waist-high wooden tub in the centre of the room. Nothing else.

The moment Lan Luofeng entered the room, she asked, "Is everything ready?"

"Yes, Mistress!" A middle-aged woman stood within the room. Ling Lan recognised her — she was chamberlain Ling Qin's wife, Ling Nanyi.

Lan Luofeng stepped forward to stand before the wooden tub. Ling Lan could now see that a little more than half the tub was full of an inky-green liquid that smelled heavily of medicinal herbs.

Ling Lan was deeply surprised — so far in this time period, all she had seen were medications of Western influence, such as injections or pills, which were bland and tasteless. Now, this familiar smell abruptly brought her back to the memories of her past life. She had had to drink so much of this sort of herbal concoction, but still ... Ling Lan's forehead scrunched up in worry — could it be that she was supposed to drink all of this medicinal liquid?

Ling Lan felt shudders of apprehension within her heart. From her mother's and Ling Nanyi's demeanour, that tub of medicinal liquid was most certainly for her. Looking at the wooden tub once again, and then mentally comparing it to her own tiny body ...

Hell, were they trying to kill her? If she finished drinking all this medicinal liquid, she would definitely be the first baby in the world to die from a distended belly due to Chinese medicine.

Ling Lan's mum was not as ruthless as Ling Lan had thought. "Is the temperature of the water alright? Ling Lan won't be scalded, will she?"

Thank God, she was supposed to bathe in it and not drink it. Ling Lan cried internal tears of relief as she hugged her mother tightly. Her life was spared.

“Relax, Mistress. I have tested it properly, there won’t be any problems,” replied Ling Nanyi firmly. Ling Lan was the Ling household’s only hope — she would never allow any bit of carelessness when it came to Ling Lan’s welfare.

Lan Luofeng did not hesitate any further. In short order, she had stripped Ling Lan naked and placed her into the tub.

Ling Lan felt as if she were soaking in a hot spring, warm and comfortable, when suddenly she felt a surge of heat invade the core of her body from her skin. An indescribable feeling suffused her entire body — like pain yet not pain, like an itch yet not an itch. Ling Lan, who had never before been afraid of pain, actually couldn’t help but moan at the strange sensation.

Lan Luofeng was startled by this and looked at Ling Nanyi anxiously, wondering how Ling Lan was doing.

Ling Nanyi reassured her, “Mistress, this is normal, the young master is fine.”

As time passed, Ling Lan started getting used to the strange sensation. But then, the feeling escalated into intense pain, almost reminiscent of the body-shredding pain of her previous life ...

Oddly enough, this intense pain actually calmed Ling Lan down instead, as she knew she was fully capable of withstanding this sort of pain from 24 years of experience.

“Huh? What is this thing?” Ling Lan heard Little Four exclaim within her mind.

“What?” Although she could manage the pain, it was still nice to have someone to talk to to distract her from it based on her experience. She was very happy to chit chat with Little Four even while wracked with pain.

“It’s a very strange energy ... it is actually raising the activation of your muscles and their resilience.” Little Four was very surprised and curious. How was this tub of medicinal liquid brewed? There was no information on this concoction within his databases.

“This must be a secret formula of the Ling family, specially made for refining the body.” In contrast, Ling Lan wasn’t as surprised. No matter how weak and insignificant the Ling family was, they were still an old clan that had persevered for over several thousand years, so it was not at all surprising that they had developed this secret formula over the years and had passed it on through the main branch of the family, Ling Xiao’s branch.

“Lord, the things in this world of yours are amazing. Heavens, what did I discover? This medicinal liquid is actually 96 percent plant-based ...” Little Four marvelled. Who’d have thought such an amazing concoction could be made without having to utilise any sort of advanced technology? This was truly a miraculous world.

Ling Lan sweat-dropped. What else would a Chinese herbal concoction be made of if not medicinal herbs?

“And what’s the remaining 4 percent? Why is it so familiar ... poison? Yep, should be a type of snake poison ... and what’s this? Scorpion? Centipede, and ... spider venom!” Little Four’s tone of voice kept getting higher and higher until he was practically screeching. It couldn’t be helped — within this one year, Little Four had learned about the various creatures that could be found in human society, and although he was OK with most of them, he really had no tolerance for creepy crawlies. According to his sense of aesthetics, they were so ugly that they should be wiped from the surface of the Earth.

Ling Lan chose to ignore Little Four’s manic flailing in her mind. She was busy marvelling at the fact that she was actually going through a purification ritual like some main character in one of those novels she had read.

Yep, travelling to the future was not too bad after all. The cheat code of the God of Time and Space Travel was pretty powerful.

Chapter 20: Ling Lan is a Glutton

Lan Luofeng and Ling Nanyi stood beside Ling Lan and anxiously observed her expression and body condition. This medicinal liquid needed to be bathed in while conscious for maximum effect — the effects would be greatly weakened if the bather lost consciousness, and the first soak was the one with the greatest impact.

Ling Nanyi saw that although Ling Lan’s little forehead was all scrunched up, her facial expression did not show any signs of the savage struggle that other children had during these baths. She nodded approvingly — as expected of their master’s child, this tolerance level was extraordinary. If their master was still around, he would probably be greatly heartened that he had such a reliable descendant.

Every time Ling Lan’s face twitched, Lan Luofeng subconsciously wanted to pull Ling Lan back into her arms. The pain in her eyes eclipsed the pain that Ling Lan was enduring — she really did not want to see her own child going through this sort of crushing pain. She had never forgotten what Ling Xiao had once said about the medicinal liquid — he had said that it was very effective, but it also inflicted tremendous pain in the process.

Lan Luofeng's gaze shone with boundless sorrow, and tears glimmered in the corners of her eyes.

Ling Nanyi sensed Lan Luofeng's reluctance and tried to comfort her. "Mistress, you need to bear it and let it happen. This will help build up the young master's foundations so he can live a better life in the future. In the end, this world is still a world where the strong triumph ... without true strength, we will not be able to protect what the master left behind."

Lan Luofeng nodded. "I know. It's alright, I can bear this. I believe that Ling Lan can continue holding on too." Ling Nanyi was right. A strong foundation was necessary for her child to be able to live freely in the future.

Meanwhile ...

"I need to go research this formula. It's too miraculous! If I can understand the medicinal properties and how they work together, perhaps I may be able to develop a new agent! Lord, I'll be going now, take your time soaking ..." Without any remorse whatsoever, Little Four abandoned Ling Lan and ran off to his research lab to pursue his next great invention.

Hells, this heartless bastard! Ling Lan, who had been hoping that Little Four would continue talking with her to share her pain, was full of contempt for his selfish actions. Later, she would definitely teach Little Four a lesson and would make sure he understood that nothing was more important than his lord.

The intense pain caused Ling Lan's body to spasm uncontrollably, low moans spilling in an endless stream from her mouth. Suddenly, she recalled that her Qi exercises could somewhat alleviate this sort of pain, and quickly began practising them. It actually worked — the pain was greatly dampened and became bearable again.

The violent spasms of Ling Lan's body just now made Lan Luofeng and Ling Nanyi even more anxious, but while Lan Luofeng was purely heartsick over Ling Lan's suffering, Ling Nanyi was concerned over what would come next. She knew that the next half hour would be the most critical period of the medicinal bath, and it was also the part that was most difficult to bear. Most of the children would faint then — even their master had become comatose, though still aware, for half a day back when he had endured this coming half hour.

Perhaps the Qi exercises Ling Lan practised had been deeply ingrained into her body memory since she had been practising them since she was in the womb, for Ling Lan entered into a deep meditative state very quickly. She could no longer feel the pain wracking her body, but merely felt as if she was submerged in a miasma of heat.

Seeing Ling Lan's slack face, Lan Luofeng relaxed in turn. It looked like Ling Lan had managed to overcome yet another hurdle.

On the other hand, Ling Nanyi was confused since she knew the true properties of the medicinal liquid. Could it be that the herbal contents had been absorbed entirely? She peered at the inky-green water — the saturation of the colour indicated that there was still plenty of herbal content left.

If so, then the pain should still be present and should have even intensified at this point. It seemed like their Young Master Ling Lan was either a child with abnormally high pain tolerance, or else had deficient pain receptors, being less sensitive than the average child.

Ling Nanyi was leaning more toward the latter possibility, since it was rather inconceivable that a one and a half year old child would have such a high pain tolerance. This misconception of Ling Nanyi would bring even greater suffering to Ling Lan in her future training, as the Ling family tried to compensate for her deficient pain receptors by intensifying their training, so that she could know what true pain was like.

After an indeterminate amount of time, still groggy from her trance, Ling Lan sensed that she had been picked up from the tub and placed on the bed. Someone started massaging her gently, and Ling Lan felt so comfortable that she could stand it no longer, and ... fell asleep.

After sending away the military personnel, Ling Qin had been standing guard outside the room all this while. Seeing them come out of the room, he asked intently, "How was the effect?"

Ling Nanyi could not contain her elation. She nodded vigorously as she reported, "The effect was much better than expected, all areas have been improved by 30 to 80 percent."

Ling Qin almost broke down at these words. "Really?!" It should be known that throughout the history of administering these medicinal baths, Master Ling Xiao had recorded the best effects so far. That year, the recorded improvements had only been between 10 to 50 percent.

Seeing Ling Nanyi nod decisively in confirmation, Ling Qin couldn't stop his tears from falling as he muttered fervently, "God bless our Ling family, God bless our Ling family."

Ling Nanyi surreptitiously grabbed hold of her old companion's hand. She knew how much this news meant to her husband. Although Master Ling Xiao had been the master of the Ling family, he had been raised at the knee of her husband. Ling Qin had loved Ling Xiao like a son, and his passing had been as hard on her husband as it had been on the mistress.

“Looks like the young master has inherited the physical qualities of Master Ling Xiao. Being able to absorb ten tubes of gene stimulating agent, and even being able to get a better effect from the medicinal bath ...” Ling Nanyi said, wondering.

Ling Qin was still overwhelmed by his emotions, and could only nod emphatically in agreement with tears in his eyes. The old Ling couple could only interpret it this way — they could not know that effects of the bath were so remarkable because of the Qi exercises. The shifting of the body’s energies during the exercise had greatly increased its absorption ability, allowing the medicine to permeate even deeper into the body, hence resulting in improvements like never before.

Just like that, Ling Lan began her life of medicinal baths. That aside, she continued to contort herself into bizarre poses that stretched the limits of the human body every day. Of course, she practised those poses in secret, lest her mum grow frantic with concern.

One year passed after another as Ling Lan slowly grew up. Before she knew it, she had become a bona fide glutton, able to eat her mum’s full day of meals in one sitting.

Heavens, she was only four years old! Was she destined to grow sideways?

That won’t do! Today, she must diet. After all, she had a dream to be a child with ‘four greats’ — great ideals, great morals, great discipline, and great goals — she must not lose to her own stomach.

Ling Lan was just cheering herself on when she noticed that the large serving of fried noodles before her had vanished. With a constipated expression, she muttered to herself at the insufficiency of the noodles. They hadn’t satisfied her hunger much at all! Rubbing her flat tummy, she mentally cautioned herself not to eat any more ...

A sudden shift in facial expressions, and Ling Lan slapped a sure hand onto the table, shouting, “Give this young master an extra-large serving of beef steak!”

Dammit, hunger pangs were the worst. Ling Lan would much rather suffer pain than hunger pangs.

Oh well. She was already planning to live as a man this life after all — if she ended up becoming a cool and stylish, elegant and poised, unparalleled handsome gentleman, and caused the women of the world to fall for her and fight over her, that would be a catastrophe. So ... for the sake of those clueless women and to minimize her sin, and also so that other men will be able to wed and graduate from bachelorhood, she should just go ahead and become a little fatter!

Ahem, ahem, she was such a soft-hearted person!

Ling Lan, moved by her own self-sacrificial attitude, resolutely took a large bite of the freshly served steak before her.

It should be noted that Ling Lan was very quick to adjust her world view just so she had an excuse to indulge in her gluttony.