

Pursuit of the Truth

#Chapter 1 — Prologue - Read Pursuit of the Truth

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The Pursuit of the Truth

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Synopsis and Preface

Before I post the story in two hours, I'd like to explore with all of you what it means to 'pursue the truth'.

The word "Pursuit", has two meanings: one is to follow after something and the other to implore.

The title "Pursuit of the Truth", uses the latter meaning. Yet at the same time, there are also other meanings to the title. I have searched for many other words, but only the word "Pursuit" was the one that was the closest in encompassing the essence of the story in my heart.

What does "Truth" mean then? It is written with the word 魔 (Mo), meaning devil. I believe all of you believe that devil is simply a villain, a person who does all sorts of bad things. Someone who would soil their hands for the sake of success, even practicing dark arts like a demon lord. In other words, I am referring to the Mo which is a devil or demon.

It is just like the Wuxia stories we have read before, where they will train with despicable ways such as eating dried human placenta or by forsaking their own humanity.

But is this devil really the Mo I want to create?

I once told a friend of mine that I wanted to create the Devil, the true Devil. Not a villain or a demon lord that will be lost in time and be viewed as crass and evil by future generations, but the Devil! One that will walk on the path and the truth he resolutely believes, even going against the natural order of the universe!

It is a deep word which reveals the life and spirit of a character.

What I want to write is a story where there was no Devil in the world before him, and neither will there be any other true Devil after him!

What I want to create is a theme different from Renegade Immortal, yet with a much more touching plot!

I want to write a story where Su Ming stands on the pinnacle of the mountains looking over the world and muttering in a voice burdened by his experiences and grief, murmuring about things no one has ever cared about.

"If the world calls me a devil, then so be it. Henceforth, I, Su Ming, shall become the Devil!" (the first devil is left intentionally in small letters.)

You will see the story I wish to write in two hours...

"Using Mo isn't wrong, because if the title is Pursuit of the Truth and I see the word Devil suddenly being used in the preface, I'll feel cheated, and you're right, Devil is commonly used to describe evil. From what I can see, that isn't what you want in the preface, but neither is there any good English equivalent for the word, since we're losing the original meaning of the word Mo if we use Devil. Since another translator has translated this to Devil, you'd best keep to it, but what you need to do next is to associate Truth to Devil. Meaning the truth the main character is looking for is associated to Devil, perhaps it is referring to his character, but perhaps it is the path he chooses to take, which we both believe is the case. And if that's the case, you'll need to add a little more explanations to the preface itself. Things that only Chinese readers will understand if they read the source language because we know the many meanings of Mo, but not English readers, because to them Mo is only the devil."

Did I manage to convey the meaning though?

Prologue

"Kala..."

"Kala... Kala..."

No one could not tell what that sound was. It was as if it was a sound that could penetrate the body and pierce through the soul, forcing the body to shiver in the cold caused by the blizzard that night.

The cold northern wind whistled through and the snow danced with the wind, causing the line separating heaven and earth to shatter into a million pieces, scattering on earth and causing heaven and earth to become one. Looking from afar, it was as if the world was a white and desolate place.

It was not midnight, just twilight, but the sky was already as dark as night. It brought about a heavy feeling as if it was pressing on your chest, cutting off your breath. On that white plain, a gigantic silhouette could be seen. It was the silhouette of a huge city like a huge beast prowling in the plains.

At the centre of the city was a tall altar in the shape of a tower. It was built in the shape of a heptagon, completely black, and was so tall it reached the clouds. It remained silent and unmoving even in the midst of the blizzard. When the wind blew past the altar, that creaking sound could be heard clearly amongst the moans of the wind even when the sounds were brought far away into the distance. The sounds carried about the wildness of the ancients, creating a unique harmony.

"Is there still hope... Is there?"

Hoarse mumbles could be heard from the altar, as if it was one with the wind, and it was barely distinguishable.

"If there's still hope, then where is it? If there is no hope then why do you let me see it?!" As if driven mad, the owner of voice roared towards heaven as if he was pouring out his heart and soul into the scream.

Standing underneath the altar were countless people wearing clothes made of straw. They stood silently, and if you cast your gaze further, you would see that the number of people amounted to tens of thousands. Men and women gathered densely around the altar. They may be unmoving, but there was a sort of fanaticism that could be felt among them, as if they would sacrifice everything should the person on the altar just speak.

The blizzard became heavier.

"If you've let me see it then there must be hope, but where is it?!" There was a hint of anguish and sorrow in the hoarse voice on the altar, and the voice lingered for a long time.

"Today is the day the Emperor of Ming returns, the day the gates to the Three Lands open, the day the blizzard arrives, and the day all was created. I will predict the Berserker Day once again!" The voice grew louder and with some unknown skill, the colors of the clouds in the sky changed. The countless snowflakes stopped in midair, and immediately went back the way they came. Exclamations from all around gathered in one place, making heaven and earth rumble.

There was no longer any snow falling from the sky. All the snow gathered to form a gigantic dragon. The dragon immediately lifted its head and let out a piercing roar the moment it was formed. Those who heard it felt their hearts shaking, as if the sound itself could tear them apart.

The snow dragon was quickly covered by its own blood, turning it into a bloody dragon. It let out a mournful cry and flew towards the heavens like a shooting star as if it wanted to tear through the sky and create hope.

It reached the endless boundaries quickly and amidst its own roars, the dragon crashed into an invisible and shapeless barrier. Heaven and earth shook, and the sounds scattered everywhere. The blood dragon cried out once again and its body fell apart before their eyes.

At the very moment it almost shattered completely, the tens of thousands of people standing in silence under the altar casted hand seals and bit down their tongues, spitting mouthfuls of fresh blood. As if guided by some sort of energy, the blood darted forth like a sea of blood towards the crumbling blood dragon to combine with it, allowing the blood dragon to recover slightly from its broken state, soaring once again into the horizon.

All of them watched as the blood dragon soared higher but at that very moment, the blood dragon shuddered and let out a roar that travelled through tens of thousands of miles, no longer able to stop its body from falling apart. It turned into countless bloody snowflakes and fell downwards, creating a red realm on the plains.

Yet at the very moment the blood dragon fell apart, it spoke with a sound completely different from its roars.

"Death..."

"Death..."

On the top of the altar was an old man clad in a purple robe sitting cross-legged at the centre. The old man's face was covered in wrinkles and brown spots. Mumbling, he opened his eyes but his gaze held no light, a clear sign that he was blind.

Before him was a complete spine emitting an eerie white glow. In his right hand was a stone slab, which he held on top of the thirteenth vertebrae.

With his blank gaze, he looked silently towards heaven. After a long while, he let out a long sigh.

"Tell the King of Yu... I've tried my best..."

While he spoke, his right hand moved once again on top of the odd spine. He rubbed at the animal spine with the stone slab, creating clicking sounds that travelled through a distance. He looked desolate and along with the sounds, one could also find a sorrowful loneliness and weakness from him.

"As the Court Diviner of the Great Yu Dynasty, you cannot see the world that I see..."

"You... cannot see..."

"Hope..."

Chapter 2: Su Ming

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Mountains; Lush, green mountains.

These mountains formed a chain that seemed to span endlessly across earth, resembling the back of a dragon lying down. The mountain range covered the vast plains. There were numerous types of plants in the mountains and within them, even more sounds of birds as well as beasts.

There were five tall protrusions which formed five mountaintops. They looked like a human's hand raised with the fingers pointed skyward, as if they wanted to catch the sky. In the middle of one of the peaks was a big hollowed-out rock, and a young man was hiding in the shade that it provided. By his side was a woven basket filled with medicinal herbs which surrounded the area with a pleasant and therapeutic scent.

The young man had a handsome face, but he was on the leaner side, making him look frail at first glance. He wore a shirt made of beast skin and around his neck he wore a white fang in the shape of a crescent moon. His messy hair was held together by a string of straw.

He sat there with a scroll made from dozens of beast skins in his hands. He read it with fervor and would occasionally shake his head in disagreement to the words written in the scroll.

"Since the creation of the world and of man, the Berserker Tribe has existed and it still exists to this date... The people who hold the Berserker's Power are known as Berserkers. They can fly in the skies, move mountains and turn the tides in the sea... Those who have the Berserker Mark can read the future and obtain the power of the sun, moon, and stars..." As the young man read this, he sighed.

"Yet without the Berserker Body, it is impossible to become a practitioner of Berserker Arts... Berserker... Berserker... Su Ming, it is your fate that you can only pick herbs and become a common healer in the tribe. Becoming a practitioner who practices the Ways of the Berserker is an impossible dream for you." The young man mocked himself and put down the scroll. He then gazed into the distance and allowed his mind to wander.

He had read the scroll countless of times. He might not be able to memorize the contents backwards, but he still knew it like the back of his hand.

"The sky is round and the earth is flat as though it had no end, no boundaries..." As Su Ming read out the text in soft murmurs, he began imagining the world depicted in the scroll. Gradually, the sky darkened, and dark clouds started to form in the sky.

The surrounding wind also made it more humid. As it blew past the trees and leaves, it created a rustling sound.

When Su Ming saw the dark clouds in the sky, he was momentarily stunned.

"Elder's predictions are coming true! The Dark Dragon's Saliva can truly be found today!" Su Ming's eyes grew bright and he stood up quickly, gathering the scroll into his bosom. He grabbed the basket with his left hand and slung it on his back. Then, with a lithe movement, he grabbed onto a rope and climbed towards the top of the mountain.

The young man's frail body charged forth explosively with a tenacious force. He moved just like an ape. With just a few jumps, he already managed to cover dozens of feet in distance.

The dark clouds in the skies arrived like waves and roared as they came. It was like the wrath of the gods had been brought down upon the mountain range. The dark clouds covered the skies completely as though they connected the heavens and earth. They covered the land in darkness and the clouds approached the mountain range quickly.

Su Ming climbed even faster. Just as the dark clouds spread out over the mountains, he reached a place a few dozen feet away from the mountaintop. An oddly shaped rock was there. However, while it may seem odd, it still looked like it was naturally formed. The center of the rock was hollow and there were numerous holes about the size of fists scattered around the other parts of its surface. It was as if the King of Pythons had entrenched itself in the mountain range.

Underneath the mysterious rock was a stone shaped like a terrifying looking fang. It was odd because it was a mountain protrusion, making it look like it hung in the air. It was very difficult to climb onto that stone unless one could fly.

Su Ming took hold of the rope in his left hand, and with his right hand he took out a small bottle from the basket. He held it between his teeth and slowly nudged forward in the opposite direction of the mysterious, fang-shaped rock. He moved until the rope he held onto was so taut that it inclined towards his direction, then grabbed onto the walls of the mountain and pressed his body against it. He lifted his head skyward and looked at the dark clouds in the sky. His eyes shone and his body was still.

After some time, the clouds covered the sky entirely and thunder roared. The sound was so great he thought he might have gone deaf. Wind started blowing mercilessly, as if it was trying to throw the mountain range off the ground. Su Ming's knuckle had already turned white from holding onto the mountain in the typhoon, but he remained unmoving. Strength shone from his eyes as he continued looking at the sky.

The typhoon grew even stronger. The plants in the mountain range swayed around helplessly in the wind. The sound of the wind was akin to the roars of a huge beast. It made the numerous broken branches and dead leaves fly in the air, causing the entire place to be filled with branches and leaves dancing madly in the air.

Some bigger branches and even small beasts were lifted by the typhoon and subsequently tossed away. Their cries of agony were silenced by the sound of the wind.

Su Ming was not going to persist much further in the typhoon. The sky was completely covered by dark clouds. With the sounds of thunder, huge droplets of rain poured down from the sky. At that moment, it was as if the world was covered by a gigantic curtain of water.

The rain persisted and grew heavier with each passing moment, but Su Ming held onto the drenched rope tightly and kept his body firmly against the wall of the mountain. He did nothing to avoid being drenched by the rain and remained still as ever. His eyes were fixed on the mysterious rock above the fang-shaped stone.

An unknown amount of time passed and the rain continued growing heavier. The world was surrounded by rain and fog. Under the rain's cleansing, the fang-shaped rock Su Ming was staring at began secreting a black liquid.

The black liquid merged with the rainwater and formed a stream that flowed downwards.

When Su Ming saw this, his eyes were filled with excitement yet he remained stationary until the secretion of the black liquid gradually slowed down and finally turned into an impressive golden color. Su Ming narrowed his eyes and with no hesitation, he released his grip on the mountain wall. As he slid down, he took out the bottle in his mouth with his right hand.

The rope in his left hand was already positioned diagonally to begin with. When he let go of the mountain wall, his entire body swung with the force of the rope at a frightening speed towards the fang-shaped rock.

Su Ming arrived next to the seemingly floating fang-shaped rock with the help of the rope just as the next blast of thunder crackled over his head. This was due to the rope's great level of inclination and the accuracy of his position. With his left hand, he held onto the rope and with his right he held the bottle. He quickly placed the bottle underneath the fang-shaped rock as he approached it. In the brief moment that the rope reached the peak of its swing and began its journey back, he managed to fill up half the bottle with the golden liquid.

However, at that very moment, he heard a piercing cry. Black centipede like creatures about the size of four or five arms crawled out from the many holes on the mysterious rock, pouncing ferociously onto Su Ming, who was still dangling in midair.

Su Ming was not even the least bit surprised. The moment the centipede like creatures appeared, he let go of his hold on the rope and allowed his body to fall at a terrifying speed, avoiding their attack.

"Xiao Hong!" Su Ming was falling in midair quickly and his body stiffened as he felt the typhoon cutting fiercely into his body like sharp blades. Even if he avoided those creatures, he would still turn into mincemeat if he fell on the ground.

But he was not afraid. A red shadow rushed forward from the cliff by the side towards Su Ming's falling body on a length of rope. It grabbed onto Su Ming once it reached him. The red shadow was a red, small monkey. It was grinning and its eyes were filled with vigor.

The man and his monkey fell on a cliff somewhere further down the mountain along with the rope. It was the very same cliff where Su Ming was reading just moments ago. Su Ming's eyes were finally filled with nervousness and he immediately put away the small bottle he was holding in his hands.

"Xiao Hong, we have to run! I took too much Dark Dragon's Saliva this time! Huh, what's that in your hand?" As Su Ming spoke, he saw a small piece of black stone in the monkey's paws.

The monkey's gaze immediately grew sharp and it hid its paws behind its back, hissing at Su Ming. Su Ming did not bother and immediately walked a few steps forward before jumping and grabbing onto a length of rope as he did so. He fell downwards quickly with the monkey.

Behind them, screeching sounds filled the skies and the black centipede like creatures gave chase as they sped down the walls of the mountain. They were like numerous black lines falling down the walls to relentlessly chase after the duo.

The little red monkey hissed at Su Ming and it moved about constantly on his body. Occasionally, it would turn back to look at the centipede like creatures giving chase, with a gaze filled with terror and anger.

"It's not like it's the first time we're running away. Those Dark Dragons won't go down the mountain anyway, so stop pretending. Same rules, I'll give you half of the Dark Dragon's Saliva." Although Su Ming was fleeing at impressive speeds, there was a lazy quality to his voice. Once he spoke, the monkey immediately smiled, making it obvious it was just pretending.

The man and the monkey were familiar with the mountain range. For some unknown reason, the Dark Dragons would not travel into certain places but would rather go around them. Hence, while Su Ming and his monkey were not as quick as the Dark Dragons, they would choose to jump downwards at times and grab onto a rope in their

way. After doing so a few times, they managed to escape from the top of the mountain and they disappeared into the forest.

As expected, the Dark Dragons did not venture out of the mountains. After a few cries of rage, they returned to the top of the mountain begrudgingly.

The dark clouds left as quickly as they came. After a few hours, the mountain range returned to normal as the dark clouds left to venture further down.

Su Ming and the monkey made their way towards the borders of the forest. By then, it was already night time. There were dim balls of fire in the distance, all of them belonging to Su Ming's tribe.

"I already gave you your share, and you still want more?" Su Ming was still entirely drenched as he came out of the forest, but he did not mind it at the slightest. Instead, he smiled faintly as he watched the monkey following him with hopeful eyes.

This monkey was very intelligent. Su Ming found it by pure accident three years ago when he ventured into the mountains. They even had a bit of a scuffle in the beginning but in the end, they became best friends.

The monkey blinked and scratched its face, revealing the tiniest bit of hesitation. But it quickly handed Su Ming the black stone he held onto earlier and let out a few screeches, conveying his intention to trade the stone with Dark Dragon's Saliva.

"Fine, I'll let you have some more, but I don't want that stupid stone. You can keep it." Su Ming smiled and took out the small bottle from the basket before handing it to the monkey.

The monkey quickly took it and drank a mouthful. Once it did so, total bliss appeared on its face. The monkey even swayed a little and let out a burp. It threw the black stones along with the small bottle back to Su Ming and wobbled back into the forest.

Su Ming looked at the small, half empty bottle and smiled faintly. Putting it back into the basket, he then turned his attention towards the black stone.

Chapter 3: The Berserker's Awakening

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It was a normal stone that was the size of a baby's palm, and it had an uneven surface. Besides some naturally formed patterns forming the uneven surface on the stone, there was a small hole on the stone that seemed to be man-made so that it looked like an accessory.

Other than that, there was nothing else which looked out of place. In fact, it looked like any normal stone.

The only thing out of ordinary was the warmth it emitted when Su Ming held it. The warmth seemed to seep into his body and it was a very comfortable feeling.

"Hmm?" Su Ming looked closely at it. Yet even after he scrutinized the entire thing, he still could not find anything else odd about it.

"I remember the elder saying that this was once the Land of the Fire Berserker Tribe. If that's the case, then this thing might have some powers of fire. That's why it can keep people warm. Not bad." Su Ming took off the crescent fang on his neck and replaced it with the stone before wearing the necklace once again, letting it hang over the stone. When the stone touched his chest, he felt its warmth increase.

"Let's go home!" The young man then ran quickly towards the place with the balls of light. He did not notice it, but at that time, the stone hanging off his chest gave out a dim glow before disappearing.

As Su Ming neared his destination, the dim balls of light grew brighter before his eyes, and he saw a settlement surrounded by a wall made from giant wood.

The settlement was not big. It could only hold about a few hundred people in it, but in Su Ming's eyes, it was a place that made him feel at home. He could faintly hear cheerful sounds from within as he approached the settlement. From the cracks in the giant wooden wall, he could see a bonfire in the middle of the tribe. There were many tribesmen gathered around it and some of the women from the tribe were dancing around the bonfire.

The gate to the tribe was also built with giant wood. Usually, when it was open, it would be held up with several pieces of rope. Now, it was closed and there were some burly men standing on top wearing clothes made from beast skin. Their skin was rough and there were white bone necklaces hanging from their necks. They were terrifying to look at. They also wore earrings made of bone, and their overall appearance made them look intimidating as they surveyed the area. When they saw Su Ming running back, the men grinned.

"La Su, the elder has been looking for you the entire day, why are you out so late?"

"It was raining just now. Did you go out to steal the Dark Dragon's Saliva again?"

"The elder was looking for me? Throw down the rope, I had a pretty good haul this time!" Su Ming sped up, and when he was underneath the gate, he patted the basket on his back proudly as he shouted loudly.

A woven piece of rope was lowered down and Su Ming grabbed onto it, lithely climbing upwards. Within the span of a few breaths, he reached the top of the gate, smiling as he saw the tribesmen keeping watch. He then quickly walked down with the ladder propped by the side.

"Boy's an agile one for sure, and he's brave to boot. He already started climbing Dark Dragon Mountain alone many years ago. Looks like he's definitely going to become the tribe's common healer in the future."

"It's a pity that he doesn't have a Berserker Body, or else he would become a Berserk Healer just like the elder." The men sighed as they watched Su Ming leave.

As Su Ming entered the settlement and ran in between the wooden houses, those who saw him called him La Su in a kind manner.

La Su was not a name just for him, but also for all the children who did not go through the second Berserker's Awakening.

Su Ming ran quickly. Before long, he reached the middle part of tribe where he saw many of his tribesmen laughing and chatting around the bonfire when he was outside earlier.

A fire-resistant wooden fence surrounded the bonfire. Many slices of juicy meat were being roasted on the fire and they emitted a nice aroma.

When some of the girls in the tribe saw Su Ming approaching, they merely cast him a glance before turning away uninterested.

To the tribe, the clean and handsome Su Ming was built much more differently compared to the other tribesmen. Almost all of the tribesmen were bigger and more intimidating than he was.

He squeezed through the crowd, grabbed a slice of roasted meat and ate it as he ran forward.

Right in the center of the crowd was an old man wearing sackcloth instead of beast skin. The old man had his hair braided and looked frail. Nevertheless, his eyes shone with a charm that could steal a person's soul if they so much as looked into his eyes.

He appeared to be a man of status. He was surrounded by several tribesmen who were listening to him as he talked in a low voice. Their gazes towards him were respectful.

As he saw Su Ming running over, the old man smiled and gave him a nod, signaling Su Ming to sit by his side. He then continued speaking to the tribesmen.

When the tribesmen saw Su Ming, their faces also lifted up in smiles.

"Dark Mountain Tribe may be small, but at least we are the true descendants of Dark Mountain. The Elder from Wind Stream Tribe is celebrating his birthday. We must attend his birthday as a sign of respect since our tribe has maintained a good relationship with them since long ago." The old man spoke slowly.

"It's a pity that a few centuries ago, Dark Mountain Tribe was divided, and now, there are only three colonies of the tribe left. If that hadn't happened, Dark Mountain Tribe would be a medium sized tribe by now. We could have controlled all the land around the area, including Wind Stream Tribe. But now... ha." The one who spoke was a man of about 40 years old. He was the leader of Dark Mountain Tribe and was a burly man who was also shockingly powerful. There were nine fangs about the size of fingers hanging around his neck.

There was a Mark on his face that could barely be seen, which made him look even more terrifying, just like an evil spirit. The Mark was not clear, and it looked incomplete.

As Su Ming looked at the Mark, his eyes were filled with admiration. From the beast skin scroll, Su Ming knew that this was a Berserker Mark that had yet to be completely formed. There was no one in the tribe who had the ability to completely manifest the Berserker Mark and bring out its true powers.

Even his elder was only at the ninth level of the Blood Solidification Realm.

Yet even so, this had made his elder one of the strongest Berserkers among the tribes around Dark Mountain. The only other tribes who could compare were Black Mountain Tribe and Dark Dragon Tribe, who were once from the original Dark Mountain Tribe but split up later.

"There is no use mentioning what has happened in the past. Without a strong Berserker who has broken through his physical limitations, there is no way we can become a medium sized tribe. The cause of the original Dark Mountain Tribe's separation was due to the death of the ancestors in the original Dark Mountain tribe who Transcended."

"As much as I have trained until now, I still cannot break through the ninth level of blood solidification and reach the 10th level, much less the 11th level, which is known as the highest level. I cannot draw a completely manifested Berserker Mark and therefore, cannot Transcend ..." The old man in sackcloth sighed and spoke slowly.

"It's fine. You can leave now. Prepare the gifts, and tomorrow... Shan Hen, you are the leader of the hunters in the tribe so, you will lead the team." The old man stood up and looked towards a middle-aged man standing by the leader of Dark Mountain Tribe. After that, he turned and walked away.

The middle aged man looked calm. When he heard those words he immediately stood up straight and received the order.

Su Ming quickly followed his elder and left the area where the feast was held.

The old man did not speak on the way and just silently walked forward until the cheers gradually disappeared behind his back. He reached a house made of wood and grass. He then went inside.

The house was not big and the interior was simple. Once he entered the house, the old man sat down cross-legged at a corner. He looked at Su Ming as he came in.

"You went to hunt Dark Dragon's Saliva again?"

Su Ming respected his elder, who took care of him as he grew up. He placed his basket on the floor and took out a small bottle, which he then handed it to the old man.

"With your agility, the Dark Dragons cannot harm you. However, it's best if you don't go too often... That is the territory of Black Mountain Tribe and Dark Dragon Tribe after all. Dark Dragon's Saliva is useless to me. Use it to improve your own health." The old man looked kindly at Su Ming.

Su Ming nodded and put away the bottle. He had been drinking this liquid for many years and it was precisely because of it that he could obtain such an agile body.

It was also because his elder had been brewing all sorts of medicine for him for all those years. Even though he did not have the qualities to obtain the Berserker Body, he was still stronger than an average member of his tribe.

"There are still three days left before the time comes for all of you La Su to perform the Berserker Awakening. You're almost 16, right? You will need to worship the God of Berserkers," the old man spoke slowly as he looked at Su Ming.

"The statue of the God of Berserkers in Dark Mountain Tribe was passed down from the original Dark Mountain Tribe in the past. It may not be the main statue and cannot compare to the statues of medium sized tribes, but it is still very powerful compared to the tribes around us."

Su Ming was silent for a brief moment before nodding his head.

"Don't leave for the next few days. Rest and go with them to the Awakening three days later," The old man said this and closed his eyes slowly.

Su Ming stood for a while longer. Then, he took the basket and left quietly towards a wooden house not too far away - his house.

He could never forget the day when he surrounded the statue of the God of Berserkers with other children from the tribe for his very first Awakening. They were all just seven years old at that time.

Members of the Berserker Tribe had two initiating ceremonies throughout their lives - the Berserker Awakening. The first was when they were seven years old, and the second when they were 16.

At the same time, the elder would choose those who had Berserker Bodies using the power given by the statue of the God of Berserkers.

Su Ming let out a light sigh as he felt his chest filling up with bitterness. He wanted to become a Berserker and practice Berserker Arts. The scenes depicted in the beast skin scroll made him dream about it since he was young, but reality was harsh. When his seven-year old self worshiped the statue of the God of Berserker, he was told very clearly that he did not have a Berserker Body and could not practice Berserker Arts.

Berserk was the origin of all things in the universe. Only by being a Berserker could a person be able to stand above others and become truly strong!

From the scroll, Su Ming knew since young that there were many tribes of all sizes in the world. In each tribe, there were different statues of the God of Berserkers. It was the soul of the tribe and the key for their descendants to become one with Berserk.

They needed to reach an understanding with the statue of the God of Berserkers. If they felt it responding, then they would be able to obtain the right to inherit the skills to practice Berserker Arts. There was no need for anyone to teach them. They could just practice it on their own.

However, if they failed at seven and at 16 years old, then it meant that they could not change for the rest of their lives. Su Ming was struggling internally. When he could not see the possible outcome to this, he looked forward to it. Yet, when there was only three days left for his final enlightenment, he became afraid.

'This time... will it be possible...?'

Su Ming went back silently into his house and sat down, letting his mind wander.

Chapter 4: The Piercing Light

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It was late at night. Su Ming laid on his bed and looked at the darkness around him, unable to sleep. His elder's words kept repeating themselves in his head and he kept remembering the scene from eight years ago.

With a long sigh, Su Ming sat up and quietly pushed open his wooden door. A light breeze blew through his messy hair. The breeze felt cooling, as if it had arrived with the night to cool down the earth.

It was quiet. There were only a few soft cries from birds and other animals from Dark Mountain, which was located in the distance. The settlement was mostly dark. The only sources of light were from the bonfire in the center of the tribe. Some of its embers scattered into the air. There were also torches placed on the giant wooden wall around the tribe, which seem to crackle as they burned in the night.

Su Ming lifted his head and looked at the sky. The moon and stars shone brightly in the sky, and it was a sight to behold. The river of stars seemed to never end, and it gradually clouded Su Ming's eyes with uncertainty.

'The tribesmen are kind to me...but it's obvious that I look different from them... Perhaps this is the reason why I failed when I worshiped the statue of the God of Berserkers...

'Without a Berserker Body, it will be impossible for me to train in Berserker Arts, then I will be trapped here forever, unable to leave, unable to see the world as depicted in the beast skin scroll...'

Su Ming sat down quietly outside and leaned against his house. As he looked at the sky, his uncertainty grew stronger.

"Since the creation of the world and of man, the Berserker Tribe has existed and it still exists to this date... The people who hold the Berserker's Power are known as Berserkers. They can fly in the skies, move mountains and turn the tides in the sea... Those who have the Berserker Mark can read the future and obtain the power of the sun, moon, and stars..." The young man looked at the sky and murmured softly as he sat in a corner in Dark Mountain Tribe that night.

At that time, he did not realize that the black stone hanging from his neck was emitting a dim glow once again...

Time passed by quickly and the third day arrived.

As it was the day of the Awakening for the La Sus in Dark Mountain Tribe, the entire tribe bustled with activity that morning. Almost all the tribesmen came out with their La Sus and gathered at the square.

An entire day was required for the Berserker's Awakening ritual, especially for the La Sus who were 16 years old. It was like a coming of age ceremony. The La Sus who had completed the Berserker's Awakening could even choose their own partners on this day.

Drum rolls with a strange rhythmic pattern resounded in the tribe. Backed by the drum roll, the La Sus stepped forward from the crowd and stood in the center.

There were approximately 30 people participating in the Berserker's Awakening this time. Most of them were teenagers. Although they were still young, their bodies were strong and muscular, and they exuded an air of toughness.

Even the girls had a similar build to the men. Hence, Su Ming was especially eye-catching among the crowd. He looked clean and handsome, an odd addition to his surroundings.

Even so, the people there already accepted Su Ming a long time ago. Even though he looked different from the rest of them, they did not ostracize him but accepted him as part of the tribe.

Once they surrounded the La Sus who were ready to partake in the Awakening, Dark Mountain Tribe performed a traditional dance as a sign of worship to heaven. By doing so, they used their bodies to convey their respect and sacrifice to heaven and earth.

"Su Ming, I heard from the others that you also went to Dark Dragon Mountain and even got some Dark Dragon's Saliva?" A good-natured voice sounded from Su Ming's side amidst the cheers from their dancing tribe members.

It was a young man of the same age as Su Ming. His skin was rough and he had a large build, almost twice Su Ming's size. His eyes were bright and he smiled boyishly as he looked at Su Ming.

Su Ming smiled weakly as he looked at the young man speaking to him. The young man's name was Lei Chen. He was one of his few close friends within the tribe.

"I brought some back. I went to look for you yesterday but your father said you went with the hunting team to the mountains. Once the Awakening ceremony ends, come to my place and get some."

The young man called Lei Chen lit up brightly and moved towards him, the boyish smile still on his face.

"I could have returned earlier, but we ran into a mink deer on our way back. I remember you said that you needed mink deer blood for your medicine so I followed it. That's why I came back late."

Su Ming knew that while his friend spoke of the encounter like it was no big deal, mink deer were exceptionally hard to kill and were very dangerous. Hence, he felt touched when he heard his friend's words.

As the two of them spoke, the cheers around them gradually grew silent and the crowd made way for the elder. The elder wore a sack cloth and held a black cane made of bone in his hand. He walked towards the teenagers as he was escorted by a few tribe members.

His appearance brought about silence. The teenagers looked at him respectfully, obviously afraid of the man.

"Offer the sacrifice to our Berserker Ancestors!" His grandfather's eyes were bright as he looked at the people gathered around him, his gaze pausing momentarily on Su Ming. As he spoke, he waved the black cane in his right hand. Immediately, several well built men stepped forward from within the crowd. Each of them carried with them a tied up wild beast on their shoulders.

The wild beasts were still alive and crying out in rage. They struggled fiercely but to no avail.

There were 49 different types of beasts and they were all lifted up moments later to be placed around the teenagers. Their cries resounded throughout the settlement, and their cries sounded like they had the power to pierce through souls. Yet, they were surrounded by the tribesmen of Dark Mountain Tribe. They were pressed down, making it impossible for them to break free.

The men standing by the beasts did not hesitate. All of them lowered their heads at the same time and took out sharp stone knives in their left hands. They then stabbed the beasts' throats, cutting off their heads in the process.

Their cries were cut off abruptly as they were beheaded. It was a shocking sight and it made some of the La Sus partaking in the ritual turn pale in fear.

Su Ming also looked pale but he bit his lip and bore through it. He cast a glance at Lei Chen and saw that his friend's eyes were filled with a scary glint. His eyes were filled a thirst for blood as if he was used to it or even enjoyed it. He looked completely different from the good-natured person Su Ming spoke to earlier.

More fresh blood spilled forth like a fountain and filled the air with a foul stench. The blood splattered onto the La Sus, on their hair, their bodies and the ground under their feet.

"You are fortunate because there are no longer any wars between tribes. But at the same time, you are unfortunate..." The elder looked at the teenagers standing before him and spoke softly.

"When I was young and went through my Awakening, I had to behead one of our enemies and drink their blood to complete my Berserker's Awakening."

"Compared to the present, you are fortunate... but you are also unfortunate because you only saw the blood of beasts and have never touched the heads of your enemies..." The elder mumbled and looked at the La Sus before raising the bone cane in his right hand and pointing forward.

He raised his left hand, which was clenched in a fist and opened it. Immediately, a powerful gust of aura blasted forth from his body. The aura surrounded them and formed a powerful blast of wind that surrounded the entire Dark Mountain Tribe.

Marks manifested on the elder's face, which then intertwined with each other and formed a picture that looked like a python.

The python looked as if it was alive and real. It appeared on the elder's face in the form of an illusion, raising its head and roaring into the sky. Even if they could not hear it, all the members of Dark Mountain Tribe, including the stronger leaders shivered and took a step back.

'The Mark of the Dark Python... This is the elder's Berserker Mark...'

Su Ming stared at the elder with a dumbfounded expression. As he looked at the Marks on his face, he was filled with awe. The last time he saw this was nine years ago. When he saw it again this time, the shock was even stronger than before.

'The elder could destroy the entire tribe alone if he wanted to. He has such power and yet, he is only at the ninth level of the Blood Solidification Realm... Just how powerful are those who have Transcended then...?'

'Then there are those who have reached the Bone Sacrifice Realm, which is after Transcendence... It was written in the beast skin scroll that the powerful ones in the Bone Sacrifice Realm are extremely rare even within medium-sized tribes. Only the truly big tribes would have a few Berserkers who have reached the Bone Sacrifice Realm.'

Su Ming felt his heart tremble. His desire to become a Berserker was growing stronger.

"We offer the blood on the ground and the bodies of the beasts to summon Dark Mountain's statue of the God of Berserkers!" The elder's voice rang through like thunder and broke Su Ming's train of thought. As the elder spoke, the carcasses of the beasts exploded. Their flesh, blood, and even the matter spilled on the ground and on the teenagers were absorbed by an unknown force. They gathered midair into a giant blob of blood and flesh.

"Berserker's Awakening!" The big man standing by the elder's side, the tribe leader of the Dark Mountain Tribe shouted.

All of the La Sus, including Su Ming, bit down their tongues with no hesitation and coughed out a mouthful of fresh blood. Their blood flew into the air and was absorbed

by the blob. A thunderous roar sounded, after which the blob of blood and flesh transformed into a black statue.

It was a terrifying statue that was half man, half beast, and it had an air of ancient savagery. In one of its hands, it held a long dragon and in the other it held a giant spear. Its gaze was filled with madness and blood thirst.

Its appearance brought forth darkness in the sky, as if the sky was subjugated by its power.

"Dark Mountain's statue of the God of Berserkers..." Su Ming's heart beat thunderously against his chest, it felt like it was about to burst. However, at that moment, the stone on his neck emitted warmth into his body, making the uncomfortable feeling disappear.

It stunned Su Ming momentarily. He was about to instinctively look down when the elder spoke.

"Come forth in order and enter the statue of the God of Berserkers to worship him!"

The moment he finished speaking, a young man walked forward briskly and stood underneath the statue. Then he just disappeared. After a while, at the very place he disappeared, the young man was teleported back looking disappointed. He stepped aside without a word.

"Next!" The one who spoke was the tribe leader of Dark Mountain Tribe. His gaze was serious. He looked at each and every one of the La Sus.

One by one, the La Sus who were at the age of Awakening stepped forth. They disappeared and reappeared again after a while. This continued until a girl stepped into the statue and it glowed a brilliant shade of red.

The entire tribe looked forth in excitement, even the elder focused his gaze on the statue. They saw that the statue glowed red nine times consecutively before the girl was transferred back.

"She possesses a Berserker Body!"

"The statue has shined nine times. This is proof that she has a Berserker Body!"

When the girl appeared, her face was bright with happiness.

"Your name is Wu La, no? Very good, come stand by my side." The elder smiled faintly and nodded at the girl as he looked at her.

As he watched the girl move towards the elder, Su Ming fell silent. Then he gritted his teeth and walked towards the statue. His actions immediately caught the attention of the other members of the tribe.

The members of Dark Mountain Tribe were mostly kind towards the young man who was obviously different from them. They kept their gazes on Su Ming until he stood underneath the statue.

Su Ming took a deep breath and cast a glance at his elder, who was looking back at him not far away. He closed his eyes. The moment he did so, he felt an indescribable force enveloping his entire body like he was being sucked into mud. When he opened his eyes, everything around him had changed.

This was not Dark Mountain Tribe, but a small space which was completely dark save for the black statue emitting a red glow floating before him.

This statue was the same as the statue he saw outside and it emitted the same aura of ancient savagery.

As he watched the statue of the God of Berserkers, Su Ming fell silent and bowed deeply towards it.

Once he was done, Su Ming's face was filled with bitterness. He knew it. If he had the Body of Berserkers, he only needed to bow once for the statue to emit a red glow. This was just like nine years ago. There was absolutely no change within the statue.

"There is no way I can become a Berserker..." Su Ming bit his lip and sighed. Then, he turned to leave.

However, at the very moment he turned around, he froze and turned back to look at the statue. He was shocked!

At the same time, he saw the stone he had been ignoring all this while emitting a piercing light...

Chapter 5: Strange Occurrences

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Under Dark Mountain, practically all the tribe members were gathered at the center watching the La Sus partaking in the Awakening.

At that moment, the giant statue floating in midair trembled and there was a roaring sound. The sound came too suddenly, and it stunned all the members of the tribe momentarily.

The elder's eyes shone and he quickly stepped forward. He did not look at the statue of the God of Berserkers but cast his gaze immediately towards the sky. His gaze turned solemn.

By then, many members of the tribe had noticed the abnormality and lifted their heads towards the sky.

When they did, they saw clouds of black smoke forming in the air at maddening speed. The smoke was gathered from all directions and it quickly formed a whirlwind in the air. The whirlwind covered at least half of the sky and the entirety of the Dark Mountain. Even if the mountain range was huge, they could still see and tell that something abnormal was happening on the land.

Once the whirlwind was formed, it started turning slowly and let out thunderous roars which reverberated throughout the surroundings. Within the whirlwind, there were numerous thunderbolts travelling about in arcs. As they crackled in the whirlwind, the thunder rumbled.

"Have our Berserker Ancestors returned?!" Someone from Dark Mountain Tribe exclaimed. All of them knelt down and their gazes filled with reverence and fear. They turned towards heaven and worshiped.

The only ones who remained standing were the elder and the leaders of the tribe. Besides the elder, the other leaders all looked alarmed.

The speed of the whirlwind became faster. After a while, a typhoon began sweeping through the land. It affected the entire land around Dark Mountain.

The floating statue trembled violently like it could not withstand the pressure that resulted from the whirlwind.

On the other side of Dark Mountain, there was a tribe about the same size. The tribe's name was Black Mountain. At that moment, all the tribe members were dumbstruck as a statue of the God of Berserkers about the size of 100 feet appeared before them in midair.

The statue's size was completely black and had no human characteristics. It looked like a lizard and it kept trembling as if it was about to fall apart. Underneath the statue was a wizened and thin old man wearing a black, long-sleeved shirt made of sackcloth. His gaze was dark and his thoughts were unknown to the others around him.

The same thing happened within the other tribes near Dark Mountain and even within some tribes that were located further away.

No one knew what was happening and how the whirlwind came to be, not even the elder of Dark Mountain Tribe. He had neglected to think about Su Ming, who had gone into the statue of the God of Berserkers for worship.

When the dim light appeared within the statue of the God of Berserkers at Dark Mountain Tribe's settlement, it occupied the entire space within the statue. It bathed the entire area in its strange light, and Su Ming was stupefied for what he saw next. He saw the statue he was supposed to worship shaking, as if it was waking up after a long slumber. It was almost like it had a physical body.

He saw that the statue, which was in itself terrifying to look at, trembling furiously while being bathed in the light, as though it could not withstand the light.

The statue of the God of Berserkers was crafted in the image of a hybrid between a man and a beast, something like a chimera. In its left hand it held a huge dragon, and in its right a spear. As it shook, the savage vibe Su Ming felt earlier changed into fear, and Su Ming was left wondering whether he was imagining it.

Su Ming's mind was blank. He did not know what was happening and he did not know what to do. He just stood there, stunned.

His entire body was also covered in the light that emitted from the stone on his neck. It made him look like he had fused into the space around him. As the light grew brighter, the world within the statue of the God of Berserkers became completely tainted by the color from the stone.

Su Ming felt something shattering in his head. It was as if a barrier had just been broken by an invisible force. It caused his body to tremble and in his head, he saw an odd image.

It was a huge plain. Su Ming looked down from where he was in midair. What he saw was hundreds upon thousands of people appearing on the land. He could not see the end of the crowd. There just seemed to be no end to it.

"Where... is this?" Su Ming muttered. This scene shocked him so completely it made him incapable of thought.

The people were divided into two crowds. They all knelt on the ground and lifted their hands to worship the heavens. There were also desolate drumming sounds thundering in the air. It formed a melody that seemed to resonate with souls and captivate all those who listened.

All around Su Ming were hundreds of gigantic statues of the God of Berserkers. Each statue was unique on its own and all of them exuded an air of ancient savagery. Their bodies appeared to be made of flesh as if they had life.

They too knelt down on one knee and lifted their hands in worship towards the sky!

Su Ming lifted his head and he saw...

...At the highest point of the sky were two people who could only be described as having reached the pinnacle of humanity. Su Ming could not see their faces, but with only one glance, he thought he was looking at the glory of heaven, and he was just an ant beneath their feet.

They were just like real gods!

One of them had long, purple hair. He raised his right hand and waved it at the sky. Immediately, the world experienced a change. In an instant, day became night and stars shone brightly in the sky. As the person waved his hand, the stars seemed to be attracted by a force and fell from the sky. They gathered by the purple haired person's side and formed a river of stars.

The man pointed at a direction with his right hand and the river of stars let out a monstrous blast before speeding towards their enemies. The scene was akin to heaven collapsing, and the powers of the entire sky were transferred to one single person.

The man in purple lowered his gaze suddenly during the blast, and as he looked at the crowd, his eyes locked with Su Ming's.

Su Ming could feel his mind being attacked. There was a great force pushing him out, and he was expelled from the seemingly illusionary world.

Su Ming trembled, his sight was covered by darkness. After a long while, he snapped out of his daze and found himself still inside the statue of the God of Berserkers. There was no light around him and it seemed like it was all in his imagination.

Su Ming's breathing was quick and shallow. His entire body was drenched in sweat. He looked at the stone hanging from his neck. It was still black and it emitted the tiniest bit of warmth, but there was nothing else unusual about it.

"Was it an illusion... or was it the statue's memories...? Just now... it was just like the writings in the scroll. That was the power to control the stars and the skies..." After a long while, Su Ming got out from his shock. His gaze was filled with uncertainty and his thoughts were in a mess. He fell silent for a while. Then he got up and bowed once more towards the statue, getting ready to leave.

Yet just as he was about to bow down, he heard a chipping sound before him. He saw a small crack on the statue's face which seemed to grow as Su Ming lowered his back further.

The statue gave the impression that it could not bear having Su Ming bowing down to it. It was like if Su Ming bowed down and worshiped it, the statue would break apart. Su Ming took in a sharp breath at this strange sight. He had no doubt about it. What he saw was not an illusion!

At the very moment the statue cracked apart, there were low mumbling sounds reverberating in his head. Those low murmurs made Su Ming's eyes light up in ecstasy. This sound was what he had been hoping for; the ways to train in Berserker Arts for those who had reached the Blood Solidification Realm!

It was impossible to pass down the ways through oral tradition. The only way was by obtaining it from the statue of the God of Berserkers. Hence, the presence of such a statue was of extreme importance in a tribe, as it was connected to the tribe's survival.

When the low murmurs disappeared, Su Ming's body also disappeared from within the statue and reappeared amid Dark Mountain Tribe. When he appeared, he saw all his tribesmen, including the elder, with their heads lifted towards the sky. He felt his heart pounding against his chest and he followed their gazes upward.

The giant whirlwind was still swirling about, letting out low rumbling sounds.

"Su Ming, come to my side." Su Ming heard the elder's voice nearby. He was afraid. He could feel the abnormality in the air and he knew it had something to do with the stone hanging from his neck. However, he did not dare say it out loud. He walked towards the elder in trepidation and stood behind him.

Before long, the scene in the sky gradually disappeared and returned to normal. No one asked whether Su Ming was successful as there was no light from the statue when it was his turn, and that could only mean failure.

The remaining La Sus entered the statue to worship once more as soon as the sky returned to normal. When they were all done, two children were known to possess the Berserker Body at the age of 16 during that Awakening ritual.

The two children were taken away by the elder as they were going to be important members of the tribe. They would learn about various experiences when training in the Ways of the Berserkers.

The other La Sus left in disappointment. Su Ming went back in silence but his heart was beating increasingly faster. He wanted to tell the elder everything, but somewhere in his mind he knew that this was too serious a matter to be discussed, especially since the statue of the God of Berserkers had cracked because of this.

Su Ming walked into his house while he thought about it.

The elder looked at Su Ming's back from afar, puzzled.

Su Ming went back into his house hurriedly and sat on his wooden bed. He looked at the black and uneven stone on his chest with an uncertain gaze. After a while, he reached out to take off the necklace, but he hesitated. He got up and barred the door with a wooden block. If anyone decided to come in, he would know and have time to prepare for it.

After that, he sat down and held the stone in his hand, observing it carefully.

'Just what is this stone? Xiao Hong found it, so it might have been because the wind was too strong and it was revealed after all the leaves were blown away. Then Xiao Hong picked it up...'

Su Ming's heart pounded furiously against his chest. He had a feeling he just got his hands on a piece of treasure.

'Even the statue of the God of Berserkers cracked before it... I wonder where Xiao Hong got this. Are there more of these?'

Su Ming licked his lips. His eyes were filled with excitement.

'I did not possess the Berserker Body and could not inherit the ways to train in Berserker Arts, but this thing allowed me to obtain it!'

Su Ming took a deep breath and quelled his excitement. Then, he focused all his energy on the stone.

Time passed, and Su Ming grew tired. He held the stone in his hand and fell asleep on his bed.

The stone began emitting a very dim glow once again.

Chapter 6: Dream

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"Brother..."

"Brother..."

A fragile voice that had a unique sounding tone echoed in Su Ming's dreams.

"Brother... Are you listening? Brother..."

"Brother... I'm waiting for you..." The voice was tired as if it had been calling out for eternity. It became weaker and the sound slowly disappeared.

As the voice grew weaker, Su Ming felt a gut-wrenching pain in his dreams. It was as though something of utmost importance to him disappeared along with the voice. The feeling jolted him awake from his sleep.

Su Ming felt cold. He was drenched in his sweat. His face was pale and he was breathing heavily. He looked at his surroundings and began to calm down when he saw that he was surrounded by familiar sights.

It was midnight. He could hear the sounds of birds and beasts from afar. Aside from that, everything was silent. Su Ming sat up quietly on his bed and looked at the stone in his hand. He looked doubtful.

'That dream just now was weird... I wasn't tired either but I fell asleep as I was observing the stone. That dream... that voice...'

Su Ming's face was clouded with uncertainty. He rarely had dreams and he definitely never dreamed about something like that before. Yet somehow, the girl's voice was oddly familiar.

'All of this must be related to this thing!'

Su Ming lowered his gaze and looked carefully at the stone in his hand using the moonlight as his source of light. He frowned.

'Just what is this...?'

He hesitated for a brief moment and then bit his finger. According to the scroll, most of the treasures in the world could only be activated with blood.

Up until then, Su Ming had never seen such treasures before. The stone was the only one he had ever seen. As the blood from his finger fell on top of the stone, Su Ming began to look at it expectantly.

Yet after a long while, nothing happened. There was no sign of the blood being absorbed either.

Su Ming scratched his head, but he was stubborn. He got up and used all sorts of methods, be it biting the stone with his teeth, trying to force it apart with his hands, and even soaking it in water. Nevertheless, there were still no changes on stone.

It was almost dawn. Su Ming held the stone in his hands and his mind wandered. Time passed and morning arrived. As the sun rose, Su Ming got an idea.

'When I placed it on my chest, I felt some sort of heat from it. Perhaps... This might be its use!'

Su Ming placed the stone once again around his neck without hesitation, letting it hang close to his chest.

Waves of warmth spread out and seeped into Su Ming's body. That warmth traveled through his body, enveloping his entire body in a comfortable feeling. He took a deep breath, and in his mind, Su Ming saw the methods to train in Berserker Arts which he obtained from the statue.

Berserk was the origin of all things in the world. Now, Su Ming had obtained the methods to train in the first realm in Berserker Arts - the methods to train in the Blood Solidification Realm.

Su Ming knew from the scroll that since ancient times, when their Berserker Ancestors created heaven and earth, all humans possessed remarkable abilities. Yet as time passed, the Berserker Tribe became a legend. They were no longer as they were before. They had all become common people.

The methods to train in Berserker Arts were also passed down from ancient times, but they had been modified to suit the present Berserker Tribes. The very first realm, the Blood Solidification Realm was divided into 11 levels. It allowed the practitioners to activate the Berserker Blood they had inherited from their ancestors and solidify it.

The power of the statue of the God of Berserkers was in reality used to search for those who had inherited denser Berserker Blood from their ancestors, and these people were deemed to possess Berserker Bodies. Only they could walk on and travel down the path of Berserkers.

A normal member of the tribe would not be recognized by the statue because their blood was thin with Berserker Blood. That was why they did not possess the right to become Berserkers. That was also why when they worshiped the statue of the God of Berserkers, they would not obtain the ways to train in Berserker Arts

However, Su Ming was special. He may not have possessed a Berserker Body, but due to this mysterious stone, he obtained the ways to train in Berserker Arts. Berserker Arts was something difficult to pass down even through oral tradition, and it was something only possible for the tribes who possessed the statue of the God of Berserkers.

"Focus and solidify the Berserker Blood in your blood veins and you will awaken the blood. Draw the Berserker Mark unique to your own to Transcend!" Su Ming muttered with his eyes shining brightly.

He sat down cross legged and took a few deep breaths. He closed his eyes slowly. After that, he gradually immersed himself in the training method he obtained.

Soon after, the sun had risen to the peak of the sky. Smoke could be seen, signaling the bonfire was lit in the tribe. The tribe started to bustle with activity. The hunting team, led by several leaders in the tribe, ventured out to hunt for food with blessings from their families.

Some of the La Sus who were around four to five years old were running around naked and playing happily. The cheerful sounds brought about smiles on the faces of the tribe members.

The two tribe members who were told that they possessed Berserker Bodies were at the elder's house. They were listening to lectures on how to train in Berserker Arts, as well as how to become a Berserker and how to become an important asset to the tribe.

As of that point in time, Dark Mountain Tribe only had 22 Berserkers after the older generation had passed away.

No one noticed the door to Su Ming's house was shut tightly that morning. Within the house, he was emitting a dim, blood red light. The light came from every single vein in his body. It was a bewitching sight to behold as his blood veins glinted in red.

Only one blood vein emerged from Su Ming's body and it appeared vague. It looked like it could not manifest itself completely.

After a long while, Su Ming opened his eyes and his breathing was shaky.

"If more blood veins emerge during the training in the Blood Solidification Realm, then it means the possibilities of Transcending would also be greater. But reaching the Transcendence Realm is too hard. According to the scroll, only those who have Transcended their physical limitations have the right to call themselves Berserker Masters. A person who has arrived at the Transcendence Realm has at least the ability to turn a small tribe into a medium sized tribe!"

"The elder has already solidified half of the Berserker Blood in his body but he has yet to reach Transcendence. There is no one around us who has yet to reach the Transcendence Realm."

Su Ming continued mumbling. The Transcendence Realm was a dream too far away for him at that moment. He was worried whether he could manage to even reach the first level in the Blood Solidification Realm.

To reach the first level in the Blood Solidification Realm, he needed at least three of his blood veins to emerge.

Those who possessed a Berserker Body would be able to manifest three blood veins very quickly into their training and arrive at the first level of the Blood Solidification Realm. They would be unlike Su Ming, who could barely even manifest the first vein.

He was off to a rocky start, but Su Ming did not give up. As long as he could train, he had hope.

Besides, when he was trying to make all the blood veins in his body emerge, he could feel the stone on his chest growing hotter. This lifted Su Ming's spirits. He had a feeling that he held the key to the activation of his treasure.

Seven days had passed. Within those seven days, Su Ming barely left his house. He was seldom hungry, which puzzled his mind. It was stated in the scroll that Berserkers would have an increased appetite during the Blood Solidification Realm because they were activating all the blood veins in their bodies. This would allow them to grow faster physically and create more fresh blood for their training.

However, there was no sign of hunger within Su Ming. He thought about it and attributed this to the strange warmth emitted by stone.

Within those seven days as well, Lei Chen dropped by once to give Su Ming the mink deer blood and take some Dark Dragon's Saliva. Lei Chen was tested and proven to possess the Berserker Body when he was seven. He had already reached the fourth level of the Blood Solidification Realm by now. He was able to manifest 23 blood veins from his body and even within the hunting team, his abilities were at least of an average level.

Before he left, he hesitated briefly. He wanted to cheer Su Ming up, but in the end, he chose to look at Su Ming and speak honestly.

"Su Ming, we grew up together. I'll protect you from now on. If anyone bullies you, then they're my enemy as well!" Once he finished, he swung his arm in a powerful manner and left with a boyish grin.

Su Ming watched Lei Chen leave feeling touched.

Life in the tribe was simple but it was not boring. Almost all of the members of the tribe had their own task to perform to contribute to the tribe.

Half a month after the Berserker's Awakening, Su Ming once again took his basket and left for the forest alone after reporting to the members of the tribe.

Su Ming was like a different person once he went into the forest. He was agile. He could speed forth like an arrow with a jump and climb up a big tree with just a few leaps. As he sat on a tree branch, he smiled. He was proud of his own speed.

Even if I haven't completed the first level of Blood Solidification Realm, my body has become much more agile than before.

Su Ming placed two fingers in his mouth and whistled. The whistle travelled far and echoed as it did. Soon, a flash of red came from afar. The red blur was quick and it reached Su Ming in a flash.

Su Ming grinned widely and jumped forward as soon as the blurry red figure approached. It screamed and chased after Su Ming.

"Xiao Hong, let's see who reaches the top of the mountain first today!" There was joy in Su Ming's voice, and as he spoke, he ran forward. Behind him was Xiao Hong. The monkey's face was scornful. It did not think that competing with Su Ming was something worth doing. It was even eating a fruit in its hand at that moment. Xiao Hong scratched its face and chased after Su Ming lazily.

However, the monkey soon grew restless and its screams became sharper. Its gaze was filled with shock and it threw away the fruit in rage, chasing after Su Ming with everything it had.

Chapter 7: Gift

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Su Ming never stopped moving in the forest. His body was like an arrow as he shot through the forest using his familiarity with the forest and his agility. Very soon, Dark Dragon Mountain appeared before his eyes. Once he got out of the forest, he would be able to get into Dark Dragon Mountain.

For Su Ming, who came to this mountain since he was young to collect herbs, every single living thing here gave off an aura that put him at ease.

"It's written in the scroll that the Berserkers can increase their strength by calling forth their blood and make their bodies stronger while they are training in the Blood Solidification Realm due to honing the Berserker Blood within their bodies. I thought I would never obtain such an opportunity but to think that I would be able to experience it today!"

"To reach the first level in the Blood Solidification Realm, the manifestation of three blood veins is needed. But even if I have yet to manifest all three, my speed has increased by leaps and bounds. Even my strength has..." Su Ming jumped forward and whilst in midair, he swung his right fist at the giant tree beside him.

With a huge crash, the faint outline of his fist could be seen on the tree. But at the same time, Su Ming's right hand also felt numb, though his face was filled with excitement.

But as he was drowning in excitement, a flash of red ran past him and let out a string of proud screeches. Obviously, it was made by the little monkey who felt pleased with itself for catching up to Su Ming and surpassing him.

Su Ming smiled and chased after the red blur. His speed did not decrease but he could not catch up to the little monkey. In the past, every single time he reached Dark Dragon Mountain, that monkey would be waiting for him impatiently with a face filled with scorn as if it had been waiting for him for a long time.

But now, after two hours, as Su Ming climbed Dark Dragon Mountain and reached the same big rock with a hollow located in one of the mountains, he saw the monkey. While it still looked at him with scorn and disdain, its forehead was covered in sweat, showing that while it had arrived before him, it did not wait for long this time.

Su Ming smiled and went up to touch the monkey's head. He took off the basket and stood on top of the rock. As he looked at the mist around the area, he took a deep breath.

He liked standing there looking at the sights before him, even if there was a deep canyon right underneath. If he took a few steps forward and if wind blew at him right then and there, it would cause him to stumble and fall. It was a dangerous place, but Su Ming had been climbing this mountain ever since he was young. To him, this place was like a second home.

"Xiao Hong, how does it look like on the other side of the mountain... have you gone there before?" Su Ming's hide shirt swayed along the wind and let out light flapping sounds. Instinctively, he reached out with his right hand and touched the black stone on his chest.

The monkey by his side rolled its eyes and looked at the land located far away. It did not bother to reply Su Ming, but lowered its head to tug at its own fur as if it was looking for something.

Su Ming scratched his nose when he saw the little monkey grooming itself and ignoring him. He shook his head and smiled, then decided to sit down cross-legged on the spot where he stood.

"Xiao Hong, I'm not going to return to the tribe for a while this time. I might be staying here for a while, so if you go out and play, get some fruits back for me."

The monkey beside him immediately lifted its head and looked at him with surprised eyes. It looked at Su Ming scrutinizingly, then smiled happily and nodded. It usually only got to spend three to five days with Su Ming. When Su Ming returned to the tribe, it

would be left alone in the forest. Once it understood what Su Ming said, it was extremely happy.

Su Ming took a few deep breaths and closed his eyes slowly as he felt the wind on his face. He was about to begin training there until he reached the first level in the Blood Solidification Realm. Only then would he leave.

After all, Su Ming did not know how to explain what happened to him. Somewhere in his mind, he wanted to keep this a secret and let no one know about it.

A red vein appeared from Su Ming's body soon after he closed his eyes. This red vein was giving off a dim red glow. It was no longer glinting, but showing signs of manifestation.

It was the same red vein that had only appeared vaguely half a month ago. The same red vein that was now manifesting itself completely.

Su Ming may not have any talent in practicing the Ways of the Berserker, but he was not the type to give up easily. Now, as he sat down with his legs crossed to train, time passed by slowly.

The sun rose and set, the mist in the sky gathered and dispersed. The sounds of the birds and beasts echoed in the mountains, forming a sort of tranquility. Surrounded by that peace, Su Ming opened his eyes on the second day in the morning.

He moved his body. When he looked back, he saw that the little monkey had gone off, but there were some fruits on the ground and some cores left from fruits that had been completely devoured.

Su Ming picked up some of the fruits and ate a dozen of them. With his appetite, the fruits could only make him partially full. He may like to eat fruits but he was not fond of eating too many in one go.

Once he finished eating, Su Ming sat down immediately and focused on refining the Berserker Blood within his body. But this time, Su Ming opened his eyes after a few moments with a puzzled look on his face.

"The first blood vein has already manifested, but it seems like there's not enough blood in me for the second vein to appear..." Su Ming did not know how to describe it. It was as if the first vein itself absorbed more than half of the fresh blood in his body and there was not enough blood for the second vein to manifest itself.

It was difficult to explain, but that was what Su Ming felt.

"I don't have enough blood..." Su Ming scratched his head and sighed. He did not know that practitioners of the ways of the Berserker, especially during the initial stages, while

requiring a strong body to train, would also need to take in a huge amount of medicine that would greatly boost the formation of blood within the body to increase the speed of their training and subsequently allow each vein to manifest one after another.

The strength of a Berserker in the Blood Solidification Realm was directly linked to the amount of blood veins and blood he had. The more blood a Berserker had, he would also be able to manifest more blood veins, and he would be stronger! Once the power was released, even with just their physical strength alone, they could tear apart a huge beast. This was Berserker Power!

All these were the secrets of the tribe. Only those who possessed Berserker Bodies had the right to know about it.

"When the members of the tribe were injured, they would lose a large amount of blood. Their faces would grow pale and they would be weak. At that time, they would need to consume herbs that would help with the formation of blood..." Su Ming's eyes lit up. After some careful thinking, he immediately slung the basket over his back and jumped towards the side of the mountain. This time, his speed was extremely fast and he returned about an hour later.

When he returned, there were some herbs with dirt still attached to them in his basket. Once he cleaned those herbs, Su Ming took out a stone bowl from the basket. He crushed the herbs and mixed it with dew, which turned into a dark green concoction that emitted a strange smell.

But he was already used to this smell. He breathed in a few whiffs of the smell, then added more herbs. Once it was done, he took a deep breath and drank the whole thing down.

It was disgusting. Su Ming frowned in discomfort but forced himself to drink the whole thing before sitting down with his legs crossed again.

It was not until midnight before Su Ming opened his eyes again. When he did, he stared into the darkness and let his mind wander.

"There's a little effect... but only a little. The method is correct, but something is still wrong..." Su Ming frowned. He could not tell his elder about this. He could only rely on himself to solve the problem.

"That's what's wrong!" Su Ming's eyes lit up. As the common healer in the tribe, it was his job to collect herbs. He remembered every time he went to collect herbs, his elder would usually select some herbs from the pile and take it away. The rest would be given to the tribe leader and distributed to the tribe according to need. The herbs would be taken out of the herb storage when there was a need to use them to create medicine to cure the wounded and the sick.

Dark Dragon's Saliva was among those taken away by the elder. But Dark Dragon's Saliva was no longer of any use to him, and thus, all of them were given to Su Ming to nourish his body.

"There's still some Dark Dragon's Saliva left after I gave some to Lei Chen." Su Ming immediately ruffled through the contents in the side pocket of the basket and took out the small bottle. When he opened it, there was the familiar fragrance wafting in the air. He shook it lightly. There was only a little less than half left.

Without any hesitation, Su Ming placed the bottle by his lips and drank all the contents in one mouthful.

Then he immediately sat down with his legs crossed, immersing himself in refining and solidifying the Berserker Blood in his veins. Su Ming had been drinking Dark Dragon's Saliva since he was young. Every time he drank it, he would feel a bit faint with a sensation as if he was about to fall asleep drunk.

But this was the first time he drank Dark Dragon's Saliva to assist in his Berserker training. As the blood in his veins circulated in his body, he could feel a cold sensation growing within his body, spreading to all parts of his body very quickly.

The cold gradually fused with the blood in his veins and increased the rate of circulation in his body. There were even signs of his blood rate increasing.

"I knew it!" Su Ming felt excited. As he continued channeling his blood, his body suddenly shivered. He opened his eyes, his face filled with disbelief and doubt.

"How could this... Is it the elder?"

Within his body, Su Ming could clearly feel the coldness emerging from all parts of his body as he absorbed the chill brought about by Dark Dragon's Saliva. That cold feeling seemed to have existed in his body for many years and had been laying dormant, waiting for the time to rush forth the moment he started refining the blood in his veins.

And the key to activate it was the same Dark Dragon's Saliva that Su Ming drank!

Now, that cold seemed to gather from every part of his body, crashing through his veins like a gigantic wave to form a sea.

This was a gift which the elder prepared for him when he was young. His body that had been nourished by Dark Dragon's Saliva was the gift. If Su Ming walked on the Ways of the Berserker, then this power would aid him immensely in the earlier stages of his training. If he did not have the gift to practice in the Ways of the Berserker, then it would help keep his body healthy.

Su Ming was dumbfounded. He could almost see his elder's kind eyes and his expectations towards him as he grew older over the years. Most of all, he remembered the disappointment in his eyes half a month ago.

"Elder..." Su Ming mumbled. There was a low rumbling sound within his body. The vast amount of Dark Dragon's Saliva that had gathered in his body over time rushed forth to drive his blood forward, causing the second blood vein in his body to appear immediately and manifest quickly.

As the second blood vein appeared, the third blood vein immediately followed suit!

There were even signs of the fourth blood vein appearing vaguely!

Su Ming's body began rapidly growing bigger. The speed and the strength of his blood circulation brought about his physical growth. If this continued, then he would no longer be frail and weak, and he would be just like the other members of his tribe. He would obtain a strong body.

Yet at that very moment, the stone hanging off Su Ming's chest suddenly gave off the very same piercing light as it did in the statue of the God of Berserkers!

The moment the light came, things changed!

Chapter 8: Barrenness!

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As the cold light appeared, Su Ming could clearly feel a strong wave of heat emitting from his chest and travelling through his entire body quickly. It spread throughout his body in an instant and fused together with the cold brought by the Dark Dragon's Saliva, permeating into his blood.

A clear roar could be heard from within Su Ming's body. As he was sitting down trembling furiously, the fourth blood vein manifested itself.

At the same time, a large amount of black filth seeped out of Su Ming's pores. There was even a terrible stench in the air, but it disappeared along with the wind.

With three blood veins, one could reach the first level of the Blood Solidification Realm. Now, Su Ming had become a Berserker who reached the first level of the Blood Solidification Realm!

Still, he kept his eyes closed. There were no signs of him waking up. As time passed, the solidification of his blood gradually stopped as the fourth blood vein manifested.

When the little monkey returned the next morning while sniffing at its right claw with a pleased look on its face, it was surprised when it saw Su Ming covered entirely in black filth. It scratched its head in confusion then circled Su Ming a few times.

It may have obtained intelligence, but it did not know what was happening then. Curious, it approached Su Ming and reached out a claw, wanting to pat Su Ming.

Just as it was about to touch Su Ming, the light once appeared strongly from within Su Ming's body. It reached its brightest in an instant and enveloped Su Ming entirely, making the monkey hang its mouth open in shock. Then before its very eyes, Su Ming's body disappeared.

To the little monkey, Su Ming was taken by the light. This scene made it widen its eyes and let out a piercing screech. It rushed towards where Su Ming disappeared and began searching in frenzy, but it found nothing. It stood there, unmoving and stunned.

Su Ming did not know where he was. He was currently looking at his surroundings in confusion. The place was enveloped in white mist. He could see too far into the distance, but he could see the vague outline of the peak of a mountain before him.

He had just woken up, but he remembered he was in Dark Mountain. He could not understand how he got there.

His gaze slowly turned cautious. He first lowered his gaze and looked at his chest, then felt his heart missing a beat. The strange black piece of debris was missing from his chest.

"It's gone..." Su Ming was shocked. He looked around at his surroundings, then stood up slowly. His gaze was dark and alert as he started walking towards the mist covered mountaintop.

The mountain was not far away. Within a short amount of time, Su Ming was standing at the foot of the mountain. As he lifted his head, he took in a sharp breath.

It was the peak of a mountain for sure, but there were no plants on it. It was instead a barren land, as if it had been polished smoothly. There were a lot of pictures carved on it, mountains, rivers, strange beasts, the sky... and even words that Su Ming have never seen before. The place gave off a feeling as if it was from ancient times, as if came straight from the stories about the age of the Savages.

At the very moment Su Ming looked at the carvings on the mountaintop, a roaring sound echoed in the air. A crack appeared right in the middle of the mountain, as if it was cut apart by an invisible force.

The crack was narrow, and he could see how far it went down. It stopped under Su Ming's feet.

Su Ming briefly hesitated then gritted his teeth. He was already here, and he did not know how to get out of the place. He did not even know where he was. Now that there was a path before him, he had to trudge forward.

Somewhere in his mind he felt that this was connected in some way to the black piece of debris, because he remembered clearly the heat emitted by the debris.

Su Ming felt as if he walked for a long time as he went into the mountain following the narrow crack. The road before him gradually grew wider. There were also a lot of weird carvings on the walls around him. Su Ming could not understand it, but there were various plants and herbs on the carvings. There were also some naked people with messy hair surrounding an odd big pot fiddling around with the herbs.

He continued observing the carvings until he caught a glimpse of the end out of the corner of his eyes. There was a door at the end, and Su Ming paused in his footsteps as he stood at the door.

The same carving was on the door. There were five different herbs carved in the drawing. Uneven strings emitting the cold light Su Ming was already familiar with surrounded the drawing of the five herbs and formed a circle, completely covering the door.

Right at the centre of the door were fifteen small holes. They looked as if something could be placed within. The holes formed a circle.

Su Ming frowned then scrutinized the door. He took a look at his surroundings again, then cast his gaze at the five herbs on the door.

"This is... Iron Core Flower. That's right, it's the Iron Core Flower!"

"This is... it looks like Joyleaf, but it also looks like the Iced Catalpa Plant..."

"This is the Night Glitter Branch! I often collect these."

"What is this...? It looks really familiar..."

"I've never seen the last one..." After looking at it for a while, Su Ming hesitated. He did not know whether he should try and push the door open.

Just as he was hesitating, he saw the strings surrounding the five herbs move and shine so brightly it could blind the eyes. As Su Ming was stunned by the moment, the light floated from the door and sped towards Su Ming.

The light was too quick, and Su Ming had no time to dodge. Within just a moment, he was enveloped by the light.

At the same time, a lot of memories not belonging to Su Ming flooded into his mind. These memories seemed to have been brought along with the light and forced their way into his head. It made Su Ming uncomfortable.

He saw the figure of a person. He was just like the other people in the other drawings, throwing herbs into a big pot. The person's actions were very fluid. Each time he threw the herbs in, he would take a sniff at the herbs, then his gaze became serious. He waved at the air with his right hand and a wave of fire appeared in the air encircling the big pot.

The process was extremely complicated. Even the size of the fire had to be controlled. Su Ming had never seen this before. It was not as complicated in the tribe either. They would usually just eat the herbs or at most turn them into a concoction to increase the effects.

Su Ming became engrossed with the memories in his head. A long time passed before the person slammed his right hand against the pot.

Immediately, the flame around the pot disappeared. The person opened the lid of the strange pot, and Su Ming immediately saw three green spherical objects the size of nails within the big pot.

Even if they were just memories in his head, Su Ming could still faintly smell the scent of medicinal herbs in the air. When he looked at the three spherical objects, he became completely stunned, as if he was hit by lightning.

He had been making medicine since he was young. With just a glance, he could tell the quality of various medicines. As he was now, he could not even begin imagining the effects of these spherical objects.

The light around his body disappeared and returned to the door, causing the numerous strings that formed the circle on the door to also move.

As the light faded, Su Ming's sight became clouded. He moved as if he was pushed by an invisible force. When his view cleared, a red blur came screeching towards him in joy.

The red blur was, of course, Xiao Hong. It climbed over Su Ming and jumped happily on his body. When Su Ming disappeared, it had been terrified. Now that it saw Su Ming return, it was happy.

Su Ming was stunned. He immediately looked at his surroundings and found that he had returned to the big rock on the Dark Dragon Mountain. He lowered his head and saw the piece of debris that had disappeared still hanging on his chest.

"All of this must be connected to this thing. Perhaps when I arrived at the first level of in the realm of Blood Solidification, I activated it, and all of that happened. Looking at Xiao Hong's reaction, I must not have been dreaming, but went physically to that place. Just what is this thing? Why is it here?" Su Ming mumbled softly as he recalled the memories in his head.

"Quenching... the medicinal pills..." After a long while, Su Ming mumbled out the name of the refining process he saw in his head.

"Scattering Dust..." This was the name of the medicinal pill, and it was also one of the many memories that appeared in his head.

Su Ming spoke in a low tone. In his mind he saw the carving on the door. His eyes lightened up gradually. He may not know where the place was, but it was clear that quenching thing he saw had piqued his interest.

In his view, the training to become a Berserker is related to those herbs that increased the blood rate in the body. They needed to consume lots of it to make their bodies stronger. That quenching process he saw in his head might be able to help immensely in his training.

"I've never seen a round medicinal pill like this in the tribe, not even the elder has seen one before, or else I would have definitely seen it. But that round medicinal pills seemed to be working pretty well. I wonder how strong the effects of the herbs would be once I finish refining it."

"Then my next step would be to look for those five herbs. Xiao Hong, have you ever seen these two types of herbs." Once Su Ming made his decision, he called out to Xiao Hong and picked up a stone, then drew the two herbs that he was unable to identify on the ground before he looked expectantly at Xiao Hong.

Xiao Hong looked at them with his teeth bared, then gave a nod.

Su Ming felt his spirits lift. He walked around the big rock several times as his mind quickly processed his thoughts.

"I can find the herbs, but making that sort of medicinal pills will be complicated. There's even fire involved. It'll be just like cooking rice... Interesting." Once Su Ming had his thoughts sorted out, he frowned.

He remembered that the pot itself was also odd. It was different from the pots used to cook rice in the tribe. As he was searching through the memories in his head, he learned the pot used for the quenching process had an odd name - the Barren Caldron.

"The pots used in the tribe should be useless... I'll also need fire." Su Ming lifted his head suddenly as he was mumbling. His eyes were bright as he looked at one of the mountains located further away among the five mountains in Dark Dragon Mountain.

That mountain was completely brown in color, and at this moment, there was smoke rolling out from the top of the mountain.

Chapter 9: Red Mud

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Each one of the five mountains in the Dark Dragon Mountain are different. The mountain which produced the Dark Dragon's Saliva was the closest to the Dark Mountain Tribe. If he went any further, he might accidentally run into other people from other tribes.

That was why Su Ming spent most his time here. He would only venture to the other mountains to collect some rarer herbs, and he did so with caution.

Now, within Su Ming's sights, was the mountain which had smoke rolling down from its peak, Black Flame Mountain.

It is said that there was a huge amount of earthen fire¹ within this mountain. A long time ago, this place was the centre of the Land of the Fire Berserker Tribe. Centuries may have passed since then, but if anyone approached this place, they could still feel waves of heat rolling off the very ground.

Su Ming was not unfamiliar with Black Flame Mountain. He had stepped foot in this place multiple times. He had even met the people from the Black Mountain Tribe before. If it were not for his speed aiding his escape, he would have died much earlier.

That place was very close to the Black Mountain Tribe. The Black Mountain Tribe had held grudges against the Dark Mountain Tribe for generations. The sizes of both tribes were about the same. There may be no battles between them, but there were scuffles among their hunting teams, and these scuffles tended to be bloody and cruel.

There was a moment of hesitation, but very soon Su Ming's eyes lit up as he had a plan. He turned his gaze away from Black Flame Mountain after a long while, then quickly walked towards the deeper parts of the flat stone. There were a few big stones at the hollowed part of the stone. When Su Ming took them away, he saw an object that had been hidden underneath by the stones.

It was a crudely made bow!

It may be crude, but the string of the bow, which was the size of a finger, was stretched tautly across the bow. Its power could be felt just by looking at it.

Only hunters were allowed to possess bows within the Dark Mountain Tribe. It was difficult for other tribe members to obtain one. Su Ming made the bow himself after he exchanged some materials with the herbs he collected. He did not take it back to the tribe but kept it here. This was a secret that only Lei Chen knew.

As he held the bow, Su Ming's lit up brightly. He took out another five arrows from underneath the big stones. The arrowheads were made from stone, and Su Ming would usually polish the arrowheads so that they would remain sharp.

He placed the five arrows on the basket over his back. Su Ming held the bow in his hand and whistled at the little monkey before pointing at the herbs he drew on the ground.

The little monkey understood him, and grinned at him displaying all its teeth before rushing forward in a red blur.

Su Ming followed closely behind carefully. With just a few leaps, the man and the monkey disappeared from where they stood.

If they were comparing their level of familiarity towards Dark Dragon Mountain, then Su Ming would never be able to compare with Xiao Hong. Under Xiao Hong's guidance, as the sun became a bright red and started to set, Su Ming's basket was filled with various medicinal herbs.

There were about seven or eight types of herbs in the basket, and there were plenty for each type. These were all the herbs that Su Ming saw from the drawing, and even herbs that were similar to the drawings. He was unable to identify them completely, that was why he decided to take the herbs that bore similarities to the drawings as well.

"You mean there's another herb that looks alike here?" It was almost twilight by this point. Su Ming and Xiao Hong were standing in the forest near Black Flame Mountain. He was pointing at a patch of black mud on the ground before them, looking at Xiao Hong.

Xiao Hong bobbed its head up and down, then gestured at Su Ming wildly before pointing at the setting sun in the sky.

Su Ming's eyes lit up in understanding. He squatted down and fixed his gaze at the swamp, waiting for the sun to set. Seconds ticked by slowly, and after half an hour, the light in the forest grew dim. It was almost as if everything outside a hundred feet radius within the forest had been consumed by darkness.

As soon as night fell on the land, bubbles suddenly emerged from the mud. There was also the vague shape of a red plant. It was rising up so quickly as if it was swimming forward. The odd sight made Su Ming's hair rise, but he did not move.

He watched as the red plant continued to swim in the mud, then slowly rise from it. It was the bud of a red flower. The roots were still hidden in the mud. It was obvious now that the flower had been moving about in the mud just now due to the movements of its roots.

As he watched the flower buds emerge from the mud, they bloomed before Su Ming's eyes and let out a nice fragrance. Su Ming only took a whiff and immediately, he felt as if his blood was boiling. It was as if his entire body was surrounded by flames and his skin burnt by the heat.

At that moment, Xiao Hong let out a nervous screech. Su Ming did not hesitate and rushed forward, grabbing the red flower closest to him. There was a sharp spatula made of stone in his hand, and with practiced movements he cut the flower part from its roots, then threw it into the basket over his back.

Once he was done, Su Ming did not linger and left quickly with Xiao Hong.

As soon as Su Ming left, there was the sound of a roar from a beast from within the mud, and all the red flowers immediately closed their petals before sinking into the mud once more. Soon, fresh blood emerged from the mud and the stench of blood filled the air.

Su Ming and Xiao Hong left in a hurry. When the sky darkened completely, they were sitting on a tree and looking through their haul using the moonlight.

There were many types of herbs in the basket, a sight which made Su Ming excited. He saw the quenching scene in his mind once again, and he became even more excited to do it.

"It's a pity I don't know the effects of the Scattering Dust...but it should be really good nonetheless." Su Ming licked his lips, casting his gaze towards two of the herbs in the basket.

These two herbs were similar in color, and if he was not looking at them closely they would look exactly the same. They are both red, and the only difference between them was that one of them had six petals, and the other five petals.

Su Ming was not familiar with those two herbs. They were the only ones he had never seen before in the making of the Scattering Dust. It was fortunate that Xiao Hong had seen them before and could bring Su Ming to them.

"Just which one of them is the one necessary to make the medicine?" Su Ming frowned, he swept his gaze along the two herbs. He had obtained the six petal flower from the mud. As he remembered the strange sight that had happened when it bloomed, Su Ming had a feeling that if he ate this raw, his body would explode.

He placed the herb once more in the basket and laid down on the branch, then took a bite at a piece of fruit. He watched the stars in the sky and breathed in the air in the forest. He could hear the sounds of the beasts and birds around him. It was as if he had become one with the forest, and it was a comfortable feeling.

Xiao Hong was grooming itself by the side, its eyes warily surveying their surroundings.

The man and the monkey spent the night on the tree just like that.

As the sun rose the next morning, Su Ming and Xiao Hong left the tree and hurried towards Black Flame Mountain as the forest was covered by darkness and surrounded by a thin veil of mist.

Su Ming remained on alert as he held the bow in his hands. Xiao Hong was also affected by this and was also wary of its surroundings. When the sun rose to the sky, the snow-like mist disappeared from the forest. There was a gigantic mountain before his eyes. The mountain was brown, and he could feel waves of heat rolling off the ground onto his face.

He could even see puffs of black smoke rising into the air at the very top of the mountain. It was a sight to behold from afar.

"Black Flame Mountain..." Su Ming muttered softly, then cast a wary eye at his surroundings before rushing up the mountain with no hesitation. He was already prepared before he came. There were a lot of heat repellent herbs under his feet, and with their presence, Su Ming could climb to the top the mountain without stopping.

He may be climbing really quickly, but he remained alert, and his wariness only increased as he climbed further up. He did not how long he took, but as he was halfway up the mountain, Xiao Hong let out a screech as he was about to continue upward.

Su Ming immediately hid his body in one of the cracks by the side of the mountain without any hesitation as soon as he heard the screech. He planted his feet firmly on the ground and lifted the bow in his right hand as he quickly took out an arrow. It was all done within the span of a breath. Xiao Hong arrived before Su Ming, and was now pressed closely to him.

Su Ming breathed slowly, his eyes cold. From where he stood, if any of the members of the Black Mountain Tribe noticed him, then they would have to fight till the death.

Very soon, soft voices travelled to where he stood, and there were even sounds of stones falling as they spoke.

"Why are they asking us to mine stones so early in the morning? What is this for anyway?"

"Stop complaining. This is a request from the tribe leader, we just need to do it. By the way, did you hear? The elder is about to reach the next level..."

"I also heard about it from the other tribe members that the elder is different than how he is usually. He's a bit terrifying now."

"Could the tribe leader be asking us to mine these stones for the elder?"

The voices became clearer and then gradually faded, Su Ming remained still as he stood pressed against the crack. It was not until the two people had gone further away that he let out a sigh of relief.

"Black Mountain Tribe's elder is about to reach the next level...I remember the elder once saying that the elder in Black Mountain Tribe was at the eighth level of the Blood Solidification Realm, but he has mastered an evil art just so that he could go up against the elder." Su Ming narrowed his eyes. He would have to return later to tell his elder about this.

He waited for a bit longer to make sure those two had gone far away, then Su Ming continued scaling the mountain. But at that moment, the little monkey by his side grabbed his shirt.

Su Ming immediately turned his head in alarm, but he only saw the monkey's face bright with excitement, pointing towards the crack they had stayed. There was a small, naturally formed hole over there, and steam was rising from it.

Su Ming immediately gave up on climbing the mountain any further and decided to approach the small hole. After careful scrutiny, he took off the basket on his back and brought it into the hole as he crawled into it, with Xiao Hong keeping close to his footsteps.

The hole was not big, and Su Ming only managed to get in because he was on the smaller side. If it were any of the other members of the Berserker Tribe, they would not have been able to make it in.

Chapter 10: Quenching

The hole was strange. It was completely even in size. When Su Ming saw the end of the hole some hundred feet later, he started slowing down.

He approached the exit carefully. As he looked out, he was momentarily stunned, then he took a deep breath.

This was a fire cave. There were vast amounts of stalactites hanging from the ceiling. The surface of these rocks were dry and cracked, as if they would crumble into pieces at any moment. The ground was black, but there were lines upon lines of red rocks flowing downwards, turning the place brown. The heat was even stronger in here compared to when they were outside.

There was a black skeleton hanging near him. The skeleton was about eighty to ninety feet long, and Su Ming could tell with just one glance that it was the skeleton of a python.

On the python's head was a horn about the size of an arm. It was black in color.

Su Ming had never seen such a long python before, but he remembered hearing from his elder that there was once a species of pythons in Dark Dragon Mountain. They were fierce creatures, and these pythons all possessed horns on their heads. They were known as Horned Pythons, and the sharpness of the horn could be given to the tribe as tribute.

There was one such horn in the Dark Mountain Tribe, and it was treated as the symbol of the tribe leader in the tribe.

"Could this be the Horned Python?" He looked at the Horned Python's skeleton, then at the cave he was located, and an answer formed in his head.

In his silence Su Ming took out one of the herbs from the basket and threw it downwards.

As the herb floated downwards and was about to touch the floor, it let out a sizzling sound. About fifteen minutes later, it withered. He tried a few more times to test the heat on the ground, and decided that while the heat was strong, he could withstand it for some time, as long as he did not touch the red stones.

Xiao Hong was already growing impatient. If it did not know the dangers of this place, it would have jumped down much earlier.

Su Ming climbed out of the hole carefully, then jumped downwards and landed on the floor. Immediately, there were sizzling sounds coming from underneath his feet. A wave of heat seeped into his body from his feet, but it would not be strong enough to burn his feet for the time being.

When Xiao Hong entered the fire cave, sweat poured down its body like a river. It pondered for a while before returning once more to the small hole, refusing to go back into the fire cave. Instead, it chose to go somewhere else to play.

Su Ming did not continue trying to persuade it, but chose to carry the basket on his back and hurry onward. He could tell that this was connected to the inner parts of Black Flame Mountain, and there just might be a suitable place for quenching herbs later.

Not far down the road was an empty space. Su Ming did not know where it was connected to. There were a few potholes on the ground, and the heat was even stronger over there. Su Ming could even feel a scalding heat underneath his feet.

He was just about to step on the empty space after a brief moment of hesitation when he felt a strong wave of heat bursting forth. Su Ming let out a yelp and immediately retreated, his pupils dilating in fear. He saw a blast of fire the size of an arm rushing forth from one of the potholes, lighting up the cave instantly.

Su Ming took in a deep breath and retreated once more until he reached the mouth of the cave. Then he cast his gaze forward. About half an hour passed before the fire gradually disappeared. But no sooner than it did, another blast of fire emerged from another pothole.

As soon as it disappeared, another blast of fire came out once more. It was an endless cycle.

"Fire..." Su Ming stared at the potholes, then his eyes gradually lit up in excitement.

"There is fire here! But they will appear only once in a while, and it's not a stable source of fire either..." Once the excitement faded, Su Ming took a moment to gather to gather his thoughts, feeling a little disappointed.

"No matter. I might be able to reach the deepest parts of the mountain through the peak of the mountain, and I might even find a better place which might be hidden here. If there's any danger, I can leave quickly as well."

"Very well, this will be my very first place to perform quenching!" Su Ming's eyes were bright with excitement as he looked around.

"I have fire now, so the only thing I'm missing now is the Barren Caldron...I'll make one myself!" Su Ming then cast his gaze on the scattered rocks on the ground.

These stones have been here for many years, but have not turned into ashes. They must be able to withstand a great amount of heat, so they should be able to be used for quenching..." Su Ming scratched his head then changed the herbs underneath his feet before jumping down once more. He chose a more suitable looking piece of stone, then

touched the surface after a brief moment of hesitation. It was not too hot, just a bit warm.

Once he was certain of using the big stone as a material, Su Ming took out his own spatula. The spatula was extremely sharp and had been constantly polished by Su Ming himself. As he took up the spatula, he used every ounce of his strength and started cutting into the stone.

It was an extremely dull process, but one Su Ming was already used to. There was no hesitation within his movements, but as he was cutting into the stone, a thought suddenly crossed his mind. He looked at the skull of the python, and especially at the horn on its skull.

Su Ming went over quickly and looked at the skull for a moment. He gave a light knock at the skull, and when he did, there was a cracking sound, and the entire skeleton immediately turned into ashes.

Only the black horn remained unscathed.

"I knew it. This horn is extraordinary. I was just wondering how the python came to this place." Su Ming picked up the horn and sliced it across the wall to his side. There was a crack following his motion, but the scene did not surprise Su Ming.

"But why did the Horned Python climb into this place?" Su Ming did not understand, but he still took up the horn and went to the rock and started cutting into it.

With the help of the horn, after a few hours, a stone stove that was almost similar to the Barren Caldron in Su Ming's memories was born. Su Ming even made a lid for it to keep the heat from escaping from within the caldron.

"Let's try it out first." Su Ming was excited. He pushed the Barren Caldron to the potholes and forced himself to calm down as he waited.

After a few hours, after numerous blasts of fire, fire finally emerged from the pothole near Su Ming.

As soon as the fire erupted, Su Ming pushed the stone stove right on top of the erupting pothole.

Su Ming was nervous. It all depended on whether the caldron he made could withstand the heat now.

Very soon, the caldron became red and heat rolled off from its surface. There were even sizzling sounds, and Su Ming saw the surface of the caldron cracking in multiple times. Su Ming felt his heart still, but when there were no signs of the stone crumbling, he gradually began to relax.

"Two hours... There is only two hours each time. I don't think it's enough." Su Ming sank into his own thoughts. It can even be said that he was truly spending all his effort to make sure this quenching process would work.

"Then how about this?" Su Ming took a few steps back. He may have a plan in his head, but he did not dare act recklessly. Instead, he stood at a place that was not too hot and focused on those potholes. A day passed by while he was doing that.

During that period of time, the little monkey dropped by and left some fruits on a place that was not too hot before leaving once more to play.

As for the stone caldron, it withstood the test of fire and did not crumble no matter how many times it was burned.

"There seems to be some sort of rule for the eruptions, but there doesn't seem to be any rules either..." After a day, Su Ming picked up the horn and went to the potholes, cutting a ravine on the ground, connecting one of the potholes underneath the caldron.

He did not stop there, but instead make six other ravines before retreating. Very soon, one of the potholes erupted once more, and most of the flames flowed into the ravine and went underneath the caldron.

"I made it!" Su Ming only looked at it for a moment before going off to make another five ravines, then he backed off to observe for another day. As he was sure his method worked in extending the period of time for the fire underneath his caldron, he became relaxed.

To tell the truth, he was worried about it. The lines of the ravines were not drawn on a whim. He had to make sure that the flames underneath the caldron were not too strong or too weak, or else the pills would come out misshapened.

After all, there were times when several potholes erupted at once. If this happened multiple times, then it might be dangerous.

Once he solved two of the most basic of his problems, Su Ming calmed down and began his very first quenching process according to the memories in his head.

He had the little monkey preparing his meals for him, and there were times when Su Ming went out to hunt some smaller prey before bringing them into the cave to roast it. Su Ming also used the chance to tell the hunting team from his own tribe about the elder in Black Mountain Tribe as he met them by chance while he was out hunting.

Time passed by, and sounds of frustrations could be heard from this place that he claimed as his own for the purposes of quenching. Half a month had passed by. Su Ming's eyes had turned red by this point. For the entirety of the half a month he spent,

for all the numerous times he tried refining the herbs he had, there was not once where he was successful!

He was now at the first level in the realm of Blood Solidification, and he even manifested four blood veins. If only he could manifest two more, then he would reach the second level in the realm of Blood Solidification.

Once he reached the second level, then Su Ming would be able to use the first of the Berserker Arts which he inherited from the statue of the God of Berserkers!

This was a dream for Su Ming, and also the reason why he did not give up on trying to create the medicinal pills.

But after a month's worth of failures, Su Ming was at the verge of giving up. But his obstinacy did not allow him to give up so easily.

"I won't believe it! Xiao Hong, collect herbs for me again!" Su Ming threw the basket towards the little monkey baring its teeth at the mouth of the cave, then continued trying to create the pills.

The little monkey caught the basket and grinned before running out.

Days passed...

Failures upon failures...

Another half a month passed by. During this day, as Su Ming stood in front of the caldron with his hair in a mess, he held two herbs in his hands. They were both red in color. One of them had six petals, and the other five petals.

"Which one should I use..." Su Ming knew he did not have much time to think, so he grit his teeth and made his decision.