

Medical 231

Chapter 231 The Dark Ages

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Yan Xiaobao spent hours each day reading library books, but no matter how much he searched, he found no other references to the Dark Era or the Sin. Yan Xiaobao pushed the envelope far enough, even asking Mr. Li if he had ever heard of the Sin, but the teacher said he hadn't, and judging by his expression, it was clear he was not lying.

When he sat in the library again, he sighed, tirelessly pursuing a stack of heavy books. He knew the chances of finding more clues were slim, but he would seize any opportunity. Unfortunately, now wasn't the time to delve into the mysteries of the Dark Era, so he packed up the books he borrowed, and bowed slightly to bid farewell to the librarian before returning to his courtyard.

The past few days had been spent in the library overnight as he cultivated pure Qi Line, but tonight was different. Tonight, he didn't have the luxury to cultivate all night; tonight, he needed to sleep.

The week passed faster than expected, and Yan Xiaobao knew that although the mysteries of the Dark Era and the Sin lingered in his mind, he had to prioritize other urgent events; he needed to channel his final bit of focus into the upcoming event the next day. The day of the auction was upon him.

Yan Xiaobao settled himself on the bed, his eyes closed instantly, and he fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

The next morning, Xu Yue woke up feeling more refreshed than he expected and quickly gathered the items he would need for his journey. First was his conical hat, then his blue clothes, and finally a few coins left from selling pills.

Unlike last time, Yan Xiaobao was not traveling with the Rong twins, nor did anyone know he was leaving the academy today, so just as the sun rose, he dashed out of the academy gates, heading towards Liluo City.

Although the distance was easier to cover in a horse-drawn carriage, even a lower-ranked student possessed a fairly decent speed, but Yan Xiaobao was in no rush to reach his destination. The auction wouldn't begin until the evening, so Yan Xiaobao took four hours to arrive at the city gates.

After returning to the city, Yan Xiaobao found a stall selling street snacks, and he bought a jam-filled bread for breakfast. The bun was warm and sweet, and after running for hours in the biting morning wind, both Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng felt very satisfied.

After wandering randomly for a few hours, Yan Xiaobao noted a random inn where he could stay.

He could obviously choose to check in as he did last time, but doing so would make it more likely for his real identity to be seen by others.

As Yan Xiaobao walked through the city, he passed through a poorer area and noticed that no one was moving on the bustling streets.

Suddenly, a heavy smell hit Yan Xiaobao, assaulting his nostrils with a scent he was all too familiar with. At one time in his life, he had experienced how his entire world turned into a swirl of red by this particular nauseating iron-like smell.

Yan Xiaobao glanced at the empty street ahead and noticed a black-clad, stealthy figure observing him. The cloak completely covered the person's face, but Yan Xiaobao had a feeling that no killing intent was emanating from within. Yan Xiaobao turned away and walked off, clasping his hands together and bowing deeply to the figure.

Throughout his journey, Yan Xiaobao could feel the black-clad man observing him, but he did not follow him.

As Yan Xiaobao stepped onto the main road, he felt the sunlight on his skin, as if the entire world had changed. Previously, he felt as if he was submerged in a tank filled with ice water. He didn't feel the sunlight, the light was dimmed. He didn't see the people around him, but now, the city was full of life.

It was clear that this black-clad figure used some form of magic, but Yan Xiaobao didn't know why it didn't affect him, while Lan Feng was currently hiding deep within Qi Cave, waiting for them to get far away from the black-clad figure.

It was apparent he'd killed someone, but he didn't consider himself a cold-blooded murderer because he ignored Yan Xiaobao, leading the white-haired boy to shrug lightly and once again ignore the black-clad figure.

Although he had killed someone, murder was a frequent occurrence in this new world, and since he hadn't killed Yan Xiaobao before, it was likely he wouldn't pursue him later. As for who he was and why he committed murder, Yan Xiaobao didn't think it was something he could pry into.

After traversing various roads and alleys for several hours, Yan Xiaobao finally arrived at an inn where he checked in. It was a colder inn than the previous one, however, it would provide what Yan Xiaobao needed.

The room itself was very small. The room only had a single bed and a basin, but these were all Yan Xiaobao needed.

Before changing clothes and removing the conical hat, Yan Xiaobao quickly washed himself in the basin. Although he had left the academy early, he still had to move quickly to the Black Market Auction House. First, it took him four hours to reach the city, and then he spent time wandering around. After seeing the black-clad figure, Yan Xiaobao walked several more hours, and now there were only two hours until the auction began.

Arriving at the auction house this time was different. The staff stood guards on the street, greeting Yan Xiaobao with a respectful bow, and as soon as he arrived, they immediately passed a message to the manager via a Memory Stone, causing the elderly man to come downstairs to greet their guest.

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"Old Lady Li," he bowed deeply and said. Yan Xiaobao nodded in response, a faint smile appearing on his face.

"Please follow this servant into the hall we have prepared for the auction. We've arranged the most beautiful balcony for you to overlook the auction; we hope it meets your satisfaction."

Yan Xiaobao raised an intrigued eyebrow. The manager couldn't see his reaction, but from under the conical hat, a melodic, youthful voice replied:

"Thank you, manager. I deeply appreciate your assistance."

The manager and all the guards felt a ripple, a shockwave reverberating through their bodies as the voice passed over them. Though gentle and friendly, the voice carried an undeniable depth of power—a testament to this expert's remarkable cultivation.

The guards did not follow Yan Xiaobao into the Black Market Auction House building. Instead, after bidding him farewell with respectful bows, they resumed their patrol duties immediately.

The manager personally escorted Yan Xiaobao up to the balcony of the main auction hall on the second floor. The balcony, spacious enough to accommodate ten people, was entirely reserved for "her." A servant was stationed outside to ensure that the expert "Li Fen" would have everything "she" desired.

Despite the arrival of numerous nobles early on, none were permitted to enter before the disguised Yan Xiaobao. Now seated within "her" private balcony, the doors were finally opened, revealing a panoramic view of Liluo. The city's upper echelon began to stream into the auction hall, reminiscent of a tribal frenzy on Black Friday.

The first floor was filled with rows of seats for minor nobles and merchants. Mercenaries and wealthier middle-class civilians were also given places. The other balconies were reserved for the city's most influential aristocracy.

The first balcony to open belonged to Lord Rong Liang. Yet, when Yan Xiaobao saw who entered it, his brows knitted tightly.

Yan Xiaobao had anticipated Rong Liang would bring along Bubu and several guards. However, among those entering the balcony were the two unmistakable figures of his children, alongside seven mysterious individuals cloaked entirely in black, who closely resembled ones Yan Xiaobao had encountered before.

Seeing these enigmatic figures, Yan Xiaobao felt a cold sweat break out and a pang of unease settle in his chest. Logically, he understood that these experts couldn't possibly recognize him as the boy he had been earlier.

Previously, Yan Xiaobao had relied solely on his cultivation base as a student. His aura was entirely his own. But now, to anyone observing, what emanated from him was the aura of Lan Feng.

Calming himself, Yan Xiaobao scrutinized the experts. Although Lan Feng's spiritual energy was naturally exuding around him, neither said a word. Instead, they synchronized their souls completely, merging their auras effortlessly.

The men in black passed their eyes over Yan Xiaobao. All they did was nod slightly, to which Yan Xiaobao responded courteously. Lord Rong Liang seemed to treat these individuals with even greater regard than he normally displayed, leading Yan Xiaobao to suspect they were affiliated with the Royal Family.

The black-cloaked figures no longer paid Yan Xiaobao any attention, and his nerves gradually settled. Instead, their focus shifted back to Lord Rong Liang, observing him cryptically. It seemed as though they were conversing, but the whispering was too far away for Yan Xiaobao to overhear.

Lord Rong Liang adopted an utterly humble and reverent posture, nodding frequently and bowing slightly in acknowledgment of their words.

Watching the City Lord exhibit such great hospitality and deference toward these shadowy figures, Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but feel a whirl of confusion. Clearly, these were individuals of extraordinary prowess, or perhaps renowned experts he had yet to identify.

Who are they? Yan Xiaobao pondered as his gaze rested on the opposite balcony. Why would Lord Rong Liang extend such respect and humility? Could they truly be from the Royal Family? The mere thought sent a jolt of surprise through him. Beneath the brim of his conical hat, his eyes widened as he examined the figures more closely. But no matter how carefully he observed, all he could see were the seven cloaked figures seated, with Lord Rong Liang standing beside them.

It made complete sense if they had been dispatched by the Royal Family, given the extraordinary value of the two martial arts skills being auctioned tonight.

As he waited for the auction to commence, Yan Xiaobao let his gaze wander to the other balconies. His eyes fell on the one beside Rong Liang's, and a faint smirk crossed his face.

This particular balcony housed five seated individuals, with five stern-looking guards standing watch behind them. Among the seated, one was a youth almost the same age as Yan Xiaobao, whom he instantly recognized as Wang Julong.

While Yan Xiaobao had anticipated seeing Wang Julong participate in such a high-stakes auction, the sight still amused him. If the Wang Family managed to purchase the skill, it would certainly drain an enormous sum of money. But if they failed, the envy it would stir might sow discord within their household's already delicate atmosphere.

This was admittedly a petty line of thought—one Yan Xiaobao himself was well aware of—but when it came to Wang Julong, his rationality often slipped away. The stalemate from their previous duel still weighed lightly on Yan Xiaobao's mind. In his past life, Yan Xiaobao had never encountered an equal. Yet in this world, Wang Julong had been the first to stand on par with him.

Acclaimed as a prodigy, Wang Julong had become a nagging thorn in Yan Xiaobao's confidence. However, he stubbornly refused to acknowledge them as equals. Soon enough, Yan Xiaobao was determined to prove who was superior—especially once he secured some powerful medicine pills through this auction.

Truthfully, Yan Xiaobao had little desire to be at the Black Market Auction House tonight. Attending was fraught with risks. With so many powerful figures present, even the slightest misstep could draw unwanted attention, potentially blowing his cover.

Unfortunately, he had no other choice. Whenever students left the academy, the student council meticulously recorded their names and departure times. Were the teachers to notice discrepancies during the expert's visit, they'd launch an investigation.

Obviously, no one could suspect that Yan Xiaobao, a mere student, was the expert in question. Yet his extraordinary combat repertoire ensured he could no longer pass as an average academy disciple.

This placed the identity of "Li Fen" in peril, leaving Yan Xiaobao with no safe way out. Thus, he resolved to fully immerse himself in his imagined persona as the distinguished expert. Lan Feng had promised

they'd escape unharmed if things escalated to conflict. Even if he couldn't secure victory alone, Lan Feng assured him that, by ceasing their aura synchronization, he'd at least have the strength to spirit them to safety.

Initially, as guests began to arrive, Yan Xiaobao had brimmed with excitement at the prospect of profit from the auction. But that exhilaration soon transformed into apprehension the moment the black-cloaked figures entered the fray. That apprehension further congealed into irritation as his gaze landed on Wang Julong, fueling a simmering frustration.

Lan Feng, overly preoccupied with maintaining the aura blend, lacked the capacity to tease Yan Xiaobao as usual. Yet even without external remarks, the irritation lingered far longer than Yan Xiaobao anticipated. At last, he heaved a deep sigh, passing the stage of frustration as he continued scanning the room, his attention drawn to the next balcony over. There, a sight unfolded that caused him to frown ever so slightly.

This balcony unmistakably belonged to the Deng Family. Though Yan Xiaobao had expected Wang Julong to show up tonight, he now wondered if the Rong twins or even Hong Kong might make an appearance. What genuinely surprised him, however, was the presence of Deng Wu.

Deng Wu was generally regarded as a moderately talented boy. Yet his personality was far from the norm for someone from a distinguished lineage. People brought to auctions of this scale were typically considered prominent within their families. Deng Wu's attendance piqued Yan Xiaobao's interest—there was clearly much more to him than he let on. Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but imagine that bringing attention to himself was precisely Deng Wu's intent.

As if he could sense Yan Xiaobao's thoughts, Deng Wu turned his head, locking eyes on the conical hat of the disguised expert. A knowing smile crept onto his face, wordlessly conveying that he could see straight through the facade of the esteemed "Li Fen."

Yan Xiaobao bit his lip, exhaling sharply. He sensed the plans beginning to unravel, yet there was no way to change course. For now, all he could do was remain seated and continue scanning the rest of the guests.

Catching sight of the audience below, Yan Xiaobao noticed Shan Ping sitting beside Wang Jingshen. For some reason, the elder brother wasn't seated within the Wang Family's allocated balcony, raising Yan Xiaobao's eyebrows in surprise.

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Chapter 233 Memory Gem

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Aside from a few young people, most of the guests seated underground were middle-aged. None of them seemed to be here to purchase or use the skills for practical purposes; they were here to witness what sort of skills these would become and how much they would fetch. This auction was making history, and everyone in Liluo City wanted to be part of it.

Yan Xiaobao watched as the large crowd trickled into a stream, leaving only one or two people to pass through the door at a time. He was starting to feel bored.

Finally, the guards closed the two large doors, and as the lights dimmed gradually, the room plunged into darkness.

This did not last long, however, as all conversations ceased, and a loud noise echoed through the hall. Multiple floating crystals lit up, casting soft light around the room, with the brightest illumination concentrated around the stage.

The manager stood at the very top of the stage himself. He clapped his hands repeatedly, a polite smile on his face, ensuring that the entire crowd's attention was drawn to him.

"Ladies and gentlemen," started the manager, his expression sincere, "today's auction features only two items, but these items far surpass anything that has ever been sold here at the Black Market Auction House."

The manager began pacing across the stage, his every word eagerly absorbed by the audience, who collectively seemed to be holding their breath.

"These items," he declared, "are as the rumors speak—two Memory Gems imbued with high-ranking skills." After saying this, the manager paused dramatically, allowing the crowd to savor the weight of his words.

"The first Memory Stone to be auctioned contains a martial arts offensive skill ranked within the King Ranking. This skill is called Qi Burst. It activates the full reserve of Qi possessed by a cultivator, releasing it in the form of either a kick or an attack."

As soon as the words "martial arts offensive skill ranked within the King Ranking" were uttered, the entire hall erupted in disbelief. However, it quickly fell silent again, as no one wished to miss the details of this attack.

Activating the entire cultivation base for an attack was immensely powerful. Far more powerful than most other attacks, it could be utilized in numerous ways. What shocked the audience even further was the potential versatility of the skill, yet when Yan Xiaobao observed their hopeful expressions, he couldn't help but chuckle quietly. He fully understood how difficult it was to activate, meaning those who purchased the skill would almost certainly not be able to use it.

"We will auction this skill first," the manager continued, "but before we do, I would like to introduce the expert to whom we owe the opportunity to attain such an elusive skill."

As the manager spoke, he raised his hand, guiding the audience's gaze to the balcony where "Li Fen" sat, her face concealed beneath a conical hat.

"Her name is Li Fen," the manager introduced, "and the mere presence of this expert in our small city demands our utmost respect and gratitude. She has granted us this opportunity, despite knowing no one in our fair city." Just as the manager was about to continue his praise of Li Fen, his speech was interrupted by a subtle laugh.

The laugh was not loud enough to be considered outright disrespectful, but it was certainly audible across the hall, prompting everyone's gaze to shift away from Yan Xiaobao and toward the source.

He sighed lightly as he looked at Deng Wu, who remained smiling, with a subtle glint of amusement in his eyes.

"Miss Deng, do you find this expert amusing?" the manager asked in a menacing tone. He feared that "Li Fen" might leave a poor impression on the Black Market Auction House because of this young master. Yet, as a mere manager, he couldn't afford to clash with the Deng Family.

"My apologies," Deng Wu said, wiping a tear from one eye, "You see, Li Fen and I are great friends. It's a bit awkward to hear such lavish praise about her."

Deng Wu's words rendered the entire room completely silent, and questioning gazes swept toward the enigmatic "Li Fen," who had been sitting still like a statue thus far.

Yan Xiaobao perfectly understood Deng Wu's intentions. Deng Wu had no desire to expose Yan Xiaobao's identity; rather, he wished to leverage the reputation of this extraordinary expert to bring some prestige and recognition to his family.

Considering that his true identity might be revealed if others uncovered his secret, Yan Xiaobao quickly decided that giving Deng Wu some face wouldn't be difficult.

"Li Fen" nodded and then stood on the balcony. "It was by sheer chance that I encountered this remarkable friendship not long ago. I'm truly delighted to see his master manage to appear today."

After saying this, Yan Xiaobao returned to his seat and turned his head toward the manager. Upon hearing Xu Yue's words, Deng Wu's smile grew steadily wider, grateful for such a display. He bowed slightly toward his friend.

"I deeply apologize, manager," Deng Wu addressed the manager again. "Please forgive me for my interruption."

Deng Wu bowed deeply before returning to his seat, entirely indifferent to the envy, astonishment, or admiration he stirred among the crowd.

Though the manager had initially been met with opposition, he was now thrilled to have acquired new information about the enigmatic "Li Fen."

"Well then," the manager said, smiling at the guests, "let us commence bidding on this middle-level King Ranking skill without further delay. The starting bid will be ten spiritual gold coins!"

The audience on the first floor could hear a collective gasp. It had to be said that spirit coins represented a massive fortune. The usual copper, silver, and gold coins were crafted from metal, whereas the elf coins were made from magic gemstones infused with the spiritual power of experts who had unlocked the Middle Dantian.

A noble family named the Deng Family, specialized in various industrial productions throughout Liluo City, had an annual income equivalent to fifty gold coins, with more than half spent on salaries and other expenses. Only about twenty spirit coins entered the national treasury each year.

Four guards entered the stage, carrying between them a transparent box and a wooden cushion, upon which lay a low-grade Memory Stone set on a red pillow inside a jade box.

When they observed the white mist swirling within the seemingly ordinary black gemstone, a greedy glint appeared in everyone's eyes. The body of the jade shell was massive wood, engraved with various magical inscriptions to protect the item.

These cases containing Memory Gems could only be opened by the manager himself, and should someone attempt to abduct him and the Memory Stone, it was evident that other attending guests would prevent it from happening.

"Fifteen spirit gold coins!" A Deng family member suddenly began the bidding, only to be immediately outbid by Lord Rong Liang.

"Twenty gold coins," came a steady voice drifting from the City Lord's balcony. The Deng Family and the Rong Family were relentlessly vying for martial arts skills, with no other families involved in the bidding. The Wang Family didn't even make a bid once.

Yan Xiaobao had been watching the entire bidding war, noticing that Lord Rong Liang was merely bidding on behalf of those mysterious, shadowy, black-clad figures.

"No one else? 250 spirit coins going once... 250 spirit gold coins going twice... sold to our own City Lord, Lord Rong Liang, for 250 spirit coins." The manager clenched his hand as the bid concluded at an extremely high price, thinking that the Deng Family alone offered 200 soul coins, which showed how interested they were in these skills, but ultimately even they had to give up.

One of the black-clad men stood up, leaving the balcony once the result was announced. Yan Xiaobao thought this man would be paying for the newly acquired skill.

Seeing that Rong Liang had purchased these skills, Yan Xiaobao felt a little conflicted. The price was truly extravagant. Should be no issue, he thought to himself, it seems as if it was purchased by the black-clad men rather than Rong Liang. Even for him, it's not my concern.

However, supposing it was indeed these shadowy figures who bought the skill, their actions did not seem as unusual as they implied. Yan Xiaobao's impression was that these people wouldn't be trifled with, convinced they were affiliated with the Royal Family. Who else could support such wealthy and respectable experts?

"We will now move onto the next skill," the manager continued while clapping his hands, prompting eight guards to enter with another transparent jade box, which contained a gemstone identical to the one previously seen.

"The skill we are displaying here is a middle-level King's skill called Spiritual Tsunami. It is a spiritual skill that requires an affinity with water and will evoke an attack just like the previous skill. It unleashes the entire spiritual cultivation base in a devastating tsunami that destroys enemies. In desperate situations, this is the skill you want!" The manager advertised while glancing around, knowing this skill would surely fetch a higher price than before.

In this city, quarrels between noble families frequently occurred, with these families wielding the highest prestige rank. For the top-ranking King's Experts, most of their time was spent on cultivation, leaving them no time to create their own skills. Hence, purchasing a skill capable of abandoning their entire cultivation base would be seen as the ultimate attack, sparing themselves the time from cultivation aspects.

"Two hundred spirit gold coins!" A Wang family member shouted before the manager had time to propose the starting price, but the manager did not feel upset, rather understanding he must strike while the iron is hot.

"Two hundred spirit gold coins have been bid, who will say two hundred and fifty spirit gold coins? The Deng Family? The Deng Family has offered two hundred and fifty spirit coins,"

"Four hundred gold coins," a calm voice came from Lord Rong Liang's balcony once again, surprising Yan Xiaobao with his expressionless face.

"Four hundred and fifty," the Deng family bid, but the bidder gritted his teeth, evidently unhappy about the high price.

"Five hundred and five spirit gold coins," Lord Rong Liang said again with a calm voice, this time silencing everyone.

"We have a proposal of five hundred and fifty spirit coins," the manager began as he noticed a lack of other bids, "five hundred and fifty spirit coins going once... five hundred and fifty spirit coins going twice... sold to Lord Rong Liang for five hundred and fifty spirit coins."

Whispers quickly spread throughout the room, filling every corner and crevice. For two skills, the City Lord's mansion had just paid a total of 710 spirit coins. With such an extreme sum of money, anyone who acquired it could retire, kick back, and live a life of luxury.

Yan Xiaobao leaned back, feeling very satisfied with the result. He was also certain that Lan Feng would be pleased with their price. Even though many could have lived long lives with this money, Lan Feng had warned Yan Xiaobao that a cultivator's life was expensive. For future pills or magical items, he'd need to spend a large amount of money.

"Sorry, Li, please follow me to the manager's office to receive your money." After the room emptied, a waiter finally appeared, and Yan Xiaobao stood up immediately, following the waiter to the third floor.

Upon entering the room, Yan Xiaobao immediately met a bowing manager, who led "Li Fen" to sit in the chair she was seated in.

The manager crafted a small golden stone, handing it to Yan Xiaobao, who looked at it curiously. Fortunately, the manager quickly began to explain.

"This is a specially crafted Memory Stone, ranked by our own king among the experts of the Ma family. It currently contains your seven hundred and ten spirit gold coins, but it hasn't been combined with Qi yet, so I suggest you do so."

"We're very grateful for you using our service, and we haven't charged any fees for handling your order. Handling this order has given us great prestige, and we've already made our money back from selling tickets to this auction. Should you wish to sell in the future, we would be honored for your esteemed master to return to us."

Yan Xiaobao turned around and noddingly left the room. Lan Feng had maintained this aura for a long time, and Yan Xiaobao knew they had reached the limit of how long two auras could merge.

Yan Xiaobao quickly left the Black Market Auction House in the summer breeze, rushing down the street before he realized something was off.

The auction had just ended. Before, the auction house was crowded with people, but as soon as Yan Xiaobao exited the door, he hadn't seen a single person, not even the guards who should have been patrolling the area.

Yan Xiaobao gritted his teeth, increasing his pace, and rushed through the town, trying to reach the inn as quickly as possible. However, the city had turned into a maze, the alleys and roads changed their appearance in front of him, and although it was now morning, the moon and stars above gave no light.

Yan Xiaobao was trapped in complete darkness, sensing how a group of experts was following him. Senior Experts.

As Yan Xiaobao turned a corner, he caught a blurry image flying past his eyes, and suddenly, three men stood in front of him, blocking his path. As Yan Xiaobao was forced to stop, four men appeared behind him.

"I can't hold back for long," Lan Feng spoke from the depths of Yan Xiaobao's Qi Cave with gritted teeth.

The previously warm summer night had become a frigid gale, piercing through Yan Xiaobao's skin as if containing icicles.

The usually indifferent expression was now alert, his eyes glimmering. Yan Xiaobao took a few steps back, ensuring all seven men were within his line of sight.

Taking a defensive stance, Yan Xiaobao observed the men before him more closely than before. Their black cloaks were made of shining material, with black inscriptions woven into them, emitting a silvery glow. These black inscriptions seemed to release some form of spiritual power, causing the air around the men to ripple slightly.

However, these men were entirely shrouded by their cloaks, not even a patch of skin visible. From their hoods, no light could be seen nor any breathing heard. Even with careful observation of these shadowy figures, Yan Xiaobao was unable to perceive the slightest hint of cultivation base from within.

Yan Xiaobao took a deep breath, forcing his body to calm down. In the depths of his Qi Deep was a majestic swirling core, containing the essence that had been refined over many years into a high-quality aura.

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Chapter 235 Star Student

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Although this Qi only possesses the quality of a six-star-ranked cultivator, it allows Yan Xiaobao to utilize it more effectively. At present, the Qi vortex spins like a hurricane, forcibly merged with Lan Feng's aura. However, it progresses slowly, and a small thread of Qi is released from the hurricane, meticulously and tightly controlled as it traverses through his meridians.

The people around Yan Xiaobao were highly alert, observing the "expert" in their midst. They had no idea what was transpiring within the Qi Cave. Despite the numerical advantage they had, they saw themselves lacking the raw power of the expert, and none wanted to make the first move.

A surge of Qi and blood propagated through Yan Xiaobao's body, gathering between his palms. A faint spark of fire sprang to life, propelled by Lan Feng's aura, causing it to grow faster than ever before.

Together with the initial Mars Fire, the white spiral belonging to Little Qiqi began to coalesce beneath Yan Xiaobao's feet, slowly affixing itself to his ankles, signaling that Velocity Flow was now ready to be unleashed.

The small flame between Yan Xiaobao's palms didn't seem to rattle the seven men dressed in black at first, as they easily discerned this as a low-level Martial Arts Skill. Unfortunately for them, the tiny spark transformed into an explosive flame within seconds. As the flame grew larger, Velocity Flow was activated, propelling Yan Xiaobao into the midst of the surrounding men.

Though this maneuver was executed in the blink of an eye, the seven men displayed no signs of shock or distress. Their minds were already refocused on pursuit.

Yan Xiaobao frowned slightly due to their lack of reaction as he sensed a creeping danger behind him. Nevertheless, their swift response fell within Yan Xiaobao's expectations. He acted accordingly, releasing the explosive flame that had reached its peak.

As the flame erupted from Yan Xiaobao's palm, a faint smile crept onto his face. He shot a burst of Qi into the flame with his released hands, letting it surpass his control. Its unleashed power drastically exceeded what could be handled in less than a sixth of a second, far outpacing the rank typically associated with a Star Student.

Even Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but be secretly impressed by himself. Although his attack wasn't strong enough to defeat any of his pursuers, it was sufficient to slow them down, forcing them to avoid the explosion and allowing Yan Xiaobao to increase the distance between himself and the ones chasing him.

If anyone were watching this pursuit, they might say Yan Xiaobao seemed carefree and fluid while trying to escape weaker experts. However, while Lan Feng fused his Qi with Yan Xiaobao's Spiritual Energy, Yan Xiaobao was still unable to fully leverage Lan Feng's cultivation base.

This triggered all the skills and techniques Yan Xiaobao had ever developed to form his cultivation base, though they still bore the oppressive aura of a Saint-ranked expert.

Though the explosion induced by Mars Fire had provided Yan Xiaobao the advantage in the chase, he noticed the gap shrinking rapidly. Swiftly, he created another Mars Fire, once again merging it with Lan Feng's affinity, igniting another explosive blast.

This second explosion barely caused any disruption to his pursuers. However, Yan Xiaobao achieved his goal. He smiled knowingly as a clone of Yan Xiaobao darted into a narrow alley.

This clone was the result of Yan Xiaobao's complete mastery of Velocity Flow. Though ineffective in combat and incapable of surviving more than one hit, it resembled Yan Xiaobao so much that even the aura carried the oppressive energy of a Saint-ranked expert.

Martial Arts Skills capable of creating such clones are exceedingly rare, yet as the invisible pursuers displayed an unwavering mindset once again, Yan Xiaobao sighed in frustration. Speechless, three cloaked, invisible men separated from their group, pursuing the clone instead.

"Damn it, those fools have really pushed me to my limits," Lan Feng roared inside Yan Xiaobao's Dantian Cave. The Phoenix appeared paler than ever, its brilliance dimmed. The Phoenix's blue eyes were heavy with exhaustion from sustaining the fused aura for an extended period.

"Hold it tight! Stop it!" Lan Feng continued to berate him, but Yan Xiaobao didn't have the time to focus on the frustrated bird. He felt these cloaked shadow men were nothing ordinary, making it imperative to escape as soon as possible.

"I said stop, you useless bastard son!" Lan Feng cursed through Yan Xiaobao, shouting, "I can't maintain this damn fusion any longer. Let me roast these bastards instead!" Although his pursuers were temporarily repelled, the verbal abuse Yan Xiaobao endured left him slightly uneasy.

Lan Feng's distress was understandable. To sustain the fusion between the two auras, Lan Feng had to constantly rotate his entire cultivation base, forcing it to envelop Yan Xiaobao's Qi vortex.

Though it might sound simple, this relied heavily on spiritual energy. Typically, spiritual energy manifests in Lan Feng's soul as a vast ocean, rather than revolving around a seven-layered vortex. Currently, Lan Feng had his focus stretched to the maximum, with spiritual energy continuously escaping in bursts, further exacerbating the already irritable Lan Feng.

Lan Feng had spent an entire day distorting his Energy Sea into an abnormal shape. This caused his once-abundant spiritual energy sea to become thin and unreliable.

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Even Yan Xiaobao's student could almost break through the Qi Spiral. But if he managed to break through the remaining energy, how could Lan Feng handle the seven people following them?

Yan Xiaobao knew very well the destructive power of Lan Feng, but to amplify such power, spiritual energy was needed. However, Lan Feng had already exhausted the majority of his spiritual energy. Yan Xiaobao hoped Lan Feng wouldn't resort to other measures, unless he was absolutely certain there was no way to escape.

Gritting his teeth, Yan Xiaobao let out a deep sigh. The people trailing behind him stirred an inexplicable sense of fear. He seemed to have nothing special, yet he was forced to face the despondent blue bird within his rapidly depleting Qi Acupoint.

Fatigue was steadily creeping through the child's body, his short legs slowing substantially. His blue eyes flickered with resilience as Yan Xiaobao pressed his last rope onto his foot before being shot out once more by a flash of light.

Unfortunately, this was the final battle Yan Xiaobao could endure. Within seconds, he found himself surrounded again by seven black-clad men. Hatred and helplessness surged in his heart as he didn't even notice the last three men rejoining the chase after taking a brief rest.

Grinding his teeth, Yan Xiaobao stared at the men, anticipating their next move. Yet, just like before, the men did nothing but surround him. An eerie silence engulfed the empty street as both sides tried to outwait each other.

"Love your father!" Lan Feng roared within Yan Xiaobao's body, releasing a surge of energy. Without any warning, the fire seemed to force Yan Xiaobao into his usual meditation state, where he took control of his consciousness instead of his physique. Fearing Lan Feng might harm his body, Yan Xiaobao's mind was filled with shock and doubt. No matter how hard he tried, he could not connect to Lan Feng's soul—all he felt was a raging flame.

Unlike usual, when Yan Xiaobao could forcefully take back control of his body, this time it was impossible. The Qi Acupoint was enveloped in scorching blue flames; though Yan Xiaobao didn't touch them, he instinctively knew they were lethal.

Shock and horror dissipated, replaced by astonishment. His uncontrollable body was buzzing with untamed energy. Such minuscule energy compressed in this tiny frame caused steam to rise from his pale skin.

Relentless energy waves distorted the air around Yan Xiaobao's body, blurring his appearance. Even with his conical cap removed, no one could see what he truly looked like.

"I warned you before," a rumbling voice reverberated from Yan Xiaobao's mouth. Only Hui Le, whose consciousness was within the Qi Cave, could hear it, feeling utterly shocked. It was Lan Feng's voice, yet even though it belonged to Lan Feng, it sounded strikingly unfamiliar when declared aloud.

Seeing through unfamiliar eyes, perceiving through unrecognized senses, and voicing words he hadn't spoken—these sensations were novel to Hui Le. He finally understood the life Lan Feng had endured over the past decade.

Suddenly, Yan Xiaobao sensed the Sea of Hell surrounding him beginning to swirl through his meridians, resembling the modified Mars Spark he had previously conjured. As he noticed the pattern, he sensed his hands aligning parallel, as if preparing to practice Mars Fire, yet he realized this time it wasn't him at all.

The first spark that formed was even larger than the maximum Yan Xiaobao himself could currently produce. The flame rapidly expanded at such a swift speed that it began to draw in the cold air lingering on the desolate street. The wind coursed through the fire, transforming it from mere flames between two palms into a radiant inferno above Lan Feng and Yan Xiaobao's heads, radiating heat akin to the sun.

"Boom!" As the fiery orb left Lan Feng's mouth, the miniature sun hovering above their heads surged toward the men facing them. Unfortunately, the men had enough time to react to the attack; they managed to dodge sideways, letting the miniature sun streak past them before exploding against the wall.

The wall, constructed of stone, turned into molten lava upon contact with the fireball, unleashing havoc within the family compound on the other side.

As the wall collapsed, a sudden warm breeze swept through, carrying the deafening sounds of the entire city and dispelling the grim silence.

Yan Xiaobao regained control of his body. Lan Feng sat within the Dantian Cave, feathers gray and appearance lacking luster.

The seven black-clad men were nowhere to be found, while a second man screamed repeatedly from within the burning family compound.

Yan Xiaobao swiftly turned to leave, deciding it was time to depart. But as he turned, he felt a hand rest on his shoulder, causing him to tense up once more.

"Seriously, you caused such a massive fire, yet still missed?" Yan Xiaobao cursed inwardly, realizing that those men had finally caught up with him.

"First of all, it's your fault for practicing such garbage skills," Lan Feng retorted. Despite his exhaustion, he didn't take kindly to the blame. "Also, look at that handsome boy. I suspect he's the one stirring up trouble here." With that, Lan Feng decided to go back to sleep, leaving Yan Xiaobao somewhat caught off guard.

"We better get out of here," a familiar voice whispered near Yan Xiaobao's ear. The white-haired boy was stunned to see Deng Wu suddenly appear out of nowhere. "I live next door," Deng Wu explained, currently spreading suspicion across Yan Xiaobao's face.

For once, the carefree expression on Deng Wu's face was replaced by a serious one. He dragged his classmate through several alleys before entering a rear door in a stone wall, leading to a vast family compound that could easily rival the City Lord's estate.

"Wait here," Deng Wu murmured before approaching a few patrolling guards. Out of hearing range, Yan Xiaobao couldn't eavesdrop on their conversation. However, when the guards glanced at him crouched on the ground, their expressions of shock and disbelief mirrored their subtle recalls of the attire he wore during the auction. After a while, the guards disappeared abruptly and Deng Wu returned.

"You'll stay in my courtyard tonight. On the way back to the academy, we'll sort out accommodations at any inn tomorrow. For now, this is the safest place for you." With that, Deng Wu didn't wait for a reply before dragging the little boy by hand toward his courtyard.

"What did you just say?!" Deng Zengying was shocked to see two guards kneeling before him on the floor.

"The young master brought back the revered expert that the entire city is abuzz about, and he instructed no one to disturb them tonight while they're in his courtyard," the guard continued, his trembling voice betraying his fear of the clan leader's reaction.

Contrary to expectations, Deng Zengying wasn't angry about the matter. Instead, he laughed heartily and asked the guards to describe the expert they had seen. Upon hearing about the conical hat and the blue attire, the clan leader's mood became euphoric. His earlier claim of knowing the expert seemed to be authentic. A great opportunity had conveniently landed in his lap.

"Why would you sell two high-tier skills?" Deng Wu asked with curiosity after bringing Yan Xiaobao back to his courtyard. He had even personally prepared a room for his guest, instead of delegating the task to his servants.

"These skills are useless," Yan Xiaobao shrugged. "They're customized for the creators, and only those without practical use could figure out how to unlock them."

Yan Xiaobao could have lied, but he felt that Deng Wu's gratitude toward his family would soon be repaid. Out of respect, Yan Xiaobao was sure to reciprocate it.

Hearing that the skills were useless, a hint of calmness appeared in Deng Wu's eyes. He nodded lightly before his face fell into an expression of sorrow.

"You scoundrel! You made my father-in-law pay such an enormous price for something worthless?" he bellowed, causing Xu Yue to burst into laughter, finally feeling a sense of relaxation after the day's turmoil.

"He didn't buy them," Yan Xiaobao chuckled softly. "He brought along some black-clad figures who purchased them. They're also the ones who stirred up such chaos tonight," Yan Xiaobao explained.

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Chapter 237 Pretending to Be Innocent

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"I might deceive myself, but I'm certain it's you." Deng Wu said with a smile, causing Yan Xiaobao to shrug his shoulders and feign innocence.

"Me? No way! How could someone as insignificant as me create such destruction?" Deng Wu didn't reply directly but merely chuckled, then kicked Yan Xiaobao out of the room.

"Get some proper sleep. I'm glad you didn't blow up my house. If you had, I would've mounted your head on a silver platter for the Black Specter to feast on!"

As Yan Xiaobao left the room and walked off on his own, he smiled, but a fleeting thought struck him midway, turning his smile into a mischievous smirk devoid of good intentions.

Previously, it was clear that the family attacked by fire had lost a significant amount of valuable belongings. However, these people didn't just lose their possessions; they also lost their home and their opportunity to rebuild. In the coming days, other families would bid for the land, forcing this once-renowned family to leave Liluo City and eventually become a minor aristocracy.

For that family, it was undoubtedly devastating news. Yet, as soon as Yan Xiaobao heard it belonged to Shan Ping, he felt no sympathy at all. Instead, he seemed to gain sudden clarity, as if he had experienced a satori.

In a world where lives could be swept away at any moment, insurance should spark significant interest among people. Perhaps personal insurance to handle unforeseen accidents, or even household insurance to safeguard one's family in times of disasters like Lan Feng's fire attack.

As Yan Xiaobao pondered deeper, he couldn't help but feel pleased and satisfied with this sudden idea. He vowed that once Lan Feng awakened, the two of them needed to have a thorough discussion on the matter.

Sitting on his bed, Yan Xiaobao felt elated. Yet despite his current cheerful thought, a new sense of determination arose within him. Today marked the first time he encountered genuine danger, but what he had endured was not something he could resolve on his own.

He had survived today thanks to Lan Feng expending the spiritual power he had spent a decade perfecting. Although Lan Feng still had the potential to refine more spiritual power, it would be a long time before he could once again save Yan Xiaobao from peril.

Yan Xiaobao needed power. Finally grasping the magnitude of the strength he required, he quickly grabbed his golden memory stone, stuffed it into his pocket, and breathed a deep sigh.

Tonight would not be a night for sleep but rather the beginning of arduous and slow cultivation. By tomorrow, he would be able to purchase his first pill.

Far away on a mountain built of snow and ice sat a young man, approximately twenty years old, holding a cup of wine in his hand. He unknowingly turned around to gaze into the distance.

In front of him was a memory stone, within which lay the information he had previously received. It recorded details of a battle that occurred in Liluo City.

"Come back quickly," the young man finally said. "Return and grant me your skills, so I can see if it's truly him."

The first rays of sunlight shone through the window as the morning birds began singing in the sky, while Yan Xiaobao slowly stretched his weary body. After an entire night spent cultivating, his childish face now radiated an unprecedented brightness, adorned with a satisfied smile.

The refinement of Qi brought rejuvenation, allowing the exhausted Lan Feng within Yan Xiaobao's Qi Cave to awaken hours before sunrise.

One reason Yan Xiaobao chose to cultivate instead of sleep was the lingering worry in his heart. However, as the bird awoke, those concerns transformed into frustration.

"You stupid bird, why on earth did you try to handle those esteemed experts with Fire Spark?" Yan Xiaobao bellowed at the groggy, drowsy bird, but the only response was an incomprehensible, murky sound, leaving Yan Xiaobao clueless.

The fact that Lan Feng didn't erupt in anger could only be attributed to the shared apprehension within their intertwined souls, which brought a faint smile to Lan Feng's pale lips and a sense of warmth that spread through Phoenix's body. It had been far too long since he'd felt someone else worry for him.

The sunlight gradually rose, and the morning rays bathed the boy and the bird sitting on the guest bed. As they held the golden memory stone in their hands, the quiet joy of their shared silence enveloped them. Lan Feng slowly absorbed a trace of Qi spirit's color into his skin.

By the time Lan Feng finally succeeded in assimilating Qi Feng into his being, the sun had climbed high in the sky, and Yan Xiaobao could sense the activity of servants in the grand family estate. He could even hear faint sounds coming from Deng Wu's room.

Shu Yue exhaled a breath of relief, stretching his body and slowly feeling the chill of the wooden floor beneath his feet. He cozied up on the luxurious and soft bed.

The sound of a door opening alerted Yan Xiaobao to his master's approaching footsteps. As he grabbed his conical hat, the white-haired boy quickly dressed himself. Though Deng Wu knew Yan Xiaobao's secret, it didn't grant Yan Xiaobao the freedom to relax his guard.

"Wake up, my dear friend," Deng Wu's voice echoed from outside, followed by a gentle knock. Moments later, the door handle slightly turned downward, and the heavy wooden door creaked open, allowing the young man to enter, accompanied by a group of servants carrying trays of various foods.

Lan Feng, currently unable to merge the two auras, could only conceal his Beastman aura, causing the two servants watching the supposed expert to wonder why "she" suddenly appeared so robust.

Before giving them a chance to ask any questions, Deng Wu grabbed food and led the servants out the door once more. After finishing his task, he placed the food on the table, picked up the conical hat, and positioned it on his own head.

Chapter 238 Faking Innocence_2

"Interesting design," he commented as he chose a few grapes and began tossing them in the air, catching them with his mouth.

"You can have it when I return. Consider it a memento of helping an extreme expert," Yan Xiaobao picked up a piece of bread, smiled cheerfully, and responded with a laugh.

A mysterious smile appeared on Yan Xiaobao's face, but Deng Wu found it inscrutable. It was evident this little child was immensely pleased with himself.

During the night-long cultivation session, Yan Xiaobao discovered that his ranking had increased to the Seven-Star Student level due to his previous battle, where he had pushed his Qi to the limit, causing his body to greedily absorb and enhance the essence of the world.

Not only had his rank improved, but his control over Mars Fire had also reached a higher level due to Lan Feng's disruptions during the night. Apparently, some elements belonging to Lan Feng had become entwined with Yan Xiaobao's soul during their merging. Their souls were now intricately interwoven, even more tightly than through a Soul Contract.

The imprints left on Yan Xiaobao's soul contained Lan Feng's elemental affinity. Although Yan Xiaobao could not entirely harness it, this foreign affinity allowed him to amplify the flames of Mars Fire, doubling its intensity compared to the previous day. As for the opposing affinity, Yan Xiaobao couldn't detect it yet, as he required further mimicry of Martial Arts Skills to do so.

"We need to push forward," Deng Wu sighed, breaking the silence. "Once he wakes up, my old lord will likely show you respect." As he said this, Deng Wu smiled slyly, his gaze wandering casually across the small boy in front of him, someone mature beyond their years.

When he looked at the child before him, Deng Wu's body shivered slightly. Yan Xiaobao appeared innocent, as one might expect from such a young boy. However, deep within his mind, everything was shrouded in a veil of cunning, carefully calculated plans. Deng Wu couldn't shake the feeling that this seemingly innocent child would usher in disaster.

Yan Xiaobao paid no attention to Deng Wu's glaring look, instead finishing a few bites of bread before retrieving his cone-shaped hat and using it to shield his face from the scorching sun once again. He seemed to be enveloped in an air of mystery once more.

"We need to stop by my inn," Yan Xiaobao calmly added as he stood up and followed Deng Wu out of the courtyard, somehow slipping unnoticed past the entrance to their little alley from the previous night.

Deng Wu picked up the small sky-blue statue he had carried before. When he inserted a strand of Qi into it, a pulse of energy spread through the surrounding area, momentarily startling Yan Xiaobao.

"Don't worry," Deng Wu murmured, frowning at the statue as though trying to listen to a faint hum. His posture froze at the scene for a few minutes before his youthful face relaxed.

"No one is observing us right now, so you can take off your hat." With that statement, Deng Wu tapped the Memory Stone embedded in his bracelet, and a long black cloak materialized from thin air.

Yan Xiaobao felt uneasy when he saw the black cloak but, upon closer inspection, realized it was entirely different from the cloaks of the seven unknown men from the night before.

Once Yan Xiaobao accepted the cloak, he tossed his hat back at Deng Wu. "Your memento," he said before wrapping himself in the cloak, giving the previously distinguished expert the appearance of a girlfriend wearing her boyfriend's clothes.

The sight made Deng Wu chuckle softly, giving Yan Xiaobao the vague impression that he always intended to make fun of him. Rather than argue with Deng Wu and his apparent lunacy, Yan Xiaobao sighed deeply, letting his frustration escape before heading out to the main street, determined to retrieve something from the inn he had left behind the previous day.

The walk through the bustling city didn't seem to insult Deng Wu in any way, who busied himself observing the vibrant morning buzz of the town. As a young lord, he rarely ventured onto the streets, so seeing bakers preparing for their day, open market stalls, and mercenaries grabbing breakfast before leaving to battle Magical Creatures was a refreshing change of pace. The city's energy came from those busily laboring at the start of their day.

Thinking back to his school days, Deng Wu remembered returning to this crowded town every morning while rushing to university without noticing the lively streets. Now, he was trailing behind Yan Xiaobao, drawn along with him.

At the inn, Yan Xiaobao still possessed the Memory Stone Key and had a few hours before he needed to check out. Quick as a flash, he darted downstairs and checked out, ensuring he donned the black cloak before doing so.

Impatience started nagging at Yan Xiaobao, making him anxious to return to the academy as swiftly as possible. If they hurried, he would have time to reach the building where the pills were sold.

"A carriage is waiting for us outside the city gates," Deng Wu said excitedly, glancing around. "I have some things to discuss with you, but this isn't the place." He continued speaking while Yan Xiaobao subtly nodded. He, too, had matters to discuss with Deng Wu.

The two young men slowly approached the city gates, and as Deng Wu had mentioned, a carriage awaited them, rivaling the grandeur of the Rong Family's transport.

The Demon Beast in front of the carriage was truly peculiar. Its body resembled that of a python, but its hind legs belonged to a horse. Its forelegs were the talons of an eagle-like creature, its tail resembled that of a dragon, and its head took on the shape of a feline with two long fangs protruding from its upper lips and twin pointed horns projecting from its forehead.

"Say hello to Xiao Mao," Deng Wu said with a grin. "She's my personal beast. If I don't want anyone else involved, she acts as a mobile fortress and pulls the carriage effortlessly."

Yan Xiaobao could only nod at this revelation. It seemed most Magical Creatures he encountered had practical uses, but none of them approached the intelligence of Lan Feng. In fact, they weren't even close to his level.

Inside the carriage, Deng Wu and Yan Xiaobao sat facing each other, neither initiating conversation. Left to reflect in solitude, Deng Wu brought out the small sky-blue statue again, while Lan Feng immersed himself deeply in refining strands of spiritual energy.

"So," Deng Wu finally said, "you stirred up quite a commotion last night. Do you think the benefits were worth it?"

Yan Xiaobao observed the black-haired youth before him for a moment before slowly nodding. "I didn't intend to cause trouble yesterday, but some people felt they could bully me."

With that said, Yan Xiaobao's lips remained sealed, and Deng Wu did not press further. It seemed the tension of the incident was already looming overhead, given the destruction it had caused.

Unfortunately, Deng Wu wasn't aware of those capable of threatening a Holy Beast's eruption.

What Deng Wu didn't realize was that Lan Feng could only employ the techniques Yan Xiaobao had cultivated. Unfortunately, the seven black-robed men had caused Lan Feng to lose his poise and become quite aggressive, seeking to annihilate them completely.

"My guess is, you don't have any other advanced skills at your disposal," Deng Wu joked, subtly observing whether Yan Xiaobao would react with panic, embarrassment, or indifference.

Deng Wu himself didn't fault Yan Xiaobao for keeping secrets. Having secrets was everyone's right, especially in a dangerous world like theirs. Deng Wu had his own share of secrets, none of them trivial. Yet, while Deng Wu promised not to reveal Yan Xiaobao's secrets to anyone, Yan Xiaobao might request one of Deng Wu's secrets in turn, evening the exchange. But this was never mentioned, further solidifying Deng Wu's favorable impression of the young boy.

Faced with Deng Wu's question, Yan Xiaobao merely shrugged nonchalantly. At that moment, he wasn't lying—he truly hadn't yet realized any other advanced skills. Since Lan Feng was a secret, it was evident he had no intention of revealing his feathered companion or its capabilities.

"If you encounter other advanced skills in the future, come find me. The Deng family will help you and ensure you won't be bullied again," Deng Wu said with a smile while glancing at Yan Xiaobao's somewhat disheveled appearance.

"I don't need to sell too many things," Yan Xiaobao replied with a smile. "I need some quick cash to secure cultivation resources, and for now, I should have enough time to provide for them."

Deng Wu's eyebrows lifted upon hearing this statement. Selling such rare skills for the sake of cultivation resources was something a child would only consider. Pills could be crafted by Alchemists,

and while Alchemists were seldom seen, they weren't as rare as advanced skills. Skills often took years of effort to master, even more advanced than the rarest pills.

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Chapter 239 Useless Skills

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"You're not mistaken," Yan Xiaobao finally said after noticing the stunned expression on Deng Wu's face. Deng Wu prided himself on being a master of controlling his emotions, yet with Yan Xiaobao, he let his typically meticulous demeanor relax slightly—and his poker face crumbled instantly.

"The skills I'm selling are useless, remember? They are tailor-made for creators, so even if you want to acquire them, they'll be of no benefit to you. By the time you're ready to learn, you'll already have far more powerful attack-based capabilities."

A rush of surprise rose within Deng Wu's chest, soon giving way to a faint sense of admiration. Up to now, Yan Xiaobao had shown remarkable potential to become a cunning individual capable of using his abilities and the gifts bestowed by God outside conventional norms. However, to think he deliberately staged such a grand auction merely to sell useless skills—it was still a revelation too shocking for words.

"Hey, hold on a minute," Deng Wu's surprise and admiration suddenly turned into a touch of indignation. "Rong Xiang and Rong Ming are your friends! How could you force their family to spend so much money—on not just one, but two useless skills?"

Yan Xiaobao was surprised by how much Deng Wu seemed to care, but his response remained remarkably calm as he said, "Rong Liang wasn't the one who bought them—it was some men in black cloaks. Later, they were the same ones who decided to bully me. Does it seem unreasonable to make them pay a huge sum as compensation for putting me through a traumatic experience?"

The blue-eyed boy in front of Deng Wu looked so innocent as he claimed the evening's events had been painful for him. However, to Deng Wu, it was glaringly obvious that Yan Xiaobao had zero qualms about selling those highly-ranked yet useless skills to the families of his friends. Not to mention, the incident that should've left Yan Xiaobao wounded had actually resulted in him uprooting an aristocratic family from Liluo City.

Noticing Deng Wu's dissatisfaction with his reply, Yan Xiaobao let out a heavy sigh, deciding it was time to turn his focus to how he could help his new friend grow in this world.

"There's something I'd like to share," Yan Xiaobao said slowly. "Does your family primarily focus on producing wood, grain, and various other agricultural goods?"

The phrase "share with you" immediately piqued Deng Wu's interest. Up to this point, everything that had come from Yan Xiaobao seemed to glitter with gold, so the likelihood his family might benefit was quite high.

"Do you have anything called a water mill in Liluo City?" Yan Xiaobao asked with a smile. He already knew most common machines from the Old World did not exist in this new realm. Even though most energy was derived from spiritual energy or magic cores, there was still ample room for improvement.

"What's a water mill?" Deng Wu frowned as he asked. While it was clearly a new term, it didn't seem to carry the allure of advanced martial arts skills.

"Imagine a steady stream of water helping to process wood for production. You wouldn't need large amounts of manpower or rely on spiritual energy, nor would you need to cultivate Qi through talent." Yan Xiaobao spoke like a salesman, fully aware that convincing Deng Wu of the mill's utility would be the trickiest part.

"Water powering this?" The idea sounded almost too good to be true to Deng Wu. If it were indeed possible, then the Deng Family could substantially increase their income and even expand into Sun Kingdom's other major cities.

"Of course, you'll still need some workers for manual tasks, but most of the labor will be powered by the process itself. I'll attempt to draw up a blueprint for you," Yan Xiaobao said, tentatively accepting the piece of paper and pen Deng Wu had just handed to him.

One advantage of traveling by carriage in this world was that, despite their astonishing speed, the carriage never felt like it was moving. It seemed as though Yan Xiaobao were sitting inside a motionless house. During these few minutes, he started drafting a blueprint for a mechanized framework, while Deng Wu watched intently, growing increasingly amazed as the meeting stretched on.

Midway through their return to the academy, Yan Xiaobao had finished sketching out a set of blueprints. Deng Wu was informed that the mechanisms Yan Xiaobao had designed could be modified to help manufacture paper rolls, grind wheat, produce wood, and even weave textiles. These water-powered mills were destined to usher in a new era for the Deng Family.

During the remainder of their carriage ride back to the academy, as the two boys discussed the concept of water mills, Deng Wu's respect for Yan Xiaobao grew steadily. He couldn't begin to fathom what was going on inside the mind of this young boy to allow him to conceive such ideas.

Yan Xiaobao's decision was straightforward. He would take a 5% share of revenue from the water mill factories but, in return, he promised to help create more mechanisms to further enhance the Deng Family's income.

Xu Yue's face lit up with a smile, the laughter of triumph dancing in her eyes. Yan Xiaobao cared for his friends and wanted to help them. However, Yan Xiaobao came from a world where personal capability outweighed the importance of one's family background.

Lord Rong Liang himself truly didn't have the money to waste so frivolously on two skills, but even if he did, Yan Xiaobao wouldn't pity him for spending more. Resisting temptation was something everyone needed to learn.

On the other hand, Yan Xiaobao deeply appreciated Rong Ming, Rong Xing, Gao Yan, Ma Kong, and even Deng Wu. And since Deng Wu had previously begun to show distrust, now was the perfect time for Yan Xiaobao to prove just how serious he was.

Chapter 240 Useless Skills_2

Yan Xiaobao had studied ancient cultures across the world and discovered many methods to improve society. However, back when Yan Xiaobao was attending university every day, he could never have expected his knowledge would be used to change a completely different world.

"He's over there." A cold voice pierced through the morning air, as if summer had already ended.

Yan Xiaobao and Deng Wu had left the carriage some time ago, but the two of them lingered at the foot of the mountain, discussing water mills and their uses.

This concept of a water mill could be traced back thousands of years in Yan Xiaobao's early world. Yet no one ever needed to build such a thing, since leaders and serfs relied on their own strength and cultivation to complete tasks.

They had already spent twice the time climbing the stairs, and even when they reached the top, they were deeply engrossed in their conversation and reviewing blueprints.

A sharp voice sliced through their peaceful state of mind like a knife, pulling them out of their own world and dragging them back to reality.

Rong Xing stood before Gao Yan, Rong Ming, and Ma Gang. Her usually sweet and smiling face had darkened like a storm cloud, ready to unleash a flurry of unmatched fury. Her arms were crossed over her chest, her fingers incessantly drumming against her opposite arm, as if urging the two novices to explain themselves.

Ma Gang's face still held its usual cheerful smile, as if trying to act like the current situation had nothing to do with him. His grin was slightly wider than normal, and laughter sparkled in his eyes. Clearly, this calm and opportunistic young master was enjoying watching Rong Xing prepare to scold the pair.

Rong Ming seemed somewhat anxious, his face devoid of its usual smile. Instead, he frowned, gesturing randomly with his arms—gestures that Yan Xiaobao and Deng Wu couldn't decipher.

Gao Yan was the only one who acted as though nothing had changed. He was tired, yawning lazily, clearly unhappy about how the Rong twins had forced him out of bed that morning.

As for why Rong Xing was so angry, no one present had any idea.

"Deng Wu!" Rong Xing's voice was cold and bore the weight of visible pain on her face. "I can tolerate you casually entertaining random women. I truly don't care whether those women are highly skilled experts. Honestly, if you find other women to share your affections, I think that's wonderful. But I absolutely forbid you from bringing back Yan Xiaobao!"

The day before, Rong Xing had visited, but no matter how many calls she made or how many knocks she gave on the courtyard gate, no one answered. Rong Xing felt the heavy anxiety weighing on her heart, as

Xu Yue had mentioned nothing about her departure that day. The only other possibility she could think of involved the Wang Family.

Suddenly, her youthful mind became overwhelmed with naive memories of suffering punishment for her advanced martial arts skills. Images of being executed for embarrassing their talented son flooded her thoughts. Generally speaking, Rong Xing envisioned all kinds of terrible scenarios in her mind, and she hurried to gather her friends, only to discover Deng Wu was also missing.

Seeing the alarmed expression on Rong Xing's face, Gao Yan had no choice but to speak to his friends, learning that Yan Xiaobao had already been seen in Liluo City.

Rong Xing was filled with concern and indignation. After all, he was only a ten-year-old child. He shouldn't personally travel to Liluo City; the Rong twins should have intervened instead.

Early that morning, Rong Xing decided to wait for Yan Xiaobao to return and reprimand him. But they also heard rumors about Deng Wu and an unfamiliar expert—now Deng Wu and Yan Xiaobao had both arrived, deeply engaged in a conversation, completely oblivious to their waiting friends.

Rong Xing's hostility toward Yan Xiaobao immediately shifted onto Deng Wu. It was evident that Deng Wu had tricked the naive young Yan Xiaobao into joining him on the journey to Liluo City.

"Rong Xing, my heart! My lifeblood! Do I look like a cheating husband?" Deng Wu said with a distraught expression as he knelt before the furious woman. "I was only accompanying Yan Xiaobao because I assumed he would enjoy a few days in a place better than the academy." Deng Wu added arrogantly, "We were just discussing some business matters, as he seemed capable of helping me solve a problem I don't fully understand."

Rong Xing's face displayed a tortured expression, her fists trembling. Deng Wu smiled broadly, and Rong Xing soon felt her anger dissipate into the air. "Well, little brother Yan Xiaobao has returned safely," Rong Xing said, turning to head toward the nearest dining hall so she and the others could have breakfast. After all, they had already been waiting since before sunrise.

"I heard the Shan Clan finally left Liluo City," Gao Yan remarked during breakfast. "One of my friends works as a servant at home, and she said that after the mysterious fire, all the servants were dismissed."

But she managed to overhear the master and the young master talking about finding a larger city to take over."

"That's not going to make much of a difference for them," Deng Wu commented with a knowing smile. "It seems that many families are competing to purchase properties, wanting to expand. We're also one of them."

"They should have had insurance," Yan Xiaobao sighed, drawing curious glances from the others. Yan Xiaobao happily ate a double breakfast, and as he focused on his grilled fish and vegetable soup, he didn't notice the peculiar expressions in their eyes. However, the sudden quietness felt unsettling, prompting him to look up and return their strange stares.