

Medical 721

Chapter 721: Ice Storm Sword

...

Yan Xiaobao's gaze was drawn to a small pile of weapons scattered across the floor. Some were rusty, while others were broken, but his attention locked onto a seemingly ordinary rusty sword. Staring at the sword, Yan Xiaobao was overwhelmed by a sudden memory, a flashback to how he once lived a different life years ago. He had stepped into a shop and found the Phoenix hairpin there. As he observed this rusty, ancient sword, the feeling in his chest grew faint, yet it transported him back to the day he first encountered Lan Feng's hairpin. Something inside him silently screamed: if he didn't claim this sword now, he'd regret it for the rest of his life. Without hesitation, he reached out and picked up the sword from the pile as Ma Yun watched in shock. Their family considered these weapons nothing but scrap metal—valuable only because some contained rare metals, jewels, or inscriptions worth repurposing. Yet no attempt had been made to restore them to usable weapons. Ma Yun, surprised that Yan Xiaobao chose this dilapidated sword over the pristine ones on the racks, remained silent, knowing deep down that Xiaobao never acted without reason.

Yan Xiaobao felt an intense, unexplainable pull toward the sword. Though it appeared to have remained neglected in this pile for countless years, left to rust, there was still something drawing him significantly closer to it. As if answering his touch, a vibration hummed from within the weapon. The sword emitted faint energy ripples outward, while Xiaobao felt an opposing pull in his own Dantian. The pull was so strong, it consumed all the energy ripples from the sword entirely. Once traveling freely through his body, the energy was refined into golden martial power as it settled into his Upper Dantian. While the initial vibrations were weak, both the strength of the humming and the intensity of the ripples steadily grew. Before long, the entire storage room was immersed in the resonating hum, so overpowering that Ma Kong was forced to cover his ears and shut his eyes.

The humming caused the sword in Yan Xiaobao's hand to tremble. Its vibrations seemed to harmonize with the humming, leading to flakes of rust peeling off its surface. However, this didn't completely restore the sword nor make it usable again. The hum grew louder and louder until it reached a deafening pitch, even making the racks in the vault shake from the sheer impact of the waves, but then, without warning, all the sound ceased. The sword fell silent, its energy pulse vanishing simultaneously. As the weapon quieted down, so did Yan Xiaobao's body. The abrupt change left him speechless; his mouth hung open in awe as he stared at the weapon in his hand, unsure of what to say or do.

Watching him, Ma Kong slowly lowered his hands from his ears and opened his eyes. He grew increasingly unsettled by his friend's extraordinary reaction to the sword. It wasn't the concern that Xiaobao might be taking something invaluable from his family; rather, it was the disquieting idea of how Xiaobao seemed to resonate profoundly with the weapon itself. How was this even possible? A sword

was simply a tool—lifeless, devoid of feelings—but this particular one struck him as entirely different. Shaking his head, Ma Kong decided to stop dwelling on it. He'd leave it to Yan Xiaobao to handle; this was far beyond anything he could make sense of.

Once the humming faded, the strange sensation of energy draining from the sword subsided. Yan Xiaobao focused on the rusty weapon in his hand. He ran his fingers hesitantly across its surface, which was nearly corroded to the point of ruin. His hand instinctively reached toward the hilt, where rusty flakes crumbled beneath his touch. Amid the rust, he discovered faint markings carved into the metallic surface. After painstaking effort and patience, he finally deciphered the letters: Ice Storm Sword.

The blade was still marred with rust. Gazing at the battered sword, Yan Xiaobao wondered if it could somehow be restored. He resolved to try, no matter how slim the chances appeared. The pulsating waves of power emanating from the sword confirmed to him that it was anything but ordinary. Despite its decrepit appearance, Xiaobao refused to underestimate its strength. There had to be a way to rescue the weapon's true essence from within.

Clearing his throat, Yan Xiaobao finally broke the silence, voicing what was already apparent. "I'll take this sword. I hope you don't feel like I'm exploiting your family. If you want me to pay for it, I'd happily do so, but if you'd prefer not to get involved—" he paused, a trace of worry flickering on his face as he continued—"I'd completely understand." Although he desperately wanted to claim the sword, he resolved not to quarrel with the Ma family over it. After all, the weapon rightfully belonged to them.

Shaking his head, Ma Kong managed a smile toward his good friend. "We've had this sword for countless years. It was tossed into a pile to be forgotten, too damaged to be of any use. It would eventually have been scrapped and recycled into something else. If the sword reacts this way for you, then obviously I wouldn't stand between it and the one it truly desires," he said. Though perplexed, Ma Kong couldn't shake the feeling that the sword held something almost like a soul within it. He chose not to dwell on the thought too much, terrified that he might lose his sanity pursuing such a peculiar possibility. What kind of weapon could this be if it truly had a soul of its own? A soul-linked weapon... Was such a thing even possible?

Chapter 722: Ice Storm Sword_2

Ma Kong led the treasury and brought Yan Xiaobao back to the office they had left earlier. When they opened the door, the smiling Ma Clan Leader was standing inside. "I almost thought you got lost," he joked while looking at the two young men, but his eyebrows suddenly furrowed when his eyes fell on the sword in Yan Xiaobao's hand.

The sword was about one and a half meters long. Its hilt was a simple cross shape, and it was an extremely ordinary sword without any gemstones or core embedded within. Staring at the rusted,

mundane blade, the clan leader shook his head, unable to comprehend the young man's choice. "Don't disgrace us," he said sternly. "I intended to gift you a great weapon, not some nearly worthless scrap. You can choose any weapon you like. Please don't hold back; let us return to the treasury." He added, "If word gets out that we gifted such a worn-out sword, I will surely lose face!"

"Take me to anyone who dares speak ill, and I'll make them bite their tongues," Yan Xiaobao vowed. "This weapon is what I hope for. It is all I desire. Please allow me to keep it." Realizing Yan Xiaobao was not joking, Ma Kong's father frowned, but seeing the earnest excitement on the young man's face, he was at a loss for words. "Hmph. It seems you're easily pleased," he remarked, and with his approval, Yan Xiaobao bowed deeply to him, a brilliant smile spreading across his face. "Run along," the clan leader chuckled. "When boys get a new toy, they're often eager to play with it. I won't hold you here any longer. If you change your mind, come see me, and I'll make sure you get a decent weapon," he said with a dismissive wave, a shameless grin on his face. With a sigh, Yan Xiaobao bowed once more before leaving the office, then hurried back to his mansion. As the clan leader predicted, he was indeed eager to play with his new toy.

Normally, Yan Xiaobao would return to his mansion, but today he was in such a rush that he immediately hailed a carriage to speed up his journey. Paying the fare and offering a handsome tip, the young man practically leaped out of the carriage upon arrival. He sprinted until he reached the park behind the mansion.

The park was vast, and though there were gardeners and servants present in the garden, finding a completely secluded spot was not easy. He eventually found such a place—a small grove surrounded by massive trees that blocked sunlight. Soft grass grew between the trees, and large stones were scattered here and there.

Yan Xiaobao sat on one of the large stones, crossed his legs, and carefully placed the sword on his lap, staring at it with shining eyes. He hadn't expected anything specific but found himself filled with expectation regardless. Yet, disappointment quickly set in. The mysterious buzzing sound did not return, nor did waves of energy rush forth as they had before. The internal feeling, the sense that he needed this sword, did not re-emerge. In all, the only things present were the chirping of birds in the sky and a few rays of sunlight filtering through the treetops.

As he gazed at the sword on his lap, Yan Xiaobao felt a pang of disappointment, but he refused to give up. From his storage stone, he retrieved tools he had previously used to clean daggers, intending this time to clean the sword. Sitting atop the stone, he methodically set oil, cloth, and sharpening tools beside him and began carefully moistening the cloth with oil before gently wiping down the sword.

Large flaky shards of rust started falling from the blade, and the metal underneath quickly began revealing itself to the young man's patient eyes. Some rust was deeply embedded in the weapon and impossible to remove, while other parts came off easily. The sword hidden beneath was exceedingly fragile, its metal visibly corroded and eroded by rust.

An hour passed slowly, and Yan Xiaobao did not rush as he methodically restored the sword. However, even after several hours, the rust on the metal could not be entirely removed. Disappointment lingered in his azure eyes as he realized it was impossible to fully strip away the decay from the blade.

"Lan Feng," he called out as his consciousness entered his Lower Dantian, focusing on the Phoenix sitting in its usual position. The bird immediately stopped cultivating and turned its gaze toward the young man approaching.

"I'm not skilled with weapons. If I need to fight, I always rely on my beak and claws," it warned Yan Xiaobao as he neared. "But while I'm no expert with weapons, I suggest you visit a spiritual blacksmith. They are specialists in crafting armor and swords and experts in Metal Affinity. If anyone knows how to restore your sword, it's them."

Upon hearing this, Yan Xiaobao was so delighted that he almost wanted to kiss the Phoenix, but the bird only let out a dismissive hum, sensing the juvenile happiness emanating from the young man's spirit. It then closed its eyes once more, fully refocusing on cultivating more of Wu Wei. Lan Feng rarely spoke; most of its time was spent strengthening itself bit by bit to ensure that one day it would be strong enough to confront the bird it had battled long ago, before being sealed into the blue Phoenix hairpin and having its power locked away by An Hee. "So I need to find a spiritual blacksmith," Yan Xiaobao muttered to himself as he looked at the damaged weapon resting on his knees. A surge of excitement and hope filled him. Before leaving the park, he carefully stored the sword in his Memory Stone. Strolling through the mansion, he eventually reached the bustling streets outside, where guards stationed by the mansion greeted him. Nodding in acknowledgment, Yan Xiaobao dashed toward the city center in search of the market. His goal was to find the shop and forge belonging to a spiritual blacksmith.

As he stepped into the shopping district, Yan Xiaobao noticed numerous weapon stores displaying enticing wares in their windows to lure customers inside. Surveying the area, he chose a shop at random and entered to inquire about the city's most skilled spiritual blacksmith. Pushing open the door, he stepped into a small shop. The moment he entered the dim room, the scent of fresh leather assailed his nostrils. A bell rang to announce his arrival, and as he turned toward the counter, a young woman appeared from behind it. She regarded Yan Xiaobao with a welcoming smile, her gentle face radiating expectation.

"I'm looking for a spiritual blacksmith," Yan Xiaobao said, wasting no time. "Can you tell me the name and location of the best forge in town?" he asked quickly, and the woman's smile froze slightly at the question. "Our forge is highly skilled," she said with a faintly wounded expression. "The blacksmith is experienced and talented. I'm certain he can accommodate your request."

Realizing he had inadvertently offended the young woman, Yan Xiaobao retrieved a small pouch of coins from his storage stone. Inside were copper, silver, and gold coins. He fished out three gold coins and placed them on the counter. "I do not doubt your forge's abilities," he apologized, "I simply have a specific task and require the best blacksmith in town to assess it."

Seeing the gold coins, the woman's eyes narrowed slightly. Though mildly insulted, she also knew the coins presented a significant amount of money. Sighing, she collected the three coins and let go of her earlier annoyance. "The town's best blacksmith runs a forge three blocks from here. It is located on a narrow, constricted street. If you don't look carefully, you might miss it. The blacksmith's name is Cou Ling."

Taking the woman's directions, Yan Xiaobao knew he had been dismissed. He stored the remaining coins in his hand before turning around to leave the shop, following the directions she had provided. The narrow street she mentioned was indeed extremely confined, feeling more like an alley than an actual street. Moving down this alley, Yan Xiaobao quickly found it was almost impossible for his body to fit, but after traversing about fifty meters, the alley widened slightly, and a shop suddenly appeared before him.

...

Chapter 723 Blood Forging of Nine Heavens

...

This shop doesn't look appealing, nor does it have any precious metals, gemstones, or jeweled decorations adorning its exterior; instead, it is made of wood with a large window, showing all items' prices—each one noticeably steep. Their prices are more than double those of the shop he had visited earlier.

Upon entering, the shop carried an old, leathery scent similar to the other, but the lighting was significantly dimmer here. The narrow alley blocked out sunlight, and the only light illuminating the walls came from a lone torch. Rhythmic hammering sounds echoed from the back of the shop.

Unlike other shops, no one greeted Yan Xiaobao as he entered, leaving the young man alone for a long while. Despite his keen desire to know whether his weapon could be repaired, he understood that rushing to the blacksmith would likely garner no assistance. An hour and a half passed as Yan Xiaobao scanned all the items in the shop.

Another hour went by, and Yan Xiaobao began to wonder if he should try a different shop as unease settled in and he paced nervously. "I need the best blacksmith if I hope to restore the ice-cold Storm Sword to its original glory—or at least something close to it." Each time he was about to leave, he murmured to himself, and finally, after waiting two and a half hours, he saw a young man around his age walk into the shop.

"Sorry for the delay," the young man said with a grin as he looked at Yan Xiaobao. Obviously aware of how long he'd left him waiting, he still dared to feign an apology. Yan Xiaobao couldn't help but find it somewhat rude. Nevertheless, he'd come here seeking help and refrained from showing any emotion on his neutral face.

"I'm looking for Cou Ling," Yan Xiaobao said, not revealing that he felt a touch insulted, knowing that humility was essential when asking for assistance. Perseverance was something Yan Xiaobao had learned long ago.

"Cou Ling, huh?" The young man smiled and turned away, saying, "Follow me." He gestured for Yan Xiaobao to follow him as they left the front room and entered the blacksmith's workshop. Taking in his surroundings, Yan Xiaobao could still hear the rhythmic hammering of metal. The force was so strong that the ground shook, and the harder the hammer struck, the more the floor trembled beneath the youth's feet. Walking straight towards the noise, Yan Xiaobao soon found himself standing in front of Cou Ling.

At the sight of her, his eyebrows shot up, his eyes widening. He had expected a muscular man but instead encountered a petite woman. Despite her small frame, her muscles were well-defined, and her sweat-drenched skin glistened. As the two young men approached her, she plunged the piece of metal she held into a large bucket of water, sending forth a sharp hissing sound as it met the cold. She set the hammer down on the anvil.

"What can I do for you?" she asked, wiping sweat from her forehead with a cloth from a nearby table. Her blue eyes locked straight onto Yan Xiaobao with clarity and intensity, staring directly into the young man's gaze.

Staring at the woman, Yan Xiaobao promptly retrieved the sword from his storage stone and placed it on the anvil between them. "I need it restored," he said. "They told me you're the best blacksmith, so if anyone can do it, it must be you."

Her eyes glimmered faintly, but as she took the sword into her hands, her expression soured. Setting it back down on the anvil after only a few seconds, she said, "Sorry, it's too shattered; I can't restore it." Stunned, Yan Xiaobao stared at the blacksmith. "You didn't even look at it properly. How can you be so sure?" he asked, but her only response was a shake of her head.

The young man who had led Yan Xiaobao into the workshop cleared his throat. "We could use Nine Heavens' bloody forging," he suggested, catching Yan Xiaobao's attention with a renewed sense of hope. "What is this Nine Heavens bloody forging?" he asked curiously, not missing the sharp and resentful look Cou Ling sent the young man.

"It's impossible. There are too many conditions and prerequisites to use that forging technique. Either you're not suited for it, or it's far too expensive," she said dismissively, but Yan Xiaobao refused to give up. "Let's try," he said, his lips curling upward. If there was a way to restore such a sword, he was determined to pursue it.

With another sigh, the woman took the sword back into her hands, this time genuinely examining it. She rubbed it with her hands and scraped at the rust with her fingers. Though her gaze wavered in hesitation, a stubborn determination surfaced within her. After eyeing Yan Xiaobao for a while, she finally asked, "There are many requirements for this process. First, do you have an affinity for the Metal Element?" she asked, and Yan Xiaobao nodded. Seeing this, her reluctance intensified. "Do you have the money? If we're going to attempt Nine Heavens bloody forging, I'll need significant payment," she said.

Confused, Yan Xiaobao glanced at the blacksmith but nodded regardless. He could be considered wealthy.

"I won't settle for anything less than ten spirit coins," the blacksmith said, to which Yan Xiaobao immediately withdrew ten spirit coins and handed them to her. Seeing the coins, her reluctance softened slightly.

"Alright, the rules are simple," she began. "Come back here in three days, before the day's end. We'll need to leave the city to perform Nine Heavens bloody forging; once we're out there, you'll obey my

every command. Even if it doesn't make sense to you, you will do everything I instruct," the woman continued, and Yan Xiaobao nodded. He dared not oppose the woman once she had agreed to proceed with the forging. As for what kind of forging this was, Yan Xiaobao didn't know, but it sounded both bloody and dangerous. Dangerous enough that it could not be attempted within the city boundaries.

Chapter 724 Blood Forging of Nine Heavens_2

"I will see you in three days," Cou Ling said as she tossed the rusty sword to Yan Xiaobao. He caught it mid-air and stored it within the Memory Stone while watching the woman return to her metalwork she had been shaping earlier. The dismissal was clear, and Yan Xiaobao slowly left the shop, heading toward his mansion. Waiting for three days could prove troublesome, but Yan Xiaobao knew how to handle it. It was time for him to fully immerse himself in the new martial arts or spiritual art given to him by Lan Feng.

Although he was excited to restore the sword, he knew that rushing things would only make them worse. Instead, he embraced the necessity of waiting. Upon returning to the mansion, he carefully searched his memories until he found the sacred Solarflare technique floating in his recollection. This was the spiritual art bestowed upon him by Lan Feng, and it was the one he was currently dedicating himself to mastering. With a smile on his face, he dashed home and headed straight for the park behind the manor; there, amidst the peaceful and quiet surroundings, he could cultivate his inner self. Yan Xiaobao was deeply curious about the blood forge of the Nine Heavens, but he understood that rushing the blacksmith would yield no good outcome. Some things required time to prepare, and though impatient, Yan Xiaobao wanted his sword to be perfect. Meanwhile, he found the sacred Sun Flames fascinating. It was a spiritual art ranked at the High-level King tier.

Spiritual arts and martial arts were divided into levels. They were classified as Student, Disciple, Practitioner, Master, Grandmaster, Duke, King, Emperor, and Saint. Within these levels, they were further subdivided into low-level, middle-level, and high-level techniques.

The reason for the differentiation in skill levels was the proficiency of the creator at the time of crafting the technique. If a Peak King Expert were to create martial arts or spiritual art, the art would be classified as a High-level King-tier technique. If an early-stage Emperor were to craft a skill, the skill would then become a low-level Emperor-tier ability.

If a lower-ranked expert were given a High-level King-tier ability, the skill would evolve alongside the expert until they reached the King-level tier. Once the skill reached the level at which it was crafted, it could no longer progress further unless the skill itself underwent evolution or improvement.

Martial arts and spiritual arts above King-level were extremely rare because experts at those levels typically focused exclusively on martial power attacks. While they could use spiritual and martial arts

skills, creating them demanded immense amounts of time, and most cultivators preferred to dedicate their efforts to personal training rather than skill creation. That was true of most practitioners, but when Yan Xiaobao thought of this, a smile spread across his face.

While most experts avoided spending energy on crafting new skills, Rong Ming and Rong Xing were different. Though they had already graduated from the Royal Academy upon reaching King-level, they chose to stay and join the Department of Technique Development. There, they dedicated themselves to creating one skill after another to benefit the Kingdom.

As Yan Xiaobao considered his martial arts and spiritual arts while arriving at the park, he sought out a secluded area with no other people present. Today, he needed a spot particularly suitable for his training. It had to be free from too many trees or dense shrubbery. The spiritual art he intended to train with relied heavily on his affinity for fire and involved creating a massive sun capable of releasing a series of flares. This sun would persist until it eventually exploded, unleashing a magnificent supernova that would incinerate everything within reach.

Learning and perfecting skills was never a simple task, and Yan Xiaobao began by sitting cross-legged on the ground, his eyes tightly shut, his mind completely focused on the technique that dominated his thoughts. First, he needed to summon his spiritual energy and imbue it with his affinity for fire. Following this, he needed to guide his spiritual energy through his meridians in a specific pattern. This was the first step in learning a new skill. Yan Xiaobao drew energy from his Middle Dantian, took a deep breath, and concentrated on channeling the energy through one meridian after another.

His first attempt failed, as his spiritual energy moved too quickly, making it difficult to control and causing it to miss the meridian paths entirely. This disrupted the flow pattern completely. The energy backfired, resulting in an internal explosion within Yan Xiaobao's body that caused injuries to his internal organs. The young man felt a bitter taste in his throat as he coughed up blood moments after.

As Yan Xiaobao looked at the blood he had spat onto the ground, his expression turned sour. Yet, even in the face of injury, he stubbornly clung to his resolve; he would not give up so easily.

Once again, Yan Xiaobao closed his eyes and accessed his Middle Dantian, summoning more spiritual energy and infusing it with flame elements above the spiritual energy sea.

This time, his failure resembled the first attempt, but the backlash was less intense. He slowed the energy's movement through his body, yet the result was the same—before he could complete the meridian pattern, the energy dissipated into nothingness.

With a sigh, Yan Xiaobao muttered, "Third time's a charm." Yet soon he realized, his third attempt was no better. He was still far from achieving the pattern.

After a while, Yan Xiaobao gritted his teeth and wiped blood from his lips after countless tries. He finally decided to take a break from attempting to complete the pattern required to create the sacred Sun Flames. Although it was merely a High-level King-tier spiritual art skill, it was one of the most challenging techniques Yan Xiaobao had ever encountered.

The pattern was extraordinarily intricate, with extremely high demands. A strong affinity with the fire element was essential, and only those with enough stubborn resolve—or perhaps masochistic tendencies—could overcome its challenges. Yet the immense difficulty brought equally immense rewards; once mastered, it would become one of the most powerful abilities Yan Xiaobao could possess. Though it was only a High-level King-tier skill, its power due to the high demands on fire elemental affinity rivaled middle-level Emperor-tier technique. Elemental fusion with fire was necessary to execute this complex pattern.

The day transformed into night, and all Yan Xiaobao did was attempt to create a small, sacred Sun Flame. Yet he failed repeatedly. As night descended upon the park, Yan Xiaobao stopped training in spiritual arts and instead closed his eyes for spiritual refinement. He could not afford to waste the night. He needed to refine Yin Energy. Yang Energy was not merely cultivated through breathing but required a perfect balance of Yin Yang Energy to elevate himself further; he needed to become one with the world. Yet, as a man, Yin Energy was challenging to acquire, and when the Cold Moon's light provided only Yin Energy, Yan Xiaobao greedily absorbed it.

The Heaven and Earth Essence flooded into the young man's body, the cold energy drifting toward his Upper Dantian, while the essence itself entered his Lower Dantian, transforming into Qi. Then, Qi was refined into spiritual energy, which was then slowly refined into martial power.

The Golden Martial Power steadily increased within his Upper Dantian, gradually incorporating Dark Yang Energy and Light Yin Energy. Although one could refine martial power without disturbing the balance of Yin Yang Energy, those who did so would forever remain at King-level. To reach Emperor-level and eventually rise to Saint-level, perfect balance within one's body was essential. Upon achieving perfect balance, one would merge with the heavens, the Earth would transform, and one would become akin to God.

Yan Xiaobao understood this because Lan Feng had told him so long ago. This was why he never allowed a single night to pass without absorbing the Heaven and Earth Essence. He knew that this energy was crucial for his path to becoming a powerful cultivator.

Years ago, when Yan Xiaobao and Lan Feng accepted their soul contract, Lan Feng had gifted Yan Xiaobao all the Yin Energy he had spent millennia refining. Even now, while Lan Feng continued refining, he was incapable of refining Yin Yang Energy. Without a physical body, and existing solely as a soul, Lan Feng could only enhance the quantity of martial power he already possessed.

The Yin Energy gifted to Yan Xiaobao by Lan Feng, combined with the energy Yan Xiaobao refined nightly, had elevated him to the eighth star of a King-level cultivator. He was even in the later phase of the eighth star, though he knew he should now be able to ascend to the ninth star. Despite this, he chose to slow down and establish a stable foundation. He wanted to master skills that could support his growing power.

...

Chapter 725: A World of One's Own

...

Before the sun broke through the sky again, the night passed quickly. "Two more days," he mumbled to himself as he straightened his body. It had been a long time since he last spent a night outside, and the cold had made his body stiff.

Once again, he sat down and began channeling his flames infused with spiritual energy through his body, neither too fast nor too slow. He had managed to determine the perfect speed yesterday, but even so, this pattern wasn't easy to create. His failures far outnumbered his successes.

With the park grounds shaking repeatedly, a booming roar could be heard after each tremor. Each time, Yan Xiaobao would spit out a mouthful of fresh blood and then wipe his mouth with a stubborn expression.

At times, he would sit down to meditate, then take medicine to allow the inner medicine to heal his injuries. After that, he would return to practicing the sacred Sun Flames once more.

Sitting still, a frown appeared on his handsome face as small beads of sweat gradually rolled down from his chin. The young man felt strong energy waves; at first, they were tiny ripples, but now they had turned into scorching heat waves rolling out like a plough cutting through the earth.

The heat waves began to shift slowly. No longer spreading outward, they instead gathered upward and spiraled into a vortex. As the energy gathered, a miniature sun began to take form. At first, it was quite small, but with the overwhelming heat radiating from the sun, its intensity grew until it became astonishingly immense.

The accumulated energy ceased increasing the size of the mini-sun. Instead, ripples of energy flowed outward like small flames. Everything in their path was reduced to ashes. As the fiery pulses exceeded Yan Xiaobao's anticipated range, several enormous trees were obliterated.

The sun didn't last long. Before it exploded, only three or four ripples burst forth from it. The explosion blinded Yan Xiaobao's eyes and was far louder than any sound he had ever experienced. Everything turned white, and after the booming detonation, it seemed like all sound had vanished. He found himself in a realm of his own—a world filled with pure white light and complete silence.

Slowly, the fading sound returned just like the diminishing light. Looking around, Yan Xiaobao stared in astonishment. He now stood within a massive crater, at least twenty meters across. Within the crater, ash was visible here and there, clearly remnants of trees and other objects that had been obliterated.

As Yan Xiaobao examined his surroundings, he heard a commotion coming from one side of the mansion. Turning back, he saw what was happening on his path. Servants, maids, guards, and even Xu Biao and Deng Wu were rushing toward him, their faces alarmed and weapons in hand.

They all came to a halt, staring at Yan Xiaobao and the devastation around him, unable to guess the reason for such destructive power. A smile appeared on the young man's face. It was his first time successfully creating the sacred Solarflare spiritual art, and he realized it could become even stronger. The power was already enough to resist weak martial power attacks, and if he managed to perfect his skill, it should be able to contend with medium martial power techniques.

The next three days passed in a blur. While Yan Xiaobao managed to perfectly form a sacred Sun Flames sun, the next attempts didn't go as smoothly. Some exploded before they could fully take shape, while others failed completely, causing Hui Yue considerable torment. Most simply dissipated into the air.

At first, it was quite difficult, with only one in ten attempts succeeding. But over time, he nearly perfected his technique. After three days of practice, every so often he would achieve the perfect execution of the skill, though other attempts merely summoned a smaller sun that, while dangerous, was not as powerful as the perfected version.

It was early morning when Yan Xiaobao had just absorbed Yin Energy from the cool moonlight. He then stood up, his expression turning solemn. After leaving the mansion, he walked swiftly toward the Blacksmith Shop, excitement bubbling within him for what was about to happen.

Upon his arrival, he was surprised to see the door standing open. Entering, he found Cou Ling and the young man waiting for him. The woman's face was evidently full of hesitation, an indescribable fear lingering deep within her.

"You took long enough to get here," she complained as she reached behind the counter to grab a few storage stones. Gesturing to Yan Xiaobao, she signaled him to follow her out the door.

The young man didn't question her and immediately followed. Though he had many questions, seeing the discomfort on the woman's face, he chose not to ask. He was certain that if he needed to know something, she would tell him.

The three of them moved together through the city until they arrived at the East City Gate. Despite the early hour, there was already a constant stream of caravans, horse carts, merchants, citizens, and adventurers. A group of mercenaries was working together, taking on tasks ranging from escort missions to venturing into nearby mountains in search of beasts and medicinal herbs.

Looking around, Yan Xiaobao enjoyed the bustling atmosphere. But as Cou Ling picked up her pace and began running past the crowded areas, she showed no interest in the lively scene. Following behind her, Yan Xiaobao couldn't quite understand where they were headed.

The three of them ran for most of the early morning. They passed through several villages, farmlands, and forests before finally arriving at a desolate area. The place was rocky and barren, with hardly any vegetation in sight.

Chapter 726: A World of One's Own_2

When they arrived at this desolate place, Cou Ling stopped and began to walk at a slow pace. From time to time, she would pick up a stone, examine it carefully, and then place it back where she had taken it.

Clearly, she was searching for something specific. Although Yan Xiaobao was incredibly curious, he focused all his attention on observing the woman before him.

Traversing the area, the woman finally started to quicken her pace. After fifteen minutes of inspecting one stone after another, they arrived at a small stone altar. The altar was black, but the runes engraved on its rough surface at the top were incomprehensible to Yan Xiaobao.

"Alright, tell me if you've changed your mind," Cou Ling sighed as she picked up a storage stone and retrieved a silver hammer engraved with runes. Yan Xiaobao watched as the hammer was placed on the ground, feeling vibrations reverberate through the earth. The hammer was obviously several tons in weight, clearly not as light as it appeared in the hands of the woman.

"Nine Heaven's Blood Forging is far from a simple or straightforward forging process. As the name implies, we will need your blood. But just using your blood alone won't suffice," Cou Ling said with a deep sigh, exposing a long scar on her forearm. "You will need to infuse the metal affinity dwelling deep within your body into your blood. The more metal you've attuned to within you, the more effectively the Metal Flame in your Middle Dantian will blend into your blood, enhancing the forging process."

"Does it absolutely have to be my blood?" Yan Xiaobao asked curiously, looking at the blacksmith in front of him. She nodded solemnly. "Try picking up my hammer," she said, shrugging as she pointed to it. Yan Xiaobao approached, but no matter how hard he tried, it was impossible for him to move the hammer even an inch.

"This weapon will only heed the commands of its rightful owner. The one who feeds it blood will be the sole person it obeys. Unfortunately, with a weapon like this, one must regularly feed it blood. The metal it ultimately creates is called the Nine Heavens Blood Devouring Metal. Just like some tools require maintenance and oiling, these weapons and tools thirst for blood. You may choose to feed it with your own blood or someone else's, but honestly, killing people suddenly in the middle of the city isn't a great idea."

Considering the woman's words, Yan Xiaobao simply nodded in agreement. Rampaging through the city and killing people wasn't an ideal choice, and since he had already shed so much of his own blood, as long as the sword could be restored, he was willing to do almost anything.

Seeing the determination in Yan Xiaobao's eyes, Cou Ling couldn't help but sigh. "This is by no means an easy task," she warned again as she retrieved what appeared to be a small silver circle from her storage stone.

"You will need to endure this. It will attract lightning to your body. But let me warn you, when I forged my hammer, I stayed here for three months. During that time, I had to forge it nine times. Each time, I could only withstand one bolt of lightning, and even then, I barely survived. If it weren't for a good friend who took care of me until my body stabilized, I would've been long dead."

"Don't think you can handle all the lightning at once with ease. We will need to try several times," the woman said, her eyes uncertain. Although she knew forging in a single attempt was impossible, she couldn't predict how much this young man could endure.

"Understood," Yan Xiaobao nodded to the blacksmith before him. She nodded back and walked towards the altar, saying, "Place the sword here. This altar will serve as my anvil."

Following the first instruction he had received, Yan Xiaobao immediately retrieved the sword from his storage stone and placed it on the altar as directed. As he looked expectantly at the woman in front of him, he noticed her hesitation growing stronger. Yet, despite her evident reluctance, she continued forward.

"In your Middle Dantian, the Metal Flame hovers above the spiritual energy sea," she instructed, guiding Yan Xiaobao, who nodded in understanding. "Extract a small portion of that flame and push it into your blood."

Closing his eyes, Yan Xiaobao entered his Middle Dantian. He focused intently and separated a small fragment of flame from the massive inferno within. Pushing it through his meridians, Yan Xiaobao directed it towards the Chongmai Meridian, the pathway that allows Qi, spiritual energy, and martial power to flow into the body. It is also where energy transfers from the meridians into the body itself. Whenever he strengthened his internal organs and bones in the past, he had used this same meridian.

When he first opened the Chongmai Meridian, Yan Xiaobao had to manually push energy through it into his body. However, as his strength increased, he was able to absorb larger amounts instantly. As the energy flowed through the meridian, it would automatically leave the pathways to fortify his body.

It was along this same meridian that Yan Xiaobao now directed the small Metal Flame, channeling it into his blood. From his arm, black blood seeped out, shimmering faintly with the infusion of metal, dripping onto the stone altar below.

The moment the blood made contact with the altar, a rumbling sound echoed, and tremors shook the ground. What had been a clear sky suddenly turned ominously dark. Looking up, Yan Xiaobao saw clouds inexplicably forming out of nowhere.

"We need to act quickly," Ke Ling said, grabbing the hammer and the broken sword. She placed them onto the altar, taking hold of Yan Xiaobao's arm and letting his blood drip onto the blade's surface. Although nothing seemed to change about the sword, the altar began to radiate with a brilliant light. Moments later, the stone turned transparent, and intense heat started to emanate outward.

Chapter 727: A World of One's Own_3

Yan Xiaobao said nothing. Instead, his eyes kept scanning the clouds overhead. "This is it. The lightning will strike soon. Use all of your Inner Energy to protect yourself, and if it's going to cause too much damage, toss aside a small piece of metal to act as a lightning rod for the strike. Aim for those large rocks," she said, pointing at two massive boulders twenty meters away.

Yan Xiaobao nodded as he looked to the sky, gritting his teeth as he tightly clutched the piece of metal. He delved into his Lower Dantian and activated the beast core, letting crimson energy surge outward, wrapping around him like a shield. Yan Xiaobao was determined to finish forging as quickly as possible. Since everything depended on how much lightning he could withstand, he was willing to expend every ounce of energy in his body to resist it.

As blood continuously flowed from his arm, Yan Xiaobao suddenly heard the loudest thunder he had ever experienced. Moments later, his entire body was enveloped by an immense power, and everything turned pitch black before his icy-blue eyes.

The darkness didn't last long, as it was instantly replaced by searing agony. The lightning coursed through his entire body, shattering a few bones under the immense force of the strike. The red fog protecting him completely dissipated, and blood sprayed from his mouth.

It was clear that Yan Xiaobao had underestimated the lightning. The remaining fog energy in his body now surged around him just as a second lightning bolt struck. This time, his entire body trembled violently, and even more blood spewed from his mouth. However, his bones didn't sustain any additional physical damage. Though his face was pale, the fact that he had survived two lightning strikes in a row brought him a flicker of joy.

Knowing he had only seconds before the next bolt, he summoned his golden martial power and shrouded himself with it. This helped shield him from the next lightning strike.

Although Yan Xiaobao was struggling against the lightning, Cou Ling couldn't help but feel a twinge of amazement as she observed how he endured bolt after bolt. Even though he was clearly gravely injured, he refused to give up.

Shaking her head, the Blacksmith shifted her focus from Yan Xiaobao to the sword on the altar. She positioned the blade under the stream of blood dripping from Yan Xiaobao's arm. His blood had turned a shimmering silver, and the sword greedily absorbed it, drop after drop.

Cou Ling watched the sword hungrily drink up the silver-tinged blood. She held it under the flowing blood for two seconds before pulling it away, picking up her hammer, and beginning to strike the blade as if the blood were flames and the stone altar her anvil.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The sound of the hammer hitting the blade echoed as sweat coursed down the woman's forehead. Each droplet fell onto the altar sizzling, releasing steam that rose upward. Though the steam made it harder for her to see what she was doing, she pressed on relentlessly.

Under Yueyue's steady hand, the sword greedily drank more and more blood. The blood's color deepened into a brilliant silver, and by now, it gleamed intensely under the radiant light, with tiny currents of electricity sparking within its core.

At this point, Yan Xiaobao had endured three of the nine lightning arrows. But as he prepared himself for the fourth strike, he had to grit his teeth harder. His martial power was entirely depleted, his Qi and spiritual energy were drained, and the beast core was now completely exhausted as well.

...

Chapter 728: The Colorful Shield

...

When the fourth lightning lamp approached him, Yan Xiaobao summoned his last drop of energy, wrapping himself in his elemental power. In front of him, a multi-colored shield appeared. Some areas of the shield were silver like the Metal Element, others were red like fire, one was yellow like the Earth

Element, and there was even a faint green hue visible within. The only color missing was the blue of the Water Element.

Deep within Yan Xiaobao's Middle Dantian, hovering above his spiritual energy sea, were four flames revolving around themselves. They spun with such intensity that some of the elemental power spilled into his body—exactly the energy Yan Xiaobao had just summoned.

The fourth bolt of lightning struck him. As Yan Xiaobao fell to the ground, the world around him turned black. At the moment he collapsed, a small metallic object that had been attracting the lightning slipped from his hand. When Cou Ling looked up at the sky, she saw how the bolt slammed into the massive boulder before them.

Although Yan Xiaobao was now unconscious and the lightning no longer struck him, Cou Ling's task was far from over. She resumed hammering the sword that had absorbed so much blood. Pouring all her skill into her work, she shaped the sword quickly. The blade gleamed silver, losing its previous blackness, and even the hilt began to shine as the rust was wholly devoured by the Nine Heavens' Devouring Blood Metal.

While working on the sword, Cou Ling glanced at the unconscious Yan Xiaobao and shouted, "Wei, quickly pick up that boy and give him some pills!" No sooner had she spoken than that marked young man immediately lifted the unconscious Yan Xiaobao and dragged him away from the blacksmith. After rummaging through some storage stones, he selected various medicinal pills, elixirs, and salves for the teenager.

Applying the salve to Yan Xiaobao's scorched forehead, he then spread it over other parts of the boy's body. This treatment helped soothe him and begin healing the burn marks from being struck repeatedly by the fierce lightning. Next, the elixir was prepared. Fang Wei crushed some medicinal herbs, mixed them into the Elixir of Immortality, and fed the concoction to the unconscious youth.

It took Cou Ling half an hour of relentless hammering to reach her breaking point. When she finally placed the sword on the altar and walked toward the two young men, the relentless lightning had already faded. Yan Xiaobao remained unconscious, and the blue skies had returned. A gentle warm breeze wafted across the land as the blacksmith let out a deep sigh. The bloodshed of the Nine Heavens was no trifling matter; throughout the Sun Kingdom, she was the only one capable of forging something with such ancient methods.

Looking at the young man who had managed to endure four out of the nine lightning trials, she couldn't help but inwardly commend him. She knew just surviving a single bolt was immensely challenging.

"How is he?" she asked, her eyes peering curiously at the young man before her. Fang Wei shrugged in response, glancing back at her. "I believe these remedies should be effective. I assume he'll regain consciousness in a few days, and after a few more, he should return to peak form. After that, we should be able to proceed."

Hearing this brought joy to Cou Ling. She had worried they might be stranded in this godforsaken place for a month or longer. But with the youth's evident strength, it seemed they would soon resolve the matter. For the first time since leaving Muchuan City, a smile graced her lips.

"Keep an eye on the boy while I search for food," she said cheerfully, before darting off toward a dense forest they had traversed earlier. It took her an hour to reach the forest and another hour to hunt enough game to bring back for a meal.

Feeling everything falling into place, Cou Ling couldn't suppress a smile. Creating this weapon for the young man had taken a heavy toll, but he had proven resilient enough, capable of wielding the sword without difficulty.

Back in the desolate area around the stone altar, Cou Ling was utterly stunned to see the young man—whom they had expected to remain unconscious for some time—awake. He sat upright, eyes open, burns still visible on his skin, yet seemingly unbothered. If anything, he seemed relaxed, leaning against a boulder with a blanket draped over his legs and a steaming cup of tea in his hands.

Before him, a campfire crackled, and beside it was Fang Wei. Fang Wei was heating a kettle of water, into which he added medicinal herbs and tea leaves. Although he was initially shocked to see Yan Xiaobao awake, his task was paramount once Cou Ling entrusted him with it. He carefully ensured the salve was applied to Yan Xiaobao's wounds and that the youth consumed medicines to aid his recovery.

Noticing Cou Ling had returned, Fang Wei smiled at her and pointed to Yan Xiaobao. "My skills with medicinal remedies far exceed your expectations," he declared proudly. "The moment you left, this guy opened his eyes. Even though his body is in immense pain, he's healing at an astonishing rate. I had no idea my medicine was this potent before."

Watching the excited young man and the calm youth leaning against the rock, the blacksmith was astounded. It was impossible for someone so gravely injured to sit up, let alone open their eyes.

Cou Ling narrowed her eyes and approached cautiously. Her lips tightened, and her fingers twitched as she fought the urge to press against the burn marks to see if the young man would cry out in pain, just as others had in the past.

Chapter 729: The Colorful Shield_2

However, as she looked at this young man, she found that the burn marks had slowly faded and disappeared, leaving his fair skin as perfect as it had been before. Gritting her teeth, Cou Ling couldn't help but mutter, "This must be because he's mixed-blood. He's truly a natural-born monster."

When she gazed into those fathomless, profound eyes, her spine shivered. As she finally realized the danger posed by the young man in front of her, fear filled her heart. Not only was he adept at controlling his energy, enough to withstand four bolts of heavenly lightning, but he also managed to recover from unconsciousness far more quickly than she had imagined.

Sensing the fear and conflict within herself, the woman no longer exuded an air of arrogance around her; instead, she humbly sat by the fire and began cooking food she had caught in the nearby forest.

"I've heard of you before," she suddenly said, her skilled hands expertly butchering the prey. "Everyone supporting Zhan Weisheng knows you, because the Ma family decided to back you over the merchants."

"When I heard even Gao Yan and his black lion had decided to support you, I was extremely surprised. Your faction suddenly emerged, and in an instant, everyone was watching you with both wariness and admiration."

"In the days following the banquet, many rumors spread among the people of Muchuan City. These rumors claimed that although you look different, this appearance is likely not due to mixed blood."

Pausing for a moment, Cou Ling looked at the calm Yan Xiaobao, sighed, and then continued, "I've lived in Muchuan City for a long time—far longer than you might imagine—but I've never heard of someone like you, let alone someone who isn't mixed-blood."

"I have to admit I did look down on you, but now you've surprised me time and time again. So, I'm genuinely curious about you," she continued, her eyes filled with curiosity and her entire being focused on Yan Xiaobao.

After her final words, Cou Ling stopped talking, leaving Yan Xiaobao to ponder his response. In the end, he shook his head despondently. "I don't know what I am," he said sadly. "Both of my parents are human, but I can't deny that I'm also part beast. It's really complicated." He shrugged and continued.

"If you don't want to tell me, you can just say so," Ke Ling said, pouting. "You have no reason to lie."

Hearing the blacksmith's words, Yan Xiaobao could only respond with a smile. He was being truthful, but the matter was far from simple. Even he couldn't determine whether he was beast or human. Was he half-beast, a human with a beast inside, or had he become a beast the moment he formed the beast core? There were many questions but no answers. Even the young man himself was frustrated about it.

"I suppose she'll believe me eventually," Yan Xiaobao said as he accepted the cooked meat, having already passed it along. He looked up and saw vast arrays of stars, his lips curling into a gentle smile as he pondered what the laws were doing now that they'd found a new world. The first law he encountered was the one controlled by a little boy in the starry sky. With a soft crackling sound, Yan Xiaobao shifted his body from its comfortable position leaning on the rock and sat cross-legged. Though injured, he couldn't afford to waste a night without cultivating, so as he adjusted himself into the proper position, he closed his eyes, and the essence of Heaven and Earth began flowing around him, drawn toward Hui Yu to be absorbed completely. Seeing the severely wounded young man manage to move into a posture for cultivation, Cou Ling was both shocked and surprised. She had never imagined he would wake so soon, let alone force his ruined body to obey his will.

Most people wouldn't think much of it, and even Fang Wei wouldn't be entirely surprised, since he knew the young man they had brought was extraordinary. But neither he nor anyone else had experienced the true terror of heavenly lightning. Only Cou Ling had once endured it and knew just how destructive it could be. To see someone withstand four bolts of such lightning and still spend the night cultivating—it made the blacksmith cough involuntarily in shock.

Although Yan Xiaobao could feel her gaze, he said nothing; instead, he focused entirely on absorbing the essence of Heaven and Earth. As the essence entered his body and refined itself, a faint blue cloud gradually surrounded the young man. Once this phenomenon occurred, the lingering essence twisting and churning in the air was forcefully pulled toward Yan Xiaobao. All the energy was drawn to him, leaving no trace for the other two experts.

At least Cou Ling and Fang Wei had no need to cultivate, so neither of them minded that the essence was being absorbed so completely by Yan Xiaobao. If anything, they were surprised by the fact that it was even possible. Frowning slightly, Cou Ling approached the young man cautiously, staring at him as she contemplated her next move.

Curiosity seemed to get the better of her, as she tentatively reached out to touch the blue cloud surrounding him. To her surprise, it didn't attack her as she anticipated; instead, a surge of energy appeared in her hand, absorbing the surrounding essence at a speed she had never experienced before.

"How peculiar," she murmured softly, watching her arm in disbelief after withdrawing it from the blue cloud. Once it left the blue cloud, the suction effect vanished, but her body was already overflowing with the essence of Heaven and Earth.

Knowing what she must do, the woman sat down and began refining the incredible amount of essence she had absorbed, hoping she might be able to raise her level by a few star ranks. She had ceased cultivating upon reaching Master Level, aiming instead to gain Metal Affinity. Although she was not particularly strong in combat, she excelled at merging with her elemental powers, which was why she could elevate her rank from nothing to several stars, but the pure Heaven and Earth essence currently overwhelmed her body.

As he watched Cou Ling, Fang Wei was astonished. "Did she experience sudden enlightenment?" he wondered as he stared at the woman cultivating. Shaking his head, he concluded that something must have happened when she touched the blue cloud. Though he too was curious, his fear prevailed. This was why he dared not approach or touch the cloud. Instead, his face grew solemn as he set out to kill the campfire and began inscribing various markings in the surrounding area. He infused them with Qi to activate them.

These inscriptions had been designed to mask the signs of humanity. If someone passed through their little encampment, no one would notice they were there. One inscription shielded their voices, another created an illusion to make the area appear empty, and the last one would alert Fang Wei if anyone approached within fifty meters of the camp. These markings were clearly meant to protect their small group.

Though Fang Wei used various inscriptions, the night passed peacefully, with no signs of anyone approaching the camp. Humans were rare in such desolate landscapes. While these inscriptions could be seen as a safety net, one could also argue they were entirely unnecessary, as no one willingly ventured

into this forsaken place—unless they wished to attempt the Nine Heavens' blood-forging techniques, which only one blacksmith in the entire Kingdom had ever used.

The night passed quietly. Yan Xiaobao and Cou Ling spent the night cultivating. As Yan Xiaobao continued to absorb the essence of Heaven and Earth, Cou Ling struggled with her own predicament: refining the essence she'd absorbed merely by touching the blue cloud. Watching the man constantly drawing energy to himself, she shook her head and muttered, "Monster."

Although she had stopped cultivating to improve her own strength long ago, Cou Ling never imagined she would lag so far behind Yan Xiaobao in absorbing and refining essence. As she looked at the young man, she finally understood how he had managed to survive four bolts of heavenly lightning.

The sun slowly rose above the horizon, and the stars faded from the sky. Cou Ling opened her eyes and glanced at Yan Xiaobao. The moment her gaze fell upon the handsome young man, her mouth hung agape and her eyes widened in shock.

The previous night, when he sat down to cultivate, his burn marks had been plain to see, but by morning, his skin was as flawless as it had been before the Nine Heavens blood-forging began. She stared at his entire body in astonishment, searching for even the slightest trace of the severe injuries he'd sustained the day before.

...

Chapter 730: Born a Monster

...

No matter how much she looked, she found nothing. She shook her head in surprise, whispering faintly, "Some people are born monsters." After a while, she stood up and approached the stone altar she had used twice before. Her emotions were turbulent, complex, and incomprehensible. The feeling she experienced during blood forging was incredible; the technique invigorated her, yet at the same time, it left her utterly drained after completion. If not for the dense energy that had flooded her body the previous day, she would have been wholly unable to stand at this moment.

Glancing again at Yan Xiaobao, Cou Ling found herself increasingly astonished by the young man who had appeared before her. His strength exceeded her expectations, and not only that, there was a serene

purity about him—like a lotus flower. He was beautiful and calm. His eyes held no excited thrill, nor did they show shock or amazement, even as he endured lightning strikes time and time again.

Feeling almost dizzy like a young girl, Cou Ling wasn't sure why her gaze kept drifting towards the young man beside her. She was at least eight to ten years older than him, yet every time her eyes fell upon him, her heart began to race, a fluttering sensation stirring like butterflies in her stomach. It was a feeling she was not accustomed to.

Yan Xiaobao had long since stopped cultivating. He, too, noticed Cou Ling's peculiar behavior, but all he could do was smile wryly because he realized the hostility in the woman's eyes had now turned into admiration.

Clearing his throat, Yan Xiaobao decided to break the descending awkward silence. "I'm completely fine now. Let's try the blood forging again. I should be able to withstand at least five lightning strikes today."

When she heard he intended to complete the forging today, Cou Ling was taken aback. While she felt astonished, she couldn't help but feel a hint of frustration at the young man's eagerness to rush the process. He was clearly too determined to restore his sword to its former glory, paying little mind to the price he might have to pay.

Clenching her teeth, Cou Ling did nothing but comply with the customer's wishes. "If you say so, then we'll proceed this way, but don't blame me if you end up dead." Her voice was harsh, but unlike before, Yan Xiaobao now understood that the sharpness in her tone also conveyed a certain level of care.

Nodding at her words, Yan Xiaobao offered a gentle smile but said nothing. Seeing his silence, Cou Ling could only sigh deeply, "Let's wait an hour or two, and then we'll start the blood forging again." She spoke with a sigh.

The next few hours passed in a tense atmosphere. Yan Xiaobao chose to spend his time cultivating, while Fang Wei followed his lead, doing his utmost to improve his own cultivation base. On the other hand, Cou Ling spent much of her time lost in thought. She pondered how Yan Xiaobao could manage to endure one more lightning strike than he had the previous day. How was it possible? She truly didn't know, but deep down, she believed he could achieve it.

Sighing deeply for the tenth time that day, Cou Ling picked up the sword Yan Xiaobao hoped to restore. By now, all the rust that once covered it had vanished. The black metal it was forged of had been completely destroyed, replaced by a silvery metal that engulfed the sword core.

The Nine Heavens Blood Devouring Metal was a material that consumed everything it came into contact with. It not only required blood to sustain itself but also devoured precious metals. Yet this time, Cou Ling gazed at the sword in her hands with astonishment.

She knew she was only halfway through the reforging process, but the sword seemed as though it was already complete. Like its master, the sword was shrouded in mystery. Holding it in her hands, she could sense subtle tremors coursing through it, as if the sword were alive.

The time for reflection passed quickly, and before they knew it, the moment had come to begin. Seeing that it was time, the three of them packed their belongings and returned to another location. Just as they were about to begin, a squealing sound was heard alongside massive energy fluctuations, leaving Cou Ling and Fang Wei utterly shocked. They turned to look at Yan Xiaobao, unable to comprehend the cause of such intense disturbances.

Twisting to face Cou Ling, her widened eyes instantly shifted to her chest. A sharp scream erupted from her. Behind her, where there should have been a young, handsome man, there was now a terrifying beast—an enormous red wolf with crimson eyes and a sinister cold gleam within.

Staring at the transformation, her lips quivered, her entire body trembling in fear. She had long heard that the white-haired man was indeed the Great Marshall of the Beast Army, but she had never truly grasped what it meant for him to be a beast himself. Gazing upon his beast form, an overwhelming fear consumed her. What if his rationality had vanished and been replaced by primal beast instincts?

"I'm sorry to have frightened you," a growling voice resonated from the powerful snout as Yan Xiaobao noticed the shocked expression on Cou Ling's face. Awkwardly scratching his head with sharp claws, he looked down at himself. He had transformed from human into beast, his body growing larger and tearing apart his clothes. His entire presence now was utterly intimidating.

"I won't harm you, but as you can see, my strength in this form is a hundred times greater than when I am human. If I am to endure five lightning strikes today, I must give it my all. I assure you, I'm not as dangerous as I appear." Pausing briefly, he flashed a toothy grin, "Please don't tell anyone about my beast form. Although everyone knows I am the Great Marshall of the Beast Army, there are few who have seen this transformation. I want to keep it a secret."

