

## Prodigies 151

### Chapter 151 Dog Barking Argument

After Old Mo left, Lin Xun had become much quieter.

Every day, after he completed his training sessions, he returned to Old Mo's warehouse and silently drank a jar of wine by himself.

Xiaoman was a little worried about Lin Xun.

She sensed that there was something wrong with Lin Xun, but every time she wanted to comfort him, he had already gone off to practice.

Xiaoman sighed and gave up on comforting Lin Xun. Some things might be better to face alone, only then will he mature quicker.

Thirteen days later.

Early in the morning.

Today, the 237 students from the eight campgrounds of Blood Kill Camp would take a battleship to the Demon Cloud Ridge in the northern frontier of the empire to participate in the battlefield assessment.

"Don't worry, I will take care of Jiujiu. You only need to worry about safely bringing back a beautiful assessment result." Xiaoman softly urged before Lin Xun left.

"Yes." Lin Xun nodded and headed to the 39th Campground.

Xiaoman's bright eyes glistened as she stared at the handsome young man's back, casting her mind back to the first time they met.

At that time, Lin Xun seemed frivolous. Sometimes he was a sweet talker and sometimes he was focussed and serious, but most of the time he wore a warm smile like a harmless sunshine boy.

However, he had become different. No one could tell what was on his mind anymore.

Is this a good or bad thing?

Xiaoman didn't know. Maybe this is growth. It isn't determined by age. People often change with experience.

Jiujiu lay in Xiaoman's arms, its round black eyes staring longingly at Lin Xun's back. It constantly chirped.

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A moment later, following rumbling roars, eight standard small-scale Violet Hero Battleships carrying the 237 students rose into the sky, cut through the clouds. and sped towards the north.

"How many people do you think will return?"

"Fewer than fifty."

“Fifty? That is almost twice as many as previous times. I can only hope so.”

“Then, how many do you think would lose their lives?”

“It’s hard to say.”

“Demon Cloud Ridge is a test of life and death. There are only two outcomes for those who can’t persist. Elimination or death. Death is inevitable among the students.”

“That’s the rule. Regardless of how extraordinary their backgrounds are or how talented they are, they won’t become great if they can’t withstand the flames of war.”

“I’m just a little worried. The forces and clans behind the students are complicated. They might blame our Blood Kill Camp if an accident were to happen.”

“You’re wrong. In a large clan or sect, there is never a shortage of outstandingly talented descendants. Sometimes the death of an unfit descendant might not be a bad thing for them.”

“Indeed. In terms of how cruel it is, the competition among ancient sects and clans is more perverted than in Blood Kill Camp. Descendants competing for resources and power, brothers turning against each other, and family feuds are all very common.”

“Wait and see. In three months, we will know how many of the 237 students will stay, and who will be eliminated, or...die.”

In Blood Kill Camp, a group of instructors briefly conversed as they watched the eight Violet Hero Battleships disappear into the north.

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In the Violet Hero Battleship carrying the 39th Campground students, Lin Xun was studying the storage ring in his hand.

It was the only allowed aeth tool in the assessment. Students weren’t allowed to bring other aeth tools or armaments.

That was the rule of the assessment.

After arriving at Demon Cloud Ridge, the 237 students would enter the battlefield and be assigned missions as ordinary soldiers of the empire.

They would have to survive in the war zone for three months using their own means just like ordinary soldiers.

The military merits they obtained was their assessment result. Those who unfortunately died would be eliminated and those with little military merits would also be eliminated.

The storage ring distributed to each student was prepared for collecting military merits.

The so-called military merit was the life of enemies!

It wasn’t particularly quiet in the cabin as many people were discussing in low voices about the assessment in the Demon Cloud Ridge.

Demon Cloud Ridge was a complicated war zone located on the northern frontier of the empire. Further north of Demon Cloud Ridge was the turbulent wasteland that the Darkness Kingdom controlled.

War had been ongoing in Demon Cloud Ridge for hundreds of years and the flames of war raged everywhere, but both the empire and the Darkness Kingdom were aware that there was only the tiniest hope of completely occupying the Demon Cloud Ridge.

This was due to the complicated terrain in Demon Cloud Ridge. It was shrouded in a black haze all year round and the area spanned thousands of miles and was full of danger. Anyone who wanted to occupy the area had to pay a heavy and immeasurable price.

Now, the Demon Cloud Ridge had become a buffer zone between the empire and the Darkness Kingdom. Although the flames of war hadn't ceased, they were all small-scale battles.

"I heard that the Demon Cloud Ridge had changed and is now regarded as a training ground for the empire and Darkness Kingdom. Young cultivators are sent there to experience true battles. Only the tempering from the flames of war could shape them into true fighting talents."

Shi Yu suddenly lowered his voice and said mysteriously. "This also means that we might run into young experts of the Magi Brute Race. Their strengths likely won't be inferior to us."

"Nonsense." Ning Meng snapped.

"Nonsense?" Shi Yu sneered. "If you know yourself and your enemy, you can win a hundred battles. An idiot like you will die before you know it when you reach Demon Cloud Ridge."

"You don't have to worry about this." Ning Meng said disdainfully. "Little White Face, I am different from you. I grew up on the battlefield and I dare to say that you don't even have one-tenth of my understanding of war!"

Seeing that the two were about to argue again, Lin Xun had a headache. "Guys, how about this? You two can treat the assessment in Demon Cloud Ridge as a match and compete on military merit. Isn't this better than smack talking? You two can even make a bet. You can decide what to bet on."

Shi Yu and Ning Meng looked at each other, anger rising inside their eyes. They nodded at the same time. "Alright!"

"Aren't you going to join in?" Shi Yu asked Lin Xun.

"Me?"

"Yeah, how can we have a bet without you!?" Ning Meng's eyes lit up and he rolled up his sleeves enthusiastically. "How about this? We each bet one hundred gold coins and the two losers will give theirs to the winner."

"One hundred gold coins..." Lin Xun inhaled sharply. The wager is huge. That equals to ten thousand silver coins and one million copper coins!

Unexpectedly, Shi Yu didn't look satisfied with the amount. He snorted. "One hundred gold coins? That's too little. We might as well not bet."

Lin Xun was at a loss for words. This is the style of the third young master of Stone Cauldron Alms. Even one hundred gold coins are too little to him.

"Then how much do you want to bet?" Ning Meng sounded displeased.

"At least one thousand gold coins, plus another condition." Shi Yu said with a smile, "The condition is very simple. If Ning Meng loses he has to apologize to me and admit that he is inferior!"

Ning Meng's expression changed. He said through gritted teeth, "Alright!"

Shi Yu chuckled. "So straightforward!"

Lin Xun couldn't help but say, "Guys, I don't have one thousand gold coins."

"You can owe us!" Shi Yu and Ning Meng almost said at the same time.

His two friends' determination sparked Lin Xun's competitive spirit. Without changing his tone or expression, he spat out one word, "Alright!"

A harsh sneer suddenly sounded from the other side of the cabin. "Someone is really a gambler. Does he think he won gloriously against Xiao Kun the other day?"

Lin Xun, Shi Yu, and Ning Meng all turned their heads.

It was a slightly pale, unfriendly, and grumpy-looking boy called Hu Long. Like Li Duxing, he was also one of the students who joined the 39th Campground after the quarterly assessment.

The fact that Hu Long survived the quarterly assessment already proved that he wasn't weak. Furthermore, his score was ranked average.

It was just that, at that moment, he was sneering and when he said "someone", it was a direct jab at Lin Xun.

Hu Long's voice was full of provocation and immediately attracted the attention of other students in the cabin.

Seeing this, Hu Long had no intention of stopping. Instead, he looked more pleased and proud. He said disdainfully, "Who in Blood Kill Camp doesn't know that Xiao Kun didn't lose because of his strength? Miss Bai Lingxi couldn't bear to see someone lose and embarrass himself so she stopped the battle. Who would have thought that someone isn't ashamed and proudly thought he won. He really is an embarrassment to our 39th Campground!"

This matter had spread throughout Blood Kill Camp, but many people also understood that Lin Xun wasn't as bad as Hu Long had said. If the battle continued to the end, they also wouldn't know who would win.

However, many people could tell that Hu Long was deliberately mocking Lin Xun. Many of them only had an acquaintance relationship with Lin Xun and so they didn't want to get involved.

Shi Yu and Ning Meng frowned and both were about to say something when Lin Xun stopped them. "Just a dog barking. Do you plan to reason with a dog?"

Hu Long's expression dramatically changed and he screamed, "Who are you insulting?"

Lin Xun smiled. "A dog."

Hu Long thundered, "I'm asking you who you are calling a dog?"

Lin Xun shrugged. "The dog will know."

Hu Long flew into a rage. He got up, pointed at Lin Xun, and said, "You're insulting me but you don't dare to admit it?"

Lin Xun said with a smile, "If you admit that you're a dog, then I am insulting you. Why don't you prove to everyone that you're a dog?"

Will Hu Long prove he is a dog?

Definitely not!

That would be too humiliating!

But who doesn't know that Lin Xun was insulting him?

Many people couldn't help but smile, and some even laughed out loud.

Hu Long's face reddened with anger. He was so enraged that his body trembled and he roared, "Someone dares to do it but doesn't dare to admit it. If I am a dog, that someone is worse than a dog!"

He compared himself to a dog and compared Lin Xun to someone worse than a dog. Many people burst into laughter, almost shedding a tear from laughing too hard.

Is there such an insult?

He really has gone mad from rage.

Chapter 152 Mission Begins

Lin Xun was stumped for words. He had never seen someone insult themselves in order to insult their opponent. He is...simply mad!

Hu Long's blood was already boiling with anger. He immediately realized that he had said something wrong but it was already too late to take it back.

The more that Hu Long heard everyone's laughter, the more his expression changed. He hated Lin Xun more and more. If he hadn't called me a dog, how would it turn out like this?

He's so hateful!

Embarrassed and humiliated, Hu Long suddenly saw that Lin Xun's expression was a little overcast and he couldn't help but smile coldly. "What, someone can't stand this kind of insinuating attack?"

Lin Xun sighed. He couldn't even be bothered to assess Hu Long's intelligence. He was just baffled as to how such an idiot passed the quarterly assessment and could remain in Blood Kill Camp.

Seeing that Lin Xun kept silent, Hu Long seemed to have found a chance to vent his anger. He arrogantly and triumphantly raised his head and uttered coldly, "Don't be a coward. Aren't you very good at talking? If you're so amazing, come and hit me? Do you dare to do it?"

Everyone broke into clamor. Hu Long wasn't really stupid. He knew that no one would dare to create trouble with all the students watching in the cabin. He took advantage of this chance to provoke Lin Xun.

Will Lin Xun be a coward?

Definitely not.

But will Lin Xun take action?

He likely wouldn't.

This was the same tactic that Lin Xun used to ask Hu Long to prove whether he was a dog or not.

Boom!

Unexpectedly, facing Hu Long's provocation, Lin Xun didn't utter a word and just got up. He stepped forward in large strides and threw his fist forward.

It happened in the blink of an eye and even Hu Long didn't really think that Lin Xun would dare hit him. Lin Xun's punch landed right in his stomach.

Following a loud boom, Hu Long felt that his stomach was about to explode and a terrifying force rushed into his body like the tide. The force rumbled to the extent that he felt like his organs were shifting positions. He wailed in pain and curled his back like a boiled prawn.

"Lin Xun...you..." Hu Long roared, but before he finished, a palm slammed his back. With a thud, fell forward and lay on the ground like a toad, tears, and snot running down his face and nose. He couldn't make any other noise except scream in agony.

Everyone was in an uproar and disbelief.

However, Lin Xun seemed relaxed and just smiled at the onlookers, "Everyone, you heard him right? He asked me to hit him. It's the first time I heard such a request. How could I refuse?"

Everyone was speechless.

However, Hu Long was so furious that he almost vomited blood. He didn't look good at all.

The cabin door opened with a loud bang and a mighty and burly figure stood at the doorway. An oppressive aura assaulted everyone's faces.

It was Dong Lu, the instructor responsible for leading the 39th Campground students to Demon Cloud Ridge to participate in the battlefield assessment.

"What's going on? You want to see what it's like to violate the rules of the camp?" Dong Lu's face was chilling as he coldly swept his eyes over Lin Xun and Hu Long lying on the ground.

"Instructor, he hit me first!" Hu Long wailed, struggling to get up. But Lin Xun pinned him to the ground with his foot.

"Little guy, what do you have to say?" Dong Lu's unfriendly voice boomed out.

"He asked me to hit him. You can't blame me. Everyone here can testify. If he didn't say so, how would I be interested in bullying a weak chicken like him?" Lin Xun answered seriously.

Dong Lu was taken aback for a moment; he then glanced at the others and saw that no one refuted Lin Xun. His expression turned a little strange.

"Liar!" Hu Long was so infuriated that he roared till his lungs were about to rupture.

"Instructor, have you ever seen a person like him? He asked someone to hit him, but he won't admit it. There's something wrong with his brain.

Lin Xun sighed helplessly, "I really think he has no pride."

Dong Lu began to understand the situation, and his expression grew more and more strange. He looked at Hu Long going berserk from anger for a long moment and coldly snorted, "This matter ends here. If I find out that any of you guys have fought, I will kick you out regardless of the reason!"

He turned around, walked out of the cabin, and slammed the door shut.

Just as the door was closing, many people with sharp hearing could vaguely hear Dong Lu mumble, "Really has no pride!"

All of a sudden, many of the students' expressions turned strange and they looked at Hu Long with pity in their eyes.

He was provoked, beaten, and was called prideless by the instructor. Who could blame him?

Lin Xun returned to his seat, calm and composed like nothing had happened.

"Amazing." Shi Yu gave him a thumbs up.

"Haha, absolutely amazing." Ning Meng laughed.

Lin Xun just smiled slightly.

This little incident soon passed, but many students in the cabin looked at Lin Xun with overcast and fearful faces.

No one dared underestimate someone who didn't play by the rules.

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The eight Violet Hero Battleships flew for seven days before they landed at a military area called Black Wind in the northern frontier of the empire.

The Black Wind Army was a large army of the northern frontier consisting of 300,000 soldiers and 50,000 cultivators. It was controlled by Lieutenant General Wu Xinglie, who had splendid military achievements in the empire.

The evening clouds were flowing like fire.

Flags fluttered at the camp. The military discipline was strict and meticulous.

In one of the open spaces, the 237 students from Blood Kill Camp walked out of the battleships in single file and were led to one of the eight camps by their respective instructors.

"Old Song, I leave these little guys to you. I will come to check the assessment results in three months." Dong Lu said to a middle-aged man who came to greet them.

The middle-aged man was clad in martial attire and silver armor. He had a tough appearance and exuded a chilling iron-blooded murderous aura. He clearly had years of experience on the battlefield.

He was called Song Ling and was a senior colonel in the Black Wind Army.

"Alright."

Song Ling was clearly a man of few words. He ran his gaze across Lin Xun and the other students, and then he nodded.

Immediately, he sent someone to fetch the maps and travel bags. Then he distributed them among the students. "From today on, you are all a member of the Black Wind Army. Although you have special identities, you will still be subjected to military punishments if you fail to complete your mission!"

His words were powerful, resounding, and full of murderous spirit. Many people shuddered inwardly.

Dong Lu silently left the camp. He had completed his mission and only had to come and collect the students in three months.

"From tonight on, you will be divided up and each of you will carry your own equipment and enter the Demon Cloud Ridge to fight."

"Your mission is to kill all Magi Brute experts you encounter and you will be given military credit every time you acquire a brute totem rune."

"The duration of the mission is three months. During this period, anyone who leaves without authorization will be killed!"

"Those who liaise with the enemies will be killed!"

"Those who murder their comrades will be killed!"

Song Ling's three consecutive "killed" made the students realize that everything was indeed different from in Blood Kill Camp.

It was a real military camp, the military front, and the most ruthless battlefield. Military orders had to be obeyed and military discipline had to be followed.

In the end, a dazzling steely light flashed from Song Ling's eyes. He swept a glance over everyone. "Most importantly, those who betray us and flee to the enemy army will be slaughtered with their families!"

It was the most terrifying punishment!

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At night.



Clouds shrouded the sky above Demon Cloud Ridge and only faint wisps of dull moonlight squeezed through the layers of clouds, casting a gray and oppressive glow upon Demon Cloud Ridge.

On a mountain ridge, Lin Xun's figure shuttled between the rocks and trees like a nimble leopard cat. It was extremely dark there and he almost couldn't see his own hands.

It hugely affected Lin Xun's vision. Fortunately, he had an extremely strong spirit sense and was able to clearly detect everything within a 120-foot radius.

Just like Lin Xun, the other Blood Kill Camp students participating in the war zone mission also entered the Demon Cloud Ridge before night fell.

Some people chose to travel in a team, and some chose to act alone, such as Lin Xun.

"It says in the information that there are many magi brute experts scattered across Demon Cloud Ridge. There are fierce ones acting alone and there are also groups of them...It seems that I have to be careful."

Lin Xun tightened his grip around the blade when he recalled the information he was given before setting off.

The blade was a standard empire aeth tool called Defeat Army. It wasn't of particularly high quality but fortunately, it was sharp enough.

In addition to the Defeat Army Blade, Lin Xun and the other students were allocated equipment such as a map, inner armor, and a whistle to call for rescue.

The map of Demon Cloud Ridge was very rough and could only be used as a guide.

The inner armor was called Iron Scale Armor and was also a standard empire armament. It wasn't particularly good or bad and had adequate defense power.

The rescue whistle was very unique. Small, sophisticated, and shaped like an eagle's beak, it produced a unique whistle and wave of energy once blown. Experts outside Demon Cloud Ridge could perceive it immediately.

But a student would be eliminated once the whistle was blown. Furthermore, rescue might not come in time even if the whistle was blown.

Therefore, it wasn't particularly special and a student still had to rely on themselves if they wanted to survive.

"Three months—besides fighting an unknown number of enemies, we don't get a supply of materials. This period will be very difficult..."

"It seems like I have to make a plan before I act. I mustn't be impatient and go out to kill the enemies. My priority is to adapt to the environment here first."

While he was deep in thought, Lin Xun suddenly sensed something and silently leapt onto a low hill. He leaned right against the rocks and held his breath.

Before long, a black leopard beast was speeding towards his direction from the grass in the distance. Its strong and lightning-like body was almost imperceptible like a ghost in the night.

It was a black leopard with strength comparable to the eighth layer True Martial Stage, but it wasn't a threat to Lin Xun.

Lin Xun was about to get up and leave the area when a bad feeling rose in his heart. He realized that he had overlooked something.

He released his spirit sense and it spread like a tide. It didn't take long for him to detect a figure behind the black leopard. The figure was like a wisp of black smoke as it perfectly camouflaged with the night. It was impossible to notice it with just the naked eye!

"What a sly guy. He uses a black panther to scout out the path while he hides in the dark. Fortunately, I didn't show myself."

Lin Xun trembled inwardly!

### Chapter 153 Totem Brute Tool

Amidst the rustling, the black panther gradually approached him.

It seemed to sense something as it shifted its lush green eyes towards the rocks where Lin Xun was hiding.

Swoosh!

Lin Xun charged out from the rocks. The Defeat Army Blade produced a beam of blinding light in the air as it slashed down, splitting the darkness.

The black leopard couldn't evade in time. With a squelch, its head split from its body. Blood jetted everywhere and its tremendous body tumbled to the ground.

Buzz!

However, at the same time, an incomparably sharp black object produced a sharp whistle as it stabbed toward Lin Xun from behind.

Unbelievable speed!

It was as though it had been waiting to strike. The angle of the attack made it very tricky to dodge and any ordinary cultivator would have failed to react in time.

However, Lin Xun suddenly spun around in mid-air after killing the black leopard as if he had eyes on the back of his head.

Shua!

He brought the Defeat Army Blade up in a backhand slash and it precisely struck the tip of the black object.

A muffled groan sounded from behind him and a faintly discernible figure that seemed to be fused with a black robe suddenly appeared!

It was a slender youngster in black. His eyes gleamed with a sinister blue light and he looked strange and terrifying.

The slender youngster was surprised that his attack failed and was about to flee when Lin Xun clasped his blade and charged toward him like a lightning bolt.

Boom!

The thin youngster swiftly reacted and raised the sharp iron rod in his hand.

To his dismay, Lin Xun's blade produced a terrifying suction force and pulled the weapon towards it!

The slender youngster stumbled forward uncontrollably.

Taking the opportunity, Lin Xun leaned forward, gathered strength in his left hand, and landed three consecutive punches at the opponent's throat.

With a crack, the slender youngster's neck snapped, his head twisted, and he suddenly collapsed to the ground and lost his life.

The battle outcome had been decided in the blink of an eye.

It was unbelievably fast but also extremely dangerous. If Lin Xun hadn't noticed his opponent hiding and used himself as bait to lure the opponent to attack, the outcome could have been completely different.

Chi!

After a neat kill, Lin Xun didn't hesitate to tear off the opponent's clothes. He immediately saw the chest was marked with a natural brute totem rune, which resembled flowing water.

It was the symbol of the Water Tribe of the Magi Brute Race.

In other words, the slender youngster was a water brute expert.

Lin Xun skillfully carved out the brute totem rune along with the skin and put it away into the storage ring.

This was military merit. The most convincing evidence when exchanging for military merit was the number of enemies killed and the brute totem runes collected.

In addition to the brute totem rune, Lin Xun found a short thorn. Its two-foot body was entirely jet black with wave-like patterns and was constructed from a type of extremely precious black steel-gold.

In the Magi Brute Race, such weapons were called brute tools, and the patterns engraved on them were called brute runes.

Lin Xun had heard that only totem shaman could create such brute tools among the Magi Brute Race. The so-called totem shaman was similar to rune masters in the empire.

An important point was that brute tools could only display their greatest power in the hands of a Magi Brute descendant. The reason lay in the brute runes carved on the brute tool.

Brute runes seemed similar to runes but their secrets were different and they couldn't be activated with spirit qi.

In short, only experts of the Magi Brute Race could bring out the power of brute tools and brute runes.

Only cultivators in the empire could bring out the power of aeth tools and runes with their aeth power.

This was the difference. The empire and the Magi Brute Race were two completely different civilizations, and their tools and cultivation methods were also completely different.

In addition to this short thorn, Lin Xun also found some miscellaneous items such as medicinal herbs and mountain fruits to replenish energy. He stored them all in his storage ring.

Just as Lin Xun was about to leave, he suddenly heard a rustle. He turned his head to see worms gathering around the black leopard corpse.

The jet black worms were only the size of a pinky finger but they had sharp fangs and looked unusually vicious.

They burrowed out from the ground like sharks smelling blood. In just a few breaths, they had devoured the black leopard's corpse without a trace of bone left.

Immediately, they swarmed toward the water brute youngster's corpse and also obliterated all traces of him.

Lin Xun couldn't help but shudder as he watched on. He realized that Demon Cloud Ridge was more strange and dangerous than he had thought. At least, he had never heard about the black worms before.

Fortunately, the worms had no interest in living beings and didn't attack Lin Xun. They rapidly disappeared into the ground like quicksand.

The black leopard's body was gone and so was the water brute youngster. Even the traces of blood on the ground had disappeared. It was as though nothing had happened.

"If I, unfortunately, die here, my body and bones would disappear..." Taking advantage of the night, Lin Xun pushed forward on his journey.

He had to first understand the environment of Demon Cloud Ridge. Only then could he keep the danger to a minimum.

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Lin Xun hadn't stopped for seven days in a row. He passed over mountain ridges, waded through swamps, trudged through dirty water, climbed cliffs, and navigated through forests.

He had encountered ambushes and attacks along the way, and he had fought enemies head-on. There were many dangers but he managed to kill all the enemies he encountered.

He hadn't experienced any life-threatening danger, but he knew that it was bound to happen sooner or later.

In the past seven days, he had fought alone as he penetrated deep into the enemy's territory. He hadn't relaxed for a moment and every inch of his body was very tense. He was like an old ruthless hunter.

Danger lurked in every corner, and life and death could be decided in a split second.

He had to show greater strength and resourcefulness than the enemy if he didn't want to die!

Lin Xun had a wealth of experience in battles. He even showed more battle means than usual in the complicated and dangerous terrain of Demon Cloud Ridge.

Lin Xun was only troubled by his lack of material supplies.

In Blood Kill Camp, he consumed Lengning Pills every day for his cultivation and he didn't have to worry about cultivation resources.

However, in the barren hills and turbulent water of Demon Cloud Ridge, he had to rely on himself to find materials if he wanted to cultivate, restore his strength or treat his wounds. He either had to forage for aeth medicines and herbs or snatch them from enemies.

There was no other way besides those.

Lin Xun didn't even have the time to wonder how the other students were doing or whether anyone had been eliminated.

Demon Cloud Ridge was more dangerous than he had imagined. It was clearly very difficult to survive here for three months and also earn enough military merit to not be eliminated.

Under those circumstances, how would Lin Xun still have the energy to care about other people?

Around one in the afternoon.

Demon Cloud Ridge was still as dark as always. Thick haze shrouded the sky and made it feel stifling.

Lin Xun curled up like a ball and hid in the dark crevice of boulders covered in thick weeds. It was difficult to spot him without a careful look.

Lin Xun was resting and recovering his strength.

He had rubbed a thin layer of rotten fish plant on his skin to not only cover his odor but also to avoid attracting the attention of beasts and insects.

"I can barely last until tomorrow afternoon with the materials I have now. The most important thing now is to find materials to restore my aeth power. Otherwise, I would no doubt fall into a dangerous situation if I can't maintain my optimum state..." Lin Xun said thoughtfully.

In the past seven days, he had killed nineteen Magi Brute experts and had acquired lots of materials. Even so, those materials weren't enough.

He had also found aeth plants and fruits in Demon Cloud Ridge but they were only a drop in the bucket. His strength recovery would be a fatal problem if he couldn't find top-quality medicinal herbs soon.

Suddenly, the sound of footsteps in the distance made Lin Xun tremble inwardly and his curled-up body tensed up like a pulled bowstring.

Before long, a group came out of the mountain forest.

It was a group of over thirty Magi Brute experts escorting around twenty soldiers in the Black Wind Army uniform.

The soldiers consisted of men and women and they were all chained and dragged off like cattle. Everyone's expression was filled with fury, despair, and dejection.

They seemed to be heading somewhere. They quickly passed the rocks where Lin Xun was hiding and disappeared into the distance.

Lin Xun leapt out and followed them.

Demon Cloud Ridge was extremely vast. Before Lin Xun and the other Blood Kill Camp students arrived, the Black Wind Army often sent soldiers to the depths of Demon Cloud Ridge to conduct guerrilla warfare.

Lin Xun just didn't expect to see empire soldiers captured like cattle on the seventh day of coming to Demon Cloud Ridge. He felt like he had to do something when he saw the anger and despair on the soldiers' faces.

He followed them until evening when the group of Magi Brute experts escorted the captives into a canyon.

Lin Xun surveyed the surroundings and climbed to the top of a mountain where he could clearly see the situation in the canyon.

A temporary campground was set up in the canyon.

At the entrance of the campground, dozens of Magi Brute experts were patrolling with weapons. In the center of the camp sat three men around a stone table. All three exuded a tyrannical aura while they seemed to be discussing something.

On the other side of the campground stood several cages, in which empire soldiers were held captive.

In front of the cages was a platform similar to the gallows, and a huge iron pot was set up on a blazing bonfire there.

A human race youngster was tied up and gagged on the platform. His face was deathly pale with terror and his body was trembling as he constantly struggled to break free.

A Magi Brute man was standing at the side of the platform with a sharp blade. Smiling sinisterly, he slashed off the youngster's arm and casually tossed it into the iron pot.

Si—

A striking red stained the boiling water of the iron pot.

Lin Xun narrowed his eyes and he felt chilled to the bone. They are going to eat people?!

Chapter 154 Burning with Rage

“Wu—!”

The youngster on the noose screamed, but only whimpers came forth because he was gagged.

His face was contorted with pain, and blood spurted from his broken arm like a waterfall. But no matter how he struggled, it was useless.

The Magi Brute man seemed to enjoy hearing the tragic screams. He brought his sharp blade up and severed the youngster's other arm in a quick and skillful motion. Clearly, it wasn't his first time doing such a thing.

Si—

The two broken arms floated up and down in the boiling water and striking red blood splashed like waves.

The youngster's body went still as he fainted from the pain.

The imprisoned soldiers in the nearby row of cages went crazy from the shock. Angry curses and screams mingled with roars of panic and despair constantly rang out.

However, that only drew roars of laughter from the Magi Brute experts.

"Human bastards are so weak. They can't even withstand a little pain."

The Magi Brute man cursed. He picked up a wooden bucket of cold water and doused the youngster. The youngster woke up, face deathly pale to the point of almost transparent. He fiercely grimaced with pain.

Pu! Pu! Pu!

The Magi Brute man again raised his blade and swiftly cut off the youngster's ears, feet, and legs like he was slaughtering an animal. Blood flowed everywhere as he tossed every part of the youngster's body into the iron pot.

The empire soldiers almost collapsed in the cages when they saw such a cruel and bloody scene. They screamed and roared endlessly, full of indescribable rage and bitterness.

Atop the mountain in the distance, Lin Xun had an ice-cold look on his face and his dark eyes were filled with thick unconcealable murderous intent.

Every cut on the youngster's body felt like an invisible sharp thorn stabbing into Lin Xun's heart.

The youngster's grimace and terrified expression, the furious roars from the cages, the savage and sinister roars of laughter from the Magi Brute cultivators, the splatter of blood in the bubbling iron pot...

Every scene made Lin Xun so angry that the veins were popping on his forehead and his blood was boiling to the point of exploding like coal was stuffed into his chest.

He knew that the Magi Brute Race was the sworn enemy of the empire. He also knew that many cruel tortures and punishments existed in the world. But he still couldn't control his anger when he saw his people being slaughtered like animals!

Just as Lin Xun was about to rush out, an indescribable terrifying feeling rose to his heart. Lin Xun instantly calmed down. He had almost been blinded with anger.

He cast his eyes over the camp in the canyon and noticed a few problems. There were thirty-nine Magi Brute experts in the camp but only three were ninth-level brute slaves.

Ninth-level brute slaves were equivalent to ninth layer True Martial cultivators in the empire.

Besides the three ninth-level brute slaves, the other Magi Brute experts were all below the ninth-level.

Their combined powers wouldn't be enough to deal with the elite students from Blood Kill Camp yet they look so fearless. It's very abnormal that they chose such an easily noticeable location to set up a camp but also captured so many empire soldiers. They don't need to openly torture the empire soldiers. They seemed to be deliberately cutting off the flesh of the empire soldiers in front of everyone. But why would they do that?

A thought struck Lin Xun's mind. It's a trap! Their purpose is to lure empire cultivators to jump out to save the soldiers!

Lin Xun felt goosebumps knowing that he almost jumped out and exposed himself.

The trap wasn't sophisticated and could be described as simple and rough, but who would be able to think clearly after seeing Magi Brute experts slaughter empire soldiers?

Lin Xun's face was ice cold. He drew several deep breaths to suppress his anger and murderous intent. Then, he patiently waited.

The wait was torturous.

After the youngster was slaughtered and his body was cooked in the iron pot, an even more cruel scene followed. His flesh and blood were served on a plate and became food for other Magi Brute experts in the camp!

Lin Xun felt an impulse to charge into the camp several times when he saw the bloody and barbaric scene. But his rationality told him that, if he did so, he would fall into a trap and might even fail to save anyone.

The intense conflict between his rationality and emotions tortured his mind like fire. He had to clench his teeth and control his impulse with all his powers.

Soon, night fell.

The bonfire burned fiercely in the camp, becoming more and more eye-catching. It was as though they didn't care that enemies could be watching them.

That night, the Magi Brute experts again slaughtered three captured empire soldiers in the same way.

Lin Xun quietly watched. He watched intently. He wanted to remember everything. He couldn't miss any little details!

Lin Xun finally understood why there was unresolved hatred between the empire and the Magi Brute Race because no one could forgive such crimes!



Dawn broke but nothing changed in the camp. No empire cultivator jumped out, which seemed to disappoint the Magi Brute experts.

Just when the Magi Brute man was about to slaughter another empire soldier, someone stopped him.

It was a middle-aged man at the ninth-level Brute Slave. His eyes were a dazzling gold and he clearly was from the Gold Brute Tribe.

“It seems that there are no human bastards nearby.”

The middle-aged man made a strange and obscure long whistle.

Before his whistle died away, eight figures suddenly emerged on the mountain behind the camp. In the blink of an eye, they had already landed in the camp.

Lin Xun narrowed his eyes. The figures were all ninth-level Brute Slaves! They had been hiding and waiting for prey to walk into their trap!

The middle-aged man discussed with the other ninth-level Brute Slaves and, as though they had reached some kind of decision, seven ninth-level Brute Slaves left with a group of Magi Brute experts.

Only four ninth-level brute slaves and fourteen Magi Brute experts weaker than the ninth-level remained in the camp. The middle-aged man also stayed behind.

After lying in wait all night, Lin Xun felt murderous intent and anger that he had accumulated and forcibly suppressed for a long time suddenly bubbling like lava.

The opportunity is here!

.....

In the canyon camp, a ninth-level brute slave strode towards a cage and, with a lewd smile, dragged out a young woman. He pushed her to the ground and stripped her clothes.

The young woman screamed in terror and anger and tried to struggle free, but the ninth-level brute slave smiled smugly and pressed his body on hers.

“Dirty human bitch! It’s your honor that I’m playing with you! You dare to scream! You’re so ungrateful!”

The other Magi Brute experts in the camp roared with laughter.

The empire soldiers in the cages all roared with rage.

Just as the young woman was about to be raped, a shaft of light shot out and a piercing whistle rang in everyone’s ears.

It was an arrow fired with incredible speed. With a boom, it pierced through the brute slave’s shoulder and blasted him into the distance.

“Enemies attack!”

“Enemies attack!”

The camp was thrown into chaos. The group of Magi Brute experts roared and began to act.

Swoosh!

Lin Xun didn't evade at all. He charged directly into the camp, constantly swinging his Defeat Army Blade. He instantly killed the three Magi Brute experts in front, sending blood spurt everywhere.

Lin Xun didn't pause once. He quickly charged forward, his black hair fluttering in the air, his handsome face biting cold, and his dark eyes blazing with lava-like killing intent.

Die!

He felt his entire body was burning. Hatred and anger surged like raging waves in his heart. He brought out everything he had learned to its fullest.

He swung his blade!

At that moment, Lin Xun resembled a blade shooting out from the abyss. He killed with the most overbearing means and slaughtered with the coldest method.

Blood splattered in all directions.

Limbs flew everywhere.

Tragic screams rang endlessly.

It was as though Lin Xun didn't realize that he only had one thought in his mind: to kill all the wicked Magi Brute bastards!

The camp was in utter chaos. Who would have thought that a youngster would use such cold-blooded and terrifying fighting means?

He was completely different from the Black Wind Army soldiers who they had seen before. He was too terrifying!

Bang!

Lin Xun's arm suddenly felt numb and he saw his Defeat Army Blade was blocked. A ninth-level brute slave appeared opposite him, wielding a huge hammer. The brute slave suddenly charged toward him.

Lin Xun didn't dodge and met the attacker head-on. The heavy hammer struck his shoulder and his body swayed a little but he continued to charge forward. He thrust his blade into the opponent's stomach and suddenly made a twisting motion. Violent aeth power gushed forth and blasted the opponent away like a piece of paper. The brute slave died an instant violent death.

The battle of life and death made many Magi Brute experts feel a chill in their hearts as they trembled inwardly.

Where did the youngster come from?

So terrifying!

Lin Xun felt a throbbing pain in his shoulder as if his bones about to shatter, but he didn't seem to care. He raised his blade and continued to charge forward. He looked as tough and ruthless as the god of death.

"Hurry and capture him!"

"Everyone!"

Amidst furious roars, Magi Brute experts constantly charged forward, trying to surround and kill Lin Xun. However...

It was destined to be futile. Since training in Blood Kill Camp, Lin Xun's strength had reached an astonishing level. Even most ninth layer True Martial cultivators were no match for him.

For example, Wen Mingxiu, Xiao Kun, and Hu Long were all extremely outstanding and possessed a cultivation base at the pinnacle ninth layer True Martial Stage yet they still miserably lost to Lin Xun.

Furthermore, Lin Xun hadn't started to practice the Mystery Grotto Devour Wilderness Scripture when he fought Xiao Kun!

Now, not even Instructor Xiaoke could tell how strong Lin Xun had become!

Under such circumstances, it would be useless if the Magi Brute experts tried to take advantage of their numbers to deal with Lin Xun.

Die!

Magi Brute experts were killed one after another, and corpses were quickly piled high on the ground.

On the other side of the camp, the empire soldiers in the cages were dumbfounded watching the battle.

The demon-like youngster bathed in blood was their savior but he seemed as unbelievable and unreal as a dream.

## Chapter 155 Heavenly Water Sacred Bead

The battle was over in three minutes.

Lin Xun's body was riddled with wounds; the most serious amongst them from a strike to his shoulder. However, after nearly half a year of training in Kill Blood Camp, such wounds were nothing to Lin Xun.

His clothes were drenched in blood but most of it belonged to his enemies. The blood paired with his cold face made him give off an invisible heart-palpating aura.

Blood dripped from his blade. The enemies had all been killed and the ground was littered with corpses and bloody patches.

However, even all this failed to quench the burning hatred in Lin Xun's heart.

Man-eaters!

They're lower than animals!

The inhumane acts these brutes had committed against the empire's soldiers had eternally damned them as beasts in Lin Xun's heart!

A wave of cheers suddenly erupted, breaking the austere atmosphere.

The imprisoned empire soldiers had recovered from their shock and could not help but cheer emotionally.

Everyone's faces were filled with various emotions such as gratitude and excitement.

They knew that they were finally saved from this nightmare-like encounter!

However, this sight did not make Lin Xun the least bit happy.

Demon Cloud Ridge was humongous and had been a war zone between the empire and the brute race for many years. It was impossible for similar incidents to have only happened a handful of times.

In fact, it was likely that the same thing was occurring at this very moment in every war zone between the empire and the brute race!

Lin Xun understood that this was the reality of war. What he needed to do was to get used to it and deal with it the best he could.

.....

Under Lin Xun's arrangement, the twenty or so empire soldiers that had been captured managed to leave the camp supporting each other.

Lin Xun stayed behind.

As a temporary camp set up by the brute race, there were quite a number of goods here such as ores and herbs. There were also weapons like bows and swords.

Lin Xun began to move. He first cut off the brute totem runes from the twenty-three dead brute experts before picking out any weapons and herbs he could use.

In the end, Lin Xun hung the brute experts' corpses on sharp wooden stakes like scarecrows exposed to the elements.

Although it was very cruel, it was a form of intimidation and warning.

Eh?

When Lin Xun hung the last ninth-level Brute Slave's corpse on a wooden stake, a bead had dropped from its mouth.

The bead was the size of a pigeon egg. It had a crystalline appearance and gave off a bewitching blue glow. Sea-like qi seemed to heave inside of it as if it contained an entire ocean, making anyone who looked at it feel an aura of mysterious vastness.

Lin Xun picked it up and immediately felt a bone-chilling cold burrow into his body. He shivered uncontrollably, feeling as if his qi had been frozen to slush.

What a strange bead!

Lin Xun's eyes narrowed. This toy was likely some treasure, but he was unable to decipher its abilities for the time being.

He looked at the ninth-level Brute Slave corpse again and faintly recalled that it belonged to a leader-like figure in the camp.

A treasure found on such a person was likely no ordinary article.

After some contemplation, Lin Xun kept the mysterious blue bead in his storage ring. He planned to properly study it when he had time in the future.

Having done all this, Lin Xun packed up and stealthily left the camp.

The seven ninth-level Brute Slave expert returned less than fifteen minutes after Lin Xun left, accompanied by an additional member: a brute race elder in strange clothes.

The elder was tanned and thin and carried a bone staff made from the fang of a savage beast. If anyone familiar with the brute race was present, they would be able to recognize that the elder was dressed in the garb of a totem shaman, which represented his superior status and identity.

When the group returned to the camp, they were furious and alarmed to discover the corpses of their comrades hanging from stakes, causing them to curse out loud.

A brute expert returned from his investigation of the camp and reported with an enraged expression, "Shaman Ye Ling, they're all dead...it must have been the handiwork of those human experts."

"You bunch of useless fools!" The thin tanned elder called Shaman Ye Ling angrily cursed, "What are you guys still standing around for? Go and find Ba Tong!"

Ba Tong?

The brute experts were stunned before their expressions rapidly changed as if realizing something. They immediately set off and swiftly identified the corpse which belonged to the middle-aged leader of the camp.

One of the brute experts pried open Ba Tong's mouth and carefully inspected it before crying out, "No! My clan's Heavenly Water Sacred Bead is missing!"

Shaman Ye Ling's entire body shook as his eyes gleamed an intimidating night-blue. He quickly walked towards the corpse and ruthlessly stabbed his bone staff into its heart.

Squelch!

Night-blue light pulsed along the staff and surged into the corpse as if searching for something.

A long time later, Shaman Ye Ling's body jerked and he withdrew his staff. Beads of sweat dotted his forehead and his tanned, gaunt face was slightly pale.

"Useless! All of you are useless!"

Shaman Ye Ling roared, "Do you know how dearly our Water Tribe paid to take this treasure back from the humans? After painstakingly succeeding, everything ends up falling apart in your hands, you guys...have committed an unpardonable crime!"

The seven Brute Slave experts repeatedly kowtowed in terror.

They likewise never expected such a sudden turn of events despite the high secrecy of this matter. To safely transport this treasure back, they had not even dared to dispatch any powerful experts and had chosen to go through the complex terrain of Demon Cloud Ridge to avoid drawing the human experts' attention.

Who could have imagined that the thing that they didn't want to see the most would happen?!

What do they do now?

The brute experts felt terrified at the thought of their sacred treasure being stolen back by the humans due to their negligence.

If the tribe were to mete out punishment, none of them would live to see another day!

One of the brute experts took a deep breath and said, "Shaman Ye Ling, according to my findings, the battle occurred not too long ago. Moreover, from the traces left behind, the culprit is likely a single individual. We might be able to save this if we act quickly!"

Shaman Ye Ling aggressively waved his bone staff and roared, "Then hurry up and go!"

The seven brute experts immediately moved out, not daring to delay a moment longer as they spread out and searched in different directions.

Shaman Ye Ling scolded again, "What a bunch of useless trash!"

No matter how angry he was, he couldn't think of a better plan. He could only wait and hope that they would find a trail as soon as possible.

The Heavenly Water Sacred Bead was the Water Tribe's sacred treasure, which had been lost to humans several hundred years ago. How could they lose it again after managing to get it back?

It was absolutely not allowed!

.....

A spear-wielding brute expert flew towards a hill behind the camp. Just as he was about to reach the summit, a bloody smell suddenly entered his nostrils, causing his eyes to narrow as he jerked his head to the side.

The smell of blood was drifting out from some rocks there.

An ominous light flashed in the brute expert's eyes as he carefully approached. However, he was surprised to find only a single bloody arm behind the rocks.

Shit!

It's a trap!

The brute expert's reaction was undeniably quick, instantly realizing that something was wrong. Just as he began to dodge to the side, he suddenly felt a chill up his back as a blade was thrust into his heart.

"Urgh...mhm..." The brute expert's eyes bulged from their sockets as he tried to yell. However, only a weak sound was emitted from his throat as he silently crumpled to the ground.

Lin Xun appeared behind like a phantom, extracted the blade, and cut off the brute totem rune from the other party's chest.

Lin Xun looked down before his figure leaped into the air and headed in another direction.

Shaman Ye Ling was pacing up and down in the camp, feeling inexplicably irritable as if something bad was about to happen.

However, he did not dare to leave. Although a Totem Shaman had high status, they were not adept at combat.

He did not notice the figure stealthily approaching from the shadow of the valley near the camp.

Twang!

The whistle of an arrow broke the silence in the camp, causing Shaman Ye Ling's heart to jump. He instinctively threw himself to the side and a sharp arrow brushed past his scalp. It viciously struck the ground, releasing a spray of dirt and rocks.

Shaman Ye Ling crashed into the ground and quickly touched his head. The blood he found on his fingertips made his heart turn cold. If he had reacted just a split second slower...

"The culprit is here!" He howled in fear as he flipped to his feet and dashed away.

Lin Xun frowned in the shadow of the valley nearby, knowing that the opportunity was gone. He kept the bow without hesitation and turned around to leave.

The six brute experts, who had scattered to search, soon returned. Their expressions changed when they saw Shaman Ye Ling's disheveled appearance.

"Quick give chase! That damned human trash fled in that direction!" Shaman Ye Ling pointed in a certain direction, his gaunt face filled with resentment.

A sinister-looking man whose face was covered in scars instructed, "Shui Zheng, you three stay with Shaman Ye Ling to protect him. The three of us will pursue that human expert."

Someone could not help but say, "Big Bro Lie Ke, Mu Zhen isn't back yet."

"I believe he won't be coming back." The scar-face man called Lie Ke's eyes flickered in thought, his expression filled with hatred, "Our enemy is very crafty and is likely a young expert from Ziyao Empire's Blood Kill Camp. Only those youngsters are capable of such feats in Demon Cloud Ridge. Everyone must be more careful!"

After leaving this warning, he led two experts to give chase.

"No matter how great the price, we must seize back our sacred treasure!" Shaman Ye Ling loudly roared behind them. Blood dripped down his scalp, creating an exceptionally eerie sight.

Chapter 156 I'm Called Shui Zhi

Lie Ke and the other two brute experts came to a stop when a forest appeared before them.

Forests were one of the most terrifying places in Demon Cloud Ridge. They were filled with poisonous miasma, various strange and frightening venomous insects, and ferocious beasts.

Under normal circumstances, neither the human nor brute experts would willingly enter.

"Lie Ke, do we continue?" One of the brute experts asked with a grave expression.

Lie Ke swiftly enquired, "Are we certain the culprit's trail leads into this forest?"

The other brute expert answered in a low voice, "There should be no mistake. I've been following his presence since the beginning and although he is adept at concealing his traces, the unique scent he left behind cannot hide from my nose."

He was called Shui Zi and specialized in tracking and assassination. The cultivation method he practiced could lock onto the unique scent of an enemy.

"Chase!" Lie Ke cast aside all hesitation with a wave of his hand and led the way by charging into the miasma-filled forest.

.....

The dark forest was like a giant maze. Mists filled the air, making it extremely easy for someone to lose their sense of direction.

It was also extremely dangerous. Poisonous toads could be hidden in the shrubbery, beautiful flowers could instantly transform into giant bloody mouths which could devour any passerby, and the thick chain-like vines could easily be a snake in disguise.

The environment here was strange and treacherous. Even the seemingly solid ground could instantly transform into a giant swamp which emitted a suction force that even a Spirit Dipper expert would be powerless against.

Not only did the Lie Ke trio fail to immediately find Lin Xun's trail, but they also instead found themselves in dangerous situations several times. If not for their quick reactions, they might have lost their lives there and then.

This made their expressions become increasingly grave and alert. They were beginning to regret entering this dangerous and unpredictable forest.

One of the brute experts asked, "Lie Ke, this forest is too bizarre. Could the culprit have died already?"

"He's not dead!" The one who answered was Shui Ze. His gaze was locked into a certain spot in the distance, "I can still detect his scent and it leads somewhere nearby. We've almost caught up to him!"



“Continue chasing. We cannot lose our sacred treasure!” The hesitation in Lie Ke’s heart was dispelled as he gritted his teeth and pushed forward.

Moments later.

Shui Ze came to a stop and noiselessly signed to the other two to stop as well before he looked towards a certain thick ancient tree in the distance.

The other two immediately understood and gripped their weapons as a chilling light flashed in their eyes.

The trio silently spread out and approached. When there were only a hundred feet left to the target——

“Kill!”

The trio charged forward, dashing towards the tree from three different directions.

However, their prepared attacks completely whiffed. There was only empty space behind the tree and a bloody rag in the bushes which had clearly been torn off from someone’s clothes.

Oh no!

In mid-air, the trio’s expressions changed slightly as unease bubbled within them.

Beng! Beng! Beng!

A series of explosion-like arrow sounds seemed to seize their souls like a call from the underworld.

Lie Ke immediately twisted his body and curled up in the air like a porcupine, allowing him to shift his trajectory mid-air.

Bang!

An arrow brushed past his body and pierced a tree, causing a spray of splinters before it struck the ground with a loud and terrifying bang.

Lie Ke landed on the ground and found himself drenched in sweat. The archer’s timing was nearly impeccable, choosing the split second when they could not avoid in mid-air. He had felt like a live target and if he had not taken evasive maneuvers in time, the outcome would have been unimaginable.

“AHH——!” A blood-curdling scream rang out.

Lie Ke immediately turned his head and saw an arrow embedded in Shui Ze’s right eye. The arrow had pierced right through his head and dripped with viscous blood and brain fluids, creating a nauseating sight.

With a loud thump, Shui Ze fell to the ground and died.

Lie Ke’s eyes nearly popped from their sockets, wishing he could wrangle the hidden culprit’s neck.

Before he could move, the whistle of another arrow rang out, causing him to shiver as he instinctively threw himself to the side.

Lie Ke roared, “Mu Qu, are you okay?”

"I'm...I'm fine." The other brute expert uncertainly shouted back a hundred feet away. His face was slightly pale.

He was backing away as if he was facing a hidden demon that was ready to pounce and devour him.

After retreating about seventy feet, the ground below his feet suddenly softened and he sunk into it with a splash.

The ground churned like a vortex, releasing a terrifying pulling force that made it impossible for him to escape.

Horried, the brute expert yelled, "Big Bro Lie Ke, save me!"

"Damnit!" Lie Ke was furious. He tried to approach but was immediately forced back by a volley of arrows.

"Mu Qu! Hold on!" Lie Ke's entire body shook with anger as he roared. He kept trying to move but was repeatedly forced back by sharp and merciless arrows.

Amidst this, he could only watch helplessly as Mu Qu's body continued to sink into the mud and ultimately disappeared with one final despairing cry.

"Come out you human scum! Get your ass out here now!" Lie Ke released a thunderous roar like a wild beast that had gone mad.

His two companions had died in less than fifteen minutes but the enemy was still nowhere to be seen. This made Lie Ke feel as if he was about to go crazy from frustration.

However, no matter how Lie Ke howled, the forest remained deathly silent. There were no more arrows. It was as if the enemy had already vanished.

Moments later, Lie Ke rapidly gasped for breath. He felt as if he was on the verge of crumbling.

Two of his companions had been killed without even seeing the enemy's appearance. The operation to take back their sacred treasure had ended in complete failure...

It was an outcome Lie Ke could not accept.

"I must report to Shaman Ye Ling as soon as possible. Only by notifying more elite warriors will we have a chance to save the situation. The culprit...must die!!!" Lie Ke gritted his teeth as resolve flashed in his eyes.

He could not bother to think why the enemy had not killed him as well...

.....

Lin Xun was fleeing.

When he was preparing to give Lie Ke the final blow, Lin Xun suddenly felt a sliver of intense danger. This immediately made him abandon everything and turn around to flee.

Lin Xun sprinted through the thick fog, leaving after-images and a swirling trail of mist in his wake.

He did not need to turn around to know that his enemy was still following him. The danger felt like a dagger on his back and had not decreased at all.

Lin Xun knew that he had encountered a true expert this time.

It made him recall Shi Yu's evaluation of the battle zone test before coming to Demon Cloud Ridge.

To the empire and the brute race, Demon Cloud Ridge was merely a soldier training facility. It was a place where their young experts could understand their opponents via real battle.

In other words, Blood Kill Camp's 237 students in Demon Cloud Ridge were very likely to encounter young experts from the brute race who were definitely not the least bit inferior to them!

Although Lin Xun did not know whether the person who was pursuing him was one of these elites, he understood that he was already at a disadvantage before the battle even began.

He had not rested since he entered the temporary camp set up by the brute experts. He had been constantly on the move even until he lured Lie Ke and the other two brute experts into the forest.

Lin Xun had originally planned to kill the trio and return to the camp to eliminate the rest of them.

However, his plan had now been disrupted.

Lin Xun took a deep breath and gauged his current condition. He estimated that he had used nearly half of his energy and there were several wounds on his body.

Normally speaking, these wounds and energy consumption would be inconsequential. However, they put him at a disadvantage against a true expert.

"I need to lose this guy as soon as I can. Otherwise, the situation will become increasingly unfavorable for me..."

Lin Xun took a deep breath, cast aside all unnecessary thoughts, and pushed his speed to the maximum.

.....

A slim and healthy figure confidently advanced through the forest. Every step covered over a hundred feet, making his speed astonishing despite his seemingly slow movements.

It was a young man with bronze skin and very handsome facial features. He had a high nose, deep-set eyes, and a pair of long straight sword-like eyebrows. All of this together with his thin blade-like lips gave off a feeling of prettiness.

His eyes were especially enchanting. They looked like a pair of whirlpools that would occasionally flash a peculiar blue.

If Shaman Ye Ling was present, he would definitely recognize this young man. He was the most outstanding individual amongst the younger generation of the Water Tribe, one of the heaven pride leaders, and a ninth level Brute Slave, Shui Zhi

Shui Zhi wielded an ordinary-looking short bronze blade and strikingly resembled a healthy cheetah as he zipped through the woods.

Shui Zhi's eyes suddenly shone as an icy smile formed on his lips, "Heh heh, it seems that the heavens are helping me."

He dived forward like an eagle, moving so quickly that he caused a series of sonic booms.

After a few breaths, his figure came to a halt because his target had already appeared in front of him.

It was a tall and handsome young man who was currently engaged in battle with a blood-horn python whose body was as thick as a bucket.

Shui Zhi arrived just in time to see the young man stab his blade into the blood-horn python's head, killing it.

"My luck is pretty bad today." The young man turned his head and sighed when he saw Shui Zhi.

It was naturally Lin Xun.

He was indeed rather unlucky. While running, he had unexpectedly bumped into a blood-horn python, leaving him no choice but to draw his blade and fight.

This slight delay had allowed his enemy to catch up.

"I'm called Shui Zhi and I'm from the Water Brute Tribe." Shui Zhi was in no hurry to fight. Instead, he smiled faintly, revealing a set of pearly-white teeth as he introduced himself.

"My only goal for coming to Demon Cloud Ridge is to kill more Blood Kill Camp students."

His ordinary voice gave off a heart-palpitating aura of cold cruelty.

#### Chapter 157 A Battle of Ruthlessness

As Shui Zhi spoke, he revealed two tokens with a flip of his hand.

"These are from two Blood Kill Camp students I killed three days ago. Do you know them?" Shui Zhi asked. The smile on his pretty-boy face would make anyone who saw it shiver uncontrollably.

Lin Xun looked over and confirmed that the two tokens were from Blood Kill Camp students. It was impossible to falsify the tokens.

Also smiling, Lin Xun casually wiped off the blood on his blade and remarked, "You seem to be rather proud of yourself?"

The two individuals were separated by only a hundred feet. Although they looked like two friends casually chatting, the atmosphere was strangely suffocating.

The miasma in the forest seemed incapable of enduring the suffocating pressure any longer and suddenly scattered in all directions.

"The stronger the opponent, the prouder I will feel when I kill them. These two were not worthy."

Shui Zhi waved the two tokens in his hand as a smile blossomed on his thin lips, "Do you think killing you will make me feel proud?"

He kept the two tokens and began to toy with his bronze short-blade as killing intent stealthily crept out in his night-blue whirlpool-like eyes.

The atmosphere turned increasingly oppressive as a terrifying pressure spread from Shui Zhi's slim body.

"Why so much nonsense when you're going to kill me? I'd like to ask my own question as well. Do you agree when I say you're lacking in the intelligence department?"

Lin Xun stood straight as he smiled and looked at Shui Zhi. The aura around Lin Xun's body was akin to a volcano that was about to erupt at any moment.

"Haha." Shui Zhi laughed loudly, "Such tricks might work on brainless idiots, but it is laughable to use them on me."

Lin Xun earnestly replied, "I don't think it's funny. In my view, you're a complete dumbass and can't be much stronger than your so-called brainless idiots."

Shui Zhi asked, "Oh? Shall we compare our skills then?"

"Stupid, do you even need to ask?" Lin Xun had already drawn his blade and dashed forward.

Swoosh!

A sharp blade sliced through the air at a precise and vicious angle; it was a simple and direct attack.

Lin Xun had been constantly probing the other party during their brief conversation, hoping to find an opening. However, it had ultimately been a fruitless endeavor. This made Lin Xun realize that this opponent was very different from the norm and battle was probably the only place he would have any chance of finding an opening.

"You look like you're in a rush. Could you have used up too much energy and plan to end this as quickly as you can?"

Shui Zhi softly chuckled as a cold and cruel smile rose from the corners of his lips. At the same time, his body also dashed forward.

Bzz!

His blade emitted a peculiar hum as if excited to feast on fresh blood as it also hacked towards its opponent in the most simplest and direct manner.

Lin Xun did not dodge and the blade instantly penetrated his right shoulder with a shlick, causing a spurt of blood.

Shui Zhi was slightly taken aback. Soon after, his eyes narrowed as he subconsciously attempted to continue pushing the blade through with a roar.

However, Lin Xun had already taken the opportunity to charge into Shui Zhi's chest and execute a twisting thrust from the Defeat Army Blade, leaving a bloody wound on his chest.

It was a fighting style where you intentionally received an attack to deal damage!

Shui Zhi had never imagined that Lin Xun would engage in such a vicious and crazy tactic from the start.

However, Lin Xun had also underestimated Shui Zhi's response. If it was anyone else, they would have probably opted to avoid first and try to take things slow in this situation.

Shui Zhi had not done so. After receiving the attack, he stifled a groan and exerted force through his bronze short blade. The blade ripped apart Lin Xun's left shoulder, tearing off a chunk of flesh to reveal the eerie white bone beneath.

At the same time, Shui Zhi's right arm ruthlessly smashed at Lin Xun's head.

Comparing who is more vicious?

I, Shui Zhi, have never been afraid of anyone!

In an instant, the two individuals exchanged over a dozen blows in close quarters. The bronze short blade and the Defeat Army Blade ferociously clashed, both pulsing with an air of reckless desperation.

Blood continuously splattered as alarming wounds rapidly appeared on both of their bodies. However, neither party showed any substantial change in expression.

In fact, neither of them made any noise either.

From a distance, it looked like two ruffians were competing to see who was tougher. Although their moves were simple, a true expert would understand how terrifying the battle actually was.

It was not a contest of technique but guts and resolve!

Thud!

Moments later, the two combatants suddenly separated.

Lin Xun's entire body was covered in blood and wounds, and the rapidly flowing blood made him seem as if he was a blood man. However, his handsome face was cold and impassive and his emotionless eyes seemed to flash like lightning.

On the other side, Shui Zhi's hair was messily scattered and his body was also riddled with wounds. His pretty-boy face was ice-cold as if he had no emotion.

Sparks flew as the two individuals' gazes clashed. With cold snorts, they charged forward again to engage in close combat.

Thud thud thud!

There were no screams and no conversation, only the dull thud of objects colliding, the sound of blood spurting and metal slicing into flesh.

These noises did not give off any pressure but they did give rise to fear and made people's scalps turn numb.

It was a battle where life and death would be determined by mere inches and any slight delay in response might lead to death.

At the same time, it was also a very unique and rare fight. Both parties displayed similar strength, technique, resolve, and battle instinct. Otherwise, such a situation would never have occurred.

After all, a slightly weaker or less strong-willed person would have been killed long ago!

Fifteen minutes later.

The two combatants split off once again.

Lin Xun panted heavily, and some of his long, bloody hair was stuck to his face. His body resembled a beehive that had been pierced full of holes. There were too many wounds to count and bone was even visible in some places.

On the other hand, Shui Zhi was in a similar state.

Anyone else would feel like escaping in such circumstances. Or their wills would have crumbled, making them give up.

However, neither Lin Xun's nor Shui Zhi's had wavered even the slightest from start to end.

Their eyes were tightly locked onto each other with both seeing the other's killing intent and will to fight.

Both of them knew that whoever fell first would lose.

Such a person can't be allowed to live!

The same thought flashed in their heads.

From this, it was clear that both individuals had already recognized the other as a true threat that needed to be eliminated as quickly as possible to prevent potential problems in the future.

However, just as they prepared to attack again, the sound of rushing wind was heard from the distant forest. Something was rapidly approaching them.

Both individuals' pupils shrank slightly as their gazes collided once more as if saying: the next time we meet will be your death!

The two backed away in unison.

Neither party could determine who was coming and neither dared to bet it was their ally. Hence, they did not hesitate to withdraw.

A group of figures soon appeared and found Lin Xun's and Shui Zhi's battlefield. It was Shaman Ye Ling, Lie Ke, and the others.

"It's Shui Zhi's aura!"

"He must have fought against the enemy!"

One of the brute experts exclaimed, managing to sniff out Shui Zhi's scent from the traces on the battlefield.

"He must have found the culprit." Shaman Ye Ling's expression sank, "We were a step late."

"How hateful!" Lie Ke ground his teeth. They had not dared to make any noise while they approached. Who could have expected that their arrival had spoiled Shui Zhi's battle?

“The culprit should have been seriously injured and escaped in that direction!” Shaman Ye Ling pointed in a certain direction, “Shui Zhi probably fled in another direction. It must have been because he was also gravely injured. Otherwise, he would never have left like this.”

“Shaman Ye Ling, where should we go? Do we save Shui Zhi or continue pursuing the culprit?” Lie Ke was uncertain what their next course of action should be.

Shui Zhi was one of the outstanding geniuses of the younger generation who was supremely talented and was highly regarded by the higher-ups in the tribe. If something unfortunate happened to him in this dangerous forest because of his injuries, the consequences would be dire.

However, they absolutely could not give up on chasing the culprit either because he had the Water Tribe’s sacred treasure. How could they allow the enemy to take away their supreme treasure?

“We go after the culprit!” The one to answer was not Ye Ling but Shui Zhi, who suddenly emerged from the forest. He had returned.

The sight of him made those present both excited and alarmed. He was in really bad shape, with countless wounds dotting every corner of his body and blood still rapidly flowing from them.

“What are you guys still standing around for? Quickly go and chase him!” Shui Zhi was slightly pissed. If these idiots had not suddenly arrived and interrupted the battle, Lin Xun might have already been slain.

Lie Ke and the others returned to their senses. They gritted their teeth, turned around, and dashed into the forest.

Only Shaman Ye Ling stayed behind. He worriedly looked at Shui Zhi, “Shui Zhi, your injuries...”

“I’m fine.” Shui Zhi frostily interrupted. Clearly peeved, he asked, “Why did you guys appear here? Do you know that your arrival ruined things for me!”

Shaman Ye Ling displayed a bitter expression, “That person killed several of our tribesmen but more importantly, he stole our sacred treasure, the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead!”

“What!”

A chilling light shot from Shui Zhi’s eyes as his expression darkened, “What a bunch of useless idiots! Why did you not report such important news earlier!?”

Shaman Ye Ling’s expression grew increasingly bitter, “There are many of the empire’s soldiers in Demon Cloud Ridge. If news of the sacred treasure got out, things would become too problematic.”

Shui Zhi coldly said, “More like you’re afraid of the tribe’s punishment!”

Shaman Ye Ling fell silent. Shui Zhi had identified his greatest worry.

Shui Zhi took a deep breath and commanded, “Send out a signal to tell all the water tribe experts in Demon Cloud Ridge to gather here immediately! We must take back the sacred treasure this time at all cost!”

Shaman Ye Ling’s expression changed drastically, “We cannot. It will create too huge of a disturbance and draw too much attention!”



Shui Zhi retorted, "Who cares about such things as long as we seize back the sacred treasure?"

His attitude was firm.

Shaman Ye Ling's expression changed indeterminately for a long time. In the end, he gritted his teeth, retrieved a black bone horn, and placed it on his lips.

Woowoowoo~~

Black circular light rippled from the horn and stealthily spread in all directions.

Chapter 158 Like Moths to the Flame

Pant~~Pant~~

Lin Xun sprinted at full speed as his breathing grew increasingly ragged. Blood flowed from wounds all over his body, causing his face to turn scarily pale as if his skin had turned transparent.

Most importantly, he was exhausted and was dangerously close to touching his breaking point.

The dizzy feeling in his head grew increasingly strong, making it very difficult for him to maintain a clear mind. He knew that he would instantly fall unconscious the moment he allowed himself to slip.

Escape!

Lin Xun gritted his teeth. Blood Kill Camp's abnormal and cruel training allowed him to display an insane amount of willpower and tenacity at this critical juncture.

Meanwhile, he swiftly took out the herbs and medicines he had gathered over the past few days and crammed them all into his mouth, hoping he could somehow replenish a little of his reserves.

A help-calling whistle hung in front of his chest. He only needed to give it a blow and help would soon arrive.

However, Lin Xun did not touch the whistle. Blowing it meant giving up and he would be eliminated from Blood Kill Camp. He would not allow himself to fail at this juncture.

It was only the eighth day since he entered Demon Cloud Ridge. How could he possibly admit defeat?

Lin Xun suddenly burst out of the forest and a barren mountain range appeared in front of him.

Not a single blade of grass could be seen on the mountains. The barren rocks seemed infused with a scarlet-red glow and emitted searing white mist.

Lin Xun quickly scanned the area as he continued to advance. He had begun to stumble and felt increasingly dizzy as a buzzing noise filled his head.

The battle had been too much for him. Not only had he sustained grave injuries, but he had also exhausted nearly all of his energy. Any brute expert could easily kill him in this condition.

His footsteps grew increasingly heavy as if they were filled with lead. Lin Xun headed towards a red peak from which lava flowed.

He needed to find a safe place to conceal himself. However, there seemed to be no such area at the moment.

The mountain was very hot and he felt as if he was in a furnace as he ascended. Any blood that dripped from Lin Xun's body instantly evaporated before it could touch the ground.

Heat seemed to pounce at him as his mind grew increasingly fuzzy, but he strongly persisted and endured. However, his heart abruptly turned cold when he finally reached the top.

It was the mouth of a volcano!

Dreadful fire-dragon-like lava roared as it surged below. Thick and hot mist rose like clouds, able to melt anything it came into contact with.

Lin Xun did not doubt that he would be instantly burned to ashes if he fell inside.

This path led only to death!

However, if he tried to turn back...

Lin Xun turned his head. He could faintly hear the sound of rushing wind from the bottom of the mountain.

Has the enemy already caught up?

A self-mocking smile rose from the corners of his lips. It was a dead-end!

"That guy is here!"

"Quickly!"

The voices rapidly approached, filled with a sinister excitement.

Lin Xun walked to the edge and looked down, his clothes about to catch fire at any moment. All he could see was the roaring and surging lava.

Did he have no choice but to jump?

Lin Xun's eyes rapidly darted back and forth. He refused to give up despite the seemingly hopeless situation.

He began to comb his storage ring to see if there was anything he could use...but there was nothing!

"Little shit, not running anymore?" A resentful voice sounded behind him.

Lin Xun looked back and saw that Lie Ke and several brute experts had appeared about two hundred feet away.

However, their expressions changed slightly when they saw Lin Xun at the edge of the volcano. They did not dare to come any closer, fearing that he would jump.

This was immediately caught by Lin Xun's keen eyes. He took several deep breaths to maintain his last bit of clarity and croaked, "Should I admire your tenacity or curse your stubbornness?"

Lie Ke replied, "No more nonsense. Hand over my tribe's sacred treasure and I might let you live. Otherwise, you will definitely die here today!"

Sacred treasure?

Lin Xun was stunned, "What sacred treasure?"

Lie Ke was enraged. He jabbed his finger at Lin Xun and said, "Are still unwilling to admit it till the end? You're asking for death!"

Something suddenly dawned upon Lin Xun, "You guys were chasing me because of that sacred treasure?"

Lie Ke sneered, "Did you think your life is worth anything?"

Lin Xun suddenly twirled his palm and a blue egg-sized bead appeared, glowing dreamily in his hand.

It felt as if he held a vast ocean in his hand and it gave off a mysterious and mighty aura.

Lin Xun asked, "This thing?"

Excitement flooded Lie Ke's and the others' faces as their breathing turned ragged. Unconcealable greed surged in their eyes.

Lin Xun instantly realized that the mysterious bead he had picked up was an amazing sacred treasure.

"Quickly hand it over!" Lie Ke was almost unable to stop himself from dashing forward to snatch it away.

Lin Xun extended his arm over the volcano. All it would take was a tiny movement for the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead to fall in.

"You dare!" Lie Ke was alarmed and immediately froze in his tracks.

The other brute experts also began to panic. If the bead was swallowed by the volcano, they won't be able to take it back!

"Why shouldn't I?" Lin Xun retorted, "I'm going to die anyway if you guys catch me. I might as well have this bead as company."

"You..." Lie Ke's felt extremely anxious as he hurriedly said, "Calm down. As long as you hand over the treasure, we will promise to let you go. How about it?"

"I will never believe a promise from you brutes." Lin Xun shook his head.

"Then what can be done for you to hand our sacred treasure over?" Lie Ke's eyes nearly popped from their sockets due to anger. He wished he could tear Lin Xun to pieces right there and then.

"Unless..." Just as Lin Xun was about to continue, trepidation suddenly flooded his heart. He immediately threw himself to the side and jumped into the volcano!

At the same time, a shadow dashed out from a boulder nearby like a bolt of lightning. However, it just barely missed Lin Xun by a split second.

The shadow was soon revealed to be Shui Zhi.

While Lin Xun and Lie Ke had been talking, Shui Zhi had stealthily approached with the intention of catching Lin Xun off guard and snatching away the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead.

However, even Shui Zhi had not expected Lin Xun to react so quickly and jump into the volcano without hesitation. Could he have already been resolved to die?

Shui Zhi fell to the ground on his butt with a thud and began to gasp for breath.

His injuries had not healed either. After spending so long preparing for the ambush, his entire body was racked with pain.

“No——!” Lie Ke and the others howled, their faces aghast.

How could they have imagined that such a thing would happen at the last moment after finally getting a chance to take back the sacred treasure?

Their minds went blank along with their expressions.

It’s over.

It’s all over!

Shui Zhi’s expression was also extremely ugly, and his pretty-boy face was ashen and stormy. He refused to believe that Lin Xun would give up on his life just like that.

How could someone like him die so easily?

Shaman Ye Ling soon arrived. When he was told what had happened, he revealed a relieved expression and sneered, “You’ve all been tricked!”

“What?” Everyone, including Shui Zhi, looked over.

“The Heavenly Water Sacred Bead is a sacred treasure of the Water Tribe and originated from ancient times. Do you guys think a mere volcano can destroy it?”

Shaman Ye Ling’s thin figure appeared at the edge of the volcano, his expression filled with ice-cold hatred, “If I’m not wrong, with our sacred treasure’s protection, that human shitbag didn’t instantly die either!”

Everyone else was stunned as their expressions began to fluctuate indeterminately.

“Does that mean we still have a chance to take back the sacred treasure?” Lie Ke asked in a trembling voice, finally seeing a ray of hope again.

Shaman Ye Ling sighed softly as his eyebrows scrunched together, “Although the volcano can’t do anything to the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead, none of us will survive jumping in. Only a Brute Warrior will not fear the lava.”

A Brute Warrior!

A Brute Warrior was comparable to a human Spirit Sea stage cultivator. It was impossible to find such an expert in Demon Cloud Ridge.

It was like Shi Yu had explained, Demon Cloud Ridge was merely a training ground. Although there were constant small-scale battles, neither the empire nor the brute race would dispatch true experts here.

Otherwise, Demon Cloud Ridge would lose its purpose as a training ground.

“What should we do?” Lie Ke and the others were clearly disappointed.

“We wait. I refuse to believe that he will camp there his whole life!” Shui Zhi declared in a determined voice, a vicious aura brewing between his brows, “Go gather people to guard this entire mountain. Do not let anyone else approach!”

“We shall do as Shui Zhi says.”

Shaman Ye Ling also understood that this was the only option they had in the current situation.

Shui Zhi took a deep breath, sat down, and began to meditate at the mouth of the volcano. He needed to recover from his wounds and replenish his energy as soon as possible.

.....

Rumble~~

Lava roared like an angry fire dragon as it released a terrifying heat.

There was a figure lying on a protruding boulder at the bottom of the volcano.

He was surrounded by a blue ball of rippling light. No matter how the surrounding lava churned, it was unable to approach the blue light.

The figure naturally belonged to Lin Xun who had fallen unconscious.

The rippling blue light was being given off by the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead he had tightly grasped in his hand.

It was like a barrier that protected him and prevented any lava or heat from approaching.

In his unconscious state, Lin Xun did not notice wisps of ice-cold blue light continuously drifting into his wounds and pouring into his body.

Lin Xun was dreaming. In his dream, he had returned to the day when the mountain prison was destroyed. He fell through the dark abyss as he helplessly watched a giant hand descend from the sky and engulf Mister Lu’s body...

Soon after, he saw Xia Zhi. She was looking back in the darkness as she softly said, “Lin Xun, you can’t die before I return...”

Lin Xun’s body suddenly turned rigid as he abruptly awakened and opened his eyes.

Chapter 159 Sacred Treasure’s Transformation

Lava howled like a rushing dragon.

Terrifying heat turned into mist as it rose into the sky from the mouth of the volcano.

Lin Xun was seated on a rock in the volcano but his entire body felt cool and comfortable.

He already had a rough grasp of the situation and had figured out that the glowing blue dome around him was emitted by the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead.

However...

Where was the bead?

Lin Xun had searched the area but failed to find the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead. This made him rather puzzled.

He soon realized that there was a blue flickering light floating beside the Omega Door in his mind-sea.

It glowed blue like the sea and gave off a feeling of vastness. It seemed to dance around the Omega Door, leaving behind a trail of beautiful rippling light.

“Could it have been subdued by the Omega Door?” Lin Xun was stunned. Why had the Water Brute Tribe’s sacred treasure appeared in this form in his mind-sea?

He did not understand.

However, he could clearly sense that the bead was continuously sprinkling light from his mind-sea which enveloped his body, creating a peculiar cooling qi flow.

It was the qi flow that stopped the surrounding lava from approaching. Moreover, it was repairing his wounds in an astonishing manner!

“What a magical bead!” Lin Xun sighed in amazement.

Before jumping into the volcano, Lin Xun had already felt the extraordinary power of the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead while he was facing Lie Ke and the other brute experts on the edge of the volcano.

When he grasped the bead, the burning heat of the volcano had instantly disappeared, bathing his body in a cooling and comfortable sensation.

It was this discovery that had made Lin Xun so fearless when he was facing Lie Ke and the others.

Unfortunately, the situation had suddenly changed before Lin Xun could think of a way out. In the end, he was forced to jump into the volcano.

It was not plunging to his death but a gamble by Lin Xun. He was gambling on the Heavenly Water Sacred Jewel’s power to help him find a way to survive.

The current circumstances proved that Lin Xun’s gamble had paid off!

“Those guys are definitely not going to leave. In fact, they might be waiting above...”

Lin Xun pondered for a while and soon came to a decision: try to recover first. He knew that hiding here was not a good long-term plan.

.....

Phew~

Lin Xun spat out a mouthful of murky air. With his legs crossed, he concentrated on circulating the Mystery Grotto Devour Wilderness Scripture.

He was completely focused on cultivating.

Lava roared and surged around him like tongues of flames dancing like waves. It was a sight that would stir the soul.

A stream of aeth qi soon began circulating in his body as his bones and muscles began to resonate to a unique rhythm.

Lin Xun suddenly discovered that his cultivation was astonishingly effective despite not using any pills.

In a few seconds, more and more aeth power accumulated in his body as it repeatedly cycled.

This was not all. Strands of a peculiar hot power appeared in his flesh and began to polish his tendons and refine his muscles.

Everything was progressing at a miraculous speed!

This bewildered Lin Xun even more because everything was going far too smoothly.

He had been gravely injured and did not have any medicine. How could a brief cultivation session yield such magical effects?

Lin Xun began to carefully inspect his body and soon discovered some clues.

It seemed to be related to the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead in his mind-sea. The blue light it emitted was continuously nourishing his body and replenishing his energy!

In addition, the Mystery Grotto Devour Wilderness Scripture and the four aeth power vortexes were also contributing.

After figuring it out, the last sliver of doubt in Lin Xun's heart was dispelled, allowing him to fully compose himself as he entered a deeper state of concentration.

.....

Demon Cloud Ridge had a complex terrain. The sky was covered with a thick layer of dust all year round and the topography was composed of forests, mountains, swamps, plains, and volcanoes; each area was filled with different types of dangers.

On a plain.

Shi Yu was panting heavily as he sat amidst a patch of bloody grass.

More than a dozen brute expert corpses were littered around him, their brute totem runes already removed.

"Damn, there were quite a few tough guys amongst them this time." Shi Yu cursed as he lay back in the grass. After the intense battle, he needed to compose himself and contemplate his next course of action.

“Third Young Master.” Li Qiu’s figure soon approached.

Shi Yu casually asked, “How did it go?”

“Still okay. One managed to escape.” Li Qiu squatted. There were several splatters of blood on his clothes and his hair was in a mess. He gave off a fierce and menacing aura.

“Not bad. At this rate, we only need to endure for three months and the army contributions we accumulate should ensure that we will not be eliminated.” Shi Yu nodded.

Li Qiu hesitated for a moment and said in a low voice, “However...I’ve discovered something off about the situation.”

“Oh.” Shi Yu’s eyes narrowed, “You’ve also noticed?”

Li Qiu instantly understood that Shi Yu had sensed this long ago and could not help but say, “Third Young Master, do you feel that the situation in Demon Cloud Ridge is more dangerous than before?”

Shi Yu took a deep breath as his eyes filled with iciness, “That’s right. There are much more experts than expected. If my guess is correct, the brute race’s nine tribes have dispatched many formidable characters from the younger generation. These people boast amazing combat ability and will give even us Kill Blood Camp students a tough fight. Encountering any of them will be very problematic.”

Li Qiu’s heart shuddered, “What are their intentions?”

Shi Yu sneered, “Of course to have competition with us Blood Kill Camp students to see who will ultimately survive and leave Demon Cloud Ridge.”

Shi Yu stood up and peered into the distance, “You can treat this test as a bout between the empire and the brute clan. However, the participants are the younger generation experts.”

After a pause, he continued, “At times, one of the ways to see whether a country is strong is to look at the strength of their younger generation. As the saying goes, when the youths are strong, the country is strong.”

Although it was not a passionate speech, these words filled Li Qiu with emotion. “If that’s the case, I’m becoming interested in killing more of those brute bastards!”

Shi Yu chuckled. He seemed to recall something as he frowned and said, “Did you notice that many water tribe experts have been gathering towards a certain direction over the past two days.”

Li Qiu nodded.

Shi Yu thoughtfully said, “Something big must be happening.”

Li Qiu asked, “Does the Third Young Master plan on taking a look?”

Shi Yu shook his head, “The more interesting it seems, the more we shouldn’t go. A big event will definitely cause big waves. It would be best to stay away from such affairs.”



Li Qiu was stunned. Soon, he smiled and said, "You are right. It's only been ten days since we entered Demon Cloud Ridge and there are still more than two months till the end of the exam. The most important goal, for now, is self-preservation and not to draw attention to ourselves."

Shi Yu praised, "Your thinking is exactly the same as mine."

Next, the two individuals began venturing deeper into the plain.

.....

On the same day, in a mountainous area.

Ning Meng's halberd thrust forward, ruthlessly piercing the last brute expert that was attacking him before flinging the corpse away.

"Fuck, too weak!" Ning Meng spat on the ground. He suddenly raised his head, frowning as puzzledly peered into the distance.

He could sense several water brute experts hurriedly traveling towards the west a few hundred feet away. Despite also sensing his presence, they showed no intent on approaching him.

This was the seventh time something like this had happened over the past two days.

Ning Meng could tell that something big must be happening in the western sector of Demon Cloud Ridge. Otherwise, there would not be so many water brute experts gathering there.

"Never mind, I shall not be a busybody." Ning Meng restrained his curiosity as he shook his head and headed in another direction.

He had made a bet with Shi Yu and Lin Xun and naturally would not take any risks. He needed to last till the end of the exam to win the bet, and the best way to do so was to steadily accumulate contributions

.....

Similar events occurred in the different sectors of Demon Cloud Ridge.

The other Blood Kill Camp students had also become aware of the strange situation.

However, most of them did not wish to involve themselves and opted to observe instead.

Only a small minority saw this as a potential opportunity and stealthily followed. Qi Can, Muo Leng, and the others were part of this group.

.....

Beside the mouth of the volcano.

Shui Zhi was currently cultivating.

Two days had passed. His wounds had already scabbed over and he was more or less recovered.

However, Lin Xun had yet to appear, causing Shui Zh to feel slightly vexed.

More than a hundred water tribe experts had gathered at the foot of the volcano over the past two days. They had set up a tight defensive perimeter around the volcano, forbidding anyone from entering.

However, many human experts had also been drawn over due to the huge commotion.

These human experts had concealed themselves near the volcano and clearly intended to take advantage of any chaos.

If the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead was not retrieved soon, the situation would only grow more and more problematic. When that happened, there would be too many variables when Lin Xun finally decided to appear!

Shaman Ye Ling walked over and worriedly said, "The situation is not good. Not only the humans, but even several experts from the other brute tribes have also come. There will be unnecessary trouble if they find out we're trying to take back the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead."

Although the water tribe and the other eight tribes all belonged to the brute race, the relationship between them was neither good nor bad. In fact, there was occasionally fierce competition between them.

In such a situation, Shaman Ye Ling naturally did not wish to see the other brute tribe experts approach.

"We'll wait for three more days!" Ye Ling took a deep breath and said with emphasis, "If he doesn't come out after three days, I will risk damaging my foundation with a forbidden art to enter the volcano to see if he's still alive!"

## Chapter 160 A Glimpse of the Aeth Transformation Stage

At the bottom of the volcano.

Lin Xun was seated in the lotus position with his back straight and a look of serenity on his face.

Strands of pure sky-blue aeth qi swirled around his body, giving him a slightly otherworldly aura.

In his body, aeth qi surged powerfully like a great river. After being refined by the four aeth power vortexes, his aeth power became as clear as glass and gave off a faint azure glow. It also shimmered with a rare and unique spiritual quality.

This meant that Lin Xun's aeth power quality had reached an astonishing level!

The more abundant and compact a person's aeth power became the stronger the person's foundations.

The higher the quality of a person's aeth power, the greater the power unleashed in battle!

Rumble~~~

It felt as if mountains were colliding in Lin Xun's body. This was the rumbling noise of aeth power that had reached the extremities of compactness and abundance. His channels, apertures, and organs were filled to the brim with surging aeth power.

The physical power in his flesh, blood, tendons and skin also formed a unique resonance that harmonized with his life force.

Inner saint was to make qi the root.

Outer king was to use the body as the foundation.

Qi and body as one was the root foundation and the true essence of the Mystery Grotto Devour Wilderness Scripture——Inner Saint Outer King!

Submerged in his cultivation, Lin Xun did not notice the astonishing transformation that was occurring both inside and outside his body.

A transformation which began from his aeth power...

If described using the knowledge of cultivation realms, this transformation was known as aeth transformation!

.....

Another two days soon passed.

The atmosphere in the vicinity of the volcano grew increasingly tense. Many more water tribe experts had rushed here over the past two days and took up positions around the volcano.

Meanwhile, many empire cultivators had also appeared and hid in various spots near the volcano. Likewise, experts from the other brute tribes had also heard of the commotion and arrived.

Strangely, no fights broke out despite having so many enemies gathered together.

The empire cultivators and the brute experts seemed to be waiting for something and no one wished to break the strange peace.

However, everyone understood that a storm was coming. Once the battle erupted, it would definitely be bigger than anyone could imagine!

Shui Zhi grew increasingly anxious, and his brows tightly furrowed together.

His injuries had fully healed and he had recovered to tip-top shape. However, Lin Xun's refusal to appear and the increasingly tense atmosphere around the volcano deeply worried Shui Zhi.

He was unafraid of battle but worried that there would be too many variables in the operation to take back the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead!

"It doesn't matter. If he doesn't appear tomorrow, I will personally have a look around the bottom of the volcano!" Shui Zhi took a deep breath as resolve flashed in his whirlpool-like eyes.

.....

"These brute bastards have stirred such a huge commotion. Why aren't they doing anything?"

"They're waiting. Some great treasure might be about to emerge from the volcano or there might be some important secret to the water tribe inside. Otherwise, they would not have gathered so many people."

"Great treasure? Secret? That can't be, right?"

“Could this be a trap? They could’ve purposely stirred up a fuss to draw us here and sweep us all up in one go.”

“It can’t be a trap. Take a look, these water tribe experts are guarding the volcano and even their fellow fire tribe, gold tribe, wood tribe, and earth tribe are unable to approach. How could it possibly be a trap?”

“Regardless, the truth will be revealed soon. At that time, there will probably be a crazy battle. Everyone should be extra careful, if it becomes too dangerous, it would be better to withdraw.”

Similar conversations were held in the many areas near the volcano where many empire cultivators, Blood Kill Camp students, and Black Wind soldiers were hiding.

No one could guess what the water tribe experts were up to, but everyone knew that a battle could erupt at any moment!

.....

When evening arrived, Shui Zhi finally heard a piece of good news.

Shaman Ye Ling had sent over a set of cold frost armor. Cold frost brute runes had been carved onto the armor which could release a bone-chilling cold. When equipped, it would protect the wearer from lava.

However, the cold frost armor had been crafted in a hurry and according to Shaman Ye Ling, it would only last an hour in the lava.

“That’s enough. As long as that kid isn’t dead, it won’t even take me an hour to kill him!” Shui Zhi was in high spirits when he donned the cold frost armor.

He was already unable to wait any longer. Ever since he entered Demon Cloud Ridge, this was the first time that he had so greatly desired to kill a person.

“Be careful.” Shaman Ye Ling gruffly said. His gaunt and tan face had a slightly waxy pallor.

For the sake of crafting the cold frost armor, he had not slept a wink for several days. The arduous task had left him thoroughly exhausted.

“It’s been hard on you. I will bring back the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead for you!”

Shaman Ye Ling gritted his teeth and said, “Not only the bead, but you also must bring that human shitbag’s corpse back as well. I want to make his skull into a wine cup and drink his blood to quench the hatred in my heart!”

Shui Zhi chuckled and revealed his eerily white teeth, “I am of the same mind.”

“Is that so?” A voice suddenly sounded.

Shui Zhi and Shaman Ye Ling turned their heads and saw a slim figure appear at the edge of the volcano.

It was Lin Xun!

As the saying went, enemies would always see red when they met. Shaman Ye Ling's eyes bulged from their sockets as a sinister smile crept upon his wrinkled face, "You little shit! You've finally appeared! Kill! Quickly kill him!"

How could he have imagined that the culprit who had hidden for many days would voluntarily jump out? This was far too exhilarating!

Shui Zhi drew his bronze shortblade with a shiing. Murder pulsed from his pretty-boy face as he said, "I will not give you any chance to escape this time!"

Boom!

His figure bolted forward like lightning as his blade cut through the air at an inconceivable speed and thrust towards Lin Xun's throat.

However, Lin Xun's figure suddenly disappeared from the spot.

Eh?

Shui Zhi's heart jumped as he immediately jerked his head. Lin Xun had subdued Shaman Ye Ling and was grabbing him by the neck. His wrinkly face had turned purple and his eyes bulged as he desperately tried to gasp for air.

Crack!

Without wasting any time, Lin Xun broke Shaman Ye Ling's neck with a light twist, causing his head to fall limply to the side before he could even scream.

His wrinkly face was filled with resentment.

It was too quick!

In the blink of an eye, Lin Xun had effortlessly dispatched Shaman Ye Ling as if he was a chicken. Shui Zhi did not even have a chance to save the latter.

"You're asking for it!" Shui Zhi's expression darkened as a wave of confusion arose in his mind.

Lin Xun seemed to have changed completely compared to a few days ago. His presence felt completely different and made Shui Zhi feel an invisible pressure.

Could he have had some kind of miraculous encounter over the past few days which allowed his cultivation to evolve?

While this thought flashed in Shui Zhi's head, his body continued to move as he pounced toward Lin Xun again.

Clang!

Lin Xun simply swung his blade. A terrifying force was produced from the simple attack, causing Shui Zhi's right arm to go numb from the impact as his entire body was swatted away. He staggered several steps backward before finally stopping himself.

"You!" Shui Zhi was horrified. How had Lin Xun's battle power changed so much in a few days?

The last time Shui Zhi fought against Lin Xun, both of them had been roughly equal. But now...

Shui Zhi found this very hard to accept.

With a twirl of the blade, Lin Xun easily cut off the brute totem rune on Shaman Ye Ling's chest.

Lin Xun asked, "Are you surprised?"

Shui Zhi's expression turned ugly, "How did you do it?"

Lin Xun chuckled as he tossed Shaman Ye Ling's corpse into the volcano as if it was garbage, "I have your water tribe's sacred treasure to thank. It truly is an amazing treasure."

The sacred treasure!

Shui Zhi's heart was immediately overwhelmed by rage.

This despicable human trash has sullied the sacred treasure's power. He should be put to death a thousand times over!

Boom!

His blade flashed like lightning as he channeled all of his anger into it, causing the bronze short blade to hum like a shrieking ghost.

Lin Xun also moved. A casual swing of the Defeat Army Blade unleashed torrential power which mercilessly crashed towards the opponent.

Sparks flew from the deafening clash. Shui Zhi coughed blood as his body was flung away and sent tumbling across the ground.

"You...you..." Shui Zhi's handsome face twisted in disbelief and horror. Lin Xun's battle power was far too astonishing, making it impossible for Shui Zhi to block even a single blow!

This is far too inconceivable!

The opponent had clearly yet to advance to the Spirit Dipper stage. So why was his battle power so terrifying?

Shui Zhi did not understand. Unrestrainable fear rose within him.

Swish!*NovelNext.Com*

Lin Xun had already arrived like a pouncing tiger.

"Someone come quickly. Kill him! Kill him!"

Shui Zhi did not dare to face the opponent head-on again. The situation was far too unfavorable for him. He immediately turned and ran to seek help.

He no longer cared about his pride as he fled like a dog that had lost its home. There was no trace of any elegance in his running figure.

He had no choice. The battle power Lin Xun had displayed was far too dreadful and felt unstoppable.

Shui Zhi had not lost the will to fight, but he knew that he no longer had the power to face Lin Xun.

He needed to find help!

That blasted shitbag had used the sacred treasure to raise his cultivation. He should be burnt to ashes!

Lin Xun did not give chase. He could already see waves of figures swiftly approaching from the foot of the mountain.

They were all water tribe experts. The short battle had evidently drawn their attention!

Lin Xun stood there as chilling killing intent surged in his heart. He had been chased all the way here and had nearly died.

Today, it was time for revenge!