

Prodigies 161

Chapter 161 Unstoppable

The disturbance on the volcano also drew the attention of the nearby cultivators.

Many people were shocked when they saw a figure suddenly appear on the volcano.

Is this the so-called great treasure or secret?

No one had expected the water tribe to be guarding the mountain in wait for a mere cultivator. Why had they done so?

There must be a reason.

However, the scene still disappointed many people. They had the impression that a great treasure was about to appear or some astonishing secret was about to be uncovered. Who could have imagined that they would all be waiting for a single person?!

"Blast it, I wasted so many days!"

"How can this be? I've never seen this guy before. Could he have appeared from the volcano?"

"He must have something that the water tribe experts are after!"

"My god, isn't that Lin Xun?"

"What? Lin Xun? It really is him!"

It only took a few moments for someone to identify Lin Xun, resulting in quite a commotion.

There was no one in Blood Kill Camp who didn't know Lin Xun because of the highly controversial first place he had obtained in a certain exam.

After ascertaining that the figure on the mountain belonged to Lin Xun, many people were surprised. Why was he on the volcano?

Why were the water brute experts so set on capturing him, even gathering so many people and setting up such a tight defensive perimeter?

Many people could not understand.

While they were still bewildered, the battle on the volcano began.

More than a hundred water brute experts swarmed towards a single person, painting a frightening sight that would make any cultivator flee immediately.

These brute experts were not your ordinary cultivator. Every warrior was brave and skilled, and there were even a few formidable individuals among them who could give Blood Kill Camp students a run for their money.

It was easy to imagine how terrifying it was when the entire group was after a single person.

Even the likes of Bai Lingxi, Zhao Xin, and Zhangsun Hen would choose to withdraw in such a situation.

“Should we go and help? Lin Xun’s from Blood Kill Camp as well. How can we allow those brute trash to kill him?”

“Don’t be rash! Haven’t you looked at the situation? Let alone you, even all of us together won’t be able to change the tides!”

“But...are we just going to watch Lin Xun die?” *noVeLnext.cOm*

“That’s the only thing we can do. Sigh, although I often find Lin Xun an eyesore, I don’t feel good as well when I think about how he will be killed by those brute trash. But what can we do? The situation is not anything a mere few people can change!”

“That’s right. There are no rules which state we need to save our fellow students when they are in danger. We...can only wait and see if the situation changes!”

The start of the battle elicited a heated discussion amongst the hidden cultivators. However, they ultimately decided to wait and watch.

They might pity Lin Xun’s situation, but they were not going to risk their lives for him!

This was reality. The current circumstances were too grim and they did not wish to bet their lives on a hopeless battle.

“It’s going to be very difficult for Lin Xun to survive this crisis. Sigh, who could have expected that he would ultimately lose his life at the hands of these brute trash?” In a hidden alcove, Qi Can sighed with a complicated expression.

Muo Leng snorted, “I can’t wait for him to die!”

“Be careful of what you say. We are empire cultivators. How can we curse our allies to be killed by the enemy?” Despite saying this, a faint smile rose from the corners of Qi Can’s lips.

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“Kill!”

“Kill!”

“Kill!”

The brute experts roared as they charged, sporting ferocious expressions while their eyes gleamed with blood-thirsty cruelty.

Each one was a water tribe expert. It was easy to imagine the intimidating sight they created when they were gathered together like this.

Lin Xun’s response was simple: charge!

His black hair flew around him; every contour and inch of his face was filled with killing intent.

In his right hand, the Defeat Army Blade rose into the air!

Kill!

A blade dashed through the air and instantly severed three heads. Fresh blood spurted like a spring, dyeing the sky red.

Lin Xun's figure did not stop. He advanced while avoiding four spears as his blade powerfully swept away one of the brute experts.

The ferocious brute experts were as frail as paper under his blade and he easily cut through them like tofu!

Every move of the Six Word Blade Art flowed naturally from Lin Xun's blade. It was like the grim reaper's scythe: reaping a life with each strike and never missing.

Kill!

Aeth power rushed in Lin Xun's body and exploded like a volcano. His style was simple and violent: charging straight on through all obstructions.

He did not dodge or retreat.

He was akin to an awl that was viciously tunneling through the enemy lines and leaving a path of bloody carnage.

Screams rang out in succession as body after body fell to the ground. Blood blossomed like fireworks: beautiful, scalding, and red!

The scariest thing, however, was how Lin Xun remained extremely composed from start to end. His movements were always precise and steady, never wavering in the slightest.

In fact, he was even harvesting the brute totem rune from every brute expert he killed!

It felt as if he was a hunter who had entered a pack of lions. Every target he hunted would be meticulously harvested and never once did he view any of them as threats.

The battle had seemed unremarkable in the beginning, but despite being heavily surrounded on all sides, no one could withstand Lin Xun's attacks. The sight of this made many brute experts' hearts shiver unexplainably.

What kind of human was this?

Composed and confident as he walked through endless enemies as if he were taking a stroll in the garden, yet his battle style could only be described as fatal!

Why did they call it fatal? Because every expert he came into contact with would lose their life without question!

Numerous cracks had appeared on the Defeat Army Blade, making it appear as if it was on the verge of shattering into pieces. However, it continued to feast on the blood, flesh, and souls of its victims like a demon's blade!

In mere moments, more than thirty brute experts had been slain.

Hidden in the distance, Shui Zhi's entire body shivered as his pupils widened in shock at the sight of this scene. He couldn't believe what he was seeing.

He's too strong!

Was this really something a True Martial stage youngster could achieve?

Lin Xun's blood-drenched body, sharp, sword-like eyebrows, and eyes which flashed like lightning made him appear like an indestructible bolt of lightning. The sight made Shui Zhi feel an aura of despair.

This made Shui Zhi's hairs stand on ends as if he was falling through the frozen cave.

Lin Xun is completely different!

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The vicinity of the volcano was also in an uproar.

"This this...is he actually intending to butcher them all?!"

"When did Lin Xun's battle power become so overwhelming?"

"My god! Who could have expected that he would not run but instead charge into the enemy alone and still perform so spectacularly?"

Shock, amazement, disbelief...and various other emotions swirled in every cultivator's heart, making it impossible for them to calm down.

In the past, Lin Xun had been doubted for being number one in the quarterly exam. Everyone had suspected him of cheating and they looked down on him for it.

Although Bai Lingxi had subsequently judged Lin Xun to have won over Xiao Kun, many people still felt that it had not been a fair victory.

However, when they saw Lin Xun steamroll through the brute army alone, many people were speechless.

They finally realized that they had never truly understood Lin Xun nor properly tried to evaluate his battle power.

This made many people feel ashamed.

The feeling made some people uncomfortable such as Qi Can and Muo Leng.

They had originally believed that Lin Xun would die for sure. Who could have anticipated that he would perform a one-sided slaughter-fest instead?

How was this possible?

It might be reasonable if it was done by Bai Lingxi or Zhao Yin, but how could Lin Xun possibly achieve such a feat?

No one would willingly admit that they were inferior to Lin Xun.

Qi Can and Muo Ling had always viewed Lin Xun as weaker than themselves. At this juncture, however, their hearts became unbalanced when they discovered that Lin Xun's battle power had begun to surpass their own.

Qi Can coldly said, "Continue watching. I refuse to believe that he will survive till the end!"

Muo Leng also said in a low voice, "That's right. Once his momentum is stopped, he will fall into a dangerous situation of no return!"

Rather than call it an evaluation, it was more akin to a vicious curse.

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The battle continued.

Miserable screams, angry roars, the clang of steel, the sound of blood spurting...various sounds wove together into a heart-palpating symphony.

A bloody hell-like battle was occurring on the unnamed volcano, and the hot rocks were quickly covered in blood, bone fragments, and chunks of flesh.

A frighteningly composed Lin Xun continued his advance.

His aeth power seemed endless, allowing him to maintain peak condition at all times. The shadow of death seemed to accompany every swing of his blade.

The water brute experts were finally beginning to feel fear. Their formations started to descend into chaos as their fighting spirits wavered, creating hesitation in their attacks.

The human youth before them was like an unbeatable demon god. He was still completely uninjured while more than fifty of their companions had already died!

This was an astonishing number and a painful price that would make anyone crumble.

At the foot of the mountain, Shui Zhi released a piercing, crazed shout, "Bastard! Are you guys going to continue watching my water tribe be slaughtered?"

A group of figures soon appeared at the foot of the mountain, revealing themselves to be experts from the other brute tribes.

Fire tribe, wood tribe, gold tribe, earth tribe...there were more than fifty of them in total.

The new arrivals would soon bring about another shift in the situation!

Chapter 162 Star-Gather's Might

The brute race was split into nine tribes.

Each tribe possessed enormous power and influence, boasted numerous powerful experts, and were akin to nine small countries.

The nine great tribes had an extremely complex relationship with each other: competition, cooperation, petty conflicts, and mutually respectful communication.

Regardless, when against outsiders, they would immediately choose to cooperate despite the grudges between them.

This was their foundation for survival. Otherwise, the entire brute race would not be able to coexist with the Abyss Demon Spirits and the Moon Soul Race in the Darkness Kingdom nor survive wars against the Ziyao Empire until today.

Hence, when other brute experts saw the water brute experts being slaughtered by a single human youngster despite their absolute advantage, the scattered brute experts from the other tribes stepped forward together in unison.

There were more than fifty of them and they were all elites with no lack of top-tier ninth-level brute slaves amongst them.

When they joined the battle, Lin Xun immediately felt pressured.

His advance slowed along with his kill rate and his originally unstoppable momentum began to show signs of faltering.

Rumble!

Fiery light swirled around a giant sword as it danced like a ferocious fire dragon.

Criiiinnkk!

A golden spear gleamed with a strange icy sharpness as it thrust through the air like a dazzling shooting star.

Dong!

A giant hammer seemed to crush the air with the force of a mountain as it slammed downwards with great force.

Omm~

A black rope-like vine rose from the ground and danced wildly like a viper. It coiled in the air above Lin Xun, waiting for the right moment to strike.

A series of attacks were completed in an instant and were launched at Lin Xun from different directions and angles.

The experts have moved!

Lin Xun's eyes narrowed as he twisted his body and took three steps back. At the same time, he hacked a black vine to pieces before sending a dozen successive swings behind him.

Bang bang bang~

Rapid-fire clangs sounded as the air exploded. A frightening qi wave spread, forcing the brute experts within a hundred feet radius to retreat.

Although he had defended against the onslaught, Lin Xun was forced three steps back. This was the first time he had been forced back since the battle began!

“Wow! I can’t believe he actually managed to block our attacks. He’s no weaker than Zhao Yin.” The golden spear wielder was shocked. His long hair seemed to be suffused with golden light and his eyes dazzled like golden stars.

He was called Rui Huaji and was the top expert of the gold tribe’s younger generation.

The man wielding the giant flaming sword was called Ba Xun, the giant hammer-wielding man was called Min Jiang, and the vine-wielding girl was called Hua Caiyi. They were top younger generation experts from the fire tribe, earth tribe, and wood tribe respectively.

In addition to the water tribe’s Shui Zhi, a total of five younger generation peak experts were participating in the battle!

However, their joint attack had failed to stop Lin Xun, causing their hearts to shiver. They knew that this human was a very formidable opponent.

“Who cares how he compares to Zhao Yin. We can discuss that after we kill him!” Ba Xun shouted as he swung his flaming broadsword in a devastating manner again.

“I’m of the same opinion.” Rui Huaji laughed cockily as his golden spear pierced through the air.

“Kill!”

Min Jiang, Hua Caiyi, and Shui Zhi moved as well.

In an instant, Lin Xun was forced into a disadvantageous situation. He could only defend as he was repeatedly pushed back, and there was no longer any trace of the unstoppable momentum he once had.

It was very terrifying indeed.

When the combined might of five top-class younger generation brute experts was directed against a single person, it was easy to imagine how huge of a threat he was under.

Any other ordinary Blood Kill Camp student would have been unable to put up any resistance and been slain long ago.

Although Lin Xun was not instantly overwhelmed, his situation had become dangerous. Numerous wounds soon appeared on his body.

The other brute experts had already fallen back, creating a large space for Shui Zhi and the other four to display their full capabilities.

There was already no way out for Lin Xun!

The sudden turn of events was also observed by the empire experts and caught them by surprise.

“It is indeed hard to predict the future. Who could have expected such a turn of events?” Some sighed, feeling anxious for Lin Xun.

“Thank god we didn’t move. Otherwise, we would be stuck in a hopeless situation like Lin Xun.” Some were secretly rejoicing that they had not tried to help.

“Should we take this opportunity to kill a few of those brute trash? It’s a rare chance since Lin Xun is keeping so many experts busy.” Some were tempted to take advantage of the situation.

“You still need your life to claim army contributions. Can’t you see that there are still over a hundred brute experts?” However, a bucket of cold water was immediately poured over their heads.

“How hateful. Are we just going to watch Lin Xun fight alone? We’re all cultivators of the empire! How can we watch him being killed by those brute trash?” Some were angry and dissatisfied with the bystander attitudes of the other cultivators.

Others scolded back, “War is heartless and this isn’t the time to talk about camaraderie. As proper soldiers, we should be able to see the big picture and judge the merits and demerits. If we act on impulse, we’ll only end up sabotaging ourselves!”

It was basically chaos. Regardless, not a single person was willing to implicate themselves and help Lin Xun kill the enemy.

To find profit and avoid demerits was human nature while also a weakness.

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Squelch!

The golden spear flashed as another wound was added to Lin Xun’s waist.

He was drenched in blood, some of which belonged to his enemies while some belonged to him. He looked like an extremely pitiful blood man.

His expression remained strangely composed and his black eyes were akin to a freezing abyss.

Although Lin Xun was forced to dodge continuously and was unable to fight back, his movements were always smooth and unhindered; his blade was always precise and stable.

“Little shit, you’ll definitely die today!” Shui Zhi icily chuckled, his pretty-boy face hideously twisted.

The water tribe had lost far too much today as more than fifty warriors had lost their lives to Lin Xun. This price was far too severe.

Most importantly, the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead was still in Lin Xun’s hands!

Rui Huaji frostily said, “This guy’s battle power would probably make him one of the top combatants in Blood Kill Camp. Such a person is usually very difficult to stop. We absolutely cannot allow him to leave.”

“Stop talking so much nonsense. A young empire expert like him must be killed. Otherwise, he’ll definitely become a hindrance in the future to our invasion of the empire.” Hua Caiyi was brimming with killing intent.

They talked as they attacked, treating Lin Xun as a lamb to be slaughtered.

Lin Xun naturally heard everything. The corners of his mouth suddenly rose at an angle as he smiled mysteriously, “Do you guys really think you can make me stay today?”

Shui Zhi and the other four were taken aback and they suddenly sensed a terrifying aura brewing in Lin Xun's body.

Although the aura was very faint, it set off loud alarm bells in their hearts!

"Quickly kill him!" All of them immediately unleashed their full power.

Various terrifying attacks erupted. The golden spear, giant hammer, flaming sword, vines, and short sword wove together into an inescapable net that sought to completely destroy Lin Xun.

However...

Lin Xun suddenly took a deep breath as disdain appeared on his face; it was the disdain of a mighty empire overlooking the land or a saint traveling the cosmos.

Alarming power undulations surged from his body like a volcano that had been repressed for far too long. All of the long-accumulated power exploded in an instant!

Shing!

The cry of a blade rang out but no one could see Lin Xun's attack. The scenery before their eyes seemed to disappear, replaced by the night sky. Stars suddenly fell from the heavens and sank into the endless darkness. It seemed as if the end of all days had arrived; the entire universe heaving as all matter was destroyed!

The terrifying aura felt frighteningly real as it engulfed their minds, hearts, and souls...

"Star Gather!"

A blade instantly appeared from the void, tearing apart the sky and slicing through the darkness!

Time felt like it had come to a standstill.

Shui Zhi saw Rui Huiji's severed head fly, his face still filled with shock.

Shui Zhi saw Min Jiang's body being cut in two at the waist. Blood poured out like a waterfall but he seemed completely oblivious as if he was stuck in a dream.

Shui Zhi saw half of Ba Xun's head hurtling through the air...

Shui Zhi saw Hui Caiyi's body suddenly explode into chunks of flesh.

Why is this happening?

Is this a dream?

Shui Zhi was dazed. However, he suddenly felt an unbearable pain and abruptly realized that his body was standing in front of him without a head...

This...

In the split-second between life and death, Shui Zhi finally understood that his head had been sliced off.

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The ring of the blade also frightened the surrounding brute experts. They felt as if they had fallen into eternal darkness and could only see stars rain down from above.

When they returned to their senses, they saw Lin Xun standing there holding his blade, his blood-soaked clothes ruffling in the wind.

At his feet were mangled corpses and pools of blood. The five apex younger generation experts had...all been killed!

It was utterly silent.

An indescribable chill filled everyone's hearts.

What the hell had just happened?

How did the battle suddenly end!

How could Shui Zhi, Rui Huaji, Min Jiang, Ba Xun, and Hua Caiyi have been killed all of a sudden!?

Could a superior expert have intervened?

The atmosphere was stiflingly silent. All the brute experts present were shocked to an unprecedented level.

It was too horrifying!

It was as if they suddenly had a nightmare and awoke to find everyone dead!

In the vicinity of the volcano, the watching empire experts were dumbstruck. They were like geese who had been grabbed by the neck, their faces filled with blank expressions.

What the hell had just happened?!

They had also failed to clearly see what had transpired. They had originally believed Lin Xun was dead for sure and there was no longer any need to try and save him. Who could have imagined that the five younger generation peak experts ganging up on Lin Xun would be killed in the blink of an eye!

It was far too inconceivable!

Chapter 163 Snatching Credit

The volcano was littered with mangled corpses and covered in a bloody haze. The area was deathly silent, and a terrifying aura filled every inch of air.

Everyone had blank expressions as they dazedly looked toward the dead corpses of Shi Zhi and the others. They were still unable to comprehend how Lin Xun had done it.

Those five were the top individuals of the younger generation!

They were the true elites of the nine tribes who should have become great individuals who could influence the future of the brute race.

It would be difficult to find such individuals even amongst a thousand people. They possessed unimaginable potential and the loss of each one was a heavy blow to the entire brute race!

Under normal circumstances, it was extremely difficult to kill such people in the Demon Cloud Ridge battlefield because they possessed various trump cards and had the extraordinary ability to adapt to any situation. Even if they encountered an opponent they could not defeat, they had a high chance of escaping.

However, five of these top brute experts had been killed in an instant!

The frightening thing was that everyone present had failed to see how Lin Xun had done it...

Gulp!

In the vicinity of the volcano, numerous empire experts' hearts thumped loudly in their chests as they swallowed with some difficulty.

Lin Xun...is far too frightening!

Qi Can and Muo Leng looked at each other and saw a sliver of intense fear and bewilderment in each other's eyes. Neither of them had expected Lin Xun to make a comeback from that hopeless situation. They never imagined that he possessed a terrifying power that could kill peak brute experts in a single strike.

Their backs were drenched in cold sweat. They had originally believed they had already regarded Lin Xun highly enough and viewed him as a formidable foe. Who could have imagined that they had still underestimated this unconventional youngster? The young man they once viewed with disdain and contempt had displayed power that stood far above them!

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The deathly silence was broken by a piercing scream which was filled with panic and terror.

The brute experts on the volcano began to flee like a frightened pack of beasts.

At the start of the battle, more than fifty brute experts had lost their lives to Lin Xun's blade.

This had already shaken their fighting spirit. When they saw the dead bodies of Shui Zhi, Ba Xun, Rui Huaji, Hua Caiyi, and Min Jiang, the last sliver of their fighting spirit finally crumbled.

Escape!

The further the better!

This human youngster was an undefeatable demon god and the herald of despair.

The place immediately became chaotic with desperately fleeing figures everywhere.

Lin Xun stood on the spot and did not give chase.

It was not that he didn't want to. Almost all of his energy had been used for the Star-Gather technique and that wasn't even the worst part. A tearing pain was currently ripping through his entire body and soul.

These were the repercussions of executing the Star-Gather technique.

The Star-Gather technique was the first move in the first half of the Heavenly Yuan Blade Art. It was an ancient inheritance from the second trial of the Omega Secret Realm's Great Azure Cloud Path.

Although there were only three moves, Star-Gather, Moon-Catch, and Burning Sun, each move was extremely complicated and boasted overwhelming power.

When Lin Xun first obtained this inheritance, he found himself unable to understand anything despite his astounding comprehension ability.

It was only recently after achieving the initial level of the Mystery Grotto Devour Wilderness Scripture that he finally managed to begin delving into the Star-Gather technique's profoundness.

However, he barely managed to scratch the surface and was still far from obtaining any semblance of mastery over the technique.

It was only because he had been forced into a corner by Shui Zhi and the others that he decided to risk it all and attempt to execute the move.

However, Lin Xun had not expected his meager knowledge to create such terrifying power!

In that moment, he had felt a tearing pain in his flesh, skin, bones, channels, and organs.

Almost all of his spirit power had been instantly sucked dry as well.

This made Lin Xun understand that the Star-Gather technique's power far surpassed the realms of his imagination. It was not something his current self could use.

Fortunately, his understanding was at best skin-deep, allowing him to somehow pull it off without suffering overly severe consequences.

The usage of the Star-Gather technique had also allowed him to understand it a little more. It turns out that abundant aeth power and a strong body that could endure the circulation of power and tenacious spirit power were some of the requirements to properly use the technique.

Simply put, despite being a mere blade art, it required the perfect fusion of physical power, aeth power, and spirit to activate.

Phew~

Lin Xun deeply exhaled. He ignored the desperately fleeing brute experts and began to go through his battle spoils.

The Defeat Army Blade had finally shattered after using the Star-Gather technique, leaving only a sharp fragment behind. However, it was sufficient for him to remove the brute totem runes from the corpses of his enemies.

The corpses were harvested one after another. Brute totem runes, personal artifacts...anything of value was quickly collected by Lin Xun.

These were his battle spoils and his reward for winning that crazy battle.

"Kill!"

“Kill all of these brute trash!”

“Fellow warriors, come and kill the enemy together with me!”

Battle cries erupted at the foot of the mountain and soared into the clouds.

The originally concealed empire cultivators had charged out from their hiding spots.

Each person’s face was filled with hatred as if they were ready to die to kill the enemy.

They charged like warriors who did not fear death and wished to exterminate the enemy in order to bring peace back to the land.

Lin Xun could not help but be stunned by this scene. A faint sneer soon appeared on his lips.

How could he not tell that these guys were clearly trying to take advantage after realizing the brute experts had been defeated and had lost their will to fight.

Although he felt contempt towards their actions, Lin Xun could not be bothered to argue. However, it did deepen his experience of war.

War was heartless and cruel and no one wanted to die. Everyone would weigh the cost and benefits and avoid things that were likely detrimental to themselves.

When there were benefits, they would charge together without hesitation.

When there was none, they would consider the big picture and make the cruelest decisions.

It made Lin Xun recall a certain sentence from a book called the Empire’s Secret Anals——

When soldiers began to fear death and make decisions based on profit, they were no longer proper soldiers.

However, after some contemplation, Lin Xun decided that the Blood Kill Camp students could not be called soldiers.

They had special identities and participated in the battle only to pass Blood Kill Camp’s exam. They naturally would not view themselves as brave empire soldiers who sought only to kill enemies and expand the empire’s territories.

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Lin Xun ignored the fighting at the foot of the mountain and concentrated on collecting his battle spoils. However, it was not long before he began to frown.

Several Blood Kill Camp students had approached and started to harvest brute totem runes from the corpses.

They had not asked his permission.

Lin Xun walked forward. The broken blade in his hand buzzed fiercely as he swung it at one of the Kill Blood Camp students.

The student was caught off guard. His expression abruptly changed as he threw himself to the side to avoid the attack and furiously shouted, "Lin Xun, are you crazy!?"

Lin Xun's expression remained indifferent and showed no intention of stopping. He continued attacking, forcing the Blood Kill Camp students to abandon their tasks to dodge.

"Lin Xun, do you think we don't dare to fight back against you?"

"Don't forget that according to the army rules, those who kill their companions will be put to death!"

"He's crazy. When the exam is over, I will definitely report this matter to Senior Colonel Song Ling!"

The students shouted in exasperation.

"I didn't see any of you come to help when I was fighting the enemy earlier, but you're all so quick when it comes to stealing army credit. Did you guys take me as someone who wouldn't dare to kill you?"

Lin Xun finally stopped, his eyes flashing murderously.

The students' expressions abruptly changed. However, they were clearly reluctant to admit that his accusations were right, "Stealing army credit? This is the battlefield, army credit belongs to whoever manages to take it!"

Lin Xun icily snorted and suddenly dashed forward. He swiftly arrived in front of a student and smashed his chest.

With a loud thud, the student was sent flying amidst a shriek. He tumbled a hundred feet on the ground before finally getting back to his feet.

The other students' expressions changed as a cold hand seemed to grip their hearts.

Does he really dare to ignore the rules of the army?

"Remember, these brute trash were killed by me and the army credit belongs to me alone. If you dare to snatch it, I will also dare to kill you." Lin Xun coldly looked at them before turning around to continue looting the corpses.

The students' expressions fluctuated indefinitely. They looked at Lin Xun with hatred but no one dared to step forward again in the end.

The terrifying scene of Lin Xun killing Shui Zhi and the other four was still fresh in their minds. They did not dare to risk their lives and provoke that madman.

"Just wait Lin Xun! You ignored the army rules today. When the exam is over, you will pay for what you've done!" They angrily left after leaving this threat behind.

In the distance, many empire cultivators observed the entire exchange. Their hearts shivered as they extinguished any thoughts of trying to steal Lin Xun's army contributions.

"A bunch of trash!" Lin Xun sneered inside. He knew that he obtained an enormous amount of army contributions this time. Even if the Black Wind Army's higher-ups found out about his actions, they would not use it as an excuse to punish him.

If they did, it would turn the other cultivators against them.

If a soldier's army credit could be openly stolen by a fellow soldier, who would want to fight for the empire in the future?

"Detestable! Lin Xun is growing increasingly arrogant. Does he think he can ignore the rules just because he killed a few brute trash?"

At the foot of the mountain, Muo Leng was pretty pissed by Lin Xun's actions.

"Which dog wouldn't grow anxious when they see the bone they desperately fought for being stolen?" Qi Can's reply was filled with mockery but his expression was quite complicated.

He knew that Lin Xun would not be punished after this battle but instead it would solidify his position in Blood Kill Camp. It would be very difficult for anyone to touch him after this.

Unless...

He somehow died in Demon Cloud Ridge!

Chapter 164 Shocking Everyone

The fighting around the volcano only began to die down when night fell.

More than 130 brute experts had died with the water tribe suffering the greatest losses amongst them.

On the empire's side, more than thirty people had been killed or suffered injuries.

This was the thirteenth day since the Blood Kill Camp students entered Demon Cloud Ridge. Lin Xun had left with his spoils long before the fighting ended.

Meanwhile, news of today's battle began to spread at an astonishing speed.

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In a mountain forest.

Bai Lingxi's figure flew through the darkness. Every brute expert along the way was instantly killed as they were powerless to stop her advance.

Moments later, Bai Lingxi's suddenly stopped because she had bumped into a Blood Kill Camp student who had participated in the volcano battle.

"Killed five younger generation peak brute experts with a single blade attack?"

Bai Lingxi soon heard about Lin Xun's battle and a genuinely shocked expression surfaced on her face.

"It looks like he has not only advanced to the True Martial ninth layer but also mastered a terrifying new battle art..."

Bai Lingxi quickly figured out Lin Xun's situation. If he was here to hear this, he would have been astonished by her frightening judgment ability.

When Bai Lingxi continued her journey, she had already decided that if Lin Xun wasn't eliminated, she would challenge him when they returned to Blood Kill Camp.

She had not forgotten the promise she had made back then.

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"Besides Bai Lingxi, Li Duxing, and Zhangsun Hen, another interesting fellow has appeared from Blood Kill Camp." In another area, a faint smile formed on Zhao Yin's lips, "I hope Lin Xun will be around when the final year-end exam begins!"

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"Lin Xun was the reason behind the strange movements by the water tribe?" Shi Yu could not help but chuckle bitterly when he heard the news.

A few days ago, he had already sensed that a big storm was coming. To avoid it, he had decided to stay away.

Who could have expected that Lin Xun was the cause of the storm?!

Shi Yu could not help but breathe a sigh of relief when he heard that Lin Xun had managed to survive, but was soon stunned when he heard the details of the battle.

Slaying more than fifty brute experts alone?

A single blade attack instantly killing five peak younger generation experts?

How had this guy's battle power become so high after half a month!?

Shi Yu was greatly astonished.

After a long silence, Li Qiu softly said a single word, "Amazing."*novelnext.com*

"What amazing, he's freaking abnormal!" Shi Yu sighed. A determined look soon flashed in his eyes, "However, he would be naive to think that he can become the final victor of the bet with just this!"

Li Qiu knew that Shi Yu, Ning Meng, and Lin Xun had made a bet. Shi Yu's earlier words made Li Qiu realize that Shi Yu was now feeling quite a lot of pressure from Lin Xun's remarkable performance.

.....

"Blast him! That bastard Lin Xun is so lucky to have encountered so many of those brute trash. If it was me, I would definitely have obtained way more army contributions!" Ning Meng felt shocked and envious when he heard the news.

Despite saying this, Ning Meng subconsciously felt a little proud. Lin Xun was his friend! Wasn't it very normal for such a person to achieve such stellar battle accomplishments?

.....

"Is Lin Xun really so strong?"

"How did he do it?"

“If all of this is true, wouldn’t that mean that his battle power can already match the likes of Bai Lingxi, Zhao Yin, Zhangsun Hen, and Li Duxing?”

“Heh, to think that there are people who still dared to snatch Lin Xun’s army contributions. Their greed blinded them!”

“No one can stop his rise any more!”

In various districts of Demon Cloud Ridge, the Blood Kill Camp students could not help but be shaken by the news, causing various thoughts and emotions to rise within them.

.....

The empire’s Black Wind Army was stationed in the southern area of Demon Cloud Ridge. Likewise, the brute race’s army was stationed in the north.

Late at night.

There was a brightly lit tent at the center of the camp from which intense arguing was occasionally heard.

It belonged to the water tribe.

Gathered in the tent were the water tribe’s great military leaders.

“Shui Zhi’s death is painful for all of us but the most important thing, for now, is to take back our sacred treasure, the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead!”

In the tent, a ferocious-looking man with hair shaped like a halberd spoke in a heavy voice, suppressing the many bickering voices as numerous eyes converged on his body.

The man was called Shui Xingkong and was a true bigwig with Brute Warrior cultivation. His eyes were dark blue like a deep undersea abyss and surged with an intimidating light.

“Everyone should know that a dozen years ago, we sent spies to the Ziyao Empire’s Forbidden City and spent a tremendous amount of money and resources to try and take back the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead. It was only recently that we succeeded.”

Shui Xingkong’s expression was stoic as he continued, “To transport this treasure to the tribe, we selected several unimportant people to undertake the task of bringing it back through Demon Cloud Ridge. This was to avoid the attention of the Ziyao Empire’s experts. Who could have imagined that it would ultimately end in failure?!”

A trace of anger flowed out in his voice, causing many water brute experts to shiver.

“However, all is not lost yet. According to the information I received, the bigwigs of the empire have yet to discover the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead is gone. This is our chance.”

Shui Xingkong took a deep breath as his eyes shone intimidatingly, “Moreover, it is our last chance!”

A water brute expert asked, “Head, we understand what you’re saying. What do you plan on doing?”

The other water brute experts voiced their agreement.

“Dispatch our elite Brute Soldiers to capture Lin Xun!” Each word overflowed with killing intent, causing the atmosphere in the tent to freeze.

Brute Soldiers were equivalent to human Spirit Dipper stage existences!

Many water brute experts could not help but stir upon hearing this.

A water brute expert worriedly muttered, “Head, for the past hundred years, there’s been an unspoken agreement with the empire and us to not allow any existences which surpass the Brute Slave level or True Martial stage to enter the Demon Cloud Ridge battleground. If we do this, there will likely be a strong response from the empire.”

Another water brute expert expressed his disdain, “Humph! What stupid agreement? Nothing matters as long as we take back the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead. Since when has our brute race ever cared about what the Ziyao Empire thinks?”

“This problem isn’t something we can ignore but we have more important priorities for now. We might have to make an exception this time.” Shui Xingkong spoke to silence the arguing, “Our goal is to capture Lin Xun and take back the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead. Hence, the Brute Soldiers dispatched will not participate in the battles of Demon Cloud Ridge. In this way, we should be able to minimize the consequences.”

After some thought, the water brute experts silently acknowledged the arrangement.

On that same night, four veteran water Brute Soldiers left the camp and stealthily infiltrated Demon Cloud Ridge.

An operation targeting Lin Xun had quietly begun.

.....

Lin Xun was quietly seated and focused on tempering his cultivation.

After leaving the volcano, he had found a hidden mountain cave and had not left it for several days.

Through some lucky circumstances at the bottom of the volcano, Lin Xun had obtained help from the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead and advanced to the True Martial ninth layer, the Aeth Transformation stage.

However, the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead in his mind-sea had fallen silent after his cultivation breakthrough and no longer released any of its power.

Although he did not know why this had happened, Lin Xun was no longer capable of enduring the lava in the volcano without the bead’s help. As such, he was forced to leave before he could properly solidify his cultivation.

He had engaged in a crazy battle almost immediately after leaving and only recently managed to find the time to stabilize his new cultivation.

Crash~~

Aeth power circulated in his body, releasing a rumbling noise similar to crashing waves.

At closer inspection, his aeth power resembled the purest green jade and gave off a dazzling shine.

From its aura, a person would realize that if Lin Xun continued to cultivate, his aeth power would soon ascend to a whole new level.

This was known as the Aeth Transformation stage, the final layer of the True Martial stage. Upon reaching this stage, all of the cultivator's power would reach a state of perfection.

Only a practitioner with such cultivation foundations would possess the possibility of attacking the Spirit Dipper stage!

The Spirit Dipper stage was the second of the five greater cultivation stages. There was a certain saying in this world that only those who stepped into the Spirit Dipper stage could be considered true cultivators.

After reaching this stage, not only would a cultivator's power evolve, but they would also ascend to become a higher form of existence. Their lifespan would increase, they would no longer need to worry about the heat and cold, and they no longer required food to sustain themselves.

This was a true cultivator!

The True Martial nine layers merely built the foundations to step onto this path. Only by establishing proper foundations would a cultivator have hopes of reaching greater heights in the dao.

In simple terms, the True Martial stage was the foundation and the Spirit Dipper stage was the starting point!

Lin Xun had recently advanced to the True Martial ninth layer and was still far from attacking the Spirit Dipper stage. What he needed to do now was to stabilize his cultivation and familiarize himself with his new power as soon as possible.

Only then would he be able to bring out his greatest power in battle!

Chapter 165 Disaster Arrives

Seven days later.

Lin Xun left the mountain cave and began his journey once more.

He had already completely stabilized his foundation. His aura had grown increasingly ethereal and felt like a silent, majestic mountain or a wilful ocean when it moved.

At the True Martial seventh layer, Lin Xun had defeated Xin Wenbin, who had been at the True Martial ninth layer.

At the eighth layer, Lin Xun had beaten Wen Mingxiu, Xiao Kun, Hu Long, and the others who had been at the peak True Martial ninth layer stage. Moreover, Lin Xun had survived in Demon Cloud Ridge for several days and slew many brute experts.

After advancing to the ninth layer, he had experienced a crazy battle where he killed more than fifty brute experts and five peak younger generation experts. This feat shook the entire Demon Cloud Ridge

and made him one of the most dazzling students in the exam. In fact, no one else could match his fame for a time.

At this point, even Lin Xun did not know what level his battle power had reached. At the very least, he no longer feared anyone at the True Martial stage!

.....

Time flowed little by little.

Battles in Demon Cloud Ridge were always bloody, savage, and filled with unpredictable dangers. For Lin Xun, however, it had become very rare for anything to threaten him.

In the day, he continued to fight and accumulate army contributions. At night, he focused on his cultivation and studied the first move of the Heavenly Yuan Blade Art, Star-Gather.

It was an unquestionably powerful technique and the more Lin Xun studied it, the more he was impressed by its profoundness. It felt as bottomless as the sea and was definitely not something he could achieve mastery of overnight.

Lin Xun could not help but sigh as he wondered who had created this technique and why a single Star-Gather move could possess such mysterious and overwhelming power.

How terrifying would its power be if he could fully master its essence?

Lin Xun looked forward to the arrival of that day.

However, he also understood his limitations. At the very least, it was impossible for him to achieve at the True Martial stage. Even if he somehow managed to completely grasp its essence, he would not be able to bring out its full power with True Martial stage cultivation.

A month soon passed since Lin Xun entered Demon Cloud Ridge.

He had accumulated a total of 278 army contributions. In other words, he had killed 278 brute experts over the past month!

There was a thick stack of brute totem runes in his storage ring which were physical proof of the army contributions he had obtained.

It was worth mentioning that the army contributions would be properly detailed when they left Demon Cloud Ridge. For example, the contribution from killing a level nine Brute Slave would be much greater than a level eight Brute Slave.

These would be evaluated by the army staff.

Besides the brute totem runes, Lin Xun had also obtained numerous battle spoils. The most valuable item amongst them was naturally the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead.

However, the sacred treasure seemed to have fallen into an inactive state and its many amazing abilities were still unknown to Lin Xun. He could only hope he would have a chance to properly study it in the future.

Besides the bead, he had also looted various valuable resources such as ores, weapons and medicine.

He had also been forced to discard many items with value that were useless to him due to space constraints.

One day, Lin Xun suddenly heard people fighting while advancing along a rapidly flowing river.

He was not surprised as it was not the first time he had encountered such a situation over the past few days. His figure nimbly leaped into the air as he headed towards the source.

Lin Xun soon found the battlefield in a thicket beside the river.

More than ten brute experts had surrounded a single person. Several brute expert corpses could also be seen nearby.

The battle was intense and had clearly started quite some time ago. The entire place was a mess with splatters of blood, pieces of wood, and stone everywhere.

What surprised Lin Xun was that the human cultivator, who had been surrounded, was a fellow student of the 39th Campground, Hu Long!

He was a proud young man who had said some pretty offensive things towards Lin Xun on the way to Demon Cloud Ridge. In the end, Lin Xun had given Hu Long a beating on the battleship.

As a result, Lin Xun did not have a very good impression of Hu Long.

However, Lin Xun did not hit Hu Long while he was down or abandon him to his plight.

In Lin Xun's view, although there were some personal grievances between them, they were still from the same camp. In comparison, the brute experts were their mutual enemies.

Lin Xun's principles were very simple: personal grudges should be set aside in situations where the empire was facing outside forces.

This did not mean he would forgive them but it was a matter of his standpoint as a cultivator of the empire.

At the battle of the volcano, numerous empire cultivators had not lent Lin Xun a helping hand because the situation had appeared harmful and unfavorable to them.

However, Lin Xun was different from those people and had his own principles. He would not idly watch his fellow human killed by the enemy.

Shiing!

The sound of a blade being unsheathed rang out as Lin Xun's figure plunged into the battlefield. The brute experts were immediately sent into a flurry, caught off guard by the surprise visitor.

"Lin Xun?" Hu Long was in disbelief when he saw who had come to save him.

Although he did not know why Lin Xun had done so, his addition helped relieve the pressure, giving Hu Long a chance to catch his breath.

He was already covered in wounds. If not for Lin Xun's timely arrival, Hu Long would have soon succumbed.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

The battle blade danced like a dragon aggressively soaring through the skies. Four brute experts were killed in the blink of an eye, shocking everyone present.

Even Hu Long's eyes could not help but widen. The rumors were real?

A few days ago, he had heard of Lin Xun's crazy battle on the volcano. Hu Long had originally believed it to be wildly exaggerated, but witnessing Lin Xun in action made Hu Long understand that Lin Xun was different now. The overwhelming battle power he displayed made Hu Long feel tremendous pressure.

In mere moments, eight brute experts were killed, causing the other five to flee in terror.

Hu Long finally returned to his senses and was shocked to find Lin Xun still untouched and unscathed after the battle. After a long time, Hu Long sighed and said, "I...am indebted to you."

After a slight pause, his expression turned fierce, "However, don't overthink things. I am not forgiving you for your previous actions unless you apologize to me."

Lin Xun casually replied, "You're the one whose overthinking. I saved you because we're both from Blood Kill Camp and not because I want your forgiveness."

Despite his bluntness, Hu Long believed Lin Xun and nodded, "That's good."

The two individuals fell silent as the pungent and nauseating stench of blood rose from the ground.

"Alright, the danger has already been resolved. I advise you to find a safe place to tend to your wounds. If you encounter trouble again, you might not be lucky enough to meet someone like me who will help you."

Lin Xun collected the army contributions and was just about to leave. However, alarm suddenly rose within his heart as his gaze darted towards the thicket beside them.

Rumble!

A water-like stream of blue suddenly arrived, ripping through the air as it released a terrifying, suffocating aura.

Brute Soldier!

Lin Xun's heart trembled. He had once fought a genuine Brute Soldier in Blood Kill Camp. How could he fail to recognize that such an attack could only come from a Brute Soldier, who was comparable to a Spirit Dipper stage expert?

However...

Experts with such power were not allowed in Demon Cloud Ridge. Why had a Brute Soldier suddenly appeared?

Lin Xun's thoughts were cut short by the attack's arrival, causing him to jump the side without any hesitation as he swung his blade at the attack.

Boom~

An earth-shaking noise erupted as light spewed in all directions. Lin Xun's figure stumbled three steps back as his expression changed slightly.

The attacker was far more powerful than the first-level Brute Soldier he had killed in Blood Kill Camp and was clearly an elite expert!

"Eh, you managed to block my attack?"

A strong and healthy figure suddenly appeared. It was a man wrapped entirely in black garments, revealing only a pair of cruel viper-like blue eyes.

"Brute Soldier!"

Hu Long finally reacted as well. His expression changed drastically as he shouted, "You brute trash! How dare you break your agreement with the empire!"

"Humph!"

The Brute Soldier coldly snorted but did not reply. He made a grabbing motion with his hands, causing dazzling blue light to condense into a sharp blade that swiftly shot towards Lin Xun.

"Run!" Lin Xun threw himself to the side, narrowly avoiding the attack as he shouted for Hu Long to run.

"Run? Neither of you will escape today!" An ice-cold voice suddenly sounded from another direction as another black figure appeared. The new arrival was dressed exactly the same as the first Brute Soldier and their auras were shockingly similar.

It was another Brute Soldier!

Lin Xun's and Hu Long's expressions changed as their hearts sank.

They might have a slim chance against a single Brute Soldier but two was too much.

"Kill!" The two Brute Soldiers were clearly seasoned veterans and swiftly attacked without wasting any time.

One attacked Lin Xun while the other dashed toward Hu Long.

Lin Xun knew that this was the critical moment!

Shiing!

He took a deep breath, ignored the rapidly approaching Brute Soldier, and instead moved towards Hu Long. At the same time, Lin Xun raised his blade as it released an excited cry.

Star-Gather!

Lin Xun did not hesitate to execute his strongest move.

A blade appeared from the void, tearing apart the darkness. Stars seemed to fall from the heavens like armageddon had arrived.

The Brute Soldier, who was about to attack Hu Long, felt his body turn rigid as danger bells blared in his head. A chill ran up the Brute Soldier's back as terror flooded his heart. What kind of blade art is this?

Chapter 166 A Regretful Elimination

A blade hummed like a crashing wave, emitting a shuddering power that seemed to reach all the way into a person's heart.

Star-Gather's power was different compared to the first time Lin Xun used it and had become stronger and more oppressive.

It had already gone beyond the realms of an ordinary martial art and contained a pressure that could intimidate the spirit. Its unique method of utilizing cultivation created power that was completely different from the norm.

The Brute Soldier's hairs stood on end as his mind was momentarily stolen from his body and plunged into eternal darkness. All he could see were brightly burning stars falling, destruction, and the laws of the universe descending into chaos.

Despair and terror washed over his heart like a tide, seemingly intent on dragging him into the bottomless abyss.

A blade soon emerged from the darkness. All the Brute Soldier felt was an intense pain as he instinctively struggled with all of his might to avoid it.

Squelch!

A deep cut reached from the top of his chest to his waist, revealing bone as thick sticky red blood poured out like a waterfall.

Only a little more and his organs would have spilled out!

The Brute Soldier screamed in pain. Despite avoiding the fatal attack, his body crashed into the ground a hundred feet away and his face was deathly pale as if he had just brushed shoulders with the god of death.

Panic and fear spread to his entire body, causing him to be frozen in place for a time as if he had been scared silly. The all-too-terrifying attack had caught him by surprise and seriously injured his spirit as well.

He could not imagine how a True Martial stage human youth could execute such a frightening blade technique that surpassed common sense.

"Third Brother!" The other Brute Soldier shouted in alarm, immediately abandoning his pursuit of Lin Xun as he dashed to his injured comrade.

This left Lin Xun no choice but to give up on trying to finish off the opponent, knowing that the opportunity was gone.

He panted heavily and his face was slightly pale. An intense, tearing pain ripped through his entire body. It was the repercussions of using Star-Gather.

However, having experienced it once, Lin Xun immediately stuffed several medicines into his mouth and urgently said, "Run!"

Hu Long subconsciously acknowledged it as if he had just awoken from a dream. His entire body was drenched in cold sweat. He had truly thought he was dead when the Brute Soldier pounced toward him earlier.

Hu Long had not expected Lin Xun would help him avert disaster again. The feeling of swaying between the line of life and death made Hu Long shiver uncontrollably.

"What are you still standing around for, go!"

Lin Xun pulled Hu Long by the wrist, not caring whether he agreed as they headed out of the thicket.

Although he had gravely injured the Brute Soldier, it was only succeeded because the opponent had been caught by surprise. Now that the other party was on guard, it would be difficult to achieve the same result.

More importantly, the majority of Lin Xun's energy had been consumed to execute Star-Gather and it was impossible for him to put up a fight if the battle continued.

"Trying to escape? Dream on!"

Another tall and muscular Brute Soldier suddenly appeared in Lin Xun's path!

Lin Xun's heart instantly hit rock-bottom. He had assumed there were only two Brute Soldiers, who could have expected that there was still one more nearby!

Hu Long's expression also changed drastically due to the sudden turn of events. What the hell is going on today? Why did three Brute Soldiers suddenly appear?

Could the situation in Demon Cloud Ridge have changed?

"It seems that we'll have to fight..."

Lin Xun took a deep breath. The severity of the situation had already surpassed his expectations. This was the first time he was in mortal danger since he entered Demon Cloud Ridge.

At this juncture, even the tiniest mistake would cost him his life!

"I..." Hu Long's expression changed indeterminately as he violently struggled inside.

"Second Brother, leave Third Brother for now and help me capture these two rats first!" The muscular Brute Soldier spoke, his eyes filled with cold cruelty.

His foot slammed into the ground, leaving behind an afterimage as he charged forth like a bolt of black lightning.

"Die!" A bronze spear appeared in his hand as a terrifying force enveloped Lin Xun and Hu Long.

The attack was like a heavenly net that was impossible to escape or avoid.

Lin Xun's eyes narrowed slightly. He pushed Hu Long to the side and channeled all of his power into the blade.

Omm!

The wave-like cry of a blade rang out again and rippled across the area like the roar of a dragon.

All of Lin Xun's remaining energy was extracted in an instant, causing him to nearly lose focus. However, he ultimately succeeded in executing the second Star-Gather.

The frightening consumption of energy made Lin Xun's face turn pale as he violently coughed blood.

The move was remarkably effective as usual. The enemy left just as quickly as he had arrived. He was sent flying by the strike and crashed into the ground a hundred feet away.

What disappointed Lin Xun, however, was that the attack only managed to cause a few minor injuries.

It was not because Star-Gather wasn't powerful enough but the target was just too strong. Moreover, he was on guard and had taken defensive measures which greatly reduced the power of Lin Xun's attack.

Boom!

Lin Xun suddenly sensed a terrifying force rapidly approaching from behind, causing his expression to change drastically. He knew that the Brute Soldier called Second Brother had taken the opportunity to attack.

Lin Xun did not have time to defend and could only instinctively throw himself to the side.

However, the opponent had clearly anticipated this response and shifted the attack accordingly. He relentlessly pursued Lin Xun as if intent on subduing him with this attack.

Danger!

Intense danger flooded Lin Xun's body, leaving him no choice but to avoid it with all of his might. It felt like he was in a neck-to-neck race with the god of death.

"Humph! It's useless to continue struggling, die!"

The muscular Brute Soldier who had been sent flying by Lin Xun had recovered and was now attacking from another direction.

Enemies at the front and behind!

Lin Xun suddenly found himself in a despairing situation.

More importantly, the two consecutive uses of Star-Gather had left his body in a dangerously exhausted state. Let alone counterattacking, even his dodging was somewhat sluggish.

What should I do?

Lin Xun gritted his teeth as he recalled the whistle hanging from his neck. If I....

Before Lin Xun could continue this train of thought, he heard a furious roar——

“Get lost!”

From the corner of his eye, Lin Xun saw Hu Long’s aura rapidly rise, seemingly becoming another person as he charged toward them.

Rumble!

With a single punch, the ‘Second Brother’ who had been chasing Lin Xun, was knocked away and sent flying.

“Eh?” The muscular Brute Soldier was stunned as he involuntarily uttered, “His cultivation advanced?”

Lin Xun also noticed the powerful dipper qi surging around Hu Long. A flash of realization struck Lin Xun, causing him to sigh inwardly.

“You brute trash, quickly come and die!”

Hu Long’s roar was filled with rage and hatred. He had become crazy and used the battle to release all of his anger.

Moments later, the Brute Soldier called Second Brother had his chest crushed by a punch. His corpse arced through the air and fell onto the ground, no longer able to crawl back up.

Even Lin Xun had not expected Hu Long to become so ferocious.

“Second Brother!” The muscular Brute Soldier released an anguished cry, his eyes nearly popping from their sockets. However, he did not continue fighting but chose to flee instead!

He had already sensed the tides turning and knew that he would also be killed if the battle continued.

The Brute Soldier roared, “Lin Xun, the next time we meet will be your death!”

Hu Long wanted to give chase but was stopped by a shout from Lin Xun, “If you pursue him, it’ll be over for me as well.”

Hu Long was taken aback and quickly returned to his senses. He turned around and killed the gravely injured ‘Third Brother’, who had yet to escape, before returning, “You saved me twice. I’ve repaid you once.”

His expression was somewhat gloomy and disappointed. There was no trace of his earlier ferocity.

Lin Xun could empathize with the disappointment and sadness Hu Long must be feeling but did not say anything. Lin Xun knew that any words of consolation he said at this juncture would only appear hollow and useless.

Despite this, Hu Long seemed to bounce back surprisingly quickly and sighed, “If I didn’t ascend, I would have been killed. But reaching the Spirit Dipper stage also means elimination. I can no longer return to Blood Kill Camp but I do not regret my decision. There’s no need for you to dwell upon this.”

He silently turned around, collected the brute totem runes and belongings of the two Brute Soldiers, and stuffed them all into his storage ring.

He then took off his storage ring and offered it to Lin Xun, "These army contributions mean nothing to me now. You should take them."

Lin Xun did not reject it and said, "These are yours. If I last till the end, I will hand your army contributions to the instructor. No matter what, they are your battle accomplishments and glory."

Hu Long chuckled in disagreement. He surveyed the area and said, "It's too dangerous here. I will bring you somewhere safe."

He squatted down for Lin Xun to get on his back and they left.

All that remained were two Brute Soldier corpses, proof of the soul-shaking battle which had just occurred.

.....

That night, Hu Long helped Lin Xun find a safe place to hide before leaving without saying a single word.

Lin Xun sighed inside again as he sent Hu Long off with eyes.

Most Blood Kill Camp students already possessed the qualifications to advance to the Spirit Dipper stage from the first day they joined.

Bai Lingxi, Zhao Yin, Li Duxing, Zhangsun Hen, Shi Yu, Ning Meng, Gong Ming and the others were excellent examples of this and made up the majority.

Hu Long was also included in this group.

They entered Blood Kill Camp to receive training and, more importantly, earn a chance to enter the Dipper Transformation Lake. With the lake's help, they would be able to construct their ideal aeth power reservoir when advancing to the Spirit Dipper stage.

Under such circumstances, no student would willingly advance to the Spirit Dipper stage unless they had no choice. If they did, it would mean leaving Blood Kill Camp and losing the opportunity to enter the Dipper Transformation Lake!

Although Hu Long's choice had allowed him to turn the tides and survive, he could no longer continue the exam in Demon Cloud Ridge or return to Blood Kill Camp.

This was the price of ascending!

Lin Xun felt regret for Hu Long. Although they had some differences between them, such petty grievances had long disappeared after fighting together.

Such were men. They were no longer enemies after fighting together as comrades, especially since there was no deep hatred between them.

Lin Xun cast his feelings aside and began to focus on cultivating. He needed to recover as soon as possible.

However, there was one thing he continued to think about. Those three Brute Soldiers had clearly been after him. Was it because of the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead?

What secrets were hidden in the water tribe's sacred treasure to make them so crazy and relentless? To think that they would even risk breaking the agreement between them and the empire and dispatch Brute Warriors to Demon Cloud Ridge.

Chapter 167 Building a House

Sacred treasure.

An object with such a title was naturally no ordinary item!

For the very first time, Lin Xun truly realized that there was definitely an astonishing secret hidden within the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead, which he had somehow obtained by chance.

The sudden battle today had clued him in on this.

Lin Xun knew that he needed to recover as quickly as possible. The enemy was absolutely not going to let up because of the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead.

In other words, they were definitely coming again!

This time there were three terrifyingly powerful Brute Soldiers, so what about the next time?

It was easy to see how precarious Lin Xun's situation was.

.....

After leaving Demon Cloud Ridge, Hu Long hesitated for a long time before ultimately deciding to first return to the Black Wind Army headquarters.

It was late at night but Song Ling had yet to sleep.

He was reading a recently arrived report from the battlefield which described the situation in Demon Cloud Ridge. Although it did not give a complete picture, it did detail a few strange movements from the brute race.

The Blood Kill Camp students entered Demon Cloud Ridge for their exam a month ago, and these reports have been arriving every three days since then.

The goal was simple. It was to prevent any sudden dangers which would deal a destructive blow to the Blood Kill Camp students.

Deaths were permitted in the exam but it was absolutely forbidden for unusual deaths to occur!

Every Blood Kill Camp student had a special background. In fact, it would not be wrong to say that they were the elite younger generation nurtured by the empire's many factions who had top-class potential and status.

To the empire, the loss of every student was equivalent to losing a future peak expert and a potential cornerstone of the empire.

Hence, although the test might appear to be a military training exercise between mere youths, no one dared to take it lightly.

Hu Long arrived right as Song Ling finished reading the report. When he saw Hu Long, Song Ling immediately knew that this young man had been eliminated.

Because he had ascended to the Spirit Dipper stage!

Song Ling could not help but frown. Being eliminated was not a big deal. Even without Blood Kill Camp's training, as long as the students didn't die, they could still become powerful figures in the future with the help of their factions.

However, Hu Long had visited late at night after being eliminated. Was he unable to accept the result?

Song Ling soon realized his initial assumption was wrong after hearing Hu Long's report about the battle which had happened today.

"Brute Soldier?" Song Ling's expression turned grave.

"Three Brute Soldiers. Moreover, they were stronger than the average Brute Soldier. We've killed a Brute Soldier before in Kill Blood Camp as part of our training. The three Brute Soldiers who appeared today were clearly much stronger and more terrifying."

Hu Long's expression grew serious, "Otherwise, I would not have been forced to ascend to the Spirit Dipper stage."

Song Ling narrowed his eyes. He knew that Hu Long had no reason to lie. This was a very serious problem indeed.

Three powerful Brute Soldiers suddenly appearing and attacking two Blood Kill Camp students was clearly abnormal. The unspoken agreement between the empire and the brute race clearly forbids the appearance of such powerful individuals in Demon Cloud Ridge!

What triggered Song Ling the most was that Lin Xun had been implicated in the battle!

Many days prior, Song Ling had learned about the battle on the volcano from the reports and some rumors about Lin Xun.

Song Ling was in-charge of the 39th Campground students' exam and only had a faint impression of Lin Xun at the start. After that battle, however, Song Ling realized that Lin Xun was definitely no weaker than Bai Lingxu, Zhao Yin, Li Duxing, and Zhangxun Heng.

Such a person was destined for great accomplishments in the future!

After hearing that such danger had befallen Lin Xun, Song Ling was thoroughly shaken and realized the severity of the problem.

After a brief silence, Song Ling asked, "Did you manage to identify them?"

Hu Long was taken aback. Something soon dawned upon him, causing his expression to change slightly, "They were all from the water brute tribe."

Iciness flashed in Song Ling's eyes, "You've also sensed that something is amiss?"

Hu Long nodded, "Most of the brute experts Lin Xun fought on the volcano were from the water brute tribe."

Song Ling rose to his feet, "This is quite an unusual problem. Wait here. I will go see Lieutenant General Wu Xinglie!"

Wu Xinglie!

The Lieutenant-General of the Black Wing Army was a man who had traversed battlefields for over a hundred years. His battle accomplishments were outstanding and he was well-known throughout the empire.

By this point, Hu Long knew that he had made the right decision to come here.

"Lin Xun, I've done what I can and no longer owe you anything...I hope that you will survive Demon Cloud Ridge!"

On that same night, Lieutenant General Wu Xinglie ordered ten Spirit Dipper experts to be dispatched into Demon Cloud Ridge to investigate.

.....

Three days later.

Lin Xun awoke from his meditation.

More than half of his medicine and tonics had been consumed.

The two consecutive uses of Star-Gather had nearly sucked him dry, leaving him no choice but to use a great amount of medicine and tonics to regain energy.

After recovering, Lin Xun was surprised to find that another spirit star had been lit in his mind-sea. This meant that his spirit power had grown again.

His understanding of Star-Gather had also deepened.

These were the benefits brought by battle. The more intense the battle the more a cultivator would be able to tap into their potential. Experiences like this were not something a person could obtain in a protected environment.

Without wasting any time, Lin Xun set off once more.

He was much more careful now. Although two of the three Brute Soldiers had been killed, the strongest one had managed to escape.

It was impossible for the other party to have given up on taking back the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead.

Under such circumstances, Lin Xun knew that he needed to be extra cautious.

Time passed as Lin Xun hunted brute expert after brute expert. Fortunately, he did not encounter any more Brute Soldiers.

Another person would have probably assumed the other side had given up but Lin Xun did not believe so.

Instead, the more peaceful things seemed the more vigilant he grew. In fact, he suspected that a meticulously put-together scheme was awaiting him!

A dozen days later.

Lin Xun was searching for a spot to recuperate after killing a squad of more than ten brute experts. His heart shivered all of a sudden and he immediately halted. *novelnext.com*

A thin figure abruptly appeared. It was a young man dressed in the military attire of the empire with the unique emblem of the Black Wind Army on his shoulder.

Although the young man was not handsome, he gave off a hard and cold aura.

He was holding a corpse in his hand.

Lin Xun's pupils shrank in surprise when he saw the corpse. It was the muscular Brute Soldier who had managed to escape previously!

"I am Song Ran, a Spirit Dipper stage cultivator of the empire's Black Wind Army." The young man's introduction was short and sweet. "We already know what happened. Is this the Brute Soldier who attacked both of you that day?"

He lifted the corpse.

Lin Xun nodded as he inwardly breathed a sigh of relief, "Hu Long told you guys?"

Song Ran's brows furrowed in thought before he nodded, "It was probably him. However, I do not know if that young man is called Hu long."

Lin Xun did not ask any further, already certain that Hu Long had helped him again. Otherwise, the empire would never have suddenly dispatched Spirit Dipper stage experts into Demon Cloud Ridge and even help him kill the current biggest threat to his life.

"You can concentrate on your exam. The Black Wind Army will not participate in the battles, but we will kill any Brute Soldier sent here by the brute race!"

A murderous look spread from Song Ling's brows.

"Thank you." Lin Xun earnestly said. Song Ran's sudden appearance and the good news he brought allowed Lin Xun to be more at ease compared to the last few days.

"Might I ask why these water brute experts have been so relentless in seeking you out?" Song Ran suddenly asked as his piercing gaze locked onto Lin Xun.

"It might be because I killed too many of their tribesmen." Lin Xun softly sighed. His heart shivered, knowing that the other party had begun to suspect something.

However, he did not plan on letting anyone know about the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead.

Song Ran made a noise in assent and looked deeply at Lin Xun, "Farewell."

He then turned and left.

This slightly stunned Lin Xun instead. He watched Song Ran leave but did not say anything.

From that day, Lin Xun had a smooth-sailing time in Demon Cloud Ridge. Given his current battle power, it was very rare for him to feel threatened unless he encountered a formidable brute expert.

Although Song Ran had killed the muscular Brute Soldier, a sliver of apprehension continued to linger in Lin Xun's heart.

It felt as if an invisible eye was always watching him.

It was an extremely uncomfortable feeling and Lin Xun tried numerous methods to find the source of this apprehension.

However, his efforts bore no fruit.

As a result, Lin Xun did not dare to let his guard down. He was not being overly suspicious but trusted his instincts.

Ever since he started practicing the Little Divine Meditation Art and lighting spirit-stars in his mind-sea, Lin Xun had become exceptionally attuned toward danger.

He firmly believed in this feeling and knew that it was not wrong.

Under this pressure, Lin Xun unexpectedly managed to light another spirit-star in his mind-sea twenty days before the end of the exam!

His spirit power had risen twice in the past month!

This made Lin Xun realize that although cultivating alone was effective, it would be more effective if there was also some danger and pressure.

Due to the growth in his spirit, the sliver of apprehension in his heart became much clearer.

This change dispelled any doubts that remained. He was now certain that the threat of the water brute tribe was still present!

From that day on, Lin Xun's routine suddenly changed. He arrived at a forest deep within Demon Cloud Ridge and built a small hut. He spent all day and night in the hut and no longer went hunting for army contributions.

It was as if he planned to camp there until the exam ended.

Chapter 168 Purgatory Array

The forest was very dangerous. It was home to many poisonous insects and savage, bloodthirsty beasts.

However, the area around the hut was strangely peaceful as if the ferocious beasts in the forests could sense a great danger within it and did not dare to approach.

This quiet and peaceful atmosphere lasted for seven days.

On a banana tree near the hut, densely packed sharp dark-gray leaves swayed in the wind.

A droplet of dew rolled down the tree. The droplet faintly trembled when it touched the ground and turned into mist. The mist silently spread, gradually taking the shape of a thin figure.

The entire process was completely noiseless and not a single sound was made.

The thin figure stood under the banana tree as he quietly observed the hut and its surroundings.

He was dressed in black and his figure was as thin as a blade's edge, revealing only a pair of bewitching cold dark-blue eyes.

He was called Shui Ying and was from the water brute tribe.

A total of four water brute experts had been dispatched into Demon Cloud Ridge to assassinate Lin Xun. Two of them had died at Hu Long's hands while another had been killed by Song Ran.

Shui Ying was the only remaining one.

He was a stealth expert and was the strongest among the four water brute experts. He had been watching Lin Xun for more than ten days.

However, due to the appearance of the empire's Spirit Dipper stage experts in Demon Cloud Ridge, Shui Ying had not dared to make his move.

He had carefully followed the target as he searched for an opportunity. If he failed, it would likely no longer be possible to take back the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead.

Hence, Shui Ying did not dare display any negligence even though his target was merely a True Martial ninth layer youngster.

However, Shui Ying was surprised by the sudden change in the target's behavior seven days ago. The target had built a hut deep in the forest and had not taken a single step outside since then.

The strange behavior confused Shui Ying.

What is the target up to?

Shui Ying could not fathom the target's motives but he did not dare to move carelessly. He continued observing in secret, hoping to eventually figure out the target's aim.

However, the target did not take a single step out of the hut for a whole week. In the end, Shui Ying's patience had been completely eroded.

As a result, he decided to make an assassination attempt today and would immediately withdraw the moment he sensed anything unusual.

Qi rippled like water around Shui Ying, perfectly melding his figure with the surrounding mist. It would be very difficult to detect his presence with only the naked eye.

Shui Ying cast aside his hesitation and unimportant thoughts and concentrated on the operation. He moved like a specter as he approached the hut at a strange angle.

From a distance, it looked as if mist was drifting towards the hut without making a single sound.

When he arrived in front of the hut, Shui Ying focused his senses on the hut but found that the interior was still completely silent.

This made him feel doubtful. Could the target have already left without him knowing?

In the end, a cold light flashed in Shui Ying's eyes as he made his move.

He could not wait any longer. There must be an outcome today!

Boom!

The hut's door was blown open, causing splinters to shoot inside as Shui Ying also dashed in at an inconceivable speed.

At the same time, the long-accumulated power around him was also unleashed. A long and narrow saw-blade had appeared in his hand and was swiftly swung in a wide arc, covering the entirety of the hut.

It was an attack with his full power behind it. Shui Ying was certain that even a Spirit Dipper stage expert would be hard-pressed to withstand this blow!

However, Shui Ying was surprised to find that the hut was empty. There was no trace of the target!

The interior of the hut was a small cramped space without any windows. There was nothing of note inside and only a few random bits of rubbish were scattered across the floor.

Had the target escaped?

Shui Ying suddenly heard a faint buzzing noise the moment this thought surfaced in his head. It sounded like a needle was gently scraping across a piece of paper.

However, the sound made Shui Ying's heart shudder violently as his intuition, which had been honed by many years of battle, made him throw himself towards the exit.

Shui Ying's response was remarkably quick. However, a peculiar change had already occurred on the wooden door that had been smashed when he entered.

It originated from a dark-gray compass-like object which was a similar color to the door. When it touched the ground, a strange rune array emerged on its surface.

Ohmm~

Like a chain reaction, strange runes also emerged on the four walls of the hut and its roof.

Although there seemed to be nothing special there, Shui Ying's retreating figure was suddenly stopped by an invisible force at the edge of the entrance. The resulting collision created a terrifying boom.

Rumble~~~

Shui Ying's expression changed drastically as he circulated all of his power in an attempt to break through the invisible barrier. However, flames suddenly began pouring down from the roof like rain as a frightening aura unfurled.

The full extent of Shui Ying's abilities was being displayed at this moment. A wave of dark-blue light surged with a wave of his sleeve and extinguished the falling fire.

His figure flickered from spot to spot as he rapidly probed every corner of the hut. However, his expression swiftly darkened as he realized that the hut seemed to have transformed into a steel cage that would not break no matter what he did.

It's a rune array!

Shui Ying instantly recognized that the many symbols on the walls and roof were a rune array that could only be constructed by the human rune masters.

A trap!

It finally dawned upon Shui Ying that he had stepped into a trap.

A powerful rune array had been secretly carved into this very ordinary hut.

It would never have crossed Shui Ying's mind that a True Martial stage youngster would be capable of setting up a rune array like a rune master.

Was the target not only a Blood Kill Camp student but also a young rune master?

Without giving him more time to think, another barrage of attacks was released from the hut. There was dazzling fire rain, waterfall-like ice arrows, sinister vines bursting out from the ground...

Shui Ying's figure was soon swallowed by the storm of attacks...

.....

At a certain spot a hundred feet from the hut, the ground suddenly burst open to reveal Lin Xun's figure. He immediately looked towards the hut.

Seven days ago, Lin Xun had built the hut for the sake of this very moment!

After entering Demon Cloud Ridge, Lin Xun had accumulated a giant hoard of resources from the many enemies he had killed.

He had originally planned to exchange it all for money. However, the lurking danger he sensed had made him change his plans.

At his current level, Lin Xun was well-aware that although he might succeed in gravely injuring a Brute Soldier with a sneak attack, it would be very difficult to kill the target.

If he was unable to kill his opponent, he would eventually be killed. This was an outcome Lin Xun absolutely did not wish for.

Under these circumstances, Lin Xun considered his other strong point—runes.

In the past, Lin Xun had not been able to construct a rune array because his spirit power and cultivation were insufficient.

After all, it was common knowledge that only Spirit Dipper stage rune masters could construct rune arrays!

Lin Xun's cultivation had not reached the Spirit Dipper stage, nor did he have any experience in constructing rune arrays.

However, due to the circumstances, he had no choice but to do his best and try!

For the past few days, he had used all of the resources he had collected to craft a rune brush and rune ink, and focused all of his energy on constructing a rune array.

Rune arrays were no stranger to Lin Xun. In fact, he was extremely familiar with them and could instantly recall over a hundred different rune arrays when he closed his eyes.

He only lacked the experience of personally going through the process.

Despite giving his best effort and resolve, Lin Xun did not fancy his chances of success.

He was pretty much prepared for failure.

To his surprise, he ultimately succeeded in his first attempt at constructing a rune array!

It was like the first time he had crafted a Flame Blade in a single try. The only difference was that it was a rune array this time!

Even Lin Xun himself was in disbelief.

Regardless, he had succeeded in constructing a Little Five Elements Purgatory Array in the hut.

It was an array that encompassed the power of the five elements and was a basic rune array every experienced rune master knew.

Although it was not anything special, it was an extremely practical trap array.

Shui Ying currently being trapped in the hut and unable to escape was the best proof of the array's power.

However, the happiness in Lin Xun's heart gradually faded as a grave look surfaced between his brows.

Although the array's attacks had not stopped, it was becoming increasingly apparent that the opponent would not be killed any time soon. Lin Xun was certain that the opponent this time was far stronger than any ordinary Brute Soldier.

It was because Lin Xun clearly understood that even an extremely formidable level one Brute Soldier would not be able to survive in a Little Five Elements Purgatory Array!

However, Lin Xun did not withdraw. He continued to observe the hut with cold calculating eyes as a plan formulated in his head.

Boom!

The hut suddenly exploded as a terrifying wave of qi soared into the sky and rippled the clouds.

Shui Ying's figure walked out. His hair was a scattered mess and his clothes were in tatters, making him the very picture of misery.

Despite this, his dark-blue eyes were still calm and cold while an incomparably oppressive aura pulsed from his body. At this moment, he was akin to a fully enraged primeval beast.

"To think you were capable of constructing a Little Five Elements Purgatory Array with your True Martial stage cultivation. How remarkable. Such an outstanding young rune master like yourself must be very rare in your Ziyao Empire, right?"

Horrific killing intent surged around Shui Ying as he stepped forward and locked onto Lin Xun.

Chapter 169 Absolute Control

Before the chilling and grim voice faded, Shui Ying was already charging forward and was shrouded in a dazzling but terrifying blue glow.

Boom!

He made a grabbing motion in the air and, as the air exploded, a giant invisible hand enveloped Lin Xun's body.

Before the attack struck Lin Xun, a terrifying blast of wind had already ruffled his hair and he felt piercing pain in his skin like it had been frozen.

He looked terrified as he stood rooted to the spot.

The wooden hut exploded into pieces and Shui Ying had completely broken out. The series of movements had happened at an unbelievable speed.

Other cultivators likely wouldn't have been able to react in time to the series of movements.

However, Lin Xun remained calm and composed without budging an inch. He fixed his dark eyes on the destroyed wooden hut, looking a little unusual.

Shui Ying was a sharp-witted, vigilant and experienced expert, so Lin Xun's extremely subtle but unusual action didn't escape his attention.

Could that guy still have a trick up his sleeve?

Just as the thought flashed into Shui Ying's mind, he felt a terrifying force rushing towards him from all directions like invisible tentacles. It caught his body and propelled him back while he was charging forward.
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Bang!

He was ruthlessly slammed to the ground and brought dust swirling into the air. A sharp pain shot through his body and he couldn't help grunting.

At that moment, Lin Xun, who was standing quietly, seemed to be heaving a sigh of relief. Then, an imperceptible smile curved the corners of his lips.

The wooden hut had exploded apart and fell into ruins, but a perfectly round shadow had unknowingly appeared above the ruins.

The shadow wandered silently and imperceptibly like mist. Several wisps of mysterious runes were circulating within it, releasing five different colored rays of rune light: gold, blue, red, azure, and black.

If someone was looking down from a bird's eye view, they would see that the colorful shadow formed a perfect circle in the center of the ruins of the wooden hut, spewing out rays of rune light that intertwined and wove together in the air. The runes within the shadow tumbled and pulsed in a mysterious and dazzling manner.

Shui Ying was imprisoned inside it. Each ray of rune light seemed illusory, gentle, and powerless but they were able to hold him to the ground. He felt like he had been suppressed by a divine mountain, unable to break free regardless of how he struggled.

His countenance suddenly changed, his eyes were wide with horror, and he seemed a little dazed.

Standing in the distance, Lin Xun quietly drew his blade. Then, he slowly stepped forward, his handsome face still as calm as a tranquil lake and without a ripple of emotion. But a murderous aura was spreading around his body

"This is the true face of the Little Five Elements Purgatory Array."

Lin Xun came to a stop outside the array and looked at Shui Ying's furious and shocked face. "So you don't have to look so unhappy."

Shui Ying felt his body aching with severe pain. He distinctly felt terrifying forces pressing down on him, crushing him like a millstone. Every inch of his body was being destroyed.

He had no doubt that he would be crushed into a puddle of flesh and blood and lose his life if it continued!

"I have indeed underestimated you, but do you think you can kill me with this formation?"

Shui Ying's voice was hoarse and low as if it was being squeezed out from his teeth but it contained no anger. He clearly hadn't completely lost his mind.

Surprisingly, Lin Xun nodded with a smile. "You're right. Although this array is powerful, it lacks one of the core things. I really don't have much confidence in using it to kill you."

Shui Ying narrowed his eyes, studying the young man in the distance. But his heart uncontrollably sank when he saw the serious and calm look on his face.

What kind of human youngster is he?

I thought I had a very good hiding spot and wouldn't be discovered, but that youngster seemed to have an extraordinary sight—He not only knew about my presence but also went to the effort of setting up a sophisticated trap over several days.

This isn't something that ordinary cultivators could do!

However, Shui Ying was most terrified and shocked that Lin Xun was able to set up such a rune formation at such a young age. Lin Xun's ability had completely changed Shui Ying's view of rune masters.

Shui Ying had over twenty years of combat experience and had killed an unknown number of experts from the Ziyao Empire. He had a deep knowledge of the Ziyao Empire and knew that it was very rare and terrifying for a youngster at the True Martial Stage to produce such a rune array.

Shui Ying finally sensed a trace of crisis when he saw Lin Xun's calm and composed expression. Lin Xun seemed to be in absolute control.

The youngster must have a trick up his sleeve!

If Shui Ying's comrades knew that he, who had the title of Ghost Assassin, was so terrified of a youngster from the human race, they would laugh their heads off.

However, Shui Ying didn't find it funny at all!

On the contrary, he was terrified. If a True Martial teenager could force me to such a state, what terrifying strength would he possess when he grows up?

If he isn't killed, he would become a huge problem to the entire Magi Brute Race.

Unfortunately for Shui Ying, it looked like he couldn't change anything. He wasn't even certain if he could escape from the danger he was in!

Suddenly, Shui Ying sharply sensed that the rune array power around him was imperceptibly weakening.

His heart fluttered as it confirmed one of his speculations.

"It seems that it's indeed impossible to escape my doom. I, Shui Ying, have assassinated an unknown number of human cultivators in my life. I thought I would die in the hands of a stronger opponent. I never thought that it would be a teenager. How ridiculous."

Shui Ying sighed, his hoarse voice sounding grim. "Can you tell me your name before I die?"

Lin Xun clasped his blade as he stood outside the rune array. His smile deepened as he looked at Shui Ying's dispirited expression.

He had always liked to smile since a young age. Sometimes it was endearing and sometimes it was incredibly annoying.

At least, at that moment, Shui Ying felt the smile was very unpleasant like Lin Xun was mocking him.

"You're just buying time, but so am I." Lin Xun suddenly spoke.

His smile began to fade and his expression turned serious. "You must already know that this array's greatest weakness is that it lacks a strong aeth power source. As a result, its power is only temporary. Over time, the rune array will completely collapse due to a lack of aeth power support."

Lin Xun shrugged, sighing, "It can't be helped. I can't find aeth crystals to act as an aeth power source in Demon Cloud Ridge and had to use items such as aeth pills and aeth herbs instead. It seems that this

array can't be used anymore. In five minutes...no, three minutes, you won't have trouble breaking out with your strength."

As Lin Xun's voice rang out, Shui Ying looked increasingly annoyed. Lin Xun had read his mind but he couldn't guess what Lin Xun's real intention was.

"What do you actually want to do?" Shui Ying couldn't help but ask. He knew the question was stupid but he couldn't stand being controlled.

"My ultimate goal, of course, is to kill you." Lin Xun stated without any hesitation. "Only then can I continue the assessment with peace of mind in the remaining half a month."

"Are you sure you can kill me when I break out?"

Shui Ying stared intently into Lin Xun's eyes as if attempting to read his mind.

"Of course."

Lin Xun casually responded. "If I didn't think I could kill you, I would have fled while you were trapped in the wooden hut. I would have had enough time to escape from here and get help from Black Wind Army Spirit Dipper cultivators. I wouldn't need to put myself into any further danger."

Shui Ying's heart sank. "So, the reason you stayed is because you have the means to kill me?"

Lin Xun thought for a moment and shook his head. "I can't be too sure until the last moment."

Shui Ying suddenly raised his head, and a chilling and ruthless glint shot out from his blue eyes. "I'll ask you one more time, do you have the Heavenly Water Sacred Bead?"

Lin Xun smiled, "This is what you care about the most?"

Shui Ying nodded.

Clang!

Lin Xun suddenly brought his blade up, producing a clear and resounding blade cry. "Then there's no harm telling you after you die."

Shui Ying's pupils rapidly shrank as an intense feeling of unease surged in his heart.

He predicted that he only needed at most another ten seconds to break out the rune formation but he didn't think Lin Xun would act now!

Could that guy have already accurately timed it?

However, before Shui Ying could think further about it, a bizarre blade cry rang in his ears. It stirred the wind and shook his spirit.

As though he had entered a trance, Shui Ying felt like he could see stars falling from the dark sky, the sky splitting, and everything collapsing...

It was like doomsday!

A deadly dangerous aura enveloped Shui Ying and made him feel like all the pores on his body were about to explode. It was unknown where he got the strength from but he unleashed a loud roar, which violently shattered the layers of rune light pressing on his body. He scrambled to his feet.

“Do you think a human bastard like you can kill me?”

As he uttered coldly, he circulated all his powers. His entire body seemed to be burning and a terrifying aura surrounded him. The illusion instantly disappeared before him.

He finally saw Lin Xun’s blade slashing through the air. A chilling smile curved the corners of his lips and he thrust his palm forward without any hesitation.

However...

Unexpectedly, although the power of the Little Five Elements Purgatory Array that imprisoned him couldn’t do anything to him, it suddenly exploded!

Rumble—

The rays of dazzling rune light exploded and vaporized like a volcano erupting. They turned into terrifying waves of qi and engulfed everything across a thousand-feet radius. Not only were the surrounding rocks and trees instantly pulverized, but Shui Ying was also drowned in them.

Lin Xun had swiftly moved to the distance to avoid the rune explosion.

As he stood afar and watched the explosion and columns of flaming light shoot into the sky, he didn’t relax his grip around his blade in the slightest.

Everything had been under Lin Xun’s control so far, but he didn’t know whether or not the explosion of a rune formation could kill a top expert like Shui Ying.

Chapter 170 Mysterious Beast Tooth

All the known rune arrays in the world, whether low-level or high-level, whether large or small, wouldn’t explode if successfully arranged.

This was common knowledge to all cultivators.

However, there was a special situation in which almost all defective rune arrays would self-destruct.

The explosion power of a defective rune array was terrifying!

Due to this, ordinary rune masters would pay extra attention when creating rune arrays or even prepare careful defensive measures.

The higher level the rune array, the more terrifying was its self-explosion power. In the history of the Ziyao Empire, it had been recorded that a few rune masters had suffered a rune array explosion accident before.

However, the Little Five Elements Purgatory Array that Lin Xun made was very unique.

It was a successful defective rune array.

It was successful because it possessed all the powers of the Little Five Elements Purgatory Array.

It was defective because almost all the rune materials and rune inks that Lin Xun had used to make it were damaged.

There was nothing he could do about it. He had collected the rune materials and inks from enemies' corpses. He had also found all kinds of materials, some useful and some useless. It could be imagined how difficult it was to use them to create a rune array.
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Even rune masters wouldn't believe that anyone could create a rune array from incomplete and damaged rune materials.

There was only one reason for this: every rune array encompassed different rune patterns and so required different rune materials and inks. Not all rune materials and inks could be used.

For example, the Little Five Elements Purgatory Array required more than one hundred and thirty kinds of rune materials and dozens of rune ink.

The rune materials were all specific to that rune array. It was easy to imagine how unbelievable it was for Lin Xun to create a rune array with incomplete and defective rune materials.

The most astonishing aspect was that he succeeded!

It was no doubt a miracle that he succeeded. At least, other rune masters in the world would drop their jaws in shock if they learned about it.

However, Lin Xun thought it was normal because he had seen Mister Lu do it before. To be fair, he was a little surprised that he succeeded since it was his first time creating such a rune array.

However, although Lin Xun had succeeded, the Little Five Elements Purgatory Array was indeed flawed. Its power was limited because the core of the formation lacked the most important aeth power source.

Shui Ying had noticed the flaw right away.

However, Shui Ying didn't know that the rune array had an even more fatal flaw: its structure was extremely unstable because the rune materials used were defective. Once the structure was damaged, it would trigger a chain reaction and had a terrifying risk of self-explosion!

Lin Xun had taken advantage of this.

Previously, Shui Ying had been trying to buy time to wait for the rune ray to weaken and then escape the array.

However, Lin Xun was also buying time. He was also waiting for the power of the rune array to gradually disappear. Then, he launched a powerful surprise attack, thereby destroying the structure of the rune array and triggering a self-explosion.

Lin Xun had succeeded in the end. He didn't activate the Stars Gathering move to kill Shui Ying but instead acted to make the rune array explode!

Caught off guard, Shui Ying was drowned by the power of the self-exploded rune array.

.....

Rumble—

The power of the self-destructed rune array was extremely terrifying. It produced waves of qi and rune light that drowned the entire area like a landslide.

With the explosion radius, rocks were crumbled to powder, trees were incinerated to ashes, and terrifying cracks had split the ground. The blast created a tremendous mushroom cloud in the sky.

Standing afar, Lin Xun constantly scanned the center of the explosion. He found it a little abnormal that he still hadn't heard a single scream.

Unless Shui Ying had been instantly killed. But there was only a very slim chance of that happening to a top expert like Shui Ying.

Screee!

Suddenly, a beam of black light shot out from the exploding waves of flames. It streaked across the air like a lightning bolt and arrived in a split second.

So fast!

Unbelievably fast!

If Lin Xun had lowered his guard, he wouldn't have been able to evade that attack.

However, even though he hadn't relaxed, the sudden attack still caught him by surprise.

Too quick!

Too sudden!

Boom—

Lin Xun barely had time to bring his blade in front to shield his body when he felt a terrifying power slamming into him.

His arms trembled violently, his bones almost shattered and his body was uncontrollably blasted more than a dozen yards into the distance.

The agonizing pain drained the color from his face and he coughed up a mouthful of blood.

The power contained in that attack was so terrifying that Lin Xun's countenance uncontrollably changed and a heavy feeling weighed on his heart.

Only then did he clearly see that the beam of black light was from a strange jet-black beast tooth. Thumb-sized with a smooth and shiny surface, it resembled a pure black gemstone. It glowed with the most heart-chilling luster.

Lin Xun lifted his head, stared at the rune array explosion and saw a figure staggering out from the flames.

It was Shui Ying, but his body was mangled and dripping with blood and his bones were sticking out of his skin. He looked like a rag riddled with holes.

As he teetered, his blue eyes blazed with hatred and bitterness. He glowered at Lin Xun from afar. He hated the fact that he couldn't swallow Lin Xun alive.

Enduring the pain all over his body, Lin Xun got up and gripped his blade.

"I didn't think you could set up such a rune array. A rune master like you who can think outside the box will no doubt become a shadow shrouding our Magi Brute Race and cause unimaginable disasters to us. Today...I must kill you!"

Shui Ying's voice was extremely hoarse and also filled with extreme malice.

However, his body tottered like an oil lamp about to be extinguished. Despite his vicious words, it carried not a trace of threat.

Lin Xun narrowed his eyes, studying Shui Ying as he approached. Suddenly, he raised his brows and took out a short crossbow from his sleeve.

Beng!

Lin Xun pulled the trigger without any hesitation. A rain of arrows shot out, producing piercing soul-stirring whistles.

Shui Ying clearly didn't expect Lin Xun to be so cautious. He couldn't help but let out a roar of fury.

Boom!

He suddenly pressed his hands together in the air, summoning a blue light screen to deflect the shower of arrows.

However, that move exhausted the last of his strength. His body swayed and tottered and, with a thud, he collapsed to the ground.

"So hateful—!"

This was his last cry before death. It was full of bitterness and reluctance.

Lin Xun stood motionlessly until he had confirmed that Shui Ying was completely dead. Only then could he relax and draw a deep breath.

If he hadn't fired the crossbow, Shui Ying's final counterattack before his death likely would have taken his life!

It made Lin Xun truly realize that if he let his guard down before an enemy had fallen, it could lead to an unpredictable disaster!

Without any hesitation, Lin Xun stepped forward with his blade and slashed off the piece of damaged brute totem rune on his dead opponent's chest.

Then, he firmly stabbed Shui Ying in the chest.

Unfortunately, besides the brute totem rune, there was nothing else valuable on Shui Ying. Lin Xun couldn't help but smile wryly. He had spent so many days and prepared so many means to kill a terrifying brute soldier but his harvest was only a damaged brute totem rune.

However, just as Lin Xun was about to leave, a thought struck his mind. He remembered the dark beast tooth.

He turned around and picked up the beast tooth on the ground. He was examining it closer when an earthshaking beast roar suddenly rang in his mind and a terrifying power shook his soul. He trembled and a wave of dizziness came over him.

But the horrifying beast roar faded in a second. It made Lin Xun think that it was just an illusion.

He couldn't help but take another look at the dark beast's tooth in his palm. He still couldn't figure out what sort of beast it belonged to.

Lin Xun pondered for a moment and finally stored away the dark beast tooth and left.

.....

Only half a month was left until the battlefield assessment ended.

No one knew that Lin Xun had killed a brute soldier with unimaginable strength. He also had no intention of mentioning the matter to anyone.

The matter ended quietly.

A deep worry of Lin Xun had been removed with Shui Ying's death. Following the incident, he resumed his usual routine: he searched for enemies during the day and restored his strength at night.

Everything in Demon Cloud Ridge seemed the same to Lin Xun.

However, the remaining half a month on Demon Cloud Ridge was a critical period for many Blood Kill Camp students. It determined their scores and consequently who would be eliminated!

The atmosphere was incredibly tense.

All the students no longer held back their strength and fought bloody battles one after another on Demon Cloud Ridge. Wounds and injuries were inevitable in such battles.

.....

In the Water Tribe Army north of Demon Cloud Ridge, Shui Xingkong sighed. "Completely defeated..."

The atmosphere in the camp was very depressing and every water brute expert's face was overcast.

Shui Ying and the others had all died. Furthermore, their movements had alerted the Ziyao Empire to dispatch many more cultivators to Demon Cloud Ridge. Under those circumstances, it was clearly impossible to send out more experts to assassinate Lin Xun.

"Leader, the Blood Kill Camp training is about to end. Do we have to give up on the sacred treasure?" A water brute expert asked bitterly.

“No, it won’t end like this. Even if we fail this time, we will have a chance to capture the youngster called Lin Xun. I guarantee it!”

Shui Xingkong’s voice was resolute and resounding. He drew a deep breath and peered at Demon Cloud Ridge shrouded in night through the camp entrance.