

# THE PRODIGIES WAR

## Chapter 4: Mine Prison



Dusky yellow lamp light swayed in the simple straw house. The old wooden box was opened, revealing an azure blade, a yellowing book and a dark gray half-foot-long brush.

Usually, a brush was a tool for drawing and writing.

This brush resembled a calligraphy brush but had a sharp blade in place of the usual soft hairs. It was a necessary tool used by rune masters to carve runes.

Hence, this brush was also known as a rune knife.

Personally, Lin Xun preferred the name rune knife because it sounded similar to dao seeking. Who could vie with someone who sought the dao in every land?[1]

This kind of name elicited an indescribable feeling of excitement.

Lin Xun's gaze lingered on the yellowing book and the dark gray brush. These two items held extraordinary significance to him.

The yellowing book was roughly three-fingers-thick and did not have a title. Its tattered pages were cut from leather and the book had clearly been made long ago. A mere glance at it would make anyone feel an ancient and historical aura.

The dark gray brush was quite unique and resembled a sword more than a brush. Mysterious cloud-like patterns were etched into its dark, dull surface and its bladed tip gave off a chilling aura that reached all the way into the depths of a person's soul.

They were Lin Xun's two most important treasures.

Besides the book, brush and blade, there were also bones, animal skins, dried plants, rocks and other similar items. These were aeth resources that could be crafted into special tools, made into rune ink, or used as rune materials.

They had been collected by Lin Xun along his journey and could be sold for quite a tidy sum.

In the corner of the wooden box sat a stack of thumb-sized wooden blocks that were as solid and hard as jade.

These wooden blocks were called clubmoss silver wood and normally had little value. Their only unique quality was that they were extremely tough and as hard as rocks.

As such, clubmoss silver wood was an ideal material for rune apprentices to practice their rune carving.

Lin Xun carefully picked up the thick yellowing book and sat in front of the desk by the window.

He silently gazed at the book but did not flip it open. Instead, he fell into deep thought.

In the blink of an eye, Lin Xun seemed to return to the past.

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He recalled a mine prison full of prisoners that was isolated from the rest of the world in the mountains.

Lin Xun had been in the prison for as long as he could remember. It was a place without sky or sunlight, only darkness and dampness.

The atmosphere was suffocating with prisoners dying and new ones arriving every day.

In Lin Xun's memory, no one had ever managed to escape from the mine prison before it was destroyed.

Strictly speaking, Lin Xun was not a prisoner but an orphan, who had nearly been eaten by the fiendish prisoners when he was found.

That was what Mister Lu had told him anyway.

As for how an abandoned baby had survived, he had, of course, been saved by Mister Lu.

No one knew Mister Lu's origins, but he had clearly received special treatment in the mine prison. Not only the guards, but even the prisoners were also extremely respectful towards him.

It was all due to Mister Lu's other identity—a rune master.

Lin Xun had followed at Mister Lu's side since young and had subsequently begun to help the latter with various chores once he was old enough.

He became proficient at recognizing words and identifying various ingredients. In addition, he learned how to manufacture rune ink, practiced his rune carving and committed various types of runes to heart. He did all of this while also doing other mundane chores, such as preparing tea, serving water, washing clothes and cooking.

Lin Xun had believed that he was Mister Lu's disciple, a sentiment shared also by the guards and prisoners in the prison mine.

However, Mister Lu had never acknowledged Lin Xun as his disciple. In Mister Lu's words, he did not plan on ever accepting a disciple, and Lin Xun was merely someone who was helping out with the chores.

This statement had once made Lin Xun depressed for a bit, but the bad memory gradually faded with time. However, deep inside, he still treated Mister Lu as his master.

Life in the mine prison was very dry and monotonous with no sun to herald the arrival of each day. As Lin Xun grew older, he slowly began to realize that there was a wider world outside.

When Lin Xun was nine, Mister Lu brought him outside for the very first time. However, they returned a mere three days later.

The experiences over these three days shocked Lin Xun tremendously. He had seen the outside world, sunlight, the blue sky and the clean white clouds.

From then on, Mister Lu would take him out from time to time, though they would always return to mine prison within three to ten days.

Their goal for each trip was simple. Mister Lu needed to collect more aeth resources for his runes.

Every trip gradually increased Lin Xun's understanding of the world.

The only thing that puzzled him was that Mister Lu seemed to prefer to stay in the dark, sunless mine prison instead of the outside world.

Regrettably, Lin Xun was never able to find the answer to that question.

Even when the mine prison was destroyed...

At this thought, pain shot through Lin Xun's heart as the terrible memory from three months ago involuntarily filled his head—

On that day, he had been engaging in Green Wood Rune carving practice, while Mister Lu was mumbling to himself as he watched over a pot of boiling aeth ingredients.

Outside the room, the guards whipped the less 'motivated' prisoners with their bloody metal whips while a cacophony of curses, shouts and wails of agony echoed amidst the dark prison.

This day was no different from any other, and it was a life which Lin Xun had already long grown accustomed to. In fact, he no longer felt any sympathy for those pitiful-looking but inwardly evil prisoners.

The only strange thing about that day was Mister Lu.

Since young, Lin Xun had learned that Mister Lu had a bad temper, often appearing irritable and impatient. Lin Xun had been verbally abused countless times by Mister Lu and had long grown used to such treatment.

Although Mister Lu would scold and reprimand, he never hit Lin Xun. Moreover, the lectures were always due to Lin Xun's mistakes.

On that day, Mister Lu had been exceptionally irritable and had smashed numerous items in the room. Even his most beloved rune brush, Azure Sky Burning Gold, had been violently snapped into two by him.

While Lin Xun was bewildered by such behaviour, he saw Mister Lu retrieve an old wooden box and furiously throw in a yellowing book, an azure blade and a dark, dull half-foot-long rune brush, before handing the box over to the stunned Lin Xun.

Even today, Lin Xun could still remember Mister Lu's complicated expression—conflicted, hatred, helplessness and an unwillingness to accept something. However, it ultimately turned into a solemn seriousness.

Lin Xun had never seen such intensity before and knew he would never forget this sight for as long as he lived.

Mister Lu then tightly grasped Lin Xun's shoulders, making him feel as if his bones were about to be crushed, and said, "From today, you shall learn how to be independent. Hence, you must make sure that you live on!"

Mister Lu's hoarse voice overflowed with an unshakable determination. His eyes were blood-red and filled with madness that only appeared when a

person knew his death was coming. “Remember, it was not easy for me to save you, so you absolutely cannot die!”

Mister Lu then pointed towards the yellowing book and dark gray rune brush and stated in a voice that held a serious tone that Lin Xun had never heard before, “Safeguard them well! The success of your future cultivation will depend on them, especially the brush! I have failed to uncover the secret within it but if you manage to, you’ll be able to defy the heavens and change destiny even after losing your Origin Aeth Artery!”

“Haven’t you always wanted to know who stole your Origin Aeth Artery? I can tell you that the answer lies in the Ziyao Empire! So live on and search for the answer! Don’t ever forget!” Mister Lu’s voice turned hysterical; his expression warped and distorted. Overwhelmed, Lin Xun could only instinctively nod his head.

Mister Lu grabbed Lin Xun’s frail body, violently dragging him to a dark, concealed passageway that he had never seen before. “Go!” *noVelNExt.com*

The dark passageway was akin to a bottomless abyss. Mister Lu pushed Lin Xun in without any hesitation.

Lin Xun was unable to even react; his mind turning blank as he felt as if he was falling from a cliff.

It was also in that instant that he saw an ancient hand tear apart the darkness of the mine prison, accompanied by a loud rumbling as it descended.

The hand was so enormous that it could cover the sky, every finger akin to a pillar supporting the heavens and each groove akin to a deep gorge. The hand was surrounded by terrifying purple flames and resembled a purple sea of fire pouring down from outer space. It was filled with dreadful destructive power that could incinerate darkness itself and burn the skies.

Never in Lin Xun's wildest dreams would he have imagined that someone's hand could...cover the sky!

1. Both are spelled 'wen dao' in pinyin with slightly different pronunciations 🙋