

Prodigies 81

Chapter 81 Bloody Battle Everywhere

Raging flames were blazing in multiple areas of the Black Tiger Gang's den. The fire had already spread to an uncontrollable state.

Some people were still defending to the end, hoping that Old Tiger Lu would return in time. But many more people chose to flee. It had become a scene of complete chaos.

These criminals who were considered at the bottom of society would rather choose their lives over loyalty.

As Lin Xun walked into the Black Tiger Gang's den, he saw many people fleeing in panic. They raced past the hall and completely ignored him.

Soon, Lin Xun saw dozens of cultivators ready in battle formation and waiting for his arrival. This was completely different from what he expected.

Do these guys not know how to hide?

"I leave these people to you. I have another affair to deal with." By the time Xia Zhi's voice entered his ears, she had already vanished.

Lin Xun narrowed his eyes and then smiled. He drew out the Flame Blade and charged toward the dozens of cultivators!

Armed with just his blade, he planned to take on dozens of cultivators by himself!

Even the Black Tiger Gang cultivators gathered in the hall couldn't help but find it absurd. Most importantly, he was only a youngster!

But when they thought of the little girl's terrifying ability, that absurd feeling instantly faded and they went on alert. The youngster might even be more powerful than the little girl.

Boom!

Seeing Lin Xun speed towards them, someone couldn't help but pick up a spear and thrust it forward. The spear moved like lightning and the tip was incomparably sharp; it contained astonishing aeth power.

It's a fifth-layer True Martial Stage expert!

This thought flickered in Lin Xun's mind. Without the slightest hesitation, he brought his buzzing blade down at the opponent's spear!

Bang!

A terrifying landslide-like force blasted his opponent and his spear across the air and sent them smashing into a stone pillar. Spurting blood from both his nose and mouth, his opponent fainted on the spot.

At the same time, all sorts of weapons—blades, swords and hammer—were launched from different directions at Lin Xun. The moves were tricky, ruthless, and precisely timed.

Lin Xun leaped into the air and his blade started to rotate, turning into a whirlwind. Waves of flames exploded as they rolled like the flowing ocean.

With a loud boom, the enemy's blade snapped into two along with the person's right arm. Screaming, he frantically drew back.

Whereas the sword and hammer were sent hurling across the air, leaving the other two cultivators exposed. Taking advantage of this opportunity, Lin Xun changed attacks once again. He suddenly slashed down.

With a sickening thud, the hammer-wielding cultivator's head was crushed and tumbled to the ground.

The sword-wielding cultivator had evaded in time and narrowly escaped, but he was so frightened that his face was deathly pale and his soul had almost left his body.

Three people had been slaughtered in seconds!

Lin Xun had only performed three moves of the Six Word Blade. His blade skills might not be comparable to Xia Zhi's but it was more than enough to deal with the cultivators present!

Moreover, he was equipped with all sorts of rune armaments and had a Flame Blade. He was simply armed to the teeth and his strength was at least thirty percent stronger than usual.

On the flip side, very few of his opponents had seen cultivators at the eighth layer True Martial Stage. Most of them were only around the fifth layer True Martial Stage and posed no threat to Lin Xun.

After all, when Lin Xun was only at the fifth layer True Martial Stage, he was already evenly matched with Du Xiao, a seventh layer True Martial Stage expert. Now that he had broken through to the sixth layer, his strength was, of course, superior to before.

After witnessing several comrades being killed in the blink of an eye, the Black Tiger Gang cultivators in the hall all turned ashen-faced, and shock filled their hearts.

"Quick! Let's join hands to kill that kid!"

Following a loud roar, the cultivators simultaneously charged forward. No one dared to hold back anymore. Every one of them looked ferocious as they surrounded Lin Xun.

Fighting cries rang endlessly in the hall. The walls collapsed, the ground cracked, and various items in the hall had been crushed to powder.

Die!

Lin Xun fought with his blade. His figure was as vigorous and nimble as a flying monkey. The Flame Blade swung in all directions and crimson blade light shot out with terrifyingly destructive power.

Although it was Lin Xun's first time up against dozens of cultivators, he didn't panic at all. His dark eyes were deep and calm, and his handsome and warm face didn't ripple at all.

But beneath his calm exterior, fighting intent and murderous intent were blazing.

Fight!

The smell of blood and fire, as though by magic, opened up a desire in Lin Xun's heart that he had never felt before.

Kill! Kill! Kill!

This young man, who was from a mine prison, clasped his blade like a frightening dragon and stirred up a storm of blood. His long hair billowed wildly around his face.

The miserable screams of the enemy as they fell vitalized Lin Xun's fighting spirit and made it become even stronger like stirring music.

The blood poured out from the enemy was like the strongest wine in the world and made Lin Xun experience a joy that he had never felt in the past.

At that moment, Lin Xun had completely forgotten himself. He was fully immersed in the battle. He had forgotten everything about mundane life and all the compromises and plots needed to live in the world!

In his eyes, there were only enemies!

Bang!

A cultivator failed to evade in time, and his head was severed off.

Hua!

On the other side, a cultivator's legs were slashed off and left burning in the flames while he collapsed into a pool of fire and blood.

Boom!

A bronze mace suddenly swung down behind Lin Xun and struck his shoulder. Fortunately, the Cloud Mountain shoulder armor engraved with an earth guarding rune had absorbed most of the impact. But he still broke his shoulder blade.

But Lin Xun didn't seem to notice. He wildly drew back, spun around and lunged his blade into his attacker, tearing his stomach open!

This was a close-quarters fight. It was fierce, cruel, and there was no room for hesitation. Life and death could be decided in a split second.

At that moment, Lin Xun wasn't only ruthless towards the enemies, he was even more ruthless towards himself. He would rather fight and get injured to seize every opportunity to kill the enemy.

Enemies constantly fell, and Lin Xun was riddled with scars and soaked with blood.

But his gaze never wavered once, and the Flame Blade was even more precise, ruthless and steady in his hand. He resembled a god of war who would never fall. He launched his blade among blood and flames, playing out the changes of life and death.

It seemed like a long time had passed but it also felt like a split second. He suddenly felt his body become light and when he looked around, only seven or eight opponents were left.

Around his feet lay mangled corpses in pools of blood that were still burning in raging flames. A charred smell stung his nose and filled every corner.

More than half of the enemies had been slaughtered!

Lin Xun awakened from the battle and realized that he had become incredibly powerful...

Lin Xun was perhaps still at the True Martial Stage and there was still a distance until he reached the Spirit Dipper Stage, but the present him was eons away from the thin and weak youngster that had just arrived at Feiyun Village!

The seven or eight cultivators opposite him were evidently aghast. Their expressions were full of undisguisable terror. The teenager opposite them was like a demon bathing in blood and made their entire bodies tremble uncontrollably.

They were scared out of their wits.

Not only could they not do anything to a teenager at the sixth layer True Martial Stage but even after they joined forces, the majority of them had also been killed!

What sent a chill to their hearts was that Lin Xun's killing method was extremely direct. He didn't utter a word from beginning to end, yet that silence and unwavering will made them feel suffocated.

What kind of teenager is he?!

Da!

Lin Xun moved again. He stepped into a pool of blood, making a dull sound.

No one would notice that sound in the past, but in this silent and suffocating hall, it was like the death knell!

The eight cultivators' bodies stiffened, and then, they immediately roared in panic and bolted out of the hall.

They were already terrified and their fighting spirit was already completely gone. They had no desire to struggle in the slightest when they were on the verge of death.

Flee!

Must flee!

That youngster is a demon who kills without batting an eye. He's too terrifying!

Lin Xun was first taken aback but then he shook his head. He was too lazy to chase after them. He scanned the hall and walked towards its depths.

The pain all over his body pounded his mind like the tide. It was only after the battle ended that he realized that despite being armed with various aeth tools he had still sustained a lot of injuries—blade wounds, sword wounds and internal injuries...

These weren't important to Lin Xun. As a criminal in the mine prison had once said, scars were the most glorious feat of a man!

The only thing that made Lin Xun frown was that his aeth power had been exhausted after a round of fighting and killing, and he couldn't endure much longer.

He urgently had to find Xia Zhi!

Soon, Lin Xun disappeared into the depths of the hall.

The walls of the hall crumbled down behind him; the stone pillars were destroyed, and a sea of bodies was burning in pools of blood. The scene resembled hell.

Outside the main hall, the great fire surged to the sky and illuminated the night. Everything was an indication that the Black Tiger Gang's den had completely fallen!

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Old Tiger Lu saw a towering inferno by the time he returned with a group of subordinates. The den that he had worked so hard to build for many years was completely shrouded in flames.

In an instant, Old Tiger Lu's face turned livid and his eyes almost cracked.

Behind him, his subordinates couldn't help but cry out loud. Their faces blanched. When we left, there were still many people in the old den. Could they have all met with disaster?

"Leader! Leader, you're finally back!" A cultivator with a dirty face and disheveled hair rushed over and burst into tears.

"Who did this?" Old Tiger Lu's voice seemed to be squeezed out from between his teeth and was filled with endless coldness.

"It's a teen and a little girl!"

A man hissed through gritted teeth. "Not only did they kill many of our brothers, but they also set our territory on fire! Leader, you have to avenge our brothers!"

Everyone was in an uproar. The attacker isn't from another gang, but turned out to be just a teenager and a little girl!

And they destroyed our den with just two of them? How is that possible?

"Where are they?" Old Tiger Lu grew livid and his eyes were red and bloodshot.

He suddenly remembered that the target they were going to kill was a teenager called Lin Xun. Could it be that Lin Xun didn't run away, but took the opportunity to destroy our Black Tiger Gang?

Old Tiger Lu's heart sank again. He had fallen into a trap!

"They're inside!" The cultivator pointed inside the Black Tiger Gang's den.

Old Tiger Lu was boiling with rage. Unable to contain the anger in his heart any longer, he roared, "Come in with me to find those two little things. I want to see them in person if they are alive and I want to see their bodies if they are dead!"

Chapter 82 The Power of Spirit Dipper

Corpses were strewn across the ground and blood was everywhere.

The castle-like building had been burnt to nothing but an empty shell. It was a scene of complete devastation.

As Old Tiger Lu walked forward in big strides, his heart ached like it had been slashed by a knife when he saw the devastating sights. Those were his subordinates. All of that was his hard work!

How could Old Tiger Lu not be furious to see everything completely destroyed?

His face was ashen, his eyes bloodshot and he emitted a terrifying aura like he was about to swallow someone as he quickly went into the hall.

All his subordinates had already begun the search for traces of the enemy, but Old Tiger Lu was more concerned about something else.

Before long, he came to the end of the hall.

There should have been a stone wall there, but now a huge hole had split it open, revealing a spiral staircase that led to the underground.

"Damn it!"

Old Tiger Lu's cheeks twitched uncontrollably. He motioned with his hand, gritted his teeth and commanded, "You all stay here and wait!"

As he issued the command, he was already rushing into the hole and then he disappeared down the spiral staircase.

The Black Tiger Gang subordinates glanced at each other in puzzlement.

"That seems to be our Gang Leader's treasure trove?" whispered someone.

"It's more than a treasure trove. The wealth that our gang leader has accumulated over the years and all the properties that our gang have plundered are stored there!"

"But from the looks of it...the enemy has already discovered it."

There was a clamor of discussion everywhere, and everyone's face grew overcast. If Old Tiger Lu hadn't given an order, they would have charged in to find out what was going on.

However, they also knew that, regardless of whether the treasure trove had been looted or not, Old Tiger Lu wouldn't let them near the treasure trove given how he loved money more than his life.

"Ah, we clearly have come back too late. The thief has likely escaped already," someone sighed, and it made the others even gloomier.

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The bottom of the spiral staircase was a basement room with moonstones embedded into all the walls. The soft glimmer around them dispelled the darkness.

This was the Black Tiger Gang's treasure trove!

When Old Tiger stepped into the basement and saw the situation inside, his vision flashed black and he almost vomited blood.

In the huge space, the dozens of giant bronze boxes that were originally packed with gold, silver, jewelry and aeth medicines were now in disarray, and the copper locks on them were all destroyed. The boxes had been completely emptied and not a single copper coin was left behind!

All of that was the wealth that Old Tiger Lu had spent decades to accumulate. The suffocation, anger, and madness that Old Tiger Lu felt made him look malevolent. The veins on his forehead throbbed and burst, and he finally couldn't help but roar in fury, "Damn it!"

His voice was like a clap of thunder, shaking the walls.

Boom!

Suddenly, the corner of the innermost wall suddenly crumbled, revealing a bronze door; however, a crack had split the door open and there was enough space for a person to squeeze through.

Old Tiger Lu was so infuriated that his entire body trembled and his eyes almost split apart and bled.

It was a door that he personally made as an escape route for himself. If any unpredictable danger were to happen, he could safely run away with all his wealth.

In order to create the door, Old Tiger Lu had hired a rune master to engrave a rune lock on it.

In the end, Old Tiger Lu even killed the rune master to prevent him from leaking his secret. Who would have thought that the escape door would be discovered and even damaged?!

Old Tiger Lu's beard and hair were bristling and crackling from anger. His qi pulsed and raged around him and his ashen face was incredibly terrifying. How would he not know that the enemy had already taken all his wealth and left through the escape door that he made?

His decades of hard work had only helped something else in the end. Old Tiger Lu was so furious that he almost went berserk and his heart was about to explode.

"Curse you, bastard! Don't let me catch you, otherwise I will slash you thousands of times until you bleed to death!" he thundered.

Shua!

A blade flashed in the corner of his eyes like a bolt of lightning. It was aiming to kill Old Tiger Lu from behind.

Hm?

Though Old Tiger Lu was immersed in wrath, his fighting instinct remained. He immediately sensed danger approaching, but instead of evading, he spun around and thrust his palm forward!

Rumble!

Instantly, the terrifying Spirit Dipper Qi transformed into a tangible form and tumbled like raging waves, scattering even the air.

Before the blade even neared, it was whipped away like a little boat in a vast ocean.

Bang!

A black shadow slammed into the wall in the distance and let out a grunt: it was Lin Xun.

However, at this moment, his face was deathly pale, his pupils constricted, and his heart rapidly palpitating. Is this the power of a Spirit Dipper cultivator?

He originally thought that the timing of his sneak attack was perfect, and that, even if he couldn't kill him, he could at least severely wound him.

Who would have thought that he only found out that he was wrong when they exchanged attacks? And he was ridiculously wrong!

As a cultivator at the Spirit Dipper Stage, Old Tiger Lu's entire body was shrouded in a forcefield formed from his Spirit Dipper power. It was impossible for Lin Xun to break this layer of Spirit Dipper power let alone get near him!

Just now, Lin Xun felt like a fish pushed into the sea and before he could react, he was swept away by a huge wave, unable to struggle or defend!

That was the terror of a Spirit Dipper cultivator.

Once someone reached this cultivation stage, their body would be shrouded in spirit dipper qi like an iron wall full of destructive power. It was impossible for a True Martial cultivator to even get close to a Spirit Dipper cultivator!

Even though there was only one level between the True Martial Stage and the Spirit Dipper Stage, there was a world of difference in power. It was akin to an ant trying to shake a mountain.

"Little bastard! You didn't run away! Hahaha!"

Old Tiger Lu wasn't surprised but delighted to see that Lin Xun hadn't escaped because it meant that there was a chance of retrieving his treasures.

At that moment, Old Tiger Lu's mood was like a rollercoaster, alternating from sorrow to joy. He could barely control his emotions any longer.

While speaking, he was already speeding across the air and folding his fan-like hand into a claw. He firmly aimed for Lin Xun.

Rumble!

The dazzling black spirit dipper qi transformed into a giant claw that looked real and shrouded space.

This was the ability of Spirit Dipper cultivators. They had the ability to release Spirit Dipper Qi outside the body and kill from a distance! A True Martial Stage cultivator simply couldn't achieve this.

However, as Old Tiger Lu was hovering in midair, his expression dramatically changed, as if he had noticed something. His years of fighting experience made him subconsciously twist his waist and limbs

strangely, like a snake coiling up from the ground. But he had to suddenly forfeit his attempt to grab Lin Xun and instead slammed hard to the other side.

At the same time, a bone spear suddenly appeared. Its smooth, jade-like body was glistening with strands of silvery starlight, making it appear illusory and mysterious.

It seemed slow, but by the time that Old Tiger Lu had noticed it, the tip was already piecing in between his eyebrows!

Boom!

With a loud boom, terrifying aeth power rapidly spread like a storm wreaking havoc. The dozens of bronze boxes were instantly swept up and smashed against the walls, producing dull collision noises.

Lin Xun's expression abruptly changed. Unexpectedly, Old Tiger Lu was clasping the bone spear in his hand and Xia Zhi, who was holding the spear, was held up in the air!

"As I thought, there is another person. I knew that kid can't possibly break into my territory with his strength. So, the mastermind behind today's incident is you, little girl!"

Old Tiger Lu roared with laughter, his face sinister and cruel, and his hazel eyes filled with deceit. He had moved unhindered in the slums for tens of years and was still standing tall, so how would he be an ordinary person? The opponents who had underestimated him were all now buried underground!

The way that Lin Xun failed to withstand even a single blow made Old Tiger Lu suspect that he had a helper. Sure enough, he only needed to use one move to expose his real opponent!

The pleasure of revenge filled Old Tiger Lu's heart.

But an uncontrollable chill surged in Lin Xun's heart. Old Tiger Lu is too cunning. Xia Zhi and I have underestimated him!

Without any hesitation, Lin Xun sprinted out to save Xia Zhi.

However, Xia Zhi suddenly raised her head, revealing her beautiful face hidden beneath the hat. At that moment, the entire basement seemed to have dimmed. An indescribably stunning face that seemed to not belong to this world had suddenly appeared.

Lin Xun was mesmerized. Xia Zhi's beauty seemed more dazzling than before, and even gave off a charm that could sink one's soul.

Her beauty also took Old Tiger Lu's breath away as he stared in astonishment.

Pu!

After a muffled sound, Old Tiger Lu's thunderous roar resounded in Lin Xun's ears, completely snapping him to his senses.

When he looked up, he saw that the bone spear, which Old Tiger Lu was clasping, had somehow pierced through Old Tiger Lu's chest.

At the same time, Xia Zhi was sent flying with a palm strike!

"F** your mom!"

Lin Xun was so furious that his eyes almost popped out and an uncontrollable anger surged in his heart. He suddenly charged forward and slashed his blade down at Old Tiger Lu.

Seeing Xia Zhi sent flying felt like a stab to his heart. That feeling was so strong that Lin Xun went berserk.

Lin Xun didn't realize but when his rage took over and he lost himself, blood-like vortexes were reflected in the depths of his eyes. And at the bottom of the vortexes was an endless abyss.

Pu!

With a single slash, Old Tiger Lu's head split from his body and hurled across the air. It had been unusually easy to kill him because Xia Zhi had already pulverized Old Tiger Lu's heart and completely severed his life force.

Lin Xun's slash only instantly ended his process of death.

However, Lin Xun seemed to have gone mad. He didn't care about anything, and after severing Old Tiger Lu's head, he continued to slash his body repeatedly dozens of times with the Flame Blade until his corpse became a bloody mangled mess.

"Lin Xun, we should go."

Xia Zhi's voice sounded. Although it was a little weak, it woke Lin Xun up, who was in a frenzy of rage. He rapidly gasped for breath and rushed over to Xia Zhi.

He saw the little girl curled up on the ground, her little face a rare pale and weak shade and her dark jewel-like crescent eyes also were incredibly dull and lifeless.

Lin Xun's heart ached again. He didn't care about anything else, so he picked up Xia Zhi, yanked the bone spear out from Old Tiger Lu's body, and darted towards the bronze door that had already been broken open.

[Chapter 83: Guest at the Door](#)

It was deep in the night. In the dark and complicated alley that seemed to extend and twist endlessly like a cobweb, a youngster was frantically running with a little girl in his arms.

The biting cold wind felt like a knife stabbing into his wounds. But compared to the worry in his heart, it was nothing.

Lin Xun didn't know when it had started, but for the first time, he realized that Xia Zhi had somehow occupied an irreplaceable place in his heart.

He felt his entire world collapsing when he saw her wounded and sent flying. All his thoughts, all his willpower were gone at that moment, leaving him with only uncontrollable anger and madness.

That feeling made Lin Xun's heart tremble because, for the first time, he saw that he had an irrational side.

Xia Zhi, who was held in his arms, opened her eyes and silently gazed at Lin Xun's face. She said nothing but there seemed to be an imperceptible smile on her pale little face.

He saw that Courtyard No. 49 was within sight, but before he could breathe a sigh of relief, he saw someone waiting by his door.

At the same time, the figure turned around and met Lin Xun's gaze. It turned out to be Gu Yanping, the owner of Golden Jade Hall.

He swept a glance over Lin Xun and, as though realized something, he assumed a serious expression and said, "If you believe in me, I can stand guard here."

"Thank you." Lin Xun's voice sounded hoarse.

While expressing his gratitude, he was already rushing into the house with Xia Zhi in his arms. He was too occupied to think about why Gu Yanping would appear at his door at this hour.

Gu Yanping watched Lin Xun disappear into the house and then turned around and stood silently in front of his door like a gate guardian.

His appearance was average, but when he stood there, he exuded an unshakable might.

Not long afterwards, a young man was hurrying along the alley in the distance. It was Gu Yanping's son Gu Liang. "Father, we have already investigated carefully. The Black Tiger Gang's den had been set aflame. It is said that a powerful enemy broke in, but the specific details aren't clear now."

"I see." Gu Yanping nodded. "Lin Xun has returned. You should get ready. I don't think it will be peaceful tonight."

A chilling murderous look flashed in his eyes.

"Father, I heard that the Black Tiger Gang is working for a Spirit Dipper cultivator. We—"

Before Gu Liang could finish his sentence, Gu Yanping interrupted. "No matter who it is, no one can step through this door tonight."

His voice was resolute.

Gu Liang was taken aback at first, but he then nodded silently.

"Liang'er, remember that a business cultivator isn't a deceitful and sly person, and even more isn't a lowly person who takes advantage of a situation."

After a moment of silence, Gu Yanping suddenly said calmly, "We owe Lin Xun a debt of gratitude and we have to repay him with kindness. It has nothing to do with whether he will work with us in the future."

Gu Liang was shocked by his father's words, but he nodded solemnly. "I understand."

Gu Yanping nodded, peering into the deep night sky. Tonight will likely be very long.

In the room, Lin Xun carefully set Xia Zhi down on the bed. While he was worried about what medicine to use to treat her, she suddenly said aloud, "I just need to cultivate for a while to recover. You don't need to worry."

Lin Xun breathed a sigh of relief. "You really don't need to take medicine?"

Xia Zhi shook her head. "We've killed Old Tiger Lu and so it will inevitably lead to chaos within the Black Tiger Gang and attract the other gangs' attention. The Chopstick Gang will no doubt be impacted so you have to be extra careful."

Lin Xun understood what she meant.

After the death of Old Tiger Lu, the Black Tiger Gang would fall into chaos without a leader. It was the perfect opportunity for other gangs to attack, and so the other forces in the slums, of course, wouldn't miss such an opportunity.

This had nothing to do with Lin Xun, but he still had to be on guard in case the other gangs wanted to take the opportunity to deal with him and Xia Zhi.

Everyone in the slums knew that Lin Xun was the brain of the Chopstick Gang, and the Chopstick Gang was constantly expanding and had already seriously threatened the survival of other gangs.

If the other gang members learned that he and Xia Zhi were wounded, they would be delighted to take advantage of the situation to kill him and Xia Zhi.

When the snipe and the clam fought, only the fisherman profited.

Given the circumstances, the other gangs would no doubt act when they clearly understood the situation.

Xia Zhi was already beginning to cultivate on the bed. Her method was extremely unique. She sat on her knees, straightened her back, and pulled her shoulders back. Then, she put her hands together, intertwined her fingers to form a strange hand seal, and placed it in front of her chest.

An invisible force was released from her, and her entire body started to float in the air.

It was unknown when the bone spear began to rest on her knees. Wisps of clear and bright silvery light floated up from the spear's surface and seeped into Xia Zhi's body. Her breathing was long and quiet like she had sunk into a mysterious cultivation training.

In the past, Xia Zhi only ate and slept. She didn't seem like she had to cultivate and this was also the first time that Lin Xun saw her cultivate.

So mysterious!

This was the strongest feeling in Lin Xun. He quietly stared at her for a long while until he saw that her breathing was stable, and then, he breathed a sigh of relief and quietly walked out the room.

Lin Xun had long known that Xia Zhi was very mysterious so he wasn't too surprised.

Night dropped its curtain and the sky was covered with thick clouds and not a star or the moon was visible, making the night particularly dim and dull.

Lin Xun came to the courtyard and started to treat his wounds.

He took off his shoulder armor, wrist guards and inner armor, exposing his body to the air. A criss-cross of bloody scars and bruises peppered his body. He also had sustained internal injuries to his shoulders, ribs and waist.

Each injury represented unbearable pain. Hence, the sum of all of them together could only be incredibly agonizing.

However, Lin Xun didn't seem to notice. His brows didn't furrow once.

He had to quickly recover because tonight was undoubtedly going to be tough.

"Young Master, if you don't mind, I can help you."

It was unknown when Gu Yanping had walked into the courtyard. He studied the wounds on Lin Xun's body and couldn't help feeling aghast.

"No need. I'll treat them myself." Lin Xun smiled and went to clean each wound with clean water.

Gu Yanping said regretfully, "If my son hadn't come back to tell me in time, Young Master, you might have been in a bit of trouble. I'm afraid I still don't know how you suffered such serious injuries."

It was only then that Lin Xun remembered that Gu Liang had come by in the evening. It was obvious that what he told Gu Liang caught Gu Yanping's attention and made him make a trip to his house in the middle of the night.

"It's nothing. The people from the Black Tiger Gang wanted to kill me, so I have to kill them first."

After Lin Xun cleaned his wounds, he took out the medicine that he had prepared and carefully applied it to each wound. He suddenly smiled. "Fortunately, I have killed Old Tiger Lu and I can relax a little."

Old Tiger Lu is dead.

Gu Yanping gasped in shock and his gaze towards Lin Xun started to change. He was certain that Lin Xun didn't lie.

That meant that Old Tiger Lu, a Spirit Dipper cultivator, was no longer in this world.

Gu Yanping couldn't calm his emotions when he thought about how Lin Xun could possibly kill a Spirit Dipper cultivator. This youngster is indeed incredible.

However, Gu Yanping didn't question Lin Xun. By the time he finally calmed down, he remembered another thing he wanted to tell Lin Xun. "The death of Old Tiger Lu will inevitably tear his gang apart. And when such a situation arises, other gangs will cast covetous eyes at the Black Tiger Gang."

Lin Xun interjected. "Shopkeeper Gu, you might not know that those forces will likely be coming to find me tonight."

He frankly recounted the sequence of events to Gu Yanping and hid nothing about the Chopstick Gang.

Hearing this, Gu Yanping seemed to see through Lin Xun's intention. He nodded sincerely. "The Flame Blade that you sold us last time had helped greatly Golden Jade Hall. Tonight, let me help you guard the door."

Lin Xun got up and respectfully bowed. "I'm sorry to trouble Shopkeeper Gu. If you have anything you need me for in the future, just tell me."

Gu Yanping chuckled. "Alright, but don't call me Shopkeeper Gu, it sounds too distant."

Lin Xun also laughed. "Then I'll take the liberty to call you Uncle Gu."

Gu Yanping chuckled again, seemingly quite happy. "Don't worry and rest well. I will go outside to take a look now and see how many people will come to die tonight."

He turned around and left.

Lin Xun overflowed with emotions as he watched him disappear out of the door. Uncle Gu isn't ordinary.

Gu Yanping was indeed not ordinary. He had created a sensation in Donglin City with just a Flame Blade and made Golden Jade Hall rise to fame.

This surely wasn't something that ordinary people could achieve.

Now, based on a sentence from his son Gu Liang, he paid Lin Xun a visit and helped Lin Xun a great deal. The man wasn't just gilding the lily; he was providing much needed coal during a cold snow. But even so, Gu Yanping had never made any demands from Lin Xun. He simply didn't seem like a businessman.

However, Lin Xun knew that he owed him a huge favor. If Gu Yanping had any request in the future, Lin Xun wouldn't refuse.

This is intelligence and capability. He not only made me feel extremely grateful but also handled the matter beautifully.

Lin Xun was thoroughly impressed.

Meanwhile, Gu Yanping, who was standing outside the door, was also feeling quite emotional. He had lots of life experience and had met many talented young people with remarkable cultivation aptitudes. There were all sorts of people. Some had abnormal intelligence and some had abnormal skills. Compared to those people, Lin Xun wasn't that great yet there was something unique that made him completely different from the others. Gu Yanping couldn't put his finger on what it was, but he was certain that, without any accident, Lin Xun would no doubt reveal his brilliance and amaze the world in the future.

Would there be such a day?

Gu Yanping's mind drifted off and he recalled a lot of past events.

Suddenly, footsteps from the alley snapped him out of those thoughts and made him narrow his eyes vigilantly.

He was still standing there motionless, but a terrifying aura was faintly gathering and circulating around his body. Although his appearance was average and his face honest-looking, he exuded a threatening and imposing presence.

[Chapter 84: Kill the Chicken to Warn the Monkey](#)

The gang leader of the Black Tiger Gang, Old Tiger Lu, had been slaughtered.

This news spread throughout the slums in less than an hour and attracted the attention of other gangs.

The first thought that came to many people's minds was that there was an opportunity to expand their territory.

The Black Tiger Gang was the largest underground force in the slums of Donglin City. In the past, the Black Tiger Gang had constantly expanded its territory and controlled many sources of ill-gotten gains due to Old Tiger Lu, a Spirit Dipper cultivator, overseeing the gang.

But after his death, the Black Tiger Gang had lost its sharp fangs. It was akin to an attractive piece of meat that everyone wanted to take a bite of.

There was only one opportunity. If they couldn't grasp it, it would be too late to regret it later.

So that night, almost all the gangs in the slums took action, including the Green Bamboo Gang, the Black Water Gang, and the Venomous Scorpion Gang.

Suddenly, all the alleys in the slums were full of fierce-looking gang members. Like packs of hungry wolves smelling blood, they instantly pounced on the territory that belonged to the Black Tiger Gang.

Soon, the sounds of fighting, yelling and cursing rang in various areas. The glint of blades and the shadows of swords criss crossed in the dark night. The foul wind and rain of blood was an indication of the tragic battles of life and death.

That night wasn't peaceful at all.

The dark sky that shrouded the slums also seemed to be bleeding.

Before long, someone found out that the leader of the Chopstick Gang killed Old Tiger Lu and it was said that the leader of the Chopstick Gang was seriously wounded in the fight.

Regardless of whether the information was true or not, many gang leaders saw another opportunity and were tempted.

The Chopstick Gang was seen as a rising star in the slums. It had risen strongly in less than a month and swallowed up five to six nearby gangs. It was seen as a serious threat to other gangs.

Now, when the other gangs heard that the death of the Black Tiger Gang leader was related to the Chopstick Gang, they immediately realized that they could make this situation in front of them into one where they were the fisherman taking advantage of the fight between the snipe and the clam.

Perhaps, we can take this opportunity to swallow up the Chopstick Gang's territory too.

It wasn't long before a group of people arrived at the entrance of Courtyard No. 49.

They were from the Venomous Scorpion Gang and they worked for Chai Shao, who was the second most important person in the gang and was nicknamed Poisonous Sparrow Hawk.

Chai Shao was at the eighth layer True Martial Stage and was notorious for his ruthless means and viciousness. Countless people had died in his hands over the years.

Behind Chai Shao stood a group of gang members, around a dozen people, and all of whom were cultivators.

According to the brain of the Venomous Scorpion Gang, such a strong elite force was more than enough to get rid of the severely wounded gang leader of the Chopstick Gang.

Of course, it didn't matter even if the leader escaped because they wanted to take over their territory and so it might be even better.

"Don't let other gangs get ahead of us. Once we kill the leader of the Chopstick Gang, this area will be our Venomous Scorpion Gang's territory." Chai Shao shouted, urging everyone. Inside his heart, he was quite pleased with himself and eager to act.

Most of the other gangs were racing to take a chunk of the Black Tiger Gang's territory, and the Venomous Scorpion Gang was the first to eye the Chopstick Gang.

However, when Chai Shao arrived in front of Courtyard No.49, the person standing in front of the gate took him aback.

The person was average-looking and just stood there modestly like an ordinary person. But Chai Shao panicked when he saw the man.

That's definitely not the leader of the Chopstick Gang.

But who is it?

Chai Shao was very cunning. His eyes glinted and he motioned his hand as he commanded, "Let's charge in together!"

Instantly, all the cultivators from the Venomous Scorpion Gang were dispatched. Every one of their faces were ruthless and sinister. But as for Chai Shao, he quietly hid behind them and didn't charge forward.

Even until now, his heart was still palpitating. He had sensed danger and decided to wait and see what happened.

Gu Yanping's lips twitched in disdain when he saw the cultivators charge over. He folded his arms and lightly flicked the air.

Hua!

The sound of rushing water suddenly rang in the air and a wave of dazzling azure spirit dipper power soared like a real water dragon and wandered back and forth between Gu Yanping's palms, making whistling sounds that resembled a dragon's roar.

The Secret Art of the Water Dragon Roar!

The cultivators who were charging towards him suddenly felt their vision blur before they flew across the air and smashed into the surrounding walls. Their muscles and bones snapped and they lost consciousness instantaneously.

Gu Yanping's attack seemed very relaxed but it had suppressed dozens of people at once. He made it look as easy as crushing dry weeds and wood.

How powerful was the attack to be able to achieve that?

In the distance, Chai Shao seemed to have been struck by lightning. He inhaled sharply. A Spirit Dipper cultivator?

He is able to unleash aether power and kill enemies from a distance. Also the means of turning spirit dipper power into a water dragon is no ordinary skill.

Why would a guy like him be willing to stand at the gate of Courtyard No. 49?

A chill ran down Chai Shao's body and he subconsciously spun around and bolted.

However, the water dragon leaped across the air and instantly drowned Chai Shao's entire body. He frantically struggled while screaming before his body plunged to the ground and he died on the spot.

The sudden battle ended in seconds. Gu Yanping had simply used one move to suppress everyone present.

His ability astonished Lin Xun, who was watching at the door. He didn't expect Gu Yanping to be a Spirit Dipper expert.

Moreover, Lin Xun had a strong feeling that Old Tiger Lu would be no match for Gu Yanping if he was still alive.

His attack was too unbelievable. The man's spirit dipper power had transformed into a water dragon and its roar shook the universe. Its light was so dazzling that it tore apart the night. Gu Yanping's power was too terrifying and it made Lin Xun wonder whether he could even survive the attack just now.

"Father, why did you kill him?" Gu Liang hurried over from a distance and asked in puzzlement.

Gu Yanping didn't answer him but looked at Lin Xun who was standing by the gate inside. "Lin Xun, do you know why I left them here?"

"Kill the chicken to warn the monkey." Lin Xun answered briefly with a smile.

"I see." Gu Liang's face lit up with understanding.

The gang members in the slums were frequently dispatched tonight because of the Black Tiger Gang. They were like flies smelling blood. It no doubt wouldn't be peaceful.

Likewise, the situation was extremely unfavorable and dangerous for Lin Xun.

The elites of the Venomous Scorpion Gang had just come but other members of other gangs would also appear soon. If they didn't demonstrate their powers, even if Gu Yanping was around, it would be quite troublesome.

"Can I ask why I don't see members of the Chopstick Gang tonight?" Gu Yanping suddenly asked.

Lin Xun said casually, "I ordered them to hide and not get involved no matter what they hear."

Gu Yanping understood right away. He generously complimented Lin Xun. "What a good strategy of watching the tigers fight."

Gu Liang looked at Lin Xun in surprise. "Did you already predict that so many things would happen tonight?"

Lin Xun patiently explained, "I made these preparations just in case. Once Old Tiger Lu dies, the other gangs would no doubt try to take over the Black Tiger Gang and tragic battles would inevitably happen when a group of hungry wolves fight for the same piece of meat. The Chopstick Gang can't avoid the other gangs if we participated so I thought it would be better to lie low and watch the tigers fight."

After a pause, he continued, "The other gangs might occupy a lot of the Black Tiger Gang's territory after the battles, but they will also lose a lot of power. It will be easy to swallow up those gangs in the future."

After listening to Lin Xun's logical and calm analysis, Gu Liang marveled, "No wonder my father admires you so much. You are indeed different from others."

He previously didn't think much of Lin Xun because he was only thirteen to fourteen years old, which was just a few years younger than him. But his impression of Lin Xun had tremendously changed after hearing the younger boy's logical analysis and about his amazing feat in slaughtering Old Tiger Lu.

Lin Xun smiled, turned around, and walked into the courtyard.

The brawl between the gangs continued throughout the night and disturbed the peace in the entire slums. Many residents couldn't sleep as a result.

After the Venomous Scorpion Gang left, many more gangs sent people to come to take the Chopstick Gang's territory.

However, when they saw the corpse of Chai Shao and the bodies of dozens of Venomous Scorpion Gang cultivators, they all retreated without any hesitation. They hurried away with all sorts of perplexed, shocked and complicated feelings.

That night was particularly long.

However, Lin Xun was especially calm. He sat alone in the courtyard, meditating and recuperating like he had completely forgotten that their situation was still very dangerous.

However, his calm state of mind made Gu Yanping think even more highly of him.

Meanwhile, in a dormitory of Donglin Academy, Lian Fei was pacing back and forth. His eyes were bloodshot but he had no intention of sleeping.

Why is there still no news?

The Black Tiger Gang's work efficiency is so low.

Lian Fei was restless. He was very worried because if he failed to kill Lin Xun this time, he wouldn't have a better chance to get revenge in the future.

Suddenly his door was pushed open and a gust of cold wind poured in through the door. The biting coldness made Lian Fei shiver all over before he saw that it was Xue Yong who came.

It was just that Xue Yong looked extremely bad. He said through gritted teeth as he came in, "The operation failed."

"What?" Lian Fei cried out in disbelief. How is that possible?

He suddenly became visibly agitated. His face was malicious and ruthless as he reached out to grab Xue Yong by the collar. "Old Tiger Lu is an expert at the Spirit Dipper Stage. He has thousands of members under his command. How could he lose?"

Xue Yong pushed Lian Fei away and said coldly, "I'm not afraid to tell you that Old Tiger Lu not only lost, but is dead. The murderers are Lin Xun and a little girl."

"Think about it yourself. I still have to return to the clan to report this." Xue Yong flung his sleeve and stormed away.

Wu—

The cold wind howled and the door creaked.

However, Lian Fei seemed unaware. His expression was blank as he murmured, "A cultivator at the fifth layer True Martial Stage slaughtered a Spirit Dipper expert—how is that possible?"

Lian Fei only regained his composure after a long while, though the cloudy expression remained on his face.

He knew that his repeated failures and Old Tiger Lu's death would make the Wu Clan re-evaluate Lin Xun's danger level and they wouldn't act rashly after this.

This indicated that Lian Fei had lost the power to support his revenge. Even if he couldn't accept it, he had to endure it.

"Lin Xun, don't be so smug. Sooner or later, I will take your little life as an offering for my father."

Lian Fei's handsome face was awe-inspiring yet sinister, as though there was a savage beast roaring in his heart.

[Chapter 85: Reactions of the Various Parties](#)

It was currently the wee hours of the morning with daybreak soon approaching.

Lin Xun was currently immersed in his cultivation training. His injuries were not severe and should fully recover in three to five days with the help of some medicine.

This was mostly thanks to the rapid growth in his physique. Ordinary injuries were no longer a problem as long as they weren't fatal.

Lin Xun was currently visualizing the Six Word Blade Art in his head.

He had single-handedly slain a dozen True Martial cultivators in the battle at the Black Tiger Gang's base. However, he had no chance to properly analyze each detail in the heat of the battle.

As he slowly recalled the fights, numerous things soon became clear.

Battle was never just about theoretical discussions. Although the Six Word Blade Art only had six moves, each move contained numerous subtleties. It was a unique blade art that combined both viciousness and difficulty.

At the end of the day, the Six Word Blade Art was a technique that was made for fighting. There was no way to properly understand its essence without battle.

In the past, due to Lin Xun's lack of battle experience, he was only able to reach the elemental level despite his efforts, finding himself stuck and unable to make further progress.

After being tempered and polished by blood and battle, Lin Xun realized that he had learned plenty from his experiences. Many subtle key points he could never understand before were gradually becoming clear in his mind.

"I should be able to push the Six Word Blade Art to the precise level after a few more battles."

Lin Xun knew that tonight's battle had deepened his understanding of the Six Word Blade Art, raising his control and knowledge of its power to whole new levels.

The sound of people conversing outside suddenly drew Lin Xun's attention. He immediately got up and walked out.

It was already the wee hours of the morning with dawn fast approaching. The fighting in the slums district was also gradually dying down.

Gu Yanping, a powerful Spirit Dipper stage expert, was stationed at the entrance to Lin Xun's residence, eliminating the possibility of other gangs attacking.

Who would come at this time?

When Lin Xun walked out of the courtyard, he saw an unexpected person: the Stone Cauldron Alms treasure appraiser, Wang Lin.

Lin Xun was especially surprised to find that Wang Lin was not alone. He had brought a group of subordinates, who were holding bloody heads in their hands.

Could Mu Wansu have heard of what happened and sent Wang Lin as reinforcements out of kindness?

However, this thought was immediately denied the moment it emerged.

Mu Wansu was a decisive woman who made clear distinctions between love and hate. If she wanted to help, she would have already made arrangements while the Black Tiger Gang was preparing to deal with him. It was impossible for her to have waited till now.

Then why is Wang Lin here?

Lin Xun was unsure of why Wang Lin, who had indifferently driven him out of Stone Cauldron Alms just a few days prior, was here. Although Lin Xun knew it was Mu Wansu's idea, he still held a small grudge against the man.

On that day, he had personally sent the Flame Blade into the Stone Cauldron Alms' hands with the belief that they would understand his good intentions while also hoping to repay their help. Who could have predicted that he would instead be chased out, which did not feel good at all.

Wang Lin was conversing with Gu Yanping, but immediately smiled and called out when he saw Lin Xun appear, "Young Master Lin Xun, I hope you won't blame me too much for disturbing you so late at night."

Lin Xun smiled, "Uncle Wang Lin is too polite."

His attitude was neither cold nor friendly, neither servile nor overbearing. There was zero indication that he was going to invite Wang Lin in.

At this observation, Wang Lin could not help but sigh inwardly. Looks like the little guy is still somewhat resentful.

Despite this, Wang Lin's smile grew friendlier as he said, "I heard some crooks wanted to cause trouble for Young Master Lin Xun and immediately hurried over to provide assistance. Along the way, I encountered some crooks who were going to pick a fight with the young master. Hence, I decided to take matters into my own hands and take them down."

As he spoke, he pointed towards the string of heads carried by his subordinate, "Please have a look, young master, there seem to be a few big shots from the Green Bamboo Gang among them."

Lin Xun immediately understood. Wang Lin was here to express his goodwill. He had evidently found out about Lin Xun's relation to the Chopstick Gang and sought to express his sincerity by attacking the Green Bamboo Gang.

Why had Wang Lin done so?

It was clearly related to the Flame Blade he had sold to Golden Jade Hall a few days ago. Wang Lin had likely connected the dots and made the decision to try and make up for before and gain Lin Xun's favor.

"Many thanks Uncle Wang Lin." Lin Xun cupped his hands together.

"Haha, this is nothing. I'm happy as long as you are safe." Wang Lin laughed heartily, his voice booming loudly.

Gu Yanping suddenly said, "Lin Xun, it will be morning soon. Since the situation has stabilized, I shall not disturb you any further and will take my leave."

"Please wait Uncle Gu." Lin Xun suddenly recalled something and hastily returned to the room. He returned with a package, which he handed to Gu Yanping, "This is a small gift, please accept it."

Gu Yanping raised his brow, "Please take it back if it's just money, I did not help you for such things."

Lin Xun chuckled, "Uncle Gu should open it and take a look."

Gu Yanping contemplated a little before ultimately opening the package. His eyes immediately narrowed when he saw the Flame Blade lying within, gleaming with an icy light.

Wang Lin's heart violently shook at this sight. As expected, Lin Xun had more than one Flame Blade and most definitely had some relation to the mysterious rune master.

Gu Yanping swiftly kept the blade and glanced at Wang Lin. Gu Yanping then nodded at Lin Xun, "Golden Jade Hall does need such a treasure to keep up appearances at the moment. I will accept this gift, but when it is sold, Golden Jade Hall will give you a fair cut of the profits."

Lin Xun wanted to say something but was stopped by a wave of the hand from Gu Yanping. He smiled and said, "Let's do things this way. Alright, I'll be leaving now."

He turned around and left with Gu Liang. The professionalism and discretion Gu Yanping displayed were clearly different from other merchants.

This was a merchant cultivator.

After Gu Yanping left, Wang Lin also bid his farewells and swiftly departed with his subordinates.

Lin Xun did not urge Wang Lin to stay a while and watched him leave. Lin Xun knew that Wang Lin would definitely tell Mu Wansu everything when he returned to Stone Cauldron Alms.

Lin Xun wondered what Mu Wansu would think when she found out he had more than one Flame Blade.

Some mischievous ideas popped in his mind but he soon shook his head.

He and Mu Wansu were not enemies, and he did owe Stone Cauldron Alms. Although Lin Xun had some criticisms about her, he would not resort to such tricks just for some petty revenge.

The Flame Blade he had allowed Wang Lin to see was a signal for Mu Wansu to review her attitude towards Lin Xun.

He did not dwell on the matter and closed the gates before returning to the room. He found Xia Zhi was still in meditation with no indication that she was about to awaken. After today's affair, Lin Xun felt that as long as the Wu Clan and Lian Fei were not fools, they should restrain themselves somewhat.

The Wu Clan.

The brightly lit discussion hall was filled with the sounds of arguing.

The bickering had not stopped ever since the Black Tiger Gang's Old Tiger Lu had been killed. Seated in the hall, Clan Leader Wu Qun, First Elder Wu Yunshan, Second Elder Wu Yushan and Third Elder Wu Lanshan wore dark and stormy expressions.

Everyone was quarreling over whether to continue going after Lin Xun's life.

Some pinned Wu Henshui's, Wu Jie's and the others' deaths on Lin Xun and demanded his death to preserve the clan's dignity.

Others argued that Black Widow, Du Xiao and Frowning Oldy and even the Black Tiger Gang's Old Tiger Lu had already been killed, causing their Wu Clan to pay a huge price for nothing. *novelnext.com*

This proved that Lin Xun was no easy target. They felt that it would be better to take a step back and reassess their plans instead of continuing the operation.

Both views had their justifications. Hence, the room could not come to a consensus no matter how long they debated.

Right before daybreak, an informant came with news that finally put an end to the long debate.

The news was simple: the Golden Jade Hall Manager, Gu Yuping, had stepped forward to support Lin Xun.

Stone Cauldron Alms' Wang Lin had also led a team of guards to Lin Xun's residence, signalling that Stone Cauldron Alms had also decided to stick their hand into this matter.

When the Wu Clan higher-ups heard the news, they finally realized the severity of the matter. In the end, they agreed to temporarily take a step back and reevaluate the situation.

They did not fear a youngster like Lin Xun, but had to consider the threat of Stone Cauldron Alms. The Golden Jade Hall Manager, Gu Yanping, was also not simple and was a powerful Spirit Dipper stage cultivator. This level was considered top-tier even in Donglin City.

Under such circumstances, the Wu Clan could do nothing no matter how sullen they felt or how much they didn't want to take this lying down. They had no choice but to change their strategy.

Dawn broke, chasing away the darkness of the night as the world welcomed a new day.

The curtain had long fallen on the bloody chaos in the slums. Although there were still some undercurrents, the situation had stabilized for now.

The night's events had been limited to the commoner district and had not really affected the rest of Donglin City. It was normal, after all, for gangs to be wiped out and new gangs to be born in the slums each year. As such, the city's residents were long used to such happenings.

On this new morning, Golden Jade Hall announced again that they would be selling a new Flame Blade, causing a huge uproar and drawing many people's attention.

Wang Lin walked in the deepest courtyard of Stone Cauldron Alms and prepared to report the night's events to Mu Wansu.

In the slums' 49th residence, Lin Xun hurriedly finished his bath and began training in the messy and badly damaged courtyard.

In the room, Xia Zhi was still silently cultivating; her peaceful, beautiful little face like a painting under the morning light.

[Chapter 86: Registering for the District Examination](#)

Early in the morning, Mu Wansu was seated before a copper mirror on the dressing table as she meticulously applied her makeup. A beautiful woman would never allow her sloppy side to be seen by outsiders.

Mu Wansu was undoubtedly extremely beautiful, mature and enchanting, like a ripe honey peach that would make anyone's imagination run wild.

When Wang Lin arrived to seek an audience, Mu Wansu had already completed her morning ritual with her pretty face now glowing beautifully.

She asked with a slightly surprised tone, "What's so important that you had to come so early to report?"

"It's related to Lin Xun." Wang Lin did not hide anything and told her everything he had seen last night.

As he spoke, he did not notice Mu Wansu's originally glowing face turn somewhat cloudy.

When Wang Lin came to the part where he helped Lin Xun take down several key figures of the Green Bamboo Gang, Mu Wansu could no longer stop herself and interjected, "Who told you to help him?!"

Her tone was cold and accusatory.

Wang Lin was silent for a moment before he answered, "Miss Wansu, you instructed me to keep track of Lin Xun's activities a few days ago. I found out yesterday that Golden Jade Hall's Gu Yuping had moved long before me. Do you know what he did?"

Mu Wansu frowned and impatiently said, "Spit it out."

Any mention of Lin Xun made her mood turn extremely sour for some unknown reason, leaving no trace of her usual elegance and composure.

"Gu Yanping is a Spirit Dipper stage expert, but he willingly became a door guard for Lin Xun and even his son, Gu Liang, was dispatched as well."

Wang Lin sighed and said, "I could not understand his intentions initially, but I subsequently realized that the key lay with Lin Xun."

Mu Wansu was confused and her black brows furrowed even deeper, "What exactly are you trying to say?"

Upon seeing that Mu Wansu had clearly lost her patience, Wang Lin stopped beating about the bush, "Lin Xun has more than one Flame Blade and I am certain he has some connection to the mysterious rune master."

Mu Wansu's heart trembled, "How do you know?"

She was indeed very concerned about the mysterious rune master. After all, Donglin City's many merchant groups were all searching for this individual.

Everyone knew that if they could get their hands on the mysterious rune master, he would definitely bring them immeasurable wealth in the future.

Although Stone Cauldron Alms was a giant merchant group which could call itself a top-tier faction even in the empire, Mu Wansu could only depend on herself to expand the Stone Cauldron Alms branch in the remote Donglin City.

"I personally witnessed Lin Xun hand a Flame Blade to Gu Yanping yesterday. Moreover, Gu Yanping has already announced news about the blade this very morning, causing a substantial commotion. Miss Mu Wansu can easily verify this with a simple check."

Mu Wansu became silent. Wang Lin had no reason to lie to her. However, she could not fathom how a youngster like Lin Xun had established such close relations with the mysterious rune master in less than a month since he left Feiyun Village and entered Donglin City.

This is far too inconceivable!

After a long while, Mu Wansu asked, "In other words, we can only find the mysterious rune master through Lin Xun?"

Wang Lin nodded, "It is exactly as you say."

After a slight pause, he continued, "Miss Wansu might not know this yet but the boss of the slum district's biggest gang, the Black Tiger Gang, was killed by Lin Xun last night."

"Old Tiger Lu?" Mu Wansu was abruptly alarmed, "Lin Xun is only a True Martial fifth layer cultivator. How can he possibly kill a Spirit Dipper stage expert?"

Wang Lin nodded, "I initially found this absurd as well. But it subsequently occurred to me that it might be related to the mysterious rune master. An existence who can create the Flame Blade is definitely no ordinary person!"

Such an explanation made sense and even Mu Wansu could not help but waver.

The two, however, were still unaware that they were already going down the wrong track...

However, it wasn't surprising for them to reach such a conclusion. Xia Zhi's existence had always been overlooked because she was too young and very seldom showed herself. Moreover, no one would believe that a True Martial stage cultivator like Lin Xun could craft something like the Flame Blade. Hence, they could not help but surmise that there must be a master acting from the shadows.

This series of misunderstandings resulted in numerous deviations from the truth.

Under such circumstances, even if Wang Lin's information clearly told him that only Lin Xun and Xia Zhi had attacked the Black Tiger Gang's base, Wang Lin would still ignore Xia Zhi and attribute everything to the mysterious rune master behind Lin Xun.

Because, in his mind, this was the only logical explanation.

Mu Wansu's heart churned. Her rationality told her that everything Wang Lin said was true. However, she felt a wave of depression when she thought of Lin Xun's loathsome face.

Do I really have to lower my head to that devious and shameless brat?

Mu Wansu suddenly asked, "Right, didn't you help Lin Xun last night?"

This single sentence told Wang Lin that Mu Wansu's attitude had changed. He hurriedly nodded and said, "I wouldn't really call it help. It's more like trying to make amends."

“Did the kid show any gratitude?” Mu Wansu continued her questioning.

Wang Lin poured himself a cup of tea and said, “At the very least, he didn’t reject or show resistance.”

Mu Wansu nodded as a thoughtful look surged in her clear eyes, “Lin Xun should have come to Donglin City to participate in the district examination. If that’s the case, invite him to meet me after the district exam is over.”

Wang Lin immediately hesitated, “Miss Wansu, I’m afraid that it’ll be better if you went...personally.”

Mu Wansu was taken aback but soon understood Wang Lin’s meaning, causing her to feel another wave of frustration and sullenness. After a long silence, she took a deep breath and said, “Alright, I will take the initiative and pay him a visit when the time comes!”

She felt agonized. So I ultimately have to bow my head to that punk...

However, Mu Wansu quickly regained her energy. If that little punk thinks that he has won because of this, he’s underestimating me too much!

.....

Three days later.

When Lin Xun finally completed repairs on the badly damaged residence, Xia Zhi awoke from her meditative state.

The first thing she said when she opened her eyes was: “I’m starving!”

Despite this, Lin Xun was overjoyed and the final remaining worry in his heart vanished. He hastily dashed into the kitchen and unleashed all of his talents to cook Xia Zhi a sumptuous meal.

While eating, Lin Xun discovered that Xia Zhi seemed to have changed slightly after awakening. She now gave off an additional unfathomable aura of superiority.

Lin Xun could not help but ask, “Your power has grown?”

“Mm.” Xia Zhi continued to eat as she vaguely answered, “The battle was quite beneficial to my cultivation. If I have to face someone like Old Tiger Lu again, it will not be as troublesome as before.”

Lin Xun gasped. How is this only quite beneficial? It is a universally-shocking improvement!

Xia Zhi casually asked, “What about you?”

Lin Xun immediately shut his mouth, finding himself unwilling to answer. He had only deepened his comprehension of the Six Word Blade Art, and it was indeed hard to raise his head if he compared himself to Xia Zhi.

Fortunately, Xia Zhi was clearly more interested in her food than Lin Xun and did not pursue the question.

Lin Xun secretly breathed a sigh of relief, “Since you’re awake, I no longer have to worry. I will probably go to Donglin Academy soon. The district exam will take place in six days and registration has already started at Donglin Academy.”

Xia Zhi acknowledged this and said, "Remember to bring back some books. I don't want any of those random strange novels where the protagonist only fights and kills. They are so boring."

Lin Xun chuckled and promised her he would.

.....

Donglin Academy.

The usually peaceful academy had become extremely busy for the past two days. There were pedestrians everywhere and the streets were filled with horse-drawn hansoms.

Some of the students in navy-blue uniforms acted as guides, helping to give directions in the academy.

The district exam registration period lasted for two days and it was the grandest annual event in Donglin City!

Anyone who passed the district exam would obtain recognition from the empire. The passer would not only be rewarded with a substantial sum of money but also receive the qualifications to participate in the prefectural exam.

In addition, those who passed the district exam might catch the eye of powerful factions; this was an opportunity which might help them soar into the sky and obtain numerous cultivation resources!

Hence, although everyone knew the contents of the exam were simple, no one dared to underestimate the empire's method of selecting talent.

After all, the cultivators who passed the exam were at most fifteen. They possessed excellent cultivation potential and would definitely grow into true experts if nothing unexpected happened!

In fact, the more outstanding individuals would have unlimited cultivation prospects.

They were a group of seedlings with potential in the cultivation world. Although they were not remarkable now, they would definitely not be ordinary in the future.

Hence, when the yearly district exam began, it would draw the focus of the entire Donglin City. Everyone wanted to see which lucky souls would pass the exam.

At the same time, it was also a very attractive chance to recruit talent for the many Donglin City factions, and no one would willingly miss it.

When Lin Xun arrived at Donglin Academy, he found a bustling scenery sprawled before his eyes, a sea of people rushing here and there.

Some of the young registrants were even accompanied by their entire clan, a sight that deeply moved Lin Xun and made him feel for all the parents in the world.

The status and privileges of cultivators in the Ziyao Empire were indeed incomparable to the ordinary folk.

However, becoming a cultivator was still far from enough. Only cultivators who were acknowledged by the empire would bring glory and honor to themselves and their ancestors.

The district, prefecture, provincial and national exams were excellent tools to select talent. The person who came up with these exams was most certainly far-sighted and wise.

Every year of exams would give a huge batch of potential future pillars to the empire, replenishing new blood which would gradually strengthen the empire!

Of course, Lin Xun did not see so far, but he understood that it was no simple feat to create such talent selection methods.

He felt rather expectant as he wondered how far he could go.

The district exam? The prefectural exam? The provincial exam? Or maybe even...the national exam?

[Chapter 87: Enemies Meet](#)

The district exam registration was held on a wide and open plaza at the center of Donglin Academy.

Due to the overwhelming number of registrants, thirty-six registration booths had been set up all over the plaza. The ones in charge of these booths were students of Donglin Academy.

Despite such arrangements, there were still too many registrants, creating long lines behind each booth.

Lin Xun could only start queuing behind one of the booths and silently wait for his turn.

The registration process was very simple. A person only needed to pay a fee of ten copper coins in exchange for a district exam participation token.

While he was queuing, some discussions suddenly drew Lin Xun's attention.

"Amazing, I've heard that the chief examiner for this year's district exam is Lord Yao Tuohai of Qingfeng County!"

"Who is he?"

"Idiot, thirty years ago, Lord Yao Tuohai was fifteen. At this age, he should have already been a little too old for the district exam, but Lord Yao Tuohai successively passed the district exam, prefectural exam and provincial exam in a single year!"

"That's not even all. When Lord Yao Tuohai participated in the national exam, he displayed unrivalled power which allowed him to stand out amongst countless amazing talents!"

"Although Lord Yao ultimately came a little bit short in the national exam and failed to enter Qinglu Academy as he hoped to, his outstanding performance managed to catch the prime minister's eye. In the end, Lord Yao was recommended for a post in the empire's central district, making him very famous for a time!"

"You must know that no one from our southwest province has managed to pass the national exam for many years. The fact that Lord Yao managed to climb so high is proof of his capabilities. In the entire southwest province, the only person who can compare to Lord Yao is the Great Commander Liu Wujun, who holds the highest authority in the southwest province!"

“My god! Since Lord Yao Tuohai is so amazing, why has he chosen to oversee the district exam in Donglin City? A bigshot like him is more than qualified enough to oversee the provincial exam!”

“No one knows why Lord Yao has come, but his presence has definitely drawn numerous cultivators to this year’s district exam. In fact, I heard that cultivators from nearby cities have also rushed here after hearing the news. Nearly everyone is hoping to be recognized by Lord Yao during the exam and subsequently obtain a successful career for themselves!” nOvelnext.com

“Despicable! These guys are dreaming!”

“Ah, regardless of everyone’s motives, the competition is sure to be fierce with so many cultivators. Since only a thousand people will pass in the end, many cultivators who could have originally met the mark will be eliminated.”

Lin Xun was shocked by this information. He never imagined that this year’s district exam would be so different.

It was also the first time he had heard of Yao Tuohai. After hearing about his many achievements, Lin Xun understood that this individual was an extremely formidable character.

Why has such an illustrious person personally come to oversee the district exam in Donglin City?

There must be some important reason!

However, Lin Xun couldn't care less about this mystery at the moment and was quite speechless after hearing these conversations. Due to Yao Tuohai’s presence, the number of registrants had drastically increased and there would most certainly be several talented individuals amongst them. It was easy to imagine how competitive the final selection would be.

“I currently have True Martial sixth layer cultivation and I’ve yet to reach fourteen years of age. I wonder if this will be enough to pass the district exam...”

Lin Xun was originally filled with confidence but he now became somewhat uncertain.

The district exam’s contents were simple: the first was that the participant had to be no older than fifteen years old and the second was to possess cultivation.

One could say that any cultivator who dared to register would definitely fulfil these two conditions. However, due to the limited number of passing spots, the district exam would only choose the cream of the crop. Ordinary cultivators were destined to be eliminated!

It soon came to Lin Xun’s turn.

Two Donglin Academy students were seated behind the booth: a girl and a boy. One was in charge of collecting the registration fee, while the other’s duty consisted of giving out the participant token and recording the registrant’s information.

After handing over ten copper coins, the female student seated behind the booth raised her head and asked, “Please report your name and birthplace.”

Lin Xun casually answered, “Lin Xun, from Donglin City Feiyun Village.”

The male student's head jerked upwards at these words, "You're Lin Xun?"

The male student had an upright appearance and looked like a capable person. However, his expression was currently a little dark, a slight contrast to his bored, lethargic and unconcerned appearance from earlier.

His gaze had become as sharp as a knife as he stared at Lin Xun; clearly somewhat unable to control his emotions.

However, the male student quickly realized he had lost self-control. He immediately withdrew his gaze and regained his composure.

Lin Xun raised his brow, "You know me, friend?"

His keen senses had picked up faint killing intent leaking out from the student earlier. Although it had been well hidden, it was impossible to conceal from Lin Xun.

"I mistook you for someone else." The male student shook his head, his voice now somewhat cold.

Lin Xun acknowledged and smiled, "What a coincidence then."

The male student expressionlessly handed Lin Xun a token, "There are many coincidences in this world and sometimes unfortunate happenings. You should leave quickly so as to not obstruct others from registering."

Lin Xun rubbed the token in his hand for a while before suddenly lowering his upper body. Smiling, he looked at the male student behind the booth, "Coincidences are always the result of karma. Friend, I believe we will be meeting again in the future."

His words seemed to hold a deeper meaning. After speaking, he turned around and left with a chuckle.

Only after seeing Lin Xun's figure disappear did the male student's face darken again as iciness flowed in his eyes.

"Lian Fei, is there something wrong?" The female student asked in surprise. Lian Fei's expression had become far too ugly and this was definitely not normal.

"It's nothing." The male student shook his head. With a deep breath, he recollected himself and smiled, "Don't worry Susu. Let's continue our duties. Many people are here to register today and we need to work as quickly as we can."

"Mhm." The female student nodded. She was no fool and had already sensed something was up during the earlier interaction.

She secretly wondered to herself, Was that the enemy Lian Fei wanted to deal with for the past few days? He's just a kid, and here I was thinking he was some three-headed six-armed monster. Lian Fei doesn't like me interfering in his affairs but since I now know who this enemy is, how can I possibly do nothing and watch him swallow his anger in silence? After all, he's...the man I, Yao Susu, has chosen!"

.....

Lian Fei!

As Lin Xun walked out of Donglin Academy, he recalled the appearance of the male student. Lin Xun had already roughly guessed the student's identity.

Lin Xun had very few enemies in Donglin City. Lian Fei was the only enemy he had in Donglin Academy.

Lin Xun had not been able to recognize Lian Fei at a glance because they had never met before. It was honestly a stroke of fate to finally meet this foe today. In fact, Lin Xun had already felt the impulse to kill Lian Fei earlier.

Lin Xun ultimately restrained himself. Donglin Academy had tight security and there were many experts stationed nearby. He could not afford to act so recklessly.

However, he had committed Lian Fei's appearance to memory. There would always be a chance to eliminate him in the future!

Lin Xun also understood that Lian Fei would love to avenge his father. Hence, Lin Xun would absolutely not give Lian Fei any chances.

Pedestrians seemed to be knitted together on the busy street, brushing shoulders as they traversed through the crowd. Various noises rang nonstop, creating quite a din.

Numerous people were talking about Yao Tuohai. He could be said to be the hottest topic in Donglin City.

News of his arrival to oversee the district exam was akin to a storm that shook the entire city. Many were trying to guess Yao Tuohai's true goal for coming here.

After all, it felt like a huge waste for someone of Yao Tuohai's status to oversee the district exam.

Lin Xun did not pay much attention to this. No matter how famous Yao Tuohai was, it had nothing to do with him.

Lin Xun soon arrived at Liji Bookstore, walked in, and greeted the owner, Old Uncle Li, whom Lin Xun was already reasonably acquainted with. He then began selecting books for Xia Zhi.

The sky was still bright when he left Liji Bookstore and Lin Xun found himself with some rare free time to relax. He leisurely strolled along the street, stopping from time to time to purchase sweet foods, fruits, and roasted meat.

Due to the threat from the Wu Clan and Lian Fei, Lin Xun had been pretty tense for the past few weeks. He had used every last second he had to make various preparations and had not stepped out of the slums for nearly half a month.

Since the threats were mostly resolved for the time being, Lin Xun was naturally not going to push himself too hard. The road of cultivation was not a race, and too much focus on cultivation training would instead be less effective.

It was not long before Lin Xun's gaze was drawn towards a place by the roadside called Donglin Martial Training Hall and he soon found himself stopping in front of it.

“Young hero, would you like to have a try? There are aeth testing stones installed in our Martial Training Hall which can accurately gauge a cultivator’s aeth power. This knowledge will be a huge help to your future cultivation.”

An errand boy swiftly approached, his eyes shining as he warmly invited Lin Xun in, “Besides aeth testing stones, our Martial Training Hall also has specialized practice rooms for cultivators which contain copper skin puppets of various levels. You can freely test the power of your martial dao without risking injuries.”

“Oh? I can also train my martial dao here?” Lin Xun immediately became a little interested.

Upon seeing that Lin Xun seemed to be interested, the errand boy hurriedly struck while the iron was hot, “If the esteemed sir is not interested in these things, our Martial Training Hall also has a martial arena where you can spar with other cultivators. You can even win prizes for each victory!”

Lin Xun had no interest in the arena but was somewhat tempted by the aeth testing stone and the martial practice rooms. He was curious to find out his current power level.

After some consideration, Lin Xun tossed five copper coins to the errand boy, “Bring me to aeth testing stone first.”

The errand boy kept the tip with a wide smile, “Of course! Please follow me, young hero!”

[Chapter 88: Steel Blooded Youngster](#)

Donglin Martial Training Hall occupied a huge space that was divided into three areas: the martial practice rooms, the aeth testing hall, and the arena.

As the errand boy led Lin Xun through the place, he would occasionally see various kinds of cultivators. There were even students wearing the Donglin Academy uniform amongst them.

However, most of these cultivators only had True Martial cultivation, and it was very rare to find any Spirit Dipper stage experts.

Evidently, although the Martial Training Hall was huge, the main customers it drew were True Martial stage cultivators.

It did not take long for Lin Xun to be led into the aeth testing hall.

He found himself in a large, spacious hall. Dark golden stone tablets that were over a hundred feet tall towered at the center, giving off wisps of aeth power undulations.

These were aeth testing stones, which were aeth artifacts rumored to have been created by a great master from the empire’s Divine Workshop. The stones could perfectly measure a cultivator’s aeth power level.

At closer inspection, Lin Xun found that the aeth testing stones were covered in runes. Each rune represented a different meaning.

Lin Xun observed that there was a corresponding number to each rune: 100 catties, 400 catties, 600 catties, 800 catties, 1000 catties, etc.

The errand boy began to explain, “Young hero, normally speaking, a True Martial first layer cultivator possesses a 100 catties of aeth power, while a regular True Martial second layer expert possesses 400 catties and so on. Different cultivators will also have different levels of aeth power.”

Only then did Lin Xun understand. Catty was a type of measurement unit for aeth power.

The errand boy continued, “Young hero, you only need to pay ten silver coins to measure your aeth power.”

Ten silver coins was equivalent to five hundred copper coins. This was a substantial amount.

Lin Xun thought about it for a while before ultimately handing over ten silver coins. For the sake of his future cultivation, he needed to know what level his aeth power cultivation had reached.

The errand boy accepted the money and carefully withdrew, leaving the giant aeth testing hall to Lin Xun. This was to maintain the customer’s privacy.

After all, cultivation was the root of a cultivator’s power and no one would willingly allow others to see their power level.

Lin Xun was quite satisfied on this point.

He stepped forward and inspected the aeth testing stone. After a long time, he took a deep breath, circulated all the aeth power in his body and pressed his hand onto the notch at the bottom of the stone.

Omm!

A strange power rippled from the aeth testing rock. Lin Xun felt as if he was being enveloped by flowing water on both the inside and the outside. Other than this odd sensation, he did not feel any discomfort.

Meanwhile, light suddenly emerged on the aeth testing stone’s surface and began shooting upwards. It quickly passed the 100 catties, 400 catties, 600 catties and 800 catties rune indicators.

It continued to climb from 800 catties.

800 catties to 1000 catties represented the regular range of True Martial fifth layer aeth power levels. Where a particular cultivator stood depended on where the light stopped between the 800 to 1000 range.

If the light stopped at 800 catties, it would mean that this True Martial fifth layer cultivator’s power was relatively weak and could only be considered ordinary.

If it stopped at the 1000 catty position, the power in the cultivator’s body had already reached the peak of the True Martial fifth layer stage.

Normally speaking, most True Martial fifth layer cultivators would range between 800 and 1000 catties.

One thing worth mentioning was that the standards were based on the power levels of the average cultivator in this world. No matter how precise the measurements were, it only represented the quantity and quality of aeth power, and did not say anything about how strong a cultivator was compared to others of the same stage.

The light soon rose to the 1800 catties mark. This meant that Lin Xun's aeth power cultivation had reached the peak of the True Martial sixth layer.

However, it was not over yet!

After reaching the 1800 catties mark, the light continued to climb without slowing.

Lin Xun could not help but feel surprised.

1800 catties to 3000 catties belonged to the True Martial seventh layer aeth power level!

Was the power he possessed already enough to match a True Martial seventh layer expert?

Before Lin Xun could regain his calm, he saw the light reach the 3000 catties position in a few breaths.

However, it was still not over yet!

The light soon charged into the 3000 to 5000 catties range. This was the power level which belonged to True Martial eighth layer experts!

However, after reaching this range, the climbing light gradually began to slow down.

Lin Xun forcibly composed himself and focused on the light.

In the end, it stopped at the 4900 catties mark and did not rise any further.

This position represented the current level of Lin Xun's aeth power. He only needed a little more to reach the peak of the True Martial eighth layer, Big Cycle!

Of note, Lin Xun's cultivation was only at the True Martial sixth layer, Blood Igniting. This meant there was a difference of two entire lesser cultivation stages!

From this, it could be seen that Lin Xun's aeth power was already comparable to a peak True Martial eighth layer cultivator!

Lin Xun could not help but feel skeptical about the results. Is this aeth testing stone broken?

If the result was true, wouldn't it mean that his aeth power was superior to ordinary True Martial eighth layer cultivators?

An ordinary True Martial eighth layer expert and a peak True Martial eighth layer expert were two completely different entities!

After mulling over it for a long time, Lin Xun ultimately reasoned that it was because of the four aeth power vortexes at his four heart acupuncture points.

His aeth power became purer and of higher quality after being refined by the four vortexes. The power contained within naturally also grew extremely terrifying.

"Since I already have 4900 catties worth of power, I wonder how much my aeth power will grow after reaching the True Martial sixth layer." Lin Xun was still thinking about his aeth power as he left the aeth testing hall.

When he stepped out of the entrance, however, he saw a flurry of activity in the main hall.

He soon saw a group of soldiers in empire-manufactured heavy armor marching toward him. An aura of sternness swirled around them and the few cultivators who were unable to get out of the way in time were thrown aside by the soldiers.

In the blink of an eye, the group opened a path in Donglin Martial Training Hall and a tall, soldierly young man wearing a scarlet-red cape strode in.

The young man had a broad forehead, tiger-like eyes which seemed to flash with lightning, and a tall, imposing figure. Each movement he made gave off a strong feeling of boldness and disdain.

The soldierly young man asked in a commanding voice, "Where's the aeth testing stone?"

"Th...th...there." An intimidated worker stammered as he pointed behind Lin Xun.

The soldierly youngster flicked a sparkling gold coin to the worker, "This is the fee, use the leftover to buy some alcohol for the brothers behind me!"

After which, he headed towards the aeth testing hall.

Lin Xun silently moved to the side, giving way to the soldierly youngster. With such a grand entrance, the soldierly young man was definitely no ordinary person. He had to be extremely rich to so casually spend a gold coin.

The youngster glanced at Lin Xun and suddenly thought of something, "You just used the aeth testing stone?"

Lin Xun nodded.

"You look like you're about thirteen or fourteen-years-old. What cultivation stage have you reached?" The young man had a deep voice and was very direct, making him seem rather rude. After all, it was an unspoken taboo to ask about someone else's cultivation level.

However, his gaze only contained curiosity and did not appear to be trying to cause trouble.

Lin Xun thought for a moment and said, "I just reached the True Martial sixth layer, Blood Ignition. I am far inferior to the esteemed sir."

He was trying to be modest but the young man did not seem to realize this point, "You're quite self-aware. I already possessed True Martial ninth layer cultivation when I was nine, but due to concerns about my future, my cultivation was suppressed for four years by my grandfather. Otherwise, I would have advanced to the Spirit Dipper stage four years ago! You definitely can't compare to me in terms of cultivation speed."

Lin Xun was taken aback. This fellow is a strange one. Did he really just tell a stranger such things?

Moreover, he looked completely serious when boasting. He really is...a marvel.

However, Lin Xun also found out that the youngster was the same age as himself: thirteen.

However, the young man seemed to have matured rather quickly and looked nothing like a thirteen-year-old. He looked much closer to eighteen or nineteen.

While Lin Xun was lost in thought, the soldierly young man had already pushed open the doors and walked into the aeth testing hall.

The soldiers in heavy armor were left outside, intimidating everyone in the main hall until no one dared to speak.

Several people had already left the place.

Lin Xun did not linger for long either and began walking towards the exit.

He originally intended to have a look around the martial practice rooms and test the power of their copper skin puppets. However, due to the unexpected encounter and because he was starting to worry about Xia Zhi, who was all alone at home, Lin Xun did not dare to stay any longer.

“Judging from the slightly bloody aura around them, they are clearly battle-hardened elites who have been baptised by the fires of war. Moreover, from the insignia on their armor, they seem to be from the empire’s famous Steel-Blood Army.”

“The empire’s Steel-Blood Army? Oh my god, are you referring to the Steel-Blood Army under the Steel-Blood King who are stationed at the empire’s west border?”

“Who else would dare to wear the heavy army specially crafted for the Steel-Blood Army?”

“But who is that youngster? Who could have a squad of Steel-Blood soldiers as his guards?”

“He’s definitely no simple individual and is likely related to the Steel-Blood King!”

“What piques my curiosity is that the Steel-Blood Army is stationed at the Blue Sand Province near the empire’s western border and is several tens of thousands of miles from Donglin City. Why have Steel-Blood Army troops appeared in Donglin City? Could something big have happened?”

Before he could walk out of Donglin Martial Training Hall’s main entrance, Lin Xun overheard some conversations.

Steel-Blood King?

Was that the same Steel-Blood King Ning Bugui who lived only for battle, preferring to die on a mountain of corpses and lie in a sea of blood, so his body could eternally face the heavens and slumber with the land?

Lin Xun could not help but stop and turn his head to glance at the soldiers.

Sure enough, he found that the soldiers seemed brave and capable and killing intent leaked from their bodies. They gave off a hardened, steel-blooded aura, as if they were ready to conquer every land under the heavens.

“If these are soldiers under the Steel-Blood King, that youngster’s origins are definitely even more astonishing...” A thoughtful look arose on Lin Xun’s face, but he soon shook his head and disappeared into the bustling streets outside Donglin Martial Training Hall.

Meanwhile, the soldierly youngster angrily roared in the aeth testing hall, "That little liar. His power is clearly at the peak True Martial eighth layer level, but he lied to me and said he had only had True Martial sixth layer cultivation. Since when has anyone dared to lie to me? How detestable!"

If Lin Xun returned, he would realize that he had forgotten to erase the record on the aeth testing stone when he left because he had been lost in thought about his aeth power cultivation...

Unfortunately for him, the record had caused a misunderstanding with the soldierly youngster called Ning Meng.

Nevertheless, even Ning Meng would not have imagined that Lin Xun was indeed at the True Martial sixth layer...

[Chapter 89: Exchanging for Money](#)

Before returning home, Lin Xun paid a visit to Golden Jade Hall.

After selling the Flame Blade for a sky-high price which shook the entire city, Golden Jade Hall was no longer the same desolate place from before. It had become as busy as a marketplace with a constant flow of visitors.

Gu Yanping was capable, trustworthy and principled. He swiftly established a foothold for himself in Donglin City as his business grew day by day.

Lin Xun could not help but feel impressed. Gu Yanping was already a Spirit Dipper stage expert, so who could have expected that he would also be so amazing in the merchant ways?

When Lin Xun left Golden Jade Hall, he was accompanied by Gu Liang.

After slaying Old Tiger Lu three days ago, all the treasures in the dead man's secret underground storehouse had been emptied out by Lin Xun.

There was gold, silver, pearls, herbs, pills, and other resources like ores. The entire collection had been painstakingly accumulated by Old Tiger Lu over the past dozen years and could fetch an astonishing price.

However, after sieving through everything, Lin Xun found that most of the treasures were of little use to him. He had paid a visit to Golden Jade Hall to sell off the things he didn't need.

After being told about it, Gu Yanping cheerfully agreed and sent his son, Gu Liang, with Lin Xun to appraise the value of the goods.

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Slum district 49th residence.

It took Gu Liang an entire incense stick of time to go through all of the articles. His final calculated value was 116 gold coins!

Lin Xun was surprised. This sum was equivalent to 11,600 silver coins and 1,160,000 copper coins!

It was definitely an astronomical sum to Lin Xun as it could purchase nearly forty Flame Blades priced at 300 silver coins.

From this, it could be seen how much wealth the slums' number one faction, the Black Tiger Gang, had plundered over the years.

More importantly, these only included the things Lin Xun was unable to use.

The herbs, money, aeth resources and other things Lin Xun had already taken out would add up to at least another 100 gold coins as well!

Lin Xun could only sigh deeply. Conquering and looting were indeed one of the most effective means of obtaining wealth.

Under Lin Xun's insistence, 116 gold coins were rounded down to 100 gold coins, completing the exchange with Golden Jade Hall.

Lin Xun's act of voluntarily giving up 16 gold coins made Gu Liang feel both admiration and gratitude. He now saw Lin Xun as a person truly worth befriending.

Gu Liang promised Lin Xun that he would personally deliver the agreed amount once all of the goods were sold.

Gu Liang had no choice. Given Golden Jade Hall's finances, they could not take out 100 gold coins on such short notice.

Lin Xun did not mind as he was not in a rush. After settling the details, he began chatting with Gu Liang.

Lin Xun soon found out that the second Flame Blade he had given Gu Yanping had ultimately sold for a price of 200 silver coins, an entire 100 silver coins fewer than the first blade.

This was quite understandable since scarcity meant value. Any treasure would be at its highest price if it was the only one on the market. Likewise, the price would drop once the second and third pieces appeared.

According to Gu Liang, however, the Flame Blade's price would never drop below 160 silver coins no matter how many appeared. After subtracting Golden Jade Hall's share, Lin Xun would earn 110 silver coins.

Lin Xun did some calculations; it cost him around thirty silver coins to craft a Flame Blade. If so, selling a Flame Blade would triple his initial investment!

Why did rune masters have superior statuses and be so well-respected?

It was because rune masters could create astonishing wealth that would make many people jealous. It was as the saying went: what flowed from a rune master's fingers were not runes but endless gold!

At the present, Lin Xun was still not a rune master because he could not singlehandedly complete a rune array. He was still considered a rune apprentice.

However, the ability to craft aeth tools at the True Martial stage was incomparable talent and the first of its kind!

Fortunately, only Lin Xun and Xia Zhi knew of this secret. Otherwise, it would give a big scare to the other rune masters in the world.

After all, who would dare to believe a mere thirteen-year-old youngster, who was still far from the Spirit Dipper stage, would already possess the ability to craft aeth tools?

If the other rune masters were to find out that Lin Xun could not only craft aeth tools but also have a 100% success rate, who knew what they would think?

Of course, if rune masters were to also find out that his Explosion Blades were 20% more powerful than normal, what would they think?

Lin Xun was no greenhorn and deeply understood the concept of keeping a low-profile while amassing wealth. He would naturally not divulge such secrets.

However, it was not an easy task to keep these secrets.

For instance, Gu Liang suddenly asked, "Lin Xun, the second Flame Blade has an extra old 'Xun' word on it which resembles its maker's unique signature. As long as this signature is present, people will know the item is the work of a certain rune master."

At this point, Gu Liang suspiciously looked at Lin Xun, "Could this 'Xun' word be..."

Lin Xun answered with a question, "Do you think it's possible given my capability?"

"Er..." Gu Liang hesitated for a long time before shaking his head, "It can't be you. Although there are True Martial stage rune apprentices who are exceptional enough to craft aeth tools, it is very rare to find one. Moreover, all of these rune apprentices hail from old and powerful factions and you would normally never see any."

After a pause, he continued, "Most importantly, these two Flame Blades are special. Although they are made from the same materials and rune arrays as ordinary Explosion Blades, the Flame Blade's power is substantially higher, making it a completely new kind of aeth tool. A treasure like this can only be created by great rune masters with amazing ability."

From his words and tone, it was clear that Gu Liang would not believe it even if Lin Xun admitted the two treasures had been crafted by him.

However, this was good for Lin Xun. At least he didn't need to waste more saliva trying to make his lie convincing.

Lin Xun grinned, "Gu Liang, no need to keep guessing. I might not be able to promise anything else, but I can guarantee that as long as I'm in Donglin City, I will be able to provide Golden Jade Hall with some aeth tools."

Gu Liang had originally wanted to ask about the Flame Blade's creator, but after hearing Lin Xun's words, Gu Liang immediately understood that Lin Xun was not going to divulge this secret.

On the other hand, Gu Liang could also tell from Lin Xun's words that he likely had a special relationship with the mysterious rune master. Otherwise, he would not dare to make such a promise.

Gu Liang could not help but envy Lin Xun's luck. Who wouldn't envy someone who could maintain a relationship with a rune master?

However, Gu Liang did not know that a mere sentence from Lin Xun would veer him so far from the truth...

They chatted some more before Gu Liang bid farewell and left. *nOVeLnExt.coM*

Lin Xun was left alone in the courtyard, his eyes narrowing slightly as he fell into thought.

Although it had been less than a month since he arrived at Donglin City, far too much had already happened. In addition, most of it was related to the Wu Clan.

First, Black Widow and two assassins had gone after his life, followed by the Black Tiger Gang threatening him and Xia Zhi. Lin Xun's days had not been peaceful.

Fortunately, all of it was now in the past. After two painful back-to-back lessons, the Wu Clan should not dare openly take action for a while.

However, the threat was still there and Lin Xun would not let his guard down. He knew that the Wu Clan would come after him sooner or later as long as he lived.

Thankfully, he had established a strong relationship with Golden Jade Hall and had sent a message to Mu Wansu through Wang Lin a few days ago which should make her reevaluate her attitude towards him.

All in all, there was not much Lin Xun needed to worry about before the district exam and he could spend more time training.

Compared to these petty matters, Lin Xun was more concerned about his cultivation path. As long as he was strong enough, all these plots and schemes would become jokes!

Since Lin Xun had recently advanced to the True Martial sixth layer, it was very difficult to have another cultivation breakthrough any time soon.

At the True Martial sixth layer, aeth power could be circulated 108 times in the body which was also known as a single cycle of power. The blood in the body would boil like a furnace, burning with power.

The True Martial seventh layer was known as the Little Cycle level. Upon reaching this stage, aeth power could be continuously cycled nine times! The cultivator's aeth power would also undergo rapid development and begin to touch the true essence of circulation.

At the present, there were still some ways to go for Lin Xun to reach the Little Cycle level. A breakthrough was unachievable for the time being.

For his spirit cultivation, Lin Xun's senses were growing rapidly due to the Little Divine Meditation Art. It would not take long for him to light the third spirit star in his mind-sea.

This area was not something Lin Xun needed to worry about at all.

Similar to his spirit cultivation, his physique power was constantly growing under the tridaily tempering of the Omega Secret-Realm's trial. Lin Xun's physique was currently at the copper skin iron bone level and ordinary weapons could not hurt him.

Lin Xun had changed his destiny and been reborn ever since his four heart acupuncture points had recovered. He had shown unimaginable potential in all areas of cultivation, which had enabled him to reach his current heights.

Lin Xun's only regret was that he was still unable to find any news about the arch-enemy who had stolen his Origin Aeth Artery years ago.

Since he first entered Donglin City, Lin Xun had visited the library many times to research information about the Grand Abyss Heaven Devourer.

However, he had ultimately found nothing.

The Grand Abyss Heaven Devourer was a type of Origin Aeth Artery, also known as an innate cultivation talent!

There were many cultivators in the world, but only a small handful were born with Origin Aeth Arteries. Such cultivation talents were as rare as phoenix feathers or unicorn horns.

Due to these circumstances, there were naturally almost no records about Origin Aeth Arteries.

Donglin City was merely a remote border city in the empire's southwest province. It was easy to imagine how impossible it would be to find any information about the Grand Abyss Heaven Devourer here.

[Chapter 90: Surging Waves](#)

There were only five days left until the district exam. Lin Xun continued his daily training routine: polishing martial dao in the day and working on aeth power cultivation, spirit cultivation, and rune studies at night.

He did not make any adjustments to his schedule due to the upcoming district exam and was the picture of calm and confidence.

Ever since she woke from her heavy injuries, Xia Zhi slept in the day as she did in the past and went out alone at night. Lin Xun did not need to guess where she went. An unlucky gang in the slums would be destroyed every time the lass went out.

All in all, life was as normal as it could be at the 49th residence. In contrast, Donglin City experienced numerous big events that shook the entire city.

First and foremost, Yao Tuohai had finally arrived in Donglin City to oversee the forthcoming district exam as an examiner.

Due to Yao Tuohai's arrival, the number of participating cultivators this year exploded and more than 8000 people had already registered!

Only half of those were local Donglin City cultivators. The other half were cultivators that had rushed over from other cities due to Yao Tuohai's fame.

This made Donglin City far busier than before. The entire city was abuzz with conversations about Yao Tuohai, discussing why he had come to Donglin City.

Meanwhile, news of a squad of Steel-Blood Army soldiers escorting a mysterious youngster to Donglin City created another big splash in the city which was already buzzing with gossip.

The Steel-Blood Army!

An elite army that was renowned in the empire and was commanded by the Steel-Blood King Ning Bugui!

Ning Bugui was one of the empire's legendary experts, and his Steel-Blood Army was equally as legendary amongst the empire's armies. As such, it was easy to imagine how big of a commotion resulted when people heard that a squad of Steel-Blood Army soldiers had escorted a youngster to Donglin City.

Why had soldiers from the Steel-Blood Army appeared in the city?

Who was the youngster they were escorting and why were they escorting him here?

Everyone made guesses and engaged in discussion but no one could give a proper answer.

Even the various well-informed Donglin City factions did not know what to make of this.

Although Yao Tuohao was officially here to oversee the district exam, everyone knew that his true motive would not be so simple.

The Steel-Blood guards had escorted a youngster here, but no one knew what they were up to.

A layer of mystery was cast over Donglin City, causing the city's atmosphere to turn somewhat strange.

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Stone Cauldron Alms.

Mu Wansu was blankly staring into space, her brows tightly furrowed as if something was weighing heavily on her mind.

In her hand was an urgent message which had arrived several hours ago. It was sent from the Stone Cauldron Alms' headquarters in the Forbidden City and contained an unexplained message— "A bigshot will arrive in Donglin City during this period, please be careful!"

The message made Mu Wansu uneasy. Who is this bigshot? What could have alarmed headquarters so much that they would send such a message?

Why did they not dare to put the bigshot's name or give any hints?

Mu Wansu's intuition told her that this was no simple matter!

She suddenly thought of Yao Tuohai and the youngster escorted by Steel-Blood soldiers.

Were they here because of the bigshot?

This possibility made Mu Wansu gasp. Yao Tuohai was already someone of amazing status and there was only one person in the entire southwest province who could stand shoulder to shoulder to him: the southwest city governor, Liu Wudiao.

The Steel-Blood youngster was likely even more extraordinary. The Steel-Blood guards accompanying him belonged to the Tiger Wolf Division under Ning Bugui! How could someone who could obtain the escort of these guards be an ordinary person?

If they had indeed come because of the unknown bigshot, wouldn't the bigshot's identity be even more shocking?

Moreover, why was this bigshot coming to Donglin City?

The more Mu Wansu thought, the more uneasy she grew. For the first time, she felt that she could no longer properly judge the situation in Donglin City.

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In the morning four days later.

Lin Xun ate his breakfast but did not begin training today. He had sensed that his physique cultivation had hit a bottleneck and planned to make a trip to Donglin Martial Training Hall in order to test the current power level of his physique.

Lin Xun left the slums and walked into the bustling streets. He could feel a clear difference in Donglin City. Cultivators could be seen everywhere, and everyone was talking about the district exam.

Because tomorrow morning marked the start of the district exam!

Lin Xun was not worried about the exam. He had already done his preparations and only needed to wait for it to begin.

He soon arrived at Donglin Martial Training Hall and was respectfully led into a martial practice room after paying ten silver coins.

The martial practice room was extremely big; it resembled a small-scale plaza which was filled with copper skin puppets.

Copper skin puppets were aeth tools with mechanical parts. The puppet's body was first forged from hard ores before a rune master would be commissioned to carve special rune arrays on the interior. The end product utilized a combination of mechanisms and an aeth power source to move.

Some formidable copper skin puppets were even able to engage in battle like real cultivators!

However, the Donglin Martial Training Hall puppets were ordinary products that could only execute simple movements. Their greatest function was to measure a cultivator's martial power.

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When Lin Xun entered Donglin Martial Training Hall, a bizarre procession suddenly appeared in the sky several thousand miles away deep in the Three Thousand Great Mountains.

A group of men dressed in the empire's ceremonial palace attire led the procession. However, their clothes were not light purple but deep night-black.

There were a total of sixteen men who were split into two rows. They maintained a solemn and dignified air as they marched in the sky, making sure their movements were coordinated and perfect to the tee.

It was as if they were not walking on air but on a wide, solid road. Every step and every minute movement they made followed a unique rhythm, neat and orderly as if they were of one mind!

Only Spirit Sea stage cultivators could fly in the sky, but not all Spirit Sea stage cultivators had the control and power needed to walk in the air.

Even if there were cultivators who could, they might not be able to move at the same speed while maintaining a precise distance between them like the sixteen men in black ceremonial attire!

Although these sixteen men had clearly reached the Spirit Sea stage and possessed terrifying power, they were merely vanguards in the procession.

There was a single carriage behind them.

The entire carriage was black and made from some unknown material. Numerous cryptic rune arrays were carved upon its surface, densely packed together like a vast sea. Under the blue dome of heaven, the carriage seemed to be covered in a layer of eternal night-black.

The carriage was pulled by six black horses. The horses' eyes seemed to glow a bluish-jade as if ghost fire burned within them. A single horn rose from their heads like the legendary unicorns. However, unicorns were white while these horses were pure-black, making them look like netherworld ghost horses that had escaped from hell!

The sudden appearance of such a procession amidst the wilderness was shocking to say the least, and anyone who witnessed it would definitely doubt their eyes.

Liiiiii!

The piercing cry of a bird sounded from far away, rippling the clouds. A black shadow flew towards the procession in a flash and arrived beside the carriage.

It was a strange black bird that had four claws, pitch-black steel-like wings, and glowing golden eyes. Although it was on the smaller side, it gave off a terrifying aura of savagery.

However, the strange black bird suddenly exploded, turning into a tall and imposing old man. The old man was also dressed in black ceremonial attire and his long hair was perfectly combed such that not a single strand was out of place!

"My Lady, I've searched for a long time but did not find a single clue. It is likely that someone has intentionally erased all traces. We might have arrived a little too late."

The elder bowed slightly, his voice strong and rich. His bearing and mannerisms were refined and courteous, so perfect that there was nothing to nitpick.

“Mmm.” A uniquely magnetic and husky feminine voice sounded from the black carriage, “It is within expectation. I’m honestly surprised they waited so long to act.”

The elder was silent.

After a long time, the husky voice sounded from the carriage again, “The Heavenly Seer said that an amazing treasure will appear in the Three Thousand Great Mountains. Have you heard of this?”

The elder bowed, “I have. I’ve also heard that the Little Sword Lord Xie Yutang has already proved that it does not exist.”

“Oh? The little fellow from the Forbidden City’s Black Cloth Alley Xie Clan?”

“Correct.”

“He’s a lucky boy.” The husky voice suddenly paused. Soon after, the carriage window opened as a beautiful fair hand reached out.

The hand was slender and flawless. On her perfect dainty little finger was a strange black gemstone ring which looked like an open eye, a sight that would make anyone shiver inside.

The beautiful finger pointed forward, “What lies ahead of us?”

The elder answered, “My Lady, to our front, lies Donglin City, which is one of our planned stopovers. At our current speed, we should arrive in six hours.”

“Donglin City...how interesting...”

The husky voice seemed to quiver as if sensing something but was near impossible to read.