

Spirit Realm #Chapter 21 — 30

Four Spirit Diagrams - Read Spirit Realm Chapter 21 — Four Spirit Diagrams

Chapter 21: Four Spirit Diagrams

If Ling Yushi, garbed in long, emerald skirt, had looked dark and spiritless at the entrance to the cave earlier, now her eyes sparkled with a beautiful brightness, and the corner of her lips curled into an enigmatic smile.

"I brought you something to eat. Let's fill up your stomach and talk later." She orderly set out the dishes and took out the food from the basket. Smiling at Qin Lie, she said, "Take it easy while I prepare the hot water. Once you've finished you can come in." Then, she leisurely entered the washroom.

Qin Lie rubbed the bottom of his chin as his gaze turned odd. He guessed that she must have made the connection after hearing the name "Ling Lie" from Ling Chengzhi and came over after that with the purpose to probe him.

That was in fact the truth.

Ling Yushi too was gradually starting to notice his unusualness. After listening to Ling Chengye and his brother, she began to feel that it was more and more likely that Qin Lie was purposely acting like a fool and hence decided that she would test him. By being more intimate with Qin Lie, she wanted to see if she could notice anything amiss and expose Qin Lie.

A little while later, Qin Lie devoured every last bit of the food and looked towards the washroom. Smiling bitterly, he forced himself up from his seat.

In truth, he wasn't afraid that some of his secrets might be exposed to the public.

In his opinion, the only reason he continued to act crazy and foolish was because he didn't want to get involved in too many of the Ling family's issues. He didn't want the Ling household to come looking for him, asking about what was inside Herb Mountain, his grandfather, himself, or other matters.

By continuing to act foolish, no one would bother him and he could focus more into cultivation.

But judging from the current situation, it would probably get harder and harder to continue pretending the way he was. A few members of the Ling family had already noticed something amiss, and even Ling Yushi had taken the initiative and came over to probe him. He understood that he couldn't hide the truth for much longer.

"Luckily for me though, I am now able to enter and exit the state of Thoughtless Tranquility as I please. Otherwise, I wouldn't even be able to get past today's spectacle," Qin Lie thought to himself silently. Taking in a breath, he then entered the washroom with a vacant expression.

Inside the steaming stone room, Ling Yushi stood prettily beside a big wooden barrel with a gentle smile on her elegant face. She pushed up her sleeves to reveal a pair of arms that were as white as snow, and amidst the thin veil of mist, she appeared to be both incredibly beautiful and attractive.

She grabbed a towel with one hand and beckoned Qin Lie with the other, saying, "The hot water's ready. Come over and take off your clothes. Then you can get inside and take a nice, long dip."

This situation made Qin Lie feel like he was facing a terrible enemy.

Without waiting for Ling Yushi to "lend him a hand," he took the initiative and took off his outer shirt himself. Under the gaze of those beautiful eyes, he then took off his long pants and finally stood with only his underpants on at the entrance.

Ling Yushi's eyes shone with an odd brightness, her heart trembling slightly and her lips curled into a graceful arc as she watched Qin Lie's near naked body. Blushing slightly, she cried out softly, "You look thin with your clothes on, but without them... you are actually pretty muscular, aren't you? Not bad, you have a fine body."

Since Qin Lie had trained himself strenuously for years, on the outside he appeared to be both thin and gaunt. However, once he exposed himself, there was nothing to hide the well trained and powerful body he had built for himself.

Every muscle on his body could be seen as clear as day, and they were incredibly well distributed and matched up to his body almost perfectly!

In fact, it seemed that only these well trained muscles could properly display his body's strength, speed, and endurance at perfect equilibrium. If his muscles were a tiny bit smaller, it seemed that his explosive power would be lacking. If his muscles were a tiny bit bigger, then his speed and responsiveness would be affected instead.

As the first miss of the Ling Family, Ling Yushi often acted as a supervisor at the martial arts arena and had seen countless half-naked men. She secretly compared them to Qin Lie and felt that his body seemed more suited for combat even though she couldn't figure out exactly why. She just felt that Qin Lie's body was both well balanced and coordinated and also very soothing to the eye.

While she zoned out for a little, Qin Lie jumped off the stone stairs, and with a "plop," he landed inside the barrel. He immediately entered the state of Thoughtless Tranquility and kept his soul adrift to keep Ling Yushi from noticing anything amiss.

"Why didn't you take off everything? Are you embarrassed?" Ling Yushi pouted. When she said those words, she too felt embarrassed from the bottom of her heart.

After Qin Lie dipped himself into the large wooden barrel, with the towel she had grabbed, she walked over until she was behind Qin Lie. Watching Qin Lie's back, she felt her cheeks turn warm amidst the mist, and after struggling internally, she finally grit her teeth and said, "Let me help you..." while pretending to be calm.

With that, she dipped the towel into the barrel. Once the towel was soaked with hot water, she began washing Qin Lie's back. Every now and then her soft palm and delicate fingers would come in direct contact with Qin Lie's back. Even with his soul adrift, Qin Lie was excited to the core.

"Splash splash splash!"

Holding the towel and scrubbing Qin Lie's back, it didn't take long for Ling Yushi to arrive in front of Qin Lie after scrubbing his back.

Amidst the thin veil of mist, her cheeks flushed red while her eyes were brimming with a terrifying glow as she embarrassedly peeked at Qin Lie occasionally.

Under these circumstances, although Qin Lie was still in the Thoughtless Tranquility state, his body began to react towards its basest instinct...

Although his soul was hidden within the Soul Suppressing Orb, he could see that a little tent had bulged up from his pants. Since his lower body was completely submerged inside the water and his wet underpants were sticking tightly against his stomach, the outline of this little tent had appeared with perfect clarity, and it also appeared to be very... excited.

"Mm..."

Ling Yushi didn't dare to stare at Qin Lie for too long, so she leaned against the barrel and looked down. She immediately saw the little tent, and suddenly felt blood rushing to her cheeks. In fact, her face was red enough to almost bleed out of her skin. Her eyes seemed to turn misty as she covered her lips and cried out softly.

"Peh!"

Not daring to look down any longer, she made a soft spitting sound and looked up at Qin Lie.

She discovered that Qin Lie's eyes remained as vacant as ever, but there were green veins barely popping to the surface. Not only that, every nerve was taut. They were also pulsing so very slightly as if trying really hard to hold something back.

Taken aback by the sight, Ling Yushi quickly turned her attention back to Qin Lie's back, and after giving it another simple wipe she exited the washroom rapidly with a hint of panic.

She had a feeling that if she continued to stay and test Qin Lie, something bad was going to happen to her.

"I won't be able to come over often for the next few days. I need to take the Hundred Vein Pill and improve my constitution." Her voice trembled slightly as she shouted to Qin Lie, who was still in the washroom. She then slipped out of the house immediately after with her face completely red.

Once out of the stone house, the mountain breeze blew against her skin and refreshed her mind instantly.

Immediately, her expression turned into one of surprise, and she pressed her hands against her bright red cheeks and smiled derisively, saying, "What's going on with me? Why should I be scared of him? Haven't I come here to check if he's a fool or just faking it? Instead, I turned back at the last moment; I'm so useless..."

Back at the house, inside the wooden barrel.

After a long while, Qin Lie broke out of the Thoughtless Tranquility state and gulped deep breaths repeatedly as if he didn't have enough air. For a moment there, he had a terrifying feeling that he was going to suffocate himself.

"As I thought, a young body like mine can't handle any stimulation at all. That was way too close." He stared towards the door with fear still lingering about his face. Then, he shook his head, smiled wryly, and continued, "You really should stop playing with fire. If you keep this up, I won't be able to hold back much longer."

Previously, while his soul was still adrift, he had had a terrifying feeling that his body was about to explode. It was as if there was a flame blazing inside his body, burning him to the point where it felt unbearable for his soul, and he even came close to losing control and slipping right back into his body.

He knew that the moment he broke out of the Thoughtless Tranquility state, his breathing, his heart rate, his muscle tension, and so on would immediately expose his true state of the mind, thus revealing to Ling Yushi that he definitely wasn't foolish and was no different from any normal man.

"If you keep playing with fire, you're going to get burned~"

After calming himself down for a little while, Qin Lie continued to lie inside the wooden barrel with an odd expression on his face. He was still recalling the wonderful feeling of Ling Yushi's small hands rubbing his skin.

It was a feeling much like electricity pricking into the body, and it had distracted him completely. No matter how much he tried, he just could not calm his heart down.

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The next day, Ling Yushi did not show up as expected, and as usual, it was Ling Feng and Ling Ying who escorted him through Herb Mountain.

Inside the cave, Qin Lie, who had just broken through the seventh level of Refinement, was tirelessly cultivating, and through the wondrous state of Thoughtless Tranquility, he repeatedly assailed his remaining fingers and other parts of his body.

To fully master the seventh level of Refinement, he needed to reach the point where he could discharge spirit energy from every part of his body.

The ten fingers, the palm, the arms, the shoulders, and so on were all primary points of attack. If a martial practitioner could discharge their spirit energy anytime they wanted, then their combat capabilities would be greatly increased. It would enable a martial practitioner to blast spirit energy into their opponent's body with just a simple shoulder charge or an arm throw to injure or kill their enemies.

What Qin Lie wanted to do right now was to open up every single attack point in his body and enrich his ability to discharge spirit energy.

Under the state of Thoughtless Tranquility, his cultivation efficiency was greatly increased just as he had thought. This was especially so since he could enter and leave the state freely. With each passing day he cultivated, he could feel obvious improvement.

Today, armed with the knowledge that he had improved by leaps and bounds, Qin Lie once again tried attacking the Soul Suppressing Orb's seal in his forehead.

"Boom!"

To his surprise, his mind attack had gone extremely smoothly, and he broke through a seal almost immediately.

As if he had blown open a door, four incredibly complicated and enigmatic diagrams suddenly appeared inside a vast space immediately after he broke through the first seal!

Amidst the vast open space were four diagrams hanging high up in the air, and each massive diagram was so gigantic that they were all at least several hundreds of meters wide feet wide.

Each diagram had countless shiny threads crisscrossing each other as if many gigantic spider webs were pieced together into one. They brimmed with an ancient and complex

mysticism, as if they contained the world's most central, fundamental principles and truths.

Beyond the four diagrams was a sealed chaotic area. Qin Lie gave it a look through his soul consciousness and discovered that it seemed to be yet another world, as though that was where his memory fortress truly lied.

Surprisingly, there was more than one seal inside the Soul Suppressing Orb and another appeared behind it after the one before it had been unsealed.

It was like opening a door and entering a whole new world and then realizing that within this new world there was yet another door connecting to an even more mysterious world waiting for him to break through and explore.

"Spirit diagrams! Four spirit diagrams!"

After staring closely at the complex diagrams for a while, Qin Lie suddenly exclaimed in surprise within the vast world.

His grandfather, Qin Shan, was an Artificer. For the past few years his grandfather had often fixed spirit artifacts inside the cave for the Ling Family while he was cultivating. His grandfather knew that he could hear him even when in the state of Thoughtless Tranquility, so he would talk nonstop about the principles of artifact forging and expound an endless amount of information, all while fixing spirit artifacts.

According to his grandfather, artifact forging was divided into many little steps such as preparing spirit ingredients, mixing spirit ingredients, and then melting and forging them before fusing them as one. This mixture would then slowly cool down and stabilize into an "artifact," and finally, the "spirit diagram" would be added into the formed "artifact." This last step of adding in the spirit diagram was also the most important step of Artifact Forging!

A spirit artifact's quality and power were not determined solely by how perfectly the spirit ingredients were merged together. The spirit diagram inside the spirit artifact was even more important!.

A mystifying complete spirit diagram could effectively change a spirit artifact and grant it unbelievable power!

A spirit diagram was the core of Artifact Forging, and to master a powerful and mystical spirit diagram would also mean to master the true essence of Artifact Forging!

Chapter 22: Training Hard for Three Months

The four spirit diagrams were like four magnificent mountains hanging high amidst a vast space inside the Soul Suppressing Orb.

The intricate and complex threads crisscrossed and connected with each other to form an extremely complex and mysterious pattern. An indescribable mystique was contained within it.

Qin Lie's mind consciousness flew over and examined one of the huge spirit diagrams, but it didn't take long before his mind wilted, afflicted with a strong sense of fatigue.

He hurriedly withdrew the wisp of consciousness.

In the space that stored the four spirit diagrams, a new world had appeared after the seal had been broken. He only needed to let out a thought and slip into the space that was unlocked if he wanted to examine the mysterious spirit diagrams.

However, if he thoroughly examined any one of the spirit diagrams, he would quickly feel his mind grow tired and it would greatly wound his state of mind as well.

This was different from the state of Thoughtless Tranquility.

In the state of Thoughtless Tranquility, his soul consciousness would slowly depart from his mind and, in the end, disappear entirely into the Soul Suppressing Orb, entering the Soul Suppressing Orb's outermost layer of space.

The external layer of space was vast and boundless, and a soul would never become fatigued when inside, nor would it ever become dispirited and listless as though it could be sustained for an eternity. It was like falling into a state of deep sleep while also having the wonderful effect of nurturing the soul and mind.

The internal layer of space stored the spirit diagrams, and he only needed a wisp of mind consciousness to enter inside. But the moment he entered, he needed to expend mind energy, and if he paid close attention to those spirit diagrams, he would grow weak and sluggish several times faster than normal. It would only take a moment for him to completely use up the wisp of consciousness he slipped in and for his soul to grow weary.

Mind energy was an incredibly esoteric and mysterious power, and only the soul could sense and use this formless power. Apparently, only high level martial practitioners would truly be familiar with the usage and cultivation methods of mind energy.

Spirit energy was the power born from the cultivation of a martial practitioner's body while mind energy was the power born from the cultivation of the soul.

It was just that low level martial practitioners would find it very hard to detect mind energy, much less cultivate and use it.

Qin Lie's realm of cultivation was quite low, but for some reason he had always been able to sense his mind energy on a deeper level. Perhaps it had something to do with

his sealed memories, or perhaps it had something to do with the Soul Suppressing Orb itself...

"Was it Grandpa who left these four spirit diagrams behind? Grandpa is also an Artificer... No, wait. Grandpa once said in a letter that even he couldn't figure out the mysteries behind the Soul Suppressing Orb, so it probably wasn't him... In that case, these spirit diagrams must have already been inside the orb from the very beginning."

After withdrawing his mind consciousness, Qin Lie looked slightly pale, and his handsome face was filled with doubt and confusion. He could not figure out where the four spirit diagrams came from or what they were.

A spirit diagram was the core item for an artificer because they formed the very foundation of the ranking and power of a spirit artifact. These mystical yet marvelous spirit diagrams could greatly increase the power of a spirit artifact and unleash its materials' highest potential!

One could even say that a spirit diagram was a spirit artifact's soul and the very foundation of Artifact Forging for an artificer. It was also the basis that measured how far an artificer would rise!

After resting for a little while, Qin Lie formed yet another wisp of mind energy and continued to venture deeper into the vast space. He began examining the spirit diagram that he was watching earlier and attempted to engrave it in his heart.

The mind energy was like a sheet of faint luminescence inside the massive spirit diagram as it meticulously probed...

Connecting the different lengths and widths of these threads, that symbolized a network of spirit power, to his grandfather's words about basic spirit diagrams, he began to realize that the purpose of this spirit diagram was to 'gather spirit.'

According to his grandfather, basic spirit diagrams could be differentiated into four types: Spirit Gathering, Spirit Storage, Amplification, and Strengthening.

Spirit Gathering grants an "artifact" the ability to gather spirit energy. It enabled a martial practitioner to pour spirit energy into an artifact.

Spirit Storage allows an "artifact" the ability to store spirit energy. Repeatedly storing spirit energy for a number of times and unleashing it all at once would result in a terrifying power.

Amplification utilizes the materials an "artifact" was originally made out of to amplify the spirit energy that had been poured inside it.

For example, if a tenth of a person's spirit energy had been poured inside an "artifact," some certain special ingredients were able to double or even triple that amount.

Amplification could also be expressed in other ways, such as compressing spirit energy and refining it cycle after cycle until it becomes extremely pure and sharp as a needle. This was another way to apply Amplification.

The reason that a lot of blade type spirit artifacts could unleash a blade beam or sword beam was because there was an Amplification type spirit diagram configured to compress energy within them.

Strengthening enhances the toughness and durability of an "artifact." It makes them harder to break, able to store more spirit energy, and able to utilize stronger levels of amplification.

Spirit Gathering, Spirit Storage, Amplification, and Strengthening were the four basic types of spirit diagrams that an artificer had to master. However, an artificer's understanding of these four basic diagrams actually slightly differed from person to person.

A simple Amplification spirit diagram might have tens of inscription methods, and perhaps all of them could achieve the same amplification effect. However, the difference in effectiveness that each method could achieve was like heaven and earth.

Some Amplification spirit diagrams could only amplify the effective capacity by up to a hundredth. But other spirit diagrams could amplify an artifact's effective capacity up to two times, several times, or even tens of times!

The same principle applied to the other three spirit diagrams. Depending on their inheritance, apprenticeship, and other differences, each artificer might have their own understanding and recognition of Spirit Gathering, Spirit Storage, and Strengthening spirit diagrams. So no two spirit diagrams would be the same, and their powers differed from one another as well.

Of course, the stronger the artificer, the stronger the spirit diagrams they could inscribe as their comprehension toward nature's spirit energy and natural law grows. The spirit diagrams will also become more and more flawless, increasingly matching the great way and natural law of the world, achieving amazing and hard to fathom effects.

"Spirit Gathering. This is Spirit Gathering! I need to see the other three spirit diagrams!"

Qin Lie focused his mind and discarded any thoughts of researching the diagram's mysteries for the moment. Relying purely on the artifact forging knowledge his grandfather had been forcing into his head for many years, he determined the effects of the remaining three spirit diagrams.

"Spirit Gathering! Amplification! Strengthening! So it is these three diagrams! But why are they so complicated even though they're the most basic of basics? This is practically chicken scratch; I feel faint just looking at it. It's hard to remember even one of them. I can't imagine who inscribed this in here..."

He quickly withdrew the wisp of mind energy soon after. Although he had confirmed the type of each of the four diagrams, the doubt in his heart had only further deepened.

In next period of time, he would use the cave's electrical network to refine his body and practice Heavenly Thunder Eradication whenever there was a thunderstorm.

After he broke through to the seventh level of Refinement, the pace at which he cultivated Heavenly Thunder Eradication had increased rapidly, and he could now conduct lightning into his marrow and internal organs.

As he refined his innards with lightning again and again, he felt his body becoming stronger, starting to grow towards an even higher level. He had a vague sense that he was about to finish laying a solid foundation for Heavenly Thunder Eradication.

When he could cultivate Heavenly Thunder Eradication to the point where his marrow and internal organs could handle lightning strikes without a hitch, he would no longer have to rely on the cave's electrical network and could cultivate directly from external lightning sources.

During stormless days, he would gather his spirit energy and expand his spirit sea. At the same time, he continued to work through his fingers to achieve a state where he could discharge spirit energy from all major attack points on his body.

When he cultivated until his body was exhausted, he would then gather his mind energy and examine the four spirit diagrams inside the Soul Suppressing Orb.

Although a month passed, he had only managed to remember a third of the "Spirit Gathering" spirit diagram, and he didn't even dare to inspect the other three.

The Spirit Gathering diagram alone consumed an enormous amount of mind energy, and every time he finished, his mind would become slow and sluggish.

However, he noticed that every time he recovered, his mind energy would improve, albeit by just a small amount. It seemed that examining the spirit diagram with his mind energy could also help cultivate it in return.

It was for this exact discovery that he forced himself and endured the incredibly dull task of diagram reading.

Mind energy was the power needed to break through the Soul Suppressing Orb's seal, and whether he could uncover the mysteries of his past and rediscover his memories in the future or not fell entirely on the strength of his mind energy.

Therefore, no matter how torturous it was, as long as it was something that could enhance his mind energy, he would grit his teeth and take it all in stride.

Time passed quickly, and soon two months flew by.

Having persevered through a harsh period of training, his mind energy had undergone an obvious improvement, and a solid foundation for Heavenly Thunder Eradication had been laid.

Now he could also discharge spirit energy from his fingers, palms, shoulders, and so forth. At times, when he had completely lost himself in training, he even vaguely felt that he was nearing the threshold to the eighth level of Refinement. This caused him to realize that his cultivation as of late had been progressing rapidly.

Moreover, he even managed to forcefully memorize that complicated and nigh incomprehensible Spirit Gathering diagram.

That being said, although he managed to memorize it, he did not understand the mystical workings of the diagram, nor did he know what it could be used for.

Today, when he returned to his stone house during the evening as usual, he saw Ling Yushi, who had been gone for a very long time, waiting for him with a smile.

"It's been three months and you're still exactly the same. Really, shouldn't you at least look happy to see your fiancée?" Clad in green martial practitioner's clothes, Ling Yushi looked both fresh and tidy. Her long black hair was like silk spilling across her shoulders. Her face was a healthy shade of red, and her beautiful eyes danced in high spirits. It was obvious that her cultivation level had improved.

"Thanks to you, I've finally broken through to the eighth level of Refinement!" Seeing no response from Qin Lie, she couldn't help but laugh before continuing, "I was only going to refine the Hundred Vein Pill, but I never thought that its effects would be this powerful! In conjunction with two Common Grade Six spirit stones, I actually broke through in just three months! This is incredible!"

Qin Lie was happy on the inside too. Because although her talent was slightly lacking compared to Ling Xuanxuan's, he knew that she was in fact not too far behind. Moreover, she had been stuck at the seventh level of the Refinement Realm for quite some time now, and in Qin Lie's opinion, it was only natural that she ascended a level after training hard for three months with the help of the Hundred Vein Pill and two Common Grade Six spirit stones.

"I've brought you something nice to eat, so come here already. I made them myself." Ling Yushi smiled, waved him over, and then began setting down the dishes.

There were four dishes and a bowl of soup, and they all looked pretty tasty and enticing. Qin Lie didn't bother with any pretenses as he picked up his chopsticks and started immediately. He found out that the food was really good.

"Nebula Pavilion found a fire crystal mine in Celestial Wolf Mountain. They have issued an order for the Ling Family, Feng Family, and Gao Family to send ten of their Refinement Realm martial practitioners to mine them, and in return, they are going to reward us with low level spirit stones. Since I just broke through to the eighth level of Refinement, dad asked me to lead a team together with Ling Feng and Ling Ying to mine the fire crystals with the Feng and Gao Family."

While he was eating, Ling Yushi said faintly, "Daddy doesn't want my little sister to join us because she is still at the seventh level of Refinement. He wants her to cultivate in the house properly, so I'm the only one left to lead the team. Sigh, I just came out of seclusion and I'm already being sent out on a mission. I won't have time to take care of you... If I'm going out, then Ling Feng and Ling Ying will be as well, so you'll be entering Herb Mountain alone. I'm not at ease leaving you alone. How, how about you coming along with me?"

She looked at Qin Lie with starry eyes.

"Celestial Wolf Mountain..." Qin Lie recalled his grandfather's map and felt a small tremble in his heart.

"Since you're not saying anything, I'm assuming that you've promised me okay? We'll depart tomorrow morning, and I'll come to pick you up. Don't worry, there are men from Nebula Pavilion stationed there, and both the Feng and Gao families will also be sending ten members each. There won't be any danger. Also, there are very few spirit beasts that appear around that area, so it's going to be fine."

With a wide smile, Ling Yushi stood up from her stone bench and watched Qin Lie with a sweet expression on her face as he buried himself in his food. As she pursed her lips and let out a giggle, she then turned around, immediately moving to fill the bath water for Qin Lie.

The moment she walked away, Qin Lie lifted his head. The vacant look in his eyes was gone, and his expression gradually turned serious.

"The reason why there aren't spirit beasts around Celestial Wolf Mountain is because it is the domain of a Rank Two spirit beast, the Silver Winged Demon Wolf! According to the labels on grandfather's map, Silver Winged Demon Wolves would set off on a pilgrimage to the peak, deep in the arctic mountains, every May and June, and they would return only around July. Now it's almost the end of June..."

Qin Lie looked towards the washroom entrance and listened to Ling Yushi humming a small tune while cheerfully filling the bath for him. He began to feel a bit agitated.

Chapter 23: Holding Hands

Ling Yushi finished preparing the bath with hot water and left cheerfully. Before she left, she even reminded Qin Lie that she would come and pick him up early tomorrow.

Immersing himself in the wooden barrel filled with hot water, Qin Lie raised his head and looked at the house beam. As he was lost in thought, his brows creased.

The strength of the Rank Two spirit beast, Silver Winged Demon Wolf, could be compared to a martial practitioner in the Natal Opening Realm. When pit against a single Ice Soul Python, the Silver Winged Demon Wolf would have a greater chance of winning.

But most importantly, Silver Winged Demon Wolves were spirit beasts that lived in packs! Not only that, Celestial Wolf Mountain was precisely their den!

“Each year during May and June, Silver Winged Demon Wolves would make a pilgrimage to the peak to meet the ‘Icestone Snow Wolf King’, and they would return in July. Once they came back and saw that human martial practitioners had seized and occupied their territory...”

The bloody scene of Ling Yushi, Ling Feng, Ling Ying, and the others being torn into pieces by a Silver Winged Demon Wolf pack appeared in Qin Lie’s mind...

He didn’t know why, but he felt irritated and couldn’t calm himself down when he thought of Ling Yushi’s delicate body being torn into pieces.

“Looks like I need to go to the Herb Mountain first thing in the morning to retrieve the sculpture Grandpa carved. Celestial Wolf Mountain... just happened to be marked by grandfather.”

Once Qin Lie had made up his mind, his irritation soothed. As he sat in the wooden barrel, he focused mind energy and studied the “Spirit Storage” spirit diagram within the Soul Suppressing Orb.

Out of the four spirit diagrams: Spirit Gathering, Spirit Storage, Amplification, and Strengthening, he had already memorized the Spirit Gathering spirit diagram, and now he slowly started on another of the other three spirit diagrams.

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The next morning, Ling Yushi, together with Ling Feng, Ling Ying, and the other Ling Family members, arrived at Qin Lie’s stone house very early in the morning.

Ling Yushi wore a blue, tight fitting outfit which highlighted her exquisite, curvy body. This caused the eyes of the many boys following her to flicker. They yearned to keep admiring her beauty, but were too embarrassed to do so.

"First Miss, do you really want to bring him?"

Ling Xin was of similar age to Ling Feng; he was tall, with thick eyebrows, big eyes, and a needle-thin mustache at the corner of his mouth. His cultivation was at the sixth level of the Refinement Realm, his earlier question was because he had some objections against Ling Yushi bringing Qin Lie along.

"Ling Xin, don't be so long-winded!" Ling Feng frowned and scolded.

Ling Xin seemed to fear Ling Feng a little. After hearing Ling Feng's scolding, his mouth twitched, but he didn't say anything more.

Arriving in front of Qin Lie's stone house, Ling Yushi yelled tenderly, "Qin Lie, we are setting off!"

After waiting a little while, seeing that there was no response in the house, Ling Yushi was slightly stunned. She pushed the door and walked in, then found that the house was empty, without any trace of Qin Lie.

In the house, Ling Yushi's elegant face revealed obvious disappointment. She bit her lips lightly and sighed softly.

"...Maybe I was overthinking it, and he didn't listen to what I said seriously at all, or maybe I just imagined his affection. Could he have heard it, but pretended not to instead?" Ling Yushi's face was bitter, and she shook her head and laughed in a self-deprecating manner. After she walked out of the stone house, she took a light breath and indifferently said, "Let's go."

Ling Xin was secretly happy seeing that Qin Lie wasn't here as he thought to himself: One less burden would save a lot of trouble.

"First Miss, you don't have to worry about it. The Patriarch will make other arrangements for people to look after him." Ling Feng pondered and then comforted her.

"Yeah, the Du Family members have been less aggressive recently. They probably won't act recklessly," chimed Ling Ying.

Ling Yushi smiled, nodded her head, and said casually, "Let's go, we will pass by Herb Mountain anyway. I will yell once at the caves later, and if he really doesn't hear it, then we'll forget about it."

Hearing this, Ling Feng, Ling Ying, Ling Xin, and the others were all surprised, revealing puzzled expressions.

“Still not giving up? Could it be that she really sees that guy as her fiancée and actually has feelings for him? Incomprehensible...”

They inwardly shook their heads and threw doubtful looks at Ling Yushi.

Under everyone’s strange gazes, Ling Yushi was completely at ease, as she led the way towards Herb Mountain.

When the sun slowly rose, the party of ten arrived at the foot of Herb Mountain.

Looking at the mining caves in Herb Mountain, Ling Yushi took a deep breath and yelled with all her strength, “Qin Lie, we are about to leave, are you coming or not? We will wait for you for an hour, and if you don’t come out, we will leave first.”

“It’s still early, everyone should just take this as a break.” Turning over, Ling Yushi smiled lightly. She didn’t care if the others grew dissatisfied, and found herself a clean rock before sitting down.

Seeing such an attitude from her, they could only helplessly wait with her.

Time ticked by second by second, but there still was not a trace to be seen in the mines of Herb Mountain. Ling Yushi’s beautiful eyes showed disappointment, increasing as time passed by; she obviously wasn’t feeling well at heart.

“There’s no way that fool could hear...” After waiting for a while, Ling Xin couldn’t help but mumble as he became impatient.

Ling Feng glared at him viciously.

“First Miss, it is time. He probably won’t come.” Ling Ying got up energetically. Facing Ling Feng, she stretched her slim waist lazily. As she did so, her arrogant, soft bosom made an astonishing curve as she tenderly said, “Big Brother Ling, we should start leaving, right?”

Ling Feng, seeing her display her body seductively, nodded with a small headache, and said, “First Miss, what do you think?”

“Let’s go.” Ling Yushi said in a quiet, sullen tone.

Celestial Wolf Mountain was also in the Arctic Mountain Range, and it was closest to the Gao Family. The Gao Family, Feng Family, and Ling Family were all vassal forces of Nebula Pavilion. Celestial Wolf Mountain’s Fire Crystal Quarry was on its cliff. It

would be really difficult for an ordinary person to climb it; one careless mistake could cause the person to fall to his or her death.

Fire crystals were a fire source for artifact forging, and it was the most common kind. Once it was lit with fire, the fire crystal would burn fiercely, providing the heat required for forging spirit materials.

According to the difference in quality, the grade of the fire crystals would also be different. However, the ones with inferior quality were Common Grade Three spirit materials, and the ones with better quality would only be Common Grade Five spirit materials. It wasn't too precious, so making high ranked martial practitioners from Nebula Pavilion mine them would seem overkill.

Because of this, Nebula Pavilion arranged their vassal forces, the Gao Family, Feng Family, and Ling Family, to mine them jointly. In the end, they would tally the number and grade of the fire crystals that the three families mined and reward them accordingly with spirit stones.

Celestial Wolf Mountain and Solitary Ridge were in completely different directions, so as soon as they left Herb Mountain, they would be on a different path.

The ten people of the Ling Family slowly walked out of Herb Mountain. Ling Yushi looked back at Herb Mountain behind her, sighed faintly to herself, and disappointedly stepped on the path towards Celestial Wolf Mountain.

Knowing that she wasn't in a good mood, no one disturb her. Even chatter-box Ling Xin was satisfied enough to not say anything more after Qin Lie didn't turn up.

Walking under the many ancient trees, the rest of the group slowly started chatting and were excitedly discussing about mining at Celestial Wolf Mountain.

Later on, even Ling Feng and Ling Ying joined the conversations. They were all in high spirits and were imagining all the spirit stones that they could receive through the job.

Ling Yushi quietly pulled some distance away from the others and walked alone at the front. She walked silently with her head down, deep in thought, and occasionally would lift her head to watch the road.

Because she slowly felt that Qin Lie was not a fool, she figured he should have been able to hear what she had said, which was why she told him that she wanted to bring him along to Celestial Wolf Mountain.

But, after this happened, she wasn't so sure anymore.

As for other possibilities, she didn't want to think too much about them. She would rather believe that Qin Lie didn't hear what she had said than believe that he deliberately stood her up...

"You probably didn't hear it. Nevermind, I made assumptions." Ling Yushi comforted herself. However, she was still slightly bitter as she lifted her head again to look at the path before her.

Her pretty face suddenly froze. She subconsciously rubbed her eyes, and her dull eyes slowly brightened. Her bitter mouth bloomed into an extremely bright, beautiful smile.

Under a big tree ahead, a slender shadow stood stiff here, with clothes covered in dew drops; she didn't know how long he had been waiting.

Who else could it be other than Qin Lie?

Ling Yushi's heart was suddenly filled thick with sweetness as she laughed softly, unable to control herself. In her joyous laughter, her delicate body moved to Qin Lie's side like a gust of wind.

In front of others, it was the first time she had openly held Qin Lie's hand. She then turned her head and said to the stunned Ling Family members, "Turns out he had been waiting for us here all this time."

Ling Feng, Ling Ying, Ling Xin, and the other Ling family members were all stunned for a while. They looked at each other and suddenly felt like their minds couldn't follow this turn of events. "When did that guy... know to wait for people?"

"You guys go first!" Ling Yushi didn't care about their confusion and surprise, ordering them to walk in front.

As Ling Feng and the others passed by her and Qin Lie, they all wore odd expressions as they rubbed their heads, and Ling Ying's bright eyes seemed as though they had seen a ghost.

Everyone slowly passed the two of them.

"Oh you, seriously, you made me sad for a while!" Only when the others were far away, did Ling Yushi blush slightly and look at Qin Lie in a meaningful way. She then pounded his chest softly and smiled lightly in a gentle manner, saying, "It's good that you've come. Since you came... then that means you can hear what I say. Hah, how long can you keep pretending?"

Only now could she finally be sure that Qin Lie was definitely not the fool he acted like on the surface. He was at least sometimes clear-headed.

Qin Lie didn't immediately express anything and continued to stare blankly. After she finished talking, he wiggled his hand out from hers and advanced toward Ling Feng and the others.

"Heh, if you think this is interesting, then I will continue to play with you." Staring at his back, Ling Yushi laughed softly, shook her head, and immediately followed.

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Chapter 24: Celestial Wolf Mountain

Celestial Wolf Mountain comprised two mountain peaks.

From a distance, the two mountain peaks looked like two enormous wolves crouching and facing one another. Moreover, both wolves seemed to be howling towards the sky.

Between these two mountain peaks was a large, steep canyon. Embedded within the two cliffs of the canyon were fire crystals, and to mine them, one had to first scale those steep cliffs.

For an ordinary person to be able to go up and mine upon those cliffs was clearly rather unrealistic. Only martial practitioners who had spent long years bitterly training were able to take on the great responsibility of mining due to their physiques which were of much higher quality than the masses.

Qin Lie and Ling Yushi traveled with the group and arrived at Celestial Wolf Mountain right before dusk.

They immediately noticed the many hanging rattan ropes on both sides of the canyon's steep cliffs. Relying on the support from these ropes, martial practitioners of the Gao and Feng families, maneuvered along the cliffs like monkeys, using their chisels and pickaxes to hammer at the crystals.

The setting sun's light shined down, causing a faint, fiery crimson glow to flicker sporadically along the canyon's cliffs.

Wherever the fiery red light flickered, a small chunk of fire crystal could be found. This crystal was crimson as if it were a kind of turbid crystallized body, and when illuminated by the sun, it would glow.

Qin Lie observed the fiery light which flickered across the canyon's cliffs and muttered a sentence within the depths of his heart, "So this is a fire crystal, huh..."

From listening to his grandfather's thorough explanation of forging artifacts, he knew that every time an artificer smelted spirit materials they required the assistance of a fire source.

This was extremely easy to understand. As even the most ordinary blacksmiths required fire when they smelted iron, fire would naturally be required when forging artifacts. It wasn't possible to skip this most basic procedure.

Of course, the fire source artificers used would naturally be different from that of a blacksmith's which was from burning wood.

The fire source for artificers was usually obtained through one of three methods. First, the artificers themselves could cultivate a fire technique which would allow their spirit energy to transform into the fire source for forging artifacts. This method was heavily dependent on the artificer's cultivation level and was also the most taxing on the Artificer's spirit and mind energy.

When his grandfather repaired spirit artifacts, he had used this type of fire source to smelt and forge. Artificers who cultivated fire techniques, could always forge artifacts no matter where they were. Thus, this was the most convenient method for artificers. However, it consumed the most spirit energy and was also heavily dependent on the artificer's cultivation level.

The second method to obtain a fire source was to harness the fire of the earth's core and use the raging fire of a volcano to forge artifacts. In general, many Master Artificers would only use this method if they needed to refine an enormous artifact. There were also specialized Artificer Sects which would select volcanoes as their forging ground, guiding the violent fire of the volcano into multiple forging chambers which the disciples would then use to forge artifacts.

This type of method which relied on the earth's energy as a fire source could not be used at will to forge artifacts and could only be done at a designated area. However, where there were cons, there were pros as well. This method consumed very little spirit energy and did not depend on cultivation level.

The third and final method was to use fire type spirit materials like fire crystals. Upon igniting these spirit materials, they would become a fire source for Artifact Forging.

This kind of fire source did not consume the Artificer's spirit energy and did not depend on cultivation level either. It was also portable, and thus, it was the most commonly used method by Artificers.

However, this kind of fire source was consumable, which meant that each usage of a crystal represented the loss of it.

Each of the three fire sources were able to complete the task of refining spirit materials, and each type had its own pros and cons. Sometimes, Artificers would even combine multiple sources, allowing them to use the advantages of each source.

After breaking through to the seventh level of Refinement, Qin Lie was now also able to discharge spirit energy. This meant that he was finally able to truly use spirit artifacts to their full potential.

Recently, Qin Lie had constantly been memorizing the spirit diagrams within his Soul Suppressing Orb; this caused him to more or less develop some ideas about forging artifacts...

Even though fire crystals were only the most basic fire source for forging artifacts, for him, it was not something that was easily obtainable.

There were two reasons why he accompanied Ling Yushi to Celestial Wolf Mountain. Firstly, he was afraid that Ling Yushi would run into trouble. Secondly, he wanted to obtain a few fire crystals for him to try his hand at making a spirit artifact.

"The Ling Family has come to report," Ling Yushi tenderly shouted.

Below the canyon, a man wearing a Nebula robe sat on a recliner.

He was lazily watching the setting sun in the sky. At this time, his eyes unconsciously latched onto the members of the Ling Family. He raised his hand, beckoning them over, and said, "I am Liu Yan, the person who was tasked with this matter by those above me. Mn, it's already late today. Starting from tomorrow morning, you will all go and mine together with the Feng and Gao families. All of the fire crystals that you guys mine will be handed over to me, and I will count them. After the task is completed, Nebula Pavilion will give you the corresponding number of spirit stones as payment."

Liu Yan seemed around thirty years old and had a slightly pudgy body. He wore a long beard, and his eyes were seemingly always half amused. He had a kind of casual attitude about him.

"Big brother Liu, these are today's gains from the Feng Family." A handsome, lax youth with a robust body jumped down from above, tossing a cloth bag onto the table in front of Liu Yan. He then turned towards the Ling Family, showing a magnificent smile, and said, "Ling Feng, how long has it been since we last met, hm?"

The youth was extremely handsome and wore white battlewear. A strip of gold was etched into the corners of his clothes, causing the clothes to seem extremely precious and extraordinary.

Although he directed his question to Ling Feng, his eyes were instead fixated on Ling Yushi. Walking over with large steps and a smile as bright as the sun, he said, "Ling Yushi! Haha, so this time the Ling Family had you bring people over. It's been quite a while since we have met, right?"

"Yes, it has been two years," Ling Yushi responded indifferently.

“Who is he?” asked Ling Ying to the people around her.

“Feng Yi, the second young master of the Feng Family. Two years ago, he had already reached the seventh level of Refinement. By now, he has definitely reached the eighth. His brother, Feng Kai, is already a core disciple of Nebula Pavilion. If there are no accidents, this guy will also break through into the Natal Opening Realm before he is twenty and follow his brother in Nebula Pavilion.”

The crude and rough looking Ling Xin looked towards Feng Yi with faint admiration. Lowering his voice, he whispered an explanation to Ling Ying, “Two years ago, when First Miss, Ling Feng, and I were within the Arctic Mountain Range, we formed a team with them to hunt spirit beasts. There is more or less some friendship between them. Moreover, Feng Yi developed some feelings for First Miss during that time...”

“Nine Common Grade Four fire crystals, not bad. Continue to work hard tomorrow.” Liu Yan recorded the number, his eyes squinting as he smiled and nodded at Feng Yi.

At this time, the other nine practitioners of the Feng Family also descended from the canyon’s cliffs.

They stood by Feng Yi, smiled, and exchanged tips for mining fire crystals while also observing the people from the Ling Family. Their gazes were mostly focused towards Ling Yushi and Ling Ying, and they occasionally chuckled and whispered to each other.

The ten practitioners from the Feng Family were all at the Refinement Realm. Most of them were at the fifth, sixth, and seventh levels, but most importantly... they were all male.

As they had arrived somewhat earlier, they had already spent a few days mining in boredom. Now, upon seeing two fresh beauties, Ling Yushi and Ling Ying, their eyes immediately lightened up, becoming excited.

“Brother Liu, this is the Gao Family’s.”

Another youth flew down. This youth wore a black practitioner uniform with hair almost touching his two shoulders. His gaze was insidious, and the depths of his eyes revealed evilness.

“That’s Gao Yu, the youngest young master of the Gao Family. Both of his sisters have entered Nebula Pavilion. The Gao Family’s Patriarch greatly spoils him, and as for his character... he’s kind of eccentric. He should only be sixteen, a year younger than Feng Yi. Not too long ago, I heard that he had broken through into the eighth level of Refinement.”

This time, before Ling Ying could even make a sound, Ling Xin lowered his voice and explained this youth’s background.

After thinking for a moment, Ling Xin's face became sullen, and he continued, "This Gao Yu... you should be cautious around him. Rumor has it that this guy is kind of crazy and that he has apparently slain some young girls in the past. Yes, you should avoid provoking him, or else there might be endless trouble."

Listening to Ling Xin's words sent chills down Ling Ying's spine as she always liked showing off in front of Ling Feng.

Looking at Gao Yu's pale white face and his pair of dark, cold eyes, which contained evilness, Ling Ying couldn't help but take a step back, moving closer to Ling Feng. Clearly, she was somewhat afraid.

"Five Common Grade Four, six Common Grade Three, and a Common Grade Five, not a bad harvest." Liu Yan sat upright, and after a moment, he turned towards Gao Yu and smiled.

Qin Lie looked carefully at them and realized that when Liu Yan talked to Gao Yu, he was no longer laying in his chair and had instead sat upright. It was as if he placed more importance on this person.

Gao Yu's slightly cold eyes swept across the Ling Family's group before he left with the rest of those from the Gao Family. They walked to the other side of the canyon and started preparing fire for their food.

"Ling Feng, Yushi, come and join us for dinner," warmly invited Feng Yi.

"No need. We brought our own food. Moreover, we killed quite a few small beasts on the way over. There's no need for the trouble," politely declined Ling Yushi.

"Yushi, you are too courteous. It has already been two years since we last met. Let's all just drink some liquor and happily converse for a while. Are you not even willing to give me this amount of face?" Feng Yi asked with a bitter smile.

"Then... alright, I guess." Without a choice, Ling Yushi brought the Ling Family over to the Feng Family's quarters.

The Feng Family's practitioners quickly got a fire going and took out the jugs of liquor. They also took out some cooked meat, smiling as they invited the Ling Family members to sit.

Ling Feng, Ling Xin, and the others were all familiar with some of the Feng Family, and thus, sat as requested without being too courteous. They took out the wild rabbits, pheasants, and other sorts of small animals that they had killed on their way and threw them over the fire. They laughed and conversed with the Feng Family's practitioners while expertly maintaining the barbecue.

“Qin Lie, sit next to me.” Ling Yushi tugged at Qin Lie discretely and tried to pull him to her side. Shortly after, she received the barbecued meat which Feng Yi passed over and pressed it into Qin Lie’s hands, softly saying, “We have traveled so far today in order to rush over; you must be hungry. Eat this first and fill up your stomach a little. I will go and roast a few pheasants for you to eat.”

Feng Yi, in order to impress the beauty, didn’t eat a single piece of the meat he cooked and instead gallantly gave it all to Ling Yushi.

Never would he have thought that the beauty would be even more straightforward and give it to Qin Lie beside her. This caused Feng Yi to clearly be slightly stunned, his face becoming kind of awkward.

“Who is this younger brother?” asked Feng Yi with a smile.

Qin Lie’s expression was like a block of wood, one which didn’t know manners. He just held the cooked meat and ate as if he didn’t know any decency.

“He’s my fiance,.” replied Ling Yushi reflexively.

The smile upon Feng Yi’s face immediately froze, his eyes becoming gloomy. Coughing a laugh, he asked, “When did you become engaged? How come your father didn’t notify my Feng Family? I really didn’t receive any news about it.”

The faces of other practitioners of the Feng Family also became slightly blank, unconsciously beginning to closely scrutinize Qin Lie.

Upon examining him, they noticed Qin Lie’s wooden expression and began to feel that something wasn’t quite right. Thus, they became increasingly curious.

“It’s only an engagement and not something important. Thus, my father decided that it wasn’t necessary to announce it to everyone. That’s why we didn’t notify any of our nearby friends.” Ling Yushi faintly smiled. Hearing Qin Lie’s chewing sounds, she knew that he was definitely doing it on purpose. She helplessly glared accusingly at him. Within her heart, she didn’t know whether to laugh or cry, thinking: This guy, you have to be laughing inside; you are definitely embarrassing me on purpose.

“Ling Xin, who is this guy? It seems as if I haven’t seen him before, is he a bit...?” tentatively inquired one of the Feng Family practitioners.

Ling Xin grunted and disdainfully said, “He isn’t a part of my Ling Family. This guy has some problem with his brain and is a complete idiot. Only the devil knows why the Patriarch agreed to let him and First Miss be engaged.”

“I knew it, look at his clumsiness. To think he’s actually an idiot.” The guy began to laugh strangely.

“Whoosh!”

The fiery stick in her hand, along with the greasy pheasant on it, drew a line of fire as it flew across and hit the guy straight in the chest.

The person hit couldn't help but groan. Afterwards, he suddenly stood up, quickly trying to disperse all of the sparks upon his chest in case they began to blaze. Turning around, he glared angrily at Ling Yushi.

“Be careful when you speak!” exclaimed Ling Yushi, her clear eyes narrowing. She suddenly stood up and turned to Feng Yi, saying, “Thanks for the hospitality!” Then, she grabbed Qin Lie, turned around, and left.

Feng Yi and everyone else's expressions all became awkward. Feng Yi hurriedly scolded his clan member while Ling Feng and Ling Ying, seeing what it had become like, couldn't help but rise and say their own goodbyes before leaving to follow Ling Yushi.

Ling Yushi brought Qin Lie to the other end of the canyon, her beautiful face harsh and cheerless. She waited there until Ling Feng and the rest of the group came, coldly glared at Ling Xin, and said, “In front of your own family members, there are some words that I don't care about, but if you dare say that again in front of outsiders, don't blame me for being uncourteous!”

She, who always seemed to be gentle and elegant, had suddenly become so strict and unreasonable. This caused Ling Xin to feel a little guilty in the depths of his heart, his face flushed red and he didn't dare to say anything more than “yes.”

Qin Lie's expression was still wooden, but his heart warmed.

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Chapter 25: High Grade Spirit Materials

The next few days, the Ling Family mined fire crystals together with martial practitioners from the Gao and Feng Families, then hand their yields for the day to Liu Yan in the evening so that they could be counted and recorded. Afterwards, they would go their separate ways, hunting for small animals, setting up their tents, starting fires for their meals, and cultivating for a while before sleeping.

Gao Yu and the Gao Family's martial practitioners never had any excessive interactions with either the Ling or Feng Families. Every day, after they finished their task, they would rest at their designated quarters.

Liu Yan, who was in charge of overseeing this task, would always go over to the Gao Family to eat dinner after he had finished counting and recording all the mined fire crystals. From this, it could be seen that he was relatively closer to Gao Yu.

As the practitioners of the Ling and Feng Families were rather familiar with each other, they had often moved amongst each other during the last few days.

In regard to this, it wasn't good for Ling Yushi to stop them and she could only ignore it.

After the event which had happened two days ago, Ling Yushi never grouped up with the Feng Family again. Instead, she was constantly starting fires and cooking with Qin Lie and the few practitioners who weren't familiar with those of the Feng Family.

However, Feng Yi seemingly didn't take the small conflict a few days earlier to heart and tried to find opportunities to converse with Ling Yushi daily, whether it was talking about how to split the mining areas or exchanging tips for mining.

Whenever Feng Yi saw Qin Lie, he would greet him in a friendly manner. Ling Yushi, upon seeing his amiable character, felt bad keeping a straight face all the time and began to occasionally smile and say a few sentences.

Qin Lie didn't really participate in the Ling Family's mining. During the day he tended to wander around the nearby mountain forests by himself before choosing a quiet place to cultivate in.

Only when it was about to be meal time did he reappear within the canyon so that he could eat with the Ling Family members.

Towards the matter of the Ling Family having brought a fool over to mine, Liu Yan had no opinions to express. He clearly didn't think anything of Qin Lie, and every time he saw Qin Lie, he would disregard or ignore him.

Most of the time, Liu Yan was narrow-eyed and resting. Only when a small dispute or problem arose while the Ling, Feng, and Gao Families were mining would he finally come forward and mediate.

Members of the three families were scattered across both sides of the canyon, and occasionally, disputes would occur over mining sites. As the Ling and Feng Families were familiar with each other, their martial practitioners rarely had disputes with each other. Only when the Gao Family was involved would there ever be any friction, and every time, Liu Yan would correctly manage the situation so that the three sides could proceed to mine smoothly.

Today, Qin Lie once again returned to the entrance of the canyon around meal time.

He discovered the martial practitioners of the Ling, Feng, and Gao Families had still yet to finish today's mining. In fact, many of the Gao Family's practitioners were all grouped up together around one rock cliff.

Upon the rock cliff, an extremely deep hole had been bore open. By the hole, hanging onto ropes, were several extremely excited Gao Family practitioners who were whispering amongst themselves.

The Ling and Feng Families' practitioners, upon seeing the irregular actions of the Gao Family practitioners, began to grow curious and slowly made their way up.

Suddenly, the Gao Family's Gao Yu, the noticeably pale skinned youth, trembled slightly. Waving his hand towards Liu Yan, who was climbing up, he said, "Brother Liu! Over here! Come look over here!"

As the sun's rays shined down, a marvelously beautiful orange luster emitted from within the hole Gao Yu was hanging by.

"Fiery Solar Jade! It's Fiery Solar Jade! It's a Profound Grade Three spirit material!"

Liu Yan had yet to reach the hole, but just from his own experience, he was able to tell what it was. Unable to restrain himself, he let out a great shout of surprise as an excited expression spread across his slightly chubby face.

Fiery Solar Jade was a Profound Grade spirit material and was used for refining fire attribute Profound Grade spirit artifacts. It was capable of providing a spirit artifact with sufficient energy.

Furthermore, martial practitioners who cultivated flame techniques could directly draw out the fire energy within to enhance their cultivation; for them, it was even more effective than spirit stones.

The value of a Profound Grade Three Fiery Solar Jade was much more extraordinary than Common Grade Four or Five fire crystals! Fire crystals were only the most basic fire source while Fiery Solar Jade was spirit material that could be used by practitioners who had cultivated to the Manifestation Realm and Netherpassage Realm!

It was no exaggeration to say that a single piece of Fiery Solar Jade was even more precious than ten pieces of Common Grade Five fire crystals!

"In areas where Fiery Solar Jade is present, the temperature will be extremely high. No wonder there are fire crystals nearby. Evidently, this rock cliff could give birth to many more fire crystals, and it would all be due to this Fiery Solar Jade!" The corners of Liu Yan's mouth drew back into a huge smile as he excitedly laughed and said, "This time our Nebula Pavilion is fortunate. I wonder how much Fiery Solar Jade exists on both

sides. Fiery Solar Jade... it is something that we can exchange with Dark Asura Hall for many benefits!"

At this time, Gao Yu, who always seemed dark and cold, also began to laugh with a similarly carefree attitude.

The members of the Feng and Ling Families, upon hearing about the existence of Fiery Solar Jade, were also overjoyed. They knew that those who had come mining this time would definitely be rewarded for their great contributions.

"Gao Yu, Fiery Solar Jade differs from fire crystals. This matter must immediately be reported to the elders so that they can arrange for even stronger experts to come!" Liu Yan took a deep breath, then instructed, "Your Gao Family is the closest. Quickly arrange for someone to return and notify your father. Tell your father to notify Nebula Pavilion and let them rearrange everything."

"Yes!" Without wasting a breath, Gao Yu immediately shouted, "Gao Yuan! Quickly go home. Within two days, you must convey the message to the family!"

Without even replying, one of the Gao Family martial practitioners jumped off the cliff, landing on the ground below. He then turned towards the Gao Family's headquarters and hurriedly ran off.

"It is already late. Everyone, go and hunt some wild game, have a nice night and happily drink yourselves full; have a good celebration!" exclaimed the smiling Liu Yan. Encouraging everyone to party, he continued, "From tomorrow onwards, we shall temporarily put off mining fire crystals and focus all of our efforts towards this piece of Fiery Solar Jade! Rest assured, this time, all three families have greatly contributed, and no family will be left unrewarded!"

A rumbling response was given by everyone.

The martial practitioners of the Gao, Ling, and Feng Families immediately dispersed to their own quarters, all of them excited. They formed many small groups of three to five and then went into the nearby mountain forests to hunt for wild game, ready to celebrate and have a good night of drinking.

"Our luck is truly good. The value of Fiery Solar Jade is equivalent to a city. To Nebula Pavilion, it is already a rarity. To have participated in the mining this time, we truly came at the right time. After it's over, the number of spirit stones we receive will definitely surpass our expectations! Perhaps I can rely on the harvests to breakthrough the seventh level of Refinement!" exclaimed Ling Xin with a smile on his face and his fists clenched in excitement.

People like Ling Feng and Ling Ying were also full of smiles. Ling Yushi was no different. Her shining eyes gleamed a brilliant splendor as she was similarly caught up in her own wonderful fantasies.

The next morning, at the break of dawn, the three families excitedly left to mine the Fiery Solar Jade. Qin Lie just followed his usual routine, leaving the canyon after eating his fill.

He cultivated by himself within a forest secluded in the mountain. It seemed as if his luck today was quite good, as in the afternoon, the sky slowly became dark. Before long, the rumbling of thunder could be heard.

Under a giant tree, Qin Lie sat cross legged, concentrating on circulating Heavenly Thunder Eradication.

“Bzzt bzzt bzzt!”

Between his fingertips, strokes of fine electric arcs fluctuated like nimble electric snakes.

As he sunk deeper into the art's formula, and as spirit energy gradually seeped toward all the bones in his body, he could faintly hear the muffled sound of thunder emanating from the cavity of his chest, as though resonating with booming sounds of the thunder in the firmament.

“Boom boom boom!”

In the raging sky, a deafening thunderclap, followed by bolt after bolt of lightning began to gradually interweave themselves together.

That lightning hovered over the top of the mountain forest, and after a while, as if was gradually being attracted by Qin Lie, began to congregate in the area around him.

“Boom!”

Thunder constantly resounded around him as bolts of lightning struck down from the skies, landing directly onto his body.

“Ohhhh!”

The lightning rushing into his body caused Qin Lie to helplessly scream in pain. His hair had all but become charred as his body unceasingly quivered.

The violent current instantly surged into his inner body, charging through his flesh like a strongly galloping horse!

He felt a burning sting throughout all his muscles and veins as the electric current followed the circulation of Heavenly Thunder Eradication, surging all the way to his chest cavity and causing his sensation of pain to increase several fold. It was so unbearable that he almost went to roll on the ground.

“Too frightening! If it’s like this, I might not be able to endure it. I have to do it slowly!”

Qin Lie quickly realized that in order to lay a solid foundation for his body, he needed to bear the direct bombardments of thunder. Currently, he was still unable to stand, causing him to feel fearful that he could die at any time.

The strange formations within the depths of Herb Mountain had the effect of an insulator, weakening the thunder and lightning by splitting the lightning along the wire web. This made it relatively easier for him to bear.

As of right now, it was still too hard for him to not use the strange formations and bear the thunder and lightning directly. He had to gradually adjust his body and attract less thunder and lightning for now.

He choppy circulated Heavenly Thunder Eradication, and the amount of thunder and lightning condensing in the sky clearly reduced. The thunder and lightning that struck down was also quite a bit weaker, making it much easier for him to cultivate with.

“Won’t circulating Heavenly Thunder Eradication when my level of cultivation is higher and my spirit energy is both thicker and purer... attract even fiercer thunder and lightning? If it’s like that, then in the future, after I’ve advanced further, I can still continue cultivating through this method, calling down even more powerful thunder to temper and continuously strengthen my flesh!”

“Based on what Grandpa once said, I should persistently cultivate Heavenly Thunder Eradication and not be negligent. If I can use the power of the lightning of the Ninth Heaven to temper my flesh, muscles, veins, bones, and organs and toughen my body to a certain extent, I will gain the ‘Heavenly Thunder Sacred Body!’ Once I attain the ‘Heavenly Thunder Sacred Body,’ my body will undergo a qualitative change which will allow me to, with but a thought, incite the thunder within me to rumble. Furthermore, I’ll be able to directly summon thunder and lightning from the most distant part of the Ninth Heaven even when I’m below the blazing sun, and rage wildly across the world!”

Recalling what his grandfather, Qin Shan, had said when describing the ‘Heavenly Thunder Sacred Body,’ his heart began to yearn. He began to assiduously receive and attract thunder and lightning at an increasing rate to temper his body, causing the area around him to become filled with the flickering of lightning and sound of thunder. The booming thunder constantly exploded around him.

He didn’t know how long had passed, but eventually, the thunder and lightning stopped and a torrential rainfall began.

He sat cultivating in the rain for an extremely long time, but suddenly, he heard the cheerful sounds of some small beasts around him; he also smelled the strong scent of blood.

Qin Lie's heart became uncertain, and after thinking about it for a moment, he stopped cultivating. He moved towards the cries of the small animals with furrowed brows.

Condensed below a large, densely leaved tree were several . They were clawing something within the mud, constantly biting into it until it was a bloody mess.

Aardwolves didn't understand how to circulate the nature spirit energy, so they weren't considered spirit beasts. Towards Qin Lie, they held no danger whatsoever. Furthermore, as there was still lightning fluctuating along his body, those aardwolves quickly fled as soon as he approached.

"This, this is... Gao Yuan!" Looking forward, the color quickly drained from Qin Lie's face, and he became unable to restrain himself from yelling in shock.

The corpse's body had already become indistinct, but from the clothes that it wore and its unsightly appearance, Qin Lie was immediately able to discern the identity of the deceased person.

It was Gao Yuan, a martial practitioner of the Gao Family!

It was the martial practitioner who had been ordered to return and report to the Gao Family last night. His cultivation was at the sixth level of the Refinement Realm, and there was no way that he had been killed by aardwolves!

Looking closer, he discovered that the nearby soil was loose. Moreover, a small pit had been revealed due to the torrential rain. Nearby, there were also marks from the exploding thunder...

He immediately understood. This Gao Yuan had been killed by someone last night and then expertly buried.

Perhaps while Qin Lie was cultivating and attracting the bombardment of thunder, it had coincidentally also hit this area. Afterwards, the torrential rain eroded the area, causing the scent of blood to waft out from the corpse. Subsequently, the aardwolves smelled it and came over to feast.

"He was killed last night, but why would anyone kill him? He was going to report to the Gao Family... who could have done it? Could it be that there are other forces lurking nearby?" Qin Lie frowned, his heart becoming flooded with worry.

He realized that the Ling Family's mission this time around might be harder than he had expected. Not only did they have to deal with the Silver Winged Demon Wolves that

were probably on their way here, they might also have to face an additional unknown force.

Chapter 26: Undercurrents

Qin Lie reburied Gao Yuan's corpse and removed all of the nearby traces. After thinking for a while and upon seeing the sky darken, he began walking towards the canyon.

The rain gradually stopped.

When he returned to the canyon, he saw the martial practitioners of the Ling, Feng, and Gao Families still mining along the cliffs. They all looked like chickens which had been dropped into broth, their bodies completely drenched. However, their minds were still exuberant as if the Fiery Solar Jade had invigorated them to the point of not knowing exhaustion.

Even Liu Yan no longer laid within the valley resting like usual. Instead, he had moved to the area where the Fiery Solar Jade had been discovered. His expression was absolutely radiant as he overlooked the people from the Gao, Ling, and Feng Family as they were busily working, making sure that they didn't hide a piece of Fiery Solar Jade for themselves.

Towards the fire crystals he had always been somewhat inattentive, but that was because fire crystals weren't worth too much. Since none of the three families had artificers, they wouldn't steal the fire crystals.

Fiery Solar Jade was vastly different.

The value of Profound Grade spirit materials was just too high. If anyone from the three families stole a Fiery Solar Jade, they could immediately go to any of Icestone City's auction houses and exchange it for quite a large amount of wealth.

Thus, Liu Yan had to keep his eyes peeled in case someone tried to covertly steal some Fiery Solar Jade.

"Little Ying'er, come and drink a few cups with elder brother in a bit?" invited Feng Lun as he grinned with an undisguised, lusty glint flashing through his eyes as they unceasingly stuck to Ling Ying who was close by. "Big brother is much stronger than Ling Feng, and more capable at taking care of you too, hehe."

After being drenched by the rain, Ling Ying's fine figure was completely revealed, her full, curvy body arousing the wild and fanciful thoughts of others.

Grabbing the rope with one hand, her feet moved across the cliff, causing her perky butt to slightly rise. All of the nearby martial practitioners of the Gao and Feng Families couldn't help but discretely gulp as they wantonly stared at her.

However, the only one who dared speak their mind was Feng Lun. All the Gao Family martial practitioners didn't say a word.

Feng Lun was Feng Yi's cousin and had cultivated to the seventh level of the Refinement Realm. Previously, the person who was rude towards Qin Lie and provoked Ling Yushi's rebuke was precisely him.

After being taught a lesson on the spot by Ling Yushi and then reprimanded by Feng Yi, Feng Lun had stayed quiet for a long period of time. Even recently he hadn't done anything outstanding. Thus, it was unknown why he would suddenly act presumptuously today.

"Go look after your mother!" Ling Ying was a little prickly rose with her beautiful eyes glaring at Feng Lun as she opened her mouth to unceremoniously insult him.

"Feng Lun! Clean your mouth a little!" coldly shouted the nearby frowning Ling Feng, unable to restrain himself.

"Hehe, your little mouth is very fierce, very interesting! I like it!" A sliver of hostility flashed through Feng Lun's eyes as he lowered his head and creepily laughed. "I hope you can continue being so fierce, it won't be any fun otherwise..."

"Shut up!" coldly shouted Feng Yi.

Feng Lun was clearly somewhat afraid of him, as his head shrunk back and he stopped speaking.

At this time, the other Feng Family practitioners beside him all looked interested for some reason as if they were all expecting something out of the ordinary.

"Enough, stop quarreling. Let us it end here today," chipped in Liu Yan narrowing his eyes. "Not bad, today, your three families have mined a total of eleven pieces of Fiery Solar Jade. Compared to our previous day's efforts, the value of today's efforts... is much greater than all of the previous days combined! Everyone rest assured, the pavilion will definitely not treat you wrongly!"

Following Liu Yan's instructions, the practitioners from the three families began to gradually climb down from the cliffs. After reaching the canyon, many of them began to return to their tents to change into dry clothes.

Ling Yushi wore neat blue battlewear, which had also been drenched by the rain, revealing her alluring and supple body. Feng Yi, who wasn't too far away, couldn't help but constantly look over.

Upon seeing Qin Lie's return, Ling Yushi sweetly smiled. She brushed aside the wet hair from her forehead before saying, "Let me go change clothes with Ling Ying first. In a short while, I will make you something to eat."

Ling Yushi and Ling Ying shared the same tent. Knowing that the two of them were squeezed into one tent and changing their clothes distracted the minds of many of the nearby practitioners. Sneaky eyes swept over as they all wished for their eyes to penetrate into the tent and experience the wonderful scenery within.

Before long, Ling Yushi and Ling Ying changed into dry clothes and walked out. Ling Feng and the others had also changed their clothes one after another, and before long, everyone grouped together.

"God dammit, that bastard from the Feng Family. I don't know why he suddenly began mouthing off. A few days earlier, everything was still fine, but now, he dares to act so wantonly with Little Ying!" Ling Xin scowled, then looked towards the Feng Family practitioners in the distance. "Last night, they had someone complain that their body wasn't comfortable, and that they needed to return home to get treated. From my point of view, that guy didn't look sick at all. He must have rushed home to report discovering the Fiery Solar Jade."

Qin Lie's heart shivered, and he unconsciously looked over towards the Feng Family's quarters.

"Hehe, look at that fool!" In the Feng Family's quarters, Feng Lun discovered Qin Lie's gaze sweeping over them. He grinned and began to laugh strangely, "Him? He's engaged to the girl young master had his eye on... the Ling Family's Patriarch has probably been infected by that fool to the point of stupidity."

"Yeah, it's rumored that a woman surnamed Du has pressured the Ling Family to the point where they can't even raise their heads. The Ling Family's Ling Chenghui... was driven to death by her, and they still didn't dare to say anything," whispered someone nearby, continuing the conversation. Sneering, they continued to ridicule the Ling Family's various disgraces, constantly emitting one disgusting laugh after another.

The two families were separated by quite the distance, but occasionally, some of the chatter from the Feng Family's quarters would float over, causing the faces of the Ling Family's people to become increasingly ugly.

"Those bastards of the Feng Family, did they take the wrong medicine these last two days?" Ling Xin immediately stood up, angrily yelling, "First Miss, do you want me to go over and shut them up?"

"Forget about it, they are just whispering behind our backs, there's no need to care." Ling Yushi weakly waved her hand, motioning for him to sit back down. Afterwards, with a similar feeling of uncertainty, she said, "Starting from yesterday, those people from the

Feng Family have truly begun acting a little strange. That Feng Yi, the way he was looking at me today... was becoming more and more untoward."

"Does the Feng Family have some kind of problem?" asked Ling Feng profoundly.

"What kind of problems could they have?" Ling Yushi shook her head and continued, "With Nebula Pavilion's Liu Yan present, what kind of problem could they have? The Feng Family is the same as us, but a vassal of Nebula Pavilion. If Nebula Pavilion wanted to eliminate the Feng Family, it would be but a simple task. Furthermore, Feng Kai is within Nebula Pavilion, what problems could the Feng Family throw out?"

"That's true." Hearing Ling Yushi's reasoning, Ling Feng nodded his head and said no more.

As Qin Lie silently listened, waves began to roil within his heart. He had secretly gained a clue...

Blankly looking at the Feng Family opposite him, Qin Lie became inwardly cautious. It was very possible that Gao Yuan's death was related to the Feng Family member who had left.

According to common sense, the Feng Family, as a vassal force, would definitely not dare to play dirty tricks right below Liu Yan's eyes as he was from Nebula Pavilion.

But this time, it was different.

Fiery Solar Jade was just much too valuable. Furthermore, this entire area was a Fiery Solar Jade mine, making its value immeasurable! It was definitely worth it for some people to take the risk!

Thinking upon this further, Qin Lie suddenly discovered his train of thought was becoming nimbler, as if he had experienced this matter over ten years ago, expertly analyzing and deducing everything.

"If I were the Feng Family and had already made the decision to not care about offending Nebula Pavilion with regards to stealing away these immeasurably valuable Fiery Solar Jade spirit materials, what would I do?"

Qin Lie asked himself, searching for an answer in his heart. Afterwards, his psyche shivered, feeling increasingly uneasy.

His conclusion was — to kill everyone within the canyon who knew about it! The Ling Family, the Gao Family, and Liu Yan, not a single one would be left alive!

Only if everyone was eliminated could they guarantee that no information about the Fiery Solar Jade would leak out. That would then allow them to take full control of the

mine and mine all of the Fiery Solar Jade before Nebula Pavilion discovered anything. Afterwards, they could make additional arrangements.

After arriving at this conclusion, when Qin Lie looked over at the Feng Family martial practitioners once more, he discovered that their eyes were all leaking hostility...

If it was truly like this, then in their eyes, the Ling Family had probably become lambs to the slaughter. No wonder their attitudes had become so abnormal, as they were no longer bitterly repressing their hidden desires towards Ling Ying and Ling Yushi, and instead gradually spiralling out of control.

A silent night passed.

The next morning, Qin Lie didn't go out to cultivate like usual and instead remained within the canyon, woodenly watching the people of the three families atop the cliffs as they mined Fiery Solar Jade together.

He carefully examined the expressions and every minute action of the Feng Family's practitioners and discovered that as they mined, they seemed to not be as excited and focused as the others from the Gao and Ling Families.

Every so often, the Feng Family's martial practitioners took advantage of the moments when everyone else was focused on mining to stare at their backs, and within their eyes was indeed killing intent.

It gradually became clear to Qin Lie that the reason why the Feng Family members had yet to make a move was because the strength of their current forces was insufficient.

They were just waiting, waiting for their reinforcements to arrive so they could massacre everyone else within the canyon.

Having roughly figured out the intentions of the Feng Family's martial practitioners, Qin Lie returned to his usual routine. While the three families mined, he once again began to wander amongst the mountain forest surrounding the canyon.

Only, he didn't continue with his cultivation of his martial way and instead paid attention to his surroundings from amidst the darkness.

"It is already July. If Grandpa wasn't mistaken, the Silver Winged Demon Wolves will be returning soon. If there weren't any Silver Winged Demon Wolves, then it would be best to inform Ling Yushi and immediately leave Celestial Wolf Mountain in case the reinforcements of the Feng Family besiege us. However, with the possible arrival of the Silver Winged Demon Wolves, there are just too many variables..."

Qin Lie secretly planned and prepared by himself, constantly and cautiously wandering around the proximity, secretly observing the situation from the darkness.

And like that, three days passed.

In the past three days, the Feng Family's martial practitioners were constantly involved in minor conflicts with the Ling and Gao Families. Even Liu Yan was slowly becoming unable to bear it, having already severely reprimanded Feng Yi once for the increasingly unbridled actions of the Feng Family.

But, everyone thought that the excessive actions of the Feng Family was due to the stimulation of having found Fiery Solar Jade.

None of them had thought to think about it further...

Today, not only did Qin Lie secretly observe their surroundings during the day, he also took advantage of the time the Ling Family members were sleeping to slip away at night in order to secretly patrol the mountain forests as well, carefully preparing for the events to come.

After calculating the time, he knew that the reinforcements for the Feng Family could appear at any moment. Thus, he had to be extremely cautious.

At midnight, he hid his body amongst the dense foliage of an old tree. Just as he was resting with lidded eyes, he suddenly heard the sweeping sound of footsteps.

Poking his head out from the cover of leaves, he took advantage of the moonlight to look out over the distance in the direction the noise had come from. His face suddenly drained of color, and his heart felt as if it was about to explode — it was actually Shattered Ice Manor!

He saw fifty to sixty martial practitioners with Shattered Ice Manor's emblem on their chest steadily and calmly approaching.

They were deliberately taking light steps, making sure no loud noises were made. It was clear that they were preparing to unleash a sudden attack and take advantage of the people sleeping deeply in the canyon to kill them.

The person in front had a haggard face and sinister cold eyes. He seemed like an elder of Shattered Ice Manor and had undoubtedly cultivated to mid stage Natal Opening Realm!

Qin Lie only observed for a few seconds, chills running down his spine. He quickly descended from the trees.

He gingerly moved towards the canyon, afraid of making any sort of noise. Only after he had created a large enough distance between him and the others did he dare to speed up his pace and skim across the ground...

Chapter 27: Imminent Danger

"Shattered Ice Manor! They're from Shattered Ice Manor!"

Qin Lie tightened his brows with an extremely heavy heart. The moment he saw them arrive, his final doubts were also resolved.

The Feng Family and Shattered Ice Manor were in cahoots, so of course they wouldn't fear Nebula Pavilion taking revenge on them. When the deed was done, the Feng Family could even join Shattered Ice Manor and completely detach themselves from Nebula Pavilion.

Perhaps they had already been in contact with each other for a long time, but had just kept it well hidden under wraps until now.

A Fiery Solar Jade Mine was just too valuable, so valuable that the Feng Family could no longer stay their hand. Even if they were to expose themselves, they would do everything in their power to help Shattered Ice Manor snatch the mine for themselves!

A string of thoughts raced through Qin Lie's mind as he ran back towards the canyon at top speed. Strangely enough, he actually calmed down while listening to the wind sweeping past his ears.

Just like Nebula Pavilion, Shattered Ice Manor's martial practitioners comprised Hall Masters, Elders, and Manor Lords.

Normally, Hall Masters were composed of early stage Natal Opening Realm practitioners and Elders were all at mid stage Natal Opening Realm. Additionally, a single elder would normally have two or three Hall Masters serving under them.

If Shattered Ice Manor had sent an elder after them, then they must have brought their Hall Masters along as well, and if another fifty to sixty Refinement Realm martial practitioners were added into the mix, even without the Feng Family's assistance, there were more than enough people to destroy them all! The Ling Family, the Gao Family, Liu Yan and his men, everyone!

From the way Shattered Ice Manor was coming after them, it was pretty clear that they would do anything to seize the Fiery Solar Jade Mine for themselves. They would never allow any word of it to leak out.

It also meant that the moment they arrived there would be a bloodbath, and not a single man would be left alive!

Even if the Ling Family, the Gao Family, and Liu Yan combined forces, there wasn't the slightest chance of them winning this fight. Their only hope was to escape the canyon as quickly as possible before Shattered Ice Manor's martial practitioners arrived!

Qin Lie's brain spun faster than ever before as he ran. Now that they were at the crossroad between life and death, he no longer had any plans to continue acting like a fool. He would have to use everything in his arsenal to survive this crisis.

He hid a bitter smile in his heart. If only he could've figured out that the Shattered Ice Manor was Feng Family's reinforcements sooner, he would never have taken this risk and have instead informed Ling Yushi to escape with the other Ling Family members two days prior.

Unfortunately, no battle plan survives contact with the enemy. Not only were the elites of Shattered Ice Manor coming after them, they were also led by an Elder. In an instant, they were forced to the verge of despair.

The martial practitioners of the three families all camped at three different directions in the canyon. Everyone was asleep beneath the night sky.

Because this place was slightly remote and the fact that there hadn't even been a single encounter with a spirit beast, no one had the mind to put people on night watch thus far. There were only a few defensive traps that were set up around camp.

Skillfully avoiding the traps, Qin Lie made his way to the Ling Family's camp. The Ling Family's martial practitioners were all divided up, two people to a tent, and he was the only one who had a single tent to himself.

Most of the Ling Family's martial practitioners were clumped up in one place, and only Ling Yushi and Ling Ying resided slightly further away because they were women.

He quietly crept towards Ling Yushi and Ling Ying's tent before making just a tiny bit of noise...

"Who is it?"

Ling Yushi alertly asked and pulled at Ling Ying who was also in the tent. Both of them were only wearing thin cottonwear when they poked their heads up drowsily.

Then they took a glance at Qin Lie and suddenly froze. Both their eyes immediately lit up with surprise!

Under the night's sky, Qin Lie stood outside the tent alone and made a shushing gesture, signalling both of them to remain silent.

Not long ago his eyes had seemed like they would stay vacant for all eternity. But now they were both completely bright and clear like a pair of cold stars beneath the moonlight. He was naturally good-looking in the first place, but at this very moment, he looked so handsome that it was almost devilish. The sight caused both Ling Yushi and Ling Ying's jaws to fall open, feeling as if they had fallen out of reality.

"I must still be dreaming..." Ling Ying whispered to herself and rubbed her eyes, looking like she was trying really hard to wake up.

Ling Yushi had known that Qin Lie was more than he seemed since long ago, so she quickly calmed down after zoning out a little. She smiled lightly while looking at him with starry eyes, and asked, "So, what are you planning to do in the middle of the night?"

"Let me in first." Qin Lie looked around until he was sure that everyone was asleep before speaking in a low, serious tone, "Martial practitioners from Shattered Ice Manor are coming. At most, they'll be arriving in an hour, and if we don't make a move soon enough, then every Ling Family member in this canyon is going to die."

The moment he said those words, Ling Yushi's pretty face abruptly turned pale white. Ling Ying was covering her mouth in shock as well as she appeared to have finally woken up completely.

She stared at Qin Lie like he was a monster. At this moment, Qin Lie was a total stranger in her eyes, completely different from the Qin Lie from before.

"Get inside!" Ling Yushi instantly made up her mind and forcefully pulled Qin Lie inside. The moment she covered up the tent, she asked urgently, "What's going on?"

Within the tent, Ling Yushi and Ling Ying pressed against each other with messy hair and eyes filled with great doubt.

"Gao Yuan, who was supposed to return and report back to the Gao Family was killed a long time ago; I found his body by accident. If my assumptions are correct, he was most likely done in by that person from the Feng Family who had left later. Fiery Solar Jade is far too valuable; the Feng Family must have betrayed you all. I was scouting outside just now, and I saw fifty to sixty Shattered Ice Manor martial practitioners coming our way with an Elder at the front..."

Qin Lie explained quickly without heed to the surprised look on their faces, then said, "There's no time. We have to leave this place right now or none of us will be left alive when those Shattered Ice Manor martial practitioners arrive."

Because Ling Ying was still terribly shocked by the sight of a speaking Qin Lie, she could not immediately calm herself down and consider the grave matter that Qin Lie had just revealed to them.

But Ling Yushi had already figured out long ago that Qin Lie was not ordinary and quickly adjusted herself. The moment Qin Lie finished, she felt as if she had fallen into ice, and with fear and shock leaking from her eyes, she urgently asked, "Do you have any hard proof that it was the Feng Family?"

Qin Lie shook his head.

"If we don't have proof, then we cannot accuse the Feng Family, and if we aren't careful with our words, the Feng Family might even turn it around and cause both the Gao Family and Liu Yan to suspect us instead." Ling Yushi burned with impatience, feeling that every second wasted was a step closer towards death. She yelled, "What do you think we should do?"

"If you don't want to see the Ling Family annihilated, then you should withdraw immediately! If you're afraid that the others would suspect us, then... tell them that I've gone missing somewhere in front of the canyon and that you and the rest of the household are looking for me!" Qin Lie didn't hide his intentions and decisively said, "The way back has already been cut off by Shattered Ice Manor, so the remaining path is to go through the canyons and enter deep into the Arctic Mountain Range!"

If the Silver Winged Demon Wolves were to return to Celestial Wolf Mountain, they would also be returning from deep inside the mountain range. This meant that if they moved towards that direction, then there was a very high chance that they would run into the wolf pack.

Which was exactly what he needed right now.

"Shouldn't we inform Liu Yan and the Gao Family?" Ling Ying finally recovered and stared straight at Qin Lie as if she were re-acquainting herself with him all over again. "If we don't inform them and your assumptions are correct, then wouldn't we be leaving them for dead?"

"Even if we told them, they might not necessarily believe us. Worse still, the Feng Family might even realize that something is amiss and drag us into the mess. We won't be able to leave the canyon immediately." Qin Lie frowned and said in a low tone, "Also, we have a higher chance of survival with them covering our backs. At the very least, they could slow down Shattered Ice Manor..."

"How ruthless!"

Both Ling Yushi and Ling Ying's hearts turned frosty, and they stared at Qin Lie with a strange look the moment they heard those words.

"Okay. Qin Lie, please proceed to the Arctic Mountain Range right now, and once you're gone, I'll wake Ling Feng and the others up to go searching for you!" Ling Yushi grit her teeth, aware that there was no time to hesitate at a critical moment like this. While she was speaking, she had already taken out a pen and paper and swiftly wrote something.

"Got it." Qin Lie nodded his head, lifted the blinds, and exited the tent immediately.

"Oh my. First Miss, you're so bad! You've fooled us all!" Ling Ying exclaimed softly with glowing eyes. She said, "It's like he's a changed man the moment his eyes lit up! Not only is he incredibly handsome, he's so, so..."

"What?" Ling Yushi impatiently shot her a glance.

"So attractive!" Ling Ying finally found the adjective and questioned in a sweet tone, "How is this possible? Isn't he only fifteen years old?"

"Foolish girl! We have a crisis on our hands and you're thinking about this?" Ling Yushi shot her a glare. She then gave her a few instructions before walking out of the tent and woke up Ling Feng, Ling Xin, and the others one by one. She told them that Qin Lie had gone missing and requested their help search for him together.

Ling Xin and the others were deep asleep, so they were incredibly unhappy to begin with when they were woken up from their dreams. The moment they heard that it was to find that idiot Qin Lie, their complaints and anger immediately increased tenfold, and if it wasn't for Ling Yushi's reputation, they would've exploded with curses already.

The commotion was loud enough to wake Liu Yan, Gao Yu, and Feng Yi from their sleep, and when they confirmed the situation, they too cursed loudly that it would be a given if the idiot turned up dead later. They even told the Ling Family to keep it down as much as possible and not disturb their sleep.

"Let's go. Bring your weapons along just in case we need them," Ling Yushi ordered, and ignoring the grumbles of her people, she began leading the way deep into the canyon.

There was nothing they could do, so they followed Ling Yushi while cursing Qin Lie on the side and gradually left the camp site.

"Everyone, follow Ling Ying and leave this place as quickly as possible!" The moment they pulled away from the other two families, Ling Yushi abruptly turned around and shouted with an extremely serious look.

"First Miss, what's going on?" Ling Feng was the first to notice something was amiss.

"No time for questions. Ling Feng, you will lead everyone else with Ling Ying and escape at full speed deep into the Arctic Mountain Range!" Ling Yushi loudly ordered.

"Big Brother Ling, I'll tell you later, so bring your men over already!" Ling Ying beckoned him over.

Ling Feng, Ling Xin, and the rest of the Ling Family all wore doubtful expressions on their faces, but they obeyed her orders nonetheless and swiftly left the canyon.

Ling Yushi stayed at the very back of the group. It was only until after they had retreated for a while that she pulled out the arrow that she had prepared some time ago, aimed, and then fired it at Liu Yan's tent. A letter had been tied to it.

"Swoosh!"

The arrow flew over with a piercing sound. The expression of Liu Yan, who hadn't fallen asleep yet, changed when he heard the noise and flipped open the blinds with a start.

"Pwack!"

The arrow landed right in front of his tent.

Liu Yan's face turned cold for a second, but then he noticed the letter on the arrow and immediately grabbed it to read it. A single glance was all it took for his face to lose its color as he exclaimed in a low tone, "Gao Yu!"

Gao Yu's tent was closer to his, so upon hearing his call, he immediately rushed over with a cold look in his eyes and asked, "I heard an arrow. Who was it?"

"Big Brother Liu, what's going on over there?" Although Feng Yi was a bit further away, he too vaguely heard the vague sound of a piercing arrow. He wasn't too sure about the it and could not help but call out in askance.

"It's nothing. Those Ling bastards woke me up and I couldn't sleep, so I got out to stretch my body a little."

Liu Yan replied with a strange look on his face before signalling to Gao Yu meaningfully. The moment the two of them entered his tent, he immediately passed over the letter Ling Yushi sent over to Gao Yu.

"Gao Yuan is dead. The Feng Family has colluded with Shattered Ice Manor, and they plan to seize the Fiery Solar Jade Mine for themselves. An Elder and his team from Shattered Ice Manor is on their way, and they will enter the canyon in about an hour."

It also took Gao Yu only a glance to feel his entire body turn cold, and his already cold eyes burned with a terrible chill.

Chapter 28: Hunted

Gao Yu held the letter in his hands, slightly shaking. He felt the blood rush to his head, and his cold, dark eyes were filled thick with murderous intent.

"Young Master Gao, what do think about this?" Liu Yan also felt like his limbs were as cold as ice as he asked with a frigid face.

"The entire Ling Family have evacuated, and that surely must be proof that Shattered Ice Manor's men are closing in. The reason they didn't talk to us personally and took such a roundabout manner was probably because they didn't have conclusive evidence to accuse the Feng Family. They're afraid that we wouldn't believe them and would only

slow them down instead," Gao Yu said with a cool expression, and continuing on, "By evacuating en masse, they were already sending us the clearest signal about how serious the situation is!"

"Right." Liu Yan nodded his head and said with a heavy face, "We probably don't have much time left."

"I'll inform our clansmen to depart for the Arctic Mountain Range immediately. It would be best if we don't alert the Feng Family, but that is probably impossible."

Gao Yu knew very well in his heart that the Ling Family's unusual departure must have caused Feng Yi and the other to feel suspicious, and if they were to leave right after, then surely they wouldn't be able to hide it from the Feng Family any longer.

If the Feng Family and Shattered Ice Manor were truly in cahoots, then they were bound to lose their cool and act against them by blocking their way.

"The Ling Family sure acts fast. They are gone just like that, and we're slower, already one step behind them. This is probably not going to be easy." Liu Yan let out a sigh and continued, "The Ling Family member has been with us this entire time, and there wasn't anyone who left the camp. Where did they get the news?"

"It was that guy called Qin Lie! He was the only one who was moving freely this entire time!" Gao Yu let out a hmp.

"That simpleton?" Liu Yan shockingly questioned.

"Simpleton?" Gao Yu's eyes were chilly as he sucked in a deep breath and exclaimed coldly, "He's the real ruthless character in the entire Ling Family! The Ling Family had acted promptly and retreated, causing us to be left behind, so now we are forced to endure both Shattered Ice Manor and the Feng Family's attacks, buying them time to escape! What a diabolical bastard!"

Liu Yan gave it some thought and realized that, other than Qin Lie, there really was no other person from the Ling Family who left their sight. Hence, he too became as sure as Gao Yu that the mastermind behind the Ling Family was none other than Qin Lie!

"They're totally planning to sacrifice us to buy time. Truly, they are both ruthless and diabolical alright!" Liu Yan too let out a sigh.

"That damned Qin Lie!"

Gao Yu let out an angry curse before immediately leaving Liu Yan's tent in a hurry. He began to quietly inform the Gao Family and have them evacuate deep into the canyon as quietly as possible.

"Big Brother Liu, Brother Gao, just what are you guys doing? It's the middle of the night, can it be that someone among you have gotten lost as well?"

Feng Yi had already noticed something was amiss for a while now, and upon seeing the Gao Family quietly attempting to leave, he immediately realized that something must have gone wrong with the plan after giving it some thought.

He wasn't sure how such a meticulous plan could have gone wrong, but he knew for sure that it must have been exposed.

Gao Yu paid him no heed at all, and that dark and cold pair of eyes of his brutally stabbed at him once before he led the Gao Family to rush into the deeper parts of the canyon.

He knew very well that the men from Shattered Ice Manor would be arriving very soon. If he tried to confront Feng Yi now, it would be no different from committing suicide, so he could only endure it and urge the Gao Family members to escape as soon as possible.

"Young Master!" Watching the Ling Family and now the Gao Family leaving one by one as well, Feng Lun's eyes became filled with murderous intent as he asked, "How did they find out?"

Feng Yi frowned deeply as he watched the Gao Family members rush deep into the canyon, but he could not think of a reason.

After a moment's hesitation, he took out a strange-looking horn and blew out in a low, quiet tune.

The same kind of sound suddenly came from behind them, and after a start Feng Yi soon came to a complete understanding.

"Shattered Ice Manor's men are here. I do not know how they found out, but there's been a change in our plans!" Feng Yi calmed down and blew the horn again, and this time, its sound turned rapid and high-pitched.

In the forest, the Shattered Ice Manor's elder listened to the horn sound as his face darkened. He uttered darkly, "Garbage! We made all these preparations and they still found out beforehand? How completely useless! Listen to me, bastards! They already know we're here, so let's cut the sneaky sheet and kill them all already! Not a single Ling or Gao clansmen will be left alive!"

Shattered Ice Manor's martial practitioners instantly howled their replies and charged towards the canyon at full speed.

Around the same time, Feng Yi roared his order as well, "Attack!"

The expressions of Feng Lun and the rest of the Feng Family's martial practitioners changed, filling with murderous intent. Noticing that the Gao Family weren't completely out of sight,, they immediately brought out their bows, spears, lances, and other long ranged ice blades and ran after them with increasing speed, all the while firing the sharp blades in their hands.

Amidst shrill howls, a rain of frigid lights soared above the valley and headed straight towards the Gao Family martial practitioners!

"Feng Yi! The Feng Family will definitely be wiped out due to your actions here today!"

Liu Yan exploded into a roar as a surge of spirit energy suddenly ballooned from inside his slightly overweight body. Immediately afterwards, circle after circle of swirling spirit energy promptly exited his sleeves and flew up into the sky, forming clusters of spirit barriers that disrupted all the projectiles coming their way so they could not accurately stab into a person's body.

A sliver of anxiety appeared on Feng Yi's handsome face due to Liu Yan's angry roar.

Just then, a series of eerie howls came from behind him, and Feng Yi immediately calmed down as he spoke to Liu Yan, "Big Brother Liu, if we kill both you and the entire Liu Family members here and come up with some random excuse later, then who will know what role the Feng Family played in this incident? Besides, with Shattered Ice Manor here, even if you did find out the truth, the Feng Family may not necessarily have to fear you at all! Keep shooting and slow them down!"

Upon hearing his words, the Feng Family's martial practitioners grinned sinisterly and continued their offense with a newfound vigor.

Wave after wave of eerie howls sounded from behind the Feng Family, and the bottom of Liu Yan's heart turned ice cold. Without slowing, he yelled out, "Gao Yu! They're almost here! Retreat at full force out of the canyons; the Arctic Mountain Range is right behind it, and there will be much larger grounds and spirit beasts about! There will be a lot more variables there!"

He didn't need to say more as Gao Yu and the rest of the Gao Family members cycled their spirit energy throughout their entire bodies and ran as if they were flying, hastening like leopards towards the direction of the deeper parts of the Arctic Mountain Range.

The canyons of Celestial Wolf Mountain was both tight and narrow, with no available hiding spots at all. Once the others caught up to them, there would be little to no chance that the Gao Family members would survive.

Only by escaping out of the canyon and entering the vast Arctic Mountain Range would they be able to find cover. Also, the appearance of spirit beasts would likely cover their

tracks and cause Shattered Ice Manor and the Feng Family's men to hesitate, thus greatly increasing their hopes of survival.

In order to confirm Shattered Ice Manor's arrival, the Feng Family did not act when the Gao Family evacuated and thus missed out on a golden opportunity. At this moment, the Gao Family had already ditched them, and were way back in the rear, Furthermore, there was Liu Yan, who was an early stage Natal Opening Realm practitioner, around, their blades missed over and over, so they soon gave up their relentless chase.

Thus, a strange situation had formed inside the canyon where the Gao Family ran and the Feng Family gave chase, and further back, the martial practitioners from Shattered Ice Manor were also chasing after the Feng Family.

If one looked at it from a larger point of view, then one could also find the Ling Family's martial practitioners at the foremost of the lot, also desperately trying to escape.

Because they were the ones who had ran first and Ling Yushi also took a while before she finally fired that arrow, the Ling Family were the ones who managed to escape the furthest. At the moment, they had long since evacuated from the canyon and entered into the vast forests of the Arctic Mountain Range.

Under the clear moonlight, Qin Lie stood beneath a tree and waited for the Ling Family's martial practitioners to arrive.

When Ling Yushi was writing her letter, waking the Ling Family one by one and making careful arrangements, he had long since exited the canyon. Right now, he had already waited under the tree for nearly fifteen minutes.

"Haah, haah, haah!"

The sound of martial practitioners running at top speed gradually came from a distance. Qin Lie narrowed his eyes and quietly hid behind the tree, just in case the ones who appeared weren't the Ling Family; he didn't want any accidents.

It wasn't until he saw Ling Feng's figure that he finally stepped out of the tree and stood in front of the crowd.

Ling Ying, Ling Feng, Ling Xin and the rest of the Ling Family members stopped in their tracks the moment they saw him from afar. Everyone had stared dubiously at this fool who was no longer acting like one...

"Kid, if you made a mistake, then you will doom the Ling Family!" Ling Xin let out a hmph.

Ling Feng furrowed his eyebrows and asked for confirmation in a low tone, "You saw Shattered Ice Manor's men with your own eyes?"

Qin Lie nodded and asked right away, "Where is she?" He didn't say her name, but everyone knew who he was talking about.

"The First Miss stayed behind at the very back. She wrote a letter to inform Liu Yan and the Gao Family; she should be on her way to regroup with us right now." Ling Ying peered at him as if she had suddenly grown infinitely interested in him and asked, "How did you find out that Gao Yuan was killed? How did you guess that there would be people coming after us? Could it be that you were keeping watch nearby for the past few days?"

Qin Lie threw her a glance, but kept quiet and didn't answer any of her questions.

While he was in the state of Thoughtless Tranquility, Ling Ying's attitude had never been the friendliest, and some of the stuff she said was never quite pleasant to the ears...

"W-what's up with you?" Ling Ying exclaimed, peeved. "When did I ever offend you? Oh, I know, it's when you were acting like a fool, right? You were the one who wanted to act like a fool; don't tell me you can't stand us commenting a little about it?"

Qin Lie still didn't pay her any attention.

"You have quite the large temper, don't you brat?" Ling Xin shot him a glare and yelled, "You had better not be mistaken, otherwise, the Ling Family will be in big trouble! And you will not get out of this scot free either!"

"Be quiet!" Ling Feng scolded. "Since he saw it with his own eyes, it will definitely not be a mistake. If he hadn't informed us, then we could very well be dying at the hands of those men from Shattered Ice Manor right now. Everyone would all be slaughtered one by one, and the First Miss and Little Ying's fate... will be far worse!"

The crowd felt chilled to the bone as they listened to Ling Feng's depiction and pondered upon it themselves. Even Ling Ying, who was slightly dissatisfied with Qin Lie no longer said anything. There was lingering fear leaking out her bright eyes.

The crowd turned silent.

After a short while, Ling Yushi flew right over by herself with sweat atop her pale forehead. It was clear that she had also been running at top speed. Seeing that the crowd members had waited for her, she yelled, "Why are you guys standing here doing nothing? Why aren't you running?"

"First Miss, after you fired the arrow, did you notice anything amiss?" Ling Xin asked.

"I didn't dare to take a look." Ling Yushi's smile was bitter as she took the chance to take a breather before saying, "While I was chasing you guys, I vaguely heard the sounds of fighting. It's probably... the Feng Family attacking."

Everyone's face turned pale in an instant; at this point, they had all concluded that Qin Lie was telling the truth.

"What are you still standing here for?" Ling Yushi yelled angrily with clear dread in her voice. "If we don't pull away far enough during the night, then Shattered Ice Manor's men will be able to follow us quickly through our tracks during the day!"

After that, the crowd quickly set out and escaped towards the depths of the Arctic Mountain Range at full speed. At this point, everyone's expressions were heavy, and they felt a heavy pressure pressing against their backs.

"Follow me." Qin Lie, who had been silent for a while suddenly appeared at the forefront of the group like an arrow and yelled in a low tone, "There are a lot of spirit beast nests at the front, we must avoid them. Otherwise we will be torn to shreds before the Feng Family or Shattered Ice Manor even arrive!"

All were dumbstruck.

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Chapter 29: Encounter

Deep in the night.

Qin Lie walked at the front as he led the Ling Family members towards the depths of the Arctic Mountain Range. He periodically paused from time to time to retrieve a map from his chest pocket. Using the moonlight, he would look at the map and then reorient their direction.

Most of the time, he didn't lead the Ling Family members in a straight path. Whenever he thought there might be a pack of spirit beasts in front of them, he would make a detour to avoid any unnecessary spirit beast encounters.

Because they frequently traveled in a winding manner instead of in a straight line, their travel speed towards the Arctic Mountain Range wasn't very fast.

However, during their travels, they managed to avoid encountering any fierce spirit beasts. They would occasionally meet one or two, but they would only be low level ones that couldn't harm them at all.

After Qin Lie had discovered Gao Yuan's body, he had already planned and prepared for this in secret. He had already thoroughly studied their escape route long ago, and

even personally examined it himself. Due to his grandfather's map, he had a clear picture of all the common spots spirit beasts would gather at nearby and was thus able to safely guide the Ling Family members.

Only, a portion of the Ling Family members didn't quite trust him...

"We're making another detour?" Ling Xin was currently standing still upon a steep slope, his face full of annoyance as he complained, "How many detours have we taken so far? If we hadn't detoured so many times, we would have already exited the dense forest and have entered this Frost Mist Mountain you were talking about long ago! Spirit beast this, spirit beast that, we haven't even seen any traces of powerful spirit beasts so far! If we keep detouring like this, sooner or later they'll catch up to us!"

"Anyone who doesn't want to take these detours can go straight ahead. After all, whether you live or die doesn't matter to me." Qin Lie didn't even bat an eye, continuing upon the path that he himself had determined was correct.

"Brat! You really think you're something, don't you?" angrily snorted Ling Xin as he glared at Qin Lie.

"Shut your mouth!" exclaimed Ling Yushi. "If not for Qin Lie's intelligence, we probably would have already died long ago at the hands of Shattered Ice Manor's people. What are you still complaining about?"

"First Miss, I only believe that there are no spirit beasts nearby, so we don't need to be this cautious. After all, the Feng Family and Shattered Ice Manor's people should already be on our tail. If we keep detouring like this, they will catch up to us in no time," complained Ling Xin.

"That's enough. Everyone, follow Qin Lie and let's quickly move out of this dense forest," said Ling Feng.

Only a few people were agitated like Ling Xin. The rest of them were rather trusting towards Ling Yushi and Ling Feng and thus were rather well behaved.

Once Ling Yushi, Ling Feng, and Ling Ying all began to rush after Qin Lie, Ling Xin and the rest had no other choice but to also follow behind them.

The night quickly passed, and even after the crack of dawn, they didn't stop and continued rushing through the forest.

During this time, Qin Lie led everyone through more detours, avoiding other potential hotspots that could be infested with packs of spirit beasts, and once again delayed their progress. Although Ling Xin and a few others were still discontented, after being scolded by Ling Yushi and Ling Feng, they had no choice but to silently follow.

Noon.

Qin Lie and all the Ling Family members gathered beside a stream within the dense forest, and their frantic breathing gradually calmed down.

From the middle of last night until noon today, everyone had been frantically rushing along, consuming a great amount of spirit energy. Their bodies were tired, and adding on the fact that they hadn't eaten anything, they were pretty much ready to collapse at any moment. Thus, they had to stop to rest so they could eat and recover.

Everyone gathered beside the stream, gulped down mouthful after mouthful of the slightly sweet spring water and ate the dry meat that they had brought with them. They sat down and attuned their breathing and recovered their spirit energy.

They were all extremely tired. Knowing just how precious this moment of rest was, they didn't bother speaking to each other and simply recovered in silence.

Qin Lie drank some water and ate some of the meat that Ling Yushi gave him. Narrowing his eyes slightly, he took out a Spirit Recovering Pill to recover.

"What level is your cultivation at? After traveling all this time, everyone is almost tired to the point of collapsing, even First Miss has sweat all over her. But you seem like you're still pretty energetic..." Ling Ying sat down next to him, her exquisite body also drenched in fragrant sweat as it dripped down along her curves. Her eyes lit up, and she asked, "You have truly hidden yourself quite well. I guess your level of cultivation definitely isn't low!"

Out of everyone here, Qin Lie and Ling Ying were the youngest. In the past, she had never bothered to pay any attention to him and had even said a few things which were unpleasant to hear.

However, after witnessing Qin Lie's sudden transformation, her interest towards him had gradually begun to increase, almost eclipsing her interest towards Ling Feng.

The Ling Family didn't have many outstanding youths. As Du Heng and Du Fei didn't count, the only person she paid attention to within the Ling Family was Ling Feng. Thus, in the past, she had always stuck around Ling Feng and held a great amount of interest towards him.

However, Qin Lie's recent transformation had managed to light up her eyes as well, causing her to feel a sense of surprise as if she had discovered some new foreign land.

Adding Qin Lie's mysterious origins and his many hidden secrets, she had become increasingly curious. Thus, her sense of attraction continuously grew stronger, resulting in her paying more and more attention to Qin Lie lately.

“You brats know how to act quite well!” exclaimed Ling Xin as he looked over, secretly swearing to himself, “I can’t beat Ling Feng, but could it be that I can’t even beat Qin Lie? Little Ying, why must you be so close to him?”

“Stop disturbing him and use this time to properly cultivate like you should be!”

Upon seeing Ling Ying sitting down next to Qin Lie and talking to him, Ling Yushi, who wasn’t far away, suddenly felt some discomfort within her heart. Snorting, she snapped at Ling Ying.

Ling Ying pouted with her little mouth, letting out a tender hmph. Her face was full of discontent as she secretly thought: What are you getting mad over? You two are only engaged. It’s not like you two are married, do you need to shield him like this?

While the Ling Family’s people were resting, Shattered Ice Manor and the Feng Family’s people were chasing down and killing the Gao Family’s people and Liu Yan within the dense forest.

As none of these sides were familiar with the dense forest, they frequently encountered packs of spirit beasts as they rushed in from the canyon. It wasn’t a very smooth ride for them.

When the Gao Family and Liu Yan tried to escape, their luck wasn’t good considering that they encountered a Rank Two Golden Crag Beast blocking their path. Golden Crag Beasts had extremely violent natures, and thus, it had attacked them crazily. Liu Yan and Gao Yu had no choice but to work together to kill the Golden Crag Beast, which delayed them.

As Shattered Ice Manor and the Feng Family’s people gave chase, they intruded into the territory of the Rank Two Dragonhorn Rhinoceros and encountered two frenzied Dragonhorn Rhinoceros. Several people were trampled to death before Shattered Ice Manor’s experts arrived and quickly killed them.

The three sides moved through the dense forest. Because they didn’t know the distribution of spirit beasts, they didn’t bother taking detours. While their speed was much greater than Qin Lie and his group, they would time and time again encounter spirit beasts, thus suffering successive casualties.

Although Shattered Ice Manor constantly suffered some casualties, because they had quite a few experts, their path could be said to be fairly smooth.

“There are fresh tracks over here. They don’t seem like the Gao Family’s and should be of the Ling Family who escaped first,” deduced an old man of Shattered Ice Manor. This man’s cultivation wasn’t very high, but he was very good at tracking. He crouched at the clearing for a while, then pointed in a direction and concluded, “From their tracks, they shouldn’t be too far away from us. Elder Yan, we can split off a group to go kill them.”

As soon as the leader of Shattered Ice Manor's group, Yan Dewu, heard this, he immediately prepared to arrange a group to chase after them. However, at this time, Feng Yi suddenly volunteered, saying, "Elder Yan, the Ling Family is the weakest. Just my Feng Family is enough to get rid of them. Meanwhile, Gao Yu and Liu Yan are much more important. After all, Liu Yan is at the Natal Opening Realm. You must not take him lightly. The Ling Family... why don't you let my family chase and kill them. I guarantee that we can definitely kill them all!"

"Are you sure?" asked Yan Dewu with a dark expression.

"Mn, there will not be a problem," guaranteed Feng Yi with a smile.

Yan Dewu nodded, coldly laughed, and said, "Then your Feng Family can go chase them down. If there is a problem, then come find us again and I will arrange for people to go and support you."

"Many thanks, Elder Yan!" After thanking Yan Dewu, Feng Yi left with his family members, chasing in the direction of the fleeing Ling Family.

"Elder Yan, can his Feng Family truly get rid of the Ling Family?" asked the martial practitioner of Shattered Ice Manor that was proficient in tracking.

"That little bastard of the Feng Family has thoughts towards the two girls of the Ling Family, so I might as well let them go. After all, that youngster knows what to do. I assume he will go about the job attentively, and if they suffer losses, oh well. With our speed and strength, if we go and kill Liu Yan's group before killing the Ling Family, we will only be delayed for at most a day," said Yan Dewu indifferently.

"Elder's words are indeed wise," complimented everyone.

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"The Ling Family left long before us, but are actually not too far from us. From the looks of it, their speed must have been rather slow. So strange," Feng Lun commented perplexedly after leaving Shattered Ice Manor's group.

"If you were bringing along a fool as you rushed along a path, you wouldn't be much faster! Furthermore, the road so far has been infested with spirit beasts. Even though we traveled with Shattered Ice Manor, Feng Jie and a few others are still injured, and Shattered Ice Manor even lost seven practitioners. Do you think the Ling Family would be spared from this problem?" Feng Yi casually explained, not the slightest bit surprised.

"Indeed." Feng Lun nodded and then immediately laughed, "Hehe, I have stared at that cute little Ling Ying's skin for so long, it's just so hot and sexy! When we encounter them in a while, brother, please stay your hand, you must not accidentally kill her!"

“Be at ease Brother Lun, this younger brother is also interested. After we capture them, you can go first, but you must let us younger brothers also have a taste,” laughed Feng Jie.

“You’re all injured, but your obscene nature doesn’t change! Okay, if she doesn’t die when I play with her, I will leave her for you to have fun with!” laughingly scolded Feng Lun.

“I shall capture Ling Yushi and bring her home,” said Feng Yi, furrowing his brows. Turning his head, he said, “When we attack, you all must be careful. Don’t injure her.”

“Hehe, young master is indeed different from us, a true flower lover. Be at ease, we will definitely not injure her,” quickly declared Feng Jie.

“Remember, we cannot let a single one of them escape. This is a matter which affects the safety of the Feng Family, we must be ruthless!” sternly said Feng Yi.

The Feng Family members all replied in understanding.

An hour passed.

The Feng Family’s group quietly approached the stream that Qin Lie, Ling Yushi, and the others were resting at. From amongst the cluster of trees in the distance, Feng Yi and the rest could see the shadows of Ling Family members. An excited look emerged on their faces as killing intent gradually coalesced within their eyes.

Under Feng Yi’s signals, the Feng Family practitioners silently scattered, forming a semi-closed circular formation as they inched closer towards Qin Lie and the others.

“We have caught up to them.”

Seeing the formation completed, Feng Yi slightly smiled. Not the slightest bit afraid, he loudly shouted, revealing himself along with the other Feng Family members as they walked out in front of Qin Lie and the others.

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Chapter 30: Bloody Battle

“Sheet! You made us wind round and round repeatedly, and now they have caught up to us. Are you satisfied now?”

Ling Xin, with a longblade in his hands, suddenly stood up and erupted. He glared at Qin Lie who was sitting cross legged on the ground with eyes full of rage.

Many of the Ling Family members who had been singing the same note as him also bitterly looked towards Qin Lie, believing that it was Qin Lie's mistake which had wasted their time, thus allowing the members of the Feng Family to catch up.

Qin Lie's eyes narrowed slightly, his expression becoming colder. He didn't respond to Ling Xin's provocation.

"Shut up! Is this even the time for us to quarrel?"

Ling Feng rebuked and, in but a moment, took out his Firecloud Hammer spirit artifact. A current of fiery light ignited atop the hammer, bathing his arm in a crimson shade and causing the temperature around him to become extremely hot.

Ling Yushi bit her lower lip and, with a dignified expression, took out two silver hoops which were inscribed with exquisite designs from her waist. She stood in front of Qin Lie, quietly whispering to him, "Feng Yi is at the eighth level of Refinement, and many of his Feng Family members are at the sixth and seventh levels. Although they have less people than us, their power is indeed much greater. Ling Ying doesn't have any battle experience, and you... I don't know much about you. You must be careful, do not try to do anything to show off."

She stopped speaking and raised her head to look up towards Feng Yi. Frowning, she sadly asked, "I never thought that it would really be you guys. Why are you doing this?"

Ling Xin, Ling Ying, and the others all grouped together with one another, their expressions solemn as they took out their weapons and prepared to face off against the Feng Family's fierce offensive.

"To tell you the truth, the Feng Family aligned itself with Shattered Ice Manor two years ago, we just never announced it because we hoped to redeem great merits at a critical juncture." Atop Feng Yi's extraordinarily handsome face, a sunny smile emerged, "Fiery Solar Jade is just too valuable. An entire mine of it is definitely worth us exposing ourselves. However, in order to make sure this information doesn't leak out, we can only be ruthless."

Feng Lun and Feng Jie both grinned, laughing strangely as their eyes clearly swept across Ling Ying's body. It went without saying what their intentions were.

"Feng Yi, in the past we have fought together before, must we shed blood?" Ling Feng deeply shouted.

"There is no other way. If I don't get rid of you guys, then I will have to bear responsibilities in front of Shattered Ice Manor. Because you guys were able to leave the canyon beforehand, I have already messed up. I really can't make a single mistake now."

Feng Yi was also frustrated. After a moment, he seriously said, "Yushi, although it isn't appropriate to say these words at this time, I still want to say them... from the first moment I saw you, I wanted to have you. After today, I will truly be able to have you. Be at ease, you will be left alive. I will bring you back to the Feng Family, lock you up, and never let you leave.

"Either you kill me, or I kill you. There are no other possibilities," responded Ling Yushi coldly.

Feng Yi laughed, not saying another word. He waved his hand, signaling Feng Lun and the others to move out.

"Kill!" Feng Lun began to laugh maniacally.

The Feng Family's martial practitioners immediately surged over, took out their weapons, and began circulating the spirit energy within their bodies. It caused their auras to be like vicious tigers charging down a mountain, extraordinarily ferocious.

There were a total of nine Feng Family practitioners. Aside from Feng Yi, there were two others who had the radiance of spirit energy emission from their hands when they rushed over. Clearly, they had cultivated to the seventh level of the Refinement Realm.

On the other hand, amongst the Ling Family, other than Ling Yushi who had cultivated to the eighth level of the Refinement Realm and Ling Feng who was at the seventh level, the rest were all at the fifth and sixth levels. Although they had more people than the Feng Family, their overall strength was quite a bit weaker. Thus, it was no wonder that Feng Yi dared to come and kill the Ling Family clansmen with only the Feng Family's martial practitioners.

"Feng Lun, your opponent is me!" shouted Ling Feng darkly.

He ignited the Firecloud Hammer and began to fight with Feng Lun, who was the stronger of the two from the Feng Family who had cultivated to the seventh level of the Refinement Realm. They were evenly matched, tangling with each other once they got close.

Feng Yi slightly smiled. Unsheathing his sharp sword with a bright yellow hilt, he flicked his wrist, and an extremely sharp yellow sword beam that was longer than a meter exploded out from it as a result.

"Yushi, I congratulate you for having cultivated to the eighth level of the Refinement Realm, but I reached this level a year and a half ago. My Rainbow Hilt Sword is Common Grade Five, something that my brother got for me. If I remember correctly, your Twin Heart Hoops are only Common Grade Four. Heheh, there is no way you are a worthy opponent for me."

“Then come and try me!”

Ling Yushi’s face trembled as she shouted, her fine black hair suddenly beginning to flutter. Immediately afterwards, the two silver hoops she held in her hand released circle after circle of silver haloes of light.

“Cling cling!”

The two hoops collided, emitting a harsh, crisp sound. The sound wave entered straight into Feng Yi’s mind, rattling his psyche.

Taking advantage of this moment, Ling Yushi’s delicate body flashed, shooting towards Feng Yi like cold lightning. The silver hoop in her left hand suddenly flew out towards Feng Yi’s head, turning into a stream of silver light.

“It is much stronger than before.”

Feng Yi indifferently smiled and waved the Rainbow Hilt Sword in his hand. Immediately, three streams of golden rainbows appeared in front of him, blocking Ling Yushi’s stream of silver light.

Ling Yushi pursed her lips, not replying as she continued to condense spirit energy and use the Twin Heart Hoops to attack Feng Yi.

Feng Yi had a calm expression from start to finish, never initiating his own attack. It seemed as if he was waiting for Ling Yushi to run out of spirit energy so he could capture her alive.

On the other side, Ling Feng and Feng Yi were still evenly matched, but Feng Jie, the other seventh level practitioner, was unmatched against the rest of the Ling Family members.

Even when Ling Xin and Ling Ying combined their powers to fight Feng Jie, they were still badly battered by Feng Jie’s short spear.

At this moment, Ling Xin’s chest had already become bloody. Even if Feng Jie didn’t continue attacking, it was only a matter of time before Ling Xin bled to death.

The remaining Feng and Ling Family martial practitioners were fighting in a great mass. Looking at the situation, it was clear that the Feng Family had the advantage as the Ling Family members constantly received more and more wounds. From the looks of it, it was only a matter of time before they lost.

Across the entire battleground, only Qin Lie had yet to move, and no Feng Family member had moved to attack him.

In their eyes, Qin Lie was still but a fool, a fool who just stood there and didn't move. Couldn't they kill him whenever they pleased? Why would they waste their energy on a fool like him?

This was precisely what Qin Lie was hoping for!

To be ignored so that he could suddenly strike and gain the advantage, that was what he was waiting for! Waiting for the best opportunity, a moment where he could instantly kill someone!

"Whoosh!"

A silver spear was suddenly disarmed from a Ling Family member's hand. It landed directly within half a meter in front of Qin Lie.

The Ling Family member who had lost his weapon was immediately pierced in the abdomen. Miserably crying out, he desperately caught ahold of the Feng Family member's neck, ignoring his injured abdomen as he tried to wring the person's neck.

Unfortunately, his weapon was no longer in his hand and his body was too severely injured. He didn't have enough strength to achieve his goal and was stabbed a few more times in the chest, resulting in him falling to the bloodstained ground like a pool of mud.

His eyes were still wide open, unwillingly looking at the skies as if failing to kill his opponent had resulted in him being unable to rest in peace.

"Ling Yang!" Ling Xin's eyes became extremely red. From the corners of his mouth, two streams of blood flowed down to his neck. He roared with rage, seeming to go out of control in an instant.

"Becoming anxious now? Hehe, I will also send you along the path now, so you can accompany your little cousin."

Feng Jie grinned. The short spear in his hand, that was clearly a spirit artifact, suddenly shot out a dazzling bright light. The bright light shined upon Ling Ying and Ling Xin's eyes, suddenly blinding them.

At this moment, he went so far as to lustily look at Ling Ying's soft, rising mounds before piercing towards Ling Xin's heart with his short spear.

This was the moment!

Qin Lie, who had yet to move from the start, suddenly pulled up the silver spear that was in front of him and madly infused the spirit energy of thunder and lightning hidden within his body into it.

Since the silver spear wasn't a spirit artifact, it had no spirit diagram inscribed within it. Thus, it was unable to withstand such a violent infusion of spirit energy and suddenly began to emit sounds of fragmenting.

Qin Lie didn't pay it much attention as he rotated his waist, throwing the silver spear with all of his might.

"Crackle crackle! Zzzt zzzt!"

The silver spear was like a world shocking lightning bolt. The spear's electric current was frighteningly violent, and the inside of the spear was constantly emitting popping sounds as it pierced straight through Feng Jie's heart.

"Boom!"

The violent spirit energy within the silver spear exploded!

The spearhead burst outright, and the frightening explosive power, similar to that of a landslide's outbreak, instantly injected itself into Feng Jie's back, causing his back to explode and leaving behind an extremely terrifyingly gigantic hole. From the bloody wound, blood, flesh, and bone dripped out everywhere in one melded mess. It was an extremely appalling scene.

Feng Jie had been instantly killed, not able to even able to make a sound!

In the instant when Ling Ying and Ling Xin were blinded, they had both thought it would be hard to escape death; both of them despaired as they waited for the short spear to penetrate their hearts.

Afterwards, they heard the terrifying sound of an explosion. When their eyes recovered, they saw Feng Jie's bloody, miserably torn apart corpse at their feet with a broken fragment of the spear still stuck in his heart.

The two of them were bewildered, unable to figure out what had just happened in that moment. When they recovered their senses, they realized that Qin Lie had suddenly come over and had quickly picked up Feng Jie's short spear when they were still dazed.

"Brat! You're still taking advantage of the moment at a time like this?!" Ling Xin suddenly snapped out of his daze, furiously roaring, "I really want to kill you, you sheetty brat!"

Before he had finished swearing his outrage, Qin Lie had already picked up the short spear and turned, heading towards Ling Feng's direction.

His sudden usage of lightning and thunder to attack and kill Feng Jie had all happened in an instant.

Not only had the blinded Ling Ying and Ling Xin not seen it, even the surrounding members of the Feng and Ling Families who were focused on fighting didn't notice it. Thus, no one could explain to Ling Ying and Ling Xin what had happened.

"How did Feng Jie die?" muttered Ling Ying, her charming face filled with surprise.

"Only the devil knows!" The red-eyed Ling Xin breathed heavily, grinding his teeth. He continued, "Don't worry about it too much, I must take revenge for my younger cousin. I'm going to cut that guy into ten thousand pieces!"

"Mn!" Ling Ying also did not give the matter any more thought. After a heavy nod of her head, she went with Ling Xin to help their clansmen combat the remaining Feng Family practitioners.

At this moment, Qin Lie was rushing towards Feng Lun, his hand holding Feng Jie's short spear, which was a Common Grade Three spirit artifact. It was the first, true spirit artifact that he had ever touched in his life!

When he infused his spirit energy within the spear and then used a strand of his mind energy to slightly feel around the inner workings of this low grade spirit artifact, his mind suddenly rumbled as an extremely odd expression suddenly appeared within his eyes.

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