



Spirit Blade Mountain

Cong Qian You Zuo Ling Jian Shan

Once Upon A Time There Was A Spirit Blade Mountain

Reikenzan: Hoshikuzu-tachi no Utage

从前有座灵剑山

Author : 国王陛下

Synopsis :

The Spirit Blade Sect was founded in the year 4233. After thousands of years of producing first rate Xiuxian geniuses, it had become one of the five biggest sects in the Ten Thousand Celestial Alliance. The head elder, Immortal Feng Yin is one of the seven Executive Elders of the Ten Thousand Celestial Alliance, with a cultivation that can shake the whole world. The Spirit Blade Sect is dedicated to peaceful development, and holds the core values of Truthfulness, Kindness and Loyalty. In order to expand the sect and bring in new blood, all heroes and geniuses have been welcomed to attend the Celestial Gathering.

Along with the descent of the Comet, a genius appeared in the Nine Continents. Wang Lu, who reincarnated from our modern world, enters the Spirit Blade Sect and embarks on the path of a hilarious peak-level expert.

---

Info :

<http://www.novelupdates.com/series/spirit-blade-mountain/>

Raws : Not found yet!

Manga in English :

[http://mangafox.me/manga/spirit\\_blade\\_mountain](http://mangafox.me/manga/spirit_blade_mountain)

Translator :

<http://chinanovel.net/index.php/spirit-blade-mountain/>



# Prologue

Translator: Regret

Editor: Mr Voltaire

# Prologue

The Blue River Region was founded on high land, where the mountains extended across the horizon. If anyone was to ask where the tallest mountain was, the locals would immediately point towards a certain place.

It was a tall mountain shaped like a blade which pierced through the clouds. Dwelling on the mountain was a sect called the Spirit Blade Sect. It was one of the largest sects in the Xiuxian world, and occupied the entire Blue River Region. As such, the mountain was called the "Spirit Blade Mountain". [TLN: Xiuxian (修仙) refers to cultivators, often with supernatural powers]

At the peak of the Spirit Blade Mountain, an elderly man sat inside a small bamboo room. His hair was held up in a bob by a sword-shaped hairpin. He stared into the bright, starry sky, his hands holding a gleaming silver sword. The blade of the sword reflected the starlight, and the intricate and mysterious symbols on the blade began to swirl like water. They travelled upwards from the hilt, until they reached halfway to the top of the sword.

The elderly man frowned, sensing a premonition of an ill event.

"The light of the blade stopped at halfway, the sign of a calamity. Senior brother, are you reading your own fortune?" A voice sounded out behind him. It was a barefooted woman wearing a white robe, dangling an earthen yellow wine gourd by its strap on her wrist. In her other hand, she held a green bamboo sword. Smelling of wine and smoke, she

appeared behind the elderly man gazing at the stars.

"Fifth junior sister, please knock before entering in future."

"But I did knock before leaving my home."

"I'm talking about my door, not yours."

The head elder sighed, "Why are you here?"

"To borrow money."

"... If I remember correctly, you still owe me 20,000 spirit stones." The senior brother said, his expression serious and earnest.

The woman said with a pained and sorrowful voice, "Ai, isn't it because our Spirit Blade Sect is so poor. Me, the honourable fifth elder, the number two expert in the whole Sect, gets a measly 500 spirit stones per month. Who knows how many years it'll take to repay this debt. But if senior brother lets me become the head elder, I can embezzle some money to repay the debt..."

"Junior sister, if you really want to be head elder, then..."

"Then you'll resign? Wow, senior brother, you're so kind!"

"What I was going to say, was that if you really want to be head elder,

then you need to get rid of your bad habits of getting drunk, go into closed door training for three to five years and be at least at the Yuanying Stage.”

The white robed woman pretended that she hadn't heard anything, “Senior brother, lend me some money.”

“.....”

“... By the way, who were you telling the fortune for? The one with the impending calamity.”

The head elder replied with a low voice, “Spirit Blade Sect.”

The colour of the fifth junior sister's face changed, and promptly forgot about the money, “No way?! The Spirit Blade Sect is going to be destroyed?!”

“Not just the Spirit Blade Sect. I'm afraid what this sword is referring to is the entire Xiuxian world. Remember that prophecy about the Age of Chaos? Ai, this sword's light is broken in one third of the places, I'm afraid that there are only three to five years of peace left in the Xiuxian world. It seems that the only way to avoid this is to give one billion spirit stones to support the Ten Thousand Celestial Alliance to fix those five ancient Celestial Ships.”

“The Spirit Blade Sect's Stellar Fortune-telling is one of the few fortune-telling techniques in the entire Xiuxian world, and senior brother is an expert who would not make such a big mistake. However, the Celestial sword that senior brother is using doesn't seem to be the “Year” Sword.”

The head elder was shocked, "Not the Year Sword?" He looked closely at the sword. On the hilt was not the "Year" character, but rather.....

In the next instant, the elderly man who was acclaimed and feared as a god in the whole Blue River Region let out terrifying roar, "Why is it the Tea Sword? Doesn't this mean that the Age of Chaos, the Calamity, will come in the time of three to five cups' of tea?!" [TLN: cups of tea time = time it takes to drink a cup of tea, approximately 1 minute].

The fifth junior sister also became shocked; her wine gourd fell to the ground. Although the golden wine started to leak out, she did not notice or care at all.

"Senior brother, I've told you so many times to wear your glasses. You couldn't even tell the difference between "Year" and "Tea"... forget it, seeing as the Calamity is going to happen in the time of a few cups of tea, hurry up and resign from head elder so I can die with a smile on my face."

"... Even if I die, I won't let the Spirit Blade Sect suffer such a humiliation."

"I don't want to die with only a salary of five hundred spirit stones per month! I won't die a happy death!"

In the time they spent arguing, the time of three cups of tea crept past.

The peak of the Spirit Blade Mountain was the closest place on the Blue

River Region to the stars. The starry sky tonight was particularly dazzling, and the stars seemed to start to spin. Every star in the sky seemed to be trembling. It was a sight that had never appeared before in the Nine Regions.

The senior brother and junior sister looked at each other, their hearts both full of surprise and fear.

The Stellar Fortune-telling indeed was not wrong. The Age of Chaos was about to descend to the Nine Regions. Everything in the Xiuxian world would be swept away.

In the last moments, the senior brother opened his mouth to speak, "Junior sister, there's something that I've always wanted to say to you but I've never had the chance. Today, since the Calamity is coming..."

The head elder's elderly, yet attractive voice contained his true feelings. The trembling of the stellar bodies became even more intense.

"I wanted to tell you my true feelings."

In the final moment, the revolving of the stars increased to its peak, and the stars shone with a light that made it seem like it was day. A broom-like meteor swept across the sky.

That was the comet of the legends, the Halley's Comet, which signified the end of days. When the comet crashed into the earth, the spiritual energy in the heavens and earth would dry up, resulting in the Age of Chaos, the end of the Xiuxian world... The peak of the Spirit Blade

Mountain was rocked by massive winds, and seemed like the sky was going to fall down.

The white robed woman eyes spun, and she lazily pointed her bamboo sword upwards. The bamboo sword released a curtain of light that seemed to cover the entire sky, which almost seemed like it was going to pick up the falling sky.

However, in the end, there were no further changes after that. After countless meteors flew across the sky and the stellar bodies ceased their movements, everything became peaceful again.

The fifth junior sister confusedly swung the bamboo sword around, as if checking if there were any changes in the spiritual energy in the heavens and earth.

“It seems... that nothing changed?”

The woman turned to the head elder for confirmation. Her senior brother’s cultivation was higher than hers by a whole two stages. Although she would not be scared to fight him, but the difference in their spiritual sense was quite great.

The senior brother seemed very disappointed as he replied, “At least it’s not the Age of Chaos.”

“Oh? The Stellar Fortune-telling can be wrong? Although, it’s good that nothing happened. Senior brother, why do you seem so disappointed?”

“No reason.”

“It’s not every day we avoid a Calamity, how about you cut some of my debt as a celebration.”

“.....”

After the threat of the Calamity passed, the senior brother thought of his outburst of passion, and let out a long sigh. Apart from that, his heart was filled with many questions.

The Stellar Fortune-telling was not errorless, but the premonition he had about the Calamity was absolutely not wrong. It seemed that the Nine Regions really did just narrowly avoid the Calamity.

Facing this Calamity that suddenly appeared, and had disappeared even more suddenly, the head elder was completely stunned.

However, one thing was for sure-its effects would slowly affect and change the Nine Regions.

The head elder gazed at the river of stars, and gave a sigh. His hands once again fiddled with the sword under the starlight, “It is said that surviving a calamity will bring fortune in future. After escaping from this crisis, it’s very likely that a Golden Age of the Xiuxian world will be ushered in... that’s right, when was the last time we held a Celestial Gathering?”

The fifth junior sister widened her eyes, “Raw, raw and fresh gathering?”

Saying these words, she almost started to drool. [TLN: the words said by the head elder are '升仙'/Sheng Xian, meaning Celestials. The fifth junior sister uses 生鲜/Sheng Xian, meaning raw and fresh].

The head elder ignored her, and did some calculations with his fingers, "It has been at least one hundred years. For the next one, let's set it after twelve years. At that time, any changes should have appeared. Let's not hope for too much though. If we can return to the glory of one hundred years ago, the Spirit Blade Sect will have hope again."

Upon hearing about the Sect returning to its former glory, the fifth junior sister's smile immediately disappeared, and was replaced by a yawn. In response, the head elder let out a bitter laugh.

"We missed the glory days from one hundred years ago, and the only ones left from the previous Golden Age are the ten of us. This time, no matter what..."

The fifth junior sister could not even yawn anymore, so she left after giving a cold 'humph'.

At the same time, under the Spirit Blade Mountain, in an unknown corner of the Blue River Region, an infant with a piercing cry had been born.

## The Warm Wooden Inn

Translator: Regret

The years passed quickly, and the Halley's Comet passing by the Nine Regions had become an old story. Only a few people knew that their lives had almost ended on that day.

The people of the Blue River Region were only concerned with one thing-the Celestial Gathering at the beginning of the next month. Many heroes and geniuses would be attending the Gathering.

The so-called Celestial Gathering was really just different Xiuxian sects recruiting new disciples. Upon entering the sect, the disciples would begin practicing and cultivating under the instructions and guidance of the sect, until they finally ascended as an Immortal. [TLN: I will be using Celestial and Immortal interchangeably]. However, the Xiuxian world only had five peak-level Sects that had the right to call it a "Celestial Gathering":

The largest sect in the entire Xiuxian world, residing in the Central Region, the Sheng Jing Sect; based in what was called the origins of the Xiuxian world, the Kun Lun Sect; the Sect with the largest number of Celestial books and scrolls, and referred to as the 'Xiuxian Museum', the Ten Thousand Arts Sect; the Sect with the strongest forces in the Nine Regions, the Royal Soldier Sect; and the disciple-less, money-less, inheritance-less, God-knows-why-they're-in-the-five-peak-level-Sects, the Spirit Blade Sect!

The Spirit Blade Sect had very few disciples, and kept a low profile. Even if it were to be compared to other normal first-rate Sects, let alone the other four great Sects, it would still be hard for it to match up. However, the names of the five great Sects were like golden recruitment boards, shining in every eye, and the Xiuxian world had not had a Celestial Gathering in quite a while.

The Spirit Blade Mountain's Celestial Gathering had spread to all of the Nine Regions since three years ago. The only prerequisite was that the applicant had to be twelve years of age or under, with no other conditions. Compared to other Sects which sometimes investigated the ancestors of applicants up to the eighteenth generation, this was simply unbelievable. As such, many youngsters started heading for the Celestial Gathering. Some were villagers in remote villages, some were sons and daughters of nobility and royalty... the allure of the path of the Immortal was simply too great; nothing in the mortal realm could compare.

At the present time, there was still one week until the Celestial Gathering. Below the Spirit Blade Mountain, the Spirit River Town had been completely packed. The Spirit River Town was the border between the Spirit Blade Mountain and the mortal world. Normally, the number of people living there averaged around one hundred. However, because of the Celestial Gathering, there were now over ten thousand people! The numerous inns had all been fully booked, and there were even people setting up tents next to public toilets for convenience.

There were many people, but not enough space. It was inevitable that some conflicts would arise. This was especially so at the prestigious Ru Family Inn-everyone wanted to be able to lodge there.

Bam!

Three men flew out from the entrance of an inn, and rolled along the ground. Two of the men, with large bodies and faces smeared with blood started cursing loudly, "Oi little lady, our boss is the Prime Minister of Azure Wave Kingdom, and yet you dare to be so rude to us!?"

The two big men helped the other person up. He had short, brown, curly hair, and was evidently a young lord. His nose bleeding, he stared at the coldly laughing proprietress with a look of disbelief.

He, Wen Bao, had never even been hit by his father before, and yet this proprietress had dared to give him such a big slap.

The proprietress was not old at all, looking only around fourteen or fifteen. She wore a robe made of rough cloth, and an oil-stained apron. However, her demeanour was that of an arrogant princess.

"You think a Prime Minister is so mighty? Even if your Emperor came, he'd still get slapped. I told you this inn is full, so it's full. Can't you understand human speech!? Even the Prince of the Great Ming Kingdom is in the woodshed, and yet you little peasants from your little Kingdom want to live in the inn!? And you don't think you deserved those slaps? I never thought the people from the Azure Wave Kingdom would be so unmannered."

Wen Bao was an extremely patriotic person, and instantly became enraged. He shouted, "You dare to insult our mighty Azure Wave Kingdom?! Don't think that just because you're living in Spirit River Town I'm afraid of you! You..."

“Shut up and piss off!”

Before Wen Bao even finished his sentence, the proprietress, swift as the wind, flew towards the young lord. Even though the two bodyguards were martial arts experts, they could not react in time, and could only watch as he was kicked away like a sandbag, and rolled along the street.

The proprietress was a businessperson. As a businessperson, she was required to exercise restraint, and thus did not use any killing moves. The kick seemed powerful yet gentle, and Wen Bao did not feel any pain. However, his whole body was paralysed, and he could only roll, roll, roll...

---

With the support of his bodyguards, Wen Bao returned to the inn, his face bruised and battered from rolling. He hated the proprietress so much that if he had the chance, he would torture her to death. However, he stayed silent, wordlessly showing his submission.

It was impossible not to respect this proprietress.

As Spirit River Town was the boundary between the Spirit Blade Mountain and the mortal world, it was protected by the Spirit Blade Sect. Even damaging a blade of grass or a tree would not go unpunished, let alone hurting the proprietress of an inn. There was a bodyguard of the Prince of the Yan Kingdom who had become drunk and unruly. A passing Spirit Blade Cultivator beheaded him, and sent the head as well as the Prince back to their own country. Compared to the Yan Kingdom which occupied half of the 'You' Region, the Azure Wave Kingdom was indeed

quite small. Moreover, the son of a Prime Minister could never compare to the Prince of a Kingdom. [TLN: 幽州 = You Region; to avoid confusion I put it as 'You' for the first time].

Wen Bao's heart was full of both hatred and regret. He had known the rules of the Spirit River Town before he had arrived: if anyone arrived before the Gathering, the family of any applicants would not be allowed to roam freely, and could at most take two body guards... and they must obey all of the laws of the Town.

If it hadn't been for the long and arduous journey they had just completed, which stopped them from thinking straight, coupled with the proprietress' appearance of an uncultured country girl, they would not have dared to cause such a ruckus in the inn. They had no idea if the Spirit Blade Sect knew of this incident, but they knew that their futures already had a shadow cast over them.

The bodyguards appeared to want to say something, but hesitated. Seeing this, Wen Bao sighed in his mind. They wanted him to go and apologise to the proprietress. However, he was the dignified son of a Prime Minister, and his status in the Azure Wave Kingdom could even be said to be higher than the Prince's. If he was forced to lower his head to this country girl, it would be very hard for him to swallow!

Standing at the entrance of the inn, Wen Bao took a few deep breaths. His emotions gradually calmed down, and he tried to cast the humiliation from the incident just then from his mind. He also looked away from the glares of the people around him-these youths who also came from noble and royal backgrounds usually displayed courteous and friendly dispositions while at home. However, without their elders around, as well as being surrounded by people who were all hostile towards each other, they did their best to intimidate each other.

Wen Bao walked into the inn, his face full of smiles. However, that smile only lasted for a few moments.

This was because inside, the proprietress was also smiling. However, her smile was much more sincere, but it was directed towards a young boy of eleven or twelve years of age, who was dressed in very plain clothes.

“No worries, one premium room. Please wait, I’ll arrange someone to prepare it for you.”

Wen Bao instantly felt enraged and betrayed. A premium room!? The proprietress had just said that the inn was completely full, and even the Great Ming Kingdom’s Prince was in the woodshed. So what was this about the premium room?

However, this time it wasn’t Wen Bao who voiced out his displeasure. Many other people in the reception hall became furious, “Proprietress! What’s the meaning of this?! Didn’t you say the inn was full!?”

“Yeah, didn’t you say there weren’t any more premium rooms? Young master I offered a thousand liang of silver, and that wasn’t even enough to get the woodshed. What right does he have to get a premium room!?”  
[TLN: One liang is an ancient Chinese measurement of weight. One liang = 50 grams, so a thousand liang = 50 kilograms].

“Even if it’s the Spirit Blade Sect, there should be fairness right?”

“Proprietress, give us an explanation!”

Hearing the reception hall erupt into chaos, the proprietress's businesslike smile instantly became cold, "What are you all yelling for? If you don't want to lodge here, then piss off! You think I want to wait on you pieces of trash?"

The proprietress' outburst fanned the flames even more. Seeing that a riot was about to happen, a kind-hearted local who was passing by pointed at the inn's sign, "All you foreigners, if you're not blind, come out here and look carefully."

Some people ran out and circled around the inn's sign. Next to the words "Ru Family Inn" was the signature of the man who had deigned to write the sign. The man's name was Feng Yin.

Feng Yin-just the name alone meant absolutely nothing. However, if the word "Immortal" was added to it, then it became the name of the most supreme expert in the entire Xiuxian world.

How powerful was he? Living at the peak of the tall Spirit Blade Mountain, as the head elder of the Sect, Immortal Feng Yin was truly powerful.

Seeing that the inn was under the Spirit Blade Sect head elder's protection, the various sons and daughters of nobility and royalty promptly calmed down, their faces ashen. They were unable to make a single sound.

Despite this, they were unable to quell the furious flames in their hearts, and stared towards the youth's back. The youth, as if feeling the gazes on his back, turned around. His features were clean-cut and handsome, with an aura that transcended those of ordinary people. His

long silk robe which covered his whole body did not look luxurious in the least. And yet, he looked clean and refined, not looking much different from the people around him.

The youth looked around. Seeing that there was something wrong with the atmosphere, he gently coughed.

“The situation’s different to what it looks like.”

He paused, then continued to speak, “There’s no adultery between the proprietress and myself.”

As soon as he had said this, a thought flashed across every person’s mind, “Could it be that there is adultery between this guy and the proprietress!?”

However, hearing this, the many nobles and royals slightly calmed down. If there was adultery between the two, there was nothing that could be done.

On the other hand, the proprietress’ cheeks became extremely red, and looked as if she was going to explode like a volcano and slaughter everyone.

Luckily, the youth suddenly changed the topic, “Since the Spirit River Town is hosting many guests for the upcoming Celestial Gathering, there are many events where you can win prizes. One of the prizes was a Ru Family Inn premium room voucher.”

The proprietress confirmed this, "It's just like that. He came in with a premium room voucher, fair and square, so you trash should all shut up."

The people in the reception hall gradually quietened down. However, some people still were not convinced.

"The events and prizes in Spirit River Town were all written clearly on the flyers given out at the Town entrance, and I looked over mine carefully. It never mentioned a premium room voucher."

Another person chimed in, "The prizes listed on there have all been won by most people. Apart from some special statues or talismans, everyone knows about all the prizes, but we've never heard of a premium room voucher before. There are over a hundred people in the reception hall, so why was it that only he has one?"

The proprietress didn't even bother to answer this question. Her head tilted, her face revealed a contemptuous smile.

However, the youth patiently explained, "Because this was a secret prize that would not be publicly given out."

One of the Princes gave a cold laugh, "Then tell us, how does one get this voucher?"

“Oh, the process is like this. First, you have to talk to the elderly gentleman at the Town’s entrance who was giving out flyers. He will tell you the story of the Town, as well as some information about facilities, such as motels, inns, stores, etc... You need to patiently listen, after which you can proceed onto the next step.”

Hearing this, some of the royals and nobles stared, dumbfounded. The old man with no teeth at the Town’s entrance spoke incredibly slowly in a boring tone, and even repeated himself over and over again. Just the Town’s gates took an entire hour to talk about. Who had the time to listen to his entire story?!

However, with so many people present, there were bound to be a few who had persisted.

“I finished listening to him as well.”

The crowd of people looked over and some people drew a breath of cold air. It was because the speaker was the Second Prince of the Cloud Mountain Empire in the Cloud Region, Hai Yun Fan.

The Cloud Mountain Empire was one of the one or two most powerful forces in the Nine Regions, and Hai Yun Fan was the most prominent out of the Emperor’s many children. When he was 10, the masses already believed that one day he would replace his elder brother as the heir to the throne.

Who knew that the Second Prince had given up an entire Empire to seek the Immortal path!

Hai Yun Fan's expression did not change, "I finished listening to the old man's story, but there was no next step."

The youth smiled, "Why would he just tell you the next step? It required you to find out for yourself. After telling the entire story, the elderly man coughed a few times, and said he was thirsty. At that time, you need to give him water to drink."

Surprisingly, Hai Yun Fan shook his head, "At that time, I also gave him water."

The youth continued, "Then the elderly man would say that after drinking the water, he became hungry."

"That's right, so I gave him some of the food we had." Hai Yun Fan replied.

The youth replied, "He said thank you, but obviously he did not look very happy while eating."

Hai Yun Fan frowned, "... and then?"

"After that, you need to ask, why do you not seem happy? The elderly man will say that it's not because he's not happy, but rather, it's because he suddenly thought of the Eastern Willow Diary's thousand layer cake."

"Then... you bought him the cake? And he gave you the voucher?"

“Do you really think it would be that simple? After going to the Eastern Willow Diary’s dessert store, the store owner will tell you that all of the thousand layer cakes have been sold out. If you continue to ask him about it, you would find out that the Teahouse’s owner bought ten of them. After going to the Teahouse, you’ll find out that the owner is currently playing chess with a guest. At that time, you shouldn’t bother him by asking for a thousand layer cake. Instead, you need to secretly help him to win. Afterwards, he’ll give you a thousand layer cake for free. In exchange for giving him the thousand layer cake, the elderly man will give you a recommendation letter. By giving the recommendation letter to the Town Mayor, he will ask you to collect some materials for him... then you need to go to the Tailor’s shop... after that, you have to go outside the Town... and then... after that... finally, you give the bronze ring to the elderly man at the Town’s entrance, and he’ll give you the premium room voucher.”

.....

All that could be heard were the rapid heartbeats of the crowd of royals and nobles.

The crowd of royals and nobles had come from all over the land. Although they were all still young, they all held high positions in their respective Kingdoms or Empires. They had heard all sorts of fantastical stories before, but after hearing this youth’s arduous quest to obtain the premium room voucher, they all felt incredulous.

If this event was designed by the Spirit River Town, whoever had designed it was a retard. At the very least he probably had brain damage. Who could imagine such a ridiculous and overcomplicated series of events? Even the intelligent and careful Hai Yun Fan only reached the second step, and yet there were still more than ten troublesome

steps after that! Each step became more and more ridiculous!

And yet, this youth had run in and out of the Town for an entire day for this premium room voucher! He definitely had problems as well! No one told him that doing all these things would have a reward, so why the heck did he do so?!

Even Hai Yun fan couldn't stop himself from asking, "Did you know about the prize at the end?"

The youth raised an eyebrow, "Why did I have to know? Seeing all these massive tasks in front of me, any qualified risk-taker would follow the path to the end!"

After he finished talking, he turned and followed the inn staff upstairs.

Hai Yun Fan frowned. The youth's matter-of-fact tone made it seem like only an idiot wouldn't have understood what he was saying and yet... he was indeed unable to understand what the youth was saying.

However, this was not the most important thing. In fact, even the premium room voucher was not the most important thing anymore. The question was, who was this godly youth?

All of the youths gathered in the Spirit River Town were all young heroes and geniuses. The more famous ones and ones with special abilities were all known by Hai Yun Fan. However, he had never seen or heard about this youth before. With this sort of ridiculous deduction ability, he should not be just some ordinary person he had not heard of..

At this point, Hai Yun Fan felt that this person was becoming more and more mysterious. Apart from the youth of royal and noble families, the only other people who would come to such a place were the sons and daughters of Xiuxian families. Could it be...?

Hai Yun Fan was not too far from the counter, and looked at the register, and saw the person's name.

"Wang Lu...? Never heard of him before."

"Wang Lu?"

Although there were many famous and strong people in the reception hall, Wang Lu's name still began to quietly spread.

"Could he be from the Southern Ridge Region's Wang family? I heard that every generation is very monstrous, that sounds about right?"

"No way, I heard that there is hatred between Southern Ridge Region and the Spirit Blade Sect. No Xiuxian family from there would allow their descendants to become a Spirit Blade Sect disciple."

"Could he be from the Wang family in Sheng Jing?"

"Giving up an opportunity to join the Sheng Jing Sect in order to join the Spirit Blade Sect? Although the Sheng Jing Sect rarely organises Celestial Gatherings to accept disciples, I'm sure the Wang family has its methods for its descendants to 'enter through the back door.'" [TLN: 'enter through back door' = use connections to get in].

“Ai, you guys are discussing so passionately; how do you even know he used his real name??”

## Souvenir from Hometown

Translator: Regret

Editor: Mr Voltaire

Wang Lu's performance caused him to become the focus of all of the people in the reception hall. Suddenly, he became the centre of everyone's discussion. No one could determine whose views about him were right, but everyone was in deep shock and awe of him.

If this had happened in a normal place, most people would call Wang Lu retarded. However, at the foot of the Spirit Blade Mountain, a premium room voucher was worth a lot.

"Do you guys think he has connections with the Spirit Blade Sect?"

This sort of guess was agreed upon by some people, which was spread throughout the crowd. Soon, there were people claiming that Wang Lu was the secret child of the Heavenly Sword Sect's elder.

Behind the counter, the proprietress coldly looked at the crowd, and muttered in a low voice, "A bunch of retards."

After thinking for a while, she continued, "Just looking at these idiots makes me feel angry, I should raise the prices again."

At this moment, a voice rang out from outside the inn.

“Young master, young master!”

Although the reception hall of the Ru Family Inn was not very large, there were ten or so ‘young masters’ seated inside. Everyone’s heads turned as they saw a boy around ten years of age with delicate features come running and stumbling in.

Seeing the youth, everyone’s eyes lit up.

It wasn’t because the youth looked handsome or anything, but because of the robe he was wearing. Clearly, he was with Wang Lu, and looked like he was a pageboy.

While Wang Lu looked a bit thorny, this pageboy looked much more tender and naïve. If they wanted to get some intel on their competitor, using this boy would be a good opportunity.

“Hey, little brother..”

A person who seemed to have this intent in mind gently coughed, attracting the attention of the pageboy.

“Have you seen my young master? He’s not much older than me..”

“Ah, why doesn’t little brother come over here and talk about it more

specifically with me. There are so many people going in coming out, I have no idea who you're talking about."

The pageboy paused for a moment, then nodded his head.

Evidently, there were some people who did not wish for these Princes to have an opportunity to start talking again. The proprietress rapped her knuckles on the counter and said, "Your young master is called Wang Lu right? He's already upstairs, third room on the left. And remember, keep quiet in here."

The pageboy paused again, and hurriedly bowed to the proprietress to express his thanks. He swiftly ran up the stairs, full of joy.

"Young master, young master~! I'm coming!"

The proprietress became extremely angry, and slammed her fist on the counter, "Didn't I tell you to keep quiet!?"

Everyone in the reception hall saw an earthen jar of "Daughter Red Wine" fly across the hall, smashing right next to the pageboy's feet. The pageboy was scared out of his wits, and did not dare to make a single sound, quietly creeping up the stairs.

However, the proprietress had not calmed down yet, and looked around for someone to bully. From the crowd of royals and nobles, she quickly found a target.

"Oi, you, yeah you, the one I sent flying with my kick before. Just then

you ordered a jar of Daughter Red Wine right? Hurry up and pay the bill, one thousand liang per jar, thanks.”

Wen Bao was shocked, “When did I order Daughter Red Wine!?”

“Just then when I threw out that jar to scare the kid. What, do you want to order another jar?”

Seeing the proprietress picking up another 70cm tall wine jar with one hand, the colour of Wen Bao’s face changed, “I’ll pay, I’ll pay the bill!”

Taking her ill-gotten gains, the proprietress was delighted. Her gaze swept across the crowd, and said with a voice that was heard by most people, “A bunch of trash.”

On the second floor, the pageboy excitedly opened the young master’s door.

“Young master, I’m here!”

Wang Lu, who was sitting at the desk, raised his head in shock, “Ai, why did you come here?! Go back!”

Standing at the entrance of the room, the pageboy looked like he was about to cry. He pitifully looked at his young master sitting inside the room.

Wang Lu impatiently said, “I remember I told you guys not to come.”

The pageboy's face fell, "The master asked me to come here. He said that it wasn't safe for you to come and attend the Celestial Gathering by yourself."

"And having you here will make me safe? Your surname isn't Du... Ai, my old man sure is silly, I should've told you not to be silly with him."

The pageboy was adamant, "The master told me to come."

Wang Lu sighed, "Even though he told you to come, you could have broken your legs or just said you were sick."

The pageboy weakly replied, "I..."

"If you didn't want to make it too serious, you could've drunk some croton juice, but anyways..." Wang Lu was about to continue, but saw the pageboy's innocent yet pitiful look. He shook his head, "Forget it, just come in." [TLN: Apparently drinking croton juice can cause vomiting and diarrhoea].

The pageboy whooped, and carried his various bags into the room.

Contrary to what most of the crowd had believed, the young master and his pageboy were neither royal or nobility, nor were they people of Xiuxian families.

They were simply normal villagers who had come from the Wang Family

Village at the North-East side of the Dog Ear Mountain in the Marquis County of the Eastern Way Prefecture in the Great Ming Kingdom of the Blue River Region. [TLN: Try imagine saying that out loud].

The young master's surname was Wang, and name was Lu, and was son of the richest man in the Wang Family Village. Before the age of nine, his name had been Wang Dirt, a greatly uncultured name. Afterwards, a kind scholar had changed his name from "Dirt" to "Land", making him seem a bit more gentlemanly. [TLN: 陆/Lu= Land].

The pageboy was also surnamed Wang, and was the son of a moderately well-off businessman. However, after an accident which killed both of his parents, the kind-hearted Master of the Wang Family had taken him in to be the pageboy of Young Master Wang Lu. It had already been seven years.

Seven years had passed, and yet the Young Master was still full of mystery to the pageboy. His actions and thoughts were always so inexplicable and incomprehensible. Two years ago, the Master had invited a learned scholar from the Han Zong Library in the Eastern Way Prefecture to teach the Young Master literature for an astronomical price. That old goateed scholar had seven or eight pupils who had become famous scholars in the Great Ming Kingdom. Not long after he arrived, he had changed the Young Master's name into a much more sophisticated name. However, after teaching the Young Master for only two years, he discovered that there were indeed people who were born with both innate knowledge and outstanding talent, and found that he had nothing left to teach the boy. Afraid of wasting the Young Master's potential, he had quickly left.

Before leaving, the old scholar had evaluated the Young Master to be a genius capable of ranking as number 1 in the entire Nine Regions, and

that it would be possible for Wang Lu to one day become a high ranking official. While the Master of the Wang Family was overjoyed that the sole heir of the Wang family had such limitless potential, and would bring the family much glory, his heart also ached, as he had paid the old scholar for ten years, and yet he had only stayed for two.

However, it was a pity that things never turned out perfectly. Although the Young Master was an absolute genius, he just wasn't interested in poems and other literature. He was even more disinterested in becoming an official. After the old scholar had left, he had buried all of the books in the yard, saying that he was providing an energy source for the people in the distant future, something that was absolutely nonsensical.

"Those who desire power and riches are all shallow and short-sighted; that path is not even worth considering." [TLN: The first half of the sentence is a proverb: 肉食者鄙]

Alright. So he didn't even put the Great Ming Kingdom in his eyes. At that time, the Master of the Wang Family had curiously asked the Young Master what he wanted to do.

"Follow the path of the Immortal."

Immortal!? The Young Master had nearly scared the life out of him.

Was it easy to become an Immortal? Of course not! "The path of an Immortal is different to that of a mortal's", this was an ancient saying. It was almost impossible for mere ordinary mortals to even step onto the path of the Immortal! Even just the basic Chi gathering technique of Immortal path was impossible for most people.

Only the extremely blessed and lucky ones who could manipulate the spiritual energy of the heavens and earth, a vast minority of people, had the right to step into the Xiuxian world. This right was called a spirit base.

In the Nine Regions, only about one out of ten thousand people had a spirit base. It was said that only after doing good deeds for ten lives would one be able to be born with a low grade spirit base. Although in this life the Master of the Wang Family had done many good deeds, and had become the richest man in the Wang Family Village, according to the legend, he would still fall short by seven or eight lives of good deeds.

However, once his son had made up his mind, apart from giving him all the support he could give to push him onto the path of the Immortal, what else could he do? After many sleepless nights, causing him to lose almost 5kg, he finally had a solution.

Everyone knew that becoming an Immortal was incredibly difficult. However, it was said that there were special pills and medicines that could be used to develop one's spirit base. Those pills and medicines could be bought with silver, so the second richest man, Wang Da Fu had already spent over ten thousand liang of silver in order to send his son, Wang Xiao Hu to the Seven Star Sect.

The Master of Wang Family had been frugal with money his entire life. He had never wasted any money before, but in order to fulfil his son's dream, he started to pour out money to buy various supplements... he bought everything he could find, and put it all in front of his son.

Who would have thought that Wang Lu looked down on all of these

things.

“Dad, you don’t understand Xiuxian; all of these things are useless.”

The Master of the Wang Family was shocked, “These things cost tens of thousands liang of silver, how can they be useless?”

Wang Lu was silent for a while, and nodded his head in gratitude. The next day, he sold all of the things to the Wang Xiao Hu next door for 1.5 times the price his dad had bought all the things for. At least that way, his dad wouldn’t have bought all the things for nothing.

For the next few months, Wang Lu had not mentioned anything about Xiuxian, so the whole family thought that the Xiuxian thing was just a phase. However, one month ago, when the news of the Spirit Blade Sect’s Celestial Gathering came into the village, Wang Lu’s determination was once again aroused.

“Dad, I’m going to the Celestial Gathering, please lend me some travelling expenses.”

“What’s a raw and fresh gathering?” [TLN: See Prologue; same thing as what the ‘fifth junior sister’ had said, but his dad was completely serious lol].

“It’s not ‘raw’ and ‘fresh’, it’s the Spirit Blade Sect’s event for choosing disciples.”

“You want to be an Immortal again!?”

“I never gave up!”

Facing his son’s determination, the Master of the Wang Family’s decision was to find a new concubine. If this heir let down everyone’s expectations, he would have to just give birth to a new one.

Of course, the Master of the Wang Family still gave Wang Lu all of the support he could give. He sent the little pageboy to rush after Wang Lu, arriving only one day after Wang Lu. The things in the various bags he was carrying were worth no less than 200,000 liang of silver. Even though the Wang family was quite rich, it was still a significant amount of money to them.

In order to help Wang Lu become an Immortal, the Master of the Wang Family sold many valuable assets. Facing this display of parental love, the little pageboy was moved, and admired Wang Lu from the bottom of his heart.

---

In the room, Wang Lu looked at the bags the pageboy was carrying with a look of suspicion, “What are those?”

The pageboy chuckled, and opened the bag. He lifted up a bottle in a grandiose manner, “Look, Young Master, high quality Spirit Base Developing Pills!”

Pounding the table, Wang Lu stood up, “The fuck? Who wants that

trash? Throw all of it out. Just looking at it is annoying!”

The pageboy was greatly shocked, “How can we just throw it away! These are things the Master used a lot of money to buy! These are different to the ones from before. They’re high quality, high quality! Young Master, you should know that if a mortal wants to become an Immortal, they must consume Immortal Powder. After forty-five days, they will develop a spirit base. However, if Spirit Base Developing Pills are used, the process is much faster and the spirit base will be much more stable. There’s only one week until the Celestial Gathering, so using the Spirit Base Developing Pills is the best way for Young Master to develop spirit bases! Ah, and also, here’s the Seven Star Breathing Techniques Book, the Master obtained it from the Seven Star Sect...”

Wang Lu sighed, “Enough, you don’t need to throw away all those rubbish books and pills. The way they were brought here, take them back the same way.”

The pageboy paused for a while, then looked at Wang Lu with a desolate face, “Young Master, since you want to become an Immortal, why won’t you eat these things? If a mortal wants to become an Immortal, there’s only one way...”

Wang Lu sighed again, “Yes, so why do you think I’m doing this?”

The pageboy tilted his head, and blinked. He really wanted to say ‘Young Master, it’s time for your medicine’ [TLN: hinting that Wang Lu has (mental) problems], but he was required to show the respect a pageboy should show to the Young Master. In the end, he did not say anything, and instead just used warm water to dissolve the Spirit Base Developing Pills. Immediately, the room was filled with a pleasant medicinal

fragrance. "Truly worthy of being a high quality medicine." The pageboy said in awe.

He continued to look at Wang Lu with a hopeful look on his face.

When he was in the village, this technique worked every time on the neighbour's Da Huang. Except Da Huang was a dog. And the technique was usually accompanied by a bone.

In the end, Wang Lu indeed cracked under the pressure and said to the pageboy, "Ah, Wang Zhong..." [TLN: Wang Zhong's name means 'loyal' (忠)]

The pageboy eagerly nodded his head, "Yes, Young Master?"

"For a mortal to become an Immortal, there's only one path. However, when did I ever say I was an ordinary mortal?"

# My Spirit Base is as Big as a Radish

Translator: Regret

Editor: Mr Voltaire

“The path of an Immortal is different to that of a mortal’s” was an ancient saying in the Nine Regions. Mortals without the fate or luck to step onto the path of the Immortal could only look up to those who could in admiration. An ordinary mortal being able to step onto the path of the Immortal was something that had only recently happened within the last one thousand years. One thousand years ago, a person in the Immortal world had broken the wall between mortals and Immortals, creating a miracle.

This miracle was the famous ‘Six Harmony Spirit Base’.

The Six Harmony Spirit Base was invented one thousand years ago by the Founder of the Sheng Jing Sect, the Six Harmony Patriarch. Using a secret cultivation technique as well as Heavenly and Earthly treasures, the Six Harmony Patriarch created a special powder. By continuously ingesting the powder for forty-five days, even mortals can develop spirit bases. The iron law of the Xiuxian world had been broken.

It was a pity that the Six Harmony Spirit Base was much weaker than the ‘natural’ Five Elements Spirit Bases. [TLN: The five elements being fire, water, wood, metal and earth]. Practicing basic cultivations with a Five

Elements Spirit Base would take a cultivator around fifty years to reach the Foundation Establishment stage. However, even if someone with a Six Harmony Spirit Base practiced bitterly and diligently for a hundred years, they would still be stuck at the eighth or ninth stage of the Qi Cultivating stage. As such, it was often ridiculed as the “Test Spirit Base” or the “Castrated Spirit Base” or the “Transparent Spirit Base”.

This sort of man-made spirit base crushed the iron rule that had been in place for tens of thousands of years, causing large waves of excitement. Although the spirit base was quite terrible, it still allowed tens of thousands of people to join the Xiuxian world. But what was the use of tens of thousands trash who could not even reach the Foundation Establishment stage? They lacked the efficiency to be even servants. Thus, the waves of excitement gradually died down.

However, the Six Harmony Patriarch did not give up-the Six Harmony Spirit Base was only the beginning. What lay beyond it was an incredible opportunity and chance. Although this was not seen by other people, it was clear as day to the creator, Six Harmony Patriarch.

At the time, the Six Harmony Patriarch had only been at the peak Unity stage, and was only one step away from the Enlightenment stage. After stepping into the Enlightenment stage, he would have an almost limitless lifespan. However, he never made this step, instead spending the remainder of his life creating spirit bases for mankind.

This led to the creation of Seven Skilfulness Spirit Base, the Eight Treasure Spirit Base, the Nine Creation Spirit Base and the Ten Direction Spirit Base... the effects of each subsequent spirit base became stronger and stronger, until they were on par with the Double Element Fusion Spirit Bases – only inferior to the Heaven Spirit Base, Earth Spirit Base and some other Special Spirit Bases. Some could even be considered exquisite products. Man-made spirit bases now had an equal footing in the Xiuxian world, gradually becoming more popular, and in the end, changed the Xiuxian world forever. As a result, The Six Harmony Patriarch's name became incredibly illustrious. His fame was comparable to the Heavenly Qin Emperor who had united the Nine Regions in the ancient times, as well as the ancestor who had led the great war between Immortals and Demons. He became the only 'flightless' 'True Immortal' in the Xiuxian world. [TLN: Meaning, although he did not become a 'True Immortal', the title was given to him out of respect (since he probably would have reached that stage if he didn't commit himself to just developing spirit bases)].

After one thousand years, man-made spirit bases were very common in the Xiuxian world. In ten cultivators, around eight or nine would have man-made spirit bases. Furthermore, it was not uncommon to see people with man-made spirit bases of the Jindan or Yuanying stage, or even the Deity stage!

But that wasn't to say that Xiuxian cultivators filled the streets. Although the Sheng Jing Sect had a thousand years of history in creating man-made spirit bases, the number of truly exquisite spirit bases was extremely few. The existence of man-made spirit bases solved the problem of mortals not being able to become Immortals, but whether it was affordable was a completely different matter. After a thousand years

of research, the prices of man-made spirit bases decreased greatly. The only type of spirit base that could be bought with the incredible sum of one hundred thousand liang of silver [TLN: approx. 5,000kg of silver] could only buy a trash Six Harmony Spirit Base!

That's right, the treasure that the Master of the Wang Family had bought for Wang Lu was Six Harmony powder. Once consumed, a Six Harmony Spirit Base would be developed, allowing the user to kiss goodbye the Xiuxian world. Apart from rubbish and joke sects like the Seven Star Sect, no respectable Xiuxian sect would accept a Six Harmony Spirit Base cultivator as free labour, much less a disciple!

On the other hand, the Spirit Blade Sect was one of the rare sects that had existed since the ancient times, and thus followed ancient rules and traditions. That was to say, anyone with a man-made spirit base did not even have the chance to enter.

Indeed, the Spirit Blade Sect did not accept any disciples who had man-made spirit bases. Even the legendary man-made Twelve Tower Spirit Base, which was comparable to natural Fusion Spirit Bases, or even the Earth Spirit Base was not accepted by the Spirit Blade Sect. Members of the sect had to have natural spirit bases that were bestowed upon them by fate, called Fated Cultivators in short.

However, the Spirit Blade Sect's tradition in the modern world was viewed as laughable. Something that all sects understood was that even if the quality was a bit inferior, that could be overcome with numbers! Even if man-made spirit bases were inferior, having ten times the number of people was more than enough to make up for the discrepancy in

power and talent. In the Xiuxian world, the powerful thrived and the weak died. If the Spirit Blade Sect was not willing to accept man-made spirit base cultivators, then it would be their own fault if they perished. A sect could split the Fated Cultivator disciples and the man-made spirit base cultivators into different areas, such as the inner court or outer court. However, simply refusing them purely because of their man-made spirit bases? That was just ridiculous.

As such, the Spirit Blade Sect's recent decline was not a surprise to anyone. Although it was one of the five great sects, its actual power was probably worse than the level one Ten Thousand Forms Sect, or the Flowing Cloud Sect. If it wasn't for the fact that other Sects were becoming more and more strict with their requirements, the Spirit Blade Sect's Celestial Gathering would not have received the same amount of attention.

However, out of all the youths congregated in the Spirit River Town, more than half of them had man-made spirit bases. This was because the only prerequisites stated were: twelve years of age or under with no cultivation yet. There were no other requirements. Thus, many people guessed that maybe the Spirit Blade Sect had finally loosened up on their age-old rule.

However, Wang Lu didn't believe that this was the case. If it was, then why would the Spirit Blade Sect organise a Celestial Gathering to choose disciples? Why wouldn't they just find a bunch of people who had good moral standards, then just feed them the special medicines to create decent spirit bases?

Moreover...

"When did I ever say I was an ordinary mortal?"

The pageboy Wang Zhong was not stupid. Hearing his Young Master's words, a thought formed in his head...

"Young Master, you... have a spirit base?"

Wang Lu harrumphed, but did not reply.

Wang Zhong was completely dumbfounded, and smelling the fragrant medicine aroma in the room, felt like an utter fool.

---

At the same time, in the reception hall of the inn, the various Princes from all over the land had all submitted to the proprietress' might, and remained silent. However, a noisy ox cart stopped outside the inn and the elderly man driving the cart got off and walked into the inn. He smiled and said, "Proprietress, the firewood you wanted."

The proprietress replied with a nonchalant tone, "Alright, got it. Just put the things at the back of the kitchen, I'll pay you at the end of the month." After she finished, she flicked her wrist, as if chasing him away.

However, the elderly man acted as if he did not mind at all as he walked to the counter, "Proprietress, two bowls of warm wine and a plate of beans please."

The proprietress stared at him coldly. The evil glare she looked at him with caused the people around the elderly man to shiver with fright. However, the elderly man's smile remained the same, and he took out nine copper coins.

Looking at the nine shabby copper coins, the proprietress did not throw the elderly man out. Rather, she put the money away, and handed him two bowls of wine and a plate of beans. The Wen Bao who had been forced to pay a thousand liang of silver for a jar of wine felt incredibly bitter when looking at the elderly man's measly nine copper coins.

Evidently, the elderly man and the proprietress were familiar with each other. The elderly man chatted with her as he drank his wine. Although the proprietress did not seem interested at all, she still patiently and quietly listened. The other people in the hall, having seen Wang Lu's premium room voucher, all listened carefully for any clues.

However, after the elderly man finished drinking his wine, he wiped his lips and prepared to leave. The people gathered in the hall had not

gleaned any information from listening to his ramble.

"Eh?"

The elderly man suddenly turned around as he was about to leave, and sniffed the air. He looked towards the second floor, "This smell... whose stupid kid is that? Daring to eat anything!"

The proprietress also frowned and sniffed the air, "Spirit Base Developing Pills? Weird, could it be him?"

"Ah? Who?"

The proprietress coldly stared at him, "A premium room guest."

"Oh, premium room? Which premium room?"

The proprietress disdainfully replied, "You think I have a lot of premium rooms here?" She frowned again, "No, I need to go and take a look..."

The elderly man was shocked, "It can't be that serious... can it?"

The proprietress hesitated for a few moments, "True, just going up

there like this without any good reason would seem like harassment... in that case, I'll go and promote some 'Daughter's Red Wine'."

After saying this, the proprietress reached out with her slim and jade-like fingers and steadily lifted up an enormous wine jar, and walked up the stairs. The elderly man pondered for a moment and followed her.

In the reception hall, the people in the crowd looked at each other, but no one dared to go up the stairs as well.

That enormous wine jar, if it was smashed on one's face, they would surely die.

---

"For a mortal to become an Immortal, there's only one path. However, when did I ever say I was an ordinary mortal?"

"Young Master, you... have a spirit base?"

Just as the proprietress reached the door, she was able to hear Wang Lu and Wang Zhong's conversation. She began to laugh to herself.

It seemed that she had misunderstood. That extraordinary person who had completed the twelve incredibly arduous tasks to receive the premium room voucher surely wouldn't ruin his own future by consuming

Spirit Base Developing Pills. It was just that she had misunderstood and overreacted.

Since it was a misunderstanding on her part, it was not necessary for her to go and 'promote' this five-thousand-liang-jar of Daughter Red Wine... heh, why not sell it to that gloomy and cunning Hai Yun Fan downstairs-it would be a pity not to rip him off!

The proprietress turned to leave, but heard the voice in the room continue to speak.

"Young Master, dare I ask, what spirit base... do you have?"

The proprietress' footsteps slowed as her curiosity was aroused.

"Of course it's the Heaven Spirit Base."

Her hands shook, and the jar of wine nearly smashed down onto her foot.

Heaven Spirit Base?!

The elderly man's head suddenly turned, his face full of shock. He deeply gazed towards the room, his eyes filled with starry lights. He laughed, "The quality is indeed impressive, but... Heaven Spirit Base?"

"Does he think Heaven Spirit Bases are as common as radishes!?"

## The Proprietress' Radishes

Translator: William

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

"A white radish?!"

Wang Lu widened his eyes with surprise, looking at the food in his bowl.

As an unrivalled, second generation man from the rich Wang Family Village who completed the 'Twelve Incredibly Arduous Tasks', he could not believe that he only got a boiled white radish for dinner.

His eyes glared at the pageboy, "Could you be any cheaper?"

Wang Zhong felt deeply sorry. "It wasn't my fault, young master. Just have a look by yourself. The prices at this inn are crazy! One boiled white radish costs ten liang of silver!"

Wang Lu was bewildered for a while. "Ten Liang it is then! We rich people have loads of money to spend anyways."

"What's more is that the proprietress has even limited the white

radishes to one per person!”

“Have you told her that we’re distinguished guests living in a premium room?”

Wang Zhong nodded. “Yes, otherwise it would have been five hundred liang for one radish!”

“That’s even heavier than the radish! Did the price of silver drop that much lately?”

“That proprietress was a bit delusional, thinking everyone’s an idiot! Even the people starving in the lobby don’t buy her radishes. She isn’t the only food vendor in the town.”

“Then why did you buy this ten liang radish then? Did you really think we’re rich?”

Wang Zhong continued complained, “The prices in the other shops had also been bumped up ages ago. Gold and silver are like dirt now. Ten liang for a radish is actually a fairly good price.”

“But a good price doesn’t equal good food. I don’t like radishes at all,” Wang Lu said with knitted brows.

“I’ll eat it if the young master doesn’t want to eat it. I’m still hungry.”

Wang Lu ignored his pageboy’s bad mood and complaining. “I want to

have some meat.”

“If a white radish costs five hundred liang, a portion of meat would probably cost five thousand liang. We could afford half a portion if you wish.”

“Oh I see...” Wang Lu thought for a while and glanced at the radish, and then suddenly asked, “Was there anyone buying her radishes?”

Wang Zhong shrugged and said, “Of course not. Only idiots would buy her radishes.”

“If that’s the case, we wouldn’t need to worry about our dinner.” Wang Lu’s eyes lit up, while his fingers kept knocking on the table as he was getting more and more excited.

“Young master?” Wang Zhong did not understand.

“We will have meat tonight,” Wang Lu said. Then he grabbed his travelling bag and headed out.

—

In the lobby, the proprietress held an impatient look behind the counter. More than one hundred white radishes were cooked in the kitchen, but none of them were sold except for the one sold for ten liang. Although those princelings were good-for-nothings, they were not that brainless to buy those overpriced radishes. The radishes didn’t cost the proprietress a lot, and the losses would be next to nothing. But her

reputation as the proprietress of the Ru Family Inn would be tarnished. More importantly, she was probably going to lose the bet.

“Ahhh... so tired.” The proprietress gave a long stretch, sweeping the lobby with her narrowed eyes. “Shame that squanderer from the Azure Wave Kingdom isn’t here, or I could’ve sold him a couple hundred radishes.”

While the proprietress was considering whether she should promote her radishes to those princelings in the lobby, she heard someone descending the stairs.

The person who came downstairs caught her attention immediately – Wang Lu, the man who completed the twelve tasks.

The proprietress would laugh every time she saw him. Especially when she started to think about how he had completed the twelve tasks, which was described with confidence as ‘unsolvable’ by a particular person, she would laugh even harder.

It was obvious Wang Lu had some plans in mind as he came downstairs. But unfortunately, there were no more tasks to be completed anymore.

“I’d like some radishes.”

The proprietress smiled, “That was a one-time offer.”

“I don’t mind. I’ll buy at the original price.”

Buy at the original price? The proprietress's smile faded a little.

"How many?"

"I want five big ones."

"Big ones are more expensive."

"Don't worry. I have money."

"Good. Three thousand and five hundred liang of silver. Pay first."

Wang Lu did not say anything, and put all the money he had – more than ten bank drafts of the Great Ming Kingdom – on the counter.

The proprietress waved at Wang Lu and said, "I'll bring your radishes to your room later. You can go now."

Wang Lu did not say anything and went upstairs straight away. Then the proprietress collected all the bank drafts and started counting them close to her chest.

"Such an interesting person. No wonder he completed the twelve tasks. He thinks in a completely different way to those noble idlers in the lobby. That heretic can finally find a person of his kind."

The proprietress counted calmly. After she finished counting, there were already several people standing in front of the counter. They were all stewards or bodyguards of the young nobles. They were all bearing forced smiles on their faces.

"Proprietress, I would like to buy..."

"Proprietress, your radishes..."

"Our young master wants..."

The proprietress didn't bother raising her head, "One thousand liang for one radish. How many do you want?"

The customers were surprised. "Wasn't it five hundred liang each?"

"Price's been raised. You don't need to buy it if you don't want to."

The stewards and bodyguards all went back and asked their masters awkwardly, but they all received the same replies.

If it was simply a con, every penny spent would have been a waste. However, if it could increase one's affinity with the Xiuxian world by even a little, one million liang of silver would be worth it. This strange inn must have had its reasons to price their radishes at such a ridiculous price, just like the fantastical tasks at the entrance of the town.

"Chances are everywhere in Spirit River Town." The princelings in the lobby had taken a wait-and-see attitude. As someone had taken the lead, everyone swarmed towards the counter.

Even that rustic countryman could afford thousands of liang of silver, let alone the other people.

“How about... two?”

“I want five!”

“Gimme ten!”

“Shit. Our young master is buying all the radishes!”

Bank drafts of different kingdoms soon heaped on the counter. Even the next several batches had been reserved. The one thing that the princelings didn't lack was money. It was always a jubilant occasion for businessmen when they made tonnes of money. However, while the proprietress was counting tens of thousands of silver liang in front of a bunch of customers with an infinite level of consumption, there was an obvious lack of sincerity in her smile.

“A bunch of idiots.”

This time, she said it very brazenly.

—

[Midnight]

Accompanied by a breeze through the window, the rumblings of hunger were extremely obvious.

"Are you hungry, young master?" Wang Zhong said under his breath on one side of the room. On the other side, Wang Lu snorted. "No."

"I only ate half of the radish. If you're still hungry..."

"I'd rather die than eat the radish."

"But young master, bread is the staff of life..."

"If you really care about me, why don't you dig up some wild herbs or hunt a boar for me?"

"How would I even be able to do that?"

"Then shut up."

Wang Lu turned over and did not say anything anymore. The pageboy wanted to say something, but went quiet. There was always something that you couldn't say.

Young master staked all of his money on the radishes, but apparently it did not end up well. They did not get the five radishes they bought, let alone meat. This novel experience did not seem pleasant to the ambitious young master, whose life had always been plain sailing. After

all, he was not an immortal, so obstacles were inevitable anyways.

The pageboy shrugged on his bed, thinking that it would not be a bad thing for his young master to experience a setback. Otherwise, he would actually think he was naturally talented and different from ordinary people.

While he was thinking, someone knocked at their door.

The young master went to the door, with Wang Zhong still in a daze.

Wang Lu saw the beautiful face of the proprietress as he opened the door, as well as an unusually large lunch box in her hands.

Standing in front of the door, Wang Lu laughed, "You finally came."

The proprietress also laughed, "I felt awful for letting you wait. But I really couldn't come. Those idiots reserved almost a hundred batches of radishes. I just finished cooking, so your dinner had to be delayed."

While they were talking, the proprietress walked into their room and put the lunch box on the table. The box was not open, but everyone could smell the delicious aroma of meat. Wang Lu could not wait to open the lunch box. Although the glow of the candle was dim, the oil on the food was very shiny.

Wang Lu drooled. "You are such an honest person. An honest person with amazing cooking skills."

“You helped me make millions of liang of silver. These cooking skills are nothing.”

Although the lunch box was large, the food in the box was really common: braised pork, pork with starch noodles, shredded pork with eggs and black fungus and chicken wings. However, this box of food would probably have cost more than ten million liang of silver.

Wang Lu put the food on the table one by one, and told his pageboy to eat together. They were both in the midst of puberty, so they had very big appetites. One third of the food had been finished within moments.

Wang Lu put down his bowl and chopsticks. He felt very satisfied despite a slight upset in his stomach. “You can take the leftovers. Don’t waste it.”

“What are you talking about?” the proprietress said. “This is your food for the whole week. The way you ate your food just now should be considered a waste, in my opinion.”

“...wait, wait, wait... a whole week?”

The proprietress explained, “There are still six days from the Celestial Gathering, but I guess you’ve already run out of money? You won’t have anything to eat if you don’t save some food.”

Wang Lu was completely dumbfounded. After a while, he asked, “What do you mean? Aren’t you supposed to cover all my boarding and lodging

costs over the next few days?"

"Ha ha, how is that even possible? You expected way too much."

"...Okay, let's put aside the money that you made with my help. At least I paid you three thousand and five hundred liang, right?"

The proprietress laughed, "Can you even buy a box of food like that at three and a half thousand now? Stop complaining. Save some food. The rest should be enough for you for the next six days. Just think about those idiots who spent tens of thousands and never got to fill their stomachs. At least you have meat to eat."

"..."

The proprietress suddenly recalled something. "Oh wait, actually, I did have some money left for you. Here's the change."

Then she left. Wang Lu got lost in thought while looking at the old copper coin on the table.

# The Counterattacking Junior Brother

Translator: Mr Voltaire

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

Six days passed in the blink of an eye, and the Celestial Gathering drew near.

Six days passed in the blink of an eye, and too many things had happened in the Spirit River Town. Word of an incredible countryside youth had permeated throughout the whole town, as well as word of a certain proprietress' legendary radishes. Youths from all over the land began to see if their fates were intertwined with the Immortal Path.

Six days passed in the blink of an eye, and the number of youths whose fates actually intertwined with the Immortal Path were only known amongst them.

Six days passed in the blink of an eye, and the one who started everything had stayed peacefully within the Ru Family Inn the entire time.

He had completed the town entrance quest out of sheer curiosity and interest. He had never really considered 'fate'. He had no need for 'fate'. After all, he had the 'Heaven Spirit Base'.

Of course, after spending all of his money in order to receive a decent meal, Wang Lu only had a single coin left. As such, there was nothing else he could do, unless he wanted to wash some dishes for the proprietress.

In the morning, Wang Lu was woken up by noisy sounds outside his room.

"The Celestial Gathering has begun!"

"The Golden bridge has been lowered!"

Countless people were yelling and swarming towards the exit of the town.

Wang Lu opened his eyes and gave a sigh. The sunlight from outside the room was already quite blinding. He woke up his pageboy and began to get dressed, getting ready for his journey.

For some reason, the proprietress would not stop smiling during their check out. When Wang Lu tried to return the lunch box back to her, she generously waved her hands. "It's not worth much, you can keep it."

Since she was being 'generous', Wang Lu really wanted to ask her for his three thousand and five hundred liang of silver back.

But of course, that was impossible. Squeezing the rusty copper coin in his hand, Wang Lu walked out of the inn with the heavy lunch box, and walked towards the location of the Celestial Gathering.

Outside the Spirit River Town, the reflection of the sun's rays made the towering Spirit Blade Mountain shine like gold. A golden bridge descended from the skies, with one end attached to the ground and the other end stretching all the way to the Spirit Blade Mountain. A good portion of the bridge was covered by the clouds giving the impression that it was cut off in the middle.

The land at the base of the bridge was not big, and was filled with tens of thousands of people. Wang Lu had woken up late, and was still stuck inside the town.

As the Golden Bridge in the sky gradually came lower, two cultivators wearing black and white robes standing on flying swords stood on each side of the bridge.

From a distance, the two young cultivators didn't seem to have any special features like extra arms, and looked exactly like normal mortals. They did not have a halo or any special auras around them, but the way they appeared made them seem far superior to even a mortal emperor. When the Golden Bridge hit the ground, there was a loud thud, followed

by a complete silence amongst the ten thousands. Everyone was silently staring towards one place.

In the silence, the Spirit Blade Sect cultivators smiled, and began to speak. Their voices were like wind, blowing into the ears of ten thousands.

“Greetings. My Junior Brother and I would like to firstly, welcome everyone to the Spirit Blade Sect’s Celestial Gathering.”

The two people then began to clap. But no one else dared to join their applause out of nervousness.

The Senior Brother felt a bit awkward, and cleared his throat. “We’ll skip all the formalities. Regarding our Sect’s information, I’m sure everyone has heard all they need to already. The things you will need to know, you will find out for yourselves in future. I sincerely hope that everyone will be able to find their fate with the Immortal Path.”

At this moment, someone in the crowd asked with a loud voice. “Is the Celestial Gathering just walking to the peak on this bridge?”

The Senior Brother replied with a smile. “All I can say is that I hope everyone tries their best on their journey. As for the peak, don’t obsess over it too much.”

“Then where do we have to walk to in order to pass? Surely you should tell us that.”

“When the time comes, you’ll know,” the Senior Brother replied.

“When the time comes? Isn’t this a bit too irresponsible?”

The Senior Brother smiled, but did not continue to speak. Instead, the Junior Brother coldly replied. “If you don’t want to come, then piss off. No one’s begging you to try.”

The asker’s face became red.

The Senior Brother began to speak again. “Now, please take the Golden Bridge to the mountain. There should not be any danger on this bridge. However, if you find yourself in a dangerous situation or trapped, feel free to ask for a rescue. We will come to your aid as soon as possible.”

The Junior Brother added, “And, if there are any bored people who are asking to die, we will also gladly comply.”

“Sorry everyone, my Junior Brother has been quite moody these last couple of days.”

“My emotions have been very well.”

“Shut up.”

“You shut up. You drew the worst lot, and yet somehow I was dragged out here with you to do something as boring and time-wasting like this..”

Seeing that they were being looked at by tens of thousands of people with curious gazes, the Senior Brother hurriedly changed the topic. “I declare the official opening of the Celestial Gathering!”

After speaking, the Senior Brother and Junior Brothers rose into the sky on their flying swords, opening up the entrance of the bridge.

In a split second, a tidal wave of people – countless Young Masters and their servants – surged up towards the bridge. And although the bridge was tens of metres wide, it could not suddenly accommodate that many people. As such, cries and shouts of frustration and anger erupted all around. Adding to the chaos and confusion, many of the people who had just taken a step on the Golden Bridge had immediately fallen off it.

The Senior and Junior Brothers from the Spirit Blade Sect were shocked, and hurriedly flew down. They worked together to separate the massive

crowd, but there were already more than a hundred people who were injured. The Senior Brother suddenly looked very embarrassed. "Sorry, I forgot to say just then – apart from those who fulfil the conditions, no one else can step onto the bridge. Any family members, friends or servants, please leave now."

So it was like that. No wonder so many servants had come crashing down. What was even more amusing was that a few Young Masters had also been rejected by the bridge.

At this moment, the Junior Brother coldly added, "Just to reiterate, you have to be less than twelve years old and have not cultivated before. Anyone else should piss off."

The Young Masters who had fallen off from the bridge all felt extremely awkward and embarrassed. Indeed, there were many of them who were already thirteen or fourteen, but had faked their identity passes to say that they were younger than twelve. But they had been exposed by the bridge. They had nothing to say in their defence against the condescending looks of the Senior and Junior Brothers. No one dared to say anything against the Brothers, even though they hadn't explained everything clearly.

Of course, with more than ten thousand people present, there were bound to be some weird ones. One person furiously shouted, "This year I'm only eleven years old, why can't I go on the bridge?!"

The Junior Brother gave him an annoyed look. "How do you know you're eleven? Did you look at the exact date and time of your birth when you were born?"

The person thought for a moment, "This, well, of course it was my mum who told me."

"Then your mum must have remembered incorrectly."

The youth was so angry that he looked like he was about to spit out blood.

The Senior Brother looked over, "Your Highness is...?"

"I am the Liu Family's Liu Han Long of the You Region. Last month I just had my eleventh birthday. My mother, Fei Yun Zong invited seventeen other families from the Lian Yun Mountain to celebrate my birthday – my birthday is something that everyone on the Lian Yun Mountain knows about!"

The Senior Brother looked extremely confused. "Fei Yun Zong?"

"Lian Yun Mountain?"

After looking confused for a while, they got out a map and studied it, looking for the region the youth just talked about.

After looking for a long time, the Junior Brother's became harsher. "A tiny little family living in a tiny little region that you can't even see on the map! Seventeen families came to celebrate your misfortunate birthday? To hell with your shitty little family!"

Seeing his Junior Brother becoming more and more discourteous, the Senior Brother quickly interjected. "The Golden Bridge was personally made by our Head Elder. If anyone is not satisfied with the bridge, feel free to make a complaint to the Head Elder."

The Junior Brother added, "I'm sure he'll be veeery happy to hear all about it."

Veeery happy? More like send you to eternal sleep! After hearing the Head Elder's name, the Liu Family's Young Master was too ashamed to say anymore, and quietly disappeared.

After that, no one dared to cause a ruckus anymore. Seeing everyone acting in an orderly fashion again, the Senior and Junior Brothers nodded their heads, then rose to the skies again and did not pay any attention to the people below anymore. The remaining people began to quietly walk

onto the bridge.

Of course, it was impossible for people not to be talking while walking. A pageboy shouldering a heavy load was full of admiration and sighed. "The Xiuxian cultivators are indeed different. Even two bellboys have such a high standing and atmosphere."

His Young Master beside him laughed. "Bellboys? Are you an idiot? If those two people heard that, I'd be visiting your grave for your death anniversary the next year... Didn't you hear them? They drew the worst lot, so they had to come here to facilitate this. They're even able to ride on flying swords and can separate a crowd of thousands of people with ease. Do the bellboys where you live have such power?"

The pageboy was shocked. "Indeed, they seem all high and mighty, but I sometimes feel that the Spirit Blade Sect isn't very friendly to us mortals."

"When you were little, you poured boiling water down an ant's nest, and you didn't seem very friendly to those ants. The path of an Immortal is different to that of a mortal's. To the Immortals, we mortals are just ants. Sparing our lives after being so pissed off is merciful already. You don't even know that we're all standing in front of death itself."

The pageboy's face paled. "Really?"

“Hah! Of course not. You’d really believe that? For goodness sake, they’re the Spirit Blade Sect – it’s not like they’d massacre everyone like some Demon clan.”

“.....”

“Although, the Spirit Blade Sect is very interesting. It’s very different to the other ancient sects. Although they themselves are an ancient sect, they seem more mysterious than the others – I like it!”

The pageboy sighed, and followed his Young Master’s footsteps. The Spirit Blade Sect’s Golden Bridge only limited people by their age. He was the same age as other Young Masters, having just had his twelfth birthday, and was only just able to enter. He would probably have to carry the heavy loads for his Young Master to the end.

At this point, he still had not realised that his stepping onto the Golden Bridge had signified his stepping onto the Immortal’s path. The path that signified one’s fate with immortality, and not a measly status like a Young Master or a pageboy.

The journey to becoming an Immortal had begun.

Xiao Hai

Translator: Mr Voltaire

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

Even though thousands of people were walking on it, the Golden Bridge didn't look packed at all, due to its considerable width. Wang Lu was walking without a care behind the uneasy crowd, cheerfully talking with his pageboy.

The procession was quite distinguished, with more than half of the attendees from eminent families. But at the foot of the Spirit Blade Mountain, everyone would keep quiet out of fear. It was a difficult task to keep one's composure – very few acted carefree. But Wang Lu's spectacular performance when he appeared made him especially eye-catching.

While most people were hesitating, there was someone already coming for Wang Lu, easily saying hi to him, with a tone of familiarity.

"Hey, I haven't seen you lately."

Wang Lu was in the middle of having a pleasant conversation with his pageboy, hence this person's interjection suddenly stupefied him. He turned around and immediately said, "Do you owe me money?"

The man became stupefied too. "Uh... I don't think so?"

"Well then, do I have to talk to you?"

"...No."

"Then why did you talk to me? Simply trying to strike up a conversation?"

"..."

"Who the hell are you?"

The boy forced a smile, "Now I know why people say that prominent people tend to have short memories..." He cupped his hands together and said, "I am Hai Yun Fan from the Cloud Region. We met in the lobby at the Ru Family Inn a week ago."

Wang Lu knitted his brows, trying to recall who he was. "Oh, you were the young man who asked me about the tasks... Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Not really. I'm just curious as to why you're not as concerned and worried like everyone else here. I really want to know how you're pulling this act off."

Wang Lu laughed, "So, you're looking to me for advice again? That's no good. A qualified adventurer should feel honoured to explore by

themselves. What's the point in chewing sugar canes that have been chewed by other people already?"

Hai Yun Fan's eyes lit up. "Does that mean you actually know some tricks for walking on this bridge?"

"How's that even possible? I haven't read the strategy guide."

"Then..."

Wang Lu became serious. "It's all about strength. If you're strong enough, then why would you need to care about tactics and tricks? For me, the road to immortality will be plain sailing."

Wang Lu's confident and courageous words really surprised Hai Yun Fan, and moved him to gaze at the sky. Wang Lu looked up with him. The sky was bright and scattered with floating clouds. There were no birds in the sky, which made Wang Lu wonder what exactly Hai Yun Fan was gazing at.

Hai Yun Fan sighed. "I was looking for thunderbolts. Bragging at the foot of the Spirit Blade Mountain, I wouldn't be surprised if you got struck by one."

Wang Lu laughed. "Your name is Hai Yun Fan right? Don't worry, I'll remember you this time. Don't worry. I'll protect you when we get into the sect."

"Very kind of you to say so." Hai Yun Fan cupped his hands together

again, and started walking next to Wang Lu, with Wang Lu's pageboy conscientiously walking behind them.

Wang Lu didn't mind him at all. He asked, "If I remember correctly, you were born into a powerful family right?"

"Pardon?"

"I mean, your dad is very powerful."

"Kind of. He's the emperor of the Cloud Mountain Empire."

"Oh my god. Then don't you have three thousand stepmothers?"

"..."

"Anyway, why did you give up royalty to come here?"

Hai Yun Fan laughed. "Power and influence in the mortal world is not as fascinating to me anymore compared to the wonder of the immortal world. As for Xiuxian, it is indeed easy for me to get into some normal sects because of my family's power. In the Cloud Mountain Empire, the White Dragon Temple and Benevolent Cloud Mountain are both fourth-rate sects in the Ten Thousand Celestial Alliance." His smile turned satiric. "But fourth-rate sects are nothing compared to the five top sects in the Alliance, let alone..."

Hai Yunfan had another glance at the sky. "There are no sects that can

actually touch the immortal world other than the five great sects. Among the ten thousand sects in the Alliance, only these five sects mastered their way to immortality. If I've decided to enter the Xiuxian world, I will definitely be a real immortal. Otherwise, I'd rather live a comfortable life as an emperor."

Wang Lu looked surprised. "You sure know a lot."

Hai Yun Fan smiled. "Of course. I gathered a lot of information before I chose to embark on this journey. And the information isn't a secret anyway. I'm probably more prepared compared to a certain someone."

Wang Lu shrugged and smiled, saying to himself inwardly, "Well I didn't prepare at all. A spectacular life is all about taking exams without any preparations. Who gives a shit?"

They walked side by side. The Golden Bridge wound its way up and was quite steep, but neither Wang Lu nor Hai Yun Fan felt tired. They gradually moved forward in their procession.

Staring at the young men they passed, Hai Yunfan said, "Well, before this Celestial Gathering held by the Spirit Blade Mountain, the five great sects had never selected disciples from such a great number of people. Even the Celestial Gathering would be held once in a while with many limits in place. So this gathering is really something."

Wang Lu looked around and said, "Yeah, there are so many high-ranking princelings, enough to hold a Grand Haitian Banquet."

“Well, these are people who possess more than just an eminent position. As far as I know, more than eighty percent of them have natural spirit bases.”

“What?!”

The pageboy, Wang Zhong, was also astonished. “How do you know that?”

Hai Yun Fan laughed. “Don’t underestimate me. Even though I’m a crowned prince, I know the names of most people here... After all, who would have the guts to come to the Spirit Blade Mountain without genuine skills and preparation? Among the five great sects, the Spirit Blade Mountain and Mount Kunlun are famous for sticking to traditional conventions. The Spirit Blade is even more obstinate than Kunlun. Thus, there aren’t any artificial spirit bases in the sect so far. The only thing any ordinary person could get from here is humiliation.”

While Hai Yun Fan was talking, Wang Lu did not seem worried, but his pageboy was looking awful. He thought of the spirit base development medicine in his bag.

Hai Yun Fan laughed again. “However, the Spirit Blade Sect only restricted candidates to ages twelve or under on this Celestial Gathering, but mentioned nothing about spirit bases. Maybe they’ve changed their mind? Although the remaining twenty percent of people here are just trying out their luck, I think they’ll fail eventually.”

The three had already been walking on the bridge for quite some time as they were talking. The clouds were getting dense around them, and

the Spirit River Town behind was becoming all the more smaller and distant. The pageboy was following closely to Wang Lu and Hai Yunfan, not even daring to look down.

The Golden Bridge still looked endless. Clouds enveloped the front, and all they could see were tired young men resting along the way. Without realising, they had already made it to the front of the procession.

Wang Lu sighed. "Those princelings are so weak. Already tired after such a short distance? Looks like they abandoned themselves to wine and women at such a young age."

It was just a normal joke, but Hai Yun Fan looked surprised.

The pageboy Wang Zhong complained. "Young Master, I feel really tired. I can barely keep moving."

Wang Lu's brows knitted. "You always ate so much meat and fish. Why are you as useless as those loafers? Come on, you just carried a lunch box."

Wang Zhong became upset. "It's not like that. This road is very strange. I didn't walk for too long, but it's made me feel so tired to the point of breathlessness."

"Then use your skin to breathe. Never mind. Give me the bags."

Wang Lu sighed as he took the bags from Wang Zhong, carrying it on his back effortlessly.

"That's weird. Why do I feel like it's even easier than walking on level ground?"

"Young Master, you were always exceptional..."

While the two were walking, they did not notice Hai Yun Fan staring at them in awe.

Wang Zhong felt much easier without the bags, and thus continued to follow his young master in their ascension. Clouds had now completely enveloped their surroundings. Even the brilliancy of the Golden Bridge was partly covered. Most people had been left behind, and of the few that were ahead of the three, many were out of breath from walking.

By now, Wang Lu had also realised that something was off. "Can this road absorb people's semen? Could it be that those who lose their virginity would feel more and more tired while walking? So Wang Zhong, when did you lose your virginity?"

"No I didn't!"

"Why are you sweating a lot then?"

"I..."

"So you actually lost it. Good for you."

The pageboy almost knelt down. "Young Master, please stop..."

Hai Yun Fan laughed while he was watching their banter. He said to Wang Lu, "You and your pageboy are not ordinary people. You've been walking for a long time."

"You call this 'not ordinary'? These people are worse than pigs if they can't even walk on a bridge. And this guy needed his young master to carry the bags for him. Who's the young master now?"

Hai Yun Fan shook his head. "Your standards are too high... Anyways, it's been great accompanying you two. But all good things must come to an end. Here I must bid you two farewell."

"Why? What happened?"

Wang Lu widened his eyes, feeling disappointed. Hai Yun Fan wasn't the only one enjoying the company. It was the first time Wang Lu had found another friend after he'd been living in the Wang Family Village for more than ten years. When he said he would protect Hai Yun Fan, he wasn't completely joking.

Although he was just a countryman and Hai Yun Fan was a noble prince, Wang Lu saw him as a friend.

Hai Yun Fan nodded to Wang Lu kindly, and explained, "It's nothing. I just don't feel like I should keep walking. Being here is already enough for me."

Wang Lu still didn't understand.

"You don't have to understand me. I've found my place."

Then Hai Yunfan moved close to Wang Lu's ear and whispered. "Be careful of your pageboy. Although his name means 'loyalty', he is not as loyal as you think."

A gust of wind blew at the same time, which made Wang Lu close his eyes and ask, "What did you just say?"

But when he turned around, Hai Yun Fan had already disappeared. Wang Zhong didn't pick up on what Hai Yun Fan said either.

The clouds around then were becoming more dense – they could only see as far as five metres. Wang Lu said, "Could it be that he already became an immortal?"

"Pardon?"

"Never mind. Let's go... I don't know when we'll reach the end."

—

They did not walk too far this time.

It was not because they reached the end, or that Wang Lu felt run

down. The pageboy just couldn't keep walking.

Although all the bags were carried on Wang Lu's back, the pageboy was still getting more and more tired, and eventually fell on the ground and couldn't get up.

"Hey, you—"

"Young Master, can you please walk by yourself? I am incapable of walking any further."

"That's why I told you not to come with me at the beginning. Now you're giving me such a face..." Wang Lu shook his head when he looked at the nearly paralysed Wang Zhong. "I can't leave you here alone. I'll have a rest with you. We were so close to catching up with the people ahead... I don't know if there are any benefits in being first, but it sounds like quite an achievement in itself."

Wang Lu felt ashamed and didn't say anything. He stopped talking, putting the bags on the ground. As he sat down, all the clouds around them disappeared and the golden radiance grew dim. A lush valley had suddenly appeared around them.

Astonished, Wang Lu marvelled at the dramatic change in scenery.

"Did... Did we travel through time and space?"

We don't want a disciple like that

Translator: Mr Voltaire

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

"Congratulations to the two of you..."

"Holy shit!? Are you some kind of demon!?"

The voice from behind them scared Wang Lu out of his wits, and he jumped as he spun around. What he saw was two young people wearing blue and white robes respectively, looking around twenty five or twenty six. Although they were wearing different coloured robes, the style was similar to the robes the Senior and Junior Brothers had been wearing. They were evidently also Spirit Blade Sect disciples.

The two disciples had looks of indifference on their faces. The slightly older disciple cupped his hands towards Wang Lu and his page boy. "I'm Zhang Ying, and this is Lu Ming. We're from the Serenity Peak of the Spirit Blade Mountain."

Wang Lu gave an 'oh'.

"Congratulations to the two of you on persisting this far across the Golden Bridge. According to the rules, you can come with us to the Spirit

Blade Mountain and join the disciples of Serenity Peak.”

“.....” Wang Lu frowned, but did not say anything.

Zhang Ying did not press on, and silently waited for Wang Lu’s response.

After a short while, Wang Lu was still deep in thought, but the little pageboy opened his mouth, “O Respected Immortal, you... do you mean, we’ve already been accepted by the Sect?”

Zhang Ying nodded his head. “That is correct.”

Lu Ming added on, “The Golden Bridge was personally made by the Head Elder, and can be used to evaluate the qualifications of a cultivator. The better one’s potential is, the further one can walk. And by being able to walk this far qualifies you two to enter the Sect.”

The pageboy was shocked for a moment, then excitedly asked, “Is, is this really true?”

“It is absolutely true.”

“Young Master! Did you hear that? We succeeded! We’ve already been accepted by the Spirit Blade Sect!”

Wang Lu shook his head. “Excuse me, who were the other two present when the Golden bridge descended....?”

Zhang Ying looked a bit uncomfortable. "Them? They were disciples of the Ethereal Peak."

"Ethereal Peak? Serenity Peak? What's the difference?"

"Why do you have so many questions?"

Lu Ming smiled bitterly. "Senior Brother, it's not like this is something we're ashamed of. From the outside, the Spirit Blade Mountain looks like one big mountain. However, it consists of many peaks, one of which is the Serenity Peak, which is a part of the Outer Court of the Spirit Blade Sect. The Ethereal Peak is part of the Inner Court. Those two Senior Brothers are much higher ranked than we are."

Wang Lu smiled. "I knew it. The two wearing black and white from earlier looked much more impressive than you guys." He became suspicious. "But is the test for newcomers really that – just walking across a simple bridge? Is there any way to directly enter the Inner Court?"

Lu Ming answered, "Of course not. The Spirit Blade Sect's criteria for choosing Inner Court Disciples is extremely strict. One's potential, character and affinity with the Immortal Path have to be above a certain standard. Even if one has a Heaven Spirit Base, he would still be rejected by the Ethereal Peak if all the criteria had not been fulfilled."

"Heh."

"Excuse me?"

Wang Lu smiled. "Nothing, nothing. Then, to us new people, what are the requirements for entering the Inner Court?"

Zhang Ying gave a cold harrumph. "Enter the Ethereal Peak? Hah! Alright then. From here, you can follow this path to reach the Ethereal Peak. If you can make it there, the Peak Elder will most definitely accept you."

Wang Lu looked towards the direction in which Zhang Ying's finger was pointing. A path stretched out endlessly, covered by clouds.

"How far is it?"

Lu Ming smiled. "That depends on your affinity with the Immortal Path. It might be very far away, or it might be very close. The path to becoming an Immortal is not the same for everyone."

Zhang Ying asked, "What is your decision? Will you come with us to Serenity Peak? Or will you continue to walk on this path? Let me make it clear that if you continue to the Ethereal Peak, there will be no second chances with us."

Wang Lu replied, "So just to confirm, if we choose to continue on this path, our only choice is to either walk to Ethereal Peak or fail?"

Zhang Ying gave a cold smile. "That's right. You either become an Inner Court Disciple, or you return to your little mortal lives after the Celestial Gathering has ended. So seeing as you're looking down on our Serenity

Peak, you can't come crying to us if you fail. Even though we're the Outer Court, we won't be taking anyone who turns us down."

"Hey, hey, don't take it so personally. It's not like I think you're some sort of mediocre, trashy class or anything."

"What did you say!?"

Wang Lu shrugged. "Now that I know that this path isn't the end, it's obvious I won't stop here."

"It's not like we're inferior to those in the Ethereal Peak, just because we're Outer Court Disciples. Our Serenity Peak's Eldest Senior Brother is comparable to even some Legacy Disciples. Out of all the people who set out on this journey, only a few people out of thousands manage to arrive here. I highly recommend that you value this opportunity."

At this point, the pageboy was also nodding. "Young Master, how about we just go to Serenity Peak?"

"If you want to go, then go. Why do you need to ask me?"

"Ah..." The pageboy's face became bitter. "Young Master, the Master sent me here to look after you, how can I leave you here by yourself?"

Wang Lu smiled, looking at the pageboy's face that seemed to be in constant worry. He opened his mouth, shook his head and said. "I'm determined to keep going, whether you come or not. So if you want to come, then come."

Zhang Ying stared at the two people.

"I sincerely hope that the two of you won't regret your decision... the second half of this path is far more difficult than you can imagine. No one has succeeded in the past three hundred years. In the previous Celestial Gatherings, everyone was happy to stop here. It was actually the Inner Court Elders who went out in search of disciples for the Inner Court. It may have taken them anywhere between ten to a hundred years to find one – but they did it because it is impossible for anyone to overcome this path."

"All good. I've been a professional adventurer for tens of years. I can handle it."

Zhang Ying shook his head. "Up to you then."

Wang Lu laughed, and waved towards Lu Ming. "In that case, Senior Brother Lu Ming, I hope we'll meet again in future."

Lu Ming also laughed, "This is the first time I've seen someone be so familiar with us. I'll just give you a piece of advice: the path you walk on is in an ever-changing state, every blade of grass, every tree that appears has a reason, and some relationship with you."

"..... Every blade of grass has some sort of relationship with you? Is this meant to satirise someone who has romantic affairs wherever he goes?"

"Hah! Whatever it means, you go and think about it yourself. If I reveal

any more to you, I'll be punished by the Master. Good luck!"

Zhang Ying pulled his Junior Brother. "That's quite enough. We need to go and welcome the next few who are arriving soon."

As the two people spoke, they pulled apart the clouds in front of them, then flew out.

In the valley, Wang Lu and Wang Zhong, Young Master and pageboy, looked at each other.

"Young Master, are we going to just give up like this?"

"Of course not. Who said I was going to give up!? The challenges behind this Serenity Peak have caused many geniuses and heroes to give up over the past three hundred years. Would you really want to throw away that kind of experience? That kind of opportunity?"

The pageboy shamelessly nodded his head. "Yes, I would definitely accept it! Young Master, being able to reach here, I would not even dare to dream of it! When you said you wanted to enter the Celestial Gathering, everyone in the village thought you were crazy. When I left, the Master told me that if you were rejected, you can go with him to the large cities nearby to get rid of the frustration. Who would have thought that Young Master actually... actually reached this point?"

"Reached what point? We've only just begun."

Upon seeing the pageboy's look of confusion, Wang Lu began to

explain to him his strategy.

“There are three main points that those two in blue and white just talked about. There’s potential and talent, character and affinity. Right now, we’ve only passed the test of potential and talent. No, that probably didn’t even count as a real test. We just merely stepped over a necessary threshold, and yet you’re blabbing on about this like it’s some sort of final destination?”

“But...”

“But the Serenity Peak has already opened their doors to us? Don’t be an idiot. The second point. Remember they said that the abilities of the Serenity Peak’s Eldest Senior Brother is on par with the Legacy Disciples? He must be a talented genius, so why is he still at Serenity Peak? Why hasn’t he advanced to the Ethereal Peak?”

“W-Why...?”

“Just as other people who got here thought they were sooo amazing, and thought that entering the Serenity Peak would be a glorious feat... It all means that they just simply reached their limit. If you choose the ‘easy mode’, then you can’t possibly ever attain true glory.”

“What?”

“Oh forget it. Even if I explained it again a million times, you wouldn’t understand. As for the third point.”

Wang Lu raised his head, and looked towards the clouds. He became dead serious, and his eyes almost seemed to flash in ablaze.

"As a tactician, I must have the mindset to conquer all obstacles and solve all problems!"

"What?"

"I've already decided to continue on this path. Whether you want to come or not is up to you. In any case, those two wearing blue and white have already left, so there's no option for you to turn back, haha!"

After speaking, Wang Lu picked up the bags and started marching forwards.

"And also, Wang Zhong, this journey looks like it's going to be an extremely long one, so brace yourself."

The already exhausted Wang Zhong asked, "How long?"

"If I had to write this journey as a story, it'd probably be around 80,000 words."

"... that is indeed a very long journey."

---

“The path to the Ethereal Peak is definitely not as easy to walk on compared to the Golden Bridge.”

Standing on a sea of clouds, an elderly man with white hair was stroking his white beard.

“When the Senior Brother Head Elder set down the date of this Celestial Gathering twelve years ago, none of us expected so many talented youths to appear. Almost one hundred people were able to walk more than 80% of the Golden bridge. All of them, just based on their Spirit Bases, are qualified to enter the Serenity Peak.”

Beside him, a cultivator wearing a black and white robe laughed. “Has Master already set his eyes on someone?”

The elderly man answered dismissively. “Hmph, walking across the Golden Bridge only means that that their spirit base is decent. If they want to join my Ethereal Peak, they need to have more than just a decent spirit base. Out of these hundred people, perhaps ten will be able to succeed.”

While talking, they heard a voice from behind them.

“You don’t have to be so strict.”

On the cloud platform, the two cultivators, one elderly and one young, were both suddenly shocked upon turning around.

“S-Senior Brother Head Elder!?”

The one who had suddenly appeared behind them was the number one expert in the Spirit Blade Sect, the Immortal Feng Yin.

“Please, no need to get so tense.” Feng Yin smiled as he waved his hands. “I just came to have a look at how things are going. After the Golden Bridge lies Junior Brother Liu Xian’s Ethereal Peak. The backbone of our Sect.”

Liu Xian was very serious as he lowered his head and said, “The Senior Brother entrusted me with an important task. Of course I would take it seriously.”

“Thank you for your hard work all these years. Seeing how well the Ethereal Peak has flourished, it’s quite difficult to think back to the state it was in all those years ago... However, since we’ve put so much effort in organising this Celestial Gathering, there’s no need to be so harsh on the newcomers. If there’s anyone decent, just take them in.”

Liu Xian was a bit hesitant. “But Senior Brother, this doesn’t really fulfil the rules.”

“Ai, rules are dependent on the situation. The number of disciples in our Spirit Blade Sect has remained the same for such a long time, don’t you want things around here to be a bit livelier?”

“Honestly, not at all. It’s already lively enough with Fifth Junior Sister.”

“...let’s not talk about her. Asking her to help with organising of this was

asking her for a lot of trouble. I almost lost my mind in these past few days. Hmm... this child seems familiar, and has pretty good potential. He's worth my attention."

As he spoke, the Immortal pointed at a layer of clouds, and two little doppelgangers made of clouds became animated. Needless to say, it was the Young Master and pageboy pair from the Wang Family Village.

Liu Xian became extremely shocked. "Senior Brother, do you really have a very good impression of them? Oh wait, these two peoples' results on the Golden Bridge aren't that bad at all..."

"The Golden Bridge was just a little toy I made casually, so don't take it too seriously."

"Senior Brother is being humble. The Golden Bridge can precisely control the amount of spiritual energy released. The higher the quality of one's spirit base, the easier they are able to replenish their spiritual energy, and thus making it easier for them to walk across the bridge. The further one walks, the greater the resistance they face. When the rate of their energy replenishment is the same as the rate of energy depletion, they are forced to stop, allowing us to see the quality of their spirit base. Even if they can push forwards using their body strength alone, there's simply no need for them, seeing as they're struggling so much on such a 'toy'. The Golden Bridge's design is indeed marvellous. Using this as a preliminary test is perfect. So if the Senior Brother decides that these two are worth the attention, I won't argue with him."

"Err, actually it's not me, but Little Ling'Er, who has her attention on someone... it's said that he actually completed that monstrous chain of tasks. As for his potential, it's similar to what I've seen in the past,

probably between third-rate and fourth-rate. I guess it's ok."

"Then....."

"No matter, just follow the rules of the Ethereal Peak. We'll see how far they can go according to their abilities..."

As he spoke, a blazing sword talisman appeared, and nearly set the Head Elder's beard on fire.

"Ah! Ah! Who did that? Who's so bored that they'd use a Spirit Blade Heaven Talisman to find me... so it's you! What do you want? Is it the Age of Chaos?! Is the Demon Clan invading!? What? Overtime pay? You want overtime pay for organising the Celestial Gathering? Why are you so shameless!? Aiyo, are you going to anger me to death? I feel like my primordial spirit is going to explode..."

Immortal Feng Yin spent a long time calming down, then turned around, staring into the endless sky. The clouds surrounding the mountain had been completely obliterated!

The young cultivator's face was full of horror, and Liu Xian's face revealed a hint of admiration. "Head Elder's cultivation is indeed peerless. Just releasing a bit of energy caused the Ethereal Peak's Cloud Array to be obliterated... Junior Brother is deeply in awe."

"I only broke the first layer. Moreover, the Deity stage isn't much in the Nine Regions. Heh heh, ten years ago, at the Ten Thousand Celestial Alliance Meeting, there were a few members at the Unity stage already."

“Hmph, did they do any demonstrations?”

“Demonstrations my ass. In any case, I slept through the whole thing... Anyways, I’ll be going now, otherwise if Junior Sister keeps burning through those precious Heaven Talismans we’re going to go bankrupt... Junior Brother, I’ll leave the Celestial Gathering to you. You don’t have to mind too much about what I’ve been saying, just go with the rules if necessary.”

After speaking, the Head Elder transformed into a ray of light and sped off. Liu Xian sighed. He looked through the Cloud Array, towards the Young Master and pageboy who were walking through the valley.

Caught the attention of both the Head Elder and Little Ling’Er...? Although the Head Elder told him to follow the rules, this sort of attention was in itself a violation of the rules.

“Whatever, I’ll keep my eyes on those two. Hopefully they won’t disappoint. Let’s get on with our work!”

Just as the cultivator wearing black and white was about to leave.

“Oh, right, remember to tell your Junior Brothers to bring spirit stones and sword manuals... Ai, and bring mah-jong. It looks like this Celestial Gathering is going to take some time, so let’s not bore ourselves to death.”

“Err... Master?”

“Heh heh, and remember to call your Martial Uncle Zhou Ming. Last time, the Luminous Peak won ten or so treasures from us. Let’s see if we can win them back this time.”

“... Master?”

Junior Brother you understand me

Translator: Mr Voltaire

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

"This road is so God. Damn. LONG."

Within the winding narrow valley, both Young Master and his pageboy were quickly running out of breath.

Wang Lu wiped the sweat off his forehead. "Argh, it's not like the Golden Bridge anymore... ..I can't feel my energy coming back... ..seems like our baggage has gotten heavier as well."

The pageboy sighed. "Energy coming back? What energy coming back? Are you feeling alright, Young Master?"

"No, I'm not feeling alright, so you carry the baggage."

"..."

While talking, Wang Lu suddenly became excited, and pointed ahead. "Oooh look! The fog's gotten thicker; we must have entered a new map!"

As always, his pageboy scratched his head in confusion. "What new map?"

Wang Lu explained, "Did you really think that the Immortal Path was just a straight line? If the only qualifications for the Immortal Path were just potential and knowledge, then all you'd need is a Golden Bridge and a piece of paper. Remember, the Spirit Blade Sect also wanted to test the newcomers' character and affinity. But how do you test character and affinity? A written exam? A multiple choice question quiz? An EQ (emotional quotient) test? There has to be another trial in addition to the Golden Bridge. And I'm betting this fog is an indication of an upcoming trial."

"Young Master, I have no idea what you're talking about anymore..."

Wang Lu didn't seem to be bothered by his pageboy's confusion. He began to think out loud. "The Spirit Blade Sect is quite famous, so they've got to be strict with the selection of their disciples. And because they rarely hold Celestial Gatherings, there are so many people here. However, ancient Sects are nevertheless ancient Sects. They're probably going to stick to traditional procedure, but complicate things with a twist."

Upon hearing his thoughts, the pageboy could not help but ask, "Young Master, how do you know so much about the Spirit Blade Sect?"

The Young Master had spent the whole week in the Spirit River Town cooped up in his room. When and where did he get so much information from? Could he have been born with this valuable knowledge, like some kind of Sage?

“Do you really think I spent the whole day running around, completing those tasks for nothing? Many of the players just had their eyes on the prize – they lacked the patience to listen properly. The true prize, of course, was information. When I finished the final task, the elderly man at the town’s entrance told me that this was the first time the Spirit Blade Sect had held a Celestial Gathering in the last 100 years. Clearly then, the Spirit Blade Sect are inexperienced in running such an event. But, they’ve certainly put in a lot of effort and attention to detail – going so far that they’d even enlist the help of an old man. But the ordinary aren’t able to see the value of information. Those princelings wanted information, but weren’t bothered to obtain it through a few simple tasks. Why should they receive information? Just because they have money? Hah! When 500 liang of silver buys you a single radish, money is worthless...”

The pageboy was astounded. He simply could not take in everything the Young Master had mentioned. But his tone remained somewhat dismissive, just like it was back in the Wang Family Village. It amazed him that his confidence in the Wang Family Village had remained unmoved to this point. The Young Master was indeed the Young Master. You just couldn’t help but admire him.

---

According to Wang Lu’s explanation, the fog in the valley heralded a trial – one which would test whether or not they were suitable to enter the Inner Court of the Ethereal Peak.

Although the pageboy did not truly understand the difference between the Serenity Peak and Ethereal Peak, he knew the Young Master cared about it, which probably meant that it was important.

---

The area that the fog covered was much larger than they expected.

Wang Lu had expected the fog to last only a short while, but the two of them had been stumbling around in it for quite a time. Even Wang Lu had become slightly unsure of what was happening.

"Young Master, could it be that we've gone on the wrong path?"

"Bullshit, there was only one path since the beginning. Are you saying we've taken the wrong path?"

"Err..."

The pageboy wiped the sweat off his face, unable to answer.

Wang Lu was still carrying all the baggage. Although he had persisted in carrying it the whole time, he now felt quite tired. And although he did not feel any less confident, he began to walk slower, observing his surroundings as much as possible.

Within the thick fog, their vision was limited to a radius of approximately three metres. Wang Lu remembered that they were in a ten metre wide valley, and they had been walking straight and forwards the whole time.

"Wang Zhong, let's head to the right."

"That's a cliff though."

"Not necessarily."

The pageboy paused for a second, then followed Wang Lu and turned to the right. Although he expected that they would run into the side of the mountain...

"Eh, this is... weird. I remember when we entered into the fog, the two sides of the valley stretched out for a long time..."

"We've left the valley for a long time now. The changes in the map can happen unknowingly... I thought the fog only acted as a 'buffer' or 'transition' phase, but it looks like it's part of the new map too."

As Wang Lu spoke, he bent down and pressed his hands against the ground.

"Young Master, is there something wrong with the soil here?"

"How would I know? I'm not a geologist." He dusted the dirt off his hands. "I thought the dirt might give us some clues, but I can't see anything out of the ordinary."

Wang Zhong suddenly became scared. "Young Master, could there be some sort of danger here?"

Without Wang Lu's confidence in knowing everything, the little pageboy lost his sense of security. To him, the surrounding fog suddenly became more ferocious, as if it wanted to swallow him up. In the end, the Immortal Path was something the little pageboy wasn't quite cut out for.

"There's no danger, but no clues either."

"What!? Does that mean we're going to be stuck here forever?"

"Of course not. Not having any clues is probably the biggest clue in itself. As I've said before, the Immortal Path tests a person comprehensively. With that in mind, this trial might be testing our luck – an important aspect of one's affinity with Immortality. Xiuxian cultivators value affinity and fate very highly."

"Err, so that means..."

"That means, there are no wrong turns in this place. Every direction represents a person's fate and affinity. Basically, we'll get out of this as long as we keep walking sincerely in a single direction."

"Young Master, how are you so sure about this?"

"Remember how those two wearing blue and white said that every blade of grass and every tree that appears has a reason for its being? Wouldn't that mean every direction we walk in also has reason and purpose? At least that's how I would have designed this, but the organiser of this Celestial Gathering seems to be quite professional himself, so I don't think we'll be disappointed. "

As he spoke, his gaze seemed to pass through the thick fog, and towards the mountain peak in the distance.

“Spirit Blade Sect, wait for me...”

---

At the same time, far above the fog in the valley, the Ethereal Peak had exploded into chaos.

“Shit! Why is the Disciplinary Elder here!?”

“Quickly tell Master and Martial Uncle to pack up their stands!”

“You over there, go and stall for time!”

“Ha!? Senior Brother, you’re a Legacy Disciple, shouldn’t you go?!?”

“No way, the Disciplinary Elder is even stricter towards Legacy Disciples! If I go, I’ll definitely be put into confinement until the Yuanying stage!”

“Congratulations to Senior Brother on his future prospects of reaching the Yuanying stage!”

“Cut the crap! I’m still a step away from the Xu Dan stage. I’d be kept in

confinement for one or two hundred years! Stop spewing trash and go and stall the Disciplinary Elder!”

---

“Which of you wanted to stall me?”

“Shit!”

---

“..... Senior Brother Liu Xian, Junior Brother Zhou Ming – what you guys doing?”

“Wah ah ah ah! Who?! Who is it impersonating Junior Brother Fang He?! Such audacity, impersonating the Disciplinary Elder! I’m going to report you! Stay right there and don’t you dare run!”

“..... Senior Brother Liu Xian, have you had enough? And Junior Brother Zhou Ming, don’t try to use the Shadow Light Sword to escape. I’ve already put a Stellar Veil in place. You can’t escape.”

“..... Senior Brother Fang He, when the Head Elder gave you the Stellar Sword Manual, he didn’t give it to you to use it against your fellow sect members!!”

“If I don’t discipline my fellow sect members as Disciplinary Elder, then who am I meant to discipline? The residents of the Spirit River Town? You

are all Elders of the esteemed Heavenly Sword Hall. You have been assigned to monitor the Celestial Gathering. And yet here you are, playing around. You even disobeyed the Sect rules and gathered together a crowd to gamble. In accordance to the Sect rules, you won't be able to leave the mountain for a hundred years."

"Goddamn, no way!?! Where is this rule even from?"

Just as the Elders began to raucously argue, a ray of light shot out from the cloud layer, transforming into a disciple wearing a black and white robe.

The disciple bore a serious look, and ignored the overturned mah-jong table, as well as the red-faced, arguing Elders. "Reporting to the Elders, someone has emerged from the Cloud Wave Map."

"What? So fast!?"

The Disciplinary Elder and the Ethereal Peak Elder who had been arguing until their faces were red suddenly stopped, and quickly walked to the cliff. In disbelief, they looked upon the image on the cloud layer.

"Those two actually did it..."

The Luminous Peak Elder, Zhou Ming, walked over. "What do you mean 'those two'? Do you know them? Their results are pretty good – they walked out of the Cloud Wave Map in just four hou– Wait, only four hours!?"

At this moment, even the usually serious Disciplinary Elder, Fang He, couldn't help but raise his eyebrows. "Four hours? Doesn't that mean they didn't get lost at all? The Cloud Wave Map should have sealed off all five senses, and should have also attacked one's heart. The only way anyone could have managed to pass in four hours is if they had an extremely firm emotional stability and character... These two must have a terrifying level of confidence to be able to walk straight from beginning to end."

Liu Xian was dumbfounded. "When was the last time we saw someone pass through at such a speed?"

Zhou Ming shook his head. "I've never seen it happen before."

Fang He softly replied, "Never seen it happen before? Junior Brother Zhou Ming, your memory is getting worse and worse. We've all seen it happen before. The last person who was able to walk out within four hours..."

"We've all seen it? The best result I've seen was probably from the Head Elder, who spent about eight hours... But to think someone was faster than him..." Zhou Ming frowned, then had a sudden thought. "Senior Brother Fang He, could you mean..."

"..... Who else could it be?"

An image went through the minds of the three people, and they collectively let out a sigh.

After a long pause, Liu Xian said, "As expected from the genius who

even caught the attention of the Head Elder... His talent and potential may be mediocre, but his emotional stability and character are exceptional."

Fang He shook his head. "We can't speak too early. The Cloud Wave Map is only the first step of the trial. Their success doesn't just depend on their emotional stability and character, but also their affinity with Immortality. Let's see what the next part of the trial is... Hey, Senior Brother, when did the Ethereal Peak design such a trial?"

At this time, the clouds began to change. Apart from the two little cloud doppelgangers of the Young Master and pageboy, ten or so building structures also rose up, forming the model of a small village.

Fang He became more and more confused. "After the Cloud Wave Map... according to the entrant's performance... the next trial should be either the Red Ridge Mountains, Frozen Wind Valley, Azure Cloud Canyon or the Nether World Path. If one can continue on the path to the end, they will have the right to enter the Ethereal Peak. But I don't remember this little village... did Senior Brother change the trials of the Celestial Gathering?"

Liu Xian was also very confused. "Junior Brother, you know me. Why would I randomly change the Sect's procedures?"

Fang He looked at the overturned mah-jong table, but did not say anything. Although Senior Brother was not exactly a model Elder, he was not someone who would make such a whimsical decision. Which meant...

"Fifth Junior Sister, what have you done this time?"

A talented and intellectually, physically and spiritually balanced disciple

Translator: Mr Voltaire

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

"Young Master, there's a village ahead!"

As the fog lifted, the suddenly appearing village shocked the pageboy, who subconsciously stumbled backwards upon seeing it.

Wang Lu put his hand on his shoulder in an attempt to relax him. "What's wrong? Weren't you complaining about being hungry and thirsty just then? Here's a resupply point for you."

The pageboy frowned with a face full of uneasiness. "Young Master, don't you think there's something weird about having a village here?"

"Well, after walking for an entire four hours, anyone would be tired and hungry. Of course there would be a village here. Would they really let us starve to death?"

"But... it still seems so suspicious. Look! There are people in the village!"

The pageboy pointed. On one of the paths in the village, an old lady carrying firewood was slowly walking towards them.

"You-Young Master, I think that old lady was looking at us!?"

"So? Is she making your heart beating faster? Ngaw, that's cute."

"N-No, I- I meant that it's a living person!"

"Yeah no shit. What else could she be, a 'ghost'?"

"I feel like in this sort of place, meeting a ghost would be more normal than meeting a person....."

"Great. Maybe you can use a ghost pick-up line to start flirting with her. Oh, I've got one - 'Hey there, you're the most boo-tiful girl I've seen my entire life'".

Realising his sarcasm wasn't going to work, Wang Lu sighed. "If you're scared, just follow me. There's probably going to be lots of things to do in this village. Let's not rush things."

The village hidden behind the fog was not as mysterious or terrifying as the pageboy had thought. After talking with a few of the villagers, the two had found out that the name of the village was 'The Garden of Peaches'. The villagers had been living their hidden village for over a thousand years, and did not concern themselves with matters of the external world. The resources in the mountain were abundant, and they had lived a prosperous life for the past thousand years.

The villagers of the Garden of Peaches were all very hospitable and friendly. When Wang Lu and Wang Zhong had arrived at noon, the Village Chief had organised a banquet at his residence, and half of the village came. Wang Lu and the little pageboy ate until they felt like they were going to explode, and gleefully drank the sweet wine made from the mountain spring water and wild fruits. They had been completely revitalised from their fatigue in the Cloud Wave Map.

At the banquet, apart from devouring food, there was also plenty of chatting and laughter. Like Wang Lu had expected, it was a very good opportunity for gleaning information. What was strange was that the Garden of Peaches was extremely disconnected from the outside world. Let alone the 'Nine Regions', they did not even know that they were residing inside the Spirit Blade Mountain. To these villagers, the mountains and waters around them were the entire world.

What was even more strange was that the villagers were not interested in the outside world in the slightest. Although they were very friendly towards strangers, they did not ask about anything in the outside world.

"What? There are Immortals outside? Riding on flying swords would be so cool! Here, have some Yellow Fish; it's our village's specialty. Have a taste..."

"Emperor? What's an Emperor? Is he bigger than a Village Chief? What, you have to kneel down in front of the Emperor, and he can execute anyone as he pleases? What a tyrannical Village! Have a taste of some buns my wife made..."

That was pretty much a summary of Wang Lu's experiences in trying to talk to the villagers about the outside world. He had no way of changing the topic while talking with them. Their mindsets were rigid and narrow-focused.

At night, the two of them stayed at the Village Chief's residence. The Village Chief graciously let them stay in a guest room in the backyard. The quality of the room was even better than the premium room at the Ru Family Inn. However, this went unnoticed by the pair as they each had different things on their minds.

The pageboy was not at ease, as he could not accept the situation. Why would there be such a banquet on the Immortal Path? In the stories he had heard, people had to face a mountain of trials and difficulties in order to become an immortal. If they had such a merry time on the way to the Ethereal Peak, wouldn't those two Brothers from the Serenity Peak be a bit too pitiful?

As for Wang Lu, he was not quite at ease with the villagers' behaviour.

From an adventurer's perspective, if the Immortal Path was an adventure, then the Spirit River Town would be the 'Beginner's Village'. The Golden Bridge and the fog would be the first adventure, after which the Garden of Peaches would be the main focus, similar to the main city in those adventuring stories. However, the villager's lack of interest in the outside world seemed to cut off any prospect of a 'main quest'.

At the dinner banquet, Wang Lu talked with most of the villagers, but did not even have a glimpse of that 'quest' appearing.

“Argh, why is this progressing so slowly?!”

Wang Lu tossed and turned in bed, unable to sleep. It was not until the second day’s morning, when Wang Lu was brushing his teeth at the stream, when there was finally a turning point.

“As they say, you just can’t run away from fateful encounters, eh?”

Seeing the person walk out of the forest, Wang Lu almost swallowed the water he was rinsing his mouth with.

“Little Hai!?”

Hai Yun Fan’s smile was somewhat awkward. “Little Hai... alright, Little Hai it is. Brother Wang Lu, I never thought I’d meet you again here.”

Wang Lu dropped his toothbrush with a face easily giving away his confusion. “I never thought I’d meet you here either. Does this mean we’ve unknowingly formed a party?”

---

At the same time, the Elders on the Ethereal Peak were going crazy.

“Where, where did this Garden of Peaches come from!?”

“..... Master, even if you asked me, I wouldn’t be able to answer you.”

The disciple wearing black and white, being shouted at by the furious and red-eyed Ethereal Peak Elder, was under enormous pressure. He almost had to pull out his Spirit Sword and offer it as a sacrifice to prevent himself from being crushed by his master.

Before, when the Head Elder's rage exploded out from him, he had obliterated the Cloud Array. Now, Liu Xian's anger, resulting in his primordial spirit energy leaking out, caused the Ethereal Peak's entire Seeking Sword Hall to tremble. Within 100 metres of Liu Xian, anyone who was not yet at the Xu Dan stage was not even able to stand.

"Senior Brother, calm down."

Elder Zhou Ming shook his head, and patted Liu Xian's shoulder. A wave of cold and clear sword aura flowed into Liu Xian, who instantly was awoken from his rage. "Sorry, I lost myself for a bit there."

Zhou Ming bitterly smiled. "It's no wonder that Senior Brother is so angry, this Garden of Peaches Village... makes one want to laugh and cry at the same time."

At the beginning, Liu Xian believed that this village was a certain person's prank. However, when the second wave of people to walk out of the Cloud Wave Map were sent into the Garden of Peaches Village as well, Liu Xian knew that something was up.

A certain person had changed the Immortal Path, and had randomly added the village between the Cloud Wave Map and the Nether World Path. No matter how well one performed in the Cloud Wave Map, they

would inevitably be sent to the Garden of Peaches Village.

This certain person must have had impressive skills and talent to be able to change the Immortal Path without anyone knowing, but using this talent to screw with other Sect members was simply too damnable.

Zhou Ming sighed, "..... I wonder if Head Elder punished her."

Liu Xian gave a cold harrumph, "Punish? After all these years, he's never really punished her before!"

".....Aye, I have no idea what Fifth Junior Sister was thinking this time. This Garden of Peaches Village is simply too strange."

Liu Xian's irritation was obvious. "It's probably one of those incomprehensible pranks again."

"Tut tut. You call my genius design a prank? Senior Brother, your bad taste hasn't changed at all these hundred years."

"Ahhhhh! It's you!!"

Hearing the familiar voice that had appeared in his nightmares countless times, the renowned Ethereal Peak Elder Liu Xian's calm disposition flew out the window. The sword in his hand flashed like a ray of light, sending a wave of sword energy flying towards the origin of the voice.

Zhou Ming's eyes widened. "What a furious strike. This sword energy from the Golden Seven Sword has far surpassed the peak of the YuanYing stage... Looks like Senior Brother will be able to enter the next stage within fifty years."

It was a pity that the overwhelming sword energy had found the wrong opponent.

The bright and dazzling sword energy from the Golden Seven Sword dissolved and melted like snow as it met the white silhouette, and dissipated. The woman in white flicked her wrist. "Senior Brother, what are you doing? Is it time for demolitions and rebuilding?"

After striking out with his sword, Liu Xian had also calmed down, but his anger still burnt fiercely in his heart. "Look at what you've done! You've completely messed up the Celestial Gathering!"

"What are you talking about? In order to make this Celestial Gathering more efficient and comprehensive, I went out on a limb and used my own personal funds of high grade spirit stones to arrange this Garden of Peaches Village. When I applied for overtime pay from Senior Brother, I was harshly rejected..."

Liu Xian furiously replied, "Who wants to pay you for your own monkey business!? Get it clear in your mind that the stages and procedures of the Celestial Gathering have already been set hundreds of years ago. Every step and stage has been through hundreds of refineme—"

"Even if it was refined by a mediocre hundreds of times, it will still be mediocre. The Cloud Wave Map tests one's emotional stability and

character, while the Red Ridge Mountain, Nether World Path, etc etc, test one's aptitude and talent. These are decent for sure, and can test the different qualities of a person. However, you've all cultivated in the Xiuxian world for hundreds of years, and are all at the YuanYing Stage at least. Don't you understand that the most important factor in Xiuxian cultivation isn't the quality of one's spirit base, emotional stability or affinity??"

After receiving such a rebuttal, Liu Xian's anger slightly weakened. "Then, what is it?"

"It's EQ (emotional quotient) of course!"

"....."

"Right now, things are not like they were back in the great war between the Immortals and the Demons. The Nine Regions are in a current phase of peace and development. The days of bloodthirsty fighting are long gone. Right now, the most important thing in the Xiuxian world is networking and making friends! The point of this Garden of Peaches Village is to test one's interpersonal skills. Remember that "Peerless Martial God" from the Royal Soldier Sect one hundred years ago? Heh heh, he was half a step away from the Enlightenment stage, but because he had many enemies, he was obliterated by them when his Divine Tribulation came... If they're unable to maintain friendly relations with these simple villagers, how are they meant to survive in the XiuXian world?"

Liu Xian and Zhou Ming were completely speechless.

EQ? Networking? Interpersonal relations? You... you villain, you dare to mention these things!?

“Moreover, my Garden of Peaches Village isn’t that simple. It’s right after the Cloud Wave Map, so everyone will have different starting positions. And because everyone’s emotional stability, character and affinity are different, they will trigger different quests, with different consequences for each respective quest. For example, if one raises their favourability from the Village Chief to the maximum, their reward when entering the Red Ridge Mountain will be to reduce their energy consumption by 50%... heh, did you guys listen carefully?”

In the Garden of Peaches Village, Hai Yun Fan found himself in deep admiration of Wang Lu.

Although he was the second person to arrive at the Village after passing through the Cloud Wave Map, his treatment by the villagers was far inferior to how they treated Wang Lu. Although the villagers were still very friendly to him, he was only given a normal villager’s house to live in, let alone a banquet.

This was especially obvious when Wang Lu was walking with him. The villagers would greet Wang Lu with big smiles, whereas they treated Hai Yun Fan like an invisible person.

“However, when I think about those people who will come after me, and how they’ll be treated, that makes me feel a bit better.”

Wang Lu’s face revealed an expression of contempt. “There are other people?”

Hai Yun Fan smiled. "There are probably around fifty or sixty people who are able to walk out of the Cloud Wave Map. However, it seems that the longer it took you to walk out of the Cloud Wave Map, the harder it is to stay in this Village... Strange, what's with this village? I've never heard of it before."

Hearing this, Wang Lu frowned – Hai Yun Fan was usually quite knowledgeable about the Immortal Path. "Do you know much about this Immortal Path?"

"I know a bit about this whole Celestial Gathering... Brother Wang Lu, would you like me to tell you some of what I know?"

"No thanks."

Hai Yun Fan did not seem offended at all. "In that case, what are your opinions on this village?"

"Before, I didn't have much, but now I've got a bit of a clue... though I can only confirm it later on."

Hai Yun Fan nodded. "Then I'll have to thank you in advance, because I really don't have the confidence to do well in this village."

“Wait, what are you thanking me in advance for? When did I agree to take responsibility for you?”

“Haha, we’re friend’s right?”

“Haha, then we’re friends for life.”

You think I wouldn't report you?

Translator: Mr Voltaire

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

Not long after Hai Yun Fan entered the Garden of Peaches, the third wave of visitors appeared.

This didn't come as a surprise to Wang Lu – there was an incredible number of geniuses and young heroes present at the beginning of the Celestial Gathering. Apart from himself, there were probably quite a few other people who were not too far from Hai Yun Fan's level.

As such, Wang Lu and Hai Yun Fan had anticipated that the present peace and quiet in the Garden of Peaches would soon become chaotic and disorderly.

"The hell? What's up with this place?"

"Shouldn't there be the Red Ridge Mountain, or Frozen Wind Valley, or something like that? Why's there a random village here?"

"This is different to what we were told..."

Three new people arrived on the afternoon of the same day. They were all descendants from famous Xiuxian families allied together, with impressive backgrounds and a considerable amount of talent. Even Hai Yun Fan needed to treat them with courtesy.

Before the Celestial Gathering, Hai Yun Fan had prepared to face them as his greatest rivals. But with Wang Lu, a rogue element, at his side, he no longer needed to feel anxious.

Upon seeing the three enter the village, Hai Yun Fan coldly laughed in his heart. "Things are going to get interesting soon."

On one side was the mysterious and legendary village boy, Wang Lu. On the other, were the haughty descendants of Xiuxian families. This little village would not be able to contain so many people with such an ego. A battle was probably going to occur. Perhaps this was the Spirit Blade Sect's objective?

However, this didn't matter much to him. He was going to be a bystander, enjoying the amusing display. And he didn't have to wait long either.

"You, move out from here."

In the courtyard of the Village Chief, the youth from the Hearing Rain Pavilion's Xie family of the You Region pointed at Wang Lu with a face full of contempt.

While chewing on an ear of corn, Wang Lu lazily replied, "Who the hell

are you? Are you retarded?"

Xie Qian Long became furious. "You dare disrespect me?! Do you know who I am?!"

"I only asked because I didn't know! So you really are retarded."

Xie Qian Long unconsciously reached for something in the inner pocket of his clothing, as if he wanted to take something out, then paused.

"I am a fourteenth generation descendant of the Xie Family, of the Hearing Rain Pavilion in the You Region."

"Hello, descendant, what do you want from me?"

A vein appeared on Xie Qian Long's head. "I already said it. I want you to move out from here."

"Move out? Why?"

"Because I want you to move out."

"Heh, you're quite an open one, saying "I want you" to another guy."

Xie Qian Long became enraged, and was about to become violent towards Wang Lu. His two companions impatiently walked in. "Young Lord Xie, why's it taking so long?"

“Is that kid causing you trouble?”

“Stay out of this, you two.”

Wang Lu starting munching on his corn again, looking at the three people indifferently.

“Little Hai, what’s with these three?”

Hai Yun Fan silently cursed. He didn’t think that Wang Lu would be able to spot him hiding behind the tree. He had been brought into the conflict now.

Seeing as he had been spotted, Hai Yun Fan confidently walked out, and greeted the three people.

“Young Lord Xie, Young Lord Yun, Young Lord Li.”

The three people were very shocked. “Hai Yun Fan? Is that you?”

Wang Lu was also shocked. “Little Hai, it seems that these people don’t think much of you.”

Hai Yun Fan once again silently cursed in his mind. “No shit. We’re in Xiuxian territory right now... being a prince means nothing. Plus, with the three of them combined, my status is far inferior. Stop creating awkward situations for other people, you idiot!”

However, Hai Yun Fan was indeed Hai Yun Fan. He smilingly ignored Wang Lu's comment and said, "Just then Young Lord Xie asked you to move out of the Village Chief's house."

Wang Lu glanced at Xie Qian Long, and asked Hai Yun Fan. "Why?"

Hai Yun Fan looked at the three Young Lords. It seemed that none of them were going to waste any of their breath on him, and only waited for him to agree.

Hai Yun Fan cleared his throat. "Ahem. Well, it's quite simple. Young Lord Xie comes from a very famous and influential Xiuxian family, while brother Wang, although you're very talented, you're still a country boy....."

Hearing this, Wang Lu became annoyed. "It's not like I fancy his mum or anything. What does his family have to do with this?"

"Well... you, who does not have an influential background, are living in the best place in the village, whereas Young Lord Xie and his companions are living in normal villager's residences. This is a bit... not too fitting." Hai Yun Fan then added, "Of course, I'm just explaining their intentions, this doesn't represent my own views."

Having explained everything clearly, Hai Yun Fan fell silent, and waited for Wang Lu's reply.

Xie Qian Long became increasingly impatient. "Boy, what the hell do

you want? Can you pay the price for wasting our precious time?"

Wang Lu laughed. "I get it now. You're all the mediocre types that left home in order to prove yourselves to the rest of your families. Little Hai, you know quite a bit-if I have not guessed wrong, these guys had quite the low status in their families right?"

Hai Yun Fan smiled bitterly. "Do you really expect me to say such offensive things?" Let alone low status, being able to make it to this point was already evidence that they were all geniuses... but just like Wang Lu had said, they all had their own unfortunate circumstances.

Xie Qian Long became furious, and could not hold back anymore. "You bastard, you brought this on yourself, so don't blame us!"

"Hmph, what a reckless idiot!"

"Just because you got good results in the Cloud Wave Map, you think you're so special?"

The three people all prepared to attack. Xie Qian Long reached into the inner pocket in his clothes, the Young Lord from the Yun family put his hand on the hilt of his sword, and the Young Lord from the Li Family stood with his arms behind his back, his long hair moving despite there being no wind.

Hai Yun Fan's heart quivered-these children of Xiuxian families indeed were not ordinary. They each had treasures given to them by their families... and they were all fairly high-grade treasures!

What sort of place was the Spirit Blade Mountain? How could the Spirit Blade Sect allow people to casually bring Xiuxian tools and treasures that would give them an unfair advantage? On the Golden Bridge, most magical tools had already been confiscated. The only things that would be able to get past the Golden Bridge and the Cloud Wave Map were probably magical treasures!

Even if they were from a third-rate Xiuxian family, they would not casually give out magical treasures. It seems that these three peoples' statuses were much higher than the reports had stated. However, with their magical treasures, these eleven or twelve year old kids could easily destroy 100 elite soldiers of the Cloud Mountain Empire. Hai Yun Fan wondered how Wang Lu was going to block this.

Hai Yun Fan had long since known of Xie Qian Long's arrogant and malicious personality. The large Xiuxian families all viewed ordinary mortals as ants. However, the three families these youths came from barely qualified as a 'righteous sect'. In fact, they could be even considered an 'evil sect' within the 'righteous sects'.

To them, Wang Lu who did not have any influential background or power, but only raw talent, could only be described with one word: dead.

As for Wang Lu... although there were many special things about him, he was still from a little mountain village. It was simply impossible to compare him to Xie Qian Long and the others. How would this fledgling genius deal with the danger in front of him?

As a bystander, Hai Yun Fan was incredibly curious.

It wasn't impossible for Hai Yun Fan to stop the battle. Although the three people did not take him too seriously, if he used his trump card, he would definitely be able to do something about it. However... he was not very close with Wang Lu, and thus had no reason to use his trump card for him.

Moreover, if Wang Lu couldn't even deal with this sort of situation by himself, then Hai Yun Fan had overestimated him, and was not worth his time.

"Tell me your answer, Wang Lu..." Hai Yun Fan thought as he stood by the side.

Wang Lu calmly drummed his fingers on the table. "Could it be... that you want to beat me up using an unfair advantage in numbers?"

The three youths looked at each other, and the Young Lords from the Yun and Li families stepped back.

Since this whole situation started because of Xie Qian Long, he should have been the one to end it. Even though Xiuxian families viewed mortals as ants, they still had to follow certain moral codes. If word got out that three youths from Xiuxian families beat up a single mortal, they would become laughing stocks.

As for Xie Qian Long, he couldn't help but laugh hysterically. "One person or three – what's the difference? The outcome will always be the same!"

Wang Lu also laughed. "Hah, you're all pretty impatient. To be honest, beating you one by one would take too much time, so you might as well all come at once."

"What did you say!?"

Wang Lu looked at them with a serious expression. "I'm saying, against rubbish like you, I don't think I'd break a sweat. In fact, all it would take is one sentence from me."

Everyone become speechless.

Hai Yun Fan, who was watching from the side, felt his heart speeding up in anticipation of the battle.

Even if he was bluffing, Wang Lu's performance caused all to be extremely shocked. Moreover, Hai Yun Fan did not believe that Wang Lu was simply bluffing, and thought that the three youths were finished.

As for Xie Qian Long and his companions, they simply could not take Wang Lu's humiliation anymore... it was time for him to die!

"Frozen Seal Downpour Talisman!"

"Flowing Cloud Invisible Sword!"

"Blood Red Energy!"

The three people all revealed their magical treasures at the same time, and their killing intents could be felt by all in the immediate area. Although the three people had yet to truly start cultivating, and could only use an extremely small fraction of their magical treasures' powers, that was enough to completely annihilate Wang Lu.

As for Wang Lu, he spoke his sentence, "Village Chief, there are people causing trouble here."

As he finished speaking, a black shadow broke through the window and rushed towards Xie Qian Long and his companions.

Faster than lightning, the shadow's feet and fists blurred as it flew towards the three people, causing them to erupt in pitiful noises.

"Adadadadadadadadadadada!" [TLN: sound of being repeatedly hit].

In just moments, the three people and their magical treasures fell to the ground, which was sprayed with their blood.

The black shadow immediately left through the window right after it had completed its job, leaving Wang Lu and a very stunned Hai Yun Fan.

Afterwards, Hai Yun Fan heard Wang Lu dismissively say, "These trash who rely on their tools want to pick a fight with me, the Grandmaster of Reporting? Who do they think they are!"

Even if we broke him, we wouldn't be too sad

Translator: Mr Voltaire

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

A little river of nose blood was running down from the courtyard of the Village Chief's residence.

The sight of it paralysed Hai Yun Fan in awe, and he said to Wang Lu, "... Brother Wang, would you be willing to explain to me what just happened?"

Working backwards from the end result, Hai Yun Fan thought of about ten or so possibilities, but the shock of what just happened caused him to be unable to work out which possibility it was.

As Wang Lu went around looking for a mop, and threw the three pieces of "rubbish" on the ground out, he replied, "What just happened? Wasn't it obvious? The hidden expert living in the Garden of Peaches came out and foiled the plans of an evil group, protecting the peaceful lives of the villagers of the Garden of Peaches."

"The hidden expert? Do you know what person?"

"He's probably called Lei Feng... Jokes. To be honest, I don't know him, nor is there a need for me to know him." [TLN: Lei Feng was a 'heroic soldier' of the Communist army].

Hai Yun Fan was silent for a few moments and asked, "Because you knew this would be the result?"

"Just a few hours prior, the Village Chief said that there haven't been any physical altercations in this village, so I guessed that this is a non-PVP zone!"

"Non-PVP Zone?" Hai Yun Fan was obviously confused by this term, and frowned.

He guessed that a "non-PVP zone" was where people could not fight. Normally, those third or fourth-rated sects in the Cloud Mountain Empire would have countless bloody battles during their Celestial Gatherings in order to determine which potential disciples had the most strength and talent.

As such, the trials in this Celestial Gathering held by the Spirit Blade Sect were utterly incomprehensible to outsiders. If it was not for the Spirit Blade Sect being one of the five great sects, Hai Yun Fan would even be suspicious of if they were truly looking for disciples, or if they were just playing around.

"Could it be that the Spirit Blade Sect was as righteous and kind as the rumours had said?"

"Righteous and kind? Little Hai, look at all this blood I've been cleaning up. You call this righteous and kind?"

Seeing the three unconscious people lying in a pool of their nose blood on the ground, Hai Yun Fan fell silent.

Wang Lu continued explaining, "The rules in the Spirit Blade Sect are very simple: All retards shall die."

"Ugh, where... am I?"

Feeling a cold wave on his forehead, the Young Lord from the Xie family of the Hearing Rain Pavilion woke up. His head felt like it was going to explode from pain, and his nose felt like it was broken. He still felt dizzy, and his vision was blurry. He thought he could see a fatty sitting in front of him, splashing cold water on him.

"Who are you?"

"Ah? Me? I'm Wen Bao, the son of the Prime Minister of the Azure Wave Kingdom, Wen Zhong."

Although the speaker's voice sounded a bit scared, it contained a hint of pride in his family background.

Xie Qian Long felt absurd: The hell is this fat pig so proud about? Who does he think he is, coming from such a third-rate country. Doesn't he

know that even the second prince of the Cloud Mountain Empire treats us as his superiors? And yet, he's so proud of his background!?! The more he thought, the angrier he became, and adding on the humiliation he had just suffered from Wang Lu, he reached into his inner pocket to the magical treasure he had received from his family.

As for Wen Bao, he was completely unaware of the impending danger. He splashed water on Xie Qian Long's two companions as he cheerfully spoke.

"Just then, I walked out of that smoky place and saw you three lying unconscious next to the river. Is the next trial really hard? How about all four of us work together, maybe that'll make the trial a bit easier for us all. I thought that if I was with a group of people in that smoky place, maybe we'd have walked out a bit faster."

Wen Bao evidently had not realised the true purpose of the Cloud Wave Map, and thought he was very smart. However, his behaviour caused Xie Qian Long to despise him more and more.

As he was speaking, Xie Qian Long's two companions also woke up.

"Ah, you're all awake now?"

Wen Bao was overjoyed. If he could work together with these three people, it would be much easier for him to pass the next trial... back then, he had hot-headedly rejected the offer from the Serenity Peak, and had chosen to continue on the Immortal Path. However, he had regretted this decision many times in Cloud Wave Map, and could only walk forwards.

However, his joy soon disappeared. The way the three people looked at him was not pleasant at all. Although they all looked a bit dizzy and half-unconscious, their malicious expressions were still quite evident.

“What’s... wrong with you guys? You don’t want to work together? Then, I’ll be leaving now.”

Although he wasn’t very bright, Wen Bao felt that there was something wrong here, and decided to leave.

“You want to leave? You think it’ll be that easy?”

Xie Qian Long slowly stood up, his Frozen Seal Downpour Talisman held between two of his fingers, preparing to take out his anger on Wen Bao. His two companions were the same, and got into position as well.

Previously, the Serenity Peak disciples had said that life or death on the Immortal Path was already determined by your destiny. If a small fry angered someone powerful and died as a result, it’d be their own fault. Moreover, fighting with and killing one’s competitors was something very common in the Xiuxian world, even for the righteous sects of the Ten Thousand Immortal Alliance. Even if the Young Lords Xie, Li and Yun all died, no one would have been outraged or filed a report—so what was the difference between killing the son of the Prime Minister of a small country and stepping on an ant?

The activation of the three magic treasures caused Wen Bao to feel the presence of death coming closer and closer. This Prime Minister’s son didn’t have the wisdom, slyness or calmness of Wang Lu, and began to scream in fear, “Save me, save me, save me!!”

Hearing Wen Bao's panicked voice, Xie Qian Long began to feel a bit better. If there was no resistance from the prey, then it simply would not feel as good.

"Call all you want, there's no one here to save you!"

Xie Qian Long coldly smiled as he began to grip the talisman tighter in his hand. At this moment, a black shadow descended from the sky.

"Adadadadadadaadadada!" [TLN: sound of being repeatedly hit].

The Wen Bao who had survived felt his back... as well as his pants, were completely soaked.

The black shadow had disappeared just as quickly as it had come, and Wen Bao did not even have a chance to say thank you. Looking at the three unconscious Young Lords, Wen Bao still felt quite frightened.

He had just been moments away from death. Those three people had nothing against him, and yet were just about to kill him. He simply could not understand what sort of dreadful thing he had done to deserve this. Was it because he was too ugly? Was that why he had been bullied by the proprietress of the Ru Family, stepped on by the crowds of Young Masters, looked down on by the two Serenity Peak disciples?

Or was this the real side to the Immortal Path? Killing, robbing... the reason why he had come to the Spirit Blade Mountain was so that if he became an Immortal, he would be able to help his father. However, no one had expressed their hopes in him, and he was only beginning to realise why.

As the son of a Prime Minister, not only did he lack the skills in politics, but also in interpersonal skills. The only thing he had was a sentence a passing by sage had said to him when he was young: "This boy has affinity with becoming an Immortal; he should become one of us."

However, it was a pity that the old sage had quickly disappeared, and Wen Bao had grown up as a disappointment to his father...

As he was still lost in his thoughts, the sounds of footsteps behind him suddenly caused Wen Bao to start shaking again, and his legs, which had just recovered enough energy, began to feel weak. Having just received his 'baptism' from the Young Lord Xie, he felt extremely nervous and scared. Let alone another few Young Lords, but if even a wild pig appeared, he would be finished.

"Ah, who's this heavenly general sitting here?" [TLN: Wang Lu makes a bit of a joke here-the original Chinese referred to a specific Heavenly General who was punished for flirting with a Heavenly Princess by sending him down to earth in the form of a man-pig].

The voice that sounded in his ears contained three parts surprise and seven parts sarcasm, and did not sound courteous at all. However, it gave Wen Bao a sense of peace and security.

Wen Bao let out a breath, and the voice sounded out again.

“Why is this guy here? I thought he was eliminated on the Golden Bridge?”

“Ah, there’s much you don’t know Brother Wang. “Affinity” is quite an interesting thing. Many intelligent and wise people have no affinity at all with Immortality, but yet there are many useless and stupid people who have good and kind character, as well as talent, who do. It seems that Wen Bao is the latter.”

“Hmm, that sounds about right. Those three from before were all pea brains, and yet were descendants of some Xiuxian family or something.”

“Haha, they’re only from third or fourth-rate families, so they’re not all that great.”

Two people walked closer from the distance, talking and laughing together. They looked at Wen Bao, and he looked back at them. Although he had a pretty bad memory, he still recognised the two people.

One of them was the second prince of the Cloud Mountain Empire, and the other was the only person who had been able to live in a premium room, that countryside boy... all in all, they were not people to be messed with.

Ignoring how dry his throat was, Wen Bao opened his mouth. “Excuse me...”

Wang Lu and Hai Yun Fan completely ignored him, and continued to talk amongst themselves.

“Little Hai, this guy’s the seventh person to enter the Garden of Peaches. I guess his results are alright.”

Hai Yun Fan thought for a while, then replied, “Seventh isn’t that great, but then considering that you and your pageboy took two spots, it doesn’t matter that much. However, if we look at his time, it only took him twenty or so hours, which is not bad at all. In contrast to his not-so-bright appearance, it seems that he has some pretty good character and emotional stability.”

“Ahh, Little Hai, you’re too naïve. Just because someone is able to exit the Cloud Wave Map in a good time doesn’t mean they have good character or emotional stability. I’m guessing this guy broke down after he got lost, and just kept running and running until he couldn’t run anymore.”

“.....No way!?”

“What do you mean ‘no way’? Don’t you know that proverb along the lines of ‘even a pig will charge forwards and attack when it’s backed into a corner’? Charging forwards should be his instinct.”

Wang Lu’s deduction was simply him spouting bullshit, but from Wen Bao’s expression, Hai Yun Fan guessed that Wang Lu really did hit the mark.

So it turned out that this sort of ridiculous method really did exist. However, come to think of it, this was truly the embodiment of "affinity". There were many people who did not have much talent, nor did they have very good character or emotional stability, and even their intelligence was below average, and yet they had become Immortals.

In that case... could it be that this Wen Bao in front of them could become a peerless Immortal expert one day?!

As he thought, he heard Wang Lu say, "Little Hai, weren't you always curious about the tactics for this Garden of Peaches? We've got a good guinea pig now."

"... You're talking about Wen Bao?"

"Of course, this guy's got no intelligence and no guts...I couldn't have asked for a better test subject."

"Eh? Why's that?"

"Because even if we broke him, we wouldn't be too sad, ahahaha."

## Adoptive Grandmother and Adoptive Grandmother No.2...

Translator: Mr Voltaire

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

Bringing Wen Bao back with them didn't take much effort.

After his near death experience, Wen Bao didn't have much hope for the Immortal Path anymore. All he wanted to do was to continue living.

As such, when Wang Lu invited Wen Bao to join him in taking on this trial, he immediately agreed.

He agreed because there simply was no way for him to survive by himself, as indicated by a large wet patch on the front of his pants. The second reason, he thought, "What if Wang Lu could really pass this trial?" Deep in his heart, Wen Bao had not yet given up on the Immortal Path.

However, the one thing he couldn't understand was why the genius Wang Lu would be willing to work together with him. Apart from the superior amount of fat on his body, what else did he have more than anyone else?

"Haha, of course having more fat is a big advantage. You won't be easily broken."

"Eh!?" Wen Bao gave a terrified cry.

"Don't be afraid," continued Wang Lu, "whoever designed this trial did not design it to be violent. They're testing something much more important."

Wen Bao was a bit dazed. "A more important quality?"

Hai Yun Fan had also been considering this for a long time. Whenever the famous sects took in disciples, they would always test one's innate talent, character and emotional stability, comprehension, affinity... But what else could they test apart from those?

Wang Lu had already begun setting tasks for Wen Bao. "Alright Fatty, there's something we need you to do."

"Eh??" Wen Bao was very shocked. "What do you want me to do?"

"Go and strike up a conversation with every person in the village. Maybe ask them if they need help with anything, but remember to be very friendly and sincere... and then report to me. Simple, right?"

After setting some tasks for Wen Bao, Wang Lu invited Hai Yun Fan to have a meal with him, and they relaxed as they ate.

While eating, Hai Yun Fan shared some of his thoughts. "The key is probably the people. Riches, fellowship, method and place – these are, in order, the most important things in cultivation. Fellowship, or interpersonal skills, is the second most important, but interestingly enough, no sect has ever tested this before."

Wang Lu was extremely surprised. "Never tested before?"

"At least according to what I know, no other Sect has ever given much thought to 'Fellowship'. The Immortal Path is, in the end, a lonely one, so most Sects think that having too many interpersonal relationships will only be a burden."

Wang Lu scoffed. "Well isn't that a load of rubbish. The Xiuxian world isn't just some place where retards can survive. No matter how high your cultivation is, interpersonal skills are still important. Unless you're some sort of supreme God, there are always going to be things you can't handle by yourself. Come to think of it, Little Hai, don't you want to go out with Wen Bao and try your luck? Maybe you'll find an A Rank Quest."

"Ahaha, no thanks, I bet that Brother Wang already knows what's going to happen... there must be a reason for you asking right?"

"Of course," he replied. "Without enough experimental data, I won't be able to find a way to perfectly conquer this trial. Having perfection means that there must be imperfection."

"So you're saying that we need to be careful with our every action and speech here?"

Wang Lu smiled. "Exactly. The Garden of Peaches is a perfect reflection of the Xiuxian world. On the path of cultivation, it's not so easy to take back or fix up mistakes-you have to be very, very careful!"

Just as the two people were talking, Wen Bao came back.

"Eh, so fast?" Hai Yun Fan was a bit shocked. From the time Wang Lu had kicked Wen Bao to go on his mission, only about one hour had passed.

"Br-Brother Wang!"

Wen Bao paused at the door upon realising that he had referred to Wang Lu as "Brother Wang".

"What is it? Did you find some sort of interesting situation?"

"After leaving for a short while, I-I was stopped by an old auntie, who said I looked a lot like her dead grandson. She blabbered on for a long time, then shoved a bunch of desserts into my mouth, and even invited me to her house to eat tonight... I couldn't handle how sudden it all was, so I came back first to report, like you said."

As he talked, he took out a large box.

When he opened the box, a small mountain of desserts spilled out,

releasing a wave of an incredible aroma.

Wang Lu's little pageboy (Editor's note: who we haven't seen for like 5 chapters and did nothing when Wang Lu was under threat from those three princes. Like seriously, where the hell were you?) suddenly turned around, and saw that the desserts all looked very familiar. "Ah, these are all the specialty desserts from Old Auntie Liu's dessert shop. I heard that they're quite difficult to make, and that she only makes one or two of them for those who are pretty close to her. But this..."

Wang Lu let out a sigh. "Looks like she really sees Wen Bao as her own grandson. This Fatty is quite lucky, finding such a high grade quest. If I remember correctly, that Old Auntie Liu was on quite good terms with the Village Chief back when they were young."

The little pageboy suddenly jumped up in shock. "Young Master, don't say such things! Old Auntie Liu is a very upright person!"

"And who said upright people can't have affairs? You saying this is a severe infringement on the freedom of other individuals!"

"Eh!?"

"Didn't you notice last night at the banquet? They were exchanging passionate glances at each other, but were caught by the Village Chief's wife... this is very important."

The pageboy was utterly dumbfounded. All he had focused on was eating and staying awake from the wine. Who would be able to take the

time and effort to watch an old man and old lady secretly flirt with each other?

Wang Lu smiled at Wen Bao. "Congratulations, I guess this qualifies as an A Rank Quest-especially since it could affect the entire Garden of Peaches. If you can complete it..."

Although he didn't know what an A Rank Quest was, hearing Wang Lu speak in such a tone caused Wen Bao's eyes to widen in hope. "If I can complete it.....?"

"You'll have an adoptive grandmother who's very good at making desserts."

"....."

"So, please continue to work hard for your adoptive grandmother!"

And with that, Wang Lu kicked him out.

On the same evening, more and more people walked out of the Cloud Wave Map. Naturally, most of them were completely exhausted and famished. Where Wang Lu got a warm welcome, the rest of the competitors received a cold shoulder from the villagers.

"Do you have any food?"

"Yes."

"Do you have anywhere for us to stay?"

"Yes."

However, nothing was free for those who came later. To make matters worse, their currency was near worthless.

"What's this?"

"This is a gold bullion."

"Gold bullion? Can you eat it?"

"Well, eating it would be akin to suicide."

"What? You want to trade my steamed buns for poison? Keep dreaming!"

"Oi, there's something wrong with your thinking..."

This sort of conversation occurred all across the village. The villagers were not interested with gold or silver in the slightest, causing many Young Masters to fall into hopelessness. However, people quickly found the 'currency' of this village.

And that was labour.

“You want to eat? Easy. Help me clear out the weeds in my courtyard, then fill up the water tank next to the door.”

As long as they were willing to offer their labour, they would be able to receive rewards. No matter if it was a delicious meal or a comfortable residence, these things could only be attained through labour.

This rule didn't just apply to the Young Masters who were participating in the Celestial Gathering, but was rather a way of life in the village. Apart from trading goods, the only other way to obtain things was through offering their labour.

As this was part of the Celestial Gathering, the Young Masters could only helplessly accept this bartering system reality. And to Wang Lu, it made him very happy that these princelings and young nobles were experiencing the hardships of living a countryside life.

And while most people were struggling just to survive, Wang Lu was enjoying his relaxation whilst instructing Wen Bao on his quest.

On the third day, Wen Bao had officially become Old Auntie Liu's adoptive grandson.

“Hah, Fatty's progress has been pretty good so far. However, there have been people who have caught on, and may start to act soon.”

“Well, it’s not like we were trying to hide it anyways. The more people participating, the better it is for everyone. If we can find a Quest for every villager, I might be able to pull off a perfect completion.”

Hai Yun Fan replied. “Wouldn’t doing that be the same as handing over the advantage to other people? I don’t have Brother Wang’s insight, but the way I see it, the quests should have some sort of exclusivity. I doubt Old Auntie Liu would accept another adoptive grandson-her ‘resources’ have already been monopolised by Wen Bao. If Brother Wang’s perfect completion requires Old Auntie Liu’s help, then what will you do?”

“Hah, that’s my problem. Don’t you want a perfect completion too?”

Hai Yun Fan shook his head. “I’ve never sought perfection. As long as I find a place suitable for myself, that’s enough for me.”

“I like that, I think I might use that quote in future. In return, I’ll let you in on a little secret-the best entertainment is yet to come. You think Wen Bao’s quest is going smoothly right now? Trust me, he’ll come back crying tonight.”

“Wahh!! Please help me Lord Wang Lu!”

As he predicted, Wen Bao came back crying.

“The hell is wrong with you?”

Although he had predicted that this would happen, Wang Lu was still extremely annoyed at being woken up late at night.

Wen Bao continued to sit on the ground crying.

“Lord Wang Lu, I’ve run into some troubles, Old Auntie Liu...”

“Shut up, and don’t talk for a while. If you make the slightest noise I’ll get a stick and give you ‘plastic surgery’.”

Seeing Wang Lu pick up a big stick, Wen Bao quickly wiped away his tears and snot. “Old Auntie Liu and the Village Chief’s wife started fighting! The Village Chief’s wife couldn’t beat Old Auntie Liu, so she let out her anger on me, saying that she would get the Village Chief to chase me out of the village... Lord Wang Lu, please save me!!”

“Save you? Get out of here. What’s the point of you if you can’t even handle a tiny problem like this?”

“B-but, she’s the Village Chief’s wife!”

Perhaps Wen Bao’s hesitation developed from the seed of fear planted deep within him ever since he was assaulted by the proprietress of the Ru Family Inn. His homeland, the Azure Wave Kingdom, had many small villages similar to the Garden of Peaches – all of which could be obliterated completely with a simple frown from him. But here on the Immortal Path, Wen Bao’s hardships had reduced him to the equivalent of a maggot.

“You coward. So what about the Village Chief’s wife? A wife who can’t even stop her husband from having an affair is just an inflatable doll. Are

you afraid of inflatable dolls?"

"Well, you can't really put it like that..."

"That's the only way you can put it! You think the quests in the Garden of Peaches would be that easy? Get an adoptive grandmother, eat desserts every day until you become a ball, roll around a bit and pass? You think too lowly of this trial. I'll have you know that you're quite lucky to get to this point in the quest-it means that you're getting somewhere. Two days ago, my useless pageboy started playing with the kids around our age in the village!"

Hearing this, Wen Bao was a bit shocked.

"Ah?"

"What do you mean 'ah'? I've told you so many times that our EQs are being tested here. And the most effective way to test one's EQ is to shove someone into a group of people and see how well they can handle people they don't like. Just a passing thought, but the designer of this trial probably isn't liked very much up there in the Spirit Blade Sect."

Wang Lu paused for a moment and then looked up at the sky.

He felt as if there were people cheering in the clouds.

"Well said!"

“We’ve been waiting for her Divine Tribulation for a long time!”

He shook his head and refocused his thoughts towards the impending issue. “Right now, you’re on the Old Auntie Liu Quest. The biggest obstacle will be the Village Chief’s wife. If you can resolve that, then the quest will be pretty much complete. So wipe away those tears, get up, and finish this!”

And with that, Wang Lu kicked him out.

## Chapter 13

After kicking Wen Bao out, Wang Lu bore a glum look.

"Is everything alright?" Hai Yun Fan asked.

"Everything's fine. It's just the situation is a little bit more complicated than I anticipated." He gave a snort of contempt. "I thought everyone was an idiot in this stupid village. But it seems that some key characters possess a high IQ."

"Eh?"

"To put it simply, the quest here in the Garden of Peaches is supposed to be about gaining favourability from specific villagers. However, in all quests one must overcome a set amount of obstacles; for Wen Bao, it would be the wife of the Village Chief. I thought these sorts of quests would be quite straightforward and simple, but these characters are quite high-levelled and rather dynamic in personality. We'll have to use our brains well in order to succeed."

"Well, as usual, I didn't catch most of what you were saying, but what I think you're trying to get at is that most of the quests here should have simple solutions?"

"Of course. In easy quests, all you'd need to do is analyse the pattern going on and win favors from people. The scholar we met in the village and the one I told Wang Zhong to face just then – as long as you can get

good grades in class and avoid getting into trouble with your classmates, you can easily pass. Quests like the steamed bun shop, where you only need to work and make enough contribution, are straightforward and easy quests. Although with Wen Bao, things are quite different. It's not an easy task to gain favourability from Old Auntie Liu. He's triggered a high-level quest, which is a good opportunity, but I don't think he can complete it considering his IQ and EQ."

"Well that's making me nervous. But the harder a quest is, the better the rewards will be right?"

"Of course, of course. That principle is always correct. I imagine I scored brilliantly in the Cloud Wave Map because the villagers treated me like the Chief's father. So if we do well in this quest, imagine how much sweet the rewards will be."

Hai Yun Fan nodded. "In accordance with convention, the Red Ridge Mountain and Ice Wind Valley, the places after the Cloud Wave Map, are the key trials on the Immortal Path. If the truth is like what you said, that our performance here would affect our performances in upcoming trials, then I think I'd like to try my luck."

"You finally decided to give a try?"

"I feel confident now that I've spent the last few days listening to your wisdom."

"So do you want to try and find the perfect tactic to complete this trial?"

“I’ll leave that for geniuses like you. I’m only concerned with finding the right place for me.”

Hai Yun Fan walked out of Wang Lu’s room after ending the conversation. Wang Lu smiled as he walked away. “Nice. Little Hai’s finally doing his quest. This is going to be fun.”

—

Hai Yun Fan’s involvement soon made an impact on the village. Other than the genius Wang Lu and the pageboy Wang Zhong, he was the first person to walk out of the Cloud Wave Map and enter the Garden of Peaches. With a performance better than the three allied princelings, he surprised many people, as not many possessed superior powers. Compared to those with a Heaven, Earth or Variation Spirit Base, the second son of the Cloud Mountain Emperor did not seem as impressive. Even the sects of the Cloud Mountain Empire had assessed Hai Yun Fan. He was of mediocre intelligence with a high-tiered fourth grade, or perhaps a low-tiered third grade spirit base. His performance on the Golden Bridge was not considered ‘ideal’. But after the Cloud Wave Map, Hai Yun Fan suddenly became considered one of the few high achievers.

But which was more important: Spirit Base, Intelligence, or Mentality? While there is not a definite answer to the question, more than half of the elders amongst the Ten Thousand Celestial Alliance possessed a spirit base up to third grade.

So Hai Yun Fan’s third grade spirit base was not great but not bad. With the incredible amount of mentality he demonstrated as one of the best performers in the Cloud Wave Map, he would have had a bright future like most elders in the Alliance.

The other participants in the village trial all stopped what they were doing to see what was going to happen. But Hai Yun Fan just walked around at night and talked to villagers casually at random.

This tactic was also employed by most other competitors, as they were not sure what their goal was. By talking to as many of the villagers as possible, they would be able to use the response or reaction to determine their next step.

The villagers' reactions towards Hai Yun Fan were not as immediate or as exaggerated as Wen Bao's. After the first night, some of the villagers did show moderate interest towards him, but as they seemed to be relatively unimportant characters, they were quickly dismissed. Hai Yun Fan had never actually humbled himself unduly. Although he had said that finding the right position for himself would be enough, in his heart he was not satisfied with anything below an 'A Rank Quest'. The humility he showed to Wang Lu was only reverence for superiors.

After the first night, Hai Yun Fan realised that he would not be as lucky as Wen Bao to have a high-tiered quest come to him. Thus, in the morning, Hai Yun Fan approached the Village Chief's front door and knocked with his usual energy, even though he had not slept at all.

According to Wang Lu's theory on the correlation between the quests and rewards in the Garden of Peaches, the Village Chief undoubtedly represented the A Rank or higher quests. By entangling himself into the emotional dispute between the Chief's wife and mistress, Wen Bao had gotten himself involved in an A Rank Quest. Thinking about it, Hai Yun Fan wondered what would happen if he got himself directly involved with the Village Chief himself.

Although the Village Chief did not seem to have a preference for Hai Yun Fan, he stayed at his residence until the afternoon. He came into the backyards afterwards to meet Wang Lu.

“Hey there Little Hai. Did you find anything in the old man’s room?”

Hai Yun Fan lifted a slight smile. “Not bad. I did what you said, and got a big breakthrough.”

“Broken through by that old guy? Well, you are a cute little boy and he’s a lonely old man...”

“Again, I’m not sure what you’re talking about, but I just want to confirm one thing with you.”

Realising Hai Yun Fan was being serious, Wang Lu put down the drumstick he was eating and asked, “What’s the matter?”

“My quest might affect Wen Bao... perhaps even more people. I hope you don’t mind.”

“What do you mean?”

“To put it simply, I got involved in the Village Chief’s family dispute. I spent the whole morning trying to win his confidence. I myself am confident that I’ll be involved with whatever happens next.”

Wang Lu widened his eyes in surprise. "Good for you, Little Hai. Mediating emotional entanglements for old people at such a young age. You've got potential."

"He's only the head of a small village. He's not too hard to manipulate. The only problem is I have to confirm what I need to do next. Wen Bao's unexpected appearance triggered the conflict between Mrs He Lu and Old Auntie Liu. My mission is to resolve the conflict, so the Chief can live a peaceful life. But there are many ways to resolve this dispute."

Wang Lu nodded. "You're getting there, Little Hai."

"I came up with several solutions. The easiest one, was to somehow make Mrs He Lu disregard her past grudges with Old Auntie Liu. After all, no matter what the Village Chief has done, they have lived together for many years. Old Auntie Liu was only an interlude in their life."

Wang Lu laughed. "Ha, if you chose that tactic, I'm afraid I'd only award you sixty out of a hundred points at most."

"The Village Chief is still thinking about Old Auntie Liu, so he doesn't like it when his wife complains about her. Also, Old Auntie Liu also hates to be neglected."

"But this is only his desire. An inappropriate one."

"So in order to make my plan more elaborate, I could use coercion and bribery to force Old Auntie Liu to give up her desires. She started this mess, after all. She quits, and the Village Chief will be able to live

peacefully again. But if she quits, her long-cherished dream may not be realised, and Wen Bao's quest may be affected that way."

"Indeed. The A Rank quests might have been designed such that those involved need to compete to achieve completion; or they might have been designed in order to test communication between the competitors involved. But this is Wen Bao we're talking about, so there's nothing to be worried about."

"Wait. Isn't Wen Bao worth anything to you?"

Wang Lu shrugged. "This has nothing to do with me. I'm just thinking from your perspective. I didn't think he was worth anything in your eyes, so I tried to move you along a considerable suggestion. It's much harder for Wen Bao to overcome his issue though, so in the worst case scenario, he just cements a content relationship with Old Auntie Liu. Anyways, what is your decision?"

"I don't want to choose either of the two solutions. I have a third approach, and I want your opinion on it."

"A third solution?"

"Yes. Framing Mrs He Lu such that the Village Chief can divorce her on legitimate grounds, and revive his love with Old Auntie Liu. This way, Wen Bao can complete his quest and the Village Chief can get what he wants as well, putting me on good terms with him. What's more, this process shouldn't be too complicated..."

“But?”

“But this isn’t completely ethical, isn’t it? Such a plan would be considered a crime in sects with strict rules. I want to know whether the designer of this trial would accept this sort of tactic or not, and you’re best person I know who thinks most similarly to the designer. So, would this person approve of my plan or not?”

Wang Lu paused and thought about it for a while. “Hmmm... If I were the designer, I would have given you more than ninety points.”

“And then?”

“And then nothing. I’ve designed the levels and gave you a mark – what else would I do?”

Hai Yun Fan laughed. “Thank you for reminding me. No matter how much thought the designer put into this village trial, the final decision will be made by the Spirit Blade Sect. A virtuous, upright sect – I probably shouldn’t use such malicious tactics. By the way, what would you have done for this quest?”

“Me? Hah! Do you want to know what the perfect solution is?”

“I’ve already decided on my solution and I won’t change it. But I’m also curious about what you would do.”

Hai Yun Fan’s upbringing in a proud heritage did not allow him to copy the ideas of others’, even when Wang Lu, the genius he respected, was

the one who came up with the idea. But he was also curious to find better ideas.

“Easy. Convince Mrs He Lu and Old Auntie Liu to be bi-sexual, and then let the Village Chief live his happy life.”

“...”

“Oh come on, don’t look at me like that. It’s a perfect solution. Everyone gets what they want, no unethical actions, no more enemies and no more grudges. It’s an absolutely brilliant solution!”

The determined youth who endured heavy breasts [TLN: strange chapter title is explained below]

Translator: Mr Voltaire

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

After leaving the courtyard, Hai Yun Fan looked extremely absent-minded and lost in thought, which did not go unnoticed by everyone in the village, which resulted in much speculation as to what happened. Although around twenty people had tried their luck in resolving the Village Chief's issue, none had any luck. But it wasn't Hai Yun Fan's success that surprised everyone, it was his expression and unusual behaviour upon leaving the courtyard. "Could it be," they wondered, "that Hai Yun Fan had been violated by that mysterious person in the courtyard?" Hai Yun Fan, however, paid no attention to the people – completing the quest was his only priority.

He decided to go with the most troublesome, but holistic approach. Individually, he talked with the Village Chief, Mrs He Lu and Old Auntie Liu. And with his powers of persuasion, the Village Chief decided to give up on Old Auntie Liu, as well as realise how much his own wife had done for him over the decades they had been together. Moved by this realisation, the old couple wept together.

Mrs He Lu forgave the Village Chief for everything he had done, and reflected on her own misdoings, and even let go of her grudges towards Old Auntie Liu. As for Old Auntie Liu, she too, managed to move past her grudge against Mrs He Lu, and went back to managing her dessert shop with her mind at ease, spending time with her new adoptive grandson, Wen Bao. In three days, the decades of enmity and hatred dissipated like smoke. The three of them were like puppets on a string manipulated by a twelve year-old prince. Those who had been observing him the whole time could not help but marvel at his performance. For this quest, Hai Yun Fan's performance was one that could not be surpassed by anyone else, unless they used magical treasures or cheated.

Indeed, his marvellous performance also brought him great rewards. Having put out the fire in the Village Chief's personal affairs, Hai Yun Fan's relationship with the three of them increased significantly. He was now staying at the Village Chief's residence, almost becoming his adoptive grandson. Hai Yun Fan's treatment was even better than Wang Lu's. It was a pity, however, that the completion of this quest was not the finish line for him. He had solved the Village Chief's dilemma, became the most famous and respected person in the Garden of Peaches – but what then? No one knew.

Some people had found it too difficult to raise favourability with the Village Chief. One certain youth had instead, gotten quite close with a particular woman from the village. If one disregarded that this woman in

question weighed almost 200kg with abundant body hair, one could say that the two had good marriage affinity. However, after enduring that kind of relationship for two days, there was no sign of the next step leaving the village. The youth who had endured the heavy breasts [TLN: terrible, terrible pun here: the normal proverb is 忍辱负重, which means that one is able to endure heavy abuse and humiliation (showing one's character). However, a pun is used here: 忍乳负重, meaning enduring the heavy breasts] could no longer endure things anymore.

"Lord Wang Lu, please, help me!"

Wang Lu had barely left his residence since entering the village, but his fame had risen as high as Hai Yun Fan's and Wen Bao's. Even though they hadn't left the village yet, the speed at which they advanced was simply terrifying to everyone else – there was definitely a great strategist amongst them, directing them. Even the little pageboy decided to take action.

In such a hopeless situation, Wang Lu became a lifesaver.

"Oh, so you've been living worse than a dog for the past two days, but can't find a clue pointing to the next step, and now you've lost all hope? Well, I suggest you put an end to yourself then."

"What!?"

"You're not taking the Immortal Path seriously at all. Indeed, all violence

is prohibited in the Garden of Peaches, but that doesn't necessarily mean the Spirit Blade Sect is looking out for us. No, they're just making things harder from another angle. If there's no risk of injury or death in this trial, then passing has to be harder in other aspects. If you think being a gigolo for two days will help you pass this trial, you must be looking down on this village way too much." [TLN: gigolo= male prostitute]

"Then, what do I have to do?"

"If two days isn't enough, then maybe ten years will be. Maybe after being a domestic animal for ten years you'll be able to have a chance at becoming an Immortal."

"Ah!?"

"What are you 'ah-ing' about? It sounds logical to me. Continuing along the Immortal Path after being a gigolo for ten years? Most gigolos would kill for this chance!"

"I-I'm royalty in the You Region! How can I be compared to normal gigolos!?"

"Tsk, I don't quite like your attitude. As they say, you should love your job. Since you're a gigolo right now, why are you looking down on your profession? How could you long to be treated like royalty in such a place? Plus, if you want to advance faster, you should learn from Little Hai and do some more challenging quests. Maybe then you'll be able to move on

in just a few months.”

The youth left Wang Lu’s room with a look of despair and hopelessness on his face. Ten years was an incredibly long time... but at least he had obtained a useful piece of information.

A few months! According to Wang Lu, even Hai Yun Fan needed a few months to pass the trial. That meant it would take other people years... this trial was simply way too long. However, from the Spirit Blade Sect’s position in the Ten Thousand Celestial Alliance, it was somewhat reasonable for them to design a trial like this. There was one time when the Ten Thousand Arts Sect designed a trial where hundreds of challengers were required to stay at a swamp for 2 years. And the Kun Lun Sect took 30 years to choose disciples.

After finding out about how long it would take to complete the Garden of Peaches trial, most challengers decided to slow down their pace. If it was going to go on for that long, why be in such a rush?

Hai Yun Fan continued to interact with the three main people of his quest, continuously increasing their favourability towards him. He naturally understood that ‘favourability’ was not something that had limits. Right now, Hai Yun Fan was only someone to whom the Village Chief was grateful too... which could not even be compared to Old Auntie Liu and Wen Bao’s adoptive grandma-grandson relationship. As such, Hai Yun Fan didn’t feel disappointed at all when the next ‘step’ did not

immediately appear-as long as he continued, success would come sooner or later. This sort of determination and resolution was rare, especially for youths of eleven or twelve years of age.

“Heheh. Second-rate talent, first-rate intellect and willpower above first-rate. Little Hai, you’re really something.”

“Brother Wang, you’re really flattering me.”

“Well, because of that, we’re going to have to say goodbye soon.”

Hai Yun Fan’s eyes lit up. “You’re saying... wait. Didn’t you say it would take a few months?”

“I was talking about a perfect finish. With your personality, you wouldn’t be going after something like that, right?”

“... I see. Recently I’ve had a feeling that the Village Chief wants to talk to me about something, but I don’t it’s the right time yet... that should be the key to the next step.”

The next step for Hai Yun Fan came very quickly. After staying in the Garden of Peaches for fifteen days, the Village Chief, who he had greatly moved, said to him, “Child, there are some things I want to tell you...”

Although Hai Yun Fan was someone who was usually very calm and composed, he couldn't resist smiling. "I've been waiting for you to say this for a long time."

Hai Yun Fan left the Garden of Peaches three days later. Staying for only eighteen days, he was the first out of all of the challengers to leave, completely exceeding everyone's expectations.

One of the very reasons why it was possible was that before leaving, Hai Yun Fan had told everything about his quest to Wang Lu – as was the agreement between the two of them.

According to Wang Lu's predictions, achieving a perfect finish in the Village Chief's quest would take many months. But if one did not seek perfection, and wanted a simple pass, it would take a significantly shorter period of time. However, there were bound to be some downsides in doing so. And that was exactly what Hai Yun Fan and Wang Lu had been deducing together.

One's results in the Garden of Peaches would, to some degree, directly affect their next trial, just as one's results in the Cloud Wave Map affected their starting point in the Garden of Peaches. Even though Hai Yun Fan had completed the minimum requirements for the Garden of Peaches, he would not have a very favourable starting point in the next trial. Just by completing the Village Chief's quest, Wang Lu had estimated Hai Yun

Fan's true completion to about 30% of the entire trial – if he wasn't in such a rush to leave the Garden of Peaches. Hai Yun Fan's impatience had ruined his performance in the next trial. However, to most other challengers, this sort of 'downside' would be considered a blessing.

As one of the top sects, the second half of the Spirit Blade Sect's Celestial Gathering was an incredibly difficult trial. The Frozen Wind Valley, the Red Ridge Mountain – no one had been able to complete it in the past 300 years. There would usually be a small handful of people who could get into the Serenity Peak, let alone the Ethereal Peak. But this time there was a Garden of Peaches added into the trials. It would be fair to think that the Spirit Blade Sect were lowering the difficulty of their trials as well as their standards. Hai Yun Fan's exit gave all the other challengers a sense of hope. While it proved to them that it was possible to leave the village within a short period of time, no one was in a rush to follow after him. They had understood that taking their time in this trial would make the next trial easier for them.

It was a pity though, that there were increasingly less people who could achieve a minimum pass for the trial. A week had passed after Hai Yun Fan left, and no one was able to follow after his footsteps, except for the two idiots who were too eager to leave and who made a mess of their own quests.

"Little Fong, Little Fong, let me explain. I truly love you! I don't hate your thick waist or your body hair! You have to believe me! There's nothing going on between Little Lan and myself. Little Fong, please forgive me!"

"You unfaithful trash. Get the hell out of here!"

When your daughter elopes...

Translator: Mr Voltaire

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

A resource crisis was now present in the Garden of Peaches. Two weeks after Hai Yun Fan had left, or one month after most of the competitors had arrived, everyone had gathered enough experience and favourability to proceed to the next step – aside from those retarded princelings who had screwed up on their part. After a month, most strategies had been tested by most of the challengers. Although they weren't comparable to Wang Lu, who spent all of his days hiding away in his room, planning and strategizing, most of the youths here were indeed geniuses from all over the land. Collectively, they gained more and more experience and knowledge through their endeavours.

Everyone had calculated the number of villagers in the Garden of Peaches to be around 120, which meant that there were only enough quests for twenty or so challengers to move on to the next trial. Most of the challengers were focused on gaining the favourability of one particular villager, such that when it reached a certain point, it would trigger a special quest, which its completion would allow them to leave the Garden of Peaches. But once completed, it would never appear again – regardless whether it was an A Rank quest or a B Rank quest *etc.* The dilemma between the Village Chief, Auntie Liu and Mrs He Lu, or the heartbroken and hairy Little Fong, who could now only eat a 'measly' ten steamed buns per meal – their quests would not be available to anyone

again.

Most of the A Rank quests had been taken already, or screwed up by various idiots. The B Rank quests were currently being fought over, and people were desperately looking for C Rank quests. For those who had come out of the Cloud Wave Map later, they made up the lack of quality with quantity. Surely ten or so C Rank quests was worth a B Rank quest, right? Perhaps twenty or thirty C Rank quests were worth an A Rank quest? Those who already had an A Rank quest on their hands were extremely careful in handling it. All the competition and fighting over quests quickly depleted the overall pool of quests available. What made things worse was that the resources were not distributed evenly at all: some people had occupied ten or so quests, and some were not able to find any, and resigned to their fate of being stuck in the Garden of Peaches forever.

With such a resource crisis, violent conflict could explode out at any time. At this point, everyone thought of one person: the mysterious person who had locked himself up in the courtyard of the Village Chief's residence, and had not even attempted any quests...

"Strange, what is this child waiting for?"

Standing on top of the clouds, Liu Xian, who had been observing for close to a month, gave a yawn.

Because of the gambling incident, the Elder had been ordered to observe and invigilate the Garden of Peaches. Apart from meditating and

circulating spiritual energy throughout his body, all he could do was to watch the events going on in the Garden of peaches. Luckily, there were many amusing things in the village, such as the incident between the princeling and Little Fong. That incident had almost caused him to start laughing while circulating spiritual energy in his body, which could have resulted in qi deviation. [Qi deviation is pretty much the “uncontrolled flow of Qi (spiritual energy) in the body”, that can lead to one losing their senses and going crazy].

However, as a spectator, there was something Liu Xian was not satisfied about... what was the youth who the Head Elder had his eyes on doing? He had achieved incredible results in the Cloud Wave Map, so why was he doing nothing in the Garden of Peaches?

It was possible to see everything from the clouds, and it was clear that Wang Lu hadn't gone out in almost a month. Even his little pageboy had already completed his quests, and his completion status was in the top three in the whole village. He was viewed by all the other challengers with respect and admiration, and had a status far above his incomprehensible master.

At this rate, there would only be one outcome. Liu Xian was curious as to what that little Wang Lu was thinking.

“Good morning Senior Brother.”

While he was still deep in thought, a familiarly irritating voice resounded in his ears.

Luckily, Liu Xian was in a fairly good mood, and was able to repress the anger he felt upon hearing the voice.

"Oh, Fifth Junior Sister, what instructions do you have?"

"No instructions, I just came to play with you for a bit."

The woman in white talked as she deftly walked to Liu Xian's side. "After twenty days, Senior Brother hasn't been moved by my genius design?"

Liu Xian examined his conscience. He was indeed shocked, upon finding that there were no actual 'villagers' in the village-every 'villager' was actually a puppet created by an ingenious illusion array. However, their performance was vastly superior to that of a normal puppets', such as the Village Chief, He Lu Shi and Old Auntie Liu. Of course, this was not something terribly amazing, as the Spirit Blade Sect's grand entrance array was thousands of times more sophisticated, but considering Fifth Junior Sister's cultivation and her intelligence, such an array was shocking.

But shock was simply shock.

“...Do you know how much trouble you’ve caused for everyone? You’ve messed up the entire Celestial Gathering!”

“No. I think the Celestial Gathering has evolved because of me.”

“No one needs your stupid evolution!”

“Senior Brother, you’re being naughty again. Then, what about that boy who walked out of the Garden of Peaches a week ago, I’m sure he’s talented enough for you to be moved, right?”

“Urgh...”

Thinking back to the youth from a week ago, Liu Xian could not remain indifferent—he had first rate character and emotional stability, first rate intellect, first rate EQ, and although his spirit base wasn’t that great, his other qualities made up for it.

This sort of person was one who could achieve great things, and was far better than some of those evildoers. Indeed, Liu Xian could not help but feel moved...

“What does that have to do with the Garden of Peaches? Hai Yun Fan’s

results in the Cloud Wave Map were already excellent!”

“Buuuut at least I helped you eliminate a bunch of defective products.”

“Hmph.” Liu Xian did not agree or disagree. He simply could not tolerate princelings like Xie Qian Long and his two companions. Luckily they had been eliminated in the Garden of Peaches, otherwise, he would have had many headaches to deal with, had the three of them made it into the Spirit Blade Sect.

However, if one truly wanted Liu Xian to admit that the Garden of Peaches was beneficial, it would have been easier to just refine his nine-coloured Yuanying. The Ethereal Peak Elder changed the topic. “So in this Garden of Peaches, are there any penalties for those who just laze around?”

“Lazing around?” The Fifth Junior Sister’s eyes widened. She looked down, and locked on to a certain person, and her expression changed.

“Senior Brother, you’re mistaken. This person isn’t lazing around at all.”

(Come to think of it, Little Ling’Er said that someone completed that chain of tasks I set in the Spirit River Town, could it be him? Tsk, I can’t believe my chain of tasks was completed by such a country bumpkin... however, this trial isn’t as easy. Plus, what do you think about your little pageboy who is about to let you down?)

Just as everyone was waiting for Wang Lu to make a move, he was met with a surprise.

“Young Master. I think... I think I’ve nearly completed my quests.”

Inside the room, the little pageboy had a nervous and perturbed expression, as if he was a youth who was meeting the father of his pregnant girlfriend for the first time.

Wang Lu maintained his calm disposition that he had displayed for the past month, and while flipping through some of the Village Chief’s books, responded, “Which quest?”

The pageboy paused for a moment, then replied, “All 8 are nearly complete. Following the Young Master’s instructions, I progressed in each quest at the same speed and maintained relationships between the main villagers involved in the individual quests, which indeed allow me to use half the effort, but double the speed at which the quests progressed...”

“Not bad. And?”

The little pageboy stood there in shock for a moment, and then resolved himself to say the words that he dreaded to say.

Wang Lu looked at him. “Since you’ve nearly completed your quests, hurry up and finish them and get out of here. Why are you wasting time standing idly?”

The pageboy was very surprised at his words. "Young Master, I..."

After thinking for a while, he tried again. "Young Master... Although I don't know what you're waiting for, I'm still your pageboy, so I shouldn't leave Young Master behind and go on without you."

Wang Lu gave a half-hearted laugh. "Hah. Are those words from your heart?"

The little pageboy jumped up. "From the bottom of my heart!"

"Woah, woah, okay, okay. Don't jump, don't jump. Just remember that telling lies will result in being struck by lightning. Are you trying to jump higher so that you can get hit by lightning?"

"I..." Once again, the pageboy was at a loss for words. After a while, he sighed. "Young Master... two months ago, no matter what anyone said, I would not have believed that I could reach this point. The fact that an ordinary pageboy from the countryside could have the chance to become an Inner Court Disciple is simply unbelievable. I know all of this was because of the Young Master's grace on me. And if it wasn't for the Young Master, I wouldn't be able to make it here. Young Master's overflowing kindness, I-"

“As they say, if you show someone a bit of kindness, they might take it for granted. And if you don’t keep showing them kindness, they may start to hate you. If what I’ve shown you is overflowing kindness, haven’t we become mortal enemies?” Wang Lu gave a joking smile, and continued, “Actually, you should just be more honest. You’ve been in this village for about a month, and you’ve talked to the other challengers quite a bit, so you should know what it meant for you to be able to walk past the Golden Bridge. Affinity is affinity. I didn’t give it to you, and you didn’t just find it on the ground. Your affinity is something that would have guaranteed you to enter any other sect, even if you didn’t join the Spirit Blade Sect.”

The pageboy was once again speechless. Before deciding to go and talk to the Young Master, this was how he had convinced himself.

“So now you’re about to walk out of the Garden of Peaches, and straight to the Ethereal Peak. Why do you need to waste time waiting for me? The Immortal Path is full of surprises, and nothing is certain. Don’t put yourself at a disadvantage and wait for me. Besides, you’ve already agreed to travel with someone, right?”

The pageboy’s heart almost stopped. The Young Master never left the Village Chief’s residence, yet he seemed to know every single thing that was going on in the village!

The pageboy had indeed made an agreement with someone else to leave together. Because the other person was a prince of noble backgrounds and incredible talent, it was easy for him to convince Wang Zhong to travel with him.

Apart from Hai Yun Fan, no one had left the village yet. If they left now, they would still be far ahead of everyone else. And even though Wang Lu was incredibly intelligent and talented, he had done nothing for a whole month. It seemed that his luck was running out. And whatever he did only affected him and not the little pageboy.

“Whether you want to live as a pageboy for life, or as ‘Wang Zhong’... I think you should really give it some thought.”

In contrast to the little pageboy’s nervousness, Wang Lu had acted very casually, as if he had seen this coming since a long time ago.

“Your awkwardness and nervousness is really off-putting. I really don’t mind whether you’re here or not, so please get the hell out without causing anymore difficulties between the two of us.”

Wang Zhong’s face immediately became red, and did not speak anymore. Instead, he silently kneeled on the ground and kowtowed three times towards Wang Lu, then left.

After the pageboy left, Wang Lu could not help but smile.

“Becoming so bold after kowtowing a few times... Looks like he really

did decide to become his own master. Little Hai, you were right: this boy really isn't anything good."

Wang Lu's smile became one of self-mocking. "And as for me... I can't believe I designed such a strategy plan for him!"

While saying this, Wang Lu flicked his wrist, sending close to a hundred pieces of paper on the table flying into the air. Floating around in the room, no one knew that every piece of paper was worth more than gold.

"After following me for seven years, he's still not able to work out who the main character is... God damn it! I failed to teach him properly. Ah, I guess this is how fathers feel when their daughters elope."

"Screw it, forget about him. The great me has finally finished preparations... and now, the time to act has come."

After speaking, Wang Lu walked to one of the walls in the room and took down the fabric covering the wall.

If Wang Zhong was still there, he would have definitely wet his pants out of shock.

Stuck on the wall were hundreds of pieces of paper. Every single sheet

was filled with strategies for every single villager, including diagrams and writing. Compared to the 'strategy guide' that other challengers had compiled together, this was hundreds of times superior!

It was true that Wang Lu had not left the Village Chief's residence for a month, but he had not wasted a single moment. As a challenger who had walked out of the Cloud Wave Map without excellent results, the benefits Wang Lu received were far greater than what the little pageboy had known. The relationship between himself and the Village Chief was not as simple as landlord and tenant.

# The legendary chain completion strategy

Translator: Mr Voltaire

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

“Wang Lu’s starting to take action!”

“Is that true!? Quickly, go call everyone!”

On the day that the pageboy had left with his companions, Wang Lu had finally come out of his seclusion. Walking out of the doors, many people started to crowd around him and observe.

“Oh, so he’s that Wang Lu. He doesn’t seem all that amazing. Hearing all about him, I thought he would look like some sort of evil demon.”

“Tch, don’t judge a book by its cover-this guy was the first person to walk out of the Cloud Wave Map.”

“Maybe he was just really lucky; he hasn’t even done anything in the Garden of Peaches yet.”

“Hasn’t done anything yet? The first person to walk out, Hai Yun Fan, was only able to do so because of his instructions.”

“Cheh, just because he got out of here quickly, that says nothing about his overall completion status. He pretty much wasted the Village Chief’s A Rank Quest. Now, almost all of the quests in the village have been taken. So what if he’s been planning all this time?”

“Who knows... everyone’s here to see what he’s going to do now.”

Wang Lu’s actions did not disappoint everyone.

He first went to help Auntie Huang, who lived on the east side of the village, carry the water from the well to her house.

“Ehhhh, the hell’s he doing!? Auntie Huang’s quest has already been completed; she can’t possibly take another adoptive son. What’s he carrying water for!?”

The person who had completed Auntie Huang’s quest was also feeling confused. This quest was only a D Rank Quest, and was one of the most worthless ones in the village. Who would have thought that this was where Wang Lu started.

Wang Lu ignored everyone around him, and continued to carry water. Because he had a fairly good body, it didn’t take long for him to fill up Auntie Huang’s water tank.

"Ah, young man, thank-

Before Auntie Huang could even finish her sentence, Wang Lu cut her off, "I want to go to your son's school."

Auntie Huang was shocked for a moment, then nodded her head.

Afterwards, Wang Lu immediately headed next door.

Next door lived Auntie Huang's son, Scholar Huang [TLN: 'Scholar' was his title]. His quest was worth much more than Auntie Huang's. At the beginning, it was only a D Rank Quest, but after progressing, one would be able to meet an Old Sage in the village, beginning an A Rank Quest. This was the quest that the little pageboy, Wang Zhong, had completed.

After the little pageboy had completed his quest and left, he had never shown interest in anyone else. None of the other challengers even bothered talking to this Scholar anymore. Upon seeing Wang Lu stride into the school, all of the challengers were all wondering what he was going to do.

"Could it be that this Scholar has a hidden quest?"

"Probably not, otherwise it would mean that every villager has a hidden quest. I doubt Wang Lu stayed in seclusion all that time just to complete hidden quests."

They saw Wang Lu walk in, and before Scholar Huang even had the chance to say something, he shoved a piece of paper into his hands. "Teacher, this is today's homework."

Everyone outside was thoroughly confused. Wang Lu had not been accepted as a pupil, nor had he paid his study fees. According to principle, he should be chased out! And yet, he had swaggered in, claiming to have finished his homework?! What homework? However, Scholar Huang was teaching poems today, so it must have been a poem on the piece of paper.

Scholar Huang began to read through the poem, then gasped. "This poem was written by you?!"

"Who else?" Wang Lu smiled, "The waters from the Yellow River descend from the sky, yet who has ever seen it return from the sea... haven't you heard anything like this before?" [TLN: The meaning in the two verses is meant to show the brevity of life; the water flowing from the Yellow River to the sea (and supposedly never coming back) is a metaphor for how fast time flows, as well as how you can never 'regain' time. The joke here is that Wang Lu actually plagiarised this poem from the great Chinese poet Li Bai (李白), and passed it off as his own].

"There are deeply sincere emotions imbued in this poem, and is deeply moving. You, an eleven or twelve-year-old child, how can you experience

such feelings?"

"I suppose I'm just gifted, or I'm some sort of God of Literature that descended here or something."

Wang Lu chuckled. He looked at Scholar Huang as if he was a dog from the village. Scholar Huang gave a sigh of appreciation.

"It's a pity that I've already taken a Closing Disciple, otherwise I would definitely want you as a disciple." [TLN: Closing Disciple= final disciple that a master accepts].

Wang Lu continued to chuckle, completely oblivious to Scholar Huang's disappointment, asked, "Can I ask a favour of you?"

Scholar Huang looked at him seriously. "Anything."

"I want your sweat towel," Wang Lu pointed at the towel on the table that Scholar Wang used to wipe his sweat.

Scholar Huang looked extremely shocked. "You want that??"

"Mhmm," Wang Lu took the towel, and simply left. Scholar Huang was evidently no ordinary person either – a short moment after their exchange, he began to start teaching again, as if nothing had just happened.

However, the crowd outside didn't find this exchange too strange. After

all, this is how all the villagers of the Garden of Peaches were like. Apart from when a quest was actually in progression and in direct relation to them, they made decisions that seemed incredibly stupid to the outsiders.

The strange one was Wang Lu. He strode out with the towel, and started heading towards somewhere else. What was he thinking? Scholar Huang wasn't some sort of beautiful maiden – his towel was both sweaty and stinky. What was he going to use it for?

The crowd continued to follow Wang Lu. Upon reaching a house, a few of them began to exclaim, "Little Fong! It's Little Fong's house!"

The village girl Little Fong was somewhat of a legendary being. She was like a small mountain, and could eat twenty steamed buns and ten plates of beef in one sitting. Outside her house were gigantic rocks that she would flip and throw around for fun.

Anywhere else, she could have become some sort of valiant hero. However, in the Garden of Peaches she was the 'village girl Little Fong', whose one desire was true love. Everything related to her quest was about love, and the only way to finish the quest was to be completely devoted and faithful to her. Many of the challengers had described this quest as a legendary A Rank Quest. One princeling had tried his hand at this quest, but had lost everything when he had failed it. Who would have thought that Wang Lu would have come here...

It was a pity-if that princeling hadn't messed up this quest so badly, perhaps Wang Lu really might have been able to complete it... although just thinking about it made people want to vomit. Nevertheless, Wang Lu had no chance in completing this quest.

Wang Lu knocked on the door and said, "Little Fong, I've got Scholar Huang's sweat towel."

Just as he finished speaking, the door opened. Little Fong, holding a greasy leg of ham, quickly replied, "What did you just say?"

Wang Lu smiled. "I've got Scholar Huang's sweat towel that hasn't been washed yet. I'll trade it for your special recipe's Steamed Pork with Rice."

"You want my special Steamed Pork with Rice? ... Fine, give me the towel."

As she grabbed the towel, one could see the ripples forming across her fat arm. Who knew if it was because of how excited she was, or just how much fat there was on her arm.

Wang Lu did not resist, and let her take the towel. Then, Little Fong, under the gaze of the crowd, raised the towel to her nose and took in a

deep breath, as if it were some sort of aromatic scent.

At this moment, one of the challengers, who almost looked like a beggar, emanating an aura of defeat suddenly exclaimed, "That's right, Little Fong has a crush on Scholar Huang!"

Everyone looked over, and saw the princeling that had been beaten half to death for being unfaithful to Little Fong.

Little Fong seemed to be in a rush to do something to this towel, her two eyes shone with a strange glow, and charged indoors. In her haste, she even threw the leg of ham onto the ground.

In the end, this village girl was still a person of her word. After a few minutes, with a cheerful smile, she carried a large jar out and handed it to Wang Lu. "The goods were authentic, thanks!"

Wang Lu received the jar gratefully. Although it was sealed, the aroma still wafted out from jar, causing everyone's stomachs to rumble.

If there was anything about Little Fong, it would be her legendary skill in cooking.

"Thanks."

Little Fong patted her chest, "No need to thank me. Next time you have something like this, you must bring it to me. I've also got my special recipe ham – it's yours once you bring something good again!"

Wang Lu smiled. "Sure, in that case, I'll even get Scholar Huang's underwear for you."

Little Fong's nostrils flared. "Ah, ah! If you can really give me his underwear, I'll even give you my body!"

"No thanks." Wang Lu declined, and walked off, struggling to carry the large jar.

After walking for a short while, Wang Lu reached yet another person's house.

It was the same thing again and again. Wang Lu traded some of the Steamed Pork with Rice for some fine silk, then used the fine silk to trade for some cosmetics. He then traded the cosmetics for desserts... in some of the transactions he made a profit; in others he made a loss. However, Wang Lu did not care at all. Like a puppet, he repeated the same action over and over again: knocking on the door, handing over what he had in his hands, receiving something else in his hands. However, what he gained from each transaction was not simply the physical goods in his hands, but also the gratitude of each person.

In just one day Wang Lu had continuously walked throughout the entire village, knocking on around one hundred and twenty doors, and receiving the gratitude of around one hundred and twenty people. In the end, he took a box of food from the Garden of Peaches Inn back to where he was staying.

During the entire day, ten or so people had stopped progressing in their own quests just to follow Wang Lu around to see what he would do. In the morning, there were still many people who were confused about what Wang Lu was doing. However, by noon, even the least intelligent of them had worked out what was happening.

After living in the Garden of Peaches for a month, everyone knew that this discovery of 'favourability' was made by Wang Lu, and made known to everyone by Hai Yun Fan. Every villager had levels of favourability, and this favourability was also the challenger's completion status of the quest! Wang Lu's actions would be seen as ridiculous by a businessman, but it could only be described as one word by the challengers.

Brilliant.

The only goal for the challengers in the Garden of Peaches was to increase the villagers' favourability towards them. Wang Lu had gathered an incredible amount of favourability in just one day. Apart from the words that he absolutely had to say, he had not said much, and some conversations he had with villagers even defied logic, and yet everything

had progressed smoothly and successfully.

There was only one explanation. Wang Lu had grasped the essence behind this trial, and had used the simplest and most efficient method to gain the most amount of favourability. What was even more impressive was that he had completed a one hundred and twenty chain of tasks in a single go.

One day, one hundred and twenty people. Every single person was incredibly grateful towards Wang Lu. If their quests had not been started or completed yet, there was not a single person who did not believe that Wang Lu would have been able to trigger all one hundred and twenty of them. Although he did not receive much favourability from each individual, but altogether, it was a monstrous amount.

At the moment, the most quests that had been undertaken by a single person was ten, and that challenger had been busy to death.

However, what about Wang Lu? In just one go, he had gone through all one hundred and twenty people. The spectating crowd found that in the route he had taken, he had not walked even a single unnecessary step! What was even more monstrous was that he could repeat this method of gaining favourability unlimited times.

For most people, just washing their hands one hundred and twenty times in a single day would drive them crazy... so what about completing one hundred and twenty tasks? Only Wang Lu would be able to accomplish such a feat.

"...However, what's the point?"

A challenger used a mocking tone to cover the jealousy in his heart.

"If he started doing this one month ago, then he would have a massive advantage over everyone else, and no one would even be able to get a quest, and would be forever stuck here. However, he's the one stuck here now! So what if he can get a bit of favourability from one hundred and twenty people? There's no one else to give him quests now!"

Although the statement was quite harsh, it reflected what many people were thinking.

Wang Lu, this is pretty brilliant and all, but don't you think this is a bit stupid?

Of course, Wang Lu didn't think so at all.

The morning after, when Wang Lu left his residence, there were many youths who came to taunt him.

"Ah, Wang Lu, you've gained so much favourability, it's just a pity..."

Before he could even finish his sentence, Wang Lu cut him off.

"I know what you want to say... but to be honest, I didn't think you would all be this stupid. Did you think those one hundred and twenty people were all the people in the village?"

This caused the youths to become shocked, and they started to count.

"I... I don't think we missed anyone."

One youth hesitantly said, "Unless you count the baby in Auntie Zhang's belly, there should only be one hundred and twenty people in total."

Another person wondered out loud, "What if the village's dogs and pigs all had quests too?"

Wang Lu once again cut them off. "Are you retards all inbreeds with genetic problems?"

Although they couldn't quite understand some of the words Wang Lu was saying, they could still tell that he was badmouthing them. A few of them turned red with anger. "What did you say?"

While shouting, a few of them charged towards him.

Wang Lu lifted his face up, looking down on them as if they were wild dogs.

However, just before the fists of the Young Masters reached him, a black shadow descended from the sky.

“Adadadadada!!”

# The Importance of Compulsory Education

Translator: Mr Voltaire

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

The mysterious figure had disappeared just as quickly as it had appeared. The onlookers had only caught a glimpse of the figure before in the next moment, all there was to see was a group of Young Masters collapsed on the ground.

Having all been beaten half to death, the Young Masters all realised what Wang Lu had been plotting.

Indeed, there was still one person out of the one hundred and twenty villagers that had been obviously forgotten!

The mysterious black shadow, the Garden of Peaches' Protector: 'Adada'!

Whether it was a he or she, 'Adada' was indeed a mysterious figure. Whenever one tried to ask the villagers about this mysterious protector, the villagers would always respond with something along the lines of, "What sort of stupid joke is this", and refuse to discuss the matter. To date, this 'Adada' had appeared quite a lot, each time appearing just as violence was about to ensue (although verbal abuse was seemingly

tolerated, much to Wang Lu's delight). He or she was a supreme martial arts expert-even those who had magical treasures could not fight back. The worst incident was when Xie Qian Long and his companions had tried to ambush 'Adada'. They had prepared their magical treasures, then attacked another challenger to lure him or her out. However, the end result was that the black shadow had empty palmed smashed the Frozen Seal Downpour Talisman and Flowing Cloud Invisible Sword and left the three people bloodied messes on the ground.

However, because of this, no one had viewed the black shadow as one of the villagers of the Garden of Peaches. This was because in such a peaceful little village, why would there be such a powerful expert? He or she obviously must be one of the Spirit Blade Sect's disciples! How could they try to gain favourability from a Spirit Blade Sect disciple!?

However... could it be...?

Indeed, this time, after the black shadow 'Adada' appeared, it did not immediately disappear, but stopped in front of Wang Lu.

This was the first time the people had seen the black shadow up close... well, it was the same as not seeing it at all. It was pretty much a black shadow, with the semblance of a human, but without any features. It didn't look at all like a Spirit Blade Sect disciple, but rather an old devil from an evil Sect.

However, Wang Lu did not seem scared at all. Rather, his expression was one of impatience, as if he had been waiting for a long time. "Great hero, please teach me your martial arts. I have very good bones. I will definitely be able to take up the duty of protecting the earth's peace!"

The black shadow seemed to be caught off guard by Wang Lu's ridiculous greeting, and paused for a few seconds. It replied in a cold manner. "You've done many acts of kindness in this village, which is indeed good to see... but it is not enough to become my pupil."

After speaking, the black shadow disappeared with a 'swish'.

However, Wang Lu was not disappointed at all, for he had already achieved his goal. Although Adada had not said much, he implied that Wang Lu had not gathered enough favourability. Although he had painstakingly planned for a whole month, working out a perfect completion strategy, Wang Lu had still fallen short.

Despite this, it wouldn't take too long for Wang Lu to gather enough favourability. The challengers who had thought that one could not collect favourability off a villager once another challenger had started on them were truly stupid. Indeed, once a challenger had screwed up their quest, it was impossible for that villager to help them leave the village. However, what Wang Lu was doing was not relying on a single villager or a few villagers. Instead, by trading one thing for another, and racking up large amounts of favourability, he could do this repeatedly and continuously gain favourability from all of the villagers. This way, he would be able to maintain low risk and gain more favourability than anyone in the village.

Most of the challengers who were still in the village were already able to leave. The only reason they were still in the village was to gain more favourability in order to improve their scores. The methods they used were unintelligent though-fighting to solely occupy quests.

As for Wang Lu, he had been different from the others since day one.

If the attribute being tested was on anything else, Wang Lu would be certain that he would not have much of a chance against all of the other young heroes and geniuses. However, this Immortal Path felt like it was almost as if it had been designed for him. He had found every trial incredibly easy and simple. Since that was the case, he might as well do them to perfection.

With a clear goal, Wang Lu continuously gained more favourability using the same method until the black shadow 'Adada' allowed him to proceed to the next step of the quest.

Another half a month passed and more and more challengers left the village. One of the reasons was because they had pretty much completed the quests that they could actually do – quantity was not the most important thing. After all, the princeling that had been too greedy had been punished severely by the village girl Little Fong.

The point of the Garden of Peaches was to test one's EQ. This reflected that those who could stay until now, were all people who sought perfection and challenged themselves. However, in the end, it was simply too hard to do a quest to absolute completion.

Another thing was that it wasn't easy watching Wang Lu easily gather

more and more favourability. For those who did not have much mental fortitude, they would be tempted to resort to evildoing to take out this frustration.

After half a month, apart from the ones who had failed their quests, most of the challengers had already left. Even the incredibly stupid Wen Bao, who had taken up an A Rank Quest and had received Hai Yun Fan's help had finally been able to gain enough favourability to be able to leave. He left, smiling like an idiot, with Old Auntie Liu.

Apart from a few useless failures, the only person who was still in the village was Wang Lu.

Perhaps it was because Wang Lu had stayed for too long, or perhaps it was because most people had already moved on. Rumours gradually began to spread throughout the Garden of Peaches about Wang Lu. Or rather, they were more so mockery and derision.

The first person to walk out of the Cloud Wave Map was so incredible, eh? Was it worth it to reside in the Village Chief's residence? You felt pretty good instructing Hai Yun Fan, didn't it? It must have been amazing getting all that favourability from one hundred and twenty people.

And now, staying the Garden of Peaches, with us losers, must suck a lot, doesn't it?

You were so arrogant, and gave up on one hundred and twenty chances, and were so determined to complete that 'hidden quest'. Now, you've ruined yourself, and lost your chance at the Immortal Path. Apart from living in the Village Chief's residence, what difference is there

between you and us, who failed?

In response, Wang Lu didn't pretend to be noble and forgiving, but rather ran to the centre of the village, and directly responded to those rumours and mocking.

His way of retaliating was very direct.

"Retards, your mum was [xxx]'d by dogs."

This short sentence caused the entire Garden of Peaches to lapse into silence. Countless pairs of eyes stared at him, in disbelief that the Wang Lu, who had seemed so high and mighty, would use such insults.

As for Wang Lu, he found that insulting people in public was very effective – not only did being insulted in public add to the humiliation, but it also had an AOE (Area of Effect), allowing him to insult many people at the same time.

Immediately, the usually respectable Young Masters became infuriated.

"Wang Lu, you want to die!?"

"You bastard, don't think that we're afraid of you just because you know some sort of evil witchcraft!"

"I'm going to make you suffer indescribable pain!"

In just a moment, the ten or so remaining challengers all began to charge towards Wang Lu.

In response, Wang Lu coldly laughed. "You're offended? Well, if you're so offended, see if you trash can actually hurt me!"

Under such provocation, most people lost their sense of reason, and attempted to attack Wang Lu.

A black shadow descended from the sky.

"Adadadadada!"

Looking at the bodies lying on the street, Wang Lu smiled and said to the black shadow, "I've waited for you for a long time."

The black shadow was not at all impressed with him. "Your mouth is truly evil! I'm not here to be your bodyguard!"

Wang Lu nodded. "I know, you're here to teach me martial arts. I've pretty much maxed out the favourability from one hundred and twenty people."

After saying this, Wang Lu almost felt like crying. When he had entered the village, he had suspected that there would be some sort of hidden quest. This was because he felt that there was some sort of connection,

some sort of similarity between himself and the designer of this trial. If it was himself, he would definitely design there to be a hidden quest. !

However, he had never expected this hidden quest to be so troublesome! To only be able to trigger the next step after maxing out the favourability from one hundred and twenty people... if he hadn't been able to walk out of the Cloud Wave Map first, and reside in the Village Chief's residence, and have the Village Chief as a source of information, he definitely wouldn't have been able to devise this chain strategy.

Moreover, if not for this perfect one-hundred-and-twenty-person-chain strategy, even the most sociable and friendly person would find it almost impossible to gain favourability from one hundred and twenty people!

However, the greater the difficulty, the greater the rewards would be. Wang Lu was very, very curious as to what the rewards would be!

However...

"I have seen... the kind things you have done," the black shadow said, looking at the pile of unconscious challengers on the ground, "But this is not enough."

Wang Lu frowned. "Not enough?"

"If you want to learn martial arts, you need to pay tuition fees."

“..... Tuition fees?”

The black shadow laughed. “My demands are not high, I just want a single coin.”

Wang Lu also laughed. “You sure have interesting tuition fees. One coin, isn’t that simple. Here.”

At the Ru Family Inn in the Spirit River Town, Wang Lu had spent most of his money, but still had some bits of silver as well as coins.

Taking out his money purse, the black shadow shook its head. “What good is outside money? I want money from this mountain.”

Wang Lu’s expression sunk.

Money from the mountain? Where could you find money on this mountain? The system of trade was so primitive in the Garden of Peaches that it made one want to cry. Let alone gold and silver, not even shells or other primitive things were used. The only system was bartering.

Wang Lu stood there in deep thought. The black shadow didn’t seem like it was in a hurry to leave either, and patiently waited as he thought.

Money from the mountain... the mountain referred to was obviously the Spirit Blade Mountain. Obviously, the Spirit Blade Sect would have some form of currency, but he couldn't go to the Serenity Peak, much less the Ethereal Peak to get some money. Where else would he get money from this mountain?

Wait a second...

Wang Lu's active adventurer mind suddenly realised something, and his entire mind seemed to flash.

He opened his money purse, and out of the ten or so coins, took out one of the coins.

That copper coin was the coin that the proprietress of the Ru Family Inn had given him. Since it came from the Spirit River Town, it should count as money from the mountain... right?

Sure enough, upon seeing the copper coin, the black shadow stretched out its hand.

Wang Lu closely observed the black shadow. It was strange. Usually, the black shadow's movements were fast as lightning. Even magical treasures

could be destroyed by those incredibly fast fists and feet. However, this motion was much slower than even normal humans.

Strange, very strange. In his mind, his adventurer's intuition was setting off alarm bells. Wang Lu frowned, and squeezed the coin so hard that his hands began to go white.

In the next moment, he thought he heard the black shadow sigh, and so decided to do something different.

Just as he was about to hand over the copper coin, he took it back.

The black shadow was startled. "What's wrong?"

"Sorry, this copper coin is very important to me. It was left to me by my deceased wife."

The black shadow paused, and muttered something incomprehensibly. In the next moment, without any warning, a punch came flying towards him.

"Deceased wife my ass!"

Victory of the hoarder

Translator: Mr Voltaire

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

Wang Lu laughed at himself. There was an old saying along the lines of "a single cent can make things difficult for a hero". Of course, what it meant was that sometimes even capable people are unable to resolve some small matters. However, it was painfully ironic that this saying literally applied to him right now – things had been made extremely difficult for him by a single coin.

He had taken the coin back at the last second out of instinct, but he did not regret his actions, and felt that he had made the right bet.

What was the value of the proprietress' coin? Wang Lu had no idea, but its worth probably wasn't just limited to the Garden of Peaches. Before the black shadow had mentioned the copper coin, Wang Lu had not actually thought of the copper coin from the proprietress – he had treated it as a normal coin. It was only when the black shadow was about to accept the coin as tuition fees did Wang Lu suddenly realise something.

In many games... no, in many adventures and trials, this was how things were done. Items that were acquired early on often played crucial importance at later stages. It seemed that this copper coin was such an

item. If he kept it to the end, he might be able to get some big benefits out of it.

The more he thought about it, the more Wang Lu believed that his guess was correct. However, the problem that he now faced was that he still needed a single coin from the mountain. Where could he find such a thing?

Of course, there was a simple answer-just ask the Village Chief. After all, he had maxed out the favourability from the Village Chief; it wouldn't be too hard to ask him for one.

"Money?"

When the Village Chief heard Wang Lu's request, he deeply frowned.

"If you wanted anything else, it would be easy, but money... I've never seen or heard of it before. This village uses bartering-an item for an item. We've never used money."

Wang Lu clicked his tongue, I knew I wouldn't be able to get much help from you.

It seemed that he would have to rely on himself.

“Village Chief, it doesn’t matter if you guys don’t have any money. Since things are like this, let’s invent some.”

“Ah?!” The Village Chief gave a cry of surprise.

“Although there aren’t many people in the Garden of Peaches, there are many goods and trades. How about this: as the Village Chief, you use your reputation as a basis for this monetary system, and then start issuing out coins for everyone to use.”

The Village Chief was surprised, “Issue... coins?”

“That’s right. You can use shells, gold, anything like that. If you want, you can even use paper. As long as there is something to guarantee its value, it’ll work. Once there’s a monetary system, the village will become more and more prosperous, and people will be able to buy and sell even more efficiently. People’s lives will be completely changed! And in return, all you have to do is give me a single coin!”

Wang Lu became more and more excited as he spoke. He was overjoyed that there was some way to use this idiot. Who knew where he could find a coin on this mountain-it would be much easier for him to do it this way!

Unexpectedly, after thinking for a while, the Village Chief shook his head.

"No."

Wang Lu early jumped up. "No!?! What do you mean 'no'?"

The Village Chief continued to shake his head. "We can't start issuing out coins."

"Goddamn it! Why not? Did nothing I just said make sense? No matter, I'll explain it again..." Wang Lu exhibited extraordinary patience.

"Young man, I understood everything you said," the Village Chief sighed. "But it's not possible."

"Why?"

"....." The Village Chief didn't seem to be able to give an answer. Only after a long while did he reply, "We can't go against the ancestor's rules."

"Why can't you change some rules set out by an ancestor? Are you all constipated or something!?" Wang Lu was furious at this point. [TLN: Ohdearlord, this was a terrible (read: awesome) pun. "Can't change rules" is "bu ke bian", which sounds like "can't take a dump"... so Wang Lu makes a pun on that, hence the "constipated"] "You actually have the dignity to say such a retarded excuse? Does my maxed out favourability mean nothing to you?"

The Village Chief replied, "I know it's good and all, but I don't like it."

"Goddamn it! You are sixty years old and you're still trying to play hard to get? Aren't you worried that God will punish you with a heart attack?" [TLN: the Chinese could be interpreted as someone rejecting a confession].

Who knew if the Village Chief would get a heart attack, but Wang Lu was close to having one.

Being someone who seemed to have a lot in common with the designer of the trials, Wang Lu had had quite an easy time on the Immortal Path. However, at this point in time, it seemed that they were completely different, which made Wang Lu feel very bitter.

What was even more painful was that the designer of this trial was clearly cheating. Normally the Village Chief had a pretty good intellect, but now it seemed like he was completely retarded. There was something wrong going on here...

"Alright, let's stop going in circles. I'll draw the line here."

The Village Chief looked very confused. "What line?"

"....." Wang Lu frowned, and remained in silence for a long time. He looked at the Village Chief suspiciously, making him feel very awkward.

"Forget it, just pretend I never came here today."

At the same time, on the clouds.

"... I feel it's not too good to do things this way, right?"

A certain black shadow was watching the scene of Wang Lu talking to the Village Chief.

Next to the black shadow, a certain woman in white clothes coldly laughed. "For children who like to cheat, not killing them is already quite merciful."

The black shadow couldn't take it anymore. "You're saying he's cheating? It's obvious that he saw through the flaws in your design, and now you're trying to cover it up."

The woman in white awkwardly replied, "What flaws, don't spout nonsense, little Ling'Er... an Elder's flaws can't really be called flaws..."

“Changing the Immortal Path without permission, proudly telling the rest of the Elders that this trial would be on par with the Cloud Wave Map, Nether World Path, and now that there are problems, you’re forcefully trying to cover them up...”

“Oi oi oi , little Ling’Er, why are you standing on his side? We’ve been good sisters [TLN: not literal blood sisters] for such a long time, have you forgotten about all that?”

“Hmph, he helped me win that bet, so of course I’ll stand on his side. Plus, as a dignified Elder of the Heavenly Sword Hall, you should take responsibility for your actions.”

The woman in white instantly became angry from all the embarrassment. “Heavenly Sword Hall? Ha! That idiot Head Elder still hasn’t given me any of the subsidies for being an Elder; why should I act like a dignified Elder of the Heavenly Sword Hall? I’m going to cheat! The time when they give me the money I deserve is the time I change profession to a dignified and righteous Elder!”

“... Although the Spirit Blade Sect is quite large, I’m sure you’re the only person who could say such a thing.” In the face of such shamelessness, the black shadow didn’t have anything to say.

While they were talking, the woman in white had already directed the Village Chief to chase Wang Lu away, and laughed. “I want to see what solutions you have this time.”

Behind them, a cold, elderly voice rang out. "I want to see how you explain this to the Disciplinary Elder this time."

The woman in white's smile froze, and she slowly and rigidly turned around. Her smile became incredibly forced and pained. "Aiyo, it isn't Senior Brother Head Elder! Please excuse my lack of manners for not greeting this VIP guest earlier..."

"VIP guest my ass! This is my home!"

"Really? I always thought it was my home. My Alzheimer's has been getting worse lately, does Senior Brother want to give me a few ten thousand spirit stones to cure it..."

"Before curing your Alzheimer's, I want to first cure your reckless and haphazard personality! I decided to overlook your actions in changing the Immortal Path before, but now you even dare to mess with the Immortal Map while I'm gone. Heheh, forget about your salary this year."

"Fuck, no way!?"

"Like you said, as an Elder of the Heavenly Sword Hall, it's not good if you don't receive any subsidies."

The woman in white's hopes were reignited. "So...?"

"So you can forget about being an Elder, focus on cultivating at your Inimitable Peak. You can be an Elder again when you reach the Yuanying Stage, and I'll even give you full subsidy!"

"Fuuuck! Senior Brother, I did this for the good of this Sect, for you!"

"And if you keep going, I'll even take away your basic living expenses!"

"Senior Brother, you can't tell good from evil – you'll definitely regret allowing that boy to cheat!"

After chasing away the troublesome woman in white, the Head Elder turned his head, and found that the black shadow was gone.

The Head Elder sighed, and directed his mind to the Immortal Map. The Celestial Magic Tool that controlled the entire Immortal Path had been thrown into chaos by that woman. The Head Elder stretched out his hand, and the results of the woman in white's meddling disappeared.

The Head Elder sat in silence for a while, then added some things onto the Immortal Map.

“Even though Junior Sister likes to mess around, if there really are flaws and holes, it would be best to fill them out. Although...why does that copper coin look so familiar? Never mind, I’m not wearing my glasses, let’s forget about it.”

Back at the Garden of Peaches, Wang Lu decided that his sure-win tactic was completely blocked off.

Although he was very bitter about the Spirit Blade Sect using such low-handed methods, but if the easy way out wasn’t usable, then Wang Lu would have to think of another solution.

“In that case, let’s have a think about a direct attack... what’s the way to find money on this mountain? In order to get the money, it must first exist. Could there be some clues in this village that I’ve missed... Goddamn it! There’s definitely none, right!? I’m a professional!”

Wang Lu slammed his fist onto the table, showing his conviction and confidence in his professionalism.

He had prepared for a whole month, and had grasped every single detail. There definitely couldn’t be anything that he had missed. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have been able to create his perfect completion strategy. However, it was obvious that he was now stuck. If he couldn’t find a solution, this would be the end of the Immortal Path for him.

“Dammit. Money in the mountain, money in the mountain... where can I find money in the mountain? I’ve looked everywhere in the village, but...”

Suddenly, an idea passed through Wang Lu’s head.

“Hah, I actually forgot about that person. My professional spirit is crying.”

Afterwards, Wang Lu walked out while laughing self-mockingly. Just as he walked out, he saw two of the challengers who had failed.

“Hey, what a coincidence. Oi, your mum...”

Before he could even finish his sentence, a black shadow descended from the sky, and charged with Wang Lu into the room.

“Stop. You don’t need to go and verbally abuse other people every time you want to meet me.”

Wang Lu replied, “Who let the designer of the Garden of Peaches leave such a flaw? It’s not like I want to do things this way either.”

The black shadow nodded in agreement. “Then, what have you come to

discuss this time? Have you thought it through?"

Wang Lu smiled. "I guess you could say I thought it through. I've found money in this mountain."

"Oh?"

"Heh, from the beginning, I made a mistake by believing that the only money on this mountain could be found in the Garden of Peaches. After a while, I realised that I was stupid, and that the key to the secret quest was you, the only non-resident of the village. Even if the Garden of Peaches has no money, I'm sure that you, who asks for a tuition fee from me, does."

The black shadow laughed. "Indeed, you're right."

"So my job is to get a single coin from you."

"Mmm. That's a very clear plan. However, it won't be easy to get a single coin from me. Even if you gave me ten thousand liang of silver, I wouldn't trade with you."

"Don't worry, right now even if I sold my kidneys I wouldn't be able to give you ten thousand liang of silver, but..."

As Wang Lu spoke, he took out something from underneath the bed.

It was a red wooden lunch box.

Seeing the lunch box, the black shadow stood there in shock. Seeing this, Wang Lu's confidence in succeeding went from 80% to 100%.

It seemed that this trial was finally over.

The lunch box obviously was not an ordinary lunch box. Even if the craftsmanship was exquisite, and was an antique from a previous dynasty, it still wouldn't be worth ten thousand liang of silver, much less be worth a single coin from Spirit Blade Mountain.

In truth, a single coin from the Spirit Blade Mountain was priceless. Let alone gold or silver from mortals, even if Xie Qian Long wanted to trade with his Magical Treasures, the black shadow would probably still refuse.

Thinking to here, Wang Lu quickly realised that only things from the mountain could probably be traded for money from the mountain. Of course, it couldn't be any ordinary thing either, because ordinary things here wouldn't be worth much either.

The lunch box just so happened to be an extraordinary item. After food

was put inside, no matter how long it was, the freshness, smell and taste barely changed at all. In other words, this was a “super keeping fresh box”. Normally, it would be far inferior to those Magical Treasures, and after finishing the food inside it, it wasn’t worth much to Wang Lu. However, it just so happened that it was the key to passing the trial here in the Garden of Peaches.

When the proprietress had given him the box, he did not realise how special the box was. After thinking about it, he had realised how obvious it had been. After all, she had said the food inside was meant to last them one week... without any special keeping fresh abilities, they’d probably die of food poisoning.

After all, he had completed that chain of tasks, and had helped the proprietress easily win her bet. None of the things the proprietress had given him were ordinary items. If that copper coin was so special, then the lunch box was definitely not ordinary either.

Wang Lu smiled as he patted the lunch box. “I’ll sell this to you for a cheap price, just one coin. You won’t reject this kind offer, right?”

The black shadow stayed silent for a while. Because it was hidden in a dark fog, Wang Lu couldn’t see its expression.

After a while, the black shadow replied. “I never thought you’d actually

work it out. I'll accept it."

Since the black shadow had accepted it, this meant that Wang Lu had passed this trial. At this point, the professional adventurer couldn't help but start laughing.

The black shadow also laughed. "I wonder, did you see this coming from the start?"

"Of course not, I'm only a professional adventurer, not a beater [TLN: the word 'beater' came from an anime, which is the combination of 'beta tester' and 'cheater']. I didn't look at any strategy guides beforehand—who would have thought this lunch box was a key item—I finished all the food inside in the first two or three days, and just forgot about it under the bed for a while."

"Oh? Since you didn't know that the lunch box was special, so why did you carry it so far with you?"

"Because every decent professional adventurer is a hoarder."

Go and create a miracle quickly, brave Little Hai

Translator: Azarashi-Kun

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

Leaving the Village Chief's backyard and looking at the empty village, Wang Lu was deep in thought. He was the last one left behind in the village. He was truly alone.

His deep thinking was disturbed by a tap on the back. The black shadow stood behind him, smiling.

"All the quests in the Garden of Peaches have been completed. Even the challengers who have failed this trial have been kicked out already. There is no point in maintaining the forms of these villagers anymore. A waste of money. So why are you in such deep contemplation?" It caught a surprised look on Wang Lu's face before continuing. "You have fortunate timing. Had you waited any longer in the Village Chief's residence I would have been forced to kick you out."

Wang Lu asked with curiosity, "Are you a senior brother from the Spirit Blade Sect?"

The black shadow did not answer, but went on saying, "You have passed the Garden of Peaches. I, as your witness, will lead you to the next stage. Follow me."

Wang Lu quickly followed the black shadow out of the village, leaving behind all his luggage and snack in the house.

The black shadow moved quite quickly and led Wang Lu far away from the village. They ended up deep in the mountains which was the original site of an endless maze before the Garden of Peaches was created. However, the black shadow took no time to find his way.

Wang Lu struggled to catch a breath. With all the questions on his mind, he could not say anything.

“The prizes for completing the Garden of Peaches will be awarded according to one’s performance. But since you’ve already guessed it, I will not elaborate on this. Please consider the prizes carefully before making a selection. The rest of the stages are not easy, the Spirit Blade Sect hasn’t seen a qualified challenger from Celestial Gathering for hundreds of years...”

The black shadow suddenly stopped, turned around and smiled. “Good luck. I really hope to see you on the mountains.”

It disappeared in a flash, and revealed a narrow gap in between the mountain walls.

Wang Lu measured his size against the gap. Luckily, he was able to fit because he had not eaten yet.

The path started out narrow and got wider further in. Before long, the path opened up into a spacious cave hidden in the mountains. Patches of

sunlight that filtered through the cracks in the ceiling lit up the cave.

Wang Lu checked out the interior of the cave several times and shook his head with a smile.

Compared to the clearly flawed design of the Garden of Peaches, but with sincerity, this cave was below standard. In the middle of the cave, a box was placed there with a blank signpost beside it.

Although the box looked worn down, the content within had to be a high-leveled treasure, unless the Spirit Blade Sect was completely shameless and instituted 'data overflow'. (Editor's note – Wang Lu theorized that the number of points correlated to the quality of the prize. 'Data overflow' would be a situation where points that exceeded the highest quality prize would count for nothing. Had data overflow been instituted, Wang Lu would not have needed to work as hard for maximum prize, which would probably irritate him more than his massive let-down of a pageboy.)

While he was thinking, words appeared on the blank sign: "Conclusion of assignment:"

"Number of Targets Conquered: 120"

"Total Favourability: 12000"

"Average Favourability: 100"

"Key Assignment: Mission Impossible"

"Assignment Completion: 100%"

"Total Score: ..."

The figures in the last line were tiny and unreadable due to the limited space on the sign and astronomical number of score.

The overall result of the Garden of Peaches should be run basing on the rules set by the designer, but the designer might not have ever imagined an adventurer who destroys-all-the-things-along-his-way like Wang Lu would ever appear.....Fortunately, the data did not overflow.

The signpost sank into the ground immediately after giving out the total score. As for the wooden box beside, it seemed to 'brew' itself for a while, sometimes shaking or making sounds.

Five minutes later, the wooden box opened by itself, and the items inside burst out, shining intensely with every colour.

Above the clouds, a disciple dressed in black and white who was forced to stare at the changes of the clouds couldn't endure the loneliness anymore, and stretched.

"-sigh-We're probably going to work for nothing in this Celestial Gathering."

A younger disciple also dressed in black and white beside him asked,

“Senior brother, why talk like that? The progress rate of the ones ahead look pretty fine to me.”

The older disciple jeered. “Pretty fine, wasting so much at the second last monster already. Besides that Hai Yun Fan, no one else stands a chance against the last monster from what I see.”

The younger disciple was surprised. “I remember that the strongest monster in Red Ridge Mountains, Frozen Wind Valley, Azure Cloud Canyon, Nether World Path should only be at the sixth or seventh rank of the first level. They aren’t easy to deal with for mortals, but they shouldn’t bother these people who all got the prizes from the Garden of Peaches. Plus, some of them have great talent.”

The older disciple patted his junior brother’s shoulder. “You are still too young junior brother. Our sect’s Immortal Path hasn’t had a single person that completed it in hundreds of years. This sort of record that has both shocked the world and caused others to view us as jokes-do you think that it was created by just a few monsters of the sixth or seventh rank of the first level? Until now, weren’t all of us: you, me, and the other brothers, accepted into the sect by master or martial uncles (TLN: a martial uncle is someone’s master’s junior or senior brother) when they were out wandering in the world? Honestly, although your talent and affinity can be called first classed, you wouldn’t make it to the end either if you were let on the Immortal Path.”

The junior brother was obviously not convinced, but didn’t say anything.

The senior brother patted his shoulder again. “Haha. Keep watching them if you don’t believe that. Look, that boy Hai Yun Fan is not far from

the last stage.”

Hai Yun Fan, who was walking on Nether World Path, was indeed, not far from the end.

It had been two weeks since he left the Garden of Peaches, and he was just about to finish the path of the Frozen Wind Valley. But rumors say that the toughest part of the journey is towards the end. So instead of slacking, Hai Yun Fan was even more cautious. [TLN: ‘the toughest part of the journey is towards the end’ (行百里者半九十) A Chinese saying. The original text was ‘halving the journey of a hundred miles at ninety (miles)’, which means you have to be more serious towards it as it gets closer to success.

The Immortal Path of the Spirit Blade Sect that has never been accomplished by anyone in hundreds of years... How could the end come so easily? He wasn’t a natural monster like Wang Lu, Hai Yun Fan identified his abilities very clearly.

The third-rate talent, second-rate affinity, first-rate comprehension and intelligence, and his extraordinary judgement – the only skill that Hai Yun Fan was proud of.

Leaving the Garden of Peaches early was all because of the word ‘judgement’. Indeed, leaving early reduces assignment completeness, but there might be extra perks for the first to leave.

The prize was unlimited stamina throughout the trials of the Immortal Path, and a seventh-rate magical tool, the Reducing Scarecrow, which can decrease the enemy’s strength on three occasions only.

It was difficult proceeding along the path of the Frozen Wind Valley. Like the Golden Bridge, it also rejected those who were not naturally talented. Illusions were everywhere just like the Cloud Wave Map which bewitched the perceptions of the challengers. If one lacked an ability, it might spell out the end for that challenger. Fortunately for Hai Yun Fan, the most important ability for the Frozen Wind Valley was the skill of judgement. Not advancing when one should advance, not retreating when one should retreat, or only being able to use 40-50% of one's power-such things were fatal on the Immortal Path. Luckily, Hai Yun Fan's forte was his judgement-and with some luck... he passed through challenges in the Frozen Wind Valley one after another, and did not even resort to using the Reducing Scarecrow.

If one wanted to pass the last stage of the trial, the precious prize from the Garden of Peaches must be kept until then. Whether it was the Frozen Wind Valley or the Red Ridge Mountains, Hai Yun Fan knew that in the end, there is always a powerful and destructive monster that awaits. And exactly how strong is the monster?

To the point that no one ever beat it in hundreds of years.

Luckily, the Spirit Blade Sect had put the Garden of Peaches on the Immortal Path. Through the prizes given upon completing assignments, the strength of challengers was elevated. If the Reducing Scarecrow was used three times in a row, it could weaken the end-stage monster enough to pass.

Thinking of this, Hai Yun Fan walked into the last valley of the Frozen Wind Valley. The path was winding, but Hai Yun Fan stayed patient and alerted until he came across a turning, and finally he saw the monster

waiting there. Hai Yun Fan frowned and fell into a deep thought.

Weird, what breed is this thirty meters tall mammoth-like monster with icicles covering its whole body? He was quite familiar with "The Monsters of Blue River", a monster guide passed down in the Xiuxian world, but he couldn't remember seeing this particular species.

"Frankly, I've been wondering this whole time if the ancestors of our sect made a mistake."

The younger junior brother asked his senior brother, "What mistake?"

"I suspect that when they designed the Immortal Path, they put the incorrect word on the rules of the last stage, the guarding monster should have been ninth rank of second level, but it became the ninth rank of third level. They probably made a mistake with a stroke!" [TLN: two in Chinese is 二, and three is 三, only one stroke of difference.]

Hearing the phrase 'ninth rank of third level', the junior brother couldn't hold his surprise. "Level three monster?! Doesn't it hold a power close to a Foundation Establishment stage cultivator?"

"But they have to have the cultivation of first or second rated, Qi Cultivating stage. How can you let a group of people that haven't start cultivating face it? It's still hard even if you possess magical treasures passed down in the family."

The senior brother threw his hands up in the air. "Who knows? That's why no one was able to finish in hundreds of years: this third level

monster. The difference of one level, but the difficulty goes up from ten times, and ninth rank of third level is just the minimum, it isn't rare to encounter an eighth or even seventh rank. Hai Yun Fan is lucky this time, for meeting a ninth rank.....so that's why I said everyone except Hai Yun Fan doesn't stand a single chance."

While they were talking, changes occurred in the clouds again, the senior brother's eyes lit up, suddenly became enraptured.

"Oh oh, it's started!"

The junior brother closed in at once. "Ah, such a decisive reaction, using the Reducing Scarecrow straight up! Three times in a row!"

The senior brother nodded. "A very good choice, although it's only a seventh rank magical tool, and theoretically only works on monsters of the second level or below, but if it's only ninth rank of third level, it's possible to downgrade it by using it three times in a row."

The junior brother was a bit worried. "But even if it's downgraded, it would still be of the first or second rank of the second level, over hundreds of elite soldiers wouldn't be able to do anything about it....."

"Don't worry, this Hai Yun Fan must be hiding some secret weapon."

The junior brother continued to worry. "It's no use to hide magical treasures. To people who haven't cultivated before, the higher the tool's level is, the harder it is to exert its effects."

“Yes, it’s just a humiliation of us cultivators.....but this Hai Yun Fan is certainly not on the same level as those other pieces of trash.”

Hai Yun Fan was indeed not on the same level of Xie Qian Long and his people.

Because at least Xie Qian Long and his people held secret weapons given to them by their family, whereas Hai Yun Fan did not a single one.

The crown prince of the Cloud Mountain Empire was prominent, but only prominent amidst the mortal world. It is no secret that the royal family of the Cloud Mountain had good relationships with many Xiuxian sects, but not that good to the point that they would be able to exchange the magical tools of Immortals with mortal resources.

Surely, a thousand-year empire can find some Magical Treasures, but what use is it for a person who had not cultivated to hold a Magical Treasure? Apart from some legendary Magical Treasures that were comparable to Celestial Tools, there was nothing else that would be of more value to mortals than Magical Tools. However, it was unfortunate that Magical Tools could not be taken over the Golden Bridge. [TLN: from how things look, it seems that Celestial Tools > Magical Treasures > Magical Tools]

Hai Yun Fan wasn’t a beater like Wang Lu. He couldn’t find the flaws of the Immortal Path, he did not rely on secret weapons nor did he cheat along the way. Only through continuous effort did he manage to come this far. [TLN: the word ‘beater’ came from an anime, which is the combination of ‘beta tester’ and ‘cheater’]

But would continuous effort create miracles?

Hai Yun Fan hoped so.

Because if there weren't any miracles, then he would definitely be dead.

Hai Yun Fan wasn't a cultivator, and couldn't judge the level of the monster accurately, but after using the Scarecrow three times, the enormous creature shrunk from the height of thirty meters to twenty-one. Extrapolating this, his end result had improved from being crushed into meat paste to being crushed into minced meat...

Life and death were on the line in the Immortal Path, and a hundred lives weren't enough to pose a threat to this monster. But Hai Yun Fan still took out his heirloom, a sword, and bravely pointed it against his opponent.

Many hands makes light work

Translator: Azarashi-Kun

Editors: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx & Mr Voltaire

The Ethereal Peak had an excellent tradition of watching the fun down below.

At first, it was only because the two disciples in black and white above the clouds became bored, so they killed time by chatting about the performance of the people on the Immortal Path. But as Hai Yun Fan arrived at his last trial, the monster of the ninth rank of the third level, more and more disciples dressed in black and white showed up, and started evaluating and critiquing his performance.

“This dandy is pretty fast. Already reaching the last trial in only ten or so days?”

“What good is being fast? Not one person completed the Immortal Path in hundreds of years. His approach to failure is the only thing that’s getting faster. The last trial is a ninth rank of the third level monster from what I remember... Isn’t it the mutated mammoth from the Xiyi continent? The big fellow is probably the most overbearing monster of that level-it’s probably even stronger than a monster of the seventh or eighth rank of the third level. There is no chance he’ll win.”

“It’s hard to say, the mammoth’s strength has been reduced to seventy percent of its original power, and has dropped by a whole level.”

“What use is that? Even if the Head Elder’s cultivation stage was reduced by one whole stage, would you be able to beat him??”

“Shh. Look, Hai Yun Fan has taken action!”

“Using that toothpick of a sword against the hard-skinned and fat mammoth? What a brave action! Really, a brave act!”

“To swing his sword even in the face of certain death. Truly admirable.”

“Ah, he’s been hit... Oh, and it looks like that he’s going to fall off the cliff.”

“...I think he really fell off.”

“No way! Wait and see, maybe he’ll fly up and turn the situation around.”

“But he’s been lying in that pile of snow for so long.”

“What is he doing? What happened to the so-called secret weapon? And the comeback from an impossible situation?”

“He can’t have died. Didn’t this kid impress a few Martial Uncles? Master was just complimenting him a few days ago on being the genius with the best chance and brightest hope of finishing the Immortal Path. He can’t just die here!”

“Master probably wanted to teach us that anything can happen on the path of cultivation, so we mustn’t be proud or impatient.”

“Well, there’s no more entertainment anymore. Let’s go.”

With that, the crowd was gone in minutes, leaving the two original disciples behind.

“...Senior brother, did Hai Yun Fan really die?”

The senior brother was focused on the clouds. “I think he did it on purpose, the position he was in when he flew out was a bit unnatural. Although the Cloud Array’s blocking our view, I’m not really sure. Perhaps jumping off the cliff could have increased his chances of survival.”

“Ah! Senior brother, he’s moving again!”

The junior brother pointed at the image in the clouds that started moving again.

Hai Yun Fan was of course, not dead. Dying would have been a disgrace to the secret swordsmanship art passed down in the royal family, Mellow Cloud Sword Art, that he’d practiced all these years.

The Celestial Gathering did not accept cultivators that had already stepped onto the Immortal Path, and Hai Yun Fan had only practiced the martial arts of the mortal world. While his talent in cultivation was third-

rate, his talents in martial arts were first class. Having completed half of the Mellow Cloud Sword Art at the age of twelve, Hai Yun Fan displayed his quality swordsmanship through one of the three best weapons he owned, the Mellow Cloud Soft Sword.

The mammoth's strike at full strength was immensely powerful, but in the presence of a creature so tiny like Hai Yun Fan, all it'd need to do was swing its long, stone-hard nose to shred him into pieces. [TLN: 'shredded into pieces', an idiom that means to sacrifice one's life fiercely, originally written as 'powdered body and crashed bones'.]

Hai Yun Fan blocked the mammoth's first strike precisely, then used the large force to propel himself off the cliff. Had he not jumped, the mammoth would have squashed him under its large foot.

Falling off the cliffs weren't a big deal because the Frozen Wind Valley was piled with snow all year round. Although the impact of the mammoth and the fall caused his body great harm, it was a win in itself to stay alive. But even after decreasing the mammoth's strength three times, the mammoth proved to be undefeatable. And this time, Hai Yun Fan had no more secret weapons hidden up his sleeve. His journey on the Immortal Path seemed to reach its limits here.

Using the 'Eternal Stamina' perk gained from the Garden of Peaches, he finally reached his starting point in the Frozen Wind Valley after three days, where other challengers had caught up.

And to his own surprise, the person who caught up, was Wang Lu's pageboy Wang Zhong!

Hai Yun Fan barely recognized Wang Zhong upon seeing him. When they last met, he was still the submissive pageboy following his young master. This time, the submissive pageboy had become a gloomy little boy.

This did not surprise Hai Yun Fan, who being born into a royal family, knew that the pageboy held a rebellious nature within. On the Immortal Path, where anything is possible, he couldn't have been under someone's protection forever. He probably split up with Wang Lu, but still felt guilty about it.

When both of their eyes met with each other, the depressed face of his turned into a sincere and simple smile.

"Your highness?"

Hai Yun Fan smiled back. It didn't matter what bitter things had come between Wang Zhong and Wang Lu, it had nothing to do with an outsider like him. They were all companions simply trying to accomplish the trial in the Frozen Wind Valley.

"Wang Zhong? I didn't think I'd meet you here."

Wang Zhong expressed both surprise on his face when Hai Yun Fan called his name correctly, but he cut to the point immediately. "Are you resting here, your highness?"

His eyes still swept over Hai Yun Fan: that ragged jumper, the mud all over his body. He was the first to leave the Garden of Peaches yet he was

caught up by the people behind him.

Hai Yun Fan did not try to hide this fact; he told Wang Zhong of his unsuccessful experience, and Wang Zhong's bright expression dropped as he went on.

Wang Zhong had been trying his hardest on the way here, and thought that the trials would not be as hard, and thus used half of his rewards from the Garden of Peaches. But on hearing how hard the last monster was, he knew all hope was lost for him.

"I've got five Invisibility Talismans from the Garden of Peaches, but they can only hide you if you're within three metres from the target. It also doesn't cover smell and sounds that you make. If the monster is what your highness described, then I'm afraid the talismans won't be of much use."

"I think that we need to find a way to defeat it. I don't think that we will get approval for avoiding it."

"Defeat? Do you even know what you're saying? How can uncultivated mortals overpower that monster?"

"It's possible if the power of the environment is considered. For example, lure it into falling off the cliff, or find other monsters nearby to fight it, team up with other challengers or breakthrough with raw power. There's always a way."

Wang Zhong smiled, but did not answer. The kind of talk coming from

Hai Yun Fan reminded him of the young master that he served originally.

Hai Yun Fan went on. "But that creature is quite smart, and it has lived in the Frozen Wind Valley longer than we have. It would be difficult to trick it into falling, and its strength is probably more pronounced than any other monsters in this area. We don't know when the next batch of challengers will be coming along, let alone the possibility of being too cowardly to face it. No wonder no one has succeeded in the past few hundred years."

"They didn't have the Garden of Peaches in the past hundred years, and we have the magical tools from that place. There might be a chance."

Hai Yun Fan laughed. "As if your talisman can be relied on."

"Not just me. A few of my friends behind us still have their stuff."

Hai Yun Fan was startled.

There are only four to five paths after the Garden of Peaches, and around thirteen or fourteen people can clear the Garden of Peaches. Averaging that number, only three to four people can be on one path, but from Wang Zhong's tone, this path of the Frozen Wind Valley might be occupied by more than just a few...

And he found a group already? No wonder he fell out with Wang Lu. So he feels secure now that he himself has backing. Being ahead of the group, I guess he's been made to scout the path ahead. But who could put a divide in between this pageboy and his former master? [TLN:

'secure in the knowledge that one has backing' (有恃無恐) a Chinese idiom saying.]

The one who convinced Wang Zhong to their side was none other than Zhu Qin, prince of the Great Ming Kingdom of the Blue River Continent.

The Great Ming Kingdom could only ever be counted as a fifth-rated country in the Nine Continents, and in no way could they compare to the Cloud Mountain Empire. But the family that holds the throne have the specialty of great social skills, and Wang Zhong, who came from the Great Ming Kingdom, held awe to his country's royals by nature. And naturally, it only took the prince of his home country to present to Wang Zhong, a ten year old kid, an offer he couldn't refuse.

The two people by Zhu Qin's side were also nobles from other countries, and one of them held even more power than Zhu Qin. But as a testament to Zhu Qin's specialty in people skills, he respectfully followed him as his subordinate.

Certainly, no matter how great his ability was, Zhu Qin still had to be reverent and respectful to a fierce person like Hai Yun Fan. And, after some greetings, both of them cut to the point and began to discuss about countermeasures.

"Let's combine all our resources we have now...fifteen Spirit Blade Talismans, one Returning Dream Bell, three Invisibility Talismans, one packet of Rock Softening Powder, one Flute of a Hundred Birds...Oh, and three useless Reducing Scarecrows."

Hai Yun Fan shrugged his shoulders, and signaled him to go on.

“Other than that, everyone got different special prizes, such as unlimited stamina, doubled strength and so on... If we were to go alone, like his highness here, we’d probably fail miserably. But if we work together, we can clear this trial.”

Hai Yun Fan nodded with approval and added, “At least competition does not exist in this trial. We all have the same goal.”

“Indeed, as long as we can beat the creature, we can all become Inner Court Disciples of Spirit Blade Sect. The competition can wait until then.”

Wang Zhong laughed. “And it must be fate that joined us five together here on the same path. Many hands makes light work, we can certainly pass this!”

“Haha. Yes, many hands makes light work.” [TLN: The saying in Chinese is ‘Strength grows bigger when there’s more people’.]

The battle plan was simple: everyone would charge in at the same time, and hypnotise the mammoth with the Returning Dream Bell. Then, break through its defense with the Rock Softening Powder and use the Flute of a Hundred Birds to summon the hundred birds and harass it, after which everyone uses a Spirit Blade Talisman to target the mammoth’s weaknesses. Accounting for its strength being decreased by the Reducing Scarecrow, Hai Yun Fan calculated a success rate of over seventy percent.

Because the effects of the Reducing Scarecrow fades over time, the group immediately sprang into action.

Hai Yun Fan led the way, cautiously and carefully approaching the mammoth's cave. Along an old, narrow path and around a corner, he came face to face with the beast that forced him off a cliff.

"Wait...are my eyes okay?"

Hai Yun Fan rubbed his eyes hard, nearly squeezing water out of it.

"Or did the trauma from the fall mess with my head?"

Much to Hai Yun Fan's surprise, a hundred meters away, the huge creature crouching in the cave seemed to have gotten bigger.

[TLN: 1 zhang(丈) ≐ 3 meters, 1 zhang ≐ 10 chi(尺 feet)] It was originally thirty metres, which became twenty one after using the Reducing Scarecrows, but now it seemed to be over forty five metres high. The icicles on it had become much sharper too, and then muscles underneath its long fur had swelled up several times making the huge creature even bigger.

The rest of the group couldn't help but scream upon seeing such a beast. "Wh-wh-what is that thing!?"

"Are we supposed to defeat this guy?!"

"The Rock Softening Powder probably can't melt even a single icicle on it!"

“Please tell me that the Spirit Blade Talisman can make it itch!”

In all the fright, Zhu Qin turned around and abruptly pulled Hai Yun Fan aside. “Didn’t you said that you weakened it over thirty percent!?”

Hai Yun Fan too gave a bitter smile, cursing inside. ‘Why would I need to lie on this kind of stuff? Would I gain extra points from killing teammates? Would it kill to use your brain!? It’s obvious that the monster mutated!’

It’s not rare to have monsters mutate in the Xiuxian world. Sometimes they accidentally swallow some treasure, or undertake rigorous training for years, or the Hemorrhoids that had been straining it for a long time became cured all of a sudden... These can all cause a monster’s cultivation to grow rapidly in overnight, and the rate at which they can grow is frightening. There was once a fox monster that grew from a third level into a sixth level nine-tailed fox in one night. The mammoth’s case would have been a mild one compared to that.

By the way, that fox increased its cultivation rapidly because it met a spoony old Yuanying stage man, who willingly gave up some of his cultivation to practice karmamudra with it. This mammoth had an ugly, ferocious face-which nutty senior brother from Spirit Blade Sect would want to have intercourse with it? Please come forward to let everybody pay tribute to you. [TLN: ‘karmamudra’ is a Buddhist way to cultivate. It exists in real life. I’m sorry that I am not able to explain it, so here’s the link to Wikipedia, guys.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karmamudr%C4%81> (NSFW)]

Clearly there was something behind the mutation.

“What the hell is this?!”

Above the clouds, the master of the Ethereal Peak was furious. “Who altered the Frozen Wind Valley without permission? Isn’t the ninth rank of third level fierce enough? Did you really have to promote it to third rank of third level, with enough power to wipe out a Foundation Establishment stage under one of its steps? Do you hate new people that much!?”

In front of Liu Xian, the disciples in black and white looked at each other, then looked down in silence. The only other person they could think of that had access to the Celestial Gathering at this point was...

An indignant voice of a woman sounded out from behind Liu Xian.

“Senior brother you are talking shit again, I realized that since you passed Jindan, and a Yuanying was born inside, you have become irritable on your temper, could it be Postpartum Depression?” [TLN: reminder→Jindan and Yuanying are cultivation stages.]

Her voice nearly broke Liu Xian’s soul into two as he turned around and pointed at the woman in white clothes. “Explain yourself right now, or else I’ll ask for an explanation from the Head Elder!”

The woman sneered. “Explanation? Alright, I’ll give you an explanation! Yes, I did alter the Immortal Map, but I only did it to balance the map.”

Shocked at her shameless words, Liu Xian’s body was trembling with

anger. He pointed to the clouds. "Balancing! You call 'upgrading an already impossible monster' balancing?!"

His words did not faze her. Instead, she gave out a condescending laugh. "But of course. When Hai Yun Fan fought it by himself, the mammoth was ninth rank of the third level. And now that they've gathered up a five person team, the mammoth's ranking should surely rise to compensate. Isn't that how the old saying goes, 'many hands make light works'?" [TLN: The pun here is that the proverb in Chinese literally says "more people means more power"... meaning with more people in the team, the power of the mammoth should be greater..]

Liu Xian couldn't stand it anymore. "You. Mother. Fucker."

Oh Shit!

Translator: Azarashi-Kun

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

The white robed woman's definition of 'many hands makes light work' almost made Liu Xian vomit blood.

However, the woman continued to brag. "I've also added the feature of 'many hands makes light work' to the Frozen Wind Valley, the Red Ridge Mountains, and the Azure Cloud Canyon. The Immortal Path is no longer vulnerable to weaklings who team up. Aren't you proud of me?"

Yeah, we're so proud of you.

Liu Xian tried really hard to calm himself down. He quelled the urge to beat her up on the spot.

"Junior sister, I do not care anymore. If there's any problem, tell Disciplinary Elder and Senior Brother Head Elder!"

After leaving, Liu Xian's disciples looked at each other, and then turned to the Fifth Elder, who had been staring at the Cloud Array with fascination. Following the lead of several senior brothers, the disciples quickly left together, leaving the original two disciples to anxiously guard their post.

Normally, the disciples could only see vague figures moving within the changing clouds of the Cloud Array. But in the eyes of the elders, there was no doubt that there was more to it.

After a moment, the woman shook her head with disappointment.

“What a bunch of trash. Even after teaming up, their strength cannot overpower the monster.”

The two disciples shivered when they heard her words. They were glad that they were found by their master, Liu Xian, when he was out travelling, and did not need to suffer the inhumane Immortal Path.

The monster’s rank had only increased by six ranks, but in reality its strength had increased three to four times, while the number of the challengers had only increased by a factor of four. According to the Fifth Elder, unless they are pushed to the extreme limit, she won’t be satisfied.

She lost her interest after a brief observation. “This group is hopeless.”

She turned and left. The two disciples exchanged glances and laughed bitterly.

The junior brother said, “The Fifth Elder’s thoughts are difficult to understand, I think these people all have talents. If they are hopeless, then what are we doing here?”

The senior brother also agreed. “Yeah, the Fifth Elder even took part behind the scene. I’ve been in the sect for over 20 years, and this is the

first time I've seen her putting all her efforts into one thing. But if no one passes the trials in the end, she will have no face." [TLN: "face" is pretty much the same as one's honour and dignity]

While the two were talking, they heard a voice coming from behind them.

"Oh, there's no need to worry, there must be someone that can pass—  
Fuck, there's a person no one can stop."

"Fi-Fifth Elder!"

The woman did not bother to look at them, instead she had her focus on the boy who swaggered on with extreme confidence.

Seeing that she had no intent to punish them, the two disciples let out a sigh of relief. The senior brother dared to ask, "Fifth Elder, who is this person you speak of?"

"Who else could it be?" she replied. "You two have been here for quite some time, and you can't even tell who is stronger?"

The strength of the individuals was pretty obvious. If Zhu Qin and his companions were strong, then Hai Yun Fan would be super strong. As for the person who just walked out of the Garden of Peaches and entered the Frozen Wind Valley, his strength could almost make him look like a cheater. But no matter how strong a person was, if they could not cultivate, they could not beat the mammoth. If it was some place like the Red Ridge Mountains or the Azure Cloud Canyon where the monsters

have not yet been strengthened, they would have been a chance of passing.

Thinking of this, the Junior Brother suddenly had a thought. "Fifth Elder, are you referring to the prizes of the Garden of Peaches?"

"Rubbish, what else could it be? The key point of the whole Immortal Path lies at the Garden of Peaches. Those stubborn, ancient minds hundreds of years ago lost all their sanity and completely wrecked this sacred event. Speaking of those insane seniors, even the masters after them were totally crap, spouting bullshit that the Ancient laws can't be altered. Who said that firing a Heavenly Sword Sect elder can only be done with words!?"

The Fifth Elder's audacity in the extreme was well known in the sect, but the two disciples didn't have her arrogance, and thus fell silent immediately.

After some time, the junior brother couldn't hold it in anymore. "Are all those tools and treasures from your collection?"

From the junior brother's viewpoint, those ordinary magical tools must have been easy to obtain for the white-robed woman. But he didn't know what kind of tools they were, and what sort of a miracle would need to occur for an uncultivated swine to defeat that beast of a mammoth.

The Fifth Elder replied naturally. "My collection? How could they have come from my collection? I'm like, really poor. So poor I'd pillage them villages down at the mountain base. The tools were straight out of the sect's storage because that retarded Head Elder cannot even pay me the

elder's subsidy."

The two disciples in black and white looked at each other, speechless.

The Fifth Elder was rarely seen in the sect, even by the senior brothers who had been there for over 20 years.

"So Fifth Elder, according to your design, what kind of magical tool could Wang Lu get? The magical tool that can equally rival with the mammoth has to be at least a second rank one, right? But how can he use it without having cultivated?"

"I'm not so sure myself, because that retarded Head Elder didn't give me that much freedom in the storage. I derived a formula for the scores, and it will automatically provide them the tool from the storage according to their scores. Now the bunch of morons' score are mostly distributed between three to five thousand. As for that boy, I didn't watch all of his recent assignment, but he should have at least scored thirty to fifty thousand. Let alone a second rank magical tool, a ninth rank magical treasure would be highly possible. Some of the magical treasures do not require its user to have cultivated too. These tools are priceless among mortals, but is common in the Spirit Blade Sect's stock. That boy's fortune is not bad, getting one or two should not be a problem. And with some strategy, he should have a 70-80% chance to defeat the mammoth."

The brothers inhaled a sharp breath.

70%-80% success rate didn't sound like much, but during these hundreds of years, many of the world's heroes and geniuses failed at this stage. With a success rate of 70-80%, this country boy had a great deal of

affinity indeed.

And if he entered the sect, worked hard for another ten to twenty years, it would be very probable that he could become a Legacy Disciple! The two disciples in black and white couldn't help but feel envious.

There were changes in the clouds, and the three stared at it intensely. Out from the clouds appeared Wang Lu!

While the previous challengers had to spend more than ten days with the aid of magical tools to reach the end point, Wang Lu caught up in no time! Skipping over the mountains and rivers, he came to Hai Yun Fan and others, who were holding an emergency meeting.

His surprise appearance not only scared them to death, but even made the brothers' jaws drop, and Wang Lu himself shivered.

"What the hell is this shit!?"

The Fifth Elder who was on Ethereal Peak enjoying the scenery, changed her expression.

"Cloud Hiking Boots!?" [TLN: Can walk a long distance in less steps.]

The two disciples yelled out at the same time.

"Cloud Hiking Boots!?"

Even the junior brother who only joined the sect for five years had heard of the infamous Cloud Hiking Boots. It was a fifth rank spiritual treasure valued by Spirit Blade Sect!

Spiritual treasures were by far more powerful and valuable than magical treasures. Even Jindan Immortals of normal sects would die for such a possession. Let alone the fifth rank spiritual treasure personally hand crafted by the patriarch of the Spirit Blade Sect. No one could use it without reaching the peak of Jindan Cultivation.

However, there was no time for them to wonder how Wang Lu managed to operate this spiritual treasure without cultivation, for something even stranger happened.

At the first sight of this monster, Wang Lu freaked out and drew out a long sword in panic, trying to protect himself.

Then, the sword began to shine, blinding everyone's eyes.

Above the clouds, the sounds of louder profanities were heard.

"The Sword of Black Hoarfrost!?"

Although it wasn't the best spiritual treasure, the Sword of Black Hoarfrost was one of the most famous swords in the Spirit Blade Sect. Its power was determined by the location it was used in, and there was no better location to bring out its cool powers than the Frozen Wind Valley.

Who would have thought that Wang Lu could pull out such a spiritual

treasure so casually!

“Fif-Fifth Elder, didn’t you say there were only ninth rank magical treasure at most? Why did a spiritual treasure come out!? And a third rank one on top of that!?”

“I FUCKING WANT TO KNOW TOO!”

Wang Lu held the one meter long sword and waved it around, but had no idea the sword could crack open a mountain.

A third rank spiritual treasure in a mortal’s hands should not show any spiritual power. It would likely suck up the uncultivated user’s life, leaving behind a dry corpse.

However, when Wang Lu swung the sword, blasts of wind violently swept the earth, a snow storm burst out of nowhere. In the midst of the howling of the snow and wind, the Sword of Black Hoarfrost grew brighter. The ground underneath the mammoth cracked into layers when the light of the sword touched it. The fragments of the layers shattered into particles, and the particles into dust, until nothing remained.

It was like the Age of Chaos again: the heavens and the earth divided.

When the storm calmed down after quite some time, the mammoth was gone. The frozen land around it was also gone.

Behind the land was a beautiful scene with mountains and waters, with the particles of mist dancing in the sunbeams. The Frozen Wind Valley

was no more.

My Future 20 Years...

Translator: Alex

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

The scenery that Wang Lu saw before him was not the true view of the valley. The Frozen Wind Valley was in fact a realm created and situated on the Ethereal Peak by an expert of the Spirit Blade Sect. From a single glance, the horizons seemed like they stretched on forever. However, that was simply an illusion. The realm was created as testing grounds for the many mortal disciples attempting to join the Ethereal Peak. The strongest monsters within this realm were of the third level. Thus, in order to cut down on cost, the realm was not made to be extremely strong. After all, who would expect a mortal disciple to wield a third rank spiritual treasure with full strength here?

Under the pressure from a full powered swing of the blade, the boundaries of the Frozen Wind Valley shattered and revealed a gigantic gap and the sight of the Ethereal Peak beyond it.

Wang Lu was flabbergasted. For a single swing to be so powerful was something beyond his imagination and comprehension. All he could do was to stare in shock at the gap that had formed at where the boundaries once stood.

When he opened the treasure chest at the Garden of Peaches, Wang Lu was certain that the treasure was bound to be a celestial weapon of great prowess. After all, he did attain a perfect completion of all the quests within the Garden of Peaches, including the hidden quest. He merely

passed the early stages of the Spirit Blade Sect's trials. Obtaining a lower grade celestial weapon was well within his expectations. If what came out was the most powerful sword like the Emperor Blade, Wang Lu would have thought he was dreaming!

Unexpectedly, it seemed like the beautiful fantasy Wang Lu had was not as fantastical after all. Upon entering the Frozen Wind Valley, Wang Lu was able to accomplish the impossible: traversing impossible distances in a single step, slaughtering the monstrous mutant mammoth with a single blow, and destroying the entire valley itself. In Wang Lu's eyes, he felt as if he was clad with a thick cloak of invincibility and nothing stood in his path towards immortality.

However, just when Wang Lu was getting the hang of the sword, and the sensation of having cleared the trials of the Garden of Peaches perfectly was just setting in, it was over in a heartbeat!

"Come on, that was too strong!" Wang Lu thought. "That was it?!? I barely felt that!"

"Maybe this is also a part of the trial? After all, the path of a genius has always been a lonesome one. Perhaps this is to allow us to get a first-hand experience in that sense of loneliness to strengthen our resolve in seeking immortality?!? Hmm... now that I think about it, this sense of loss and loneliness is definitely something that one could not relate to without experiencing it for themselves!"

Wang Lu was overwhelmed by a flood of emotions as he savoured this realisation. Unknowingly, the frost blade slipped from his hands and fell to the ground...

“Clang!”

With a metallic ring, the impossible blade that seemed too good to be true, that seemed indestructible, shattered and disappeared upon impacting the ground.

The sound startled Wang Lu and stirred him from his thoughts. He glanced down on the shattered remains of the Frost blade and stared at it for a few moments. Though disappointed, Wang Lu simply sighed and nodded his head in acceptance.

It was impossible for the sect to grant a truly world shattering spirit weapon to him. Upon slaying the elite monster, the blade exhausted all its power and shattered. Clearly, it seemed to Wang Lu that the weapon was only for a single use and was specially meant for completing the quest before him. In other words, it was a quest item!

Although this quest's design was rather excessive, no one could rebuke its ingenuity. The quest designer was a true mastermind.

“To be so daring as to provide an applicant with a quest item of such devastating power, without fearing any mishaps? Such courage. Bravo.”

Just as Wang Lu was thinking so, a flash of golden light emerged from the mountains in front of him. The golden light from beyond the horizon changed to the shape of a person, descending before Wang Lu.

With some difficulty, he could make out that the figure before him was

a young woman dressed in a robe of pure white, around the age of 26-27.

The airs about her conflicted with each other, with the innocence of a teenager and the charm of a mature lady. Although not a ravishing beauty, she was still a rare find.....

Wang Lu was caught up with evaluating her beauty, when he heard a nerve wracking shriek.

"Frickin' hell!!! It shattered!"

Wang Lu turned to see the grieving Lady in White kneeling beside him, sobbing as she held the remains of the Sword of Black Hoarfrost.

"Is it the heaven's will for me to die?!"

Wang Lu was so stunned by her shrill voice and coarse language that he fell over, "The hell? Who would have thought she was a boorish woman!?"

However, before Wang Lu could give things more thought, the Lady In White rose quickly from the ground and grabbed up Wang Lu by his collars. "Tell me! Did that idiot Head Elder send you to make a fool of me?!" [TLN: The original Chinese literally translates to "Did that idiot Head Elder send you to play with me?!" - this is relevant for the next bit]

In his head, Wang Lu was cursing and swearing. "This woman is really ferocious! You can't even make sense of what she is saying, like a lunatic! Don't tell me...maybe she's the public sex slave for the sect!???"

Seeing Wang Lu distraught, the Lady gave up on saying more. She released Wang Lu, and stared at the remains of the blade. Slowly, her expression changed from one of sorrow, to one of great focus.

“Damn it, I’ve got to make someone else responsible for this...I got it, I’ll just say that it’s Liu Xian’s fault. Hmmm, let’s think of some reasons...”

Pretending to have heard nothing, Wang Lu asked, “Pardon my disruption, senior. The guardian of the Frozen Wind Valley has been slain, and the path to the peak has been opened. Does this mean that I’ve passed?”

The Lady paused for a moment, and subsequently sneered, “Yeah, yeah, you passed. And not just you, everybody passed. Damn it!”

As she said all this, a series of cracking sounds could be heard coming from the sceneries in the distance. After a short moment, one could start to make out a number of holes appearing in the existing gap, revealing a sea of lava, a mountain hidden in mist, and a path filled with ghastly figures.

Obviously, they were the sights of the Red Ridge Mountain, the Azure Cloud Canyon and the Nether World Path – the different branches of the Immortal Path. All these branches had been linked together, showing a path to the end.

“Not bad, you pierced through all four realms with a single swing of the blade. You could say that you’re famous now.”

After hearing this, Wang Lu realised that something went wrong. "Wasn't this a part of the trial designer's plans?"

Even before he finished speaking, the Lady in White began to rage and shout at him. "Give me a break you snitch! I'm not as crazy as some say I am. Doing all this, would give me a headache beyond anything your pathetic minds have felt."

Wang Lu was once again shocked upon hearing this. "This boorish woman is the designer of the trials-the designer I had thought was similar to me? Truly, the path to Immortality is uncertain, and one can never judge a book by its cover!"

"If you didn't design it to be like this, then....what happened?"

The Lady in White looked lost and jaded as she heard his question.

"Who knows which idiot left the Head Elder's Seal in the warehouse to be drawn by you from the lottery?"

Wang Lu paused for a moment, and took a golden seal from his waist pocket. "This thing?"

The Lady in White trembled in joy as she saw what Wang Lu took out. "Damn it, it really is the Head Elder's Seal..... Just like I thought-how else would you able to wield the blade? It was really due to the Seal!"

Anyone who wielded this seal speaks in the name of the Head Elder of the Sect, and was able to command the whole sect without exception.

All spiritual treasures have a 'spirit', which is what makes them 'spiritual' treasures. Being a treasure of the sect, the soul of the treasure was definitely a member of the sect and was thus bound to the Seal. When Wang Lu wielded the Seal and swung the blade, the blade had no choice but act upon the swing, even if no spiritual power was being provided. Not only did it had to strike down, it had to do it exceptionally well and to the utmost of its prowess!

The Sword of Black Hoarfrost was a loyal sword with a strong sense of character. No matter how ridiculous the request of the wielder or how much damage it would take for forcefully executing the strike, it would still strike down. Thus, the Frozen Wind Valey was utterly destroyed, and the blade shattered

Now that everything had been revealed, the Lady quickly made sense of it all.

Wang Lu must have obtained an impossibly high score for trial of Garden of Peaches in order to obtain the Seal. That was his own good fortune.....Of course, part of it was due to her own mistake in the formula used in calculating the score. She should have included an upper limit, but all that was no longer important. The only thing that mattered now, was the glimmering Head Elder's Seal right before her eyes!

What did it mean to obtain the seal? Simple, it meant that she would be the Head Elder!

Of course, the real Head Elder had yet to die, but who cared? There could still be two ruling parties! At the very least, she could fight for

control of the Sect's finances.

Even if she could not gain the same authority as the existing Head Elder, she could still make use of the seal and drain all the resources from the Sect's stores before the Head Elder found out. Making a rough estimate, the Sect's reserves must be astronomical, with a sea of top grade spirit stones! So long as she could get her hands on that, she could foresee a carefree future for the next few hundred years! Fantastic!

In her eyes, the Seal became the embodiment of her hedonistic life ahead.

Suddenly, Wang Lu let out a cry of pain as the Seal transformed into a ray of light, and flew away.

The Lady frowned. "Trying to get away?! Dream on! You're mine!"

A flash of white cut across the Tundra, and followed the golden light into the Ethereal Peak.

---

"Damn it, a mere seal dares to fly so fast!"

Above the Ethereal Peak, the Lady in White transformed into a flash of light as she flew by on top of her flying sword, following closely behind the Head Elder's Seal. However, the Seal that embodied all of her hopes and dreams continued to be just out of her reach!

The Lady grit her teeth in frustration. Due to her cultivation level, her speed was not very fast. But to be beaten by a mere seal would be an utter disgrace!

Of course, she did not care about it. She was only concerned about the Seal. If she let it escape her, she would definitely regret it for the next twenty years.

One flew forward with all its strength, while another chased with all her strength. At their speed, they quickly flew beyond the Ethereal Peak, and flew toward an even higher place.

After who-knows-how-long, the seal seemed to lose speed. The Lady was filled with vigour once again.

“Hahaha, everyone can take turns to be the Head Elder. And today, it’s my turn!”

However, just as she reached out her hand to grab the Golden Seal, someone else grabbed it.

The Lady in White raged, “Ha, trying to steal my precious!? Who would be so daring as to try this? Who would be so daring as to defy me—Oh, good day Head Elder!.....

...

...h-how are you? Haven't seen you in a while... ha, ha, ha..."

The Head Elder of the Sect gave her an expressionless look and replied, "It has truly been a while, how can I help you?"

The Lady chuckled, and slowly reached her hand out to grab the seal from his hands. "Ha, ha, ha... Well you see, I sort of lost something precious and now I'm looking for it. Who knew you would help me find it first? Thank you very much! Ha, ha, ha... I will certainly be more careful next time."

"I think what you lost was your integrity, no?"

"....."

"Let's not waste any time. I'm going to keep this simple."

"Uh ... Sure, sure. Go ahead....."

"Based on my initial calculations, your mistakes in designing the Garden of Peaches has caused the Sect to suffer the following losses: severe damages to all four realms of the sect; severe damages to the Sword of Black Hoarfrost; severe damages to the Cloud Hiking Boots. All damages total up to approximately twenty thousand top grade spirit stones. Don't try to bargain with me, I've already included a 10% discount for staff members. Considering your current allowance, that should be approximately equal to twenty years of your wages. So that means you will not be getting paid for the next twenty years."

"..... ha, ha, ha... Senior Brother, this joke of yours is a little scary."

"Is it? Well, you can use this time to temper your character. I'm not joking with you."

"Senior Brother, this is forcing me into a life of crime!"

"Junior Sister, just ask yourself honestly. Did I really force you into your current predicament?"

"..... If you're not going to pay me, I'll just have to go out and be a bandit! Just you wait and see!"

"Hmm... If you are truly considering to help the sect with obtaining more revenue streams, I as your Senior Brother, will be more than happy. Tell me if you are going to do so. Maybe I can still help you with a certification as a Privateer."

"...Damn it Senior Brother, have you also lost your integrity?!?"

## When a Larger Harvest Results in Greater Poverty

Translator: Alex

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

For hundreds of years, the Spirit Blade Sect did not hold a Celestial Gathering. Thus, when it finally opened its gates once again, it gained a shockingly large number of new disciples.

From the Garden of Peaches, a total of seventeen challengers embarked on the final trial's last stretch. And thanks to Wang Lu, fifteen of those seventeen challengers succeeded in overcoming the trial. Other than the two unlucky challengers who gave up too soon, the rest of them all made it successfully to the end, including Hai Yun Fan, Zhu Qin and Wang Zhong's group. After the tremors in the earth and tears in the fabric of space had ceased, they made a pathetic limp to the finish line.

With only a single swing, Wang Lu had pierced a path through all four remaining trials. The entire Immortal Path had been torn apart, which meant that all the remaining applicants could pass unhindered.

This pleasant surprise left all the applicants in absolute awe, though in the Spirit Blade Sect, things were... a little different. Internally, the entire sect was in chaos and complete disarray. The unexpected gain of so many disciples was a matter that could not be ignored. Even the Ethereal Peak Elder could not decide on how to deal with this matter, and had to bring

it up with the Head Elder, who resided at the Stellar Peak.

Within the small cottage located at the top of Stellar Peak where the Head Elder discussed matters of the sect, all nine of the (current) Elders from the Heavenly Sword Hall were present.

The Head Elder, Immortal Feng Yin, current Master of the Sect, sat at the head of the council. Despite the noisy racket around him, the Head Elder remained silent and appeared to be resting. On the other hand, Second Elder Liu Xian was staging an outrage.

"I TOLD YOU BEFORE, we shouldn't have allowed THAT fool to mess around with the trials!" Elder Liu Xian roared, slamming his hands on the table. "That woman is crazy! Yet you all still allowed her to have her way and took to her nonsense of having some what was it? Humanistic Innovation! Now look what happened! Look at the mess we're in now, and tell me: How do you all intend to deal with this?!"

All the other elders had different expressions, but unanimously, none of them wanted to take responsibility for dealing with the matter.

Only one bubbly and lively girl seated at the end responded to calm him down. "Second Senior Brother, don't get so angry. After all, you are the teacher of disciples from the Inner Court. Don't forget that you are their role model, so you must maintain your composure as best as you can (smile). Anyways, we won't be able to solve anything by blaming Fifth Senior Sister."

Looking at the pretty face smiling at him, Liu Xian also shied away from replying harshly to the youngest junior sister. All he could do was shake

his head and continued with his rant. "Junior Sister Yun Hua, that's easy for you to say. After all, you are not the one dealing with this headache now..."

The girl giggled, "Hehe, who asked you to be the Ethereal Peak Elder. I'm just the Serenity Peak Elder! If it were me, I'd simply take them all in! Our sect has been lacking in new talents in recent years anyway, so what's wrong with having fifteen new disciples? Having fifteen more people around would make things livelier too!"

Elder Liu Xian frowned and glared back. "You certainly know how to jest! Even with the Ethereal Peak's long and extensive history, the Inner Court has never been filled with more than thirty-four disciples! To have an additional fifteen disciples now would throw the Inner Court into disarray! Initially, we planned for there to be at most ten odd applicants who made it to the end, and to perhaps select the best three to five from that group.... And now look at what's happened! Thanks to THAT woman, we can't even settle the Celestial Gathering!"

Sixth Elder Lu Li who had been quiet all this time suddenly spoke, "With all things considered, our sect lacks the resources to have another fifteen disciples in the Inner Sect. Our sect may be relatively well-off, but that is still no reason to be so wasteful with our resources."

Elder Liu Xian eagerly nodded his head in agreement, and added to Elder Lu Li's remarks. "Even Brother Lu Li is saying that. Junior Sister, what other opinions do you have on this matter?"

Junior Sister Hua Yun stuck out her tongue and said. "What can I still say? Even the one who's in charge of the Sect's finances and resources has voiced his thoughts. I must still depend on him for my Peak's finances! If I

annoyed him, he would simply cut my budget for the year!”

Annoyed yet amused, Lu Li replied, “Junior Sister Hua Yun, when have I ever said that I will cut your budget? When have I ever refused you when you asked?”

“When I wanted to buy the Celestial Lights Diamond?”

“..... How can you use official funds to buy your accessories?!”

At this point, the Head Elder could no longer stand the racket.

“That’s enough from all of you. This matter is definitely one that cannot be trivially dismissed, but resolving it will still require careful deliberation. We still need a practical plan to resolve it. As you have said, Brother Lu Li, we cannot possibly take in all of them into The Ethereal Peak as part of the Inner Court. I completely agree with that. That said, what should we do next? No matter what we say, we still need to devise a way to resolve this.”

The elders looked at each other uneasily. Everyone had plenty of ideas, but to come up with one that could appeal to everyone present was a task none of them could confidently claim.

In the end, it was Sixth Elder Lu Li, who spoke up. “Well, from my calculations, it is definitely impossible for us to allow all fifteen of them to enter the Ethereal Peak. However, if they were to join the Serenity Peak,

then the sect could definitely afford it.”

Regardless of sects, the difference in treatment received by the disciples of the Inner Court and the Outer Court was glaringly obvious. After all, it was more important for the sect to focus on growing those with greater potential when faced with a talent crunch. A simple comparison of the number of disciples in each Court shows a telling tale: over two hundred Outer Court disciples, but just thirty-four Inner Court disciples. However, the Ethereal Peak disciples received up to ten times more funding!

Although the sect would be able to afford the expenses of fifteen more Outer Court disciples, a certain Junior Sister became furious.

“Hey! You smelly sixth in line, what are you trying to imply with that? What do you think my Serenity Peak is, a dump?!”

Lu Li denied rather hastily. “I am just coming up with a solution based on resource allocations! Junior Sister Hua Yun, please don’t take it to heart!”

Junior Sister Hua Yun sat down, still pissed. “...we haven’t successfully recruited anyone through the Celestial Gathering for over a hundred years anyway. Why not just kick these guys out? There. Problem solved.”

Having just annoyed Hua Yun, Lu Li went along with what Hua Yun said. “True, that would definitely save us plenty of resources.”

“Can you all stop coming up with these bad ideas? Kick them all out? Based on what reason? How will we justify it? Based on the rules, they have already succeeded in completing the trials.”

The Disciplinary Elder Fang He pointed at Hua Yun and Lu Li. “If we were some unorthodox or insignificant sect, those ideas of you two would do. But we are the Spirit Blade Sect! For the Spirit Blade Sect to do something so disgraceful would bring shame upon our founding teacher!”

Hua Yun stuck her tongue out as she dared not offend the Disciplinary Elder, whose authority was second only to the Head Elder. However, after a while she tilted her head, and whispered, “Bigot. Destined to be single for life. ”

Fang He fumed.

Luckily the Head Elder quickly injected. “So what do we do then? We cannot keep them, but neither can we allow them into the Inner Court. Any ideas?”

In reply, Second Elder Liu Xian gave a blunt response. “Ultimately, this is still a result of Eldest Brother’s excessive pampering of Fifth Junior Sister. Since it’s your responsibility, you can come up with a solution!”

“If it’s a solution you want, I might just have one that’s appropriate. We can always screen them again and kick away those who does not reach our criteria.”

Disciplinary Elder Fang He frowned. "Head Elder, that would be circumventing the rules. By all accords, they have already passed the trials and we should not make matters wors—

"Rules are made by men. The way I see it, these fifteen applicants did not even pass the trials! After all, the last segments were torn apart by an unstoppable force. They could not even finish their trials!" The Head Elder gave a sly smile.

Fang He was speechless. "This is simply unreasonable!"

Liu Xian on the other hand earnestly agreed with the Head Elder's proposal. "How is that unreasonable? That's the best words of advice I've heard today! This time, the Immortal Path had been repeatedly altered. It's already generous that the Head Elder has not made them redo all the trials."

With the top two people in power among the 10 elders of the Sky Sword Hall (at present just nine) coming into agreement, there was nothing the rest could say. Thus, this brought an end to the council meeting.

Half a day later, the elders of the Heavenly Sword Hall gathered at The Ethereal Peak to judge the fifteen applicants who had technically passed the trials.

---

Among the fifteen applicants who had gathered at the Mystical Cloud Hall at the Ethereal Peak, the predominant emotion was outrage and frustration.

Having happily thought that the gates to Immortality had been opened to them, to be suddenly notified that there will be an additional trial was a bolt out of the blue. What's more, the odds of succeeding in the eliminations were looking grim considering the panel of judges. Imagine this: It's your wedding night and you're all ready for some tender consummation. The Grand Slam. Sheathing your spear. Unable to wait, you've taken off your pants already. You see your beautiful wife seated at the edge of the bed, waiting for you. When you go to take a closer inspection, it's not your wife! Instead, it's your father-in-law smiling at you hysterically and asking for a large gift. Such injustice! Such immorality! No wonder everyone was mad.

No matter how unjust things were, it was the reality. Even the one who should be the angriest remained silent. In comparison, it would just make anyone else who complained seem childish and their complaints appear unjustified.

Wang Lu's silence made it hard for many of them to make a fuss out of the matter. After all, this additional trial was the most unfair to him as he was the only one who really made his way through all the trials. All the rest just got here thanks to him. However, he was also included in the additional trial. This left everyone puzzled: perhaps the Spirit Blade Sect never intended to recruit anyone?

Regardless of what the Spirit Blade Sect was thinking, Wang Lu was not sure and neither could he be bothered. For someone like him who was brimming with confidence, more trials and more difficult trials would only make his eventual victory ever more brilliant. After all, with the

Heaven Spirit Base, who would dare to challenge him?

Thus, when the rest of them gathered at the square outside of the Mystical Cloud Hall, one could see groups gathered together to discuss their strategies. However, Wang Lu remained on his own under a tree and ignored the rest. With the Hall unopened and the details of the trial left uncertain, it was impossible for even a professional adventurer such as him to make sense of it all. In such a case, what could be gained from discussing with one another?

However, a gut feeling remained in him, one that sensed that the road ahead would be filled with twists and turns. Who knew? Perhaps more unexpected things were up ahead?

As the youth standing before the hall was busy daydreaming away, time continued to pass. Yet, the Mystical Cloud Hall still did not open, leaving all of them to just wait outside without a clue.

Unbeknownst to them, they were not the only ones feeling nervous. At the same time, the elders of the Heavenly Sword Hall were also anxiously waiting. While most of them had arrived and began to wait for the additional trial to begin, one key person was missing: The Head Elder!

Although it was commonplace for those of importance to be fashionably late, Immortal Feng Yin was never one to be nonsensical. In fact, he was well known for being extremely punctual (especially when meeting the ex-fifth elder of the Heavenly Sword Hall). He was more than an hour late, which greatly puzzled everyone.

Fourth Elder Zhou Ming, who was rather impatient, swiftly instructed

his close disciple. "Liu Li, go see what the Head Elder is doing and tell him to come over."

The female disciple beside Elder Zhou Ming nodded her head in acknowledgement, and swiftly flew off.

A few minutes later, the female disciple flew back. "Reporting, teacher! I could not find the Head Elder!"

"..... Tell me, where did you search?"

"No idea. You did not mention any places earlier, teacher."

"What....." Zhou Min was at a loss for words. Alas, he simply shook his head. "Forget it, just sit."

"Yes!"

Now this is what you call...

Translator: Alex

Editor: xX5w0RdOfjU5t1cEXx

The Head Elder looked upon and knocked the bright silver sword before him, and spoke in his husky voice. "He really is in this group of people... Fifth Junior Sister, what do you think?"

At the other end of the bamboo room, the woman dressed in white showed a rare expression of seriousness. "The one who completed the chain of tasks I created... He is certainly not an ordinary person."

"Little Ling'Er told me about it as well. In all honesty, he does not look like the Chosen One, nor possess the potential one expects from the Chosen One."

"Tut-tut. When did you become one of those people who attribute success to talent alone? Let's say we judge them based on potential. If I were to give you a person with a Heaven Spirit Base, could you teach that person well?"

Faced with contempt from his Junior Sister, the Head Elder coughed. "Fifth Junior Sister, have you forgotten about Ling'Er again?"

“Whatever. Even if he has only a Five Elements Spirit Base – no, a Six Harmony Spirit Base – I’m certain he’s the Chosen One. Not to mention it’s also the Age of Chaos, accompanied with nonsensical talk of a Chosen One spurred on by yourself. I just helped fulfil your request and designed a test for identifying anyone with special talents. If you doubt it, then I can’t–”

The Head Elder waved his hand to interject. “I am not doubting you, I just have a strange feeling. Anyway, it’s fine. Junior Sister, since you say so, I don’t bear any doubts. I’ll just keep a closer eye on this supposed Chosen One then, even if I must use my privileges as Head Elder and Head Elder of the sect.”

The junior sister laughed. “If you are reluctant to use your privileges as the Head Elder when needed, then what is the point of having you as the Head Elder? You might as well retire and pass me the title, and let me show you how to be a good Head Elder.”

The Head Elder did not bother with what she said, and disappeared, leaving the lady in white unsatisfied.

The Head Elder only wanted the elders of the Heavenly Sword Hall to attend the additional trial. For an ex-elder like her who was not eligible to attend, all she could do was wait, but...

The lady in white looked around the room, and revealed a greedy smile. Although the Head Elder was well known to be thrifty, he was still the Head Elder of the sect. The bamboo room was his personal meditation room, which meant that there was bound to be a lot of hidden treasures. Usually, the Head Elder would have either set up a barrier to prohibit intruders or guard the place by himself, leaving no chance for her to

strike. But at this moment... opportunity was screaming out to her.

Then all of a sudden, she felt a sense of dizziness. And in the next moment, she was already standing outside the bamboo room. Needless to say, the internal protection barrier activated and kicked her out.

“What, so careful!? You are really distrusting!”

As she was complaining, she saw a glimmer coming from below the table.

“..... Did that idiot forget to wear his glasses again?”

---

The Head Elder arrived at the Mystic Cloud Hall and sat down on his seat.

On seeing him, all of the elders got up and greeted him. “Greetings, Head Elder!”

“Ah, no need for such politeness, junior brothers and sisters. I am late, and ought to be offering an apology instead,” said the Head Elder.

Second Elder Liu Xian coughed loudly to interject. “Head Elder, since all the people required are in attendance, can we get started? Just a moment ago, the other elders and I deliberated and decided that among the fifteen youths, leaving three would be just right.”

The Head Elder thought to himself. As long as they were able to keep the most important one, it would suffice. He had already reviewed the candidate himself previously on two separate occasions: once at the inn, and another at the Golden Bridge. Unfortunately, during the gathering he had been busy with other affairs. Even after he finally found time to attend to the gathering after great difficulties, the time had to be spent dealing with the antics of his Junior Sister. Otherwise, for this kind of matter that had so much at stake, he would have definitely paid more attention.

The Head Elder sighed and motioned his hand. "Let's not waste any more time."

And with that, the additional trial began.

The additional trial was nothing fancy. The doors of the Mystic Cloud Hall were wide opened, with whole hall shrouded in a soft white light. At the front of the hall stood several disciples dressed in black and white who politely, yet with a cold, distant manner, led the applicants to stand at the front of hall to wait for the trial. Within the hall, eighteen sharp pairs of eyes laid their intense stares on them, as if to dissect them.

And that was it. No complex games or rules. Be it that you were good or bad, to leave or stay, it all depended on the elders' discernment. Of course, this time, the elders would take things seriously and open their spiritual eyes in order to have the deepest analysis of each applicant's potential. Even the Head Elder used his Stellar Gaze, which can not only see through the present, but even the future.

Although not much was needed to be done on the candidates' part, they were extremely nervous. Feeling like a slave up for auction, the barrier of white light prevented all the applicants from seeing the judges' reactions clearly. They also had absolutely no idea whether they would be judged as good or bad and no clue as to the standards that the Sect used in evaluating them.

A disciple dressed in black and white spoke. "Now, please come one by one to the front of the hall."

One by one? Is there no scheduled order? Um, would it be better to go first or last? What about walking, should we walk faster, slower?

While the rest were in distress over these questions, a certain youth with a look of resolute made great strides and walked to the front of the hall.

However, it was not Wang Lu, nor the consistently well-performing Hai Yun Fan, but a crown prince from the Great Ming Kingdom, Zhu Qin.

This was a last-ditch effort from Zhu Qin. With top talents such as Wang Lu and Hai Yun-Fan around, the opportunities for them to shine were few. Zhu Qin was not confident, but he knew he had to demonstrate his resolve at the very least.

He came in tenth in the Cloud Wave Map, not because he was more indecisive than those before him, but because he pushed himself too hard on the Golden Bridge, resulting in his exhaustion, and having to rest for a longer period of time in the Cloud Wave Map. Thinking about it after the fact, he really regretted that decision.

Zhu Qin did not want to give the elders the wrong impression. After all, he had heard that the Spirit Blade Sect had always attached great importance towards a person's disposition. Thus, he would show his disposition for all of them to see!

With a steady pace, he walked forward. In fact, it did not seem like the youth's mind was highly nervous. However, as he walked on, the whole hall remained silent.

Was this good or bad? Who knows.....

And following right after Zhu Qin was Wang Zhong. The boy may not have been as decisive as Zhu Qin, but he was clever enough. In fact, he saw that when Zhu Qin came forward, Wang Lu already had the intention to move, but was unwilling to fight with Zhu Qin to go first.

It doesn't matter. If Wang Lu does not want to compete, I will.

Even if he had stopped serving his master, Wang Zhong knew Wang Lu's judgement and capabilities very well. No matter how ridiculous the situation or problem, he was always spot-on with his calculations.

So Wang Zhong followed Zhu Qin closely, and walked over. He turned

around to see Wang Lu smiling at him.

Wang Zhong immediately turned away and felt his heart tremble when he saw Wang Lu's smile.

Some sounds came from amongst the elders. Although the sound was extremely soft, Wang Zhong, who was born with extremely sharp perceptions, was barely able to make out what they were saying.

"Oh, so it was really him."

"Senior brother, do you think that this child is special?"

"Yes, indeed. He is somewhat different."

"But in terms of his talent, it's not too bad but it's not surprising either."

"Don't judge everything solely on talent."

Wang Zhong was not able to make out any further dialogue, but just those few words had left his mind blank.

There's hope! The Head Elder thinks that I'm different, and has

potential!

An overwhelming sense of happiness flooded him, so much so that while he was engulfed in his trance, many others have finished the trial.

When he came round again, he was just in time to see Hai Yun Fan walk forward with a smile on his face. Hai Yun Fan he did not notice it, but Wang Zhong was able to make out what the elders said.

“Oh, what a pity eh.....”

Pity? Ha-ha, seems like it's game over for the Prince from the Cloud Mountain Empire.

Indeed, on the Golden Bridge, Hai Yun Fan had to stop way earlier than Wang Zhong, and clearly did not qualify for the Spirit Blade Sect.

Although he was gloating inside, Wang Zhong did not show it, and nodded to Hai Yun Fan as he walked past him.

Then, he attentively waited for the next applicant, who was also the last, Wang Lu.

Wang Lu wanted to be the first. But for no significant reason. He just wanted to get it all over with but seeing as he was not able to go first, then going last was not too bad as well.

As for the intense stares that were concentrating on him, Wang Lu did

not care the least. He swaggered forward, with an attitude of indescribable composure.

Then, everyone heard a many sounds of excitement from within the hall.

“What the f—!?”

“Dear lord, his spiritual base is overwhelming!”

“I’ve been practicing for a few hundred years, but today I have truly seen the miracles of God!”

“Quick, go and make him into a specimen, I want to take him in as a collection piece!”

“I want to eat his meat! I’ve heard eating it will give you eternal youth!”

The elders’ unbridled voice rang through the Mystic Cloud Hall, leaving all the applicants stunned.

“Silence!”

The hall became dead silent. However, the racket roused all those within the hall.

What the hell, this Wang Lu is really something! What kind of a place is the Spirit Blade Sect!? Recognized as one of top five sects within the Ten Thousand Celestial Alliance! What kind of person has the Sect not seen before? And yet, they're shocked at a country boy's spirit base!

Is there still justice in this world? Is this guy is really the child of peasants from the countryside and not the bastard son of some immortal king?

And just as everyone was talking about this, a girl dressed in vivid colours walked out from the inner halls of Mystic Cloud Hall, holding a note, which she then read word for word. "Everyone, please take a short break for now. We will be compiling the opinions of all the elders. In around an hour, we will reveal the three applicants selected."

After she finished reading the note, she swiftly put the note away and turned back into the hall. However, she could not help but look at a certain someone for a while longer.

That someone was naturally, Wang Lu. The girl looked at him with eyes full of curiosity and endless interest. Comparatively, she disregarded the rest. Such a difference in treatment made everyone envious and jealous, wanting to take Wang Lu's place.

There was no more doubt. There would definitely be a place for Wang Lu within the three finalists selected by the Spirit Blade Sect. With cheater-like intellect, an unbelievable spirit base, and a likeable aura. Even the most stringent of examiners could not possibly find any flaws in him.

All this time, Wang Lu remained highly composed. He was neither moved by the ruckus coming from within the halls nor was he paying any attention to the curious looks from the female disciples. He just stood there quietly, with a posture beaming with confidence.

Just at this time, from within the Mystic Cloud Hall, the vibrant girl walked out once again, holding a note in her hands.

“For those whose names have been read out by me, follow me in. As for the others,” the girl looked up and smiled, “I suppose it’s time to head home.”

The applicants nervously held their breaths, as they silently waited for the outcome of the trial.

“Wen Bao.”

“Zhu Qin.”

“Wang... Zhong!”

## Chapter 25

From the moment the girl opened her lips to read the names on the list, she constantly kept that bright smile on her face.

However, all the participants standing within the hall were taken aback by the sudden development.

Everyone made a guess on who will make it onto the qualifying list. Wang Lu would definitely have been first, followed by Hai Yun Fan and then either Zhu Qin or Wang Zhong. But for the expected top two candidates to fail was a shocker.

The two on the list, Zhu Qin and Wang Zhong, were not smiling. Instead, one was intensely pinching his arm, while the other abandoned all sense of sanity and just head-butted the tree, leaving the leaves and branches rattling.

Only Wen Bao, who was the first to be selected, naive and childlike still, suddenly clapped and laughed. "Well, I qualified!"

And then, failing to catch his breath, fainted.

Everyone else felt puzzled and curious, even the elders in the Mystic Cloud Hall. The qualifying list seemed too unreasonable and hard to believe. They thought that perhaps this was not the real list, and was another part of the additional trial? To test mental strength and endurance?

In an unfortunate twist of fate, and with a dash of luck, Wang Zhong somehow won the favour of the Head Elder! The elders all had equal status, so even if one or two elders showed special preference, it would not be significant. But if the Head Elder made a decision, and says that he sees great potential in Wang Zhong, it came as no surprise as to why he qualified.

Of course, the people outside of the hall knew nothing about the biased viewpoints held by the Spirit Blade Sect higher ups. They were still being troubled by whether the list was real or fake.

Of course, there were some who was not so naïve.

“Wang Lu, what do you make of it?”

Hai Yun Fan’s face became sullen as he raised his question.

The others may have thought that this was all a fluke, and that there was still hope. But Hai Yun Fan’s intuition told him that the list was real.

Wang Lu was equally baffled by this result.

“What is with this plot?! With such a rich story setup, but such an ending of tragedy for the main lead... have those elders gone senile?!”

Hearing his tone, Hai Yun Fan’s heart felt even heavier. Wang Lu’s words, no doubt confirmed his own intuition.

“Do I need to raise a formal complaint to protest, Brother Wang Lu? ”

“Not just protest, we should raise a military operation and get the media to publicise the whole incident and sway the minds of the public into a single force to crush this stupid sect! As the head of Anonymous, I shall point all 40 million followers to nag and badmouth it to death!”

“ Wang Lu, calm down a little bit will you? ”

“Oh come on, it was just a joke,” Wang Lu gave Hai Yun Fan a calm smile,“ You know, this is just right.”

“Just right!?”

“Little Hai, the scene we’re in right now is the climax of my tragic story. We are the leads in this tragic hero story. The more miserable we are now, the brighter our future! Not just failing this Celestial Gathering, when we went home, we will find our entire family killed, the family ancestral graves dug up, the women of the house gang raped! If that is the case, you and I am certainly bound for immortality and greatness!”

“Dear lord! Wang Lu, come to your senses!”

A sigh came from their side.

“This is really pitiful to see, Brother Wang Lu. With your carefree ways, you should not be so taken aback by this.”

Amused, Wang Lu turned and looked. "And you are? "

"Da Ming Empire, Zhu Qin," the young man introduced himself. "I was once taken care of by you in the Garden of Peaches."

"Oh, I remember. You were the one who got his ass kicked by me back then."

Zhu Qin was left tongue-tied. At that time, he befriended Wang Zhong, encouraging him to search his own route, though it was not quite moral to convince him to betray his former young master. But at that time, Wang Lu was at the very top, and way out of his league. Thus, he had to use Wang Zhong.

"I owe it completely to you that we were able to make it past the Frozen Wind Valley. I must truly thank you for all my accomplishments so far."

Wang Lu chuckled.

"During the trial, everyone, including me, was only able to glance at your shadow, as we tried to keep up. Brother Wang Lu, to be honest, there is a lot of jealousy for you. Both of us came from the same Empire. I am the Crown Prince, and you are just a peasant, but during the trial, I could not compare to you at all."

Wang Lu continued to chuckle.

“But the results are in, and while the results are truly unexpected, it just goes to show that the path to immortality is always filled with uncertainty. However, Wang Lu, in my mind, your brilliance is not dimmed in any way by this. So take it easy, victories and defeats are bread and butter in any fight. With your talent, is there a place where you cannot shine? Beyond the Spirit Blade Sect, there are countless other sects. This does not mean the end of our common path towards immortality. ”

Wang Lu continued to laugh like a maniac.

Zhu Qin really gave his all in his performance, but Wang Lu had seen thousands of shitty actors who could give a better performance than his.

“These are my humble words, just my own takeaways as a fellow participant in these trials. Brother Wang Lu, I hope you don’t get me wrong. ”

Wang Lu nodded. “The means justify the ends, eh? Don’t worry, I understand. ”

Zhu Qin frowned. He couldn’t help but reply, “Well, Brother Wang Lu, if you are unable to proceed along the Immortal Path in the future, why not consider a future as a court official? I hear you are highly educated as a scholar. Although I cannot inherit the throne in the future, but in matters like these, I could weigh in with my recommendation.”

Wang Lu smiled. “Are you trying to recruit subordinates? Oh, and if you could share your Dao Companion [TLN: similar to husband and wife, but with the cultivation aspect] with me, it would certainly appear more sincere. When that happens, I won’t mind working for you. How about it?

Let me take a ride with your wife-it doesn't matter if you're too young for one now, I'll just make a reservation for later then."

Zhu Qin felt like he had been shit upon.

Just as all the attention were focused on the fiery exchange between Wang Lu and Zhu Qin, the young lady before the hall suddenly turned her head. She appeared to be listening to some whispers from the elders for a while and after replying "yes" a few times, she turned to Wang Lu and Hai Yun Fan.

"Urm ... My teacher asked me to explain the reason for not selecting the two of you. Although the Spirit Blade Sect is not required to explain its decision, you are two very special. First, is his Royal Highness Hai Yun Fan. According to the elders' analysis, your spirit base belongs to the Mellow Winds and Waters, a third-grade spirit base. Based on qualifications alone, you have already met the requirements of the Ethereal Peak, and your temperament and perception are far better tha—"

Hai Yunfan interjected, "If that is the case, then why did I get disqualified?! Was it because the others are better than me? Or there is a lack of space within the Sect? "

The girl hesitated, and then simply got angry and stamped her feet. "Don't interrupt me! It was so hard to remember what my master said! Now I forgot what he said! I'll leave you to guess the rest of what I'm going to say."

"I'm sorry. Please continue," he swiftly apologized.

The girl was clearly unhappy. Pouting, her ears moved slightly, as if to tune in to the whispers coming from the hall.

“Oh, I get it now. The main reason you were disqualified was because your spirit base properties are not compatible with the Spirit Blade Sect’s teachings. Your spirit base’s composite properties belong to the more extreme Yin type, and the Spirit Blade Sect does not have particularly suitable teachings to match it. ”

“What? ”

“It’s not that you won’t be able to train here at all, but even with the Spirit Blade Sect’s most compatible teachings, you will only be able to reach 80% of your true potential. That would be too much of a waste for you.”

Hai Yun Fan bitterly smiled, “I really don’t mind waste... ”

The girl put on a serious look. “In all seriousness, a third-grade spirit base is barely enough to achieve ascension. But with 80% of your true potential, your prospects of reaching ascension is very grim.”

Hai Yun Fan frowned, “I agree, the purpose of cultivating is to achieve ascension. But honestly, has anyone really done so? ”

“Ever since the end of the last Age of Chaos, no one has been able to achieve ascension. Even if the path to ascension is theoretically possible with a third-grade spirit base, it would be a long and arduous path, with countless obstacles along the way. Even with a Heavenly Spirit Base, there

has been no precedent so far. ”

This made Hai Yun Fan want to laugh even more. “If that’s the case, why are you so hard up about it? ”

“This is the Celestial Gathering, and the Spirit Blade Sect is a sect that seeks ascension. What is the point in taking in someone who does not possess that potential? To do the chores? Even if for the past thousands of years there has been no success, we do not and will not lower our standards, goals and ambitions. This is what differentiates us from those third-rate sects. We may be small, but our ambitions are larger than all of us. ”

Everyone was taken aback by her stirring speech. Who would have thought that the Spirit Blade Sect, a sect that was viewed by many as mediocre, thought itself to be so great?

“However, given that you have excelled in all other aspects, it would be a great tragedy if you were to lose your chance to pursue immortality because of a minor drawback. Hence, we intend to write a recommendation letter for you to the Ten Thousand Arts Sect, which has the most extensive library of all immortal arts amongst all sects. No matter how rare your spirit base is, you will be able to receive appropriate training. They don’t really have any morals and aren’t picky in their selection too, which makes it far more suitable for you than us.”

“Ten Thousand... Arts Sect?” Hai Yunfan muttered to himself, and quickly weighed the pros and cons.

If the Spirit Blade Sect’s recommendation letter was effective, then

going to the Ten Thousand Arts Sect would be a far superior choice. Although it could not be compared to the Sheng Jing Sect, it was still ranked second or third amongst the top five sects, and a sect that was also comparable with the Kunlun Sect. He could also maximise his potential there, rather than 80% from the Spirit Blade Sect.

The course of action was obvious, but deep inside there was still a trace of hesitation in Hai Yun Fan.

So, Hai Yun Fan subconsciously looked towards Wang Lu for an answer.

" Wang Lu, if you ..."

Before Wang Lu could answer him, the girl continued to speak. "As for you, Wang Lu, your results were simply impeccable. Far better than Hai Yun Fan's results and as for your spirit base properties, you have a Heavenly Spirit Base."

Heaven Grade Spirit Base?!

The girl smile beamed wider. "On top of that, it is the rarest and most elusive Heavenly Spirit Base – the Void Spirit Base. "

Void Spirit Base? Who knew such a spirit base type existed?

"I've never heard of it myself either. My master just told me about it. The Void Spirit Base was the same type of spirit base as that of the legendary First Emperor, Qin Shi Huang, and Revered Ancestor Desheng. The First Emperor Qin Shi Huang unified the land, while Revered Ancestor

Desheng single-handedly saved the continent, leading us to victory in the battle of Immortals and Demons.”

If Wang Lu’s spirit base rivalled these two great immortals, and if his abilities were ‘impeccable’, why did he lose out? They couldn’t possibly be recommending him to the Sheng Jing Sect, right?

“No, this... is so troublesome to explain...” the girl complained, somewhat embarrassed, “Master, I can’t explain this, you tell them! ”

Then the girl suddenly hugged her head, as if she was in a lot of pain. “Ok, ok. Don’t yell at me!”

“In simple terms, your situation is similar to Hai Yun Fan’s. There is very limited training out there for some spirit bases nowadays. Even more so with an extremely rare spirit base like yours. Not only that, but there is also a very specific and narrow range of things you can learn and practice. For example, for a heavenly spirit base of the fire type, it is almost impossible to practice water based skills. Even if you were able to acquire the skill, its effectiveness or efficacy would be largely attenuated, which would make you unable to complete the Foundation Establishment stage. In addition, one would need a lot of resources to train someone with such a spirit base. Thus, only the top sects are able to train someone with such a spirit base.”

“But that would be the case for common types of heavenly spirit bases. Ever since the end of the Age of Chaos, many teachings were lost or abandoned due to the change in the surrounding spiritual energy. Some spirit base cultivation methods have been completely lost or impossible to replicate. For example, Elder Dugu from the Shen Jing Sect has the rare Disaster Spirit Base, but due to various restrictions, he was still unable to

break through to the Deity stage after 300 years. His spirit base is more common than yours, yet he wasn't able to reach the Deity stage. Even before the end of the Age of Chaos, there was no teaching available that was compatible with the Void Spirit Base. Legends say the First Emperor Qin Shi Huang and Revered Ancestor Desheng were only able to start on the road of cultivation after the methods were handed down to them from the Celestial Realm. Revered Ancestor Desheng even went to the Kunlun Sect to cultivate, but over ten years, he had tried all available methods, but was still unable to direct spirit energy into his body."

After a moment's pause, the girl gave Wang Lu the cold, hard truth. "It's not just the Spirit Blade Sect that is unable to train you, but all the sects. The Void Spirit Base, in this day and age, is just a rare antique."

