

Beauty and the Bodyguard

Chapter 13 – Encounter in the Cave (Part 2)

Lin Yi went through the stone doors and stepped into the cave. A massive stone tablet in front of the palace instantly caught his eye- Lin Yi found that it was inscribed upon closer inspection.

Under a full moon the doors invite; A fated one may enter through.

Have in mind, leave as dawn arrive; The doors will die for five years more.

Old Lin had been teaching him ancient writing since young. Lin Yi, as a result, had no problem reading the inscription. It had him curious as he tried to interpret the it.

The doors clearly referred to the crimson stone doors. The moon was full, and so the doors opened to invite people in. But what did it mean, a fated one? That fated one couldnt be Lin Yi, could it? Was that why he could enter?

It was quite puzzling. He wasnt anything special, just some eight year old orphan Old Lin took in, living out his unlucky days. Lin Yi never saw anything noteworthy in himself, at least when compared to the old man, who was better than him at everything.

Yet the inscription did say that a fated one was meant to enter through, and here he was. He didnt see any reason to ignore the facts, so Lin Yi decided to take on the role granted to him, puzzled as he may be.

The tablet told Lin Yi to remember leaving before dawn, as well. A simple line- all he had to do was get out before the sun came up.

But what was that last part about, the doors dying for five years more?! Could it possibly be telling him that the doors would just lock him in here for five whole years if he didn't get out in time?

Lin Yi took in a deep breath, a chill passing down his spine. Thank god he understood the text, else hed be wandering around the place like an idiot until he realized the doors werent open anymore. Five years? He wouldnt survive five days without eating or drinking- no one would!

Understanding the rule and what was at stake, Lin Yi kept in mind that he would be safe as long as he left before dawn came. In the meantime, he calmed himself down and continued exploring.

As he neared the palace, Lin Yi realized that the cave's illumination came from the night pearls inlaid within the walls.

It didn't take an expert to see that the pearls held a high value. Anyone with a little experience could see its worth, knowing that they'd fetch high prices at outside markets.

But Lin Yi wasn't someone with a little experience. He was someone with none. He found them fascinating to look at, but that was it—his childhood on the mountain had given him an insensitivity toward pearls or gold.

There was also the problem of demand: Not many of his fellow mountain folk had money to spare for some random pearls. The richest one he knew of, at least in her own right, was Widow Wang, who had more than a thousand rmb left to use at the end of each year!

To Lin Yi, however, it wasn't about how much money one had. No one in their right mind should, or would, want to waste their money on something so impractical! He'd rather get himself two big slices of meat, how fine a meal that'd make! He didn't want to be looking at pearls with an empty stomach.

Thus, Lin Yi moved on, not paying the decorations on the palace walls any more heed. What he *was* interested in, however, was something he'd picked up from the novels he read. A person who just happened to find him or herself in a mysterious cave, one way or the other, were usually greeted with an encounter, a long lost martial arts scroll, for example!

Excited at the thought of defeating the old man with newfound abilities, Lin Yi looked around with heightened enthusiasm. He wouldn't have to be victim to his bullying every day if he managed to come across some powerful scroll!

Yet the palace was huge, and spacious. Disregarding all the lavish decorations on the palace walls, there were only two items of interest left, sitting in the center of the palace itself. One was the stone tablet Lin Yi noticed the moment he went through the doors, and the other was an elevation, right behind the tablet!

The elevation seemed like a sacrificial altar, from ancient times, but also a place where important objects were displayed. Whatever it was, it was ancient, and it couldn't be found in a modern setting anymore.

Not giving it much thought, Lin Yi stepped up the elevation in a couple of steps, and an ancient chest came into sight upon reaching the highest platform. It was small, but Lin Yi's eyes lit up—It seemed like something he was looking for.

Lin Yi then jumped off the elevation after carefully picking the chest up. He proceeded swiftly to hide and conceal himself, chest in hand. It was common for ancient places like

these to have traps, after all, and the chest did seem like a treasure that would trigger them.

Nothing out of the ordinary took place, and Lin Yi let out a breath. He didn't bother opening the chest just yet- there was plenty of time for that after getting back home.

He simply had no time to waste looking through the contents now, there were other things to explore; staying in the cave for five years was the last thing he wanted to do.

Lin Yi moved past the elevation, wanting to explore the cave further. Another set of stone doors greeted him with a smaller stone tablet on top of it, much to his surprise.

Excited, Lin Yi took a closer look at the stone tablet. It was inscribed as well, same as the first entrance!

Five years for the first stage; One palm's hit for entry into the doors.

Should learnings prove incomplete; Revisit in five years more.

Lin Yi was only confused. Five years for the first stage? As things stood, there might actually be some scroll that detailed a martial arts technique in the chest he was holding. Would he really be able to open the door by just hitting it with a palm after learning it?

At that thought, Lin Yi went forward to give shoving the door a try. It didn't budge when he pulled, either, and he understood easily. Should learnings prove incomplete; Revisit in five years more meant that he might not be able to learn whatever technique the chest offered in time. In simpler words, he wasn't powerful enough yet. If so, he'd have to wait another five years before he could try again.

Lin Yi's heart started itching as he stared at the closed doors- if the first palace housed a scroll, then the second stone doors would most likely lead to something of higher value!

He understood perfectly well that he wasn't ready for the second set of doors. Lin Yi felt that it was enough for now, having managed to coincidentally and fatefully stumble across the cave and all.

Satisfied, Lin Yi made his way out of the cave, the chest in his arms. The sky wasn't dark anymore, and a faint white could be seen at the Eastern edge. The sun was rising.

Lin Yi couldn't believe how lucky he was- a little later, and the doors would've shut him inside! Learning the first stage? He'd starve to death before anything else.

The first ray of sunlight shined onto the mountain, and the stone doors behind Lin Yi closed themselves without warning.

He walked back to try and get the doors open again, but to no avail.

The stone tablet spoke the truth. The only way to get past the doors was to wait for the full moon five years later.

Lin Yi was a little disappointed, but he did manage to get his hands on some special scroll. Hed figure the whole thing out after getting home.

Yi, you okay? A familiar voice sounded from behind him. Lin Yi turned and saw Old Lin, talking to him as if he didnt try to murder him last night.

Fuck! You damn old man, kicking me down a freaking mountain, were you trying to kill me?! Lin Yis bones were still hurting from the fall.

I dunno, you look pretty alive to me. Seeing Lin Yi in one piece relaxed Old Lin, since he was prepared to see some pretty serious injuries. He seemed calm, but hed be lying if he said he didnt worry at all. As strengthened with medicine as the boy may be, the old man had no guarantee, not when falling down a mountain was concerned.

Halfway there, old man. Lin Yi said as he considered if he should inform the old man of his findings. After some hesitation, he concluded that Old Lins vast knowledge could but bring him more benefit than harm.

Old man, I went in this cave yesterday Lin Yi said as he pointed behind him.

Uh-huh Old Lin already knew- Lin Yi was holding a chest in his hand. He couldnt help but feel delighted that Lin Yi decided to tell him of it, however... It meant that he was trusted. He didnt raise Lin Yi up for nothing after all, the old man contemplated.

And then Lin Yi didnt know what the old man was thinking, so he told him everything that took place, finishing it by handing over the chest. And this is that chest!

Keep it. Old Lin said after a look at it, his voice dull.

Youre not gonna look inside? Lin Yi was confused. The old man didnt seem interested in something so magical, not at all!

Theres no point. Old Lin shook his head.

Lin Yi had loads of questions to fire, but the old mans face made it clear what he was thinking. *Stop asking so many questions, do whatever you want.*

It was difficult, but the two managed to climb back up home. Old Lin fell into his bed and started sleeping, leaving Lin Yi with his chest.

Since the old man didn't bother, Lin Yi had only himself to learn what the whole thing was about. He placed the chest on an old table, and started examining it.

The chest was from an ancient time, similar to what royalty used to hold their elixirs and bibles. It wasn't locked, and Lin Yi opened it with ease.

He was breathing heavily at this point, his eyes wide with anticipation. Inside the chest was a scroll made of silk.

He took the scroll out of the chest, and noticed a small piece of jade at the bottom. Lin Yi picked it up and raised it to a light.

It was high quality jade, with a mysterious pattern etched on it. It wasn't the ancient text, so Lin Yi didn't understand what it meant. He knew, however, that the writing on the scroll was different from the one etched on the jade.

He was puzzled- the stone tablets and the scroll had the same writing- only the jade was exempt from that rule.

Lin Yi took the jade to the old man afterward, inquiring about its purpose. Unexpectedly, the old man didn't know. All he did was stare at it, equally surprised himself.

Much more surprised than when Lin Yi showed him the chest.

He came to the conclusion that the jade had to be related to the scroll, and subsequently, the training to master the art. He decided to have it with him at all times.

The scroll disappointed Lin Yi a little when he unrolled it- it was thin, and the size of a scarf.

Lin Yi's experience with Wuxia novels, however, told him that it wasn't about the word count on the scroll. Many high level techniques required only a piece of human skin to write down. With that in mind, Lin Yi started reading.

The four words Art of Dragon Mastery caught Lin Yi's eyes instantly. It was of the same ancient text from the stone tablets in the cave.

Below the title was a line of small characters. The first stage: Silkworm in the Sky. The main text followed after: Mortals weren't much different from ants. Through what means does one change their fate, grasping

Lin Yi went through the text quickly. The first stage was divided into the early phase, the mid phase, and the late phase. The scroll, however, had only the first stage of Art of Dragon Mastery written on it.

Lin Yi, of course, understood that there wasn't only one stage to this art. If it was mentioned that there was a first stage, then naturally there would be a second and third stage as well.

As for where the other scrolls were, Lin Yi wasn't sure. They might be behind the second set of doors, or somewhere else entirely. At any rate, Lin Yi had to finish completing the first stage before thinking of anything else.

The introduction to the Art of Dragon Mastery was complex and difficult to understand, but the process of the actual training was very clear, and detailed. There were even illustrations of human acupuncture points for him to reference. Lin Yi never had any trouble with those, since he'd been practicing kungfu from a young age.

Without any second thoughts, Lin Yi followed the instructions the first stage gave him. Lin Yi was young, and he couldn't possibly have considered anything else beyond the simple idea of defeating Old Lin. In actuality, there lay a risk: What he was training so hard for may very well be incompatible with the things the old man had taught him already, and incompatibilities like that were a serious matter.

Even when Lin Yi would look back years later The main reason he was interested in learning Art of Dragon Mastery in the first place was because of how cool the name sounded. Kung fu that could take down even a dragon? Who wouldn't want to learn something like that?

It wasn't until much later that Lin Yi realized- it wasn't martial arts at all.