

Chapter 131: Sword Finger of Terror

Xu Xiaoshou was completely stunned by this genius idea of his that he'd come up with. He calmed himself down and recalled everything about Sword Technique Expertise.

His Sword Will was derived from this trait, and he thought he might still be able to get something out of Sword Technique Expertise at the moment.

"It's really quite a pity. If only I could level it up more, even just one level further, I bet I'd be able to solve the problem right away."

Sword Technique Expertise brought massive amounts of knowledge every level-up, and every time he reached that stage, he seemed to find the answers he sought for the problems he was facing.

He couldn't absorb that much knowledge from it, but it was still enough, nonetheless.

It was a pity that the Level Two Skill Point column was still grayed out and thus unavailable for purchase, which meant there was no way for him to take advantage of it.

He didn't give up. While he was unable to find the solution despite spending hours working on it, he nonetheless gained some knowledge that he'd lacked before and found points that contradicted his previous ideas.

"Perhaps going at it from the inside-out will carve out a new path.

"Let's get to it."

He leapt into the Black Waterfalls again, but he didn't rush to spread his Sword Will. Instead, he calmed himself and then went on to fully experience the white sword aura that started cutting into him.

The thin, tightly packed sword aura hit him, and one seemed to tilt awkwardly to one side.

There was then a second slash, and a third...

The tightly packed sword aura came down from above Xu Xiaoshou, yet they crisscrossed each other and shot to the sides, unable to even scratch him at all.

He kept his eyes closed the whole time, but found it difficult to suppress his glee.

"That's Sword Will!" he thought happily.

He'd only put a basic understanding of Blade-draw Technique to work, and the sword aura around him had already failed to deal him any damage.

"I knew it..."

"That masked guy was right. No one would dare to use a sword on the one who has truly mastered Sword Will."

"That's because 'your sword would become my sword.'"

He suppressed his glee all the same. Having learned the true might of such will, he realized that “will” might just actually be more powerful than “form” from fixed movements.

He then attempted to make use of his will, spreading it from within to the surface of his body.

The minute distance between muscle and skin seemed to be an almost insurmountable chasm.

He sighed. He’d asked for too much.

He swept the white sword aura away, not allowing the attacks to interfere with him, and continued learning.

The heavy power of the fall’s water assaulted him yet again, but because he’d freed himself from the sword aura’s interference, he was able to quickly enter a trance-like state.

It seemed like an instant, yet that instant felt infinite.

He saw an illusion of the fleeting white clouds, which was the same scene he’d seen when he’d developed Acquired Sword Will for the first time.

“This is my place.”

When the white clouds appeared again, he felt like he was as light as a feather, and despite being weighed down by the heavy waters, he felt like he was in the clouds.

He willed and Hiding Pain shot out with a whoosh.

Vooomm.

The entire Black Cliff trembled violently like a tiger that had been startled, and the burst of anger around him was laid bare for all to see. Boundless sword aura came down on him right away.

Swoop, swoop, swoop.

All of the attacks missed.

He opened his eyes and shot upward.

His surroundings trembled at that moment, with the sky ringing and spirit qi howling like a dragon, shooting for his energy reserve. Sword Will then lethargically emerged like slivers of mist.

White gas was rising like smoke from his body.

He seemed to have glimpsed the Great Path, yet the Great Path had merged into a single, and there was only a black sword before his eyes.

He focused and recovered the image. He saw the furious Black Cliff continue to shoot sword aura at him, yet all of the incoming sword aura attacks were swept effortlessly away by his “white cloud state.”

The white mist emanating from his body gradually blurred before disappearing altogether.

His expression became one of glee instead.

“Psychokinesis!”

“Ptuih... Good old psychokinesis. Let’s go!”

He shot out of the Black Waterfalls and hovered midair, holding two fingers erect.

“Psychokinesis,” he mused.

“It’s invisible, but I can undoubtedly sense it.”

He merely held up two ordinary fingers, yet a magnificent, terrifying sword aura shot to the air as soon as he waved them, the power of which was every bit comparable to his Blade-draw Technique.

Boom!

The sword aura cut into the Black Waterfalls, and the heavy water was actually immediately cut open, causing the fall to halt in midair and then fall again after a second or two.

Boooooom...

He then proceeded to do so with all 10 of his fingers, cutting upward, and the resulting attack actually reversed the flow of the Black Waterfalls, causing it to shoot upward for quite some time before falling down again.

“Man, this is dope!”

“No wonder you don’t need any fixed sword moves. With Sword Will made solid like that, there’s really no need to use any moves, as just a single flick of the finger can bring about a blow!”

He felt like he’d made quite the breakthrough in terms of his understanding of the sword. His Innate Sword Will had remained the same, and his level hadn’t increased, but something had happened to his understanding of the “way.”

He recalled how the masked guy had kept emphasizing “Innate Level” back then, and he wondered if the masked guy really hadn’t been lying after all.

True Innate Level meant melding oneself with one’s surroundings.

And true finger sword meant that the finger was the sword, and the sword was the finger.

He took Hiding Pain in his hand and swept it through the air, and a blast of sword aura disappeared into the clouds.

He peered into his energy reserves and found that despite having launched so many attacks, he was only somewhat mentally exhausted. His spiritual source had seen no drop in quantity.

Elation, shock, and all manner of complicated emotions rushed over him.

It was only then that he realized that the true path to “pure Sword Will combat” required no use of spiritual source at all.

Before, depleting his spiritual source through his several Blade-draw Technique only meant he’d gone astray. He hadn’t at all realized that he’d taken the wrong path.

“I needed not to see the form of what I sought. I needed only to be steeped in it.”

He was stunned and put Hiding Pain away. He gazed at his ten fingers.

It was only after having mastered the 10 Sections of the Finger Sword that he'd finally realized that "common psychokinesis" was actually a special state that existed between will and sword aura.

It was formless, yet it was tangible.

The essence of it wasn't in its form but in its expression.

Simply put, it was just like the attacks that he'd thrown earlier...

Sword will existed when his will was still and unmoving, where his 10 fingers were just 10 fingers. As soon as he put his will to work, the sword will was converted to moving thoughts, culminating into psychokinesis, and thus his 10 fingers became swords.

The expression of such "thoughts" was what actually gave rise to "aura" or "qi."

Not only had his previous path confused "will" and "aura," but also it lacked the "thoughts" in-between them. As such, the two had become increasingly irreconcilable, unable to return to the same point of origin.

He flicked his fingers, marveling at it all.

That "ordinary power of thought" could actually be so terrifyingly powerful, eh.

His 10 fingers, when infused with said "average power of thought," were, in a way, already sharper than Hiding Pain.

"The 10 Sections of the Finger Sword really is something indeed."

"But that eighth sword deity is still the more powerful one. Just how imaginative does one have to be to come up with something so terrifying that can be successfully implemented?"

He had to admit his inferiority. He lowered his head, about to land on the ground below.

"Huh?" he thought.

"Land?"

"Oh sh**. I'm hovering midair?"

He was thoroughly shocked. It was only then that he realized that the spiritual energy that had gathered around him was no longer as gentle as before, and that it'd come swarming at him instead.

It looked like moths flying at a fire without a care for their lives.

He seemed to realize something, but this state didn't last for long, and what he'd initially speculated seemed about to come true.

His energy reserve trembled, and his spiritual source seemed about to become solid.

"In-Innate level is coming, then?"

Chapter 132: Innate Level. Eating Everything Up.

“How should I go about it?”

Xu Xiaoshou felt rather helpless as he started to make a breakthrough into Innate Level.

Someone else might have been able to use some kind of technique, some active measure, to go on about it.

In his case, however, there wasn't even such a technique he could use. He could do nothing but watch as his body went on to make a breakthrough...

“D*mn...”

“Can't do. Have to do something somehow!”

He was the true master of his own body and he had to do something about it.

He looked down at his body. “You really think you can just make a breakthrough just because you feel like it?”

“H*ll no!”

He suppressed it, causing his energy reserve to compress for a bit before springing open again and absorbing even more ambient spiritual energy around him.

Xu Xiaoshou was speechless.

“Whatever,” he thought. “Things have already come this far. I can no longer do anything to suppress it, and there isn't any actual need to do so, so come on and get it over with, then.”

He then took out the Innate Pill, which he'd gotten as a reward for becoming champion.

He'd heard this thing could increase his understanding.

He didn't think he'd need it, yet he still gently sucked it in nonetheless, reducing the pill into a stream of gas as it flowed into his body. This was the only thing he could do for himself.

He didn't like the idea of watching his body make a breakthrough while he just stood by, doing nothing.

As soon as the pill entered his body, he felt his mind grow calmer, stripped of all excess thoughts. He became highly focused to where the only thing that existed was his raging energy reserve.

“It's actually useful?” He shrugged off of his exceedingly focused state and, after thinking for a bit, dived back into his breakthrough, deciding he couldn't afford to waste anything.

The waves of his energy reserve were frighteningly fierce and wild. Then, the waves subsided and charged, like a tsunami was about to hit.

His spiritual source was depleted to nourish his body, and it felt like his entire body was filled. It felt so good he almost felt like moaning.

A blast of golden light descended from above and immediately washed over his energy reserve.

He could hear the sound of mantra chants from all directions, and the Great Path seemed clear before his eyes, but he opened them to find only the void without that true nature of the world he'd hoped to see within his sight.

The raging ambient spiritual energy stagnated, and, the very next second, gobbled up his body like a black hole.

Under the light that shone onto it, rapidly working and sucking in all that thick, viscous spiritual source, an origin emerged from his energy reserve, culminating into a transparent ball of light.

All 10 levels of spiritual cultivation returned to his energy reserve as the ball of golden dragon's light made its way into Innate Level.

A terrifying spiritual force spread out from his energy reserve, and it shook his surroundings, causing a spiritual mist to wash all over the Black Cliff.

He felt as if he'd ascended to some higher heights, and his soul was entirely absorbed into the realm he was in. While he was still unable to make out the Great Path, he felt himself become inextricably linked with it nonetheless.

His being melded with the Great Path.

His moment of enlightenment was over, and he'd gained a lot. His eyes gradually focused, and his consciousness came to the depths of the center of his brow.

"Now that my powers are now at the Innate level, it's the time to open up the Origin Court."

The spiritual source, which had just stabilized in his energy reserve, shot upwards into the center of his brow without stopping.

The place, which had been sealed shut for years, vaguely started to appear now that he'd made a breakthrough into Innate Level, and it wouldn't be around for long. He directed his spiritual source to bang on the gate without a moment's hesitation.

Booom!

His mind rumbled. Said gate swung wide open after that one strike from his spiritual source, which was several times far more raging than others.

He was utterly shocked at how easy it was. "Isn't this a little too much..."

The gate was opened, and the Origin Court appeared.

His vast inner landscape spread right before his eyes, and he was even able to see the very source of his own soul.

The spiritual source rushed into the Origin Court, and his will entangled with it, completing the evolution in an instant.

Spiritual senses.

It was a special ability similar to "Sense," yet somehow different.

At the moment, his Sense allowed him to clearly visualize everything within a 10-meter radius, while spiritual senses could scan everything within a radius of several kilometers.

What was different about them was that only a vague outline materialized in the latter's visualization.

But he was elated all the same, as the two didn't conflict with each other. Both perception abilities could be used at the same time to compliment each other, which was a great thing for him.

While the breakthrough looked like it'd taken a long time to accomplish, the process had actually taken only mere seconds. All the aura around him had broken into Innate Level from Acquired level as well, thoroughly completing his transformation.

However, the spiritual energy that had rushed into his body in a frenzy continued to rush in. He looked very expectant as he looked at his Origin Court, fully focused on it.

He could see a vague humanoid silhouette at the center of the place. That was the source of his soul.

That thing seemed to grow at blizzing speeds as it kept absorbing ambient spiritual energy, and it wasn't long before it took its form.

His Origin Court trembled at that moment as a beam of multicolored light from the source of his soul shot to the sky.

"Innate Elemental Power!" He looked on, his eyes full of anticipation, while clenching his fist. "I wonder what it'll be."

He looked at the scorching red color within the beam and sensed that the red was apparently very thick and matched him extremely well.

"The element of fire?"

He was very excited. "Element of fire and four other colors still around?"

"Am I going to get a complete set of the five elements?"

"Well, well..."

"Looks like I, Xu Xiaoshou, is the diamond-in-the-rough kind of a genius. I actually managed to get all five el..."

But his excitement didn't last for long. A red interface appeared at the top of the beam of light, and a massive mouth seemed to open up, gobbling everything up.

He was baffled.

"What kind of a joke is this!?"

"Godd*mn you, spit it all out right now!"

He was very flustered at the moment. "I was looking forward to getting my Innate Elemental Power and it just f**kin' had to eat up everything like that?"

“You were nowhere near that active before, yet you just had to come out and steal my thunder like that?”

“Oh, you piece of sh** of a system!!”

He was extremely furious and so badly wanted to stop it that he actually thought of destroying the system right away, yet he was unable to do anything.

Despite him mobilizing massive quantities of spiritual sense and blasting it at the red interface, the interface remained unchanged, as if he hadn't even hit it.

“D*mn you...”

“You actually canceled out the damage!”

After gobbling everything up, the red interface didn't bother saying or doing anything else before leaving without a trace.

At that moment, the source of his soul seemed as if it were struggling to contain something really big. Then it shuddered and fired a beam of white light.

“There's something else?”

He was utterly shocked, wondering if he was indeed... a genius among genius, someone who was able to awaken a two-fold elemental power.

While the beam of white light was a lot thinner, as if it lacked something right from the start, the brimming sword will it carried seemed to have suppressed all those five colors from before.

“This is something.”

“Well, well, I, Xu Xiaoshou, is indeed a genius, the likes of which no one has seen before, despite the system's suppression!”

He stood akimbo and laughed out loud, berating the heavens. “Hahaha, you piece of... huh? D*mn, what are you doing? Stop it!!”

The red interface, which had initially receded, also seemed to have been baffled by his super talents, as it started to reconsolidate the next second.

That massive formless mouth opened and gobbled up the light, then disappeared shortly afterward without a trace.

“F**k you!”

He was utterly flabbergasted.

“My two-fold Innate Elemental Powers, all eaten up eh?”

At that moment, deep down, he felt like he'd been utterly betrayed, and his hatred was so intense he felt like he could've brought down the heavens.

Yet, he simply dejectedly dropped from the sky, with his eyes looking completely hollow, as he figured that it would be a pointless exercise. His powers had all been eaten, after all.

But just when he was starting to feel dazed, he saw the source of his soul shudder again...

“I’ll be d*mned. There’s still more?”

He was elated, yet the source looked like it was only shuddering from anger. It started to become blurry, and nothing more came out of it.

“Got squeezed dry, eh?”

Boundless rage filled his heart, and he saw the source of his soul shoot to the sky, making its way into that red interface.

He was flabbergasted, and he spread his spiritual sense to the limit to try and stop what the source was doing.

“Don’t be rash!

“What will I do if you end up being eaten!?” Xu Xiaoshou very much wanted to cry as he saw that very much blurred source of his soul, his heart full of sorrow.

“Remember this.”

He directed his spiritual sense at that red interface that had disappeared in the air as he shouted to the top of his lungs, “Remember it, my brother!

“This red interface is the enemy! We shall seek our revenge when we got stronger in the future! We shall rip it to shreds!

“For now, let’s calm down...”

Chapter 133: System Upgraded

Xu Xiaoshou comforted the source of his soul and emerged out of the Origin Court, his face deadpan.

He could curse and yell all he wanted. It wouldn’t change anything.

But, he nonetheless noted, that was the first time he’d seen the System do something like that.

“There has to be some reason for it...”

The System usually didn’t do anything besides make messages pop up in the information bar.

The rest of what the System did was just that wheel and allowing him to buy skill points in the mall. Hmm, the System could also mess up his rate at drawing prizes.

There was one thing undeniable about the system—it had too little presence. Its presence was so unbelievably low that he’d almost forgotten that it was called the “Passive System,” not “Information Bar.”

Yet, it did that outrageous thing today...

But, before he could further mull it over, the System, which had gotten full from the “meal,” popped up again through the Information Bar.

[Passive System] upgrading. Please do not interfere.

He was stunned by what he read.

Upgrade?

His eyes lit up, and he wondered if the System had repented after eating up his two-fold Innate Elemental Powers and was about to compensate for it by upgrading his success rate at draws.

But his heart soon sank. “No, no, judging by the System’s habits... it’ll probably lower the success rate of the draws instead.

“No, don’t!”

He wanted very badly to get in the way of the System’s upgrade, but it didn’t give him the chance to do so. As soon as the line appeared, the entire red interface subsided from his mind.

Just when it was about to disappear completely, a line appeared below the Information Bar, catching his attention.

Passive Points: 66666.

The very “lucky” string of numbers caught him off-guard and almost blinded him, figuratively speaking.

Why that many?

He recalled the last time he’d seen such a string of numbers. It had also appeared to be all sixes. Yet, there’d only been four digits then.

There were five digits this time?

He rubbed his eyes and peered at it again, yet the red interface had completely gone.

He was so flustered he immediately took out Hiding Pain and stabbed his hand. He pulled the blade out and the wound healed.

“Good thing the passive skills are still around...”

From the looks of things, the System had truly gone somewhere else for upgrades.

It became clear that there was no point mulling over it, so he ignored the matter entirely after that.

He recalled what he’d last seen—his Passive Points at over 60 thousand—and calculated the time, thinking he’d only been at the Black Waterfalls for about six to seven hours.

He recalled that he’d spent most of those hours getting hit, resting, resting more, then getting hit again.

“I managed to wrack up that many Passive Points through all of that?”

“Well... not actually that many. If I were to calculate the number of Passive Points at the rate of 30 to 50 points a second, being at it for six to seven hours would mean... around a million points!”

He jumped at the result of his calculations, but calmed down before long.

“That’s just insane!”

He noted that it’d be impossible for him to stay standing in the waterfalls and let the sword aura cut him up the whole time. Generally speaking, even if he were to remain there for just half a minute, he’d end up with cuts all over his body.

He’d spend a good deal of time recuperating, as it took almost half an hour every time.

“But!”

He then chuckled all of a sudden, recalling that inside the Passive System’s mall there was a “Level Two Skill Point” that had been around for a long time but was greyed out, thus making it unavailable for purchase.

“That means I could probably buy it after the upgrade, right?” he thought.

He’d wanted that thing very badly for a long time now, and thought of upgrading “Eternal Vitality” after that.

“Hehehe, wouldn’t that mean a continuous flow of Passive Points, then?” He giggled sheepishly.

“Yeah...”

“Right, the upper limit of passive skills is at ‘Innate, Lv.1’ before the upgrade. So with the upgrade... ‘Master, Lv.1’ then?”

“Master Level!?”

“Holy sh**!” His eyes immediately lit up at the thought.

“‘Strengthen’ at Innate Level brought me Innate Level Physique. Does that mean that at Master Level it would become the ‘Master Physique’ that Elder Sang told me about in his story?”

“That’s a limit the entire continent has a hard time breaking through!”

He got extremely excited, thinking that it was alright for the System to gobble up his two-fold Innate Elemental Powers. So long as it was able to upgrade his current powers, he could even give the source of his soul...

“Ptuih! No, not that one!”

Voom!

His head felt like it’d been pulled, and it hurt, as if his brains had been twisted into a knot. The pain immediately snapped him out of his thoughts.

He peered inside his brain, finding nothing around.

He willed and sent his spiritual sense into the Origin Court, and the red interface suddenly appeared above his source of the soul again.

The Passive System.

“Upgrade completed?” He gauged the system with anticipation, but was stunned the next second.

Well...

Wasn't it going for an upgrade? So why did it look the same as before, like something you could pick out of a street stall? Was this so-called upgrade just a change in location?

His bright eyes darkened. This could be bad news!

He went on to check the Information Bar, which was the only medium the System used to communicate with him.

The Information Bar read:

Congratulations. Upgrade of [Passive System] successful.

New module unlocked: Awakening Pool.

Special Passive Skill acquired: Passive Fist.

Three lines and one filled with bullsh**.

The word “special in the line “special passive skill” immediately caught his attention.

There were only three major types of passive skills that he currently had at his disposal: basic, extension, and expertise.

So, from the looks of it, this was also a type in itself?

“Special passive skill...”

He took a look at the red interface, and a new module actually appeared below. There was only one message:

Passive Fist (upgrade unavailable).

Ehem!

Upgrade unavailable?

“Well, well, isn't this something? A passive skill that helps save me points. This is quite a bargain.”

He then scanned with his spiritual sense and immediately acquired detailed information regarding that passive skill.

Passive Fist: Real Damage.

Passive Fist: Charges when attacked, depletes all charged points when unleashed. You can't just stay on the defensive all the time. When one has to take the initiative, one takes it. When patience no longer suffices, there's no need for patience.

Passive Fist (charge points: 0.00%)

Xu Xiaoshou didn't know what to say.

"I get it. All the passive skills I drew before were meant to get me prepared, and now you're just giving me a reason to get myself pummeled, eh?"

"What the h*ll is with that 'When patience no longer suffices, there's no need for patience' anyway?"

"You stupid System, what the h*ll are you really trying to get me into, man?"

Regardless of what he thought about it, however, he tried to figure out what "real damage" meant.

"Real damage like how it is in games? Does it negate defense altogether?"

"If that's the case, then this passive skill really is quite formidable."

He clenched his fist and punched the ground.

Boom!

A massive crater resulted.

That was his Innate Level Physique at work.

He took a deep breath and berated, "Passive..."

"Why the h*ll does it sound kind of dumb?..."

"Whatever... Passive Fist!"

"Hah!"

Boom!

A massive crater resulted again.

The resulting crater was hardly different from the one before.

He was flabbergasted.

"Is it because there are no charge points to it? 0.00% charge points, so no amplification in damage potential, then?"

He shook his fist and looked at the Black Waterfalls. The place was capable of hurting him, so it should be able to add to his charge points.

But, instead of heading to the waterfalls right away, he looked at the second line in the Information Bar instead.

New module unlocked: Awakening Pool.

He searched for a bit, but didn't find anything on the red interface. Suddenly, he recalled that red wheel from the mall and immediately went inside the mall.

There was indeed a pitch-black, small pool lying quietly below that red wheel.

"Awakening Pool!"

Chapter 134: Getting Rich Quick!?

Awakening Pool: Performs Awakening to Extended Passive Skill.

The short line of introduction immediately caused Xu Xiaoshou to shudder.

Passive skill...awakened?

He knew just how formidable the passive skills he currently possessed were, and he wondered if the skills would become insanely overpowered if they were further awakened.

But he soon calmed down after noticing the conspicuous word “extended” in the introduction line.

“Only ‘extended passive skills’ are available for awakening, eh?”

The line didn’t mention any other limitations, yet it stressed the word “extended,” which apparently meant that “basic” and “expertise” passive skills were already out of the question.

It went without saying that “special passive skills” were also incapable of being awakened, given that that type wasn’t even available for level ups.

He turned his gaze from the Awakening Pool and looked at the boxes in the mall instead. There were four items in the boxes.

Level One Skill Point (purchase: 1000 Passive Points)

Level Two Skill Point (purchase: 5000 Passive Points)

Passive Key (purchase: 5000 Passive Points)

Awakening Stone (purchase: 10000 Passive Points)

Being a stingy guy to begin with, the first thing he saw when he checked out the prices was that the price of the Passive Keys had increased by more than five times, and his eyes nearly popped out of their sockets.

“What a godd*mn rip-off! That thing only cost 1,000 Passive Points before... The price of one thing going up causes the others to go up as well, eh? You actually wanna do it like this?”

The next second, he saw that an Awakening Stone would cost him 10,000 Passive Points and felt as if he’d just taken 10,000 points of damage to his heart. His face turned ashen.

“What the...”

“I went through all that sh*t to get only like 60,000 points, yet I could only do Awakening six times?”

He wouldn’t have cared about this if success were guaranteed, but when he recalled the probability of getting something good from the System, he figured that he would end up getting severely ripped off again.

“Hold it for now. Don’t do anything rash,” he encouraged himself, returning his gaze to the “Level Two Skill Points” that he’d been anticipating for a long time.

When compared to the other d*mned things, at least skill points didn’t depend on chance.

Level Two Skill Points cost 5,000 passive points, and he imagined the kind of power that a Master Physique would bring.

But the price was so reasonable that he felt like the System was being a little too generous, and he wondered if something had gone haywire in the System for it to sell it to him at such a bargain.

However, he quickly came to realize that he had nine passive skills, and upgrading just one to Master Level would require 50,000 passive points.

Nine skills...

450,000!

“Holy sh**!” He immediately slumped onto the sands of the Black Lake.

“What kind of a f**ked up System is this? That’s a godd*mn slaughter, man!”

He felt like he was the one who’d gone haywire instead for actually thinking that the System would be generous. Had the consecutive breakthroughs rendered him dumb?

With a massive burden of 500,000 passive points, he looked at the Black Waterfalls again, and the rumbling of the water was like music to his ears.

He’d initially felt that he was a man with a strong spine and that Passive Points earned through pain wasn’t his way of doing things, yet at that moment...

He launched himself into the falls.

“Come on!” he thought.

“Whip me hard, baby!

“If you can’t get me down on the ground today, you should stop calling yourself Black Waterfalls and just call yourself a white one instead.”

The howling sword aura immediately stunned him. It was invigorating and caused him to immediately cool down and put up his defenses.

“Woah, woah, hold it right there.

“How about an upgrade to uhh... Eternal Vitality?”

He frowned. He’d initially thought that faster recovery meant he would yield more Passive Points.

But come to think of it, “Strengthen” would be a better choice.

“So long as my physical resilience goes up, the lower the damage the sword aura could inflict on me.

“What I really need to be concerned with right now is that I can’t afford to upgrade it all the way to Master Level. If I were to gain a Master Physique and the sword aura could no longer deal me any damage, boy, imagine the losses!

“I have nine passive skills to feed here, man!”

He then traded his points for a “Level Two Skill Point.” Even though he could’ve easily traded for ten with over 60,000 Passive Points at his disposal, he chose to cautiously trade his points and go for one level at a time instead.

“While bulk purchases of skill points are indeed awesome, let’s just leave it for some other time in the future.”

Strengthen (Innate, Lv.6)

After going beyond level five, a blast of white sword aura, which could’ve resulted in a huge gash on his shoulder at an earlier level, was reduced to little more than a flesh wound.

It was right at the sweet spot where it could deal him damage and earn him Passive Points, yet was far from able to affect his movements.

“Couple that with ‘Eternal Vitality’... boy, that’s like earning points unscathed!

“Yippie!”

With his hands behind his back, he stood in the Black Waterfalls and casually walked about inside, feeling completely at ease.

After walking for a bit, he suddenly recalled that being at Innate Level meant he could fly. He quickly connected himself with his surroundings and his body levitated midair in no time.

“Fly.”

Being able to fly in the air without having to use Hiding Pain was a dream come true to him.

He was feeling very, very pleased with himself, and there was a happy look on his face as he flew through the air. He found the experience an utter pleasure. He was wracking up points, getting accustomed to Innate Level powers, and familiarizing himself with flight all at the same time.

Furthermore, his training continued without at all stopping.

“My gosh, after getting into Innate Origin Court Level, it really feels like I’m gonna take off in more ways than one!”

He then recalled Yuan Tou.

“Hehe, that dude is beneath my notice now.

“Zhang Xinxiong, was it? You dared to come and try to kill me over and over, eh? I’ll give you a taste of what I’m made of when I emerge from the Tianxuan Gate.

“I was called the ‘Little Animal Xu.’”

“But from now on, I shall be known as ‘Xu the Beast!’”

He felt all his glee and pride were going to his head, and he felt a little pompous. He knew that it was bad for him, yet somehow, he was unable to just quell that restlessness inside him.

His sword will spread out in a burst. Having infuriated the falls meant that the place was enraged enough to assail him with a tightly packed sword aura right away as expected.

Pfftt, pfft, pffft.

Bloody gashes appeared on his body and quickly healed.

He was very pleased with himself. The white sword aura blasts that had tortured him several hours ago was now something he could totally ignore after having undergone just one breakthrough.

Passive Points, which were coming at 30 to 50 points per second, immediately doubled, shooting to over 100 per second.

Furthermore, by this point, he no longer even needed to rest.

“Let’s do a few calculations...” He was so excited that his hands were trembling. While his mind was being slashed into mush by the sword aura blasts, he put his fingers up again, his mouth shuddering the whole while.

“Six times six equals 36, an hour has 3600 seconds, considering that I’d earn at least 100 points a second...

“360,000!”

“D*mn, I could feed all of my babies into grown-ups in just two hours!

He became beyond excited and his hands, which he’d kept stuck to his thighs, spread outward, and he shot upward like Iron Man.

“Come on! The one who fails to continue after 2 hours loses!”

The higher he flew, the more enraged the blasts of white sword aura became, and the number just kept rising.

The number rose from 100 points per second to 200 and then 300 points per second.

His smile was so bright his face felt like it was about to split. “Yeah, no point in increasing the number of attacks without adding to the damage.”

Pfftt!

But as soon as that thought came to mind, a supersized blast of white aura came at him from out among the others, almost tearing his arm right off of his shoulder.

He was immediately startled.

“Man, stirring up trouble now, are you?”

He immediately became focused. While his spiritual sense couldn’t detect that supersized sword aura among all the other tightly packed blasts, his Sense could.

As such...

“Evade! Dodge!”

“Hehe... you missed!”

He flipped about, conserving his strength throughout the whole time as he played around.

The blasts of white sword aura from above became even crazier. He looked at the Information Bar and, seeing the numbers jump like crazy, became concerned that the System would’ve immediately blown up right now if it hadn’t been upgraded earlier.

“Hmm, doesn’t seem like it would. It’s crude, but it’s still the System.

“Come on! Make me rich!”

Chapter 135: Master Physique

Attacked, Passive Points +1.

Attacked, Passive Points +1.

“...”

Passive Points: 100861.

Passive Points: 200404.

“...”

Xu Xiaoshou was feeling so good at the moment that one could say he was having a high.

He left only a bit of his spiritual sense in the Information Bar and used the rest of his remaining mental focus on evading supersized attacks from the falls.

It took little more than 15 minutes for his Passive Points to near 200 thousand. As to why the number was only 200 thousand...

The white sword aura blasts came in such a frenzy it was like they were on steroids. They blasted him in a fit of rage, happening at a rate that easily exceeded 500 points per second, and that rate was still climbing.

He would’ve been in utter glee if only this were the case, but the supersized blasts were coming a lot more frequently as a result, so much so that one came every second.

At times, the blasts came from all directions, and he was completely unable to evade them, resulting in him having to leave the Black Waterfalls to avoid these maximal attacks.

“Keep it up, Xu Xiaoshou!

“Just stay in there for a little while longer. You’ll get all the points you’ll need.”

His eyes were filled with steely determination. Fearsome attacks were incapable of deterring him entirely. If it hadn’t been for trying to avoid losing pounds for pennies, he could’ve simply upgraded “Strengthen” to the fullest, yet doing so would’ve been irrational.

Pfftt, pfftt!

Two massive gashes were wrought on his body again, and the pain was so intense that he hissed.

Before he left the Black Waterfalls, all the white sword aura coming from above disappeared all of a sudden, which baffled him.

“What’s happening? You’re done already?”

“Come on, man. You gotta keep it up too!”

He was immediately flustered. However, he shuddered all of a sudden, and the spiritual sense in his mind threw up a red alert.

He immediately looked up and saw the top of the Black Waterfalls turn completely white as an enormous white blast of sword aura came down on him.

He was completely frightened and knew that his eyes weren’t fooling him when he received confirmation from his Sense.

That wasn’t just any white sword aura. This was a white sword aura of a size unlike any other, and it was all over the place.

“What the f**k? You really are doing this, eh?”

There was no time to escape the waterfalls, and he dumped as many of his Passive Points into a single skill as he could in the nick of time.

Strengthen (Master, Lv.1).

“It’s truly gotten to Master Level...” He was dumbfounded by what he read on the Information Bar.

Boom!

But he didn’t get to be happy for long, as he was brought all the way to the bottom of the Black Lake by that utterly terrifying enormous white sword aura blast, which caused an explosion of water tens of meters tall.

...

His surroundings were all dark, and he couldn’t see anything.

Crack!

He cracked his neck to straighten it, then realized that he’d ended up being lodged deep into the bottom of the lake.

Completely stunned, he rubbed his neck.

“That kind of hurts...” Other than for his neck being slightly crooked from being brought down by that unbelievably terrifying blast of sword aura, he was actually totally unscathed.

“That’s the power of Master Physique, eh?”

He then recalled Elder Sang's Infernal Heavens. In the past, he'd never thought much of the frightening might of that torturous spiritual technique, but now he'd come to see things differently after acquiring Master Level.

"That technique is indeed godlike!"

All that pain he'd suffered before was nothing if it meant making a breakthrough and gaining the Master Physique, which was something few across the entire continent could reach.

"Pain for a time, but a resilience that lasts for life. Who wouldn't make that trade, eh?"

With a physical body of such terrifying resilience, he figured that spirit weapons of tenth and ninth grade probably wouldn't be able to do him any damage.

"This is rather definitely insane..."

After dumping his skill points and obtaining Master Physique, he became utterly impressed and had nothing but reverence for those who'd made such breakthroughs and reached such a level through solely their own might.

"Those are true men indeed."

That step from Innate Level Physique to breaking into Master Physique was nothing short of insane.

Given that at such a level he'd emerged totally unscathed from that enormously supersized white blast of sword aura, he could only imagine just how much pain the others had gone through during their pupa stages before emerging as butterflies.

He detected a stench that made him aware that his body had just detoxified itself again.

"A body of Innate Level Physique, something deemed near-perfect, can actually wrack up such a level of stench... boy, this is horrifying."

He then leaped like a monkey and burst forth from the bottom of the lake, shooting up to the skies.

His body was indeed covered in black goo.

After getting into the falls to wash himself for a bit, his entire body practically sparkled right away.

His build was solid and wiry, sparkling with a mystical light, and had a vague fragrance, making the phenomenon very surreal.

Xu Xiaoshou nodded, very satisfied.

"Hey, something's not right?"

"Why aren't the blasts coming at me?"

He looked up and found that the white sword aura no longer took him as a target. They dropped down without a care, as if the blast before had been the last of it and the falls had completely lost interest in him.

"Oh, come on! I'm not dead yet. Keep it coming!"

He then glanced at the bottom of the Information Bar.

Passive Points: 288666.

“It hasn’t even hit 300 thousand yet!

“That’s quite a ways away from reaching 400 to 500 thousand points, man!”

Even though he called at the white sword aura and even blasted his sword will in a frenzy, he didn’t get a response. It was as if the waterfalls were totally done with him.

He was furious beyond description, and he cursed at the falls for being useless.

But then again, he noted that he wouldn’t be getting any more Passive Points without the falls responding to him.

He leapt outside the waterfalls to the ground, feeling rather displeased. But, in general, he was still happy with the results.

While he did lament that the points hadn’t yet reached 300 thousand, this was still the first time his points had gotten to such a height, and he was nonetheless happy about that.

If the points were to be converted to draws...

That would be nearly 300 draws!

After doing the calculation, he was completely shocked, and the answer comforted him considerably.

“That’s quite a loot. At the start, I didn’t intend to exchange my body for Passive Points. That’s just so not me. Getting inside the waterfalls was mainly for training... Points and whatnot were beside the point.”

He waved his hand dismissively, then seemed to recall something. He checked out his special passive skill.

Passive Fist (charge points: 2.11%).

“What the h*ll?”

All those hits and only 2.11 percent worth of charge points?

He was feeling rather dizzy. The upper limit of the “Passive Fist” was rather terrifying. Even if he were beaten to death, would the points never exceed 10 percent?

He wanted to test the skill’s power, but he stopped himself from doing so.

Despite being only at 2.11 percent, he nonetheless believed that the tones of beat-downs he’d taken had definitely accumulated terrifying energy, and he couldn’t afford to waste it.

“I should throw just one punch at Zhang Xinxiong’s face to see its effects. Boy, that would be fun.

“Let’s check out the loot, then.”

The Black Waterfalls ignored him altogether, and he was also feeling rather tired. With a smug look on his face, he glanced at the red interface, nearly 300 thousand points in his pocket.

He didn't need to level up all of his Passive Points in one go. There was still a long way to go, and he didn't need to rush.

Prioritizing what to level up with the 300 thousand points would be enough.

"Whatever. Let's reserve 100 thousand for the Awakening Pool. Ten awakenings... hmm. Even if it ends in a failure, I still need to test the new function out.

"Well then, 180 thousand points left...

"'Strengthen' is already full, so that one's out. Eight more to consider, then.

"The three basic passive skills look very promising, but I can't afford to allot them much. Let's first go with 'Eternal Vitality.' This is a godlike skill, after all."

Life and death still mattered the most, so he dumped the points into Eternal Vitality without hesitation.

Eternal Vitality was a passive skill that could save him at critical moments. Having super-high attacks still paled in the face of solid survivability.

Eternal Vitality (Master Lv.1).

Raging lifeforce surged inside him, making his body glow even more mystically. He moaned from the pleasure of it.

"Yep, 50000 points gone..."

The corners of his mouth twitched. He'd gone through all that pain just to have his points all dumped away like they were nothing.

Chapter 136: Get Strong! Stronger! Even Stronger Than That!

Xu Xiaoshou decided that if he were to allocate 50000 points to "Sword Technique Expertise," it would definitely become something awesome that he could use for a killer move of sorts at key moments.

Yet, he definitely couldn't afford to do that at present. If he were to make a breakthrough into master swordsman level, he would definitely be in a very dangerous situation.

"Su Qianqian is such a genius, and she's yet to reach this level, whereas I just joined the Inner Yard a few days ago and have already reached it. Yeah, I'm still fundamentally an Outer Yard disciple. Becoming a master swordsman is just ridiculous."

"It would catch too much attention.

"Even if I have Elder Sang backing me, I can hardly be considered safe.

"Furthermore, there's just no telling if that old fart is stable. What if he just goes crazy all of a sudden and wants to dissect his disciple—me—instead?"

Xu Xiaoshou felt that the likelihood was rather high.

There were 50000 points left, and he wondered where he could put these points.

He thought about it long and hard. The remaining skills all served their own unique purposes, so it was difficult for him to decide at the moment.

“Breathing Techniques?”

With the others being more or less of the same importance, he could only return to his most fundamental passive technique, yet he quickly dismissed the thought.

His training didn’t actually have much to do with the level of his Breathing Technique. On the surface, it wasn’t hard to tell that the higher the levels of his passive skills, the faster he could level up.

Yet, that wasn’t actually how things worked. Cultivation resources were still the key.

While his Breathing Techniques were useful enough for absorbing ambient spiritual energy, he still had to suck in some other things, like Spiritual Cultivation Pills, Spirit Cultivation Juice, Red Gold Pills, Infernal Fire Seeds, and so on.

Regardless if any of those could actually help further his training, there was no doubt that anything that contained a good bit of spiritual energy would have a portion of it converted into his powers when they were absorbed into his body.

As such, despite the level of his Breathing Techniques not being all that high to begin with, he was nonetheless able to make breakthroughs at such a breakneck speed that anyone would’ve been astonished at his rate of progress.

“Getting from Spirit Cultivation Level three to Innate Level seemed to have taken me less than a month, I guess...”

He was feeling rather sheepish. If someone had pondered this, they would’ve quickly discovered that something was off with him.

He wasn’t the Eighth Sword Deity, and he didn’t think for a second that he had what it took to resist all those who bore him ill will.

“Well, if there’s no actual need to upgrade...” He took a look at the mall and the passive keys, which had gotten more expensive.

“Have a go, then?”

He decided that his first draw after the System’s upgrade would bring him good luck. He recalled the time when he’d first played the wheel and acquired a passive skill with just two to three keys.

“Well, the new System might have increased the chance of getting passive keys, and I could get five passive skills with just 10 keys.” He was invigorated.

Passive Points: 238666.

Passive Points: 138666.

He dropped 10 keys into the red wheel and put his hands together. “RNGesus bless me!”

Thank you for your patronage!

You got one key!

Thank you for your patronage!

Thank you for your patronage!

You got one key!

You got one key!

Thank you for your patronage!

Thank you for your patronage!

Extended Passive Skill acquired: Agility

Thank you for your patronage.

He gasped at the result, and his eyes almost popped out of their sockets.

“I actually got something?”

“Agility!?”

“That’s like the godlike technique of my dreams!”

“Agility... that should mean enhanced movement speed, enhanced reaction time, enhanced movement techniques, and some more such things, right?”

“Or is it to say that everything’s enhanced?”

He was no longer a novice when came to the System. According to the System’s habits, every single passive skill should be able to boost a certain, specific part of something.

Which also meant that the possibility of having everything in said part enhanced was greater.

“Is that to say that this one technique of mine is worth the same as countless movement-type spiritual techniques and others’ deliberate combat training?”

“RNGesus! This is definitely the blessing of RNGesus!”

He was elated and felt fortunate that he hadn’t thoughtlessly put in his points before. That decision had allowed him to gain a super passive skill that could almost rival “Strengthen,” and his combat prowess had definitely been considerably boosted.

He then put all “Level One Skill Points” into that newly acquired passive skill.

Agility (Innate, Lv.1).

His mind seemed to have been showered by an elixir of some kind, as it felt refreshed and seemed to work a lot faster.

He shuddered and made another draw with the remaining three keys, but, as expected, he got nothing in return.

Passive Points: 178666.

He finally realized that he shouldn't focus on putting points into skills. The system had just been upgraded, which meant the rate at which new things could be drawn would definitely be somewhat higher.

"The Awakening Pool!"

His eyes lit up as he looked at the Awakening Stones in the mall.

One for 10000 passive points.

"Let's go!"

His Passive Points were deducted accordingly, and an azure stone of irregular shape appeared. Its surface was shimmering, and, after he took a good look at it, he found that the stone was shimmering with all the Extended Passive Skills he'd acquired.

He willed, and only Strengthen remained on its surface.

Given that he'd been able to get this far mostly thanks to Strengthen working so well in battle, he saw fit to focus on that skill first.

He then threw the Awakening Stone into the Awakening Pool, causing splashes.

He subconsciously checked the Information Bar.

Awakening failed!

"Sh**!"

"10000 points all for nothing just like that!"

But he restrained himself. He'd be able to at least awaken once in 10 times. If the probability was lower than that, then he'd only be able to afford to try it out one more time when he had one million points to spare.

Another one, then!

Awakening failed!

His eyelids twitched. This System was brutal enough to not even wait a second before giving him another failure.

"Keep going!"

Awakening failed!

"..."

Awakening failed!

...

There was no one below the Black Cliff, yet bubbles suddenly appeared in the lake.

His face was already red, as he'd failed his seventh try at the bottom of the lake.

He'd tried throwing an Awakening Stone in every place he thought might have good Feng Shui to where the only place that remained was the bottom of the Black Lake.

He prayed devoutly for quite some time, then threw an Awakening Stone at the pool yet again.

Awakening failed!

"F**k!"

Having had enough, he viciously threw another stone in his hand into the Awakening Pool, then shot forward out of the lake.

Fresh air shot into his nostrils, and he took the moment to check the Information Bar.

Awakening succeeded!

Strengthen (Awakening: Raging Giant)!

He was very shocked.

Boom, boom, boom!

Over a dozen craters appeared on the ground, and he looked like an ape in some mountain as he beat his chest in utter joy.

"Raging Giant. What's this thing?" His face was all red as he lay in a crater and then bent Hiding Pain into a U-shape.

"Never mind. If a System that's so awful at naming gave the skill a name with such a temper, then the awakening effect must be something decent.

"I wonder if I'll turn into a giant when I get attacked, eh?"

His eyes widened, as he was unable to believe what had popped into his head: Attack on Titan.

"Can't do. But I probably need to order more clothes just in case."

Huff.

He took a deep breath and yet another one. "Sh**, calm down already!"

He forcefully calmed himself down and climbed out of the crater.

Passive Points: 88666.

The awakening of that one skill had cost him 90000 passive points, which was within the range he found acceptable.

He wanted to reserve 50000 points for “Sword Technique Expertise,” but then he figured he would get frustrated unless he did something with his remaining points.

“Well, since I’ve decided to take it slow and easy, I’ll just leave 10000 points, then, and I can use my knowledge to figure something out and get myself out of a pinch at critical moments.”

He took a look at “Agility.” Undoubtedly, the passive skill had the potential to rival “Strengthen.”

Agility (Master Lv.1)

His body moved and he felt like he was flying, which shocked him.

He looked ahead of him.

Swoop!

The distance of several hundred meters was covered in an instant.

“Holy sh**! This is frickin’ teleportation, man!”

Chapter 137: Brute Force Approach

Black Cliff, Tianxuan Gate.

“Hehehe, hehehe...”

A young man wearing only his underwear was cradling his knees as he sat on a huge rock sticking out of the lake, giggling like an idiot. This had been going on for quite some time.

Truth to be told, Xu Xiaoshou actually no longer knew just how powerful he’d become.

It’d been a painstaking effort for him to kill Zhao Shu and come up to scratch with the new Inner Yard Thirty-three in terms of powers. Yet, making another breakthrough into Innate Level had made him confused yet again.

“Zhang Xinxiong?”

“Yeah, big deal.”

He no longer even considered that man to be a threat. If the man were to have a big brother or something who was of Master Level, then fighting him might be a problem.

Master Physique...

He didn’t want to be arrogant, but he felt that he’d indeed tried his best to underestimate his own powers.

Not only did he have Eternal Vitality at Master level, but the awakened effects of “Raging Giant” still had yet to be triggered.

“Oh, right. There’s also Master Level ‘Agility.’”

“Well, does that mean I can graduate now?”

He immediately shuddered, and didn't allow himself to pursue that thought any further, as his life would be in danger if he did.

Judging by the stories that Elder Sang had told him, the old fart was probably of talents far above his and had possessed Master Physique at a young age, which meant that his powers were...

Unfathomable at present.

"But then again, something is off. I've just made a breakthrough into Innate Level, so why do I already feel that everyone in the world is beneath me? Am I seeing things or something?"

"What if I find myself to be nothing more than a paper tiger when it comes time to fight?"

He was in the middle of deep self-doubt. The growth of his powers was a little too terrifying.

"Whatever. Whatever comes, comes."

He sorted out his feelings and checked over his items. There were still about 38000 left, which he decided would serve him well as a trump card.

He would level up his "Sword Techniques Expertise" by five levels in one go if anyone got on his bad side. So long as his mind could still function, his enemy's brain would be the one to get bashed instead.

"Huh?"

After checking everything, he found that he'd actually overlooked something.

Cooking Expert (Acquired, Lv.6)

"Why is there still a passive skill at Acquired Level?"

"Well, 5000 passive points. That's no big deal." He then dumped the necessary points into the skill to level it up.

Cooking Expert (Innate, Lv.1)

A great deal of knowledge surged into his mind, and he felt as if he'd just recognized all manner of Acquired Level herbs and meats.

He seemed to know their medicinal purposes and how they mixed with each other, as well as the effects of the mixes. All of this knowledge made him realize that they were all interconnected.

But what was even more terrifying was that he came to know what meats would work with what type of spiritual medicine to get mystical effects.

It all came to him like an epiphany.

"Umm, am I supposed to like develop pills made of meats, then..." he thought, a puzzled look on his face, as he knew that doing so would be to go off-course.

He thought that perhaps it had something to do with him having opened his Origin Court, as he was able to process all of the knowledge that surged into his mind within mere moments.

"Alright. I'll leave them be for the time being."

He reminded himself that he wasn't inside the Tianxuan Gate, so he couldn't delve into alchemy. And, besides, this was something that would take him considerable time and effort to look into, so he deemed it wise to save it for when he returned home.

"280 thousand points well spent."

He felt a mix of emotions. While the System's upgrade had gobbled up his two-fold Innate Elemental Powers, in general, he hadn't lost for it.

Of course, he mostly had the Black Waterfalls to thank for that.

There was only one thing that he could say about it all—it felt nice.

He stepped inside the falls yet again, and he was already able to completely ignore the weight of the heavy water. He felt nothing being subjected to it.

The white sword auras were utterly incapable of doing him any harm, as they would be instantly deflected, unable to deal him even a single scratch.

He looked up and came back to his previous speculation.

But the Black Cliff couldn't have such sapience. While it was quite possible that the entire mountain was actually sapient, he was more inclined to believe that there was something fully sapient at the top of the cliff.

He couldn't fathom why there would be white sword auras blasting about in the falls otherwise.

It just didn't make sense.

Furthermore...

"Black Cliff. Sounds like a name someone standing on top of the place would come up with."

He looked up and decided that he would call the place something like "Black Moat" instead.

"Hehe, there's definitely something left up there to be found, and that thing might actually be a sword. By the way, isn't there some saying like...

"Treasures are left are for those destined to take them?"

He considered himself to be that destined person and immediately shot upward, moving at blitzing speed. Despite the massive weight of the Black Waterfalls, he moved unhindered.

If this place could no longer be used for earning Passive Points, then he would just pick the place clean of loot before making his way elsewhere, then.

He had all the time in the world to spare, as he'd already completed two of the goals he'd come to the Tianxuan Gate to achieve. The next minor thing he had to do was just earn as much as he could.

"There's the Black Cliff, so who's to say there isn't a White Cliff, or even a Purple Cliff, eh?"

"Let's go!"

He shot over a kilometer upwards, a height he hadn't dared to climb to when riding his word to fly. However, given that he could already fly on his own, there was no longer anything to fear.

"So long as I keep my eyes up and don't look down."

By the time he reached the height of over three kilometers, his legs were already wobbling, yet he gritted his teeth and kept climbing.

"So high already, yet the limit is nowhere in sight yet."

The Black Waterfalls seemed to still be rumbling above his head, as if it had no end, but he didn't believe for even a second that there this waterfall didn't have an end to it.

"What? You think this is something like 'the Milky Way descending from the ninth heaven' or something?"

Thump!

As he kept climbing at frightening speeds, he seemed to crash into some formless barrier, and he plummeted from the impact before quickly steadying himself.

"The end is here?" He was more excited than shocked.

When he looked up, he saw that the waterfalls were still falling from above.

He could see a clear rippling effect above him. It was obvious that the formless barrier had materialized when his Master Physique crashed into it.

He went near the barrier at once and touched it. It felt spongy and sticky.

He clenched his fist and threw a punch.

Booom!

He was sent flying yet again, but his Sense allowed him to see the barrier shaking violently, bobbing up and down as it became unstable.

"Well, well, isn't that something? 30 percent power from someone with Master Physique and it just took it like that. Not bad."

He was just about to throw another punch when he saw words start to appear on the barrier after it finished wobbling.

"No admittance."

Boom!

Sparkling bits of light exploded, and he shot right through the shattered barrier and continued his climb.

"Was there something around just now? My eyes are blurry, and I can't see a thing."

After passing through the barrier, there were still only the Black Waterfalls. It truly seemed like that place had no end.

Yet he kept climbing without stopping. “H*ll, you’ve met your match today. Even if I have to go to the top of the sky, I’ll find where this waterfall ends.”

He was about seven kilometers away from the ground when he felt that something was wrong.

A barrier was seen in midair again.

“Another one, eh?”

Before he could attack it, the words “no admittance” appeared on the barrier, and he closed his eyes instead.

Boom!

Boom!

70 percent power, 100 percent power... shattered!

He just kept climbing while reeling in shock. What kind of a thing was up there to warrant such a level of protection?

He recalled that those at Master Level were unable to enter the Tianxuan Gate, but the gate’s level of protection was so great that it probably rendered the place off-limits to average Master Level ones too.

He’d already climbed up to 10 kilometers upward, yet the anticipated breathing difficulties never occurred, and he ran into the third barrier as anticipated instead.

He took a deep breath and kept up with his speed.

“Let’s give it a try.”

His next punch was at 120 percent as he put the force of his flight behind it and rammed into the barrier, breaking the speed of sound.

Pfftt!

The recoil caused him to spit blood, and he was sent flying over 100 meters away.

He stopped attacking. His eyes were glittering with excitement.

“There’s definitely treasure to be had! Probably a treasure unlike any other given the level of protection around it!”

He wasn’t about to give up. Even though he’d put 120 percent behind that punch before, it was still just an ordinary punch.

“You think that I, Xu Xiaoshou, is someone who fights with this? What a joke!

“If an ordinary punch can’t do the job, how about the ‘ordinary power of thought’ then, eh?”

He closed in and touched the barrier, yet he didn’t choose to attack the barrier with sword aura.

Such a level of protection only meant that the more powerful the attack, the greater the recoil.

“But if I were to focus everything on a single point...

“10 Sections of the Finger Sword!”

He closed his hand and erected two fingers, then thrust them at the barrier, which actually broke right away with a crack.

He tore the barrier open and immediately leapt inside.

The top of the cliff!

His pupils dilated as he jerked his head to look at the place.

“This is...”

Chapter 138: Spirit Curtain Wheel of the 12 Pearls

Back at the Tiansang Spirit Palace, it was early morning, and the sun was about to rise.

It'd been almost a day since Xu Xiaoshou and the rest entered the Tianxuan Gate.

Zhao Xidong was fast asleep in a dark room at the side of the Council Hall.

As one of the ones prioritized by the spirit palace for cultivating, he'd been given the very important task of guarding the Tianxuan Gate despite his repeated mistakes.

The room was empty, and, save for Zhao Xidong, who was dead asleep in the room, there was only a table and a purple crystal spirit wheel hovering midair.

The wheel was very intricate and beautiful, with dragons and phoenixes carved into it.

12 white jade pearls were hovering on the wheel, and they looked sapient. All of them brought about a curtain of bluish-green light, which made them look rather mystical.

The Spirit Curtain Wheel of the 12 Pearls.

The pearls corresponded to the 12 realm-stabilizing treasures in the Tianxuan Gate.

It'd taken a massive ton of financial and human resources on the part of the Tiansang Spirit Palace to connect with an extradimensional realm with that wheel. As such, the task of guarding it could be considered both a heavy and a light burden, depending on how one looked at it.

Zhao Xidong was tasked to guard the spirit wheel. If nothing went afoul for three days, that would mean everything within the Tianxuan Gate was doing fine.

Yet, if something were to happen with the wheel... the way Zhao Xidong saw it, there was still utterly nothing he could do, as he was outside the Tianxuan Gate and couldn't do anything to salvage anything inside the gate.

The only thing he could do was report the abnormalities to his superiors.

Furthermore, if it hadn't been for Elder Xiao saying there might be a traitor or a mole in their ranks, the higher-ups probably would've sent just about anyone to guard the wheel, as they'd done in past years.

Arrhhh!

Zhao Xidong, who was leaning against the door as he dozed off, was suddenly jolted awake. He'd dreamt that Xu Xiaoshou had made a breakthrough inside the Tianxuan Gate and blew up the entire secret realm.

Thump!

His head slammed against the door, and it hurt so bad that he hissed.

Zhao Xidong wiped the drool off of his mouth and turned around, wiping the drool on the door with the back of his hand as he stood and focused on the Spirit Curtain Wheel of the 12 Pearls.

Everything was fine.

"Huff... seems like I've been overthinking things. Well, it's not like someone like Xu Xiaoshou could end up blowing the entire secret realm, right? It was nothing but a dream, then." He drank from a cup, then sighed.

"What's with this Xu Xiaoshou anyway? He keeps popping up in all my dreams as of late. Man, something is wrong with him.

"That guy really is a living nightmare."

A clear cracking sound reverberated in the room as he put his cup on the table.

Crack!

He was immediately stunned. The sound definitely hadn't come from that cup before his eyes, but from behind him.

He was trembling as he turned around. He then saw that one of the protective barriers on one of the pearls on the wheel had cracked.

The shimmering pearl immediately turned dark.

"Holy sh**!"

He was felt like he was about to go crazy. "What the h*ll!? It actually broke!?"

The protective barrier on that pearl corresponded to the three protective layers guarding the treasure stabilizing the realm. The pearl darkening meant that the treasure had been taken.

"There really is a mole among us?" He was utterly shaken.

He opened the door with a bang and rushed outside, thinking to report the matter to Elder Xiao at once, yet he quickly turned around.

He then carefully carried the wheel with him. The wheel couldn't be chucked into a space ring, as it was connected to an extradimensional realm. The spatial clashes could bring quite the disaster.

"Sh** does happen. The boss really knows stuff indeed."

He left the Council Hall and headed straight for the Spiritual Affairs Division.

Crack!

Yet another pearl's protective barrier shattered as soon as he took flight, causing him to wobble midair and crash to the ground.

"Oh good heavens. What the h*ll is happening inside the Tianxuan Gate? Who's causing all that mess in there!?"

The pearl that had lost its protective barrier flashed briefly, looking like it was about to turn dull, yet it still emanated light somehow.

"Hold on, man."

He anxiously sped up and disappeared from the skyline.

...

Four men were gathered in a dark, stifling-looking room.

Qiao Qianzhi was so puzzled as to why Elder Sang had taken a liking for braised pork feet all of a sudden that he actually didn't even bother taking a bite of the roasted goose that he used to like so much.

He put down his chopsticks and said in a serious tone, "The Holy Divine Palace has made their statement. The target of the 'Holy Vassal' this time is the 21 Famed Swords. Legend has it that a miracle will happen with all 21 of them collected.

He paused and then continued, "The Holy Divine Palace shouldn't have made such a statement. This case was initially known only to a handful, yet now the entire continent is talking about it.

"I heard that there are some who are faking it. In some places, the sword wielders have switched hands for an untold number of generations already."

Elder Sang didn't bother looking up. "How do you know that the ones faking it are not the ones from the Holy Divine Palace?"

Xiao Qixiu, who was off to the side, was stunned, and put down the roasted goose. "That's impossible. The Holy Divine Palace has been maintaining order across the continent for so long. If they were after the famed swords, they would have long since gathered them in one place."

Elder Sang snickered. "Do you really think it'd be that easy? I'm afraid that even the most powerful force in the entire continent would find it impossible to do something like that without anyone knowing about it.

"The ones in power only gain the most benefits in times of chaos. Do you think the 'Holy Vassal' could've developed so quickly throughout the years otherwise?"

Ye Xiaotian voiced his disagreement. "If we can't even believe in the Holy Divine Palace, then there's no place for the spiritual cultivators across the continent to rely on."

Elder Sang glowered at him and said, somewhat irked, "That's why I said the spirit palace has rendered you all fools throughout the years!

"When the fight for the Great Path is concerned, who would you believe other than yourselves, eh?"

All three of them fell silent. They couldn't refute this.

Qiao Qianzhi chuckled and tried to blow the whole matter over. He waved his hand and said, "Well, no point talking so much about it. The issue has little to do with us, and you, Xiao, I'm afraid you'll have to be more alert, and don't let Qianqian go anywhere."

"Sure." Xiao Qixiu nodded and, deeming it unwise to do anything rash at such a critical time, decided to securely put his token away.

"There's one more thing..." Qiao Qianzhi looked at the three of them. His expression was solemn.

"The 'White Cave' has been up to something as of late. It's rumored that a fabled treasure has appeared there, and now everyone knows it."

"The 'White Cave'... treasure?" Xiao Qixiu only pondered this for a split second before a passionate look appeared in his eyes. He was shocked enough to get on his feet and say, "One of the swords of the Eighth Sword Deity?"

Qiao Qianzhi gestured for him to sit down, but he nonetheless knew why the other man was so shocked.

No swordsman would turn a blind eye to anything left behind by the Eighth Sword Deity. He nodded and answered, "Yes, I'm afraid that the Holy Sword Land of the East will be shaken because of this."

Elder Sang rolled his eyes and said, "You lot have been overthinking things. Rumors are just rumors. Which sacred ground in the world doesn't have rumors about things he left behind, eh? Have any of you actually seen anything?"

Qiao Qianzhi then replied calmly, "But this time, the thing was specifically named the 'Fourth Sword.'"

Elder Sang was rendered speechless for a moment.

"Who spread such rumors?"

"The Holy Divine Palace?"

Elder Sang was irked. "What is wrong with that d*mned palace, eh? So they're the ones verifying it, then?"

Qiao Qianzhi nodded slowly. "Yes."

All three of them understood why Elder Sang was so ticked off.

That old man before their eyes put his life on the line over 30 years ago and had only brought back the scabbard of the "Fourth Sword." He'd been waiting for the moment when the sword could be properly sheathed again.

That was one of his purposes for returning to the spirit palace to resist the machinations of that masked man after traveling all over the place.

His second purpose was to wait for the day when the "White Cave" was opened again.

Yet, with the news leaking out like that, there was just no telling how many in the world would interfere in the matter.

Elder Sang sullenly took a gulp of wine and looked at Ye Xiaotian. "How about a bet?"

"Hmm?"

"I assume that all of you don't buy that the Holy Divine Palace is up to no good despite their glamorous façade. How about a bet to see if they'll do something this time, then?"

Ye Xiaotian was stunned and asked, "What if the Holy Divine Palace does get up to no good?"

"Nothing." Elder Sang smirked. "I bet those clean, pristine people will definitely come up with some glamorous excuse to get slots to enter the 'White Cave' from the spirit palaces of the 10 prefectures."

Ye Xiaotian raised an eyebrow. "That huge of a bet, eh?" he thought. "Betting on even how the palace will act?"

"The stakes?" he asked.

Elder Sang put his chopsticks down and said in a serious tone, "That regardless of what Xu Xiaoshou manages to get his hands on in the Tianxuan Gate, you'll all turn a blind eye to it."

Chapter 139: The Spy

"Are you kidding me!?"

Ye Xiaotian slammed his fist against the table, as he knew what Elder Sang's words actually meant. "You told him to go out and find the treasures stabilizing the realm?"

"Stop it, that's ridiculous." Elder Sang gestured for him to calm down and explained, "I was just telling him to train at the Black Waterfalls."

"Are you sure you told him nothing else?" Ye Xiaotian frowned, doubting if he could trust the other elder.

"What else could I have told him? If he can get his hands on anything at all, whatever he gets is fated to be his. If he ends up getting nothing, it'll do him good if he's able to make a breakthrough," Elder Sang casually replied.

After all, it'd be impossible for him to cheat and tell the kid how to undo the seals undoing the treasures.

However, he was very sure that the kid would definitely do something completely unexpected as soon as he got to the Black Cliffs.

"So, you up for it?"

Ye Xiaotian said nothing, but Qiao Qianzhi chuckled instead. "Well, if you're not cheating, old man, I sure don't see how Xu Xiaoshou could get something that not even Qianqian could get her hands on."

Elder Sang shrugged. "We'll see about that."

Ye Xiaotian immediately wanted to say something in rebuttal, but what Qiao Qianzhi said reminded him of something. Instead of refusing outright, he asked instead, "What if you lose?"

“I’m not going to lose.”

“Hehe.” Ye Xiaotian chuckled coldly, wondering if the old man was about to weasel out of things again.

“Don’t believe me, do you? Very well, if I lose, I’ll owe you one.” Elder Sang then picked up another pork foot.

The other three were stunned hearing that. Ye Xiaotian’s interest was piqued and he asked, “What if Xu Xiaoshou ends up getting nothing?”

“The same thing happens.” Elder Sang bit on the pork feet, and juices exploded in his mouth.

“Alright, I’m in!” Ye Xiaotian slammed his fist against the table. “The two of us shall serve as witnesses. If this guy dares to weasel of the bet, don’t go easy on him.”

Qiao Qianzhi nodded with a grin while Xiao Qixiu wore a sour look on his face instead.

He was different from Ye Xiaotian in that he knew just how capable Xu Xiaoshou was in wrecking things. He wondered what would happen to the Tianxuan Gate if that kid actually ended up taking away the treasures.

Elder Sang took a look at him and said, “We do have other things to stabilize the realm. If worse comes to worst, we’ll just put something a little inferior in their places. Relax. Won’t be much of a problem.”

Xiao Qixiu hadn’t been all that flustered to begin with, but the line “relax, won’t be much of a problem” made him start to panic.

“You said that same thing the last time, and look what happened!” he thought. “The Spiritual Library Division ended up on fire!”

...

Dum, dum, dum!

Hurried knocks on the door interrupted the private chatter between the four of them.

Qiao Qianzhi went up to open the door and found Zhao Xidong anxiously waiting there.

The spirit wheel in Zhao Xidong’s hands immediately caught the attention of all four of them. One of the pearls had already darkened, and another one was in bad shape. It was flickering, struggling to stay lit.

Ye Xiaotian was utterly baffled. He hadn’t expected to lose the bet right after agreeing to it.

“What’s happening?”

Zhao Xidong was about to reply when Qiao Qianzhi pulled him inside the room and shut the door.

“Come in first,” he said.

The cramped place got even more cramped with five men inside.

Zhao Xidong gulped and turned his gaze away from the table. “It happened mere moments ago,” he started to elaborate. “Yet another got busted when I was on my way over here, but the pearl has yet to be snuffed out.”

All four of them: “.....”

Seeing that all four of them were speechless, Zhao Xidong became even more anxious, knowing that he might've put it the wrong way.

“I didn't bust anything. The other one just got busted on its own when I was flying here. It happened just over a dozen breaths before the one before.”

All four of them were silent yet again.

The treasures stabilizing the realm of Tianxuan Gate were very far away from each other. There was no way someone could have taken down two seals within the period of just a dozen breaths.

Qiao Qianzhi uttered in surprise, “Two spies, then?”

If only one pearl had been busted, that would've been well within the fours' expectations.

The opening of the Tianxuan Gate had been a setup all along. They wanted to see if the spy would blow his or her cover.

But now it seemed like two people were involved.

Xiao Qixiu hesitated for a bit and then asked, “Could it be that one of them is the spy, and the other Xu Xiaoshou?”

Everyone was stunned, as they found this quite possible.

Zhao Xidong couldn't help but ask, “What spy? Where are they from?”

He was indeed very, very curious. His boss, Elder Xiao, had told him before that there was possibly a spy among them, but he hadn't elaborated.

“How is it possible that they know there's a spy in the spirit palace?” he thought to himself. “And how can they be so calm knowing this?”

Qiao Qianzhi looked at the three of them, then, seeing that none of the others were about to stop him, elaborated, “You remember the masked man who attacked that night?”

“If it wasn't an inside job, and the masked man had instead chosen to bust through the spirit palace's great array, we would've been alerted at once.

“Yet, despite that, he was still exposed. It didn't take long for him to be discovered by my concealed array just after he got inside the spirit palace.”

Qiao Qianzhi sounded very pleased with himself, yet he still sighed in the end. “It's too bad that the insider escaped too quickly and was very light on their feet, leaving no traces behind.”

Zhao Xidong immediately realized what was going on and asked, “How do we know for sure that the insider will definitely get inside the Tianxuan Gate?”

“We weren't sure initially, but now we are.” Qiao Qianzhi looked at the spirit wheel in Zhao Xidong's hands.

The other three grinned at each other, noting that Qiao Qianzhi hadn't actually told the truth.

The "White Cave" was about to be opened, and the "Holy Vassal" was out to collect all 21 of the famed swords, which included the "Fourth Sword."

While that sword wasn't listed among the 21 famed swords, it was known as one of the "Five Great Divine Instruments of the Continent," and it was far more renowned than the famed swords.

Furthermore, that sword had the title of the "Eighth Sword Deity's former sword," so others would definitely be tempted by its rarity.

It had gotten to the point that it'd even caught Xiao Qixiu's attention.

The scabbard of such an unparalleled mystical weapon was in the Tianxuan Gate itself, which meant that any who got their hands on the scabbard would find that they'd won half the battle.

Zhao Xidong then pondered this and asked, "Couldn't the spy be Xu Xiaoshou, then?"

Xiao Qixiu was irritated by the question and slapped the man's head. It hurt so much that Zhao Xidong almost dropped the wheel.

"Use your brains, d*mn it!

"The spy has definitely been at it for a long time given how well-hidden they are. How long has it been since that kid came to the Outer Yard, eh? We don't even know if he's even seen the great array before!"

Zhao Xidong shirked back. Who could be more like a spy than Xu Xiaoshou?

He found it to be very possible given how that kid had been taking things apart and blowing up places, as well as killing people here and there time and again. In his eyes, those actions were tantamount to trying to wreck the spirit palace.

What else could he be if not a spy?

He recalled what had happened to Zhao Shu and how Xu Xiaoshou had made up the excuse that Elder Sang was looking for him and evaded capture.

Despite having told Elder Xiao of the case, his boss had hardly reacted to it at all.

"How about I ask further?" he thought.

But, when he looked at the four elders, he swallowed the words he'd been about to say and eventually shirked back instead of continuing to stand out.

"Forget it," he thought. "My life is more important. Better not ask."

Elder Sang found the young man before his eyes to be rather intriguing and asked, "Who do you think might be the spy other than Xu Xiaoshou?"

There was no way Xu Xiaoshou could be the spy. As his disciple, Elder Sang had already looked into the kid's background countless times. He couldn't have possibly overlooked anything.

Zhao Xidong mulled over the question, then blurted a name that none of the elders had expected to hear.

“Mo Mo!”

Xiao Qixiu immediately turned glum. He’d just told the young man that the spy had been plotting all this for a long time, which meant the newly-joined Inner Yard disciples could be ruled out. He wondered what was wrong with the young man.

Elder Sang clamped down on Xiao Qixiu’s sleeve with his chopsticks just as Xiao Qixiu was about to scold the young man. Elder Sang then asked, “Why do you think so?”

Xiao Qixiu had indeed jumped the gun due to the young man being one of his own men, yet the other three hadn’t forgotten for a second that the young man was anything but ordinary.

Zhao Xidong had graduated at the top among the 33. There was no way he could have forgotten what Elder Xiao had just told him.

All four elders looked expectantly at Zhao Xidong, hoping that he’d make himself clear, yet he simply puffed out his chest and said, “Man’s intuition!”

All four elders were speechless.

Xiao Qixiu took a deep breath and took the wheel from Zhao Xidong’s hands.

“Huh?” Zhao Xidong was baffled.

Whack!

As soon as the wheel was taken out of his hands, he was immediately smacked to the ground, causing the cramped room to shake quite a bit.

Chapter 140 Heaven’s Vision

Zhao Xidong vowed he would never joke with his boss ever again.

“Did you have to go that bloody far?” he thought. “Who the h*ll just goes about beating up people like that? Cut me some slack, okay?”

He got up and explained, “Actually, I’ve always thought there was something fishy about her from the first moment I saw her. How do I put this? There’s just something about her that just doesn’t feel right...”

“Hmm, okay, doesn’t seem like I’m making much sense.” He was flustered and then said all of a sudden, “Well, she looked human...”

Xiao Qixiu’s eyebrows twitched like crazy. “Are you saying that... Mo Mo isn’t even human?” he thought.

“Do you know what you’re talking about here?” Xiao Qixiu’s quiet tone belied the anger he was trying to contain.

Zhao Xidong immediately became flustered and said, “No, that’s not what I meant. It’s, um... well, it’s like she looks like common folk because everyone else around her looks like common folk. Get it? That’s what I meant.”

All four elders were silent. Truth be told, none of them had been in touch much with Mo Mo.

Elder Qiao shook his head. "She's not a spy."

In order to gather intelligence for Xu Xiaoshou, he'd looked into the girl before and found nothing out of place about her.

If there was anything about her that did stand out, then it was her Innate Elemental Power, which was as rare as all possible. In fact, it was so rare that it was like one in a million.

But then again, that was merely a sign that she was a genius, no?

The spirit palace had been around for a long time, and every few years or so, some decent stock would emerge from among the disciples, which was normal.

By this point, Zhao Xidong had run out of things to say. "Well, if it isn't Xu Xiaoshou or Mo Mo, then I couldn't tell you who it is.

"The veterans from the Inner Yard seem to be well-behaved. They've been fellow disciples for so many years, so they're in contact with each other one way or another. Nothing seems to be wrong with any of them."

The elders didn't hold Zhao Xidong's answer against Xu Xiaoshou. They'd only asked out of a whim, after all.

Elder Sang then looked at Ye Xiaotian. "Alright, we've delayed long enough. Use your 'Heaven's Vision,' then."

"Heaven's Vision" was a space-type super ability unique to Ye Xiaotian. It allowed one to view an image at a certain location at a super far distance away.

Yet, Ye Xiaotian didn't agree to it right away. He turned his head to the side and said, "If we were in the same space, using 'Heaven's Vision' would naturally be effortless. But, they're now all in an extradimensional space..."

"Do you have any idea how difficult that would be?"

Elder Sang nodded and said, "Just tell us how long you could hold on, then."

"Ten seconds."

"That's your limit?" Elder Sang felt rather doubtful.

"Indeed. 10 seconds is the longest I could get it."

"Hmm... that's short."

Ye Xiaotian was momentarily stunned, and a vein popped out on his forehead as he said, "Old man, do you want me to cut up the space you're currently occupying right now?"

"Hahahahaha..." Qiao Qianzhi burst out laughing, and, wiping his tears away, said, "Alright. Quit it, you two. 10 seconds it is, then."

Ye Xiaotian then asked without looking back, "Are you sure you guys want to look?"

"Duh?" Qiao Qianzhi looked at the spirit wheel on the table. "One of the treasures is already gone. If we delay any longer, we'll lose track of the other one."

Ye Xiaotian smirked. "This is only the first day. Maybe the current situation isn't at its worst yet?"

Everyone was stunned. What he said did make a lot of sense.

Yet... d*mn, he made it sound really scary.

"Oh, don't jinx it!" Qiao Qianzhi was flustered. If anything serious happened to the Tianxuan Gate, he was the one who'd have to take the massive trouble to fix the great array, after all.

Elder Sang knocked his chopsticks against the table as he pondered this. He had to admit that Ye Xiaotian was making a lot of sense.

According to his speculations, Xu Xiaoshou probably wouldn't be able to do much at that point, given that the kid was still too weak... which meant it was indeed possible for two spies to be present in the Tianxuan Gate.

"We can't afford to wait. Let's check it out now. If something happens, all we can do is intervene and send the law enforcers inside."

Ye Xiaotian looked at the others and nodded after seeing that none objected to it.

That was definitely the best they could do at the moment.

"Heaven's Vision!"

He clapped his hands in the air, and countless images immediately flashed before his eyes. He shuddered before long, his forehead breaking out in a sweat.

Swoop!

A screen flickered in that cramped room. Although the image wasn't really clear, they could nonetheless see what was inside.

It was a black gladiatorial arena with reddish-black solidified blood on the ground and eight iron doors at all sides.

The doors were opened, and steel puppets holding blades emerged from within. All of them seemed to emanate killing intent so intense that they almost became solid.

"The Slaughter Ground."

Zhao Xidong was able to tell what place it was, as he was very familiar with it.

A young man with one arm was surrounded by the steel puppets, and he immediately shouted, "Zhou Tianshen? What the h*ll is he doing there?"

A steel puppet emerged, and that one-armed young man dished out a swirling cut with that golden domineering blade in his hand, his killing intent cladding the blade, and he cut the puppet in half from bottom to top right where he stood.

Because of the momentum from the slash, the blade swung right at his own body. If he still had his left arm, he probably would've chopped his left arm off right then and there.

Everyone was shocked, as they all knew that Zhou Tianshen had had both arms intact before.

Judging from the looks of it, they wondered if he'd actually been the one to cut off his own arm.

Elder Sang focused and uttered uncertainly, "Severing Self?"

He suddenly recalled the spiritual technique that the kid had managed to find in some corner of some wall back in the library that day.

"Seems like he really did go about practicing that eerie thing, then."

"Severing Self? What is that?" Zhao Xidong was puzzled. He figured that the name sounded like some spiritual spirit demanding one to self-mutilate.

"You probably know nothing of it. That's something that has to do with some guy back in the previous era. Have you heard of the bigoted one-armed god of blades?"

"No."

"Heh, you know nothing, kid." Elder Sang looked at Ye Xiaotian and said, "Cut it. The kid couldn't be a spy. Next."

Ye Xiaotian struggled as he swiped, changing the image.

"Be quick about it! Just how long do you need to look?"

The glaring weakness of that spiritual technique was that Ye Xiaotian himself was utterly incapable of seeing the image he projected, so it was up to the others watching to give him instructions.

"Next."

Elder Sang knew how hard it was for Ye Xiaotian to hold on, so he no longer went into the details of the images and decided if the image should stay with just a single look.

"Next."

"..."

"Stop!"

Ye Xiaotian stopped right away and looked at the four before him, finding that they all had peculiar looks on their faces.

"What?" He was itching with curiosity.

The image showed the “Senluo Woods,” which was one of the 12 secret realms. Ancient trees shot to the heavens, and it looked very lush. The thick spiritual energy of life had practically condensed into mist form. It was so thick that one could sense it despite the spatial barrier.

Yet, what had caused peculiar looks to appear on their faces wasn’t this but the little girl wearing green clothing hovering above an ancient well.

Raging spiritual energy of life was sucked into her body, making her look like the eye of a hurricane.

The girl’s face was all red, and her pigtails were flailing about. She looked like she was drunk, and she kept foaming at the mouth. “Gujigujiguji~”

“Mu Zixi?” Elder Qiao immediately became elated. “Old Man Sang, your two disciples really are something indeed.”

Elder Sang’s expression turned glum, as he thought the scene was rather embarrassing.

“Other people get drunk on booze, and you get drunk on lifeforce?” he thought. “Xu Xiaoshou is already as much a walking disaster as one can get. You’re his little sister-in-training here studying under the same teacher. Can’t you just stop embarrassing me already?”

“Next!” he called.

Ye Xiaotian was about to swipe to the next image, but Xiao Qixiu made him stop. “Hold on!

“She’s on top of the ‘Ancient Well of Life,’ you see. She’s probably looking for the ‘Spirit Mark of Life,’ then?”

Elder Sang’s rolled his eyes. “Couldn’t you see how drunk she got, eh? What else could she even look for? I’d say she’s already doing fine not dropping into the well.”

Xiao Qixiu added, “You’ve got a point.”

“Hurry up!” Ye Xiaotian rushed them.

“Next.”

The image switched.

A girl holding a sword at the top of the black waterfalls...

“Lei Lei?” Everyone was shocked, unable to believe what they were seeing.

The thing that was embedded at the top of the cliff was none other than the “Black Scabbard,” which was one of the 12 treasures stabilizing the realm. So... was she the spy, then?

“Hold on, look at the side!” It was only then that Zhao Xidong noticed the top right of the image.

“A foot?”

“Move the image a bit.” Everyone was getting anxious. That could probably be the two spies collaborating with each other.

Ye Xiaotian was unable to hold on any longer, and at the very second that he moved the image, the screen shattered into bits of light.

However, even though the image only lasted for a split second, everyone was able to see who that foot belonged to.

It was a young man who was in his underwear with a shocked look on his face.

“Xu Xiaoshou?”

Everyone looked at Elder Sang. First, there was the girl hovering above an ancient well spitting out lifeforce and getting drunk on it, then there was a young man flying in the sky in his underwear.

“Well, I’ll hand it to you, Old Man Sang. You really have an eye... for picking disciples.”

Qiao Qianzhi clapped Elder Sang on the shoulder and rubbed whatever dirt he had on his hand off along the way before bursting out laughing.

“Hahahahaha!”

Elder Sang was shaking all over, feeling very p*ssed.

“Why is Xu Xiaoshou at the same place with the spy?” he thought.

“Have I... really miscalculated?”