

A Sword 21

Chapter 21: Do I Look Stupid?

Ye Guan immediately started cultivating upon returning to his palace. He wanted to make a breakthrough into the Divine Path Realm as soon as possible. The fight against the giant made him realize that he had a massive weakness—he didn't have enough profound energy for a long battle.

The weakness had to be addressed because the Royal Sword Art required a lot of profound energy to execute. The capacity of his dantian in the All-Truth Realm could no longer support his level of Royal Sword Arts, so he had to cultivate and make a breakthrough into the next cultivation realm.

It shouldn't be an issue for him to make that breakthrough with an Immortal-rank cultivation method, and Ye Guan was right. He made a breakthrough into the Divine Path Realm in just two days.

He was rewarded for his efforts with the ability to fly even faster on his sword and the ability to keep using the Royal Sword Art for an extended period of time.

Ye Guan was in no hurry to make a breakthrough into the Divine Soul Realm. He believed in a certain proverb—More haste, less speed!

Men couldn't be quick, especially during that!

After making a breakthrough, Ye Guan knew that he had to stabilize his cultivation, so he visited a trial tower and cultivated there every day. The giant had returned, and it seemed that it could be challenged once more.

Of course, he couldn't clear the floor once again, and there would also be no rewards, even if he decided to defeat the giant once more. However, it didn't really matter because Ye Guan was here to challenge the giant for the sake of gaining combat experience.

The giant swung his ax fiercely at Ye Guan. Ye Guan was already a Divine Path Realm cultivation, but he still didn't dare to face the giant's ax. He decided to dodge the attacks. He wasn't planning on confronting the giant head-on, either.

Ye Guan was well aware that if he wanted to defeat this giant, then he had to use and maximize his strengths.

Ye Guan was agile, and he had to use his agility to his advantage. He sidestepped the giant's attacks. He was planning on familiarizing himself with the giant's movements, attack patterns, and tactics.

Then, he would choose an appropriate moment to interrupt and stagger the giant.

Ye Guan knew that the best defense was a good offense, but he was also well aware of his place. He was much weaker than the giant, so he had to fight in a devious way.

The battle started, and the giant quickly cornered Ye Guan. Ye Guan was avoiding the giant's attacks by a hair's breadth, but he grew more familiar with the giant's movement and attack patterns as time went on.

At the same time, he also made sure to know the giant's tactics to accurately grasp the best moment to attack.

Ye Guan retreated and widened the distance between him and the giant, but the giant was relentless. It hurled the ax in its hand toward Ye Guan just to keep on attacking.

Seeing that, Ye Guan knew that it was his opportunity to counterattack.

Unfortunately, the giant's skin was tough. Ye Guan's Royal Sword Art had become more powerful because the cultivation base that had been fueling it had become more vigorous; however, Ye Guan could only make scratches on the giant's skin.

Ye Guan wasn't discouraged by his inability to deal significant damage to the giant, and he would attack the giant whenever it was possible. Soon, a gaping wound appeared in the giant's neck.

Ye Guan didn't allow greed to take over him, and he would always retreat whenever the attack window had passed.

Ye Guan continued the same routine for an entire day, and the gaping wound in the giant's neck had grown significantly larger compared to twenty-four hours ago.

However, Ye Guan was under an incredible amount of pressure. The giant was allowed to make mistakes, but Ye Guan couldn't make even a single mistake because no one else was here to distract the giant for him.

A single mistake was enough for him to sustain severe injuries or die outright.

Soon, the second day of the battle arrived.

Ye Guan was still dodging the giant's attacks, and he ran away after avoiding an attack. The giant saw that, and it hurled its ax toward Ye Guan, inadvertently revealing an opening.

Ye Guan saw the opening, and he avoided the flying ax before turning around.

He rushed toward the unarmed giant and cut its head off.

Schwing!

The giant's head flew into the air, but Ye Guan didn't sigh in relief. He retreated as far away as he could, and as he expected, the giant flew and haphazardly swung itself while surrounded by arcs of terrifying lightning.

Crackle!

Crackling sounds filled the floor, but the ax eventually fell to the ground.

The floor went silent, and Ye Guan could finally heave a sigh of relief. He slumped to the ground, gasping for air.

The two days of intense battle had been a bit too much for him to bear, but it ended up being worth it. He could feel it—he had become much stronger after defeating the giant.

Ye Guan wasn't too concerned with his cultivation base. Cultivation base was just a measurement of strength, so he cared much more about his combat experience and prowess. A more experienced cultivator could easily defeat a greenhorn cultivator in the same cultivation realm.

Furthermore, he hadn't even used the Path Sword while fighting the giant.

Ye Guan was sure that the giant would die with just one move from him if he used the Path Sword. The giant's skin was sturdy enough to withstand his sword energy, but it was definitely as fragile as a sheet of paper against the Path Sword.

Ye Guan didn't want to rely heavily on his tools, so he decided that he would only use the Path Sword during life-or-death crises.

Ye Guan rested for a while before standing up to leave. However, the teleportation array on the ninth floor trembled, and a man emerged.

Ye Guan was surprised to see Siao Ge.

Siao Ge was surprised to see him as well, but his surprise turned into shock when he saw the ax on the floor.

"Did you just kill the giant, Brother Ye?" asked Siao Ge.

Ye Guan nodded in confirmation. "Yeah."

Siao Ge gave a thumbs-up and praised. "Wow, you're strong, Brother Ye!"

Ye Guan was all smiles as he asked, "Did you come here to challenge the giant?"

Siao Ge nodded and replied, "Yes, I learned a lot the last time I fought it, so I came here to challenge it again."

Ye Guan's smile deepened. He knew that one had to face their fear if one wanted to overcome it. The two of them had already defeated the giant, so they were no longer afraid of it.

"All right, good luck, Brother Siao. I'm off," said Ye Guan.

Siao Ge nodded and replied, "See you next time."

Ye Guan left, and the ninth floor was quickly filled with a cacophony of noises.

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Ye Guan's next destination was the library of the Guanxuan Academy. There was a wide variety of books in the library. Back when he was still in the Ye Clan, Ye Guan spent most of his time reading next to cultivating. It was a habit that broadened his knowledge and kept him humble.

It would sometimes give him cultivation insights as well.

Reading was also a form of relaxation for him, and it increased his self-awareness, too. There were only ten days before his promised battle with Nan Xuan. Ye Guan spent his time reading while he wasn't cultivating in a trial tower.

Three days before the promised battle, Nan Xuan emerged from a trial tower. He sat cross-legged on a mountain peak, exuding a powerful aura.

He was a Divine Path Realm cultivator, and it seemed that he had grown significantly stronger during his time in a trial tower.

Tutor Xiao stood next to Nan Xuan and stared deeply at him. "How's your progress?"

Nan Xuan sounded confident as he answered, "I have mastered it."

Tutor Xiao smiled in satisfaction.

Just then, Nan Xuan asked, "What has he been up to while I was cultivating?"

Tutor Xiao answered, "He has been cultivating in a trial tower every day, and he has also been reading books in the library."

Nan Xuan frowned and asked, "What floor has he reached?"

Tutor Xiao shook his head and answered, "I don't know, but I'll go and check."

"It's fine!" Nan Xuan interrupted. He stared coolly at Tutor Xiao and declared. "He only has three days left to live, so let him be."

Tutor Xiao smiled. "Indeed, confidence is the key."

Nan Xuan smiled and closed his eyes.

Meanwhile, Tutor Xiao headed to a trial tower. He was a more cautious man compared to Nan Xuan, and he wanted to check which floor Ye Guan had been cultivating on. Just then, Ye Guan left the library and headed to a trial tower.

Tutor Xiao kept his eyes on Ye Guan until the latter entered a trial tower. However, it seemed that Tutor Xiao still wasn't satisfied with that because he followed Ye Guan all the way up to the seventh floor.

Tutor Xiao sighed in relief when Ye Guan entered the seventh floor. However, he was still unsatisfied, so he continued waiting.

An hour later, a disheveled Ye Guan walked out of the seventh floor.

Tutor Xiao took in the sight and left, feeling reassured.

While Ye Guan was leaving the seventh floor, Little Pagoda suddenly spoke to him and asked, "Are you wary of Nan Xuan?"

Ye Guan nodded.

Little Pagoda was confused. "Why?"

Ye Guan answered calmly, "If I were him, I would be curious about which floor my life-or-death opponent has reached on the trial towers. Of course, there's also a chance that he's not curious, but his tutor will definitely be curious!"

Ye Guan's route to the ninth floor after clearing the seventh floor had been through the teleportation arrays on the floor themselves rather than directly entering a particular floor on the tower outside.

Of course, he would exit the tower through the same route.

He wasn't afraid of Nan Xuan. Instead, he was worried that Nan Xuan would give up on their death match on the Life or Death Stage after learning of his true strength.

Little Pagoda replied, "In that case, you should continue being cautious."

Ye Guan didn't reply, but he mumbled to himself. There are still three days...

Ye Guan really couldn't wait even a moment longer to end things, but he knew that he wasn't invincible. He also didn't want to trouble his tutor, Fei Banqing. Therefore, he decided to continue waiting.

Meanwhile, Siao Ge walked out of the ninth floor. Siao Ge smiled upon seeing Ye Guan.

"I finally defeated it!" exclaimed Siao Ge. He had been challenging the giant, and he had finally defeated the giant by himself today.

Ye Guan smiled. "Congratulations!"

Siao Ge smiled and sat on a stone bench nearby. "Brother Ye, let's talk!"

Ye Guan nodded and sat next to Siao Ge.

Siao Ge explained, "My greatest insight during my battle against that giant has been my take on fear. I couldn't feel anything other than fear when I first fought the giant, and there was this whisper in my heart that told me there was no way I could defeat it. It was a thought that pervaded my mind, and it prevented me from mustering the courage to fight."

Siao Ge made a sidelong glance at Ye Guan and said, "To be honest, I'm really grateful to you. If you hadn't invited me to challenge the giant together that day, I would have lived my life in fear, and I wouldn't have been able to escape from it."

Ye Guan smiled and said, "I felt the same. If it wasn't for you, I would have run away."

Siao Ge laughed boisterously and exclaimed, "Brother Ye, you're really interesting! I feel like you're more suitable for the Chief Student Representative role rather than me! I can only accept you as the Chief Student Representative—I can't accept anyone else."

Ye Guan stared deeply at Siao Ge and said, "I'm not sure if I'm correct, but aren't you the direct disciple of the Academy Chief? You're more suitable for the role, then."

Siao Ge shook his head. "I'm not interested in that role."

Ye Guan sounded confused as he asked, "Why not?"

Siao Ge looked up at the sky and smiled before saying, “My heart does not lie here. It lies above the Upper Realm—on the Zhongtu Divine Continent!”

Ye Guan frowned and muttered, “Zhongtu Divine Continent?”

Siao Ge nodded. “Above the Upper Realm is the Zhongtu Divine Continent! It has a large number of small worlds. The ultimate goal of the top geniuses from those worlds is to reach the Zhongtu Divine Continent. There are many noble families there, and large clans often contend for supremacy.

“It is a place filled with hidden talents.” Siao Ge turned to look at Ye Guan and said, “We’re considered exceptional talents in this tiny Nanzhou, but we’re just ordinary people up there.”

Siao Ge sighed. He was silent for a while before continuing. “Actually, I know of a scarier place, and it’s definitely the Main Academy of the Guanxuan Academy. The ultimate goal of the talents from the Guanxuan Academy branches is the Main Academy. Unfortunately, it’s far too difficult for us to reach that place. I don’t know, but I feel really inferior whenever I think of it.”

Ye Guan was silent. The world was huge, Nanzhou was just a tiny place in the vast world, and he was even smaller than it!

Siao Ge smiled. “If you’re the Chief Student Representative—”

Ye Guan shook his head and interrupted. “I’m not interested!”

His resolution stunned Siao Ge.

Ye Guan explained, “I have to go to the Zhongtu Divine Continent and become a famous figure there. I also want to fight the geniuses of the Guanxuan Academy’s Main Academy.”

Siao Ge was stunned, but he eventually laughed boisterously and exclaimed, “Such ambition! My goodness! I want to become famous in Zhongtu Divine Continent, too! I want to fight the geniuses of the Main Academy as well!”

Ye Guan smiled before standing up to leave.

“I’m off to the library. See you next time!” said Ye Guan before leaving.

Siao Ge also stood up to leave. However, a man suddenly appeared in front of him.

Siao Ge was surprised. “Who are you?” he asked.

Nan Xuan cupped his hands and smiled politely. “Brother Siao, I’m Nan Xuan of the Nan Clan.”

Siao Ge blinked. “Are you the one who’s going to fight on the Life or Death Stage?”

Nan Xuan nodded. “Yes, that’s me.”

Siao Ge smiled and asked, “What’s your business with me?”

“I heard that you cleared the ninth floor, and I truly admire you for that. I’ve come here to be your friend,” said Nan Xuan with a smile. He paused for a moment before continuing. “Brother Siao, were you talking to Ye Guan just now?”

Siao Ge nodded. “Yeah.”

Nan Guan warned in a deep voice. “Brother Siao, you have to be careful of him!”

Siao Ge frowned. “Why?”

Nan Xuan’s expression darkened, “He’s a vicious man with many tricks up his sleeves, and he also has the habit of framing the innocent for his benefit. More importantly, I heard that he doesn’t really like you, and he probably wants to steal your role as the Chief Student Representative—”

Boom!

Nan Xuan was sent flying.

Nan Xuan was stunned. It couldn't be helped because Siao Ge had suddenly kicked him in the chest without any warning.

Siao Ge glared at Nan Xuan. "I don't hate those who play dirty tricks nor those who pretend like they're smart. However, I absolutely abhor people who think that they can trick me! I know that you want to pit me against Brother Ye. Do you really think that I'm dumb? Do I look stupid? Hm?"

Chapter 22: How Pretentious!

"I wanted to give you another beating, but it seems that you're not even worthy of it," said Siao Ge while shaking his head. He dusted off his clothes before turning around to leave.

Nan Xuan stood frozen, and his expression turned extremely ugly.

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Two days later, late at night. Ye Guan was lying on the stone steps in front of his palace's grand hall. He rested his head on his hands, and he looked up at the sky to see a full moon surrounded by countless stars.

Ye Guan's heart became filled with longing as he stared at the starry sky. He truly wanted to soar through the galaxies using Sword Travel, but it was a pity that he still wasn't strong enough to do so.

Ye Guan's nose twitched upon catching a whiff of a fragrance.

Fei Banqing walked over to Ye Guan and sat down next to him. She looked up at the sky as well and asked, "Are you confident about your match on the Life or Death Stage tomorrow?"

Ye Guan chuckled at the question. "Of course!"

Fei Banqing said, "Do not underestimate your opponent."

"Understood," said Ye Guan.

There was a moment of silence before Fei Banqing said, "After that match, we can start preparing to head for the Upper Realm."

Ye Guan turned to look at Fei Banqing. "Upper Realm?"

Fei Banqing nodded. "The decennial martial contest will take place in three months, and we have to be at the Upper Realm before it starts."

Ye Guan nodded. There was another moment of silence before Ye Guan muttered, "Tutor Fei, what do I have to do to be a student at the Main Guanxuan Academy?"

Fei Banqing shook her head and said, "It can be done, but it's extremely difficult."

"Why?"

Fei Banqing smiled at him and explained, "The Guanxuan Academy has countless branches throughout the vast universe, and every student of those branches aspires to become a student of the Main Guanxuan Academy. In other words, you have to defeat the heaven-defying talents of the other branches to become a student of the Main Guanxuan Academy."

Ye Guan was silent. That is indeed quite difficult...

Fei Banqing continued. "You're extraordinary, but don't even think about the Main Guanxuan Academy just yet. You just have to do your best and tackle every issue one by one."

Ye Guan nodded. "Understood."

Fei Banqing flipped her palm open, and a golden armor appeared in front of Ye Guan.

Ye Guan was stunned.

Fei Banqing explained, "This is a Sky-grade armor, and it's my one and only armor. I'll lend it to you for your match tomorrow."

Ye Guan took a closer look at the armor and realized that it was still giving off a faint alluring scent. Ye Guan shook his head and muttered, "I don't need it, Tutor..."

Fei Banqing raised an eyebrow and stared at him.

"Didn't I tell you not to underestimate the enemy?" she asked.

Ye Guan chuckled hollowly. "I..."

Fei Banqing shoved the armor into Ye Guan's hands before she got up to leave.

"I'm looking forward to your performance tomorrow," she said.

Ye Guan blinked, and Fei Banqing disappeared.

Ye Guan looked down at the armor in his hands, and he eventually put it away.

He lay down once more and continued looking at the starry sky. Ye Guan seemed to have thought of something as he muttered, "Master Pagoda, what was my mother like?"

Little Pagoda's reply was a bit late. "She's very capable!"

“Really?”

“Yes, and she was admirable as well.”

“Is she currently imprisoned at the Ye Clan?”

“Yes.”

Ye Guan went silent for a moment before asking, “How powerful must I become to rescue her?”

Little Pagoda’s reply was a bit late once more. “You’d have to become a Great Sword Immortal at the very least.”

A Great Sword Immortal?! Ye Guan was startled, but he soon closed his eyes and said with determination, “In that case, I will become a Great Sword Immortal, then!”

Little Pagoda hesitated for a while before saying, “Don’t resent her. She had no choice but to let you go. Otherwise, she wouldn’t have made me follow you around.”

“I knew it...” Ye Guan nodded slightly. If his parents were truly heartless, they wouldn’t have sent Master Pagoda to look after him, and they wouldn’t have left a sword dao inheritance for him.

Little Pagoda was relieved, and it reminded Ye Guan. “Focus on cultivating. When the time is right, I’ll bring you to the Inheritance—Cough, I mean, I’ll bring you there so you can rescue your mother!”

Ye Guan nodded. “All right...”

...

Nan Xuan was sitting cross-legged on a certain mountain peak when an old man suddenly appeared in front of him.

The old man bowed deeply toward Nan Xuan and exclaimed, "Young Master!"

The old man handed over a black box to Nan Xuan and explained, "Master heard that you're going onto the Life or Death Stage, so he ordered me to come here and give this to you."

Nan Xuan opened the box, and his eyes narrowed upon seeing the armor in the box.

"Isn't this a Sky-grade armor?" he muttered in shock.

The old man explained, "This is a Sky-grade Black Tortoise Armor, and it's made from a hundred and eight pieces of Black Tortoise scales. A Rune Master engraved a defensive rune on it, and it can withstand a full-power attack from a Divine Soul Realm cultivator."

Nan Xuan was thrilled upon hearing the old man's explanation. "Uncle Nan Zheng, I didn't know that our Nan Clan has such a precious treasure!"

Nan Zheng chuckled. "There's a reason why our Nan Clan is one of the top three clans in Nanzhou."

Nan Xuan looked down at the Black Tortoise Armor in his hands and said coldly, "There's no way I'll lose to him with this!"

Nan Zheng nodded before taking out another small box and giving it to Nan Xuan.

Nan Xuan looked confused as he asked, "What is this?"

"Open it and see for yourself," said Nan Zheng with a chuckle.

Nan Xuan opened the box and saw two pills. They looked smooth and glossy, and they gave off a delicate, relaxing fragrance. Nan Xuan's eyes narrowed while looking at the pills, but he soon exclaimed, "Are they Sky-grade pills?"

Nan Zheng nodded. "They're Sky-grade Rejuvenation Pills. You just have to avoid instant death, and those pills will help you recover completely in a few moments. The Nan Clan is influential and powerful, but even our clan only has a total of five Sky-grade Rejuvenation Pills."

Nan Xuan sounded serious as he said, "Ye Guan will definitely die tomorrow!"

"The clan leader believes in your abilities. Ye Guan's talent will be worthless once he's dead. Our Nan Clan will be able to get rid of Ancient Desolate City's Ye Clan by then," said Nan Zheng. A sinister glint flashed in his eyes as he continued. "We want others to know that those who are daring enough to mess with our Nan Clan will die without a doubt!"

Nan Zheng put the two pills and the Black Tortoise Armor away. "I was honestly only seventy percent confident, but now, I'm a hundred percent confident in killing Ye Guan!"

In addition to the two Sky-grade Rejuvenation Pills and Sky-grade Black Tortoise Armor, Nan Xuan also had a Sky-rank cultivation method. Nan Xuan was well-equipped and powerful enough to kill any Divine Path Realm cultivator, and he also stood a chance against a Divine Soul Realm cultivator.

Needless to say, the Sky-rank cultivation method and the Black Tortoise Armor had truly empowered him.

After all, fights between cultivators could easily tip in the favor of those with better equipment. However, decent equipment was expensive, and Ye Guan was from a small clan, so how could he have any decent equipment?

Nan Xuan's lips curled up.

Nan Zheng said, "Young Master, Master also told me to remind you not to underestimate your opponent, even if you're confident in your chances of winning."

“Fei Banqing decided to take him as her disciple, so he has to be an extraordinary individual. You must not underestimate him because there’s a chance that he’ll turn the tables around.”

Nan Xuan nodded his head slightly. “I understand! Rest assured, I will not underestimate him. I will do my best in tomorrow’s battle, and I won’t give him any chance to retaliate!”

Nan Zheng boisterously laughed. “Great! I’m happy to hear that, Young Master.”

Nan Xuan closed his eyes slowly. “I can’t even wait for tomorrow to come.”

Nan Zheng nodded upon sensing Nan Xuan’s excitement. “The Nan Clan can’t wait for tomorrow to come as well. The moment Ye Guan dies, the cultivators of our clan will head toward Ancient Desolate City to eradicate the Ye Clan!”

Nan Xuan frowned slightly. “What about Tutor Fei...”

Nan Zheng smiled. “Don’t worry. Tutor Fei will not find trouble with us over a deceased talent. It’s simply not worth it to do so.”

“You’re right.” Nan Xuan agreed. He turned and smiled coldly while staring at Mount Banqing.

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The next morning, the students of the Guanxuan Academy rushed to the Life or Death Stage. Daybreak had just arrived, but the seats around the Life or Death Stage had already been occupied by tens of thousands of students.

A white-robed young man descended on the Life or Death Stage with his hands behind him. The white-robed young man was none other than Nan Xuan, and his supporters in the crowd cheered upon seeing him.

He was one of the top three talents of Guanxuan Academy, so it wasn't strange that he had fans from both genders.

Nan Xuan closed his eyes and silently stood on the stage.

Meanwhile, the stone pillars around the Life or Death Stage were finally occupied by people. Fei Banqing stood on one of the stone pillars as well. Her eyes were closed, and it was impossible to tell what she was thinking.

Not far away from Fei Banqing was Nan Xuan's tutor, Xiao Ge. He was staring deeply at Fei Banqing. Song Ci was also present, and he was looking at Xiao Ge with hostility. Nan Xuan's instigation almost led to Sun Xiong's death, and Song Ci vowed to never forget the matter.

Meanwhile, an old man suddenly appeared in the midst. The tutors and staffers bowed politely toward him and exclaimed, "Greetings, Academy Chief!"

"Don't stand on ceremony," said Song Fu with a smile. He glanced at the stone pillar not too far away on his right and saw Xiao Ge standing on it.

All of a sudden, there was a huge commotion as a young woman descended on a stone pillar. The young woman was none other than Nalan Jia, and she immediately attracted the eyes of countless male students.

Of course, it was only natural that she was capable of turning heads. After all, she was the top beauty of Guanxuan Academy, and many students had a crush on her.

She landed coolly on a stone pillar and looked at the stage with a placid demeanor.

The crowd's focus was stolen away by a young man who descended on the stage and landed right in front of Nan Xuan.

The young man couldn't be anyone else but Ye Guan. The crowd boiled over upon seeing Ye Guan; they were excited to witness the upcoming battle!

Nan Xuan opened his eyes slowly upon sensing Ye Guan's arrival. He smiled coldly while staring at Ye Guan, but the latter remained calm.

Song Fu suddenly appeared between the two of them.

He looked at them and said, "Either of you can still back out; it's not too late yet."

Nan Xuan let out a sardonic laugh and said, "Won't I become the biggest joke throughout the Guanxuan Academy's history if I were to back out at this point?"

Nan Xuan glanced at Ye Guan.

Ye Guan bowed slightly toward Song Fu and said, "Academy Chief, allow us to begin!"

Song Fu nodded and said, "Since neither of you wishes to back out, then the two of you will fight to the death here. The heavens will decide your fate!"

With that, Song Fu vanished into thin air.

Nan Xuan stared deeply at Ye Guan and chortled. His hands were still clasped behind him as he said, "Ye Guan, today will be your death anniver—"

A strand of sword energy flew at lightning speed. Ye Guan didn't bother talking or listening to what Nan Xuan had to say as he immediately made a move!

Squelch!

Nan Xuan tried to take on a stance upon seeing Ye Guan's attack, but it was too late.

The strand of sword energy lacerated his throat, and fresh blood spurted out, staining the ground crimson. Nan Xuan trembled, and his mouth fluttered open, but he couldn't make a sound.

The sight was so sudden and shocking that everyone went silent and froze.

What just happened?

Fei Banqing stared at Ye Guan in disbelief. She didn't expect that Ye Guan would attack immediately the moment the life-or-death battle started.

Everyone was in a trance, including the tutors and even Academy Chief Song Fu.

Song Fu's expression turned serious when he snapped out of his trance, while Tutor Xiao looked beyond pallid as he stared at Ye Guan in disbelief.

Ye Guan shook his head and said, "Why do people always like to mock their opponents rather than just immediately duking it out? Does mocking your opponents increase your strength or something? Were you trying to kill me with words?"

Nan Xuan grabbed his throat with both his hands in an effort to stop himself from bleeding out. He stared incredulously at Ye Guan and muttered hoarsely, "You... swordsman...! Sneak attack... S-shameless..."

Squelch!

A strand of sword energy pierced Nan Xuan's forehead, and he collapsed to the ground with a dull thud.

Ye Guan shook his head and said, "The esteemed Academy Chief has already announced the start of our battle, but you started spouting nonsense rather than fighting me, so why are you saying that I'm shameless?"

In Ye Guan's eyes, talking in the middle of a fight was foolishness!

Ye Guan walked over to Nan Xuan's corpse and collected his spoils. Ye Guan's eyes lit up when he discovered the Black Tortoise Armor and two Sky-grade Rejuvenation Pills, and he didn't hesitate to put them away.

Jackpot! Ye Guan chose not to fight a long, drawn-out battle against Nan Xuan because there was no need to do so. If the battle could be decided by just one sword move, why would he waste his energy to fight a drawn-out battle? It would be an utter waste of time. It was better to be ruthless and decisive.

"Swordsman! He's a swordsman!" someone exclaimed.

The crowd snapped out of their trance and gasped in shock.

A swordsman!

The crowd exploded into a cacophony of murmurs and exclamations.

The reveal was simply unbelievable and shocking.

However, Ye Guan ignored everyone and jumped onto the stone pillar where Nalan Jia was standing. He raised his right arm and shouted, "Sword, come!"

Whoosh!

The Path Sword emerged from his glabella and drew a few arcs in the air before hovering next to Ye Guan's feet. Ye Guan stood on the Path Sword and extended his right arm over to Nalan Jia.

Nalan Jia smiled lightly and placed her hand on his palm before stepping onto the Path Sword.

Ye Guan wrapped his left arm gently around Nalan Jia's waist.

He pointed at the sky with his other arm and shouted, "Rise!"

Whoosh!

The Path Sword turned into a beam of light that soared into the sky and pierced the clouds.

The crowd looked up at the clouds. Envy was visible in the eyes of the female students while Siao Ge chided Ye Guan under his breath. "How pretentious!"

Chapter 23: Apology

Nan Xuan lay silently in the pool of his own blood.

Everyone was silent. They thought that they would witness a fierce, drawn-out battle, so they were stunned to see it end so quickly and in one move at that!

Nan Xuan failed to defend himself against Ye Guan's sword move.

The crowd was both shocked and delighted. A swordsman! There was a swordsman in Guanxuan Academy!

Song Fu made a sidelong glance at Fei Banqing and smiled. "Junior Sister, you've concealed it properly!"

Fei Banqing was silent. She didn't expect that Ye Guan would reveal his identity here.

What was he thinking? Fei Banqing thought about it for a while before she came up with her own conclusion and muttered, "Did you want to show her and everyone else that you're outstanding?"

Fei Banqing shook her head and grinned. "What a daring brat!"

Ye Guan definitely had his own reasons for revealing his identity, but it was also a warning to Nalan Jia's suitors.

Tutor Xiao descended on the Life or Death Stage. He wordlessly carried away Nan Xuan's corpse and left.

Fei Banqing stared deeply at Tutor Xiao's departing figure. Song Ci saw that and said, "Don't worry, he won't dare to act rashly."

Fei Banqing nodded and turned around to leave.

The students departed as well.

Ye Guan's status as a swordsman quickly spread throughout the entire Guanxuan Academy.

A swordsman!

There had only been a few swordsmen throughout the entire Nanzhou, and the Guanxuan Academy of Nanzhou never had any swordsman as a student until now.

Ye Guan soon became the hottest topic throughout the Guanxuan Academy.

...

Ye Guan brought Nalan Jia with him, and the two of them soared through the clouds on the Path Sword. The red sun could be seen on the horizon, and the two of them were surrounded by fluffy clouds.

Nalan Jia asked softly, "Why did you reveal that you're a swordsman?"

Ye Guan smiled and replied, "I've been hiding my status as a swordsman because I was worried that people with ill intentions would target me, but now, I am no longer afraid of anyone."

Nalan Jia stared deeply at him. She gazed at him for quite a while before smiling sweetly. "Do you know what your most attractive trait is?"

Ye Guan met Nalan Jia's gaze.

Nalan Jia avoided his gaze and looked at the clouds before muttering, "Your confidence."

Ye Guan was surprised. "Confidence?"

Nalan Jia nodded. "I really like your confidence."

"Actually, there's another reason why I decided to wield my sword." Ye Guan smiled. He turned to look at the clouds as well before continuing. "I wanted to show everyone that your fiance is good enough!"

"I know," said Nalan Jia with a nod. Ye Guan smiled gently without replying. The two of them stood on the Path Sword and admired the sea of clouds.

...

Meanwhile, there was a meeting between the tutors and the Academy Chief of the Guanxuan Academy. Song Fu looked at Fei Banqing and smiled. "Junior Sister, it must have been tough hiding his identity from us."

Everyone looked at Fei Banqing and shook their heads while smiling. Ye Guan's status as a swordsman had truly taken them aback.

Tutor Xiao sat with his eyes closed without saying anything.

Fei Banqing responded calmly, "He's a cautious brat. He was afraid that people would start targeting him if they found out that he's a swordsman."

Song Fu nodded in agreement and said, "Well, it's not strange that he thought that way. Don't worry, the academy is happy to know that he's a swordsman. We will not covet his sword inheritance. Our Nanzhou Guanxuan Academy cannot compare to the academies on the Upper Realm, we won't harm our own students."

Fei Banqing nodded. "Yes, I know, Academy Chief."

Song Fu nodded and made a sidelong glance at Tutor Xiao. "Tutor Xiao. Let Nan Xuan's death mark the end of your enmity."

Song Fu sounded serious, and everyone could tell that it was an order rather than a request. The others looked at Tutor Xiao. They were only expecting one answer from Tutor Xiao. After all, they had to protect Ye Guan because of his incredible talent.

"I understand. I agree because it is for the greater good." Tutor Xiao nodded. Of course, the biggest reason why Tutor Xiao agreed was that he knew that everyone would turn against him the moment he did something to Ye Guan.

Song Fu nodded and changed the topic. "The students who will go to the Upper Realm to compete in the decennial martial contest have been decided, and they are Sun Xiong, Siao Ge, Ye Guan, and Nalan Jia. Aside from them, each of you may also bring a few talented students along."

Everyone nodded.

Song Fu swept his gaze across the people in the hall and smiled. "That's all."

With that, everyone stood up and left.

However, Fei Banqing was still in her seat.

Song Fu saw that and said, "Go ahead and tell Ye Guan that he doesn't have to worry about the Ye Clan. From now on, the academy will be protecting the Ye Clan."

Fei Banqing nodded. She then stood up and left.

Left all alone in the huge hall, Song Fu shook his head and smiled. "A swordsman... what a surprise!"

Siao Ge walked into the huge hall and bowed toward Song Fu. "Tutor."

Song Fu stared at Siao Ge without saying anything.

Siao Ge saw that and explained, "Brother Ye conquered the ninth floor with me, but he told me to keep his participation a secret, so—"

Song Fu interrupted with a smile. "I understand."

Siao Ge nodded.

Song Fu looked at Siao Ge. "Have you exchanged blows with him?"

Siao Ge shook his head and said, "No, but he's extremely strong. He's also fast, and his sword is terrifying. I'll surely be under a lot of pressure if I were to fight him, but I'm not afraid of fighting him."

Song Fu nodded and smiled before saying, "The two of you aren't interested in becoming the Chief Student Representative, right?"

"Yes, Tutor..." muttered Siao Ge.

Song Fu shook his head and smiled. "I knew it. Anyway, do you know who I intended to nominate as the Chief Student Representative?"

Siao Ge shook his head. "No."

Song Fu replied, "Nan Xuan."

Siao Ge was stunned.

"Real talents will not stay in Nanzhou because they need a bigger stage to bloom. You, Ye Guan, and even Nalan Jia will eventually have to leave Nanzhou.

"All three of you have extreme talent and traits, and I'm sure that the Guanxuan Academy on the Upper Realm won't let the three of you go once you're there," said Song Fu.

Siao Ge didn't know what to say.

"It's not necessarily a bad thing for the three of you to go to the Upper Realm. After all, the primary goal of the branches of the Guanxuan Academy had always been to obtain more resources by securing victories during the decennial martial contest.

"The academy will not hold you back because the stronger you become, the better it will be for us," explained Song Fu with a smile.

Siao Ge lowered his head without saying anything.

"I know that you have always been worried about this, but you really don't have to worry about it. You're still young, so you should go out there and fight for what you want and let your name be known to everyone," added Song Fu.

Siao Ge bowed deeply. "This academy will always be my home."

Song Fu nodded and changed the topic. "Nan Xuan was the best candidate for the Chief Student Representative Role, but he has a critical flaw. He's too petty.

"A cultivator must be gracious. They can be petty, but they cannot be overly petty. We have been observing and guiding him, but it's a pity that he ended up clashing against Ye Guan while we were still trying to reform him."

Song Fu shook his head and revealed a helpless smile. "He's narrow-minded, and he's the type to bring others down because he cannot stand others being better than him. Perhaps it was for the greater good that he perished, lest he became the Chief Student Representative."

Song Fu nodded slightly. "The martial contest starts in three months. We will have to head to the Upper Realm next month, so be prepared."

"I understand," said Siao Ge.

Song Fu smiled. "Go ahead."

Siao Ge nodded, and he bowed before turning around to leave.

After a moment of silence, Song Fu spoke loudly, "Pass down my orders, Ye Nan will be promoted to a student of the inner academy, and her cultivation resources will be tripled. The Chief Tutor of the inner academy, Tutor Mu, shall be her tutor."

"Understood," said an old man in a corner of the hall.

The old man bowed before leaving.

However, Song Fu stopped the old man by continuing. "I also want you to prepare a huge gift for the Ye Clan of the Ancient Desolate City. I want you to go there and let the Ye Clan nominate three of their best disciples to come to the academy. Tell the Ye Clan that we will admit one of their disciples every year into the academy starting next year."

A guaranteed spot—it was a privilege that only belonged to prestigious clans.

The old man glanced at Song Fu before bowing slightly and turning around to leave.

Left alone, Song Fu closed his eyes.

...

Meanwhile, Tutor Xiao was standing in the middle of the Nan Clan's hall with Nan Xuan's corpse lying on the floor in front of him.

A beautiful woman sobbed while hugging Nan Xuan's corpse. A middle-aged man stood next to the woman. The middle-aged man's expression was distorted in fury as he stared intently at Nan Xuan's corpse.

The beautiful woman and the middle-aged man were Nan Xuan's parents.

An old man was sitting in the hall. The old man was clad in a black robe, and he was staring at Nan Xuan's corpse in silence. His thoughts and emotions couldn't be deduced from his expression.

Tutor Xiao sighed. "Clan Leader Nan Mo, I underestimated Ye Guan. It's my fault. If I had known that he was a swordsman, I wouldn't have let Nan Xuan fight him on the Life or Death Stage."

Nan Mo shook his head and said, "How can we blame you? His arrogance was his downfall."

Tutor Xiao sighed once more and said, "Does the Nan Clan still have a suitable talent to be nurtured? I can bring them with me to the academy, and I'll teach them personally."

"Thank you," said Nan Mo with clenched fists. He stood up and called out. "Little Feng!"

A young man who looked to be around fifteen years old walked into the hall.

He arrived in front of Tutor Xiao and bowed deeply. "Greetings, Tutor Xiao."

Tutor Xiao examined Nan Feng and nodded. "He'll do."

Nan Feng immediately kneeled and exclaimed, "Thank you, Tutor!"

Tutor Xiao nodded. He turned to look at Nan Feng and said, "Get ready to follow me to the academy tomorrow."

With that, Tutor Xiao left the Nan Clan's hall.

Moments after Tutor Xiao's departure, the beautiful woman's expression turned fierce as she pleaded. "Clan Leader, you have to take revenge for Nan Xuan! Ye Guan has to die! Otherwise, I'll—"

"Shut up!" Nan Mo shouted, interrupting the beautiful woman.

The beautiful woman was so shocked that she went silent.

Nan Mo glared at the beautiful woman.

"Speak about taking revenge again, and I'll deal with you myself!" he growled.

The beautiful woman could only stare blankly at him.

Nan Mo sighed softly and explained, "He's a swordsman! In other words, he has a sword inheritance. A mysterious and powerful cultivator must be backing him, but even without a backer, a swordsman is strong enough to annihilate clans.

"In addition, the Guanxuan Academy will definitely do its best to nurture him. If our clan does something to Ye Guan or the Ye Clan, we will be in danger!"

The beautiful woman's voice was trembling as she asked, "A-are you saying that we have no choice but to let everything go?"

"We shouldn't be thinking about how to take revenge. We should be thinking about what we should do if he decides to come here and attack us..." Nan Mo muttered with closed eyes. He soon opened his eyes to look at Nan Feng. "You must not show any animosity to Ye Guan—not even a bit of animosity. Stay as far away as you can from him. I want you to ignore everything else aside from cultivating and studying. Do you understand?"

Nan Feng nodded. "I understand."

With that, Nan Mo looked at an old man in a corner and said, "I want you to prepare a huge gift, and I want you to go to the Ye Clan with it. Tell them that what happened on Nanshan Mountain had been a complete misunderstanding.

"Our Nan Clan wronged Young Master Ye Guan by misunderstanding him. Tell them that we investigated and found out that Qingyue's death has nothing to do with—forget it, I will go there personally and apologize. It'll be more sincere if I go there myself."

Nan Mo's decision rendered everyone speechless.

Chapter 24: Sword Intent

Ye Guan arrived at Fei Banqing's palace on Mount Banqing.

Fei Banqing smiled upon seeing him. "Congrats."

Ye Guan smiled as well, and he sat in front of Fei Banqing. He took out a box and handed it over to her. The box contained the Sky-grade armor that Fei Banqing had lent him.

Fei Banqing stared deeply at Ye Guan and said, "I've truly underestimated you."

Ye Guan replied, "Nan Xuan underestimated me as well."

Fei Banqing's curiosity was piqued. "What do you mean?" she asked.

Ye Guan muttered, "He didn't really know me, so he ended up underestimating me. He was also extremely confident in his chances of defeating me because of his Sky-grade armor and those two medicinal pills.

"However, his biggest mistake was the fact that he seemed to have forgotten that we were on the Life or Death Stage. Either of us would have to die, so he shouldn't have decided to talk nonsense while the fight was ongoing."

Fei Banqing remained silent for a while before saying, "Do you know why he talked so much nonsense before the fight?"

Ye Guan nodded slightly and said, "He's from a huge clan, so he has never fought someone of lower status. Those who are closer to the bottom of society are more brutal and decisive than those who are privileged. They are also more than willing to take risks."

Fei Banqing gazed at Ye Guan for a moment before smiling. "I can see that."

Ye Guan continued. "Of course, he still wasn't my match, even if he had taken me seriously. His death was inevitable."

"I really like your confidence, you brat! Hahaha!" Fei Banqing chuckled.

Ye Guan took out a medicinal pill and placed it in front of Fei Banqing. "Tutor, this is a Sky-grade pill. Take it, and it may prove useful to you in the future."

A Sky-grade pill was extremely valuable. Fei Banqing didn't reject the offer. "Sure."

Ye Guan got up and bowed. "All right, I'm off now, Tutor. I'll go back to my palace and cultivate."

With that, he turned around and left.

Fei Banqing stared at the pill in front of her, and her heart became filled with warmth.

At last, she finally understood just what kind of person Ye Guan was. He was the type of person who would treat someone the same way they treated him. Treat him well, and he would reciprocate.

Fei Banqing shook her head and smiled. "It seems Little Jia found her Mr. Right."

...

Ye Guan sat cross-legged on the summit of Mount Banqing. He put his hands parallel to each other in front of his chest and circulated the Immortal-rank cultivation method within him.

The surrounding spiritual energy surged toward him.

Ye Guan's cultivation improved by leaps and bounds thanks to the Immortal-rank cultivation method. What an incredible cultivation method...

After a while, Ye Guan slowly opened his eyes and exhaled. He managed to push himself to the peak of the Divine Path Realm. He only had just a tiny step left to make a breakthrough into the Divine Soul Realm.

However, he didn't attempt a breakthrough into the Divine Soul Realm. Ye Guan had always made sure to become familiar with the next realm first before making a breakthrough.

Therefore, Ye Guan started reading books that contained information about the Divine Soul Realm in an effort to understand the realm. The Divine Soul Realm could be reached after the confluence of one's physique and divine soul.

The divine soul was one's soul and mental strength, and the confluence of the two meant breaking through into the Divine Soul Realm.

One would undergo a qualitative change upon reaching the Divine Soul Realm, allowing one to shatter a city wall with a mere punch.

The giant on the ninth floor of the trial towers was a Divine Soul Realm cultivator, and its ax was strong enough to shatter a city wall. A Divine Soul Realm cultivator was a force to be reckoned with anywhere in Nanzhou.

Ye Guan read a few books, and he decided to attempt a breakthrough into the Divine Soul Realm upon gauging that he understood the realm enough for a breakthrough.

Ye Guan had to become even stronger because they would go to the Upper Realm in less than a month, and there would definitely be stronger cultivators there.

He also had to be wary of the Ye Clan there.[1]

If they find me, I'm done for! I have to become more powerful so I can protect myself and the people around me.

Ye Guan didn't just cultivate. He also headed to the ninth floor of the trial towers to hone his skills by fighting the giant.

He wanted to reach his limit—the limit of the Divine Path Realm. He wanted to reach it before making a breakthrough into the Divine Soul Realm. In addition to his combat prowess, fighting the giant also improved his mental strength and soul.

I won't be able to relax at all!

Ye Guan's daily routine was filled with cultivating, reading, and fighting the giant on the ninth floor of the trial towers.

Just like that, half a month passed.

Today, Ye Guan visited the ninth floor as usual.

The giant appeared, and it immediately hurled its ax at Ye Guan.

Boom!

The ax carried a horrifying power with it as it tore through the air and flew toward Ye Guan.

Ye Guan remained calm as he stared at the flying ax.

Swoosh!

Ye Guan abruptly twisted and avoided the fatal blow half an inch away from his head. At the same time, he lowered his stance and sliced the giant's knee.

Crack!

The giant's knee was split open.

The giant staggered to pick up its ax, and it immediately swung its ax toward Ye Guan.

Shrieeek!

A shrill noise echoed as the ax made its way toward Ye Guan's head.

Ye Guan crouched and rolled backward, deftly dodging the ax. At the same time, his sword flew out and struck the giant's knee once more.

Crack!

The giant lost its right leg. It lunged toward Ye Guan in a last-ditch effort to kill the latter, but Ye Guan already knew what the giant would do. Ye Guan leaped and aimed for the giant's neck.

However, it was clear that the giant wasn't willing to let things end here. It twisted and was about to send its most powerful attack toward Ye Guan.

Unfortunately, Ye Guan seemed to have predicted the giant's next move as he twisted in mid-air and thrust his sword into the giant's wrist.

Shwik! Slash!

The giant's attack failed, and it couldn't avoid Ye Guan's next attack.

Ye Guan picked up his sword and turned his back on the disappearing giant.

Vrrr!

The shining door suddenly vibrated. Ye Guan came to a halt and stared at the shining door.

A woman soon emerged from the door. Ye Guan instantly recognized her because she was none other than the woman who gave him the Immortal-rank cultivation method he was cultivating at the moment.

Ye Guan was curious. "Senior?"

The woman smiled and said, "Congratulations."

Ye Guan was confused.

“Congratulations?” he asked.

The woman nodded and explained, “You’re the fastest...”

Ye Guan was still confused. “The fastest?”

The woman nodded slightly and said, “There are about ninety-eight thousand trial towers throughout the Upper and Lower Realm. You’re the fastest person under the age of twenty to have defeated this giant.”

Ye Guan blinked and muttered, “I could have been faster...”

He wasn’t lying. He truly could have done it even faster.

The woman smiled at him and exclaimed, “You’ve done it fast enough!”

Ye Guan nodded and changed the topic. “Senior, is there any reward for it?”

“Of course, there is,” said the woman.

She flipped her palm, and a badge appeared in front of Ye Guan.

Three words emblazoned in bronze were on the badge—Trial Towers King.

Ye Guan was silent.

Can’t they give me something more useful? What the hell is Trial Towers King? Ye Guan truly didn’t care about being the king of the trial towers!

The woman smiled and explained, "I think you should know that this badge is rarer than your Immortal-rank cultivation method."

Ye Guan's curiosity was instantly piqued. "Why?"

The woman's smile deepened. "It's a valuable badge because it allows you to enroll at any Guanxuan Academy branch aside from the Main Academy."

"Really?" Ye Guan gasped. He stared deeply at the woman and asked, "I know a place called Zhongtu Divine Continent, and it apparently contains thousands of worlds, so I'm sure it has a Guanxuan Academy. Will this badge allow me to enroll at the academy there?"

The woman nodded. "Of course."

Ye Guan asked. "What if they won't acknowledge the badge?"

The woman was stunned. She blinked a few times before saying, "They won't even dare to do that."

Ye Guan was confused. "Why?"

The woman smiled once more.

She responded with a question of her own. "Do you know what my job is?"

Ye Guan shook his head.

The woman explained. "I'm the Lead Chief of the Guanxuan Academy, and all branches are under my jurisdiction. I created the badge in front of you, and those capable enough of acquiring it are extremely talented. I don't think any Guanxuan Academy branch out there will refuse to acknowledge an extreme talent."

Ye Guan hesitated before adding, "Well, hypothetically speaking... I mean, what if... they refuse to acknowledge me?"

"There are no what-ifs!" exclaimed the woman with a serious look.

Ye Guan nodded. "I understand."

The woman walked toward Ye Guan. She patted his head lightly before smiling. "Keep it up, I'm looking forward to the day you arrive at the Main Academy."

The woman's illusory figure vanished.

Ye Guan looked at the badge in his hands and smiled. What a pleasant surprise!

However, Ye Guan seemed to have recalled something.

"Master Pagoda, why do I feel like she knew me?" asked Ye Guan.

Little Pagoda was silent for a while before it said, "I think you just imagined it."

Ye Guan frowned. "I imagined it?"

Little Pagoda hurriedly explained, "Yup! She's the Lead Chief of the Guanxuan Academy, so she's obviously an influential figure in the academy. How could she be familiar with a poor country boy like you?"

Ye Guan thought about it for a moment before nodding. "Yes, that makes sense."

Little Pagoda changed the topic. "Anyway, you can start cultivating sword intent."

Sword intent! Ye Guan was delighted. "Sword intent?"

Little Pagoda replied, "Yes. Sword intent is the sword's extension of your will. Your Royal Sword Art will become five times more powerful with the help of sword intent, and a single move imbued with sword intent is enough to kill the giant you've been fighting in just one hit."

Ye Guan was overjoyed. From the books he had read so far, only those who had cultivated sword intent could be considered true swordsmen! It was rumored that those who had comprehended sword intent were rare, even on the Upper Realm.

Cultivators incapable of wielding sword intent weren't true swordsmen.

Ye Guan hurriedly asked, "Master Pagoda, how do I start using sword intent?"

Little Pagoda replied, "You comprehend it first through an epiphany."

Ye Guan blinked in confusion.

"Can you give me some guidance?" he asked.

Little Pagoda was silent for a while before it spoke, "What do you think your sword does?"

Ye Guan thought for a while. Eventually, he extended his hand, and the Path Sword appeared. He stared at the Path Sword for a while, and his eyes turned cold as he said, "A sword is a weapon for slaughter, and I am a swordsman who slaughters."

Brrr!

The Path Sword vibrated violently in his hand. Moments later, a soft red glow enveloped the Path Sword. The red glow lashed out, carving a deep crevice thirty meters away from Ye Guan.

Ye Guan stiffened at the sight.

In the world within the tiny pagoda, Little Pagoda exclaimed, “Goodness, is he cheating?”

The mysterious voice replied, “No, he wasn’t cheating! I can vouch for him.”

Little Pagoda’s voice was solemn as it said, “It’s more absurd than cheating...”

1. The Ye Clan here refers to the clan that Little Pagoda has been ‘tricking’ Ye Guan about, where he is the illegitimate son. ❹

Chapter 25: To The Upper Realm!

It’s sword intent, you know?! Little Pagoda didn’t expect that Ye Guan would comprehend sword intent so quickly. This is ridiculous.

Actually, sword intent was nothing new to Little Pagoda. There was a large number of swordsmen in the past, so Little Pagoda was familiar with sword intent. However, swordsmen were rare in the current era, so it didn’t make sense for Ye Guan to comprehend sword intent so quickly. His father had to spend many years just to comprehend sword intent!

Just then, the mysterious voice in the pagoda exclaimed, “The heavens has chosen him!”

Little Pagoda was silent.

Meanwhile, Ye Guan excitedly exclaimed, “Master Pagoda, is this the sword intent?”

Little Pagoda confirmed. “Indeed, it is!”

“Hahaha!” Ye Guan laughed like a child who had just discovered a new toy.

Ye Guan soon composed himself and asked, “Master Pagoda, how do I use it?”

Little Pagoda instructed. “Execute the Royal Sword Art with your sword intent.”

Ye Guan nodded gently and closed his eyes.

He created a sword using sword energy. He didn’t use the Path Sword because it was too strong, and he didn’t really want to rely too much on tools. Over-reliance on a tool would make him arrogant and careless.

Moments later, Ye Guan pointed, and the sword flew as fast as lightning.

Boom!

The ground was split open, and the sword even left a crevice in the ground in its wake.

Ye Guan was dumbfounded. How terrifying!

Ye Guan estimated that his Royal Sword Art had become five times more powerful, and it had also become faster as well. Ye Guan was both thrilled and delighted at the revelation.

He suddenly thought of something, and he quickly descended to the eighth floor before going back to the ninth floor.

The ninth floor was refreshed, and the giant emerged from the shining door once more. It immediately threw its ax at Ye Guan. Ye Guan responded by pointing at the giant with his index finger.

Slash!

The sword made out of sword energy cleanly cut the giant's head off.

Ye Guan instantly killed the giant.

Ye Guan looked at the door, expecting to see the woman.

Ye Guan waited for quite a while, but the woman didn't emerge. However, the badge on him changed, indicating that he had set a new record again.

Ye Guan shook his head in disappointment, but there wasn't anything that he could do aside from practicing his Royal Sword Art while it was imbued with sword intent.

His moves became extremely terrifying while it was being driven by sword intent!

Two hours later, Ye Guan finally took a break.

Just then, Little Pagoda said, "Don't get too happy now. There are very few swordsmen here, but there are quite a few of them out there. There are many geniuses all over the world as well, and it is especially true for the Ye Clan. Even an Imperial-rank demonic beast must be obedient in front of the Ye Clan!"

Little Pagoda thought that Ye Guan was getting a bit arrogant, and it thought that it had to bring Ye Guan back to reality. Ye Guan's smile disappeared upon hearing Little Pagoda's words.

"An Imperial-rank demonic beast must be obedient in front of the Ye Clan?"

Little Pagoda confirmed. "That's right!"

After some hesitation, Ye Guan asked, "Just how strong is the Ye Clan?"

Little Pagoda answered, "The Ye Clan is extremely strong. You'll understand what I'm talking about once you get to the Upper Realm."

Ye Guan went silent. Eventually, he asked, "Master Pagoda, are there any dragons in the Ye Clan?"

Dragons! They're mythical creatures! However, Little Pagoda replied, "Yes."

Ye Guan asked once more, "Can they ride on dragons?"

Little Pagoda answered, "Yes."

What an extravagant way of life... Ye Guan muttered to himself before asking, "Aren't dragons prideful creatures? Why are they willing to become mounts?"

Little Pagoda answered, "You're right, but their pride depends on their target audience. It's similar to how some women are prideful in front of others, but their attitudes are different toward others."

Little Pagoda cut himself short. Ye Guan isn't like my previous master, and I cannot let him go down the wrong path!

Ye Guan grew curious, so he probed even further. "What does that mean?"

"I'm saying that you have to become even stronger. With enough strength, you can hunt a dragon down and force it to be your mount," explained Little Pagoda.

Ye Guan nodded and said, "I understand. Master Pagoda, don't worry, I won't be arrogant, and I'll continue to work hard."

Little Pagoda cheered him on. "All right, good luck."

Ye Guan took a deep breath and turned around to leave.

The sun hung high in the sky because it was noon, and Ye Guan stared at the horizon. He closed his eyes slowly and savored the warm sunlight. The warm feeling made him feel comfortable.

Just then, an old man walked toward Ye Guan.

“Young Lord Ye, there’s a letter for you from your hometown,” said the old man with a bow before handing over the letter to Ye Guan.

“Thank you!” said Ye Guan as he hurriedly accepted the letter.

Ye Guan took out a few purple spiritual crystals and attempted to give them to the old man.

“No, I cannot accept these, Young Lord Ye!” the old man refused.

Ye Guan smiled and insisted. “I want to thank you for the trouble!”

The old man hesitated, but he eventually smiled and accepted it.

“Thank you for your kindness, Young Lord Ye!” said the old man before leaving.

Ye Guan hurriedly opened the letter and saw that it was written by Ye Xiao. Ye Xiao expressed his stupefaction at the Nan Clan’s visit to the Ye Clan to apologize.

Ye Xiao also said that the Guanxuan Academy had promised to enroll three disciples from the Ye Clan right away, and they would also give the Ye Clan a guaranteed spot every year.

The Guanxuan Academy’s offer of a guaranteed spot was a treatment that only prestigious clans would receive. The offer basically meant that the talented members of the Ye Clan would have a connection with the Guanxuan Academy.

In other words, it was only a matter of time before the Ye Clan became a major clan in Ancient Desolate City, and it could even become a major clan throughout Nanzhou.

These changes were all thanks to the Guanxuan Academy's recognition of Ye Guan's talent.

Ye Guan thought about the matter while he was on his way to Mount Banqing. Upon arriving at Mount Banqing, Fei Banqing appeared next to him and asked, "Have you heard?"

Ye Guan nodded.

"What do you think?" asked Fei Banqing.

Ye Guan answered, "I really have to thank the academy..."

Fei Banqing shook her head and smiled before asking, "I was asking about what you really think."

Ye Guan smiled bitterly. "I was being honest. I'm very grateful to the academy for treating me and the Ye Clan so well."

Fei Banqing went silent. She stared directly into Ye Guan's eyes and shattered the ice. "The academy's intentions are clear. They know that you have a bright future, so they're currying favor with you. Their intentions aren't bad, and their gifts are great, so it's great overall. Is that what you're thinking as well?"

Ye Guan nodded. "Yes."

Fei Banqing continued. "You're going to the Upper Realm soon, and we know that you're worried about the Ye Clan. You don't have to be worried about them. The Guanxuan Academy will protect the Ye Clan, and I'm sure the Nan Clan won't attack the Ye Clan unless they aren't a bunch of idiots!"

Ye Guan nodded. "Yes, I agree."

Fei Banqing smiled at Ye Guan's response.

"Anyway, let's talk about something else. How's your progress on the ninth floor?"

Ye Guan didn't say anything.

Fei Banqing added, "You don't have to say anything if you want to remain silent. I'll respect your decision!"

Ye Guan made a sidelong glance at Fei Banqing. He seemed to be hesitating, but he eventually made up his mind and said, "I comprehended sword intent..."

Fei Banqing's eyes narrowed upon hearing that.

"Are you serious?" she asked.

"Yes." Ye Guan nodded. He flipped over his palm, and a red glow enveloped his palm.

Fei Banqing was stupefied by the sight, but she soon recovered and started shouting in excitement, "Great! That's absolutely amazing!"

Fei Banqing was truly happy for him.

Sword intent! Ye Guan has become a true swordsman!

The entire Nanzhou would definitely be shocked if they found out that a real swordsman had emerged in Nanzhou, and the swordsman had already comprehended sword intent despite his young age.

Fei Banqing was truly stupefied by the revelation. She knew that someone like Ye Guan was rare, even on the Upper Realm. Fei Banqing shook her head and remarked, "It seems that I have greatly underestimated you."

Ye Guan smiled, "I also didn't expect to comprehend sword intent so quickly, but this is just the beginning for me. I'll keep working hard."

Fei Banqing's expression turned complicated. She was sure that if someone else were in Ye Guan's shoes, they would have already become arrogant at the thought of comprehending sword intent, despite their young age.

However, Ye Guan wasn't arrogant at all. It seemed that he would remain true to his goal.

What an unusual fellow... Fei Banqing inwardly remarked before saying, "You should hide your sword intent in the meantime."

Ye Guan nodded and said, "Yes, I understand.."

Fei Banqing added, "It seems that the academy actually has a chance of achieving something at the upcoming martial contest."

Ye Guan smiled at her comment and said, "I'll do my best."

Fei Banqing laughed heartily and said, "I'm sure you have no idea, so let me tell you—Little Jia has become really strong as well! She'll definitely surprise you."

Ye Guan was pleasantly surprised, and he asked, "Tutor, what exactly is the Holy Spirit Physique?"

Fei Banqing explained, "The only thing I can tell you is that her physique allows her to avoid any bottlenecks in her cultivation. For her, a breakthrough is as easy as eating her meals."

Ye Guan muttered in shock, "What an incredible physique..."

Fei Banqing nodded gently and added, "The academy's resources aren't enough to nurture her. She would have achieved more than her current achievement if we were capable of giving her more resources."

"She's strong enough to join the martial contest. Otherwise, the academy wouldn't have pampered her so much all this time."

Ye Guan hesitated before asking, "Is it really okay for us to leave? I mean, I'm asking about what the academy thinks about our departure."

Fei Banqing nodded and explained, "Of course, it's fine. The academy knows that you, Little Jia, and Siao Ge will all achieve great things once you've arrived on the Upper Realm."

"The academy is also well aware that it cannot give you the resources you need to become even stronger, so the academy knows that keeping you all here will do more harm than good."

"Of course, it's not like the academy won't reap any profits from letting you leave. The students of the academy will always end up helping the academy one way or another down the road."

Fei Banqing ended her explanation with a smile. "In other words, the academy is quite open-minded!"

Ye Guan nodded. "I see..."

There was a moment of silence between the two.

Fei Banqing shattered the ice once more. "Can you promise me something?"

Ye Guan was slightly taken aback, but he said, "Sure, what is it, Tutor?"

Fei Banqing's voice sounded grim as she replied, "You'll definitely become a famous figure on the Upper Realm, which means that many powers will extend their hands toward you. You can join any of those powers, but I want you to promise me that you won't join the Profound Sky Clan."

Ye Guan was stunned by the request, and he couldn't help but ask, "Why not?"

Fei Banqing replied, "Don't ask why, just promise me that you won't join them."

Ye Guan nodded. "Sure!"

Fei Banqing smiled sweetly and said, "Go ahead and get ready, we're about to depart for the Upper Realm."

"All right," said Ye Guan before bowing and turning around to leave.

Fei Banqing was left alone, and her eyes shone coldly as she muttered, "Profound Sky Clan..."

Chapter 26: Aim for First Place!

Half a month passed.

The students of Guanxuan Academy gathered at Guanxuan Hall. Today, the top talents of Guanxuan Academy would head over to the Upper Realm to participate in the decennial martial contest.

The students were here to send them off.

Ye Guan, Siao Ge, Nalan Jia, and Sun Xiong were here, and it was clear that they had been waiting for this day.

Apart from the four of them, there were also three other students who would follow them to the Upper Realm. However, the three students would simply expand their world horizons rather than participate in the decennial martial contest.

The other students looked at them with envy.

They would bring honor not only to the Guanxuan Academy but to the entire Nanzhou as well if they managed to make their way to a decent rank in the decennial martial contest.

Song Fu walked out. He swept his gaze across the students and smiled before saying, "Don't be envious of them. Work hard, and you'll earn yourself a spot here in the future. These students are the academy's beacons of hope, but you are the future of our academy!"

The students bowed slightly toward Song Fu.

Song Fu turned to face Ye Guan and the rest.

"Tutor Fei and I will bring you all to the Upper Realm," Song Fu said with a chuckle.

With that, he turned to look at Tutor Xiao and Tutor Song. "The two of you should stay here and look after the academy."

Tutor Xiao and Tutor Song nodded.

Song Fu turned around and flicked his wrist. The clouds parted, and a cloud ship over thirty meters in length descended and stopped in front of Song Fu.

Song Fu looked back at the others and smiled. "Let's go."

The group boarded the cloud ship, and they soon disappeared from everyone's sight.

Tutor Xiao stared at the clouds with a thoughtful expression.

Song Ci muttered, "I don't think we'll be at the bottom this time."

In the previous ten martial contests, Nanzhou had always been at the bottom of the rankings. The cold reality was the reason Song Fu decided to nurture Siao Ge. The former had been hoping that the latter would turn the tables.

If Nanzhou remained at the bottom of the rankings, the Guanxuan Academy of Nanzhou would completely lose the support of the Upper Realm. Without access to resources, the Guanxuan Academy of Nanzhou would be doomed.

The resources that the Guanxuan Academy of Nanzhou had been receiving from the Upper Realm consisted of cultivation manuals, spiritual veins, martial skills, and spiritual crystals.

The academy was entitled to such resources from the Upper Realm, but they had been getting fewer resources from the Upper Realm since a hundred years ago.

The Upper Realm started looking down on the Guanxuan Academy of Nanzhou for its abysmal ranking in multiple martial contests, so the Upper Realm had been sending them fewer resources.

The Guanxuan Academy branches on the Lower Realm had to send their most talented students to the Upper Realm in exchange for resources. This was a tragedy that many academies in the Lower Realm had been facing for a long time, but there was no other way to go about it.

The Guanxuan Academy Branches on the Lower Realm would have to close their doors from the lack of resources if they were to choose not to participate in the decennial martial contest. It was a miracle that the Guanxuan Academy of Nanzhou managed to last this long.

Tutor Xiao nodded at Tutor Song's words. "Indeed, they're strong."

Tutor Song made a sidelong glance at Tutor Xiao.

Tutor Xiao sounded calm as he said, "Rest assured, I'm not foolish enough to plot against Ye Guan at this point."

With that, Tutor Xiao turned around to leave.

Tutor Song stood still in silence for quite a while before leaving.

...

The cloud ship flew at a steady pace through the clouds.

Ye Guan stood at the bow of the ship and looked down. The Guanxuan Academy shrunk as they flew further away. Soon, Nanzhou itself became a tiny dot.

Ye Guan suddenly started missing the Ye Clan. He had been living with the Ye Clan for the past seventeen years.

Ye Guan closed his eyes slowly. He had promised the Clan Leader and he would keep his promise no matter what. Apart from that, he also had to find a pure-grade spiritual vein for Master Pagoda's recovery.

In other words, he had a long way ahead of him.

A faint fragrance wafted over to Ye Guan. He turned and saw Nalan Jia wearing a spotless white robe.

Nalan Jia smiled at Ye Guan and asked, "What are you thinking?"

Ye Guan grinned and replied, "I'm starting to miss the Ye Clan."

"We'll be back," replied Nalan Jia.

Ye Guan nodded.

Nalan Jia stared at the setting sun and muttered, "Have you heard? Our Guanxuan Academy has consistently ranked at the bottom in the decennial martial contest."

Ye Guan was taken aback. "Really?"

Nalan Jia nodded and said, "Yes, and we have to rise up the ranks this time. Otherwise, our Guanxuan Academy will lose the qualifications to join the decennial martial contest, and it'll spell doom for our Guanxuan Academy. Without the support and protection of the Upper Realm, the academy will decline until it shuts down."

Ye Guan was silent. He hadn't really thought of that.

Nalan Jia chuckled. "We're carrying quite the burden on our shoulders."

Ye Guan nodded and exclaimed, "I'll try my best!"

"What do you know about the Upper Realm?"

"Not much."

Nalan Jia nodded and explained, "The Upper Realm is split into the North Region and South Region. There are a total of three hundred and sixty states in both regions. A branch of the Guanxuan Academy exists in every single state. This means that we have to compete with talents from those states for the top ten!"

Ye Guan's eyes narrowed. "Top ten?"

"Yes, we have to reach the top ten to secure the biggest benefits for our academy."

"What if I get first place?"

Nalan Jia looked at Ye Guan for a moment.

She chuckled and said, “The academy will build a statue for you!”

“Oh...” Ye Guan’s expression stiffened.

Nalan Jia chuckled once more. “Are you aware of the reward for reaching first place?”

Ye Guan shook his head.

“I’ve heard that the first placer of the previous martial contest was awarded two Sky-grade spiritual veins, ten Earth-grade spiritual veins, fifty Pure-grade spiritual veins, ten Immortal-rank cultivation manuals, and thirty Sky-rank cultivation manuals.

“They would also receive an annual allowance of a million gold crystals until the next martial contest!” explained Nalan Jia.

Ye Guan was stupefied.

However, it seemed that Nalan Jia wasn’t done just yet as she said, “If you come in first place, the academy will definitely construct a statue in your honor. The academy will also take great care of the Ye Clan.”

Ye Guan grinned. “I guess I have to try even harder.”

Nalan Jia stared deeply at Ye Guan and asked, “Are you aiming for first place?”

“Yeah!” replied Ye Guan with a nod.

Nalan Jia stared at him for a while before smiling. What a confident man!

Siao Ge walked over. He seemed to have heard Ye Guan and Nalan Jia's conversation as he smiled and remarked, "Brother Ye, I'm not trying to rain on your parade, but first place is just too difficult to reach!"

Ye Guan asked, "What do you mean?"

"The consistent first placer for the past hundred years is the Guanxuan Academy of Qingzhou!" said Siao Ge.

Ye Guan's curiosity was piqued. "Qingzhou?"

Siao Ge nodded. "Have you heard of it?"

Ye Guan shook his head without saying anything.

Siao Ge explained, "The founder of the Guanxuan Academy, the Sword Master, was born in Qingzhou."

The Sword Master! Ye Guan was moved. He's a legendary figure!

The Sword Master had not only founded the Guanxuan Academy, but he had also ushered in a new era.

Siao Ge added, "The Sword Master was born in Qingzhou, so the Guanxuan Academy there has been receiving a disproportionate amount of resources from the Main Academy.

"In addition, Qingzhou has always been the birthplace of many outstanding talents and geniuses. They had consistently claimed first place for themselves in the previous martial contests, and they had also consistently crushed anyone daring enough to challenge them."

Ye Guan chuckled and teased. "Why are you saying that? Are you not confident about getting first place?"

Siao Ge shook his head and explained, "It's not just a matter of confidence. The students from Qingzhou are just too terrifying! I'm already feeling hopeless just thinking about their strength."

Ye Guan replied, "You either fight for it, or you don't; that's it. However, if you choose to fight, you should aim for first place!"

Siao Ge stared deeply at Ye Guan without saying anything. Moments later, he erupted into laughter and exclaimed, "I'd expect nothing less from Brother Ye's personality. I really admire your boldness!"

Ye Guan only smiled. He wasn't joking when he said that one should aim for first place.

Meanwhile, Song Fu chuckled at Ye Guan, Siao Ge, and Nalan Jia's interaction with each other.

"Banqing, I really have to admit that you have a good eye for talent. I couldn't have known that you'd recruit two geniuses for our academy so quickly," said Song Fu.

Fei Banqing looked at Ye Guan and smiled. "Well, it would be more accurate to say that the brat there was gifted to me."

Song Fu boisterously laughed.

Five days later, a powerful shield abruptly enveloped the cloud ship. The cloud ship soared into the starry sky. Ye Guan's heart became filled with awe as he looked around while standing at the bow of the ship.

A sky full of stars! Ye Guan had never felt smaller.

Right now, even the entire Lower Realm seemed as insignificant as dust.

Fei Banqing walked over to him and asked, "It's great, right?"

Ye Guan nodded. "Yeah, it's really great!"

Fei Banqing chuckled and said, "We're just in a tiny star field, you know."

Ye Guan made a sidelong glance at Fei Banqing and asked, "Tutor Fei, just how big is our universe?"

Fei Banqing shook her head. "I have no idea."

Ye Guan looked away from Fei Banqing and stared into the depths of the starry sky. He could see innumerable planets in the distance. Apart from awe, Ye Guan's eyes also shone in determination.

I'm still young, so I have to explore the endless universe while I'm young!

Rumble!

All of a sudden, a loud rumble echoed from within the sea of stars.

Boom!

The starry sky trembled, and countless cracks appeared on the cloud ship's shield.

The sudden turn of events stupefied everyone. Song Fu arrived at the bow of the ship, and his expression distorted in horror upon seeing what was happening in the distance.

A colossal shockwave was in the distance, and the rumbling they heard evidently came from the shockwave. However, the most shocking fact was that the shockwave itself seemed to have come from somewhere that their naked eyes couldn't see.

Song Fu and Fei Banqing's expressions turned heavy.

“It seems that powerful cultivators are fighting somewhere in the distance,” explained Song Fu.

Ye Guan stared into the distance, seemingly deep in his own thoughts.

Meanwhile, Song Fu heaved a sigh of relief. “It’s a good thing that they’re very, very far from us. Otherwise, we would have faced a disaster!”

Fei Banqing muttered under her breath, “Just how strong are they?”

Swoosh!

A terrifying aura suddenly surged from the depths of the starry sky.

Song Fu and Fei Banqing’s expressions changed.

They hurriedly raised the Guanxuan Academy’s banner.

No cultivator would be gutsy enough to challenge the Guanxuan Academy’s reputation. After all, it was founded by the Sword Master. Therefore, Song Fu and Fei Banqing’s actions were enough to save them from a calamity.

A black-robed old man appeared hundreds of kilometers away from the cloud ship.

He came to a halt and turned around abruptly. A rift in space was made, and a woman walked out of the rift. The woman was wearing a long white gown, and she was giving off a graceful and elegant aura. She was also as beautiful as a fairy.

The black-robed old man glared fiercely at the woman and said, “Are you mad, Lady Jian?! You’ve been chasing after me all the way from Zhongtu Divine Continent!”

“Ah...!” Little Pagoda suddenly spoke, “It’s her...”

...

Chapter 27: Please Quell Your Anger

The woman called Lady Jian didn't waste any words. She swung her hand, creating a powerful wave of energy that destroyed everything it touched.

Song Fu's expression fell, and he immediately steered the cloud ship away.

The black-robed old man was taken aback, and he curled his right hand into a fist. Space distorted and condensed into a sturdy wall, but it wasn't sturdy enough. The woman's attack struck the wall, and it immediately fractured.

There was a flash, and the black-robed old man was sent flying away with a loud boom.

The black-robed old man was severely injured, and he couldn't put up any resistance as the woman threw a powerful punch toward his head.

Boom!

The black-robed old man's head exploded, and blood erupted from the stump.

The woman flicked her sleeve, and a flame engulfed the black-robed old man's corpse, annihilating the latter from existence.

With that, the woman's job was done. She turned around and was about to leave when she noticed the swaying cloud ship carrying the banner of the Guanxuan Academy.

The cloud ship swayed violently and was on the verge of collapse. The woman's attack just now was simply too powerful that the cloud ship couldn't withstand even the shockwave that the attack had produced.

The woman appeared on the cloud ship, and the cloud ship immediately stabilized. Song Fu bowed at the woman and explained, "Senior, we're from the Guanxuan Academy of Nanzhou—"

The woman vanished and reappeared in front of Ye Guan.

Song Fu's face fell.

Fei Banqing quickly stood in front of Ye Guan, and she stared intently at the woman. Fei Banqing looked worried, but there wasn't a trace of fear in her eyes. The woman glanced at Fei Banqing and said, "I have no ill intent."

With that, she turned toward Ye Guan and said, "Come here, let me look at you!"

Ye Guan calmly walked over to the woman, but the Path Sword inside of him was anything but calm. It was vibrating, and it seemed to be gathering energy.

The woman stared at Ye Guan with complicated eyes. Moments later, she asked, "What's your name?"

Ye Guan answered, "Ye Guan!"

Ye Guan! The lady muttered to herself, "Guan..."

Everyone looked wary as they stared at the woman, but the woman didn't seem to mind their wary gazes.

The woman's expression grew warm as she asked, "Are you going to Zhongtu Divine Continent?"

Ye Guan shook his head and said, "I'm headed for the Upper Realm."

The Upper Realm! The woman's brows creased, but she smiled. "Remember to look for me once you've arrived at the Zhongtu Divine Continent!"

She flipped her palm to reveal a jade pendant, and the jade pendant floated over to Ye Guan.

Ye Guan was confused. "Senior, what is this?"

The woman's smile deepened as she explained, "I'm from the Shen Clan. Visit me with this jade pendant, and no one will stop you from visiting me."

Ye Guan was still puzzled, so he asked, "Senior, do we know each other?"

The woman blinked and said ambiguously, "No, we just met."

Ye Guan was rendered speechless.

"See you at the Zhongtu Divine Continent," said the woman with a smile. Afterward, she turned around, and a rift in space appeared in front of her. The woman walked into the rift and disappeared.

Ye Guan was still confused as he stared at the jade pendant in his hand.

Everyone else was bewildered as well.

Ye Guan asked, "Master Pagoda, I think she knows me. What do you think?"

Little Pagoda shut him down. "You're mistaken."

Ye Guan frowned.

However, Little Pagoda continued. "Think about it; does it even make sense for her to know you when she's so powerful? I think she just took a fancy to you."

Ye Guan was silent for quite a while before he nodded and said, "You're right, Master Pagoda. She's a powerful cultivator, so it won't make sense for her to know me. I think she... knows my parents?"

Little Pagoda was stunned. Goodness... this brat is too hard to trick!

"Master Pagoda?" Ye Guan called out.

Little Pagoda emerged from its thoughts and decided to change the topic. "You should worry about becoming even stronger! She was very scary, right?"

Ye Guan nodded and muttered, "Yes, she was terrifying..."

Little Pagoda said, "And that is why I've been telling you to work hard. Strength is the ultimate power, and everything else is worthless!"

Ye Guan nodded in agreement. He still had questions, but he didn't ask any more questions. However, he could feel that Little Pagoda was hiding something from him.

Just then, Fei Banqing asked, "Little Guan, do you know her?"

Ye Guan shook his head. "No, I don't know her at all."

Fei Banqing frowned. She looked confused as she asked once more, "You really don't know her?"

Ye Guan smiled bitterly and said, "I really don't know her..."

Fei Banqing nodded and said, "In that case, I think she probably recognized your talent and wanted to establish a connection with you before anyone else."

Ye Guan smiled. "Perhaps..."

Fei Banqing glanced at Song Fu, but neither of them spoke. It was obvious that the reason wasn't that simple, but neither of them asked any more questions.

The cloud ship continued on its journey.

Nalan Jia stood next to Ye Guan and asked, "Are you hiding something from me?"

Ye Guan smiled awkwardly and asked, "Is this because of her?"

Nalan Jia nodded and said, "She definitely knows you, but I can see that you don't know her at all."

Ye Guan remained silent.

Nalan Jia smiled and continued. "The Ye Clan adopted you, right?"

Ye Guan nodded.

Nalan Jia saw his response and asked softly, "Do you know who you are?"

Ye Guan shook his head and explained, "I'm not sure about the specifics, but I know that I was born out of wedlock, and I also know that I'm an illegitimate child. My parents gave me to the Ye Clan because they wanted to protect me."

An illegitimate child! Nalan Jia's eyebrows furrowed. She knew that illegitimate children were scorned as bastards in some large clans.

However, Nalan Jia's frown was soon replaced by a smile as she said, "Don't worry about your identity. I don't care if you're an illegitimate child, you'll always be Ye Guan in my heart."

Ye Guan looked away and stared deep into the starry sky before muttering, "You'll get caught up in dangerous situations because of my identity, and I—"

Nalan Jia interrupted Ye Guan by stepping closer to him. Then, she smiled and declared. "I'll face any danger with you!"

Surprised, Ye Guan turned toward her. Nalan Jia was staring into the starry sky as well, and the way her hair swayed gently behind her made her look incredibly beautiful. Ye Guan was captivated.

The two spent the night talking while sitting near the bow of the ship.

The next day, the cloud ship arrived near a teleportation array in the galaxy.

Song Fu put the cloud ship away and led everyone into the teleportation array.

The array stirred into action and teleported the group.

The group found themselves in an ancient city. The city was surrounded by tall walls, and the city gate also gave off a grand and majestic aura. There were many people walking into and out of the city, and the overall atmosphere was lively.

Ye Guan marveled at the ancient city.

"What a grand city!" he exclaimed.

The rest of the group nodded. They were truly amazed.

Siao Ge chuckled. "Brother Ye, we're in Shang City, and my clan is here. Later, we'll head to the Siao Estate to rest."

Ye Guan looked at Siao Ge in astonishment. "Brother Siao, you're from here?"

Siao Ge nodded and confirmed. "Yeah, I'm from here."

Ye Guan smiled. "Will the martial contest take place in Shang City?"

Siao Ge shook his head and answered, "No, it's going to take place in Yun City."

Ye Guan frowned and asked, "Yun City?"

Siao Ge pointed and exclaimed, "Look!"

Ye Guan turned around, and he could vaguely make out the silhouette of a majestic city above the thick clouds. The rest of the group was stunned upon seeing the silhouette.

Siao Ge smiled and explained, "There will be cloud projections across three hundred and sixty states, and everyone will be able to watch the martial contest without going to Yun City."

Ye Guan blinked and asked, "Cloud projections? What are those?"

Siao Ge explained patiently, "It's a special technology that the Immortal Treasures Pavilion has developed. I'm not sure about the specifics, but the Guanxuan Academy branches throughout the three hundred and sixty states will be watching the martial contest live.

"In other words, we'll be famous if we manage to reach the top ten!"

Ye Guan sighed and said, "I appreciate the explanation."

Siao Ge chuckled. "I've heard that the Zhongtu Divine Continent is more interesting than the Upper Realm."

Just then, an old man walked over briskly toward the group. He bowed at Song Fu and greeted him. "Academy Chief Song, the Clan Leader has prepared a banquet for you and your group. Please, follow me."

Song Fu smiled at the old man and said, "Sorry for the trouble."

The old man bowed once again. "It's no trouble at all, Academy Chief Song!"

"Hahaha!" A peal of boisterous laughter erupted and interrupted Song Fu, who was about to say something to the old man. "Junior Sister, aren't you being too disrespectful? Why did you not inform me of your arrival?"

Fei Banqing's expression turned cold. Ye Guan saw the change in Fei Banqing's expression, and he looked toward where the voice had come from. He saw a middle-aged man walking with a young woman in a green shirt.

Fei Banqing glared murderously at the middle-aged man.

Song Fu hurriedly said, "Calm down."

Fei Banqing didn't say anything.

The middle-aged man and the young woman in a green shirt walked toward the group. The middle-aged man didn't even glance at the others. He stared at Fei Banqing and smiled. "It's been a while, Junior Sister."

Fei Banqing's expression remained indifferent as she said, "It seems that you've been waiting for me for quite a while now."

The middle-aged man smiled. “I knew that you would come this time. Unfortunately, this will be your last time coming here. Your Guanxuan Academy of Nanzhou will definitely be at the bottom once again!”

The middle-aged man was quite loud, and it seemed that he was making sure that everyone would hear him. The gazes of the crowd turned strange upon hearing that Fei Banqing’s group was from the Guanxuan Academy of Nanzhou.

The crowd knew that the Guanxuan Academy of Nanzhou’s ranking had been at the bottom for the past hundred years. In fact, the academy had long earned the title—Rock Bottom King.

Fei Banqing glared coldly at the middle-aged man.

Just then, Song Fu whispered, “Don’t give them the justification to target the students. Ignore them, and let’s go!”

Song Fu’s words were effective. Fei Banqing calmed down and turned around.

However, the young woman in a green shirt raised an eyebrow at Fei Banqing and mocked her. “She’s a saintess of the Profound Sky Clan? What a disappointment, she’s just a pitiful dog.”

Nalan Jia’s eyes narrowed, and she clenched her fists.

Swoosh!

A figure flashed past Nalan Jia, and the figure was none other than Ye Guan!

Ye Guan was too fast. By the time the young woman in a green shirt realized what was going on, Ye Guan’s hand had already clutched her throat, and he immediately slammed her to the ground.

Bam!

The ground shattered upon impact. The middle-aged man wanted to make a move, but Fei Banqing blocked his way, while Song Fu teleported behind him.

Ye Guan grabbed the young woman in a green shirt's hair and dragged her in front of Fei Banqing. He glared at her and demanded. "Apologize to my tutor!"

The young woman in a green shirt started. "I'm from the Profound Sky Clan—"

Slap!

Ye Guan interrupted her by slapping her right cheek.

The young woman in a green shirt's right cheek quickly became swollen and red.

"Ah...!" She exclaimed in pain, and she thrashed around wildly. "How dare you humiliate me! I'm from the Profound Sky Clan—"

Slap!

Ye Guan slapped her left cheek, and it immediately turned red and swollen.

The young woman in a green shirt seemed to have lost her mind from the humiliation as she roared. "Kill me! Kill me if you dare!"

Ye Guan decisively whipped out a dagger.

He placed the tip on her neck and slowly dragged it across.

“Ah!” The young woman in a green shirt was terrified. She was so flustered that her voice even cracked as she hurriedly shouted, “I’ll apologize! I’m sorry! I’m so sorry!”

Ye Guan released her and walked toward Fei Banqing.

He coaxed the latter softly. “She has already apologized, so please quell your anger.”

Fei Banqing stared blankly at Ye Guan. She had no idea what to say.

Chapter 28: Playing Cards

Fei Banqing smiled. “What’s there to quell when I’m not even angry?”

Ye Guan nodded before turning to look at the middle-aged man. The middle-aged man was looking at him as well. He hadn’t made a move because Fei Banqing and Song Fu would have made a move as well if he had done so.

The middle-aged man smiled. “Junior Sister, is he your disciple? He’s gutsy! I hope he can stay that way.”

“He’s—” Fei Banqing started.

However, she was interrupted by over ten powerful auras rushing over toward them. The crowd quickly made way for the incoming cultivators, but it was also because the incoming cultivators were from the Profound Sky Clan.

Twelve cultivators from the Profound Sky Clan descended, and at least three of them were Divine Soul Realm cultivators.

The cultivator at the helm was a gray-robed elder. He gave off an extremely deep and profound aura that put those around him under immense pressure.

Song Fu's expression fell upon seeing the gray-robed elder.

The gray-robed elder's expression turned solemn upon seeing the disheveled state of the young woman in a green shirt. He extended his hand, and the space in front of Ye Guan distorted.

A rift in space opened in front of Ye Guan, and the gray-robed elder's hand emerged from it.

A Spacetime Realm cultivator!

Everyone's faces fell.

The Spacetime Realm was the realm after the Divine Soul Realm. A Spacetime Realm cultivator would be capable of teleporting as well as manipulating time and space within a certain distance from them.

They were capable of performing mysterious divine abilities as well.

Ye Guan's eyes narrowed. He was about to take out his sword when Fei Banqing appeared in front of him and waved her sleeve.

Slap!

The gray-robed elder's hand was slapped back into the rift, and the former himself was sent flying a few meters away.

The gray-robed elder recovered and looked at Fei Banqing.

"I shouldn't have allowed you to leave back then."

Fei Banqing smirked and mocked, "Wei Tong, you old ghost. Even a dog was better than you back then, and it seems that it's still the case."

Wei Tong's eyes narrowed as killing intent flashed in his eyes.

Song Fu decisively stepped in. "What's going on? Profound Sky Clan, are you trying to trample on our Guanxuan Academy? Do you really think that you're unstoppable?"

Wei Tong responded, "Guanxuan Academy? What a joke. Ask anyone around here. Ask them if your Guanxuan Academy of Nanzhou is still worthy of being considered a part of the Guanxuan Academy."

Song Fu's face grew sullen.

Wei Tong looked at Ye Guan and said firmly, "This boy must be handed over to us. Otherwise, none of you can leave!"

The cultivators of the Profound Sky Clan immediately surrounded Ye Guan's group.

Ye Guan wordlessly stared at Wei Tong. However, the Path Sword inside of him was trembling; it was ready to strike.

A Spacetime Realm cultivator?

He wasn't afraid at all. Actually, he was thinking about how he could kill Wei Tong in one sword move.

It'll be slightly difficult, but it should be possible as long as I catch him off guard. It's fine even if he survives the first attack. I can just attack him once again if that happens.

A hand suddenly grabbed his arm, interrupting his train of thought. Ye Guan turned and saw that Fei Banqing was staring at him.

Fei Banqing shook her head slightly, and Ye Guan remained silent.

“Hahaha!” A boisterous laugh echoed from deep within the city.

A plump middle-aged man descended.

Siao Ge breathed a sigh of relief upon seeing the plump middle-aged man because he was none other than Siao Ge’s father as well as the Clan Leader of the Siao Clan—Siao Shan.

Siao Shan smiled. “Elder Wei Tong, are you going to kill my son as well?”

Wei Tong frowned slightly and glanced at Siao Ge.

“Clan Leader Siao. This is between them and my Profound Sky Clan. Are you going to interfere in our matters?” asked Wei Tong.

Siao Shan remained calm as he said, “Elder Wei Tong, I simply came here to remind you that even though it’s true that the Guanxuan Academy of Nanzhou has fallen, they’re still a Guanxuan Academy branch. If you kill them here, do you really think that your clan will be able to avoid a disaster?”

Wei Tong’s expression turned ugly.

The middle-aged man next to Wei Tong smiled and said, “Elder Wei, I don’t think we need to rush things here.”

Wei Tong nodded upon recalling something. He turned to look at Ye Guan and said, “I will let you live for a few more days.”

With that, he turned around to leave, and the cultivators of the Profound Sky Clan left with him.

Ye Guan wordlessly stared at Wei Tong’s departing figure. Fei Banqing didn’t loosen her grip on his arm.

Siao Shan gazed at Song Fu and smiled. “Academy Chief Song, please come with me.”

Song Fu nodded slightly.

Moments later, they arrived at the Siao Residence, and Siao Shan welcomed them with a banquet. They had a few rounds of drinks, and the banquet ended late at night.

Ye Guan was given his own room to stay for the night. However, Fei Banqing suddenly appeared in front of him while he was walking over to his room.

Ye Guan bowed. "Tutor."

Fei Banqing spoke, "Follow me."

Ye Guan hesitated before nodding. "Okay."

The two of them walked down the stone path next to the massive residence.

Fei Banqing broke the ice and asked, "I felt that you wanted to attack Wei Tong earlier in front of the city gate, am I right?"

Ye Guan wordlessly nodded.

Fei Banqing asked, "How confident were you?"

Ye Guan replied, "I was ninety percent confident."

Fei Banqing stared deeply at him and asked, "Why not a hundred percent?"

Ye Guan hesitated before responding, "I don't want to sound too arrogant."

Fei Banqing was stunned. Moments later, she chuckled and shook her head.

“You little brat,” said Fei Banqing, sounding astonished. She lightly tucked a few strands of her hair behind her ears and asked, “Do you know why I stopped you?”

“You don’t want things to go out of hand,” replied Ye Guan.

Fei Banqing shook her head. “No.”

Ye Guan was confused.

Fei Banqing explained, “The rules here are a bit different from the rules in Nanzhou. Murders must be justified. There must be a good enough reason behind a killing. Otherwise, things will go out of control, and the academy won’t stand on our side.

“By then, you would have killed one of them, but everyone affiliated with you will suffer.”

Ye Guan was silent.

Fei Banqing continued. “Killing him would have also been meaningless. Someone stronger will challenge you once you’ve dealt with him, and that cycle will repeat until you have disposed of the entire Profound Sky Clan. Can you even do that?”

Ye Guan remained silent.

Fei Banqing smiled at Ye Guan and said, “As a man, you must learn self-control. Do not allow your emotions to take control of you. Do you understand?”

Ye Guan nodded. “I understand.”

Fei Banqing’s smile deepened. “All right, I’m going to call it a night. You should rest early as well.”

With that, Fei Banqing turned right at the next fork in the road. However, she suddenly stopped walking after just a few steps. She turned to look at Ye Guan and grinned before saying, "I appreciate what you've done for me today. You made me happy."

Fei Banqing didn't wait for Ye Guan's reply and left.

Ye Guan pondered over things for quite a while in silence before heading over to his room.

He extinguished the light in his room, and he soon emerged in a black outfit. After he entered his room, the light extinguished. Ye Guan looked around before jumping and disappearing into the night sky.

The Profound Sky Clan was here to join the decennial martial contest. Prestigious clans could also join the decennial martial contest along with the Guanxuan Academy branches. It wasn't really strange because these prestigious clans wanted their members to enroll at the Guanxuan Academy of the Upper Realm.

There was only one Guanxuan Academy on the vast Upper Realm, and it was a huge honor to become one of its students.

The Profound Sky Clan was considered a huge clan on the Upper Realm, so it didn't take Ye Guan that long to find out where they were. Ye Guan headed for the Zuixian Building, where the members of the Profound Sky Clan would stay for the duration of the decennial martial contest.

Little Pagoda suddenly spoke, "Did you already forget what your tutor said about self-control?"

Ye Guan replied, "No, I still remember it. I'm very calm right now. I'm not acting on impulse."

Little Pagoda was silent for quite a while before it spoke once more, "You should control yourself."

"He threatened me, Master Pagoda." Ye Guan growled. "He dared to threaten me."

Little Pagoda hesitated before asking, "Is that it? Are you going to kill him because he threatened you?"

Ye Guan responded, "I'm not going to kill him to satisfy myself. I just want to remove a risk factor."

Little Pagoda muttered, "What nonsense..."

Ye Guan ignored that and asked, "Master Pagoda, can you hide my aura?"

Little Pagoda sounded hesitant as it said, "I can, but it'll only last an hour."

Ye Guan nodded. "That's enough."

Ye Guan finally arrived at the Zuixian Building. He was hanging next to the window of a particular room on the ninth floor.

An old man was sitting on the bed with his eyes closed.

The old man was none other than Wei Tong.

Under Little Pagoda's influence, Wei Tong would never notice Ye Guan even if he was standing in front of the latter.

Ye Guan was in no rush. He calmly waited for an opportunity to strike. Ye Guan knew that he had to kill Wei Tong in one strike. Otherwise, Wei Tong could easily alert the members of the Profound Sky Clan, and his assassination would fail.

Wei Tong suddenly took out an old book and started reading it, but rather than a scholarly look, there was a wretched smile on his lips while he was reading the book.

All of a sudden, the door opened, and a young woman sauntered into the room. The young lady smiled softly and started taking off her robe.

Ye Guan frowned slightly. “Master Pagoda, what is she doing?”

Little Pagoda was calm as it said, “Can’t you see? She’s taking off her clothes.”

“I mean, why is she taking off her clothes?” asked Ye Guan in a solemn voice.

“I think she’s here to play cards—duh,” replied Little Pagoda.

Ye Guan was silent.

The young woman was now completely naked, and she walked over to Wei Tong and stood in front of him. Wei Tong’s eyes widened. He grabbed the young woman and lay her on the bed.

Ye Guan’s expression darkened. So that was why she was taking off her clothes! He’s already so old, so how come he’s still so energetic?

Ye Guan stared intently at Wei Tong.

Moments later, Wei Tong started jerking and exclaimed, “There are many books worthy of reading in this world, and there are many skills worthy of learning. There are also many beautiful sights and sceneries to take in, but they are not as beautiful as you—”

Crash!

Without any warning, a sword suddenly flew into the room through the window.

Wei Tong’s expression changed. He grabbed the young woman and lifted her up to use as a human shield. However, the sword twisted like a snake and buried itself into Wei Tong’s neck.

Shwik!

The sword moved by itself and decapitated Wei Tong before flying away through the window.

The young woman was shell-shocked. Moments later, her shriek echoed throughout the building. The cultivators of the Profound Sky Clan and the guards of the Zuixuan Building rushed to the ninth floor.

Their expressions darkened upon seeing Wei Tong's corpse.

....

Ye Guan ran as fast as he could through the night. That felt great!

Little Pagoda's voice echoed in Ye Guan's head, "Someone's following you."

Ye Guan's eyes narrowed, and he came to a halt.

He sounded hoarse as he said, "You can come out now."

There was no response.

"About three hundred meters on the right." Little Pagoda pointed out.

Ye Guan flicked his finger, and a beam of sword energy flew toward the right.

However, it abruptly disappeared.

A woman emerged from the darkness. The woman was beautiful. She had a gorgeous figure and an especially bountiful chest. She was wearing a bright red dress, and the dress seemed like it could barely contain her figure.

The puddings on her chest jiggled, and they were breathtaking.

The woman smiled at Ye Guan without saying anything.

“You—” Ye Guan started, but the woman abruptly appeared right in front of him.

Ye Guan was startled. However, the woman pulled down his mask and returned to her original position before Ye Guan could even react.

Ye Guan’s face fell. She’s strong!

The woman’s smile deepened. “You’re very young for a swordsman, and you’ve comprehended Sword Intent as well. Which clan are you from?”

Ye Guan remained silent. The woman didn’t mind Ye Guan’s silence.

“Even if you don’t speak, it’s only a matter of time before I find out,” she said.

With that, Ye Guan finally spoke, “I’m from the Guanxuan Academy.”

The Guanxuan Academy? Surprise flickered in the woman’s eyes.

“Which Guanxuan Academy?” she asked.

Ye Guan replied, “The Guanxuan Academy of Nanzhou.”

“Nanzhou?” The woman was stunned, and she couldn’t help but ask, “Are you talking about that Nanzhou on the Lower Realm?”

Ye Guan nodded.

The woman examined him from head to toe. "Interesting... this is really interesting."

Ye Guan stared deeply at the woman and asked, "Who are you?"

The corners of the woman's mouth pulled up, "You don't recognize me?"

Ye Guan shook his head.

The woman's smile deepened as she said, "Go ahead, you can leave."

Ye Guan hesitated.

However, he eventually turned around and disappeared into the night.

Moments after Ye Guan's departure, an old man appeared behind the woman. The old man asked, "Academy Chief, he killed Elder Wei Tong of the Profound Sky Clan."

The woman made a sidelong glance at the old man and said, "He's handsome, so does that really matter?"

The old man stiffened. He sounded hesitant as he said, "We made the rules about prohibiting murder for the entire duration of the contest..."

The woman remained calm as she asked, "Well, I didn't see him kill anybody, did you?"

"No, I didn't..." said the old man.

Chapter 29: Love

Ye Guan's expression was solemn as he made his way back to the Siao Residence.

"She was so scary, Master Pagoda..." Ye Guan muttered with dread.

Master Pagoda agreed. "Indeed."

Ye Guan frowned, but he was curious as well. "Was she scary for you?"

Master Pagoda replied, "Yeah, she was scary."

Ye Guan doubted and pointed out. "I don't think you were afraid of that woman at all, Master Pagoda. Are you hiding something from me? If you are, you can tell me. I think I can handle it."

Little Pagoda was silent for a while before it said, "Nope, I'm not hiding anything."

Ye Guan chuckled bitterly. "Fine, you can just tell me at the right time."

Little Pagoda breathed a sigh of relief. Damn, this punk is really difficult to deal with. The members of the Yang Family have been getting smarter over the past three generations.

Little Pagoda was finding it increasingly difficult to deceive Ye Guan.

Ye Guan sighed. "Now that I'm on the Upper Realm, I can finally see that I'm really weak. I really have to work even harder."

Little Pagoda hurriedly said, "Yes, that's right. You have to work even harder."

Ye Guan still had a burning question, and he decided to ask Little Pagoda about it, "Master Pagoda, why do you think she let me go?"

Little Pagoda responded, "I think she has a vested interest in you."

Ye Guan was confused. "A vested interest? What does she stand to gain from me?"

Little Pagoda didn't respond.

Ye Guan didn't probe any further because he could tell that Master Pagoda didn't want to tell him anything. And there was no way he would find out what Master Pagoda was hiding unless the latter decided to tell him...

He wasn't in a rush, and he was confident that Master Pagoda would soon talk to him about it. Master Pagoda was unreliable, but it knew something important, and Ye Guan simply had to coax Master Pagoda for it to speak.

It wasn't that difficult to make Master Pagoda talk. He just had to flatter it, and it would give whatever answer Ye Guan wanted from it.

Soon, Ye Guan arrived in front of his room.

He opened the door and abruptly froze. A woman was sitting in his room, and it was none other than Fei Banqing!

Fei Banqing wordlessly looked up at Ye Guan.

Ye Guan was at a loss for words, but he quickly recovered and said, "I think I entered the wrong room."

With that, he turned around to leave.

However, Fei Banqing called out to him. "Come here."

Ye Guan could feel a headache coming as he turned around and walked into the room.

He closed the door and took off his black clothes.

“Did you kill Wei Tong?” asked Fei Banqing.

Ye Guan nodded.

Fei Banqing’s expression was indifferent.

Ye Guan couldn’t tell whether she was happy or angry about it.

“It seems that you’ve disregarded what I said,” Fei Banqing said.

Ye Guan hurriedly spoke, “Tutor, no one saw me do it, and there’s no way people will think that I’m the one who did it—”

Slam!

Fei Banqing slammed her hand on the table.

“Have you forgotten where we are? We’re on the Upper Realm! There are many hidden talents and extremely powerful people here. Have you ever thought about the consequences you will have to face if they find out that you’re the assassin?”

Ye Guan lowered his head without saying anything in the face of Fei Banqing’s harsh scolding.

Fei Banqing glared at him and continued. “There will always be someone stronger and more powerful than you out there. You’re a swordsman, yes, but don’t be arrogant enough to think that you’re omnipotent.”

Ye Guan nodded. "Tutor, you're right. I won't do it again."

Fei Banqing was slightly troubled by Ye Guan's response. She initially wanted to vent her anger on him, but her fury was assuaged by Ye Guan's response.

There was silence in the room until Fei Banqing shattered it.

"Did you get hurt?" she asked.

Ye Guan shook his head. "Nope."

Fei Banqing's expression was complicated as she stared deeply at Ye Guan.

"You should call it a night."

She placed a white jade bottle on the table and stood up to leave.

Ye Guan hurriedly asked, "Tutor, what is that?"

"It contains a Sky-grade pill. The pill will amplify your power by three times with minimal side effects, but the effect only lasts an hour."

Ye Guan hesitated and was about to reject it, but Fei Banqing had already left the room.

Ye Guan picked up the jade bottle and chased after her.

"I—" Ye Guan started.

However, Fei Banqing interrupted him. "I'll smack you if you return that to me."

With that, Ye Guan could only smile. "I won't refuse it since it's from you..."

"You and Little Jia really are similar to each other," muttered Fei Banqing, "Call me Teacher."

Ye Guan hesitated, but it didn't take long for him to nod and say, "Teacher."

Fei Banqing nodded and asked, "How did it feel to kill a Spacetime Realm cultivator?"

Ye Guan's expression was solemn as he responded, "I got lucky."

He had indeed gotten lucky. His target was doing something, so his sneak attack ended up being successful. If Ye Guan were to face Wei Tong fairly, Ye Guan would have no confidence in defeating the latter.

A Spacetime Realm cultivator was indeed incredible, and it was all because of their ability to manipulate space and time. They were indeed terrifying opponents to face.

Fei Banqing said, "If the Profound Sky Clan decides to interrogate you tomorrow, you must deny any involvement no matter what. Do you understand what I'm saying?"

"I understand." Ye Guan nodded. They can be suspicious of me, but I will never admit to doing anything.

Fei Banqing seemed doubtful as she stared at Ye Guan. "You told me that you understood earlier, but you still went ahead and killed him."

Ye Guan chuckled awkwardly without saying anything. One had to avoid arguing with an angry woman, and the best way to assuage their fury was to nod to whatever they said; soon enough, they would no longer be angry.

Fei Banqing shook her head. "Haaa... You look gentle, but you're as prideful as a lion. You're not willing to suffer at all."

Ye Guan smiled. "I won't bully people, but I won't allow myself to be bullied."

Fei Banqing gazed at Ye Guan and asked, "Why did you help me?"

"I couldn't allow her to continue insulting you," replied Ye Guan.

Fei Banqing was silent. It was difficult to ascertain her thoughts, but she eventually broke the silence and muttered, "Sleep well. We still have to deal with the Profound Sky Clan tomorrow."

Ye Guan nodded. "Okay."

Fei Banqing left, and Ye Guan returned to his room and lay on the bed. He closed his eyes and started talking to the pagoda. "Master Pagoda, I realized something when I killed Wei Tong."

Ye Guan had discovered something about Absolute Strike. It was a sword move that Master Pagoda had taught him, but he still hadn't really understood the essence of the sword move, so he was hardly using it.

Little Pagoda asked, "What do you mean?"

Ye Guan said solemnly, "Killing. Was Absolute Strike made to kill?"

"Tell me your thought process," asked Little Pagoda.

Ye Guan nodded before saying, "The moment I decided to kill Wei Tong, I made it a goal that he had to die. The power and speed of my sword seemed to have increased after I made up my mind."

Little Pagoda was silent.

Ye Guan continued. "I don't believe that simply practicing Absolute Strike will be enough for me to master it. I need killing intent to master it."

Little Pagoda was silent for a moment before asking, "Is that all?"

"No," Ye Guan shook his head and added, "I think Absolute Strike's power depends largely on the strength of my killing intent. In other words, I can't hone it like I do with my other techniques and sword moves. Absolute Strike can only be honed through killing."

Little Pagoda said, "You should follow your conjecture."

Ye Guan hurriedly asked, "Does that mean that I'm right, Master Pagoda?"

Little Pagoda neither confirmed nor denied it. "You shouldn't pay attention to the thoughts of others when it comes to honing your techniques and sword moves. Follow your own thoughts."

Ye Guan nodded. "Okay."

Killing... The mysterious voice in the tiny pagoda spoke, "His comprehension is frightening..."

"We have to be careful—extra careful." Little Pagoda emphasized. "We can't allow him to go down the wrong path."

"Indeed," replied the mysterious voice.

...

The next morning, a group of people from the Profound Sky Clan arrived at the Siao Residence. Song Fu and the others were standing in front of the residence to greet the visitors.

The middle-aged man standing next to Wei Tong yesterday was at the helm of the group.

Fei Banqing greeted the middle-aged man.

“Lu Lian, I heard that Wei Tong died. This calls for a celebration!”

Lu Lian glared at Fei Banqing and said, “You were the ones who killed him!”

Fei Banqing smiled at him. “Where is your proof?”

Lu Lian smiled coldly and said, “Fei Banqing, do you have any idea what you’re doing? You’re challenging our Profound Sky Clan!”

Fei Banqing mocked loudly. “Oh, really? I’m so scared of the Profound Sky Clan!”

Lu Lian’s expression turned cold and sinister.

Siao Shan intervened and said, “Lu Lian, Wei Tong is a Spacetime Realm cultivator. Do you really think that we can kill him without causing a commotion?”

Lu Lian didn’t respond.

Siao Shan continued. “His murderer is also a swordsman.”

Lu Lian’s face turned ugly. The only ones who knew Ye Guan’s identity as a swordsman were the people who had come with him from the Lower Realm. In addition, there was no way the Guanxuan Academy would reveal his status as a swordsman.

Siao Shan gazed at Lu Lian and said, “There’s something strange here. I recommend that you investigate this carefully.”

Lu Lian chuckled. "Our clan has never been in conflict with any other group aside from your Guanxuan Academy of Nanzhou. We fought during the day, and Elder Wei Tong was killed on the same night. Who else could be the culprit other than the Guanxuan Academy of Nanzhou?"

Siao Shan remained calm at the accusation. "Lu Lian, do you have any evidence?"

Lu Lian stared intently at Siao Shan and replied, "No, but I have my suspicions."

Siao Shan shook his head and said, "Lu Lian, you're an elder yourself, so how can you speak like that? Why did you even come here without any evidence?"

Lu Lian gazed deeply at Fei Banqing. After a moment of silence, he smiled and said ominously, "The wind on the Upper Realm is tempestuous. You better tell your students to be careful of the wind."

With that, Lu Lian turned around and left.

Meanwhile, Siao Shan's eyes narrowed at Fei Banqing and the rest.

He was also confused. Did they really kill Wei Tong?

Song Fu swept his gaze across Ye Guan and the rest of the students. "I want you all to stay in the Siao Residence and cultivate. Don't go out of the residence unless it's an emergency."

Ye Guan and the students nodded.

Song Fu turned to look at Siao Shan and said, "I'm sorry to trouble you, Brother Siao."

Siao Shan shook his head and responded, "It's nothing."

Song Fu's expression was solemn as he said, "The martial contest will start in two months. We have to lie low and wait until then."

Siao Shan nodded and said, "The students can stay and cultivate in the Siao Residence. They can leave the residence, but they must never leave the city. No one will dare to kill in broad daylight in the city, but it's a different story outside."

Song Fu nodded. Siao Ge, Ye Guan, and Nalan Jia were talented individuals, and they had to be protected at all costs.

The group dismissed, and Ye Guan went over to the library of the Siao Residence. He was unfamiliar with the Upper Realm, so he decided to visit the library to learn more about it.

Two hours later, Ye Guan now had a better understanding of the powers that existed in the Upper Realm. The Upper Realm was divided into two regions—North and South.

The most powerful and most influential organization throughout the Upper Realm was the Guanxuan Academy, followed by two big families and three major clans.

The two big families were the Wang Family and the Zhao Family. The foundation of these two families was deep, and their history was at least a few thousand years.

Meanwhile, the three major clans were the Profound Sky Clan, Xingyun Clan, and Yun Clan. The Yun Clan and the Zhao Family were located in the North, and they were more mysterious than the others.

The Immortal Treasures Pavilion was influential on the Upper Realm as well, but they had the policy of avoiding power struggles. Of course, no one was really daring enough to offend them.

And it was all because the Immortal Treasures Pavilion was filthy rich!

Their pockets were so deep that even the Guanxuan Academy had to respect them, and the same was true not just for the Guanxuan Academy branches but in the Guanxuan Universe as well.

It had to be known that the Immortal Treasures Pavilion was the entity that provided the funding for the establishment of the Guanxuan Academy.

The owner of the Immortal Treasures Pavilion also had a unique relationship with the Sword Master of the Guanxuan Academy.

Three hundred and sixty states were going to participate in the martial contest of this decade. There were two states that were more powerful than the entire Upper Realm—Qingzhou and Yunzhou.

Qingzhou was stronger than Yunzhou, as it was the birthplace of the Sword Master. Back then, they had received a lot of support and resources from the Main Academy of the Guanxuan Academy.

There was even a rumor about how the Main Academy almost got built in Qingzhou.

Yunzhou was weaker than Qingzhou, but it was an extraordinary state. The three Greats were born in Yunzhou, but it was a pity that they had been consistently losing against Qingzhou. Qingzhou was so powerful that facing them felt meaningless.

Ye Guan finally walked out of the library and saw that it was already night.

The sky was filled with stars tonight.

Nalan Jia appeared in the distance. She was wearing a long purple dress, and her hair fluttered in the night breeze. She was walking slowly but elegantly toward Ye Guan, and the demeanor she carried as she walked was enough to make people fall for her.

Nalan Jia finally arrived in front of Ye Guan. She smiled and asked, “Do you want to go on a stroll outside? Today’s the Lantern Festival, and there are many festivities outside.”

Ye Guan blinked and asked, “Lantern Festival?”

Nalan Jia nodded. “Yes.”

A rendezvous between lovers. Ye Guan would be a fool if he were to reject the offer.

Ye Guan smiled and responded, "Okay, let's go on a stroll."

Nalan Jia's smile deepened. "Let's go!"

The two of them left the Siao Residence and headed to the city center. Every house on the street had red lanterns by their doors, and the streets were filled with people laughing and talking to each other. It was indeed a bustling night.

Fireworks would also occasionally fill the sky with a kaleidoscope of colors.

This Lantern Festival was founded by the Immortal Treasures Pavilion, and it became a popular annual festival. Ye Guan and Nalan Jia walked down the busy street.

Nalan Jia looked around and smiled. "I have no idea why, but I really like the smell of fireworks."

Ye Guan nodded and said, "Yeah, I like its smell, too."

"I've heard that cultivation gets lonelier the stronger a cultivator becomes," said Nalan Jia in a solemn voice. "I don't want to be alone on my path to the summit..."

Ye Guan turned to look at her and said, "The path to the summit of cultivation is indeed lonely, so Little Jia, are you willing to go down the path with me?"

Nalan Jia gazed at Ye Guan.

Ye Guan smiled at her and added, "I hope that you'll go down the path with me. I hope that we can reach the summit together. Let's climb the summit of cultivation together. Otherwise, we'll stay together and die together if we end up failing on our way to the summit. By then, we shall meet again in our next lives. What do you think?"

Stay together, die together, and we'll meet again in our next lives... Nalan Jia was stunned. Eventually, she smiled and asked, "Do you love me?"

Ye Guan returned the question to her. "Do you love me?"

"I don't know!" Nalan Jia shook her head. She paused and continued. "I have never been in a relationship before, so I don't know what love feels and means, but I feel really happy whenever I'm with you. Is that love?"

Ye Guan thought about it before shaking his head. "I have never been in a relationship before, but I feel the same way as you do—I feel really happy whenever I'm with you."

The corners of Nalan Jia's mouth curled up.

Ye Guan smiled. "Maybe this is love, maybe it's not—who cares? As long as we're happy, then it's fine."

Nalan Jia nodded. "I agree."

Ye Guan was about to speak, but a man in white appeared in front of Nalan Jia.

The man in white bowed slightly and smiled at her. "Greetings, My name is Wang Yuan, and I'm from the Wang Family. This is our first time seeing each other, but love has already bloomed in my heart when I clapped my eyes on you. I truly think that you're a fairy that has descended to bless us mortals with your visage. I wonder if you—"

Nalan Jia grabbed Ye Guan's hand and held it up proudly. She glared at Wang Yuan and said, "Can't you see that we're together or are your eyes on your butt?"

Chapter 30: In My Heart!

Wang Yuan's expression stiffened.

The Wang Family was one of the two greatest families in the Upper Realm, and he was even the heir! Every woman he had chased had always accepted him.

And why? It was all because he had money, power, prestige, and strength!

The Lantern Festival was tonight, so he came out to look for targets and saw Nalan Jia. He smiled upon seeing her. It was an unexpected boon from the heavens that he had stumbled upon such a beautiful woman.

However, she actually rejected him.

Unfortunately for Nalan Jia, her rejection only stoked the fire of interest in Wang Yuan because Wang Yuan was one of those men who enjoyed chasing women who were playing hard to get.

Wang Yuan wasn't angry at all. He chuckled and said, "Miss, I don't have any other intentions, I just want to get to know you better, and I—"

"Pfft!" Ye Guan laughed and interrupted. "She doesn't want to get to know you."

Wang Yuan turned to look at Ye Guan.

"May I know your name? How should I address you?" he asked.

He was the heir of a big family, so he had to be careful about treating people with unknown origins. After all, if he ended up provoking someone powerful, he would implicate the Wang Family behind him as well.

The possibility was small, but Wang Yuan knew that he had to be careful. If he's from a decent clan, I'll befriend him. Otherwise, I'll stab him in the back!

Ye Guan smiled and said, "Take a guess."

Wang Yuan's eyes narrowed, but his smile remained.

Ye Guan glared at him and said, "We do not wish to be disturbed."

With that, he pulled Nalan Jia and walked away.

Left alone, Wang Yuan chuckled to himself. "Interesting, how interesting! He actually threatened me. I'll give you half an hour to investigate everything about that man just now."

An old man quietly departed his side.

A cold glint flashed in Wang Yuan's eyes.

Meanwhile, Ye Guan and Nalan Jia continued walking with their hands intertwined. Nalan Jia didn't let go of Ye Guan's hand, so Ye Guan continued to hold her hand.

Nalan Jia giggled. "I felt your killing intent just now."

Ye Guan nodded slightly. "He was really disrespectful. If I saw a man standing next to a woman, I wouldn't bother striking up a conversation with her. He definitely saw that we're together, but he still decided to talk to you."

Nalan Jia looked at him and asked, "Are you going to approach random women and talk to them?"

Ye Guan pondered over it before saying confidently, "Nope, I don't think so."

Nalan Jia was curious, and she asked, "Why not?"

Ye Guan remained calm as he replied, "I'll just work hard to become stronger by myself, and I'll also strive to be a tycoon. By then, women will flock to me by themselves."

"Oh, that makes a lot of sense," remarked Nalan Jia.

The pair looked at each other and chuckled.

Ye Guan suddenly said, "I think he won't let us go that easily."

Nalan Jia nodded and said, "I think so, too."

"Anyway, what do you think we should do next?"

"I want to go shopping outside the city, do you want to come with me?"

"Of course!"

The pair decided to go out of the city, and their hands were intertwined tightly as they walked over to the city gate. The way they walked down the streets made it seem as though they had long gotten used to holding each other's hands.

Ye Guan suddenly came to a halt. He pulled Nalan Jia aside to a small stall. He handed over a purple spiritual crystal to the shopkeeper before taking away a butterfly hairpin.

The shopkeeper stared at the purple spiritual crystal in his hand and grinned. Jackpot!

Ye Guan turned to face Nalan Jia with a smile and said, "I'll help you wear it."

Nalan Jia blinked and asked him, "Aren't you going to ask me if I like it?"

Ye Guan smiled sheepishly. "This is my first time giving a girl a present, so I'm not really sure what to do. Anyway... ahem, do you like it?"

Nalan Jia grinned. "Yup. Help me wear it!"

Ye Guan nodded and got even closer to her. The two of them got close enough to feel and smell each other's breath. He inserted the hairpin into her hair, and it seemed fine. However, there was something off that Ye Guan couldn't quite grasp.

Nalan Jia said, "That's good enough."

Ye Guan hesitated for a few seconds before saying, "Okay."

With that, they held hands once more and continued on their journey out of the city.

The outskirts of the city were quite deserted and silent, but the silence was disturbed by panting noises from the nearby bushes. The panting noises belonged to a girl, and she sounded both anxious and excited at the same time.

"Yes! No! Yes! Yes! No, not there..."

No one could tell whether she was saying yes or no.

Ye Guan and Nalan Jia were silent.

The atmosphere had turned weird in the blink of an eye.

Ye Guan said, "Let's walk on the other side..."

With that, he pulled Nalan Jia over to the right side, and they continued walking down the path. However, the noises they had heard just now rendered them too embarrassed to speak.

Ye Guan glanced at Nalan Jia and saw that she was incredibly beautiful, elegant, and seemingly ethereal beneath the moonlight.

“You’re really beautiful, Little Jia!” he muttered unknowingly.

Nalan Jia seemed startled as she blinked a few times before responding, “There are plenty of beautiful girls out there.”

Ye Guan chuckled. “There are indeed many beautiful girls out there, but you’re the only one who’s beautiful in my heart.”

“You’re only allowed to say such mushy things ten times. You’re not allowed to say something like that anymore afterward...” Nalan Jia said shyly.

Ye Guan’s corniness rendered even Little Pagoda speechless.

Ye Guan chuckled and held Nalan Jia’s hand tightly.

All of a sudden, footsteps echoed behind them. The uninvited guests were none other than Wang Yuan and an old man.

Wang Yuan smiled at them and said, “How interesting. It appears that the two of you were trying to lure me out of the city!”

Ye Guan and Nalan Jia turned to look at him.

Nalan Jia asked, “Do you think you’re clever?”

Wang Yuan’s eyes narrowed slightly.

“I’m just trying to get to know you better, I have no other intentions!” he said with a smile.

Nalan Jia shook her head. “Well, I don’t want to get to know you.”

“Well, I want to get to know you better, anyway!” Wang Yuan guffawed. He glanced at Ye Guan and said, “I thought you’re from a decent clan or family, but to think that you’re from Nanzhou. Tsk, tsk... I have to say that I admire you quite a bit, you’re courageous enough to threaten me!”

Ye Guan wordlessly stared at Wang Yuan. There was no need to talk to a dead man walking.

Wang Yuan’s smile turned sinister and cold. “Have you thought about how you want to die yet?” he asked.

However, the old man behind him warned. “Young Master, there’s something strange with these two.”

Wang Yuan frowned. He was about to say something when Nalan Jia stretched her hand out. The space in front of Wang Yuan was torn open, and a hand emerged from the rift in space and grabbed him by the throat.

Wang Yuan’s expression changed instantly.

Ye Guan was stunned. Spacetime Realm! I had no idea that Little Jia is already a Spacetime Realm cultivator. Her cultivation speed is outrageous!

Nalan Jia glared at the terrified Wang Yuan. There was clear disdain in her eyes as she said, “You’re too inferior to even be compared to my Little Guan.”

Nalan Jia squeezed Wang Yuan’s throat.

Crack!

Wang Yuan's neck was shattered, causing blood to leak out of his orifices. The old man behind Wang Yuan turned around to run, but a rift in space abruptly opened in front of him.

A hand emerged from the rift and grabbed him by the throat.

Crack!

Nalan Jia squeezed, and the old man's horrified expression stiffened. He went limp and collapsed to the ground.

Nalan Jia opened her palms, and the storage rings of the two corpses flew into her palms. She took out a thousand gold spiritual crystals from the storage rings and gave them to Ye Guan, saying, "Half for me; half for you."

Ye Guan put away the storage ring and asked, "Little Jia, you're already at the Spacetime Realm?"

Nalan Jia smiled. "Were you surprised?"

Ye Guan nodded. "That's an understatement..."

"I have to thank you for it," said Nalan Jia.

Ye Guan was visibly confused, so Nalan Jia explained, "It's thanks to the Immoral-rank cultivation manual you gave me. If it hadn't been for it, I wouldn't have been able to reach this realm so quickly."

An Immortal-rank cultivation manual! Ye Guan finally remembered what she was talking about. An Immortal-rank cultivation manual coupled with Nalan Jia's special physique was basically a recipe for limitless growth.

Nalan Jia laughed and said, "We should go."

Ye Guan nodded. "Let's go."

With that, the two of them left the scene.

Meanwhile, an old man appeared at the scene just a few minutes after Ye Guan and Nalan Jia's departure. His expression turned solemn upon seeing the corpses of Wang Yuan and the old man.

A middle-aged man appeared at the scene, and he was the family head of the Wang Family—Wang Qi.

Wang Qi stared deeply at Wang Yuan's corpse and said, "A Spacetime Realm cultivator!"

"Indeed, the killer is a Spacetime Realm cultivator," said the old man with a nod. He went silent for a few moments before continuing. "I will investigate this matter at once."

"Wait!" Wang Qi cried out.

The old man looked at Wang Qi, and the latter explained in a calm voice, "The martial contest is just around the corner. Things will be turbulent during the martial contest because talents from other states will flock here to participate. The murderer dared to kill someone from our Wang Family, so they're definitely not afraid of us."

"Clan Leader, what are you trying to say?"

Wang Qi said, "I want you to investigate, but don't act rashly once you've discovered the perpetrator."

"I understand!" replied the old man. However, he didn't turn around to leave. He remained standing in front of Wang Qi. He hesitated for quite a while before glancing at Wang Yuan and saying, "What should I do about the two of them..."

Wang Qi remained calm as he said, "Bring them back to the Grand Elder! This is a harsh lesson for him because he hasn't been teaching our descendants properly."

“If the Grand Elder sees them, he might insist on avenging them at all costs...”

Wang Qi glanced at the old man and said, “Let him be!”

With that, Wang Qi turned around and left.

The old man was silent. Wang Qi was clearly thinking of avenging Wang Yuan with a borrowed knife.

...

Ye Guan and Nalan Jia returned to their own rooms in the Siao Residence.

Ye Guan sat cross-legged and retrieved the gold spiritual crystals he had received from Nalan Jia. He closed his eyes and circulated the Immortal-rank cultivation method he had learned from the Immortal-rank cultivation manual.

It was about time he sprinted toward the Divine Soul Realm!

He had already reached the peak of the Divine Path Realm while he was still in Nanzhou, but he decided not to make a breakthrough into the Divine Soul Realm just yet. It was all for the sake of reaching the absolute peak of the realm. Now, he had finally reached the absolute peak, so it was about time he made a breakthrough.

Cultivation was expensive!

It didn't take him that long to consume a thousand gold spiritual crystals.

The Immortal-rank cultivation method was incredible. Ye Guan's aura surged like crazy, and he could also feel his soul going through a qualitative change.

An hour and three thousand gold spiritual crystals later, Ye Guan's aura finally reached its peak.

Thirty minutes and two thousand gold spiritual crystals later, Ye Guan's eyes abruptly opened as he exhaled a puff of haze. He was sweating profusely, but he had never felt better.

He had finally reached the Divine Soul Realm!

His senses had sharpened to the extent that he could vividly sense the presence of every ant in the room. Ye Guan smiled. He was sure that his Royal Sword Art had become more powerful along with his breakthrough. After all, the Royal Sword Art's strength somewhat depended on the power of his soul.

Ye Guan was confident that he could easily kill a Spacetime Realm cultivator by using his sword intent along with the Royal Sword Art.

Ye Guan looked down and examined his storage ring upon recalling something. He chuckled bitterly upon seeing that he only had less than two thousand gold spiritual crystals remaining.

He couldn't help but admit that his breakthrough had been too expensive.

However, Ye Guan knew that cultivation would become more expensive the higher his realm. It was the universal truth, and most people couldn't afford to cultivate to the Divine Soul Realm.

"Master Pagoda, are you there?" Ye Guan asked out of the blue.

"What is it?"

Ye Guan hesitated for quite a while before saying, "Well... I'd like to borrow some money from you!"

"I have no money..." replied Little Pagoda.

Ye Guan's expression was solemn as he said, "I promise to pay you back."

“I really have no money, and I’m still recovering from my injuries. Otherwise, I would have activated the world in here long ago!”

“Then, do you have any spiritual artifacts or spiritual treasures? I’ll sell them to fund my cultivation.”

“I don’t have any of those...”

Ye Guan was rendered speechless.

“How about you go ahead and steal treasures for yourself?” Little Pagoda suggested.

Ye Guan didn’t know what to say.

Little Pagoda added, “If it makes you feel guilty, then you should learn... you should learn how to steal from someone who has mastered the famous Entrapment Technique. You can use that technique to steal anything without feeling guilty!”