

A Sword 601

Chapter 601: How About Attacking Together?

Ye Guan stared calmly at the lady in white. A middle-aged man was standing next to the lady in white, and his eyes were transfixed on Ye Guan. "Come out. Otherwise, the little girl and her grandmother next door will meet their end."

The town had its rules—no fighting was allowed inside of it.

The middle-aged man and his group were not daring enough to break it.

Ye Guan nodded slightly. "Alright."

The middle-aged man led the group away from the stone house.

Ye Guan looked behind him and saw Lin Daimei standing at her grandmother's door with a knife in hand.

A faint smile graced Ye Guan's lips. "You should rest."

Lin Daimei remained silent with an unwavering gaze.

Ye Guan then walked out of the town under Qin Xue and the others' deep gaze.

It was deep in the night, and the breeze was cold outside.

Ye Guan came to a halt, facing Qin Xue and the rest.

The middle-aged man stared intently at Ye Guan, and a sense of unease suddenly gripped his heart. The sense of unease was growing stronger with each passing moment.

How come Ye Guan was so composed?

The sense of unease became a lump of frustration within the middle-aged man's throat.

"Attack!" the middle-aged man roared, but he did not move at all.

Instead, several men standing next to him charged at Ye Guan. They were natives of this world, so their cultivation bases weren't being suppressed at all.

Ye Guan picked up a tree branch on the ground, and he thrust the branch forward to meet one of the men charging toward him.

The moment the tree branch made contact with the man's fist, Ye Guan's face twisted in agony.

Boom!

The man was blasted away, and his fleshly body scattered into a gore of flesh and blood before he even landed on the ground.

The onlookers were horrified.

Meanwhile, Ye Guan's face was pale, and his brows were furrowed deeply. He could smell iron at the back of his throat.

Ye Guan had challenged the First God's seal, and his true opponent earlier wasn't the man earlier, but the First God's seal.

Unfortunately, he failed to defeat the seal and ended up suffering a backlash.

From afar, the middle-aged man turned abruptly to Qin Xue.

"Didn't you say that he's an outsider?" the middle-aged man asked, sounding furious.

Qin Xue stared deeply at Ye Guan in the distance and said, "He's suffering from a backlash."

A backlash?

The onlookers turned their gaze to Ye Guan and saw that Ye Guan's face was pale, which was a clear sign that he had indeed suffered a backlash.

The middle-aged man glared at Ye Guan and said, "Attack."

However, no one moved at all. It wasn't strange, as they knew what the middle-aged man was trying to do here. He was going to sacrifice them to exhaust Ye Guan.

Unfortunately for the middle-aged man, they were not foolish enough to step forward and sacrifice themselves for him.

Seeing the reluctance of his companions, the middle-aged man's expression soured. He growled and said, "He's suffering from a backlash! He can no longer fight back. Let's go ahead and charge at him together; we'll surely overpower him."

Still, nobody budged an inch.

The middle-aged man's cold gaze swept across his companions.

They avoided his gaze and remained frozen.

Meanwhile, Ye Guan suddenly smiled. "Why don't you all attack together?"

Attack together!

At Ye Guan's suggestion, the crowd's demeanor grew grave.

The middle-aged man locked eyes with Ye Guan. "If I'm not mistaken, you've run out of energy. You're just bluffing in an attempt to threaten us, right?"

Ye Guan smiled but said nothing. Then, he started walking toward the middle-aged man with a wooden stick in his hand. His gait was steady and calm, but he emanated an invisible pressure that bore down on everyone present.

The middle-aged man stared deeply at Ye Guan. His hands were clenched, but he dared not make a move.

Meanwhile, Qin Xue stared at Ye Guan, seemingly in deep thought.

The middle-aged man's expression soured as Ye Guan approached him.

The pressure was making it hard for him to breathe.

However, he knew that the man before him was no ordinary foe.

Escape? He was reluctant to flee at this point. His instincts were telling him that Ye Guan was just trying to intimidate him. If Ye Guan truly had the strength to fight, why resort to tricks instead of drawing his sword outright?

Realizing that, the middle-aged man took a deep breath and said, "Everyone, fortune favors the bold. He has used a strand of Ancestral Origin just to save someone. In other words, he has multiple strands of Ancestral Origin!

"We just have to kill him, and we'll rise to the summit. Let's attack him together!"

The middle-aged man charged at Ye Guan without hesitation. He knew that if he didn't lead the charge, his companions wouldn't make a move. However, the middle-aged man was disappointed to discover that his companions had stayed put.

They were waiting, waiting to see if the middle-aged man could hold his own against Ye Guan. If he couldn't, they'd flee without hesitation.

Seeing his companions' reluctance, the middle-aged man's expression turned ferocious. However, he no longer had any choice—it was all or nothing!

The middle-aged man swung his fist fiercely toward Ye Guan, and a wave of force akin to a raging storm swept toward the latter.

At the critical juncture, Ye Guan suddenly drew his sword.

Bang!

The middle-aged man was sent flying, and he crashed to the ground with a grotesque thud. Upon impact, his fleshly body exploded into a rain of blood and flesh, leaving only his soul behind.

Everyone froze in stupefaction at the gruesome sight. The next moment, they all turned around and fled, knowing that they stood no chance against Ye Guan.

Everyone fled except for one figure, who stood steadfast, seemingly undeterred by the unfolding mayhem. Then, she charged forward and slashed out with her sword toward Ye Guan.

The figure was none other than Qin Xue!

She had been observing Ye Guan closely. She noticed that his face paled considerably the moment striking down the middle-aged man. Sensing her chance, she lunged forward with determination.

Ye Guan's brows furrowed deeply at Qin Xue's attack. Then, he raised his sword and slashed out.

However, Qin Xue's expression changed drastically at the sight. She pivoted on her heel and vanished into the darkness, opting to escape.

Ye Guan couldn't help but shake his head and smile wryly at the sight. The move he had just made was a bluff, and it had intimidated Qin Xue, making her flee.

Strength was key to victory in battles, but strength wasn't everything.

Wiping the blood away from his mouth, Ye Guan glanced toward the motionless middle-aged man not too far away from him.

The middle-aged man couldn't move, as his fleshy body had been destroyed. His soul was heavily injured as well.

The middle-aged man panicked at Ye Guan's approach, and he hurriedly said, "I'm a disciple of the Yu Hua Clan. If you kill me, you will incur great karma, you—"

The middle-aged man stopped mid-sentence as a tree branch pierced his forehead.

A small trickle of blood dripped down Ye Guan's lips. Throughout the entire battle, Ye Guan's true enemy had never been the middle-aged man and his men, but the First God's seal. He was struck by a backlash every time he made a move, and the backlash grew stronger with each instance.

The backlashes had taken their toll on him, leaving him weary.

Just then, Ye Guan's attention was drawn to a girl standing not too far away from him.

The girl was none other than Lin Daimei!

Ye Guan smiled and asked, "Are you here to help me?"

Lin Daimei approached slowly, her gaze fixed on Ye Guan. "Is it serious?"

Ye Guan nodded solemnly.

After a moment's hesitation, Lin Daimei asked, "Are you going to die?"

Ye Guan blinked, taken aback by her blunt question. "Are you afraid that I'll die?"

Lin Daimei replied earnestly, "You haven't given me the hawthorn candy you promised today."

Ye Guan chuckled, momentarily caught off guard by her unexpected response.

A faint smile played on Lin Daimei's lips as she walked to Ye Guan's side. She tried to support his weight as best as she could as the two of them walked into the town.

Ye Guan sprawled out on his bed, and blood was still trickling down his mouth. He sighed and admitted to himself that he had come dangerously close to death today.

Lin Daimei returned with a bowl of herbs. "These are my grandmother's herbs... they might be helpful to you."

After a moment's consideration, Ye Guan declined it, saying, "Thank you, but... I think I'll manage on my own."

Setting the bowl aside, Lin Daimei asked, "Do you regret it?"

Ye Guan looked puzzled by her question.

Lin Daimei's gaze bore into him. "You saved that woman, but she repaid your kindness with malice. Do you regret saving her?"

Ye Guan smiled softly. "No."

"Why?" Lin Daimei pressed, frowning slightly.

Ye Guan didn't answer and asked back instead, "Why did you come looking for me?"

Lin Daimei was quiet for a while before saying, "You know, if you had just stayed here, they wouldn't have dared to lay a finger on you. It's strange, but no one dares to fight here."

"Ah, there's that!" Ye Guan exclaimed.

Lin Daimei stared silently at Ye Guan.

Breaking the silence, Ye Guan's voice carried a hint of amusement as he said, "You have a question for me, right? Feel free to ask now."

However, Lin Daimei shook her head and replied, "Let's save it for after you've had a taste of my cooking tomorrow."

Ye Guan agreed. "Fair enough."

Lin Daimei made her way to the door. Just as she was about to walk out of the door, she came to a halt and turned to look at Ye Guan. Her voice was tinged with uncertainty as she asked, "Are you planning to leave?"

Ye Guan was taken aback. "What makes you say that?"

Lin Daimei said, "Well, that woman came back here to repay your kindness with malice, so there's a high chance that you possess something valuable enough for her to do such a thing. They know that you're here, so you're going to leave soon, right?"

Ye Guan nodded. "That's right."

"Can I ask you for a favor?" Lin Daimei asked. She clenched her tiny fists, and her figure trembled like an aspen tree.

Although she was hesitant, she knew that she had to ask

Ye Guan stared deeply at her and encouraged her to speak. "Go ahead, what is it?"

Lin Daimei's voice sounded like a mosquito's droning as she said, "Can you save my grandmother?"

Ye Guan was quiet for a while before asking, "Can you take me to her first?"

"Of course," Lin Daimei replied. Then, she seemed to have realized something, as she added, "You're injured, so... I think we should do it tomorrow?"

"Don't worry about me." Ye Guan chuckled and said, "Let's go."

Ye Guan then stood up and followed Lin Daimei to her grandmother's stone house.

Ye Guan's expression changed drastically the moment he entered the stone house.

Chapter 602: What's She to You?

It's dangerous here! Alarm bells started ringing in Ye Guan's head as soon as he entered the stone house. He felt a shiver down his spine, and his gaze drifted over to a stone bed where an old lady with snow-white hair was lying down.

The old lady's pallid face made it clear that she was weak.

Their eyes met briefly, and there was a heavy tension hanging in the air.

Ye Guan instantly realized that the old lady's cultivation base was pretty high.

Lin Daimei rushed to the old lady's side and grabbed the latter's hand. Giving it a strong squeeze, Lin Daimei said, "Grandma, this is Ye Guan, an outsider. Surely he can help with your injuries."

The old lady cast a gentle smile toward Ye Guan.

"Is that true?" asked the old lady.

"Yes..."

With a nod from Lin Daimei, Ye Guan walked up to the old lady. "May I have a word with your grandmother alone?"

Perplexed, Lin Daimei blinked in confusion.

"It is regarding her condition," Ye Guan clarified.

The old lady gave Lin Daimei a reassuring nod.

After some hesitation, Lin Daimei complied and left Ye Guan alone with the old lady.

When there were only the two of them left in the room, their eyes met in mid-air, and tension settled in the room.

The old lady broke the silence, asking, "What brings you here?"

Ye Guan calmly replied, "Just to see what's going on."

The old lady stared deeply at Ye Guan. "That's it?"

Ye Guan nodded.

The old lady stayed silent, carefully scrutinizing him.

"Did you suffer heavy injuries?" Ye Guan inquired, examining the old lady.

Shaking her head, the old lady answered, "It is not an injury. This is a punishment."

"Punishment?" Ye Guan frowned.

The old lady explained, "You're not familiar with our customs, are you?"

Ye Guan shook his head. "Not really."

"Since you're from the outside, you should know about Ah Nan, right?"

"Nope," Ye Guan answered.

The old lady stared at Ye Guan for a while before explaining, "In Haoran, those born here are bound by certain rules. One of them is that they could never leave and never cultivate. Those who defy it are cursed, doomed to perish before a century's end."

Ye Guan furrowed his brow and asked, "Is it the work of the First God?"

The old lady shook her head. "No."

Perplexed, Ye Guan inquired further, "Then who's responsible for it?"

The old lady cast a penetrating gaze at Ye Guan and revealed. "The First God left the seal to protect this town. But the curse... it was laid by one of the gods beneath the First God.

"There are many gods below the First God, and among them is Ah Nan."

Ah Nan? Ye Guan's brow furrowed in concern.

The old lady chuckled softly. "Seems like you're not too familiar with the gods, are you?"

"I know a little, but I'm far from an expert."

The old lady's gaze settled on Ye Guan. "Ah Nan is within the top three in the power ranking among the First God's believers. Interestingly, he came from this place."

Ye Guan was puzzled. "But why would he curse his own hometown?"

Shaking her head, the old lady replied, "I wish I knew. This town, once blessed by the First God, became a haven for those born here. Every single person from here is born talented in cultivation. However, those who cultivate here will not live past a hundred years, all thanks to Ah Nan's curse."

Ye Guan glanced at the old lady and muttered, "And you..."

"In three days, I'll become a hundred years old," the old lady said weakly.

Ye Guan fell silent.

The old lady turned to him. "You're thinking of taking Daimei away, aren't you?"

"That did cross my mind."

"You're going to put her in harm's way by making her cultivate," the old lady said.

"But if she comes with me... Ye Guan retorted, "She might be able to break free from her curse."

The old lady locked eyes with Ye Guan and said, "Prove it to me, then."

After a moment of thought, Ye Guan opened his palm. A strand of Ancestral Origin floated out of him and entered the old lady's body. The next moment, however, the old lady's eyes widened. She trembled, and blood trickled down her lips.

Ye Guan's brow creased in worry at the sight. The strand of Ancestral Origin inside of her had vanished as if it were a rock that had been thrown into the ocean. To make matters worse, her skin was darkening.

Ye Guan's face darkened as well. What's happening?

After a while, the old lady drew a shaky breath. "It's no use. Even Ancestral Origin can't resist the curse."

The curse... Ye Guan fell silent.

The old lady stared weakly at Ye Guan and said, "I know about Daimei's incredible talent, and I know why you want to take her away. However, taking her away with you is only going to harm her. If you truly care for her, leave her be.

"Give her a peaceful life in this town."

Ye Guan was silent for a while. Just as he was about to use the Divine Imprint, Mu Yuan inside him suddenly said, "Absolutely not."

Ye Guan asked, "Why?"

Mu Yuan sounded serious as he said, "Using the Divine Imprint to break the curse will definitely alert Ah Nan, and he's going to hunt you down the moment he knows that you possess the Divine Imprint. You're not his opponent yet.

"Moreover, there is no guarantee that the Divine Imprint can even break the curse."

Perplexed, Ye Guan inquired, "Why not?"

Mu Yuan explained, "Ah Nan was one of the Divine Arts' first inheritors. Ah Nan is a master of curses, second only to the First God himself. Even the Divine Imprint may not be strong enough to break his curse."

Ye Guan fell silent, feeling a pang of guilt.

If he hadn't used a strand of Ancestral Origin to attempt to heal her just now, the old lady would have had a few more days, but now...

The old lady seemed to have sensed Ye Guan's internal turmoil and smiled sadly, saying, "Young man, do not blame yourself. Your willingness to save a stranger with a strand of Ancestral Origin is a truly noble act."

Ye Guan sighed softly. Save?

Ye Guan wanted to save her, but he knew that he couldn't do it.

Mu Yuan was right. He was just going to alert Ah Nan if he were to activate the Divine Imprint. No, it wouldn't be just Ah Nan. Ye Guan might alert more gods as well, which would put both him and the town in danger.

He could help others, but he couldn't put himself in danger by helping them.

The old lady suddenly called out, "Daimei."

Lin Daimei rushed into the room with tears streaming down her face. She had overheard their conversation. The old lady took Lin Daimei's hand gently and said, "You're a smart girl. I know you're curious about this town and about my past... You're right; I did leave this town once to train on the mountain, but—"

The old lady was interrupted by a fit of coughing.

Lin Daimei helped her sit up and patted her back gently, saying, "Grandma..."

The old lady squeezed Daimei's hand tightly. "I know you've been dreaming of the outside world. I know you've been dreaming of becoming someone important, dreaming of flying and traveling but going to the outside world is a one-way journey.

"Promise me that you won't leave this town no matter what, all right? Promise me that you'll live a simple life, marry, and have children here... Will you do that?"

Lin Daimei knelt before Ye Guan, and her hands trembling as she pleaded, "I... I know what I'm doing is wrong, it's beyond my abilities... but... I have no other choice! I can only beg you. Please... I..."

Tears flowed down her cheeks; she knew that it was wrong and that she wasn't supposed to do it. However, she had no choice! She did not want her grandmother to die just like that.

Ye Guan stared deeply at Lin Daimei before saying, "If I save your grandmother, I might end up dead."

Lin Daimei was stunned, and then she muttered, "I understand. I'm sorry..."

With that, Lin Daimei stood up and turned around. She walked back to the old lady with tears streaming down her face.

The old lady held Daimei's hand tightly, and a faint smile tugged at her lips. "I was prepared for this day to come ever since I decided to cultivate. It's just that... I'm just a little worried about you..."

Daimei shook her head and muttered, "Don't worry, Grandma, I won't leave, I promise."

The old lady smiled and then looked at Ye Guan standing nearby. "Promise me."

Ye Guan said nothing. He simply turned around and left the room.

Outside the stone house, Ye Guan stared quietly at the starry sky.

Eventually, he sighed softly and walked away into the night. He was supposed to have no regrets over his decision, but he couldn't help but feel regretful. If it had been an easy task, he wouldn't have hesitated.

However, intervening would undoubtedly bring him a ton of trouble, and he was too weak to handle that trouble by himself. He might even end up implicating his sister, Qianqian, Mu Yuan, and a few others.

What was he supposed to do if that were to happen? What could he even do?

Ye Guan left a storage ring outside the house. It contained no cultivation items, only some food. The storage ring didn't require spiritual energy to open as well.

Soon, Ye Guan disappeared into the night.

Unbeknownst to Ye Guan, a man in a white robe and a lady in a plain skirt was staring at him as he disappeared into the night.

The man in a white robe said softly, "Qing'er, I think he's feeling helpless."

"Of course, that is beyond his capabilities, after all," said the lady in a plain skirt. Then, she stared at the man next to her and asked, "If you were in his shoes, would you save her?"

The man in a white robe shook his head and replied, "I would not because it's beyond my capabilities."

The lady in the plain skirt gazed at Ye Guan in the distance and said, "He's likely to have inner demons."

The man in a white robe frowned and asked, "Why do you say that?"

"If he were truly powerless, he wouldn't feel guilty. He might have to wrestle with his inner demons. Deep down, he knows that he could call on his family to handle any issues if he were to intervene, but he's reluctant to do so."

The man in a white robe held the lady in a plain skirt's hand and asked, "What do you think, Qing'er? Should he step in or not?"

Qing'er glanced at where Ye Guan had disappeared before responding, "One cannot establish a new order while turning a blind eye to injustice. If he can't save even one person, how can he save the entire vast expanse? He—"

Qing'er stopped mid-sentence upon noticing something.

The young man who had just departed had returned to the courtyard. He rushed to the stone house and kicked the door open. Staring at the old lady on the bed, he declared, "I'll handle this!"

The old lady hesitated briefly before murmuring, "But Ah Nan..."

Ye Guan waved his hand dismissively. "He's not important!"

Chapter 603: Qing'er, can you handle him?

"Insignificant."

Just moments ago, Ye Guan had walked alone on the street, pondering a question.

Can I not save them or do I simply lack the courage to? If it's truly beyond my power, then I can forgive myself. However, if it's a matter of courage, then why wouldn't I at least try? Am I afraid of Ah Nan? He's a disciple of the First God, but I am his inheritor!

Even if I weren't, there is no reason for me to fear a false god. My goal is to establish an order! To have an Invincible Sword Dao! If I can't even try to save one person, how can I talk about establishing a universal order or being invincible?

To achieve my goals, I cannot hesitate or compromise. I have to address injustices as they arise and face the consequences head-on.

Observing Ye Guan's confidence, Lin Daimei stared wide-eyed, completely stunned. When Ye Guan decided to intervene, his mindset instantly shifted. At the same time, his Sword Intent underwent a subtle change. He didn't dwell on it now, however, since the old lady was on the verge of collapse.

Ye Guan strode up to her and summoned the Divine Imprint in his hand. With a pointed gesture, the Divine Imprint trembled violently, transformed into a beam of divine light, and entered the old lady's body.

Boom!

The old lady convulsed violently as countless beams of divine light erupted from within her.

The Divine Imprint forced a mass of murky energy out of her. The murky energy hovered above her head, seemingly wary of the Divine Imprint. It trembled slightly, unwilling to approach the old lady any closer. Ye Guan narrowed his eyes at the scene as he drew a sword with his left hand.

Registering him as a threat, the mass of energy transformed into a black light and shot toward Ye Guan. In response, Ye Guan thrust his sword.

Bang!

In an instant, Ye Guan was sent flying out of the house.

Lin Daimei's face paled at the sight. She hurriedly ran outside and found Ye Guan standing, sword still in hand but a trickle of blood flowing down from his mouth.

The energy, which had transformed into a phantom, turned into a beam of light and shot toward Ye Guan at incredible speed, instantly reaching him.

Ye Guan drew his sword once more.

Boom!

Their clash blasted him back again. By the time he finally stopped, his complexion had turned pale.

He fixed his gaze on the phantom before him as he wiped the blood from his lips. With a smirk, he then took a step forward.

Invincible Sword Intent surged forth, determined to shatter the seal. Without it, the curse's power meant nothing. Considering the mysterious force had met his every strike with suppression and backlash, he concluded that breaking the seal was imperative to address the root of the problem.

The moment Ye Guan's Invincible Sword Intent emerged, an invisible force converged from the heavens and earth and bore down on him.

Instead of retreating, he advanced and thrust his sword into the air.

"Break!" he roared.

A beam of sword light soon soared to the sky. However, it was immediately suppressed and shattered by the mysterious force.

Boom!

The sword light dispersed.

The mysterious force dove and pressed down on Ye Guan, forcing him to bend over. He clenched his hands as his face contorted and his bones creaked under the pressure.

The force was suffocating. Nevertheless, Ye Guan still forced his head up and spread his hands. From within him, a terrifying Invincible Sword Intent surged into the sky.

Rumble!

The earth shook, and the heavens quaked.

Ye Guan's Sword Intent began to push back the mysterious force until, eventually, he managed to stand back up.

However, the moment he did, the force bore down on him once more.

With narrowed eyes, Ye Guan activated the power of his three bloodlines.

Boom!

The Invincible Sword Intent transformed into a brilliant beam of light and pierced the heavens, instantly eliminating the terrifying force.

Ye Guan took a deep breath. Relief washed over him. However, before he could relax, countless mysterious forces converged from all directions, followed by a terrifying force that slammed into him.

His expression shifted slightly. He spread his palm, and a Sword Intent soared into the sky, meeting the incoming force head-on.

Boom!

However, his Sword Intent did not only get completely suppressed but even began to crack.

Ye Guan frowned. Determined to face the mysterious sealing power, he stomped on the ground with his right foot and propelled himself into the sky.

Boom!

Ye Guan's sword collided with the mysterious force in midair, causing the world to tremble violently. At that moment, the power of the seal intensified.

Bam!

The clash sent him plummeting to the ground.

At the same time, the nearby mysterious curse energy suddenly turned toward the stone house. Ye Guan's expression darkened as he pointed at the curse energy. In response, the Xuanyuan Sword burst out and repelled the curse energy away.

He then waved his hand, and the little pagoda flew out. It transformed into a golden light and drew Lin Daimei and the old lady into it.

However, at the same time, the power of the seal surged once again.

Sensing this, Mu Yuan urged, "Use the Divine Imprint!"

In the past, he wouldn't have allowed Ye Guan to use it. After all, it could easily draw attention from the gods. Now, however, whether Ye Guan used it or not didn't matter anymore. He had already employed the Divine Imprint once to save the old lady's life.

Upon hearing Mu Yuan's words, Ye Guan slowly closed his eyes and sent the Divine Imprint out.

Boom!

A surge of divine light shot skyward, turning the night into a blazing day.

The mysterious seal cloaking the surroundings momentarily hovered in the air before gradually dissipating.

However, as the seal weakened, a multitude of murky energies suddenly manifested in the world.

Ye Guan's expression darkened.

"It's Ah Nan. He has set his sights on you," Mu Yuan explained.

A shiver ran down Ye Guan's spine as he swiftly flew into the sky. As soon as he arrived, countless phantoms materialized around him.

Curse energy!

As Ye Guan observed the approaching energies, the Divine Imprint instinctively appeared between his brows, forcing the curse energy to retreat.

"Seems like they fear the Divine Imprint," Ye Guan remarked.

Mu Yuan nodded. "Of course. That's the most precious artifact of the Divine Temple. It repels evil! That aside, if my intuition serves me right, Ah Nan has already sensed your presence."

Ye Guan slowly shut his eyes. "How powerful is he?"

After a brief pause, Mu Yuan asked, "Do you want the truth?"

Ye Guan smirked. "Let's start with a lie."

"You're evenly matched," Mu Yuan quipped.

"And the truth?"

Mu Yuan's tone grew grave. "As you are now, you're no match for him. He could eliminate you without even appearing in person by cursing you. He's stronger than Ancient Sovereigns by a significant margin."

Ye Guan smiled faintly. The starry sky in the distance then turned crimson, and the surrounding phantoms fused with it.

"Is that his true form?" he asked, his eyes fixed on the sky.

"I am not sure," Mu Yuan cautiously replied.

Suddenly, a demonic beast emerged from the crimson-red sky, wearing a beastly garb and wielding a colossal blade. It had the head of an ox and the body of a human body.

"It's the Ugly Ox, one of Ah Nan's twelve zodiac beasts," Mu Yuan said.

The Ugly Ox charged forward, ripping a colossal tear in the sky above the town.

Ye Guan rushed forward. As he focused on the battle at hand, he created a sword made of sword energy.

Explosions erupted in the sky along with a loud clang.

Although both of them were thrown back, the Ugly Ox regained its footing faster. It launched another assault on Ye Guan.

Swish!

Ye Guan's eyes narrowed, but he swiftly countered. Invincible Sword Intent gathered at the tip of his finger, condensing into a solid sword that flew toward the demonic beast.

Bam!

The sword temporarily forced the Ugly Ox to a stop, but the demonic beast lunged again in no time. It swung its massive saber down at Ye Guan again. The starry skies shattered under its sheer force.

Undaunted, Ye Guan jumped forward with his sword ready to strike.

A head-on clash!

Bam!

The clash between steel sent the two flying backward. However, they immediately charged at each other once more...

Their frenzied exchange continued, delivering blow after blow in rapid succession. In mere moments, they had traded hundreds of strikes.

Thankfully, the Divine Imprint below held firm, preventing their clash from destroying the town.

Boom!

With a resounding boom, the two were blasted away.

As Ye Guan stopped, his aura surged to unprecedented heights, allowing him to reach the Imperial Sovereign Realm.

Excitement surged through him upon realizing that he had just made an unexpected advancement. His Invincible Sword Intent had also undergone a significant enhancement.

The transformation of his Invincible Sword Intent wasn't merely a result of the battle. It also stemmed from a shift in his mindset.

Ye Guan transformed into a streak of light, vanishing from sight.

Frowning, the Ugly Ox swung its saber down.

Bam!

However, their collision sent the demonic beast hurtling through the skies. Once it had stopped, it stared at Ye Guan in disbelief.

Just as Ye Guan prepared to strike again, the starry sky behind the Ugly Ox churned ominously. In the blink of an eye, a towering phantom materialized out of thin air.

Seeing the figure, the Ugly Ox immediately knelt...

On the other side, a man in white turned to the lady beside him. "Qing'er, this one looks formidable. Can you beat him?"

The lady indifferently glanced at the figure. "Not a chance. Should we make our escape?"

The man in white was rendered speechless.

Chapter 604: The Mistress of the Daoist Sect

Ye Guan looked at the towering virtual figure in the starry sky. It was not solid, making it difficult to see clearly, and its aura was extremely terrifying. The Ugly Ox's aura was also powerful, but compared to the figure, it was like comparing a firefly to the moon.

He immediately knew that it was the legendary God Ah Nan, one of the most powerful beings during the era of the gods. He could not help but be extremely curious about him.

Just then, the figure gradually solidified into a middle-aged man dressed in divine robes. He wore a large divine robe adorned with various mysterious runes, had long hair draped over his shoulders, and wore a faint smile on his face, giving him a somewhat refined appearance.

"That's not his real body," Mu Yuan said.

Ye Guan frowned slightly, somewhat disappointed. He had thought that a god had truly come.

Ah Nan smiled at Ye Guan. "Mu Yuan, won't you come out and say hello?"

After a brief silence, Mu Yuan appeared.

"I never thought we would meet again," Ah Nan said.

"The Supreme God has chosen him," Mu Yuan replied.

"Is that so?"

"The Supreme God is very disappointed in all of you."

Ah Nan merely shook his head with a smile, which also seemed like a faint sneer.

Mu Yuan continued, "I guarded the First God Hall because I knew that the First God had not truly died yet. As I expected, he indeed left behind a contingency plan. I believe he must have witnessed the internal strife amongst you in the past, too. You all betrayed him, Ah Nan."

Ah Nan chuckled. "Mu Yuan, when the teacher pursued humanity, we followed suit. We did the same thing when he pursued divinity. However, after a while, he suddenly stopped wanting divinity. We are not him. We cannot just let go of divinity like that..."

He shook his head slightly. "After he suppressed his divinity with humanity, he gained the ability to get rid of us. In fact, he still had that capability in his later years. Why do you think he decided against it?"

Mu Yuan frowned, this was also something he had been puzzled about. After all, even if only a trace of the image remained, it would be easy for the First God to eliminate these pseudo-gods. Nevertheless, the First God chose not to.

Ah Nan stared at Mu Yuan. "Because we followed his exploration of divinity with his permission. However, the teacher underestimated how terrifying divinity can be. He could achieve self-dissolution, but we couldn't. Fully aware of that, he opted not to kill us, his followers."

Mu Yuan fell silent. He didn't expect that the First God's disciples also pursued divinity, not just the First God himself. Mu Yuan was not a disciple of the First God, just an attendant, so he didn't know these secrets at the time.

Ah Nan suddenly chuckled. "Actually, divinity is the ultimate goal of the Dao. Once your strength reaches a certain level, you will find that everything, including people and order itself, are all very ridiculous."

"On the vast road of the Dao, I believe it's better to have people you care about and people you like," Ye Guan suddenly said. "Otherwise, even if the Dao is invincible, there would be no point in all of it."

Ah Nan smiled at Ye Guan. "That's because you're still young. You haven't experienced the passage of time, and you still have passion and fervor for this world. Love and similar concepts are still fresh to you. Once you experience enough years and see enough life and death, you will gradually become indifferent and accustomed to it all. In the end, you will understand that for us cultivators, only the Dao is eternal."

Personal pursuits varied from individual to individual. Hence, instead of rebutting, Ye Guan simply looked at Ah Nan. He had his own goals, and others had theirs. Moreover, the exceptional cultivators he had encountered so far, including his own father, aunts, and grandfather, didn't really care about order and sentient beings. They had humanity, but not really much of it.

All cultivators would ultimately move toward a certain direction, albeit gradually. As Ah Nan said, the more experiences one had, the more indifferent one became to everything.

Ah Nan stared at Ye Guan and smiled. "I always thought that the master would choose Confucius, but he chose you instead. I have to say, I'm surprised. On the other hand, it makes me curious why the master chose you. There had to be other reasons."

"Maybe he saw potential in me," Ye Guan calmly replied.

Ah Nan chuckled. "You're quite thick-skinned, but you are indeed quite remarkable. Even in our era, you would be considered a rare genius."

"Are you not planning to fight today?"

"Let's just have a conversation for now. If we can't reach an agreement, we can simply fight later. What do you think?"

Ye Guan nodded. "That works."

Ah Nan got straight to the point. "I'm not greedy. I want half of the master's Ancestral Vein, and a black ancient book, which I believe you have. If you can do that, we can avoid becoming enemies."

Ye Guan shook his head. "Can't do it."

"That's quite a straightforward refusal."

"You want half of my Ancestral Vein and that ancient book not because you genuinely want to make peace with me. Rather, it's to benefit from me first. You'll then betray me and let other pseudo-gods target me while you sit back and reap the rewards. Am I wrong?"

Ah Nan smiled faintly. "Very clever."

Ye Guan took a step forward and opened his hand. A Sword Intent then appeared on his palm. "Let's fight, then!"

He knew very well that the conflict between him and these pseudo-gods was irreconcilable because he had the Ancestral Veins and inheritance of the First God. The gods had once fought a civil war to seize these things, so why would they give up now?

Hence, combat was inevitable.

Ah Nan stared at Ye Guan, a smile appearing on his lips. Instead of attacking, his body gradually became ethereal.

Ye Guan's expression darkened. He had already guessed his opponent's intention.

Just before Ah Nan disappeared, he opened his right hand. Countless dark energies surged out from his palm and rushed toward the small town below.

Ah Nan stared at Ye Guan and chuckled. "You wanted to save people, right? Come, let me see how many you can save."

Ye Guan waved his sleeve, and Little Pagoda suddenly turned into a golden light. In an instant, the entire small town was sucked into the pagoda.

Ah Nan's brow furrowed slightly. However, he didn't make another move. He just glanced at Ye Guan and then quietly disappeared along with the Ugly Ox.

Watching Ah Nan disappear, Ye Guan's expression darkened.

Beside him, Mu Yuan said, "He will definitely spread the news about you inheriting the legacy of the First God. Soon, the other pseudo-gods will come after you."

Ye Guan nodded. He knew that Ah Nan was playing dirty.

Unfortunately, he had no means of stopping him since the initiative was in the other party's hands.

Without much thought, Ye Guan turned around and returned to the Little Pagoda. He then went to the courtyard where Lin Daimei and the old lady were waiting.

Seeing Ye Guan return, Lin Daimei immediately ran up to him, wanting to say something but not knowing how to express herself.

Ye Guan smiled. "It's okay."

"Thank you," Lin Daimei whispered.

Ye Guan smiled and then looked at the old lady, who was nearby. She had already fully recovered.

The old lady looked at Ye Guan with shock, surprised that he had actually removed her curse.

Ah Nan! He was one of the gods!

Ye Guan turned to Lin Daimei. With a smile, he asked, "Are you willing to cultivate?"

Lin Daimei was about to reply but seemingly remembered something. She quickly looked at the old lady, who was now beside her.

The old lady glanced at Ye Guan, then nodded slightly.

Lin Daimei excitedly turned back to Ye Guan. "Yes!"

Ye Guan smiled. Lin Daimei had an extraordinary talent. If she was willing to cultivate, her future prospects would indeed be boundless! Everyone in the small town was no different.

"If I take the town away, will this place still be a paradise?" Ye Guan suddenly asked.

The old lady hesitated for a moment, then shook her head. "I don't know."

Ye Guan fell silent. This place turned into a paradise solely because the First God used to reside here once. If the town were taken away, would this place still be a paradise?

While thinking about it, Ye Guan sensed a presence. He left the Little Pagoda and found a lady standing near him.

The lady was wearing a snowy robe and had her long hair tied up. The scroll in her hand made her look like a scholar.

Ye Guan looked at the lady in front of him, his brows furrowing because he felt a sense of familiarity.

Soon, he exclaimed, "You are the Mistress of the Daoist sect!"

When he went to the Daoist Realm back then, he saw the statue of the Great Daoist Brush Master. Beside it was the statue of a lady, which looked like the person standing before him now.

"Is the Divine Imprint with you?" the Mistress asked.

Ye Guan immediately became wary.

The Mistress opened her palm. A golden light then soared from within Ye Guan and landed steadily on her hand.

Ye Guan's expression darkened. She had just taken the Divine Imprint.

The Mistress glanced at the Divine Imprint and then looked back at Ye Guan. "He chose you."

Ye Guan nodded.

"Follow me," the Mistress said. She then turned and left.

Ye Guan hesitated for a moment but soon followed.

Before long, the two reached a very quiet mountain wall. Below it were several study rooms.

The Mistress led Ye Guan into one of the bamboo houses, then returned the Divine Imprint to him.

Upon retrieving it, Ye Guan asked, "Are you from the Temple of the Gods?"

"The Divine Temple," the Mistress corrected.

Ye Guan nodded but remained silent.

"You intervening to save Daimei's grandmother surprised me."

"You were watching?"

The Mistress nodded.

"If I hadn't intervened, would you have?" Ye Guan inquired.

"No."

"Why not?"

"It wouldn't have been worth it."

After a brief silence, Ye Guan asked, "Why did Ah Nan curse this place?"

The Mistress glanced at him before answering, "The people born in this town are blessed with exceptional talents and Divine Dao Destiny Aura. Ah Nan planted curses within each person that continuously devour their Divine Dao Destiny Aura, which he then uses to cultivate his dark arts."

"Why didn't you intervene to help?"

The Mistress calmly reiterated, "It wouldn't have been worth it."

Ye Guan nodded in understanding, choosing to say nothing more.

Whether someone lent a hand to save others was their business. He had no right to demand anything from them.

"For the sake of a stranger, you exposed yourself as the successor of the First God. Don't you think your actions are foolish?" the Mistress asked.

Ye Guan frowned.

"Do you know what it means to sacrifice the greater good for something small?" she added. "How can you live up to the master..."

Ye Guan suddenly shook his head. "Mistress, where I save people or not is none of your business. You may dislike or disapprove of it, but I don't need your criticism."

He turned and walked away.

Since they couldn't get through each other with words, he found no reason to continue their conversation.

However, at that moment, the Mistress suddenly opened her palm. The Divine Imprint flew out of Ye Guan and landed on her hand once more.

The Divine Imprint was clearly closer to the Mistress. It didn't quite approve of Ye Guan either. After all, he was still relatively weak compared to its first owner. It especially didn't approve of his actions in this situation.

He was too impulsive and lacking in foresight!

Such a person was unlikely to achieve greatness.

Chapter 605: Goodbye Qin Xue

Outside the bamboo house, Ye Guan paused for a moment. He then smiled lightly and left.

The Divine Imprint? Of course, it's great to have it. However, it wouldn't matter even if I didn't have it.

He rarely used the Xuanyuan Sword and the Little Pagoda nowadays, so he didn't really care about the Divine Imprint all that much.

In simple terms, he now had a heart of equanimity.

If you are willing to follow me, then great, but I couldn't really care less if you aren't.

When Ye Guan showed no interest in the Divine Imprint, the Mistress frowned.

The Divine Imprint was a supreme treasure from the era of the First God. Back then, the gods even fought and spilled a lot of blood for it. Yet now, this young man said he didn't want it.

The Mistress frowned deeply. Honestly, she couldn't quite understand.

Ye Guan was not simply pretending. He truly was leaving.

However, before he could walk that far from the study, a terrifying and mysterious force suddenly enveloped him and sealed his cultivation.

Without the Divine Imprint, the sealing power left by the First God reappeared. Looking around, Ye Guan understood the First God's intention. The First God had placed the seal here, specifically targeting outsiders, to prevent outsiders from disturbing the people here. It could be considered a protective mechanism.

Ye Guan had already thought about leaving because he realized that here, the pseudo-gods would not be suppressed. If any of them came to cause trouble, he would be at a significant disadvantage since he would also have to deal with the seal left by the First God. Hence, he concluded that it would be best to leave this place.

Just as Ye Guan was about to leave, the space in the distance trembled, and then hundreds of people rushed out in unison.

Ye Guan frowned.

They were being led by an elder dressed in a blue Taoist robe, holding a dusting whisk. He had a long white beard and a dignified appearance.

Not far from the elder stood a woman in a white dress—Qin Xue.

She merely stared at Ye Guan in complete silence.

The leading elder suddenly smiled, "Fellow friend from the outside world, I am the head of the Yu Hua Clan, and I have come to meet you. I would like to get to know and befriend you."

Ye Guan couldn't help but laugh, "Befriend me?"

The elder nodded. "Yes."

Ye Guan had an odd expression now.

The elder smiled. "If I'm not mistaken, you are here to escape pursuit from your enemies."

"That's right."

The elder's smile widened. "Since you're here, you might as well stay. Why don't you just the Yu Hua Clan?"

The people around the elder were all astonished, especially Qin Xue.

She gave him a look of confusion and disbelief.

Didn't we come to kill him and seize treasures? How did it turn into recruitment?

Ye Guan looked at the elder, also feeling somewhat surprised.

The elder continued, "If you join us, you can have any position you want apart from Clan Leader."

The disciples of the Yu Hua Clan became even more surprised.

He could choose any position except for Clan Leader? What was going on?

Qin Xue glanced at the elder. Lost in thought, her brows furrowed.

Looking at the elder, Ye Guan chuckled. "I am a little confused."

The elder solemnly replied, "When will the cycle of vengeance end? Friend, the Yu Hua Clan sincerely invites you to join us. As long as you agree, any conditions can be negotiated."

"What if I refuse?"

"We'll each go our own way."

"My cultivation is currently suppressed. I truly have no power to resist."

"My friend, you must be joking. The Yu Hua Clan has always been benevolent. We do not take advantage of others' weaknesses."

"I really have nothing hidden up my sleeves."

"Are you still upset about what happened before? If so, on behalf of the Yu Hua Clan, I would like to apologize..."

Everyone was rendered speechless.

Ye Guan chuckled. "My friend, you're not following the usual script!"

The elder sighed softly. "I understand that you have doubts in your heart, which is normal. If I were in your shoes, I would be in doubt too. However, please believe that I came here with no ill intentions. I simply wanted to apologize and invite you to join our Yu Hua Clan."

Ye Guan shook his head. "I have no interest in joining the Yu Hua Clan."

"Very well."

He suddenly looked at Qin Xue. Qin Xue trembled slightly, her face turning pale.

"I'll leave this person to you, friend," the elder calmly said. He then pressed down with his hand.

Boom!

Qin Xue was instantly suppressed. Her dantian was also shattered, causing her cultivation to dissipate.

Turned into a wastrel, her complexion became as pale as paper. She fell to the ground like a puddle of mud.

Without even looking at her, the elder clasped his fists toward Ye Guan. "You are welcome to visit the Yu Hua Clan at any time."

He then led the others and disappeared into the distance.

Ye Guan remained silent.

The elder's actions certainly somewhat surprised him. Ye Guan was prepared to call out his sister and Mu Yuan to fight until the elder made this unexpected move.

Without much thought, Ye Guan looked at Qin Xue. She was lying on the ground in a white dress, rendered as useless as one could be. It didn't really matter, though. Even if her cultivation was still intact, she still wouldn't have posed any threat to him.

Qin Xue looked at him and chuckled self-mockingly. "Turns out I'm the jester."

Ye Guan walked toward her in silence.

She slowly closed her eyes while watching Ye Guan approaching. Soon, however, she frowned, realizing that Ye Guan had gone past her and was walking into the distance.

Confused, she asked, "Why?"

Ye Guan didn't stop.

"Why didn't you kill me?"

However, he just kept walking.

"I know you regret saving me back then. You—"

Ye Guan stopped and shook his head. "I don't regret saving you. That day, even if it were a dog in your position, I would have still saved it."

He resumed walking and soon disappeared at the end of the street.

Qin Xue, now back on her feet, was momentarily stunned. She then burst into wild, manic, and desolate laughter.

She seemed to have put too much importance on herself. In that man's heart, she had always been insignificant. He would have saved even a dog.

She knew that he was telling the truth.

At that moment, she wished so much for Ye Guan to fly into a rage and kill her.

However, he didn't even show a hint of anger. On the contrary, he completely ignored her...

...

On the other side, after the Yu Hua Clan's Clan Leader led everyone else away, cold sweat started to trickle down his face.

"Clan Leader..." the elder beside him called.

The Yu Hua Clan's Clan Leader gave him a deep look, his eyes filled with fear.

The elder wanted to speak, but, in his hesitation, he stopped himself.

"Are you confused?" the Yu Hua Clan's Clan Leader calmly asked.

The elder nodded.

The other elites were just as puzzled.

Suddenly, the expression of the Yu Hua Clan's Clan Leader became cold. "That damn Qin Xue almost caused me trouble."

"How so, Clan Leader?"

"Didn't you find the young man abnormal?"

"Abnormal?"

"Fools, the lot of you!" The Yu Hua Clan's Clan Leader suddenly growled. "Can't you stop cultivating for just one day and read some books?"

The elder was speechless.

"Didn't you notice? When that young man saw us, he wasn't nervous at all. Is that the behavior of a normal person?"

The elder remained silent. Looking back, the young man had indeed seemed unnaturally calm.

The Yu Hua Clan's Clan Leader continued, "Qin Xue told me that the young man has strands of Ancestral Origins, but she kept many things a secret, including the fact that he is a swordsman and how he managed to kill our people before."

The elder squinted. "Does that mean the young man still has some cards hidden up his sleeves?"

"He likely does. If he chose to escape when he saw us or even showed a little nervousness, I wouldn't have hesitated to take him down. However, when he saw us, he showed nothing but calmness. Only those who have seen a lot of the world behave that way. Above all, he could casually use his Ancestral Origins to save people. What does that imply?"

Puzzled, the elder replied, "I'm not sure, Clan Leader."

The Yu Hua Clan's Clan Leader sighed deeply. "It implies that he does not consider Ancestral Origin strands all that rare. Think about it. What family could he be a part of if he treats strands of Ancestral Origin as something very ordinary?"

The elder felt a bit embarrassed. "Your insight is truly unmatched, Clan Leader. Even I cannot hope to reach such a level. Forgive me for still being confused, but why did you choose to abandon Qin Xue...?"

"Why? Because she is a troublemaker. If I didn't abandon her, if that young man suddenly decided to get revenge in the future, her presence within the Yu Hua Clan would heavily implicate us. Handing her over to him now eliminates future troubles."

After a brief pause, the elder finally understood their Clan Leader's motives. "I see..."

The Yu Hua Clan's Clan Leader patted the elder's shoulder. "Don't spend every day cultivating to death. When you have nothing to do, come out and walk around. There are times when social skills are more important than cultivation."

With that, he turned and left. The elder, left behind, just quietly smiled.

At that moment, a man walked up to him. After a brief hesitation, he asked, "Master, didn't the Clan Leader say the same thing to you before?"

"Do you know why the Clan Leader takes me with him wherever he goes?" the elder asked.

The man shook his head.

The elder whispered, "Because I, your master, am very good at pretending... Remember, when following a leader, you must learn to act foolish and make the leader feel superior... This way, he won't be able to leave us. Do you understand?"

The man was dumbfounded.

Chapter 606: Great Daoist Brush Master is More Subtle

Ye Guan hesitated, realizing that while getting in was easy, getting out would be a bit tricky. After all, he would have to break through the seal left by the First God first. Considering such a feat would be quite challenging with his current strength, he abandoned the idea of leaving for now.

He had to visit the town he had placed inside the Little Pagoda first before he left anyway. It had been in there for some time now, and its frightened people were starting to feel uneasy and anxious since they had no idea where they were.

Hence, Ye Guan returned to the town and gathered its people. He then performed a swordsmanship demonstration with all his might, astonishing everyone.

They knew that the people on the mountain outside the town were cultivators, but the dangers that lurked past their home made encounters with them rare. Now, Ye Guan was standing right in front of them, alive and well. After his performance, he asked if anyone was willing to learn cultivation. Lin Daimei, their leader, was the first to agree. A group of children then followed suit.

Watching Ye Guan fly on his sword, the children's eyes widened in amazement. However, knowing only one sword-flying technique was obviously not enough. Some of the older people in the town seemed to be more concerned about food, which left him feeling somewhat helpless.

To put their minds at ease, Ye Guan promised to provide each of the town's households with a pig and a cow every month. His promise finally made them accept staying inside the Little Pagoda.

Next, Ye Guan started teaching people cultivation. More accurately, he taught Lin Daimei and the other children, while Lin Daimei's grandmother taught the adults in the town.

Much to his shock, the children learned the Royal Sword Art in less than a day!

Lin Daimei, in particular, showed terrifying growth. With just a bit of guidance from Ye Guan, she quickly mastered everything he taught her. It was comparable to Ye Guan's first time learning the Royal Sword Art. Of course, this was mostly a pleasant surprise. If these people were trained by the Guanxuan Academy, their prospects would be limitless.

The children swiftly made remarkable progress when they started cultivating. Since they were using Ancestral Origin strands and cultivating inside the Little Pagoda, which had abundant resources, they exhibited incredible cultivation speed.

Ye Guan didn't just teach them cultivation. Every day, he would also read books with them.

During this period, he also had some leisure time every day.

Because the children had always read books, teaching them cultivation wasn't too difficult except for one troublemaker—Guo Dan.

One day, Guo Dan suddenly walked up to Ye Guan. He was holding a book and seemed hesitant to speak.

Ye Guan smiled. "What is it?"

Guo Dan blinked. "Can I ask you something?"

"Go for it."

"Master, is the world outside cruel?"

Ye Guan nodded slightly. "Yes."

"What should we do if we head out to the world? Is fighting the most effective way to resolve things out there?"

"Yes." He tousled Guo Dan's head. "From now on, feel free to ask what you want to know."

He realized that the children here were quite precocious and couldn't be treated like ordinary people.

Looking at Ye Guan, Guo Dan asked, "Since strength is respected outside, why do we still need to read books? Reading books doesn't make us stronger."

Ye Guan fell silent. This guy had always been reluctant to read books.

After thinking about it for a moment, he answered, "You read to see the world and to better understand others and yourself. Although it does not enhance your strength, it can improve your wisdom and knowledge, allowing you to better survive in the cruel world outside. Out there, you'll learn that your brain is often even more important than your strength."

"If I become strong enough, do I still need to read?"

"You really don't like reading, huh?"

Guo Dan cautiously glanced at Ye Guan, daring not to speak.

Ye Guan chuckled. "If one day your strength surpasses Daimei's, then you won't need to read anymore. How about that?"

Guo Dan's eyes lit up. "Really?"

Ye Guan nodded. "Until that day comes, you have to keep reading. Those who fail my assessments will be punished."

Guo Dan took a deep breath. "Okay!"

He then turned and left.

Not long after, Guo Dan said something to Lin Daimei, and Lin Daimei chased after him and gave him a beating.

Watching the scene, Ye Guan shook his head and smiled. Among the children, Lin Daimei undoubtedly had absolute authority. She was also the strongest among them.

While Ye Guan was mulling over his thoughts, Mu Yuan appeared next to him.

After a brief hesitation, he said, "We have to find a way to leave this place."

Ye Guan nodded. Even inside the Little Pagoda, the First God's seal was still suppressing them. Moreover, now that Ah Nan was aware of his existence, he and the other pseudo-gods would definitely not give up. Hence, staying here could not be considered a long-term solution.

He still had a battle to fight outside!

After giving some instructions, Ye Guan left the Little Pagoda. As he did, the space behind him suddenly trembled slightly, and a lady appeared not far behind him.

It was the Mistress.

Glancing at her, he calmly asked, "Need something?"

He didn't dislike her, but he wasn't fond of her either.

The Mistress opened her hand, and the Divine Imprint slowly flew from her palm to Ye Guan.

Ye Guan glanced indifferently at the Divine Imprint and then smiled. "Don't need it anymore?"

"I am very curious to see how you will inherit the will of our teacher and restore order to the universe..."

Ye Guan shook his head. "There seems to be a misunderstanding. I never inherited the will of the First God. I plan to establish my own order, not reestablish the First God's. That's why I really don't think you need to have this attitude toward me. Your hostility toward me is unwarranted."

The Mistress remained expressionless. "I just can't seem to understand why our teacher chose you. To be frank, you are not even qualified to provoke my hostility."

Ye Guan shook his head.

He really disliked the gods from the era of the First God. They all acted so pretentious! Moreover, they were aloof yet had a natural sense of superiority.

At that moment, he remembered the Great Daoist Brush Master, whom he now thought had a pretty good personality. Although a bit flamboyant, he never acted so arrogantly.

What he didn't know was that the reason the Great Daoist Brush Master was so modest and humble was entirely because he had been beaten before...

Ye Guan didn't have anything else to say to the Mistress, so he simply turned and left. He didn't even take the Divine Imprint with him.

The Mistress furrowed her brows slightly. "Your Divine Imprint."

Without looking back, Ye Guan answered, "It chose you, so it's yours now."

Her eyes narrowed, and her voice turned cold. "Don't you know what it is?"

"Forgive my bluntness, but I could pick up some random object and I'd still find it a hundred times better than that."

He wasn't just bluffing. The Path Sword, the Qingxuan Sword, the Little Pagoda... Each one of them was more impressive than the Divine Imprint.

The Mistress' gaze became even colder. "Arrogant."

Instead of replying, Ye Guan quickly disappeared into the distance.

For him, having an impressive family background wasn't something worth showing off. After all, he wasn't that impressive yet.

The Mistress stared at where Ye Guan had disappeared, her brows furrowing deeply. After a moment, she shook her head, disappointment filling her eyes.

"Ridiculous arrogance, ridiculous pride... Teacher, why did you choose him? He doesn't understand restraint and thinks too highly of himself. What virtues and abilities does he have to deserve your inheritance?"

She was disappointed but also felt more indignant.

She had been guarding this place for years with the sole purpose of inheriting the legacy of the First God. However, she had never expected that the inheritance of the First God's Dao wasn't actually here. Of course, what she had never anticipated even more was that the First God had chosen someone with such weak strength to inherit it. What made him worthy?

The Mistress clenched the Divine Imprint in her right hand tightly. "Teacher, I cannot follow your wishes this time. Your inheritance should not be in the hands of that person."

With that, she suddenly took a step forward.

Boom!

Ye Guan, who was already quite a distance away, suddenly stopped. Swiftly turning around, he found the Mistress in front of him. A terrifying aura enveloped him before he could react.

His brows furrowed.

The Mistress stared at Ye Guan, her gaze devoid of any emotion. "Hand over everything that Teacher has given you. Only then will I consider sparing your life."

After pondering for a moment, he answered, "I thought even if we couldn't become friends, we wouldn't at least become enemies. It seems I was wrong."

The mistress remained expressionless. "If you were outstanding enough, I might have considered helping you. Unfortunately, your performance has disappointed me. For that reason, I now refuse to assist you. Furthermore, with your current strength and intelligence, it won't be long before you perish at the hands of the other pseudo-gods. I don't want Teacher's legacy to fall into someone else's hands."

She took a step forward.

Boom!

An overwhelming force fell from the sky and pressed down on Ye Guan like countless mountains piling on top of him.

Ye Guan clenched his fists tightly, causing an Invincible Sword Intent to surge out from within him.

Boom!

The Invincible Sword Intent soared, forcibly resisting the overwhelming force.

The Mistress narrowed her eyes at the sight. She then took another step forward and swung her hand down.

Boom!

The force bearing down on Ye Guan dramatically increased, suppressing his Sword Intent once again.

Staring coldly and emotionlessly at Ye Guan, the Mistress said, "This is your last chance. If you are willing to voluntarily surrender all of Teacher's inheritance, I will spare your life. Otherwise, unless Teacher returns to this world, no one can save you."

Chapter 607: Who Do You Think You Are?

The force that the Mistress of the Daoist Sect had exerted resembled overlapping mountains relentlessly pressing down on Ye Guan. Ye Guan's Sword Intent struggled to resist it, causing it to be pushed back little by little.

The disparity in their realms was too great!

Considering the Mistress had already gone past the Ancient Sovereign Realm, she surpassed Ye Guan by several realms.

She stared at Ye Guan intently. Watching him stubbornly resist her caused a hint of killing intent to emerge in her cold eyes gradually.

Boom!

At that moment, a golden light suddenly soared from within Ye Guan.

Ao Qianqian had appeared!

When they fused, a mighty force surged forth, instantly breaking through the Mistress' momentum. Simultaneously, Ye Guan transformed into a sword and flew to strike her.

Clang!

The spacetime above the Mistress suddenly tore open, and a sword fiercely plummeted on her. Remaining expressionless, she lightly swept her finger, stopping the sword and keeping it in place.

She then looked at Ye Guan, who was now close to her. "Since you seek death, I shall..."

Three terrifying forces suddenly erupted from within Ye Guan, interrupting her.

The power of bloodlines!

Boom!

In an instant, the Mistress was blasted back thousands of meters.

Disbelief filled her eyes as she came to a stop. "You have three kinds of bloodline power..."

Ye Guan opened his palm and condensed a Sword Intent on it. He then took a step forward and swung it at the Lady Master.

The sword he created not only possessed a brand-new Invincible Sword Intent. It was also imbued with three different bloodline powers and Ao Qianqian's power, making it his strongest weapon yet.

Using the sword, Ye Guan unexpectedly resisted the sealing power that the First God had left. However, he struggled greatly. Ever since he began to act, he had been having trouble contending with the Mistress and the hidden seal.

Seeing the incoming attack, the Mistress decided to advance instead of retreat. Her right hand trembled slightly, and a long, golden rod appeared in it. She swung it against Ye Guan's sword.

Boom!

As their weapons clashed, a terrifying force erupted and blasted them away.

By the time Ye Guan had stopped, his face had turned as pale as paper. The mysterious sealing power was pressing down on him again, attempting to seal his cultivation.

Ye Guan gave the Mistress a puzzled look.

Why isn't she being suppressed by the sealing power?

The Mistress stared right back at him, somewhat shocked that his combat power was so astonishing.

Her realm was much higher than Ye Guan's. Under normal circumstances, even powerful Imperial Sovereigns would be nothing more than an ant to her. Moreover, the seal was still suppressing him.

She had underestimated him!

As her expression turned serious, the Mistress stepped forward. A thousand-meter white light surged out from her and turned into a giant blade. She fiercely swung it toward Ye Guan.

As the blade came down, Ye Guan took a deep breath and charged forward, unleashing the three bloodline powers along with his Sword Intent. The only option he had left was to confront her head-on.

As he burst forth, he once again forced back the sealing power of the First God. His sword collided with the giant blade.

Boom!

In the end, Ye Guan shattered the giant blade, and his sword headed straight toward the Mistress.

Narrowing her eyes a little, she took another step forward, sending yet another giant blade toward the incoming attack.

Bang!

Ye Guan was stopped in his tracks. At the same time, she stepped forward once more.

Swish!

A white light flashed across the field.

Bang!

Ye Guan was violently pushed back!

The Mistress stepped forward again. However, as she did, Ye Guan suddenly became illusory.

Through Space Overlap, countless swords instantly emerged from a myriad of times and spaces and then converged into one sword.

Boom!

As Ye Guan's sword attacked her, the Mistress' expression changed again. She thrust her long rod at him, firing millions of white rays at him.

Another head-on confrontation!

Boom!

Their powers once again collided, causing the heavens and the earth to burst apart. The clash sent the two reeling backward, with Ye Guan being blasted thousands of meters away. Just as he came to a stop, the power of the seal reappeared and suppressed his cultivation.

Sensing this, Ye Guan's expression darkened. There seemed to be no end to this!

Ye Guan clenched his fists tightly, and within him, an endless surge of Sword Intent erupted, resisting the seal. He then unleashed the power of his bloodlines.

Boom!

The space around him began to boil.

In the distance, the Mistress stared at Ye Guan, becoming increasingly shocked. She couldn't help but admit that the man's strength before her far exceeded her expectations. It was quite abnormal for someone at the Imperial Sovereign Realm to possess such power.

At that moment, she realized that there had to be a deeper reason behind her teacher's decision. However, she didn't change her mind!

She was confident that the inheritance of her teacher would be better off in her hands.

The Mistress opened her left hand, and a white light burst from her palm and shot toward the sky. Within the light, a giant blade slowly formed.

Ye Guan looked up at her, his expression even grimmer now because she was obviously about to unleash a powerful attack while he was using most of his strength to resist the seal.

How should I handle this?

In the end, he chose not to fight her head-on!

He trembled and transformed into a streak of sword light. He then disappeared into the horizon.

The Mistress' eyebrows furrowed slightly. "Trying to escape?"

She then pointed at him, causing the giant blade to suddenly descend upon him.

In a mountain range tens of thousands of kilometers away, Ye Guan suddenly stopped. He then turned around, finding the giant blade falling toward him.

He frowned.

"Let me handle this," Ao Qianqian suddenly said.

Boom!

A golden light suddenly burst forth from within Ye Guan. However, it failed to defend against the giant blade. As soon as they collided, the golden light began to crack.

"Come back," Ye Guan hurriedly ordered.

Ao Qianqian flew back into him, and the two merged once again!

Ye Guan lightly stomped on the ground with his right foot, sending him soaring into the sky. He faced the giant blade head-on!

Boom!

When his sword hit the Mistress' attack, the countless mountains below them instantly turned to dust, and the surrounding space was slowly torn apart.

Ye Guan was slashed down from the sky. When he crashed onto the ground, the earth collapsed and turned into a vast and bottomless abyss.

At that moment, the sky and the space suddenly split open, and the Mistress descended from the sky, coldly overlooking the abyss below.

Just then, a streak of sword light suddenly soared from the depths of the abyss.

The Mistress remained expressionless. With a flick of her wrist, she swung her long weapon.

Boom!

Ye Guan was blasted thousands of kilometers away. As soon as he stopped, the space behind him shattered.

A trace of blood slowly oozed from the corner of his mouth. At the same time, his cultivation was once again sealed.

The Mistress slowly walked toward him. "I have to admit, you did surprise me."

Ye Guan wiped the blood from the corner of his mouth. "I'm curious, why isn't the seal suppressing you?"

"That's because I am one of the guardians of this place."

Ye Guan frowned. "Guardians?"

The Lady Master stared at Ye Guan, her right hand slowly tightening into a fist. "We have been tasked to guard this place. Hence, its seal naturally does not affect us."

So that's how it is!

Ye Guan wiped the blood from the corner of his mouth again. The Sword Intent in his right hand trembled slightly.

"If you willingly surrendered the inheritance of the First God earlier, I would have spared your life out of respect for the teacher. Now, however, even if you hand it over, I still won't let you live. You're already a threat, and you'll be even more dangerous in the future."

Although Ye Guan was her enemy, she had to admit that he had formidable talent and strength. If he were given enough time to reach the Ancestral Sovereign Realm...

Even she dared not think deeply about it.

He had to die now!

Ye Guan looked at the Mistress. She no longer tried to hide the killing intent in her eyes.

He knew she wanted to kill him.

He glanced upward. He could still feel the seal between the heavens and the earth. Without it, he might be able to put up a fight against the Mistress. Otherwise, he'd have no chance against her at all.

At that moment, the Mistress suddenly stepped forward. She flicked her sleeve, and the long rod in her hand suddenly turned into a white light, smashing fiercely toward Ye Guan.

Boom!

A terrifying force enveloped Ye Guan!

In response, he opened his palm and sent boundless Invincible Sword Intent surging to the sky from within him, instantly shattering the force enveloping him.

Ye Guan stomped on the ground with his right foot and transformed into a sword light.

Boom!

Ye Guan's sword clashed with the long rod, and the immense force instantly shattered his flesh, causing blood to spray everywhere. At the same time, he flew backward.

The Mistress stepped forward again in an attempt to finish off Ye Guan. Before she could, however, Mu Yuan suddenly appeared in front of Ye Guan and resisted the sealing power. After making hand signs and drawing a teleportation array, he and Ye Guan disappeared.

The corners of the Mistress' mouth curved into a frown, making her disdain known. She then looked into the distance, her gaze piercing through spacetime. However, just as she was about to pursue them, she heard footsteps approaching.

Frowning slightly, the Mistress turned to look, finding two people walking over to her. One was a man dressed in white and the other was a woman in a plain skirt.

The man in white shook his head. "That's not quite fair."

The Mistress stared at him, her disdain still visible in her curled lips. "Who do you think you are?"

The calm expression of the lady in a plain skirt instantly turned cold. "Hmm?"

Chapter 608: Do you even deserve to know my name?

When the gaze of the plain-skirted lady turned cold, the temperature of their surroundings plummeted, making the Mistress of the Daoist Sect feel as if she was falling into an icy cellar.

The Mistress shifted her gaze from the man in white to the lady in a plain skirt. She stared at her, feeling a sudden unease rising and gradually spreading from the depths of her heart.

As her brows furrowed deeply, she dispelled the gloom in her heart. However, before she could speak, the lady in a plain skirt raised her hand.

Plop!

Before the Mistress could react, her legs bent, and she was forced to her knees. Feeling as if she had been struck by lightning, her mind began to blank out.

The lady in a plain skirt, void of any emotion, stared at her with eyes as cold as ice. "What are you?"

The Mistress looked at her in confusion. "How... is this... possible..."

She was one of the strongest beings in this universe!

Nevertheless, with just a casual gesture from the woman in front of her, she knelt on her own. She couldn't even resist.

How is this possible?

Confused, the Mistress felt as if everything that was unfolding before her was just a mere dream.

The lady in a plain skirt leisurely walked away with the man in white. The Mistress was far too weak for her to take an interest in. She wasn't even curious enough about her to make a move.

As the two walked toward the distant starry sky, the Mistress asked, "Who are you?"

Without looking back, the lady in a plain skirt replied, "Do you even deserve to know my name?"

The Mistress' expression instantly became fiercer.

She had never suffered such humiliation in her entire life.

Instead of resigning herself to fate, she chose to make a desperate attempt at retaliation. Her palm opened, and a golden light soared from within her.

The Divine Imprint!

The Mistress activated the power of the Divine Imprint, hoping to use it to break the sword energy seal inside her. However, just as the power of the Divine Imprint emerged...

Boom!

The artifact, known as the strongest treasure of the era of the First God, shattered into pieces. The Mistress' flesh and soul were torn apart as well.

"No!" The spirit of the Divine Imprint howled in despair as its soul began to dissipate. Its voice was accompanied by endless unwillingness and regret.

It was the most treasured artifact during the era of the First God and even once accompanied the First God himself in creating the universe and traversing the cosmos. Yet now, it was disappearing from this universe in such a mundane manner.

The spirit couldn't let this be its end!

It roared desperately, wanting to change its fate, but it couldn't do anything. Before the plain-skirted lady's power, it was as worthless as dust.

The spirit of the Divine Imprint began to disappear from this world. The Mistress' soul dissipated like a wisp of smoke as well.

The Mistress now realized how ridiculous it was to forcibly break the sword energy seal with the power of the Divine Imprint.

It was like cracking a stone with an egg!

It wasn't until moments before her death that she learned how weak she truly was...

Soon, both the Mistress and the Divine Imprint vanished from the world.

...

The man in white and the lady in a plain skirt slowly walked away.

"Should I have not intervened and stopped that lady, Qing'er?" the man in white whispered.

The lady in a plain skirt shook her head slightly. She held the man's hand and softly answered, "I support whatever you do."

The man in white smiled and looked at the distant end of the starry sky. "Let's accompany them just for a little while longer..."

The lady in a plain skirt nodded gently. "I'll follow your lead."

...

Meanwhile, Mu Yuan stopped and looked back, puzzled that the lady hadn't pursued them. The Mistress wouldn't have let Ye Guan go so easily.

Why didn't she chase after us?

At that moment, Mu Yuan came to a realization. He suddenly turned to Ye Guan, whose injuries had already fully healed.

Mu Yuan was astonished. "You've already recovered?"

Ye Guan nodded. With his Ancestral Origin strands, the Divine Tree of Nature, and the Life Force Heart, he naturally regenerated quickly. As long as he was alive, he could heal all his injuries in no time at all.

Mu Yuan shook his head and smiled. Now that he had been following Ye Guan for some time, he couldn't help but feel how extraordinary Ye Guan was. The number of divine items he possessed was also astonishing. Although the Divine Imprint was the greatest treasure of the era of the First God, it seemed ordinary compared to what he had in his arsenal.

Ye Guan suddenly looked up. "We need to find a way to leave this place."

During the battle earlier, he had felt quite stifled because he had to fight not only against the Mistress but also against the seal that the First God had left. It was as if he was fighting against two opponents at once.

The situation frustrated him a lot. Now that his identity as the inheritor of the First God's legacy had been exposed, staying here would be pointless. However, although he knew that he had to leave, he didn't have the means to!

Without the Divine Imprint, he would have to fight against the seal and force his way out. While Ye Guan was at a loss, Lin Daimei's grandmother suddenly appeared.

When Ye Guan looked at her, she asked, "Young Master Ye, do you want to leave this place?"

Ye Guan nodded. "Do you know of a way?"

"We simply have to go to the Wu Continent."

"Wu Continent? Why?"

"As far as I know, the Wu Clan, the most powerful clan in the Wu Continent, has an ancient teleportation array left by the First God. We can use it to leave this place. However, the conditions for activating the teleportation array are quite strict."

Ye Guan thought about it for a moment. "Let's give it a try."

After a brief hesitation, the old lady said, "Young Master Ye, forgive me for speaking out of turn, but you must not expose your Ancestral Origin strands so easily. Doing so might implicate innocent people."

Ye Guan smiled. "I understand. Thank you for your guidance."

While he and Mu Yuan were far stronger than the old lady, using their power here would inevitably attract the seal's attention. However, the old lady was different. As a native, the seal wouldn't suppress her.

"Very well," the old lady replied.

The three then headed straight to Wu Continent.

On the way, Ye Guan asked, "Senior Mu Yuan, about the Mistress..."

Mu Yuan shook his head. "I don't know either."

Ye Guan looked at the depths of the starry sky. He then whispered, "Master Pagoda, is someone following us?"

Little Pagoda was somewhat surprised. "Why would you think that?"

Ye Guan shook his head and smiled. "It's just a feeling. I can't really explain it."

After a moment of silence, Little Pagoda said, "You might be feeling a bit sensitive because of the woman you just fought."

Ye Guan remained silent.

Aware that its young master's mind was quite sharp, it realized that it had to change the topic quickly. "Anyway, what's your plan now?"

Plans?

"We're heading out. The Wang Family is waiting for us outside," Ye Guan answered. "There's also the group of pseudo-gods above them..."

At that moment, he remembered something. He narrowed his eyes.

The Past Clan!

He hadn't forgotten about that woman!

The Evil Dao, too!

He didn't know who the woman from the Past Clan was, but the Evil Dao was once a member of the Divine Temple.

"Master Pagoda, you've been with my father for a long time. I want to ask you something," he said.

Little Pagoda immediately became wary. "What is it?"

"I noticed that every time I grow stronger, my enemies do as well. No matter how much I improve, my enemies always become much stronger than me. Did my father ever find himself in such a situation?"

"He didn't just find himself in one. Rather, that has always been the case with him."

"How did he deal with it, then?"

"The enemies were always strong, so he kept calling."

Ye Guan's brows furrowed. "Calling?"

"Yes. Whenever he could not beat his enemies, he would call for help. He could not just let himself get beaten to death, could he?"

Ye Guan remained silent.

Little Pagoda added, "You mustn't follow his path. That's the reason he never managed to break through to divinity and reach the final step."

Ye Guan chuckled. "Are you afraid I'll follow my old man's footsteps?"

Little Pagoda let out a quiet sigh. In truth, it felt quite complex emotions.

It had followed three generations, the first two of which took different paths. Since both paths turned out to be difficult, it didn't want Ye Guan to follow them, especially now that he was walking the path of the Invincible Sword Dao—the most formidable among the three generations.

Hence, Ye Guan had to walk down his own path. Unfortunately, History always had some astonishing similarities. No matter how hard he tried, his enemies always seemed to be stronger than him by a large margin.

Ye Guan suddenly smiled. "Don't worry. I'll walk my own path."

Little Pagoda sighed softly. Ye Guan was very clever, even more so than it could imagine. It had sensed many times that the kid understood many things but never spoke about them. What truly pressured him wasn't his enemies but his predecessors.

It was as if he was a bad student entering a top class. With everyone around him working hard and achieving outstanding feats, how could he possibly slack off?

Ye Guan slowly closed his eyes, pondering the possible events that could happen next and devising strategies. Oftentimes, one had to be proactive, not passive. He had to consider all possibilities and how to deal with them. Eventually, he came to a conclusion.

Considering how strong he was now, he would fail to handle many of the potential outcomes. Hence, following his old man's example and slacking off could just be the best course of action for him right now.

Ye Guan felt numb. Little did he know, an unprecedented conspiracy was quietly beginning, and the target was him...

Somewhere in the void, a woman in white robes closed her eyes and remained silent.

When news of Ye Guan possessing the Divine Imprint spread, she immediately decided not to waste any time. She had to end this now. Hence, she headed out herself.

Even if it meant facing them three against one, she concluded that it was time to settle the score with the three swordsmen.

Chapter 609: Benevolence

Wu Continent.

Upon entering Wu Continent, Ye Guan was immediately taken aback by the abundance of spiritual energy. What surprised him even more was the faint presence of Ancestral Origin strands within the energy. It wasn't plentiful or entirely pure, but it undeniably carried Ancestral Origin strands.

"The Hengwu Mountain Range, where the Wu Clan resides, lies ahead," the old lady by his side said.

Ye Guan glanced at the seemingly endless mountains. "How powerful is the Wu Clan in this continent?"

"They are unrivaled."

Ye Guan nodded slightly, feeling a bit conflicted. He knew it wouldn't be easy to gain access to their teleportation array. Offering payment could only invite greed.

The old lady continued, "The Wu Clan was founded by Hengwu, the most powerful being in our universe back then. After becoming the strongest in the universe, he established the Wu Clan. It stood at the top until the Mistress founded the Academy."

"The lady from before?"

"Yes. She founded the Academy."

Ye Guan couldn't help but feel curious. Until recently, the Mistress had not made any moves. Was she preparing something big?

Interrupting the silence, the old lady asked, "Young Master Ye, how would you like to proceed?"

Gazing at the mountains, Ye Guan pondered for a moment. He then decisively exclaimed, "Let's just walk right through the front door!"

Since he didn't want to spend any more time here than necessary, it would be better for him to just be straightforward.

The old lady nodded and promptly led the way.

Soon, they reached the foot of a towering mountain. Ye Guan looked up, marveling at its height. Its peak was shrouded in clouds, and he could see grand palaces peeking through.

Accompanied by the old lady, he stood before the gate of the Wu Clan. When they arrived, an elderly man appeared before them.

The old man scrutinized Ye Guan and the old lady. "Who are you?"

Stepping forward respectfully, Ye Guan introduced himself. "I am Ye Guan, here to pay my respects to the clan leader of the Wu Clan."

The old man's brows furrowed. "Outsiders don't just get to—"

When a pill was presented to him, he faltered.

Sensing the Ancestral Origin strands within the pill, the old man's demeanor softened. He turned to Ye Guan.

With a much gentler tone, he asked, "How should I address you?"

With a slight smile, Ye Guan replied, "Ye Guan."

The old man seemed puzzled. He had never heard of him before.

Ye Guan added, "Please inform your clan leader of my arrival."

With a subtle gesture, he presented yet another Ancestral Origin Pill.

The old man couldn't help but feel astonished. This individual was clearly quite generous and likely had a high status. After taking the two Ancestral Origin Pills, he uttered, "Please wait a moment."

He turned on his heels and departed. Ye Guan waited patiently, surveying the Wu Clan's surroundings. He could sense numerous powerful yet hidden auras deep within the sect.

Before long, the elderly man returned and beckoned Ye Guan to follow.

"This way," he said.

Ye Guan complied, following the elderly man to the entrance of a grand hall. The elderly man then gestured for him to enter. "After you."

"Thank you," Ye Guan replied before stepping inside.

The hall was vast and peaceful. In the far end stood a lady draped in purple robes, her snow-white hair cascading freely down her back. She had an air of authority around her. Gazing down at Ye Guan from a raised platform, she emanated an unseen pressure.

Ye Guan was taken aback. He didn't expect the clan leader of the Wu Clan to be a woman.

Although she stayed silent, her penetrating gaze remained fixed on him. The pressure she emitted intensified with each passing moment.

Undaunted, Ye Guan said, "Clan Leader, I've come seeking the use of your clan's teleportation array to depart from this place."

The woman descended the steps, her presence seemingly growing more imposing with every stride. Nevertheless, Ye Guan calmly held her gaze.

The lady stopped right in front of him, her stature towering over his. Peering down at him, she asked, "An outsider?"

Ye Guan nodded in confirmation.

"What do you offer in return?" she pressed.

Opening his palm, Ye Guan revealed a single strand of Ancestral Origin.

"Is this all?" she asked calmly, her expression still straight.

Ye Guan, unfazed, inquired, "How many do you require?"

The lady held up a finger.

Acknowledging her request, he took out nine additional strands of Ancestral Origin.

"I meant a hundred," the lady declared.

Most would think that a hundred strands of Ancestral Origin was a lot. However, it was a mere fraction of his resources.

A "If you cannot provide it, then kindly take your leave."

Just as she was turning away, Ye Guan took out ninety more strands of Ancestral Origins.

She stopped, turned back, and locked eyes with him.

The lady had perfectly symmetrical features, an oval-shaped face, and phoenix-like eyes that seemed to strip its beholder. Her striking white hair added a touch of ethereal beauty to her, yet her presence remained commanding.

Ye Guan met her gaze with calmness and composure, unaffected by her imposing aura. He had encountered far too many powerful enemies to be intimidated.

The lady with snow-white hair glanced at the hundred strands of Ancestral Origin. "Aren't you afraid I might kill you and take all the Ancestral Origin strands you have?"

"I've considered that possibility," Ye Guan responded calmly.

"Then why would you risk offering so many Ancestral Origin strands?"

"I understand the temptation that immense wealth poses. Ancestral Origin is invaluable, and you probably think that since I can offer this many at once, I must have more. If so, then you're right—I do have more. However, I am extending my goodwill to you in hopes of letting you know that my visit to the Wu Clan isn't to stir trouble. I simply want to use your sect's teleportation array to leave."

He had weighed various possibilities when he arrived, including the prospect of the Wu Clan succumbing to temptation and becoming enemies with him. Yet, even in such a scenario, he opted to extend goodwill first. It's always wise to be kind when away from home. He didn't believe everyone would resort to violence and robbery at the drop of a hat.

The lady fixed her gaze on Ye Guan. "What if I truly intended to rob you?"

"You mentioned a hundred strands of Ancestral Origin earlier to dissuade me, didn't you?"

The lady chuckled softly. "You didn't leave, though. I underestimated your financial means."

"Does that mean the teleportation array cannot be used?"

"It's been unusable for the past thousand years now."

Perplexed, Ye Guan asked, "Why is that?"

"It has been damaged. Even if it hadn't, activating it requires an enormous amount of Ancestral Origin strands. Even the entire Wu Clan can't afford it."

Feeling troubled, Ye Guan's brows furrowed. Did he really have to confront the seal left by the First God head-on? Staying in this place was incredibly dangerous. If a pseudo-god were to arrive, he'd be in serious trouble.

Just then, the lady collected the Ancestral Origin strands that Ye Guan had offered.

Ye Guan was taken aback. What's happening?

"Don't worry. I'm not about to rob you of your meager supply of Ancestral Origin strands," the Clan Leader of the Wu Clan explained.

"What are you planning to do, then?" Ye Guan asked.

"You wish to leave, don't you? I'll find a way to help."

"What method?"

"I'm still considering."

With her hands behind her back, she added, "Would my Wu Clan steal such a small amount of Ancestral Origin strands from you? Rest assured, if I say I'll find a solution, I will. Stay in the Wu Clan for now. I'll devise a plan that would help you leave."

Ye Guan asked, "How long will that take?"

The lady held up a finger.

"One day?" he guessed.

"One year."

Ye Guan stared at her in silence.

After thinking about it for a moment, she suggested, "How about six months?"

Ye Guan sighed softly. "I don't have that much time. I'll give you three days. If, within three days, you fail to find a way, you'll have to return the Ancestral Origin strands."

The lady fell silent.

"Do you accept?" he asked.

She shook her head. "Three days won't be enough. At least give me ten."

When Ye Guan didn't respond, she continued, "There are only two ways to leave this place. One is to break through the seal left by the First God, which is virtually impossible. The other is to use the teleportation array. However, it's damaged and won't be a quick fix."

"Can the teleportation array be repaired?"

The lady nodded. "Money is all you need."

"Then I'll wait for ten days."

"Okay. Until then, you can stay within the confines of the Wu Clan. However, you are not allowed to enter certain places."

"Understood."

Ye Guan then turned around and left.

At the same time, the lady's eyes narrowed a little as she stared outside the hall.

Suddenly, a hunched old man appeared behind her, seemingly materializing from thin air.

Peering outside the hall, the hunched figure spoke with a sinister tone. "Clan Leader, that man's casual offering of a hundred Ancestral Origin strands suggests he possesses Ancestral Veins."

"I'm well aware."

The hunched man briefly hesitated before suggesting, "Then why not..."

Before he could finish, the lady interrupted, "Shouldn't you be investigating his background instead of resorting to violence?"

Startled, he quickly said, "I'll investigate at once, Clan Leader."

He vanished into thin air.

Turning her gaze back to the distant figure outside, the lady's demeanor shifted, her eyes growing colder as she murmured, "If you have powerful people supporting you, I'll extend my friendship. Otherwise..."

Chapter 610: Born Beyond the Norm

Friend? Not just anyone could be considered her friend.

Without thoroughly investigating the background of the other party, she naturally wouldn't act hastily. After all, those with Ancestral Veins undoubtedly had complex backgrounds.

There was no need to rush. With a turn, the lady departed.

...

Outside the hall, Ye Guan opted not to wander within the Wu Clan. Instead, he went straight to the quarters that the Wu Clan arranged for him. After swiftly erecting a barrier in the room, he entered the Little Pagoda.

As soon as he entered, Mu Yuan materialized before him, appearing poised to speak but then hesitating.

Ye Guan grinned. "Senior, you're concerned about the Wu Clan, aren't you?"

Mu Yuan nodded. "I understand your perspective. Extending kindness and fostering good relations is undoubtedly commendable. However, Young Master, you might be underestimating the darker facets of human nature."

"I know. Human nature tends toward greed. It's a common phenomenon."

"So you're gambling on the greed of the Wu Clan's Clan Leader?"

Ye Guan shook his head. "This isn't a gamble."

"What is it, then?"

Ye Guan's smile widened. "We need the Wu Clan's help. It's only natural to offer incentives in return. They don't owe us anything, but it's simply the right thing to do. What they want to do is entirely up to them."

Mu Yuan glanced at Ye Guan. His expression showed conflicting emotions.

Although their cultivations were sealed, Ye Guan and the individuals housed within the little pagoda might still pose a challenge to the Wu Clan. Merged with Ao Qianqian, Ye Guan could fight pretty well even with the seal.

However, as he mentioned, when seeking aid from others, one had to adopt an appropriate demeanor and approach. Resorting to aggression simply because there was a chance the other party would harm them wasn't a justifiable excuse.

With a calm mind, he settled into a cross-legged position.

Throughout his journey, he discovered that the fastest ways to become stronger were combat and mind cultivation.

Battling and pushing himself to the brink allowed him to transcend his limits and reach new heights. Cultivating his mind, on the other hand, was like sharpening a blade. It was a perpetual process of introspection—an examination of his own heart, understanding it, and ultimately mastering it.

Combat cultivated the body.

Cultivating his mind cultivated the soul.

Both were indispensable.

...

The True Universe.

Somewhere in the north, amid endless snowfields, Ye Qing—a young man in black robes—strolled leisurely.

The icy wind howled, but the youth pressed on, undeterred.

Under the nurturing of the Guanyuan Universe, he had ascended to the Great Destiny Sovereign Realm, making him the most exceptional genius after Ye Guan, Ye An, and Ao Qianqian.

The Guanyuan Universe spared no effort in cultivating the talents from Ye Guan's generation, providing top-notch resources and mentorship. As a result, Ye Qing and his peers' progress was nothing short of staggering.

The True Universe also dedicated itself to helping the younger generation.

Thanks to the collaboration between the two universes, they had entered a phase of rapid advancement.

For the citizens of both universes, this era was unparalleled.

Whether in the True Universe or the Guanxuan Universe, talents emerged ceaselessly like bamboo shoots after spring rain.

Now, the Time River served as the training ground for both universes. While they coexisted peacefully, competition between them persisted. Under the two universes' guidance, it had transformed into a healthy rivalry.

The talents' current goal was the Time River, the Old Era, and Ye Guan.

Indeed, their target was now Ye Guan, the most talented individual in the True Universe and Guanxuan Universe. Many young talents idolized him.

Ye Qing's objective was also Ye Guan. It had always been him.

Soon, he stopped and gazed up at a distant snow-capped mountain. At its summit, an ancient temple loomed faintly.

Ye Qing grinned. "We're here, Master."

"Head up," a voice in his head ordered.

With a nod, he ascended.

Along the way, the voice spoke again. "I've heard that Ye Guan has entered the Old Era and has already become an Imperial Sovereign."

Ye Qing nodded knowingly. "I'm aware."

The voice hesitated, seemingly wanting to convey more.

Ye Qing chuckled. "Master, are you implying that I shouldn't target Ye Guan?"

"He's too exceptional, and he's being supported by so many elites in the dark. If you make him your sole focus, you may find yourself endlessly chasing after an unattainable goal, risking your own mental state."

"Master, if neither Ye Guan nor I had any guidance, and we were free to develop ourselves, who do you think would emerge stronger?"

After a moment of silence, the voice replied, "What do you think?"

"During our time in the Ye Clan, neither of us had any guidance, yet he was appointed as heir. I never contested it, and I genuinely respected him for it because he truly outshone me. When you started guiding me Master, I believed I could surpass him. Initially, I felt a twinge of guilt, thinking it was unfair to him. Little did I know, he was the son of the Sword Master..."

He shook his head, smiling ruefully.

"And then?" the voice softly asked.

Ye Qing brushed off the snow on his robes and chuckled. "Later, when I saw Ye Guan inherit the Guanyuan Universe and venture farther and farther, I felt genuinely happy for him."

The voice fell silent.

"Are you worried that I would be jealous of Brother Ye, Master?"

"That thought has crossed my mind."

"I have no reason to be envious of him."

"Why do you say that?"

Ye Qing glanced at the ancient temple. "Ye Guan is the son of the Sword Master. While his status has undoubtedly aided him, does it not also serve as shackles? The weight of the entire universe's future rests upon him. Can you imagine the pressure he must endure?"

"Fair point."

"Moreover, with your guidance, Master, I've already started from a position far beyond the ordinary. I'm content with that. One must learn to be content. Constant comparison with others will only lead to self-inflicted torment."

"Well said," the voice chimed approvingly.

After brushing off the snow from his chest, Ye Qing added, "Once this trial concludes, I plan to go to the Time River, catch up with Ye Guan, and challenge him again. Everyone needs a goal, don't they?"

The voice chuckled. "I'm curious to see just how far that young lad has progressed."

As Ye Qing laughed, a flurry of snowflakes rushed into his throat, causing him to cough.

Before long, he found himself at the entrance of the ancient temple. A lantern hung above, undisturbed by the howling winds and swirling snow.

Ye Qing lightly knocked on the temple door, but there was no response.

He knocked again.

Creak!

The ancient door creaked open, revealing an old man.

He gazed at Ye Qing in silence.

Ye Qing extended his palm, revealing a jade pendant. "A senior sent me here."

Upon seeing the jade pendant, the old man's expression shifted. He promptly opened the door wider and said, "Please, come in."

Ye Qing nodded and stepped into the temple. The first thing he saw was a small yet meticulously maintained courtyard with green stones lining the ground. A monk was sweeping its field.

Upon spotting Ye Qing, the monk offered a slight bow.

Ye Qing returned the gesture.

Guided by the old monk, he entered a grand hall with a clay Buddha statue inside.

The old monk bowed slightly before turning to Ye Qing.

After a brief pause, Ye Qing said, "I'm not here to join the temple."

Nevertheless, the old monk handed him a set of monk robes. "Put these on."

Ye Qing complied without protest.

"Follow me," the old monk instructed.

He then turned and led Ye Qing to the back door of the temple. As the door swung open, they were met with the biting wind and swirling snow. The wind was as sharp as knives.

Gazing down, Ye Qing noticed heavy footprints on the ground. Bewildered, he looked at the old monk for guidance.

However, the old monk simply said, "Continue onward."

After a brief hesitation, Ye Qing asked, "Master, is this a saint?"

The old monk nodded.

"Which one?"

The old monk shook his head. "There is no more need for words."

Nodding in understanding, Ye Qing refrained from prodding further. However, when he stepped out of the temple gate, he suddenly froze in place.

All his cultivation had been sealed!

Ye Qing turned to the old monk, who nodded.

"Go on," the old monk said.

After a brief silence, Ye Guan nodded and began following the fading footprints into the distance, swiftly disappearing into the swirling snow and wind.

Once Ye Qing was out of sight, the old monk returned to the temple, closing the door behind him.

Outside the temple gate, the Great Daoist Brush Master and the Boundless Master emerged.

Watching Ye Qing's vanishing silhouette, the Boundless Master softly remarked, "Your first choice was this youngster, not Ye Guan, was it not?"

The Great Daoist Brush Master gazed into the distance, offering no reply.

With furrowed brows, the Boundless Master turned to the Great Daoist Brush Master. "If your target was this lad and not Ye Guan, then why did you..."

The Great Daoist Brush Master calmly responded, "Ye Guan has never been under my control."

The Boundless Master was taken aback.

The Great Daoist Brush Master continued, "Since he was born, he had never been limited by the confines of the Dao. The Great Dao never had the authority or the courage to control him... Born outside the Dao from the outset. Impressive, isn't it?"

After a moment of reflection, the Boundless Master replied, "Incredibly so."