

Battle Through the Heavens #Chapter 181: Journey Through The Desert - Read Battle Through the Heavens Chapter 181: Journey Through The Desert

Chapter 181: Journey Through The Desert

Seeing Xiao Yan nod his head, Hai Bodong finally sighed in relief. The smile on his old face grew a little wider.

“Give me the medicinal formula... Oh, yes, you know the rule when hiring an alchemist to refine medicine, don't you?” Xiao Yan smiled at Hai Bodong. “Prepare the ingredients yourself!”

Hai Bodong nodded with a bitter smile. He naturally knew the rule, but all the same his dry palm grabbed threads of hair that could be counted as a beard as he said with some embarrassment, “I have gathered most of the medicinal ingredients required by the medicinal formula. However, I am still missing one of them.”

“This medicinal ingredient's name is Sand's Datura, can only be found in the Tager Desert and is easiest to find in places where the temperature is higher.... You should know that I train using an ice type Qi Technique. Additionally, my body also has the seal Queen Medusa left behind. If I step into the inner regions of the Tager Desert, she will discover my presence... so...”

Seeing Hai Bodong's embarrassed expression, Xiao Yan rolled his eyes and curled his lips as he said, “You aren't asking me to search for it, are you? I am already losing out just by helping you refine the medicine, now you want me to help you look for medicinal ingredients in the vast desert... Isn't your small map fragment a little too valuable?”

Hearing this, Hai Bodong gave an awkward smile. He hesitated for a while before he helplessly said, “Alright, I might be able to give you information on something you might be interested in.”

“What information?” Xiao Yan asked in surprise.

“It is related to a 'Heavenly Flame'...” Hai Bodong waved his hand and asked with a smile “Is this information enough to motivate you to help me look for the Sand's Datura?” Once he heard the two words 'Heavenly Flame', Xiao Yan's heart beat violently. His throat rolled slightly as his heated gaze stared at Hai Bodong in front of him.

“You might have heard some news about a 'Heavenly Flame' in the Tager Desert?” Seeing Xiao Yan's expression, Hai Bodong let out a relieved sigh in his heart as he said with a smile.

“Yes.” Nodding his head slightly, Xiao Yan anxiously asked, “Do you know exactly where the ‘Heavenly Flame’ is located within the Tager Desert?”

“As a map maker, I had once roamed around the Tager Desert. By luck, I obtained some information about a ‘Heavenly Flame’. I surveyed some of the locations and routes from this information. Although I still cannot be certain where exactly the ‘Heavenly Flame’ is located, I can roughly guess which areas have the highest chance of possessing the ‘Heavenly Flame’.” Hai Bodong said with an extremely pleased smile.

“If you do not have my guidance, even if you spent an entire year roaming the Tager Desert, it would be near impossible for you to find the ‘Heavenly Flame’.”

“What do you think? As long as you agree to help me obtain the Sand’s Datura, I will give you all the information from my research on the location of the ‘Heavenly Flame’.” Hai Bodong said with a smile.

“Deal!”

Xiao Yan immediately agreed without the slightest hesitation. The attraction a ‘Heavenly Flame’ posed to him was far too great. In order to obtain it, Xiao Yan was willing to pay a huge price.

Seeing that Xiao Yan had agreed, Hai Bodong nodded his head with a smile. His palm gently searched his breast pocket before finally taking out a thin goatskin parchment and handing it to Xiao Yan. He said, “After surveying a couple places, I have concluded that there are three places which are most likely to possess a ‘Heavenly Flame’ within the Tager Desert.”

Receiving the goatskin parchment, Xiao Yan carefully opened it and realized that it was an extremely detailed map of the vast Tager Desert. This map was not something that the other maps on the counter could compare with. On it, not only were there clear indications of the water sources present in the desert, it even marked in great detail the locations of the Snake People tribes that were scattered in the desert.

“Can you see the three flame symbols on the map?” Hai Bodong smiled and reminded.

Hearing this, Xiao Yan’s gaze swept across the map and found that in three directions: east, west, and north, there were very eye catching flame symbols.

“In the Tager Desert, these three places have the highest possibility of a ‘Heavenly Flame’ being present .” Pointing his finger at the three flame symbols, Hai Bodong smiled and said, “Of course these are places that I have reasoned out after surveying much of the desert. The accuracy cannot be a hundred percent, but it is much better than you randomly searching for it.”

Xiao Yan nodded his head. Even though he had Yao Lao's help, it would be extremely difficult to search for the location of the 'Heavenly Flame' in the Tager Desert due to it being far too vast. This detailed map of Hai Bodong's would undoubtedly help him save a lot of time and effort.

"You should remember that it would be best to head for the eastern and northern places with the flame symbol first. As for the western one... it would be best to avoid going there if possible." Hai Bodong gravely reminded as his finger stopped at the flame symbol on the western side.

"Why?"

"Because that area is close to the inner regions of the Tager Desert. Queen Medusa can feel any human's breath after they enter her territory. Although you possess many different unique treasures, I don't think you have much of a chance of escaping alive if you meet that terrifying Queen Medusa." Hai Bodong sighed with lingering fear in his heart.

"Okay... I will try my best."

Xiao Yan nodded his head. However, he knew in his heart that if he could not find any trace of a 'Heavenly Flame' in the other two places, there was a good chance that he would head for the western flame symbol. Even if that place was filled with danger, he would not hesitate entering it. This was because a 'Heavenly Flame' possessed just too much of an attraction to him...

"This is all the help that I can give you. I hope that you will be able to successfully obtain the 'Heavenly Flame' and return with the Sand's Datura." Seeing Xiao Yan carefully put away the map, Hai Bodong said with a smile, "As for the medicinal formula and the map fragment, please allow me to keep it safe for this period of time. When you return, I will hand everything back over to you."

"Okay." Nodding his head, Xiao Yan faced Hai Bodong, cupped his hands together and said, "Since it is like that, then I bid you farewell. I am really sorry for creating a mess in old sir's place."

Sweeping his gaze over the messy room, Hai Bodong shook his head and smiled bitterly. "Forget it. I have used up all my patience living here in isolation. Even if you didn't smash this place, I don't think I would have continued for much longer anyway."

With a smile, Xiao Yan once again apologized. After which, he waved his hand at Hai Bodong as he turned around and walked out of the door.

Seeing Xiao Yan opening the door and slowly disappear, Hai Bodong narrowed his eyes and was quiet for a moment. After which, he began to clean up the messy place.

Outside the ancient looking shop's door, Xiao Yan raised his head and allowed the hot sunlight to spill onto his face like boiling water. A long while later, he gently sighed. The experience in these two short hours had given him a dream like feeling. He had only just arrived at Desert City and randomly entered a shop. Yet, he had already met a strong person living in isolation. This kind of plot that existed only in stories had actually occurred in reality in front of him. He could not help but sigh emotionally.

"Ugh, I am able to meet someone who was once a Dou Huang by just randomly entering somewhere... Am I lucky or unlucky?" Letting out a short, bitter laugh, Xiao Yan released a breath of air and strode down the street. Gently touching the ring, he suddenly asked casually in his heart, "Teacher, do you think that he can be trusted?"

"It is indeed true that he had received a seal. But you are asking whether there is a problem with the map he gave us right? Keke, we have to follow the route on it and if he had any ill intentions, we might really get into some trouble." Yao Lao laughed before he voiced his thoughts, "But this map will indeed provide us quite a lot of help. The three areas with the flame symbol are places that I did not visit back then. Therefore, I cannot say for certain if it is real or fake..."

"Although we cannot determine if he has any ill intentions, we should always take some precautions... Once we enter the Tager Desert, try to be a little more careful. We do not need to walk completely as the map dictates. Back then, I had roamed around this place for some time so I do have some knowledge and will help you to not lose your way." Yao Lao said a little cautiously.

"Ah..." Nodding his head, Xiao Yan said with a smile, "Since it's like this, then I will go and prepare the rest of the items first before resting in the city for the night. We will enter the Tager Desert tomorrow morning."

"Yes." Yao Lao nodded his head and then became silent.

Gently patting his clothes with his hand, Xiao Yan smiled, lifted his legs and headed for the medicinal shop a short distance away. The gains that he had obtained today had far exceeded his expectations. Not only had he found a fragmented map piece, he even managed to obtain some information on a 'Heavenly Flame'. This could not help but cause Xiao Yan's heart to be excited.

Walking along the street for a distance, Xiao Yan turned into a medicinal shop. Within it, he bought some medicinal plants that repelled snakes. When he was purchasing the medicinal plants, he took care to observe the old man selling the medicine in great detail to the point of making the old man feel a little uneasy. Only then did Xiao Yan embarrassingly pick up his things and leave the medicinal shop. It appeared that after the event just now, Xiao Yan's mind was a little over sensitive. He really thought that strong people who lived in isolation like Hai Bodong, were all over the streets...

After preparing the medicinal ingredients needed to repel snakes, Xiao Yan subsequently bought enough water to fill his storage ring at a shop selling clean water before he was satisfied with his preparations and decided to head for a high class inn that a passerby had pointed to: a place where he would stay the night.

As the dark night slowly passed by, the hot sun once again covered the desert in a great heat.

Walking out of the inn, Xiao Yan stretched his lazy waist. He then gently tapped on the storage ring on his finger. In there were fifty 'Energy Recovery Pills' that Yao Lao had spent the night rushing to refine. These things were essential for him to train in the desert.

Standing on the street near the city's entrance, Xiao Yan once again checked to see if he had all the things he needed. Only after that did he place the Black Xuan Ruler on his back – which was almost as tall as him – took a deep breath and began his journey through the desert.

“This time around, I must find a 'Heavenly Flame'.”

Under the gazes of the foot soldiers guarding the city that were filled with reverence, Xiao Yan walked out of the city. He eyed the endless golden colored desert that appeared in his sight while silently steeling his heart.

Chapter 182: Tough Training in the Desert

In the vast desert, a sandstorm raged. A young man wearing the long robes of an alchemist was slowly advancing through the sandstorm. The deep footprints left in the yellow sand behind him were covered by the sandstorm in a moment, burying all traces of his passage.

The environment within the Tager Desert was more harsh than what Xiao Yan had expected. Under the exposure of the hot sun, the yellow sand under his feet was like scalding, small metal pieces, causing Xiao Yan to involuntarily twitch his mouth each time his feet stepped on it.

As Xiao Yan slowly walked, the wind blowing toward his face carried fine grains of sand that smashed against his face, causing Xiao Yan to feel a slight stinging sensation. The pain caused Xiao Yan to circulate his Dou Qi all the time, forming a faint Dou Qi mask over his face in order to prevent the possibility of the sandstorm disfiguring him.

Despite the desert environment being extremely harsh, the fire type energy that it contained made Xiao Yan a lot more pleased. It was perhaps due to the exposure of the sun that resulted in this place having a much richer fire type energy than the Magic Beast Mountain Range. Moreover, the fire type energy was also much more potent and

pure, which was extremely suitable for Xiao Yan to use to train his Purple Flame Dou Qi.

After entering the vast desert for only half a day, Xiao Yan could clearly feel that the Purple Flame Dou Qi flowing in his body was obviously much more active and joyous compared to before.

Xiao Yan slowly walked another few hundred meters. He wiped away the perspiration on his forehead and licked his somewhat dry lips. Retrieving a bottle of water from his storage ring, he viciously took a few gulps before sighing. Xiao Yan then took out the goatskin map and bitterly smiled, "Teacher, during this half a day, we did not follow the route on the map. Since we did that, it could be considered that we have avoided the main road on here. Where do we go next?"

"Ah... then we will first head towards the eastern flame symbol." Yao Lao randomly said.

Hearing this, Xiao Yan held the map and studied it for a while. He pressed his eyebrows together and sighed, "Looking at the map scale indicator, it looks like we will need to journey for at least ten more days if we want to get to the region indicated by the eastern flame symbol..."

"Hee hee, then let's go... In this desert, even walking can be considered a form of training!" Seeing Xiao Yan's bitter face, Yao Lao laughed in a gloating manner.

Sighing once again, Xiao Yan stared at the huge sun in the desert sky. He opened and closed his mouth before returning the map to his storage ring. Touching the Heavy Xuan Ruler on his back with his hand, he could not help but smile with joy. It was strange. Although this Heavy Xuan Ruler was extremely big, it still remained cool even under the extensive exposure to the hot sun. It was as though the sun in the sky did not have much impact on it. In this way, Xiao Yan did not need to think too much. After all, if someone told him to carry a red hot searing piece of metal and walk about, he would definitely not do such a foolish thing...

Once again Xiao Yan wiped his perspiration off. He was just about to turn his body toward the eastern side of the desert when his face changed. His palm grabbed the heavy ruler, drew it, and viciously stabbed it into the yellow sand under him.

"Hiss!" A loud shrill immediately rang out from where his heavy ruler was inserted into the ground. Xiao Yan was expressionless as he pulled out the heavy ruler. A pool of bright red blood began to seep up to the surface of the yellow sand, staining it red. As Xiao Yan waved his sleeve gently, a force lifted a small sized Magic Beast from under the yellow sand.

Xiao Yan glanced indifferently at this Magic Beast which had lost its life force. This kind of Magic Beast was known as the Yellow Sand Magic Scorpion and could only be encountered in the desert. These things frequently hid themselves within the yellow

sand, awaiting someone to voluntarily step on them and then they would release a poison liquid that would numb or even kill the target. The Magic Scorpions were also extremely good at hiding. Even some humans who spent most of their time in the desert would occasionally fall into their traps. Thus, this Magic Beast which was not even rank one was frequently regarded by people as one of the hardest living creatures to deal with in the desert.

Regardless of how good the Magic Scorpions were at hiding, they shone as bright as fireflies in the dark night under Xiao Yan's exceptional Spiritual Perception. If one wanted to launch a sneak attack... it was basically impossible.

Xiao Yan's gaze swept across the Magic Scorpion. He then took two steps forward and cut off its poison stinger which he then stored in his storage ring. After which, he stood up and took somewhat heavy footsteps as he began to slowly walk toward the eastern side of the desert.

The dullness and the harshness of training in the desert once again exceeded Xiao Yan's expectations. Back when he was training in the Magic Beast Mountain Range, he did not feel overtly lonely. However, in this vast desert, all that was in his sight were a few sandstorms raging. Forget about people, even the shadow of a Magic Beast was something that was hard to find. This kind of desolate and lonely feeling was a little difficult to bear.

The second day after Xiao Yan stepped into the Tager Desert was also the official start of his training. Under Yao Lao's instruction, Xiao Yan only wore knee length shorts on his body while his upper body was simply naked.

Regarding this image of his, Xiao Yan had thought of protesting but this was directly rejected by Yao Lao. The latter's reasoning was that only by letting the naked skin be exposed to the sun could his body effectively absorb the fire type energy contained within the air.

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On the endless gold colored desert, a figure wearing shorts with a naked back was clenching his teeth as he laid on the hot yellow sand. Beside him, a somewhat blurry old man was smiling while holding a small jade bottle that was filled with a red colored liquid. The mouth of the bottle was slowly tilted as a few drops of red colored liquid were poured on the back of the young man whose skin had turned a little brown from the sun.

"Hiss..." As the red liquid dropped onto Xiao Yan's back, he tightly clenched his teeth as he released a thread of cool air. His pair of hands tightly grabbed some yellow sand, not caring if the sand was hot.

"Applying this 'Burning Blood' in the desert has a much greater effect compared to being in the Magic Beast Mountain Range. Although this thing's a little hard to prepare, its

effect is indeed quite good. In the desert, it can cause the skin to be even more sensitive to the fire type energy in the air outside. When you train, it has the ability to get a more benefits for less effort.” Gently scraping the red colored liquid with a piece of jade, Yao Lao watched the young man who was tightly clenching his teeth and enduring it. An apologetic smile flashed in his eyes as he softly explained.

Xiao Yan opened his mouth and grinned but his smile was extremely ugly. He muttered with a smile, “It’s alright. Just do it. Anyway, I am becoming used to it these days. I don’t have many good points but I am extremely adaptable. Hee hee, my life is even tougher than a cockroach’s life.”

“But these few days of training has had quite a good effect. I can already feel that the Dou Qi in my body is advancing toward the peak of a one star Dou Shi.” Wiping his palm on the yellow sand, Xiao Yan said excitedly.

“Haha.” Nodding his head with a smile, Yao Lao said in a soft and even voice, “Alright. Enter your training mode. Now is the most appropriate time to train. Don’t waste these conditions...”

Hearing this, Xiao Yan hurriedly nodded his head. He stopped talking nonsense as he continued to lay with his back to the sun and his front stuck to the searing hot yellow sand. A Dou Qi mask covered his face and like an ostrich, he buried his head into a hot pile of sand.

Xiao Yan’s current strange training position was something Yao Lao had specially instructed. The reason for it was because despite the rich fire type energy being present everywhere, the fire type energy in the yellow sand, which had saturated after being exposed to the sun for an entire day, was much purer. This was how Xiao Yan ended up with this strange ostrich training position...

After burying his head into the yellow sand, Xiao Yan’s senses gradually became still. The surrounding sound of the raging sandstorms were also annihilated. His mind gradually entered into his body. Under the observation from his mind’s eye, Xiao Yan could see that under exposure to the hot sun, the ‘Burning Blood’ liquid which was applied on his back, was swiftly invading his body. Although the searing pain during this time caused his skin to involuntarily convulse, the pure fire type energy continued to give Xiao Yan a pleased feeling as he looked for joy in his sorrow.

With the stimulation of the ‘Burning Blood’ on Xiao Yan’s skin, the already rich fire type energy in his surroundings seemed to have found a container as it continued to pour into Xiao Yan’s body. After being promoted to a Dou Shi, Xiao Yan could already appropriately arrange these energies pouring into his body without spending too much effort.

Xiao Yan controlled this fire type energy through a few Qi Paths and then poured it into the purple colored vortex in his lower abdomen after being refined.

The training was slowly conducted under this harsh and lonely manner. When the 'Burning Blood' on Xiao Yan's back was finally dispersed, a small drop of purple colored liquid finally congratulated within the vortex.

The small purple colored liquid flowed happily within the vortex, much like a small fish in a lake, agile and active.

Xiao Yan's mind observed the newest small drop of purple colored liquid as he smiled. After this period of observation, he had faintly calculated that when the vortex had reached fifteen small drops of liquid, he would achieve the strength needed to be promoted to be a two star Dou Shi. Currently, there were already thirteen small drops of purple colored liquid within the vortex. In other words, once two other small drops of purple colored liquid were congregated, Xiao Yan should be able to be promoted into a two star Dou Shi!

"Soon..." Xiao Yan silently whispered in his heart. His head looked up abruptly as he ruthlessly shook the yellow sand from his head. After which, he jumped from from the sand's surface, faced the sky and shouted, "Soon! Two star Dou Shi!"

Standing on one side, Yao Lao watched Xiao Yan loudly shouting, venting the feelings in his heart. He smiled slightly and muttered softly, "Boy, although your training talent is quite good, your effort is most crucial to success... I really await the Three Year Agreement in a few months time. Back then, she gave you a humiliation that was difficult to erase. Now, you are already qualified to recover it..."

Slowly raising his head, Yao Lao watched the enormous sun. After which he tilted his head and watched the young man's back which was as thin as a stick. He suddenly smiled faintly.

"Although this training is very tough, you have not given up. All of these successes were exchanged with your effort and sweat. I believe that in the future you will be able to stand at the peak of the Dou Qi continent!"

Chapter 183: Coincidental Meeting

The golden colored sand was the main tune within this vast desert. Violent winds carried the sand, engulfing the space between the land and the sky while howling unceasingly.

On a sand dune, Xiao Yan who was naked above the waist, frowned tightly as he looked at the map in his hand. It had been over ten days since he had entered the Tager Desert. After over ten days of walking, Xiao Yan had finally approached the region marked by the flame symbol on the map. However, since he had entered this region yesterday, Xiao Yan was unable to find any traces of a 'Heavenly Flame' despite having searched for an entire day.

“Why is there nothing? Don’t tell me that we were misled by that old man?” Xiao Yan frowned and said as he waved the goatskin map in his hand and lifted his head to face Yao Lao who was floating in midair.

“This... I’m not sure. The surrounding landscape is not much different from other places. I am also unable to feel any spot with unusual movement” Yao Lao slowly descended and helplessly said.

“If there isn’t anything wrong with the map... it is very likely that this place does not have any traces of a ‘Heavenly Flame’...” Xiao Yan shook his head and sighed.

“Maybe.”

“Ugh... dammit. I’ve wasted the ten days walking.” Violently waving the goatskin map, Xiao Yan scolded dispiritedly.

“Ke ke, it cannot be considered wasting time. At the very least, you have gradually reached the peak of a one star Dou Shi during these ten plus days of training. As long as you persevere and train for a period of time, breaking through to a two star Dou Shi should be something that will naturally occur.” Yao Lao comforted. Hearing this, Xiao Yan still rubbed his lips together while feeling dissatisfied. His finger pointed at the flame symbol on the map and moaned deeply, “Let’s search for a little more. After all, this symbol is so big. The region it envelopes is not small. We are also unfamiliar with the surroundings. Naturally, we will need to spend more time searching. Otherwise, if we miss it... we’ll regret it until death.”

“Yes, this region is indeed not small. That old guy is really lazy... Ugh. Then we’ll search for two more days. After two days, we will change our destination and head north... Walking between these two areas would at least require a month’s time before reaching it.” Yao Lao glanced at the flame symbol, frowned slightly and nodded.

Xiao Yan smiled bitterly and sighed once again. His palm habitually touched the huge Heavy Xuan Ruler on his back before lifting his leg and headed toward the sea of sand that enveloped his sight.

Enduring the hot sun, Xiao Yan once again walked for nearly half an hour while perspiring profusely. Just when he intended to stop for a rest, his eyebrow suddenly rose. Tilting his head to the side, he stared at the sand dune a short distance away. There, a human figure was fleeing in a terrible state. As the figure was descending from the sand dune, a moment of carelessness caused him or her to roll down the sand dune.

Xiao Yan pressed his eyebrows slightly together as he watched the human figure roll all the way down until he reached a spot a short distance from Xiao Yan. Helplessly shaking his head, Xiao Yan walked forward, took out a pouch of water and poured it on the face of the man.

Under the stimulation from the water source, the man who had fell unconscious gradually opened his eyes. He stared at Xiao Yan who had appeared in front of him and was initially alarmed. When he noticed that Xiao Yan did not have any ill intentions, he sighed in relief.

Indifferently glancing at the man, Xiao Yan randomly took out two to three bottles of clean water from his storage ring. He then threw them beside the man, turned around and left.

At the bottom of Xiao Yan's heart, he had never thought himself as a good person who had a heart of gold. Giving some water to an injured stranger in the desert was his greatest bottomline. If someone wanted him to protect and escort them out of the desert, then he could only say sorry...

"Brother..." Seeing that Xiao Yan had turned around and walked away decisively, the man was a little startled. Immediately, he hurriedly said in a hoarse voice, "Little brother, please wait. Our mercenary company was attacked by Snake-People. Now they are in a life threatening situation. Can you go to the Rock Desert City to help call for reinforcements!"

"Sorry. I don't have the time."

Without turning around, Xiao Yan waved his hand and said indifferently. He could not be blamed for being indifferent. There were countless people dying in the world everyday. Can all of them ask him to help them bring reinforcements? Since they were working as mercenaries in the Tager Desert, it was only natural for them to be prepared to face such a fate.

"Little Brother!"

Seeing that Xiao Yan was gradually walking further away, the man clenched his teeth and wiggled his body, using all his strength to shout, "Little Brother, please help. If the team can be saved, we, the Desert Metal Mercenary Company will definitely reward you heftily."

After the man shouted, the young man in the distance who was about to disappear into a sandstorm suddenly paused. An instant later, he turned around and walked back, arriving by the man's side under the latter's gaze which was filled with unrestrained joy.

"Desert Metal Mercenary Troop? The Rock Desert City's Desert Metal Mercenary Troop?" Xiao Yan blinked his dark black eyes as some surprise appeared in them. So coincidental?

"Yes... has Little Brother heard of our Mercenary Company?" Seeing the situation, the man could not tell whether Xiao Yan had ill or good intentions to the Desert Metal

Mercenary Troop. However, under such circumstances, he could only brace himself and reply.

“The name of your company leader...?”

“Xiao Ding... Xiao Li...” The man licked his dry lips and carefully answered.

“Oh...” Nodding his head slightly, the smile on Xiao Yan’s face grew much gentler. He squatted down and moved the man’s leg with his finger to take a look at the wound. After which, Xiao Yan handed him a medicinal pill, “Eat this, this will remove the snake’s poison.”

“Thank you, Little Brother.” The man gratefully said as he hurriedly took the medicinal pill and swallowed it.

“This is a healing medicine. Apply some by yourself and there should not be too much of an issue. Once you apply the medicine, bring me to where your small mercenary team is.” Xiao Yan took out a small bottle of healing medicine from his storage ring and threw it to the man. After which, he stood up, patted his hands and smiled.

“Uh? Go where?” Hearing Xiao Yan’s words, the man was startled. He hurriedly said, “Little Brother, that won’t do. There are eight Snake-People attacking our small team. among them, there are three nine star Dou Zhes!”

“Little Brother, you should just hurry to Rock Desert City to help us pass a message to the mercenary company. The Company Leader and the others will hurry over. The distance isn’t that far.” The man bitterly persuaded.

“Stop talking nonsense. Hurry up and apply the medicine and lead the way. I naturally have the confidence if I am doing this. Otherwise by the time reinforcements come, those people of yours would all have been killed.” Kicking gently on the man’s thigh, Xiao Yan rolled his eyes and hurried him.

Hearing Xiao Yan’s words, the man half believingly observed the young man in front of him with a naked upper body, shorts and a strange ruler... all of these put together caused the man to be unable to tell just what kind of strength the young man possessed.

Letting out a bitter laugh, the man applied the healing medicine on his thigh before he stood up while trembling. His finger pointed toward the sand dune and said, “It’s that way, a short distance away.”

Glancing at the sand dune, Xiao Yan nodded his head slight. He grabbed the man’s arm and abruptly stepped on the sand’s surface. Following a muffled sound of explosion, a huge sand pit on the sand’s surface was formed from the shock. Borrowing the reverse push force, Xiao Yan and that man’s figure were suddenly shot up the sand dune.

On the sand dune, Xiao Yan swept past a great distance in a lightning like manner with each step. Finally, he stopped on a towering sand surface. He threw the shocked man in his hand onto the ground and took a step forward, looking at the huge group of people that had appeared at the lower part of the desert.

On the lower part of the desert, ten mercenaries carrying weapons in their hands had their backs facing each other. Around them were eight creatures with strange appearances surrounding them. These creatures had a human head and body but at the area where the legs were supposed to be, they had a huge snake tail. As the snake tail swung about, it released a 'chi chi' sound that caused people to feel a chill.

"Are these the Snake-People of the Tager Desert?" Xiao Yan sighed as his gaze swept across these eight male Snake-People, feeling that it was an eye-opener. This was the first time he had seen this kind of living creature.

"Little Brother... sir, they are a small team from our Desert Metal Mercenary Company. Originally, we had intended to hunt for Magic Beasts but we did not expect to be ambushed by these guys..." The man's gaze respectfully swept across Xiao Yan's back. The speed Xiao Yan had just displayed had already let this man know that the young man in front of him who appeared fairly young was a strong person who hid his strength.

"Ah." Nodding his head, Xiao Yan's gaze once again swept across the ten mercenaries. There were eight men and two women in the group of ten. His gaze drifted among them and finally landed on a gentle and beautiful lady's figure.

This lady was around twenty years old. Her pretty face was exquisite but the somewhat raised faint eyebrows of hers faintly carried an untamed feeling like a small female leopard in the desert. Looking at her disposition, it could be pictured that this flower in the desert may be beautiful but its body was covered in long thorns.

The clothes the lady wore were bold and sexy. She wore a shirt that merely covered her chest area and some skin under it, leaving her sexy and pretty narrow waist exposed to everyone's sight. Below her short skin skirt, her sexy long legs were revealed. Xiao Yan, who was standing above could see that there were a number of obscene gazes among the snake-people which repeatedly swept across the pretty narrow waist and the tightly wrapped thighs.

"Kill them, leave the women!"

The triangle pupils of the leader of the group of snake-people swept over the lady's body. His voice was both cold and husky and carried a little obscenity. The nature of a snake was licentious and they naturally yearned for women.

Hearing the order from their leader, the faces of the surrounding few snake-people were immediately swarmed with bloodthirstiness. They opened their mouths and let out their scarlet red snake tongue.

“Everyone, be careful. Dan Zi had already returned to get help. As long as we can endure for a while, we will be saved!” Seeing the Snake-People’s action, that sexy lady pressed her sleek red lips together and called out in a cool voice.

Hearing this, the surrounding mercenaries were slightly inspired. However, the hands which were tightly gripping their weapons were still filled with perspiration. The highest level among them was merely around a seven star Dou Zhe while the other party had a few nine star Dou Zhe. With this kind of difference... they did not know if they could endure until the reinforcements arrived,

“Kill!” The leader of the Snake-People coldly laughed and waved his hand. The surrounding Snake-People who had been eyeing the group menacingly immediately charged at the mercenaries with sinister faces, intending to kill.

“Xiu!”

Just as the Snake-People were beginning to attack, a sharp sound of wind breaking suddenly sounded in the air. A black shadow abruptly flew across the skyline. Finally, like a black colored lightning bolt it heavily landed in the space between the mercenaries and the Snake-People with a loud bang.

The yellow sand gradually dispersed and the thin back of a person carrying a huge black ruler slowly appeared in everyone’s sight.

Chapter 184: First Meeting With the Snake-People, Initial Show of a Dou Shi’s Power

The sudden appearance of a young man with a naked upper body caused both sides to be a little stunned. A moment later, however, the side with the mercenaries gradually became calm. Since the one who arrived was a human, they believed that he would at the very least not help the Snake-People.

The group of Snake-People, upon seeing Xiao Yan, this uninvited guest, became furious. The triangle-shaped pupils of the Snake-People’s leader coldly swept toward Xiao Yan. Without saying anything he waved his hand and two five star Dou Zhe Snake-People swung their tails and charged at Xiao Yan with fierce expressions.

Lifting his eyes, Xiao Yan gently sniffed the faint fishy wind that was blowing toward him. He frowned slightly, then slowly grabbed the hilt of the Heavy Xuan Ruler. After raising his leg gently, he abruptly stomped down and his body suddenly went from being static to moving rapidly. Under everyone’s gazes, a human figure swiftly interlocked with and then passed by the two Snake-People like lightning.

“Bang, bang!”

Just after the figures crossed each other, Xiao Yan’s body suddenly paused. The two Snake-People with fierce expressions were dragged along the sand’s surface as they shot backwards, seemingly having received a heavy blow. As they were thrown backwards, a mouthful of fresh blood was violently vomited out from each of them.

The palm of Xiao Yan tightly holding the hilt of the Heavy Xuan Ruler relaxed slightly as Xiao Yan licked his lips and moved his gaze to the two Snake-People, who were sent flying for dozens of meters by the heavy ruler. Having received such a heavy blow, even if they did not die, they would end up seriously injured.

“Hiss...”

From the time Xiao Yan and the the Snake-People crossed each other till the time the Snake-People vomited blood and retreated, only a short ten seconds had passed. However, in these ten seconds, the victor was determined.

Watching Xiao Yan with his thunderbolt-like attack, the ten mercenaries had their mouths wide open. Their faces were filled with astonishment as they stared at the young man’s back with stunned eyes. It was difficult for them to imagine how this thin frame managed to hide this kind of terrifying strength within it.

“This guy... how violent.” Opening her red mouth as she stared at Xiao Yan, who had sent the two Snake-People flying as though he was wrecking houseflies, that sexy lady involuntarily muttered.

“Hee, Xue Lan, are you alright?” On the sand dune, the man’s face was filled with excitement as he dragged his wounded leg and carefully walked around the few snake-people before coming to the Mercenary Troop and smiling at the lady.

“Dan Zi... didn’t you return to Rock Desert City to get us reinforcements? Why are you still here?” Seeing the man, the sexy lady called Xue Lan straightened her eyebrows and scolded.

Being scolded by the lady, Dan Zi could only let out a bitter laugh. He pointed to Xiao Yan’s back and said, “Yes, isn’t this reinforcement?”

“Him?” Hearing this, Xue Lan momentarily stilled. Her gaze returned to Xiao Yan, frowned and cautiously said, “He doesn’t appear to be a member of our Desert Metal Mercenary Company. How did you manage to get him to help? What condition did he ask for?”

“I don’t know him either. I met him just now when I fell. Originally, I wanted to ask him to go to Rock Desert City to send a message...” Having said to this point, Dan Zi’s face appeared a little embarrassed. “At first, he ignored me. But when I said that I am a

member of the Desert Metal Mercenary Company, he suddenly became warm. He even gave me an antidote and healing medicine...”

“Does he have some relationship with our Desert Metal Mercenary Company?” Xue Lan’s narrow hand gently swept the black hair on her forehead that had been contaminated by her sweat. Her unintentional loveliness caused the obscene glint in the eyes of one of the Snake-People close by to rise.

“But I have never heard our Company Leader mentioning that they knew such a strong person of such a young age. Looking at the strength of his earlier attack, he should at least be an eight star Dou Zhe or stronger.” Xue Lan knitted her eyebrows together and said suspiciously.

“I don’t know either.” Dan Zi smiled bitterly, shook his head and said, “ But I don’t think he has any ill intentions. Otherwise, why would he take the risk to come and save us?”

“Ugh... but whether he can save us remains a question. Among this group of Snake-People, there are three nine star Dou Zhes. At the end, he might fail to save us and end up losing his life too.” Xue Lan shook her head and said in a worried voice.

Hearing this, Dan Zi stilled for a moment before laughing awkwardly, “I think... he should be able to handle it. After all, I had told him of the strength of the Snake-People. If he did not have the confidence, why would he come?”

“Do you want to tell me that that he is a Dou Shi?” Xue Lan shook her slightly curled black hair and helplessly said.

“This...” Dan Zi opened and closed his mouth but said nothing. Although he looked highly upon Xiao Yan’s strength but a Dou Shi... Xiao Yan’s age was his sore spot. Becoming a Dou Shi before a person was twenty? How was this possible?

“Ugh. Hopefully he has some hidden cards...” Dan Zi bitterly smiled and shook his head. He could only comfort himself in this manner.

Xue Lan frowned as she mused for a while. She could only listlessly shake her head. With the current situation, she could only pray that the young man in front of her could display an unexpected performance.

Seeing that Xiao Yan had easily wounded two of his subordinates, the triangle eyes of the snake leader shrank slightly. His scarlet snake tongue gently extended and shrunk before he said in a thick voice, “Human, offending us Snake-People in the Tager Desert is not a wise choice!”

Xiao Yan smiled faintly, tilted his heavy ruler and did not respond.

"If you know what's good for you, I advise you to leave now. I can forget about the wrong you did by harming my subordinates!" The eyes of the leader of the group of Snake-People were filled with coldness, His words, however, carried fear and a faint malice. Clearly, Xiao Yan's attack a moment ago caused him to not dare to underestimate Xiao Yan.

"Sorry..." Xiao Yan smiled and shook his head. The simple word held a tone that bore no room for negotiation.

"You seek death!" Being rejected by Xiao Yan, bloodlust surfaced on the extremely small snake scale on the Snake-People leader's face. He waved his hand and coldly said, "Attack together. Kill him! Catch the women and bring them back to enjoy!"

"Hiss!" Hearing their leader's order, the surrounding Snake-People hesitated briefly before extending their snake tongues; they held their sharp snake spears and charged at Xiao Yan together.

"The wounded, stay and wait for orders. The others, follow me and attack!" Seeing that the Snake-People intended to attack together, Xue Lan, who was behind, straightened her eyebrows vertically, waved her delicate hand and coldly ordered.

"There's no need. All of you wait there or you might get in the way." Hearing the commotion from behind, Xiao Yan frowned. He helplessly tilted his head and blandly said.

"You..." Hearing this, Xue Lan, who had just drew her weapon and charged forward immediately paused. Her eyebrows were vertical. This was the first time she was looked down upon to such an extent. She was just about to scold when she suddenly remembered the person in front was their only reinforcement. Instantly, she could only stomp her feet angrily. After which, she angrily stared at Xiao Yan, hugged her hands on her full chest and took a step back. She coldly eyed Xiao Yan and mumbled in her heart, "Acting strong at such a young age."

However, the cold stare Xue Lan gave did not last for very long before it was slowly overcome by shock. Of course, the other mercenaries behind her also expressed shock for the same reason.

A short distance away from them, the young man stood still while carrying a heavy ruler. He mused for a moment before a faint purple colored Dou Qi cloak gradually covered his entire body. On the outside of this Dou Qi cloak, were purple colored flames lingering and occasionally soared upwards, appearing very mysterious.

"Hiss..." Seeing the purple colored energy cloak on the young man's body, everyone present took in a quick cool breath.

"This... Dou Qi cloak? He really is a Dou Shi?" Widening her pretty eyes, Xue Lan stared at the back of the figure in front of her that was wrapped within a purple colored Dou Qi. Her face was filled with disbelief.

"..." Everyone was speechless as they faced one another.

"What an abnormal person... to actually be promoted to a Dou Shi at such a young age. It should be known that the two company leaders are only five star Dou Shis." Dan Zi opened his mouth wide as he muttered dully with an expression as though he had seen a ghost.

"No wonder he dared to rush over by himself... he was actually a Dou Shi." One of the mercenaries let out a sigh and bitterly laughed. His voice carried envy to Xiao Yan and joy from having escaped a close encounter with death.

"Where did this guy appear from? I have never heard of such an abnormal young man appearing in any of the cities nearby." Xue Lan frowned as she whispered.

"No idea..." Regarding this question, the surrounding people similarly shook their heads.

Seeing the situation, Xue Lan also helplessly smiled. With a bitter smile, she said, "Forget it. Regardless of where he came from, we appear to be lucky to be saved."

When Xiao Yan summoned the Dou Qi cloak, the Snake-People who were charging over were clearly thrown into a mess. It appeared that they also understood very well what being able to summon a Dou Qi cloak represented.

Dou Shi! That was an entirely different class from a Dou Zhe. If one did not possess some ridiculously powerful Dou Technique as one's trump card, it was basically impossible to win a challenge across the classes. As for abnormally strong Dou Techniques and Qi Methods...would one expect these Snake-People who did not appear to live very well to have them?

Thus, this would be a completely one-sided battle!

After summoning the Dou Qi cloak, Xiao Yan gently let out his breath. He tightly gripped the Heavy Xuan Ruler and faced the Snake-People who had begun to panic. The corner of his mouth curled into a cold smile as his feet stomped onto the ground. Following an explosive sound, Xiao Yan's body was stuck to the sand's surface as he shot out.

"Bang!" Xiao Yan appeared in front of a nine star Dou Zhe Snake-Person. With cold eyes, he raised the heavy ruler that carried a ferocious force as he violently smashed it on the other party's chest. Instantly, a soft muffled noise sounded. The snake-person's eyes shrunk as he violently threw out a mouthful of fresh blood from his damaged internal organs. At the same time, his body shot backwards like a cannon ball and crashed into a sand dune.

In an instant, a nine star Dou Zhe received a fatal blow from Xiao Yan without even having the time to use his Dou Techniques. From this, it could be seen just how much simpler it was for Xiao Yan now to handle a Dou Zhe.

Having killed a nine star Dou Zhe in the blink of an eye, Xiao Yan's body abruptly turned and once again appeared in the middle of a few Snake-People whose strength were around four to five star Dou Zhes. The heavy ruler that he carried had become like a racket, beating the few Snake-People who were attempting to flee till they were sent flying as they vomited blood.

Seeing that the Xiao Yan's "solo", Xue Lan and the mercenaries could only stare with stunned faces. Even if Xiao Yan was a Dou Shi, it should not have been possible for him to kill the other party so easily. Regardless of how you put it, the other side had three nine star Dou Zhe. However, in this short encounter... they had already lost one nine star Dou Zhe and a few other ordinary Snake-People, this...

Exchanging glances with totally stunned faces, everyone could only sigh and shake their head. The strength of this guy appeared to be much stronger than an ordinary Dou Shi.

Seeing that in just a few short exchanges, his side had suffered serious losses, a bloodthirsty sinisteress surfaced in the eyes of the leader of the Snake-People. He exchanged a glance with the other nine star Dou Zhe Snake-Person. Fierce expressions appeared on their faces as they tightly held the sharp snake spear, swung their snake tail on the sand's surface and formed an crisscrossed as they charged angrily at Xiao Yan.

Seeing the pair's familiar coordination, it was obvious that this had been obtained from a long period of training. The two snake spears extended and withdrew strangely and at the tip of the snake spears, a faint crimson color appeared and disappeared. It was clear that poison was applied to the spear.

After sending the last snake-person flying with the heavy ruler, Xiao Yan felt the dense cold forces rushing at him from his back. He shifted his heavy ruler to his back and blocked the two tricky stabs from the snake spears with a 'clang' sound.

"Puff!" Seeing that their attacks were blocked, the two snake people abruptly opened their mouths in unison without prior agreement. Two smelly quiet green vapors swiftly shot toward Xiao Yan.

"Be careful of the snake poison!" Seeing the actions of the two snake-people, Xue Lan's pretty face changed slightly as she hurriedly shouted.

As Xue Lan's voice died down, the Dou Qi cloak outside Xiao Yan's body surged quickly and covered all of Xiao Yan's body within it. Any green colored poison gas that came

into contact with the Purple Flame Cloak was burnt into nothingness and gradually disappeared in the air.

Resisting the poison gas attack with an indifferent expression, Xiao Yan feet suddenly stomped and in an instant, his body appeared in front of the leader of the Snake-People present. His heavy ruler was swiftly raised and then violently hacked onto the leader's head.

The Snake-People leader's expression changed drastically when Xiao Yan passed through the poison attack and came close to him. At the point of crisis, his snake tail suddenly swerved about strangely. Following a strange 'Sho sho' sound, his body slithered like a snake as he retreated for tens of meters, narrowly dodging Xiao Yan's fatal blow.

After evading Xiao Yan's attack, the leader of the group of Snake-People still felt insecure. His snake's tail swiftly swung around and his body quickly retreated.

However, he had only maintained this for a few seconds when an unusual ferocious suction force surged out of Xiao Yan's palm a short distance away. Instantly, the unprepared leader of the group of Snake-People was sucked and flew toward Xiao Yan.

Lifting his head to watch the Snake-People leader flying at him with a horrified face, Xiao Yan let out a cold smile. He once again violently stepped on the ground. Like a huge fabulous bird, his body swiftly climbed above the snake-person's head. Then, the heavy ruler in his hand suddenly smashed downwards.

"Bang!" Fresh blood accompanied by brains rained down from the sky to the ground. A body swiftly descended, finally smashing into the yellow sand. A moment later, the pit formed in the yellow sand slowly disappeared under the flow of the sand.

Seeing that the leader had died, fear appeared on the face of last nine star Dou Zhe Snake-Person. He let out a few sharp neighing cries, swung his snake tail and swiftly fled toward the inner regions of the desert. After having finished off the Snake-People leader, Xiao Yan's body rotated in midair. Borrowing the force from the rotation, the Heavy Xuan Ruler abruptly left his hand and shot toward the Snake-Person fleeing.

"Pu Chi..." The heavy rule sped through the air like lightning and swiftly chased after the snake-person. Finally, it shot through his neck and was accompanied by bright red blood as flew into the yellow sand, leaving only the hilt outside.

Xiao Yan's feet landed heavily on the sand's surface and sunk half a foot deep into the sand as he let out a breath gently. After which, he slowly walked toward the Heavy Xuan Ruler, grabbed the ruler's hilt with his palm and pulled it out.

After wiping off the fresh blood on the ruler with gauze, Xiao Yan carelessly replaced it into the sheath on his back before slowly walking toward the ten plus mercenaries who were frozen in shock.

“Hey, are you alright?” When he had walked closer, Xiao Yan stood in front of the sexy lady and asked with a smile.

“We’re... we are alright.” Sweeping her gaze across the naked upper body of Xiao Yan, Xue Lan did not reveal any shy expressions due to this. In this desert, the women were much more open-minded. Moreover, she also frequently mingled within the mercenaries, so she did not have the shyness and reservations of those gentler ladies. Seeing the naked upper body of a man did not cause her pretty face to blush.

“You...” Xue Lan blinked her eyes before saying with a smile to Xiao Yan, “Regardless of your intention in helping us, I will have to say thank you. Otherwise, our fate... I’m Xue Lan, the leader of this small group. At the same time, we are a team of the Desert Metal Mercenary Company.”

“Xiao Yan” Xiao Yan said as he smiled and nodded.

“Xiao Yan? This name seems familiar. Where have I heard it?” Hearing the name, Xue Lan frowned slightly. She thought for awhile in her heart but did not manage to get anywhere. After helplessly shaking her head, she raised it and smiled toward Xiao Yan. “Where do you plan to go next? If you have the time, I would like to invite you to Rock Desert City. Our Desert Metal Mercenary Company clearly differentiates between those that help us and those who are our enemies. You have helped us. We will definitely return this favor!”

“The Rock Desert City isn’t far from here. It is only around half an hour journey away and will not delay too much of your time.” Seemingly afraid that Xiao Yan would reject, Xue Lan hurriedly added.

Hearing this, Xiao Yan smiled and nodded. Since he had arrived at Tager Desert, he would naturally have to visit the two brothers of his that he had not seen for a long time. Although they had been busy with their careers in the last few years and had seldom gone home, the many years of brotherly relationships still caused Xiao Yan to have deep feelings for them. Within Xiao Yan, other than his father and Xun Er, the two brothers of his were the ones who gave him most care when he was young.

“I wonder how Xun Er that girl is doing... it’s been one year ah.” In his memory, a elegant young lady in green suddenly surfaced in Xiao Yan’s heart without any warning. Her gentle frown and smile all caused Xiao Yan to quiver.

During the one year, the tough training took up most of Xiao Yan’s time. Only now did his thoughts suddenly awaken and he got a taste of missing someone. He slowly let out a breath and raised his head. In the slightly distorted air, he saw a young lady’s small

hand on her back while her agile body caused Xiao Yan to have the sudden urge in his heart to immediately end his training and head to Jia Nan Academy...

Xiao Yan trembled as soon as he realized what he was thinking. Violently shaking his head, he suppressed it deep into his heart. That girl had far too many secrets. If he did not work hard to strengthen himself, he would likely die of feeling inferior in front of her.

After coming out and gaining experience for such a long time, Xiao Yan also understood just how precious a Xuan Class Qi Method was. It should be known that back then, Xun Er could carelessly take out a High Xuan class Qi Method. From this, Xiao Yan gained a better feel of how great and mysterious her identity and background was.

Moreover, Xiao Yan had personally experienced Xun Er's training speed. In this one year, he did not know to what level that girl might have leapt to. It was possible that her level would be higher than his current level.

"Ugh, I wonder how her life is like at the Jia Nan Academy. But with that girl's looks and demeanor... it was likely she would have many admirers. With Xun Er's indifferent character... there should not have been any man who would interest her, no?" Rubbing his nose, Xiao Yan opened his mouth and gave a narcissistic smile. Each time he thought of this question, he would rejoice. He rejoiced that back then, he had accidentally and ridiculously caught the heart of this girl.

"But... it was a pity to see. Back when I was young, I was still trying to see if Dou Qi was really inside my body. At that age, how would I know anything about warming the Qi Paths... but why did I try for so many years? ... Don't tell me that back then I already had ulterior motives toward Xun Er? How can it be..." Some extremely ridiculous questions suddenly appeared in his heart, causing Xiao Yan to be a little frustrated as he mumbled.

Xue Lan tilted her head and eyed Xiao Yan who had suddenly become silent beside her. At the same time, his face continued to change, causing her to feel a little stunned. A long while later, she finally took the chance and asked, "Hey? Are you alright? Have you been poisoned?"

"Ah? Oh... ke ke. Sorry, I was distracted. I'm fine." Waking up from his memories, Xiao Yan first stilled. He watched the surrounding people who were staring at him and could not help but shake his head apologetically.

"If you are alright, why don't we set off for Rock Desert City now? What do you say?" Xue Lan tilted her head and asked Xiao Yan.

"Haha, alright." Xiao Yan smiled and nodded his head.

"Fei Gao, go pull out the camel carriage." Seeing Xiao Yan nod his head, Xue Lan turned around, waved at one of the mercenaries and ordered.

“Okay.” One of the mercenaries smiled and nodded. After which, he swiftly went into a sand dune not far away and pulled out a camel carriage and brought it over. Xiao Yan realized that on the box at the back of the carriage, there were two tier one Magic Beast corpse. Seeing the fresh blood that had yet to thicken on the corpse, this should be the quarry of Xue Lan and her small group. The size of this kind of desert carriage was not very big and thus the Magic Beast corpses left no room for people to ride in the carriage.

“You will first bring the thing back to Rock Desert City. Report what happened here to the Company Leaders.” Waving her hand to the mercenary driving the carriage, Xue Lan gave an order in a well practiced manner.

“Hee hee, alright. I believe that the Troop Leaders will be very happy to meet a new friend.” The mercenary gave Xiao Yan a friendly smile before kicking his feet on the camel’s backside. He swiftly headed to Rock Desert City with the quarry.

Seeing the carriage that was swiftly disappearing from sight, Xiao Yan gave a smile. He carelessly took out a garment from the storage ring put it on his body and led the way toward the direction the carriage headed in.

Noticing that Xiao Yan had moved, Xue Lan hurriedly hastened her subordinates.

“Group leader, do you have the feeling that Xiao Yan and the two Company Leaders... appear somewhat similar?” Staring at Xiao Yan’s back, Dan Zi suddenly said after packing their things.

“Uh?” Hearing this, Xue Lan stilled. Her gaze shifted to Xiao Yan’s back. A moment later, her heart suddenly moved violently. In a soft voice, she said, “I seem to recall the Company Leaders saying that they had a younger brother, right?”

“Uh... I also remember. It was that one whose strength had strangely continued to hover below that of a Dou Zhe?Hehe.”

“The company leader’s younger brother... seems... to also be called... Xiao Yan?” Xue Lan blinked her long eyelashes as her fragrant tongue licked her red lips. She recalled her memories of this company leader brother and a moment later, astonishment gradually covered her pretty face.

Chapter 185: Brothers

During the journey to Rock Desert City, Xue Lan had make some subtle inquiries in order to confirm Xiao Yan’s identity but each time, she would be vaguely handled by Xiao Yan. Regarding this, she could only helplessly glare at him.

Although Xiao Yan did not admit it himself, after Xue Lan’s careful and detailed observation of his appearance, a certainty appeared in her heart. The young male Dou

Shi in front of her was definitely the strange younger brother Xiao Ding and Xiao Li and talked about, Xiao Yan!

After becoming certain of Xiao Yan's identity, the gaze Xue Lan gave Xiao Yan had a little less caution and more smiles and gentleness.

While they chatted along the way, the outline of the huge city that sat outside the eastern region of the Tager Desert also faintly appeared within the group's sight.

Seeing the Rock Desert City closeby, Xue Lan and the others heaved a long sigh. Even the smile on Xiao Yan's face widened. Having spent over ten days walking and enduring tough training in the desert, his spirit was also a little tired. Now that he had a place to rest, it was natural that he was a little excited.

Under the happy cheers of everyone, Xiao Yan and the rest of the group slowly arrived at the city's entrance and swarmed into it.

Compared to the cities in the inner regions of the empire, the cities in the desert were simpler and dignified. Perhaps it was because it was near the Tager Desert that the defenses here were much tighter than the cities in the inner regions of the empire. Within the city one could see fully armed soldiers patrolling all around.

After entering the city, Xiao Yan followed Xue Lan and her group as they headed toward the south. They passed through a few streets until a compound that was similar in size to the huge compound the Xiao Clan occupied in Wu Tan City appeared in their sight.

On the top of the compound, there was a flag that was swaying with the wind where the words 'Desert Metal Mercenary Company' were written in a big font. The drawing on the flag also faintly emitted the firm atmosphere of blood and guts.

At the entrance, a few fierce large men were carrying weapons in their hands and stood as still and straight as a pen. Their sharp gazes swept back and forth on the people walking past the compound. From the faint scent of blood that they emitted, it appeared that they were men of iron will that had really survived at the edge of a blade. Those novices who simply carried a weapon by their waist and thought they were mercenaries could not be compared to them.

"In this Rock Desert City, our Desert Metal Mercenary Company's strength could be ranked among the top three. Only the Sand Mercenary Company can surpass us. Their Company Leader is a Da Dou Shi, thus the position of the Sand Mercenary Company cannot be shaken. Other than the Sand Mercenary Company, only the Storm Mercenary Company can barely compare with us in the entire Rock Desert City." Walking toward the huge compound, Xue Lan smiled and explained to Xiao Yan by her side. Her smile contained a little pride.

Xiao Yan smiled and nodded his head; he was a little surprised in his heart. In just a few short years, his eldest brother and second brother had built quite a strong power in this foreign place. This was something he could not help but admire. At the very least, he knew in his heart that if it was up to him, he would not be able to achieve this kind of success. "Big brother has always been smarter than others. Even Father had always praised him. Second Brother is careful and vicious. He is always sly when doing things while his methods are ruthless. With them working together and adding their outstanding training talent, they are really a perfect pair. No wonder they would achieve such success..." Xiao Yan's mind recalled the praise his father had showered on his two older brothers and could not help but laugh in his heart.

"Xue Lan. Are you alright? The one who came back earlier said that you were ambushed by Snake-People?" When they arrived at the compound, one of the large men at the entrance came forward and asked Xue Lan with a smile.

"We're fine." Carelessly waving her hand, Xue Lan smiled and inquired, "Are the two Company Leaders in?"

"Yes, they are both in." The large man smiled and nodded. His gaze swept across Xiao Yan by the side and finally paused on his face. He could not help but laugh, "Ever since they knew about this little brother's name, the two Company Leaders became so excited that they could not sit still... Haha, it is very rare to see the usually cool and steady Company Leaders be so happy that they forget themselves."

Xiao Yan smiled slightly while a warmth flowed in his heart. He gave the large man a friendly nod before following Xue Lan who was covering her mouth and laughing to herself as she entered the courtyard.

Following behind Xue Lan, Xiao Yan passed through a few small paths. During the walk, they met quite a number of Desert Metal Mercenary Company members. When they met Xiao Yan, a shocked expression would surface on their faces and they would begin whispering among themselves.

"haha. The two Company Leaders frequently talk about you. It looks like the person who came back earlier has already publicized you." Seeing the surrounding mercenaries' expressions, Xue Lan tilted her head and sweetly said.

Xiao Yan smiled bitterly and nodded. It appeared that she had guessed his relationship with his two brothers.

After following Xue Lan and passing through another small path, a spacious hall appeared in front of them. Standing outside the hall, Xiao Yan could hear two familiar men's voices being emitted from within. His face suddenly felt a little sour. They were different from Xiao Ning and the others in the clan. In this world, Xiao Ding and Xiao Li were his true brothers who were related to him by blood. Regardless of how calm Xiao

Yan's character was, blood was thicker than water. He could not help but become agitated and forget himself...

Taking in a deep breath, Xiao Yan smiled apologetically to Xue Lan by his side. After which, he slowly walked to the door. He was about to push it open and enter when the door was pulled open with a crunching sound.

When the door was pulled open, a face of a young man who appeared similar to Xiao Yan's suddenly appeared.

The young man was wearing a mercenary uniform; his tall figure was straight and strong. Those dark black eyes of his contained laziness and cold sternness. On his face, his smile was overflowing. However, under it hid a faint fierceness and viciousness. Clearly, this young man might appear good natured but he was the type of person who did not offend others when others did not offend him. If someone offended him, he was the fierce type who would strike back even if he was dying.

The young man who opened the door stared at the youth outside. He was surprised for a moment as his body hardened. The smile on his face that hid a viciousness suddenly disappeared. A brilliant and warm smile, that was rarely seen surfaced on the young man's face, appeared there now.

Watching the warm smile of the young man, the tip of Xiao Yan's nose turned a little red. His eyes could not help but become a little moist. Back when they were at the clan, even when he had turned into a 'cripple', the young man in front of Xiao Yan had continued to carefully protect Xiao Yan's remaining pride. He was like a vicious wolf who bit any clan members who dared mock Xiao Yan until they were badly injured. After doing so, he did not forget to smile and comfort Xiao Yan's desolated self while wearing the scars from being punished by the clan.

"Second Brother..." Wiping the tears from his eyes, Xiao Yan stared at the young man in front of him and shouted in a trembling voice.

"Hahahahaha... Xiao-Yan-Zi, you have really come. Ha ha." Seeing the youthful manner, the young man opened his mouth and laughed foolishly. After which, he took a step forwards and gave Xiao Yan a fierce hug. He heavily patted Xiao Yan's shoulders while his voice was filled with joy and agitation.

TL: Please note that Xiao-Yan-Zi is a nickname for Xiao Yan but the Xiao here means small while Xiao Yan's Xiao is like a name.

Xiao-Yan-Zi, the intimate form of address from when he was young, caused Xiao Yan to smile slightly. Without anyone noticing, he wiped the tears from his eyes and bitterly laughed, "Second Brother, do you want to pat me to death?"

“Little guy, not bad... has the strange problem in your body been solved?” Xiao Li smiled and released Xiao Yan. He patted the latter’s shoulders and swept his gaze around Xiao Yan as he happily asked.

“Yes.” Xiao Yan nodded his head.

“Go, let’s go and take a look at Big Brother first. He has been waiting for quite a while.” As he spoke, he grabbed Xiao Yan, turned around and rushed into the hall without having the time to greet Xue Lan by who was by Xiao Yan’s side.

Entering the hall, Xiao Yan’s gaze shifted to the young man seated on the leader’s seat. He was wearing a white robe and was smiling as he watched Xiao Yan enter the room. His eyes which were brighter than ordinary people’s carried a wisdom and slyness that was difficult to detect.

“Xiao-Yan-Zi, I haven’t seen you in a few years. You have really grown up.” The white dressed young man gradually stood up and stared at the youth whose height was comparable to Xiao Li. There was a doting and gentle feeling in his eyes as he smiled.

“Big Brother.” Xiao Yan took in a deep breath. He suppressed the waves in his heart. The expression on his face was gradually becoming as calm as the white dressed young man. He smiled and said, “Big Brother is also becoming more and more handsome.”

Seeing that Xiao Yan could easily suppress the emotion in his heart, a look of surprise flashed across the face of the white dressed young man. He nodded and praised, “Little boy, looks like you have experienced a lot after we left. This kind of mental strength is something that even your Second Brother may not be able to compare with.”

“That kind of atmosphere may be very uncomfortable but without that environment, I may really have had difficulty reaching this stage today.” Xiao Yan waved his hand and smiled.

“Ke ke, it is naturally good that you are able to arrive at where you are today. Your Second Brother had been blaming me for not taking you with us back then. But after travelling through the Jia Ma Empire for that period of time, both of us nearly lost our lives. Had we brought you along, wouldn’t we have ended up harming you? By staying in the clan, at the very least, Father would be able to take care of you...” Xiao Ding smiled and said.

“Alright, alright. It’s so difficult for us to see each other so let’s stop talking about the disheartening things of the past. Luckily nothing happened to Xiao-Yan-Zi, otherwise when I return in the future, I would definitely teach those little bastards a good lesson!” Xiao Li waved his hand and said.

“Haha, alright, let’s not talk about those disheartening things.” Xiao Ding smiled, shifted his gaze to Xiao Yan and laughed, “Little boy, based on the report I heard from the mercenary who returned, your strength seems to have reached the Dou Shi level?”

Hearing this, Xiao Li beside Xiao Yan stared at Xiao Yan with a surprised face. He recalled that when he left back then, Xiao Yan had been alternating between the third and fourth stage Dou Zhi Li. Within this short three to four years, he was actually about to catch up to the both of them?”

“Yes, while training not long ago, I was promoted to a Dou Shi.”

“Tsk tsk, how outstanding. This kind of training speed is something that even your peak when you were young couldn’t compare to.” Seeing Xiao Yan nod his head, Xiao Ding and Xiao Li could not help but exclaim.

“Hehe, I have no choice but to train hard. After all, the Three Year deadline is drawing near...” Xiao Yan shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

“Three Year deadline?” Xiao Ding and Xiao Li stilled momentarily. A short while later, Xiao Li gradually withdrew the smile on his face. His voice was sinister and vicious as he said, “I heard that Nalan Yanran from the Nalan clan had gone to the Xiao Clan to force Father to end the engagement?”

“They have really gone too far...” Xiao Ding smiled blandly. In his smile, there was a little coldness. With the current strength of the Desert Metal Mercenary Company, it was really not possible to fight with the Misty Cloud Sect. But he was a person who had always knew how to endure. After coming out and polishing himself for so many years, his endurance had already reached perfection. In the Rock Desert City, the names of the cunning fox Xiao Ding and the vicious wolf Xiao Li would leave their opponents extremely worried.

“Haha, I will take care of these things. Big Brother, Second Brother, you can be at ease and concentrate on developing your strength. In the future, I might end up offending someone important and would need to rely on the both of you to protect my life...” Xiao Yan shook his head and teased with a smile playing across his lips.

Xiao Ding and Xiao Li exchanged glances with one another. Smiles surfaced on their faces as they said softly, “Regardless of what happens in the future, you only need to remember that we are brothers. Back then, when your Second Brother and I created this Desert Metal Mercenary Company, both of us were thinking of building a safe place for you to stay in the future... but looking at the situation now, it appears that you no longer need our protection.”

Xiao Yan smiled involuntarily, his smile was filled with feelings of warmth.

Chapter 186: Qing Lin

On the night after Xiao Yan had arrived in Rock Desert City, Xiao Yan, who had never touched liquor made an exception and went happily to a liquor stall with Xiao Ding and Xiao Li.

The next day when Xiao Yan woke up from his sleep, his mind felt clouded and his opened eyes were blurry. He realized that the sky was already bright. Rubbing his somewhat painful head, he tilted his head and eyed the thin quilt on his body before he gradually sat up. After violently swinging his head, he smiled bitterly, crossed his legs together and formed the training seal on his hand. He entered the training mode and began to expel the remaining liquor in his body.

After training for a while, Xiao Yan gently flicked his finger and a thread of dense liquor vapor shot out from it.

Once he had expelled the alcohol from his body, Xiao Yan comfortably smoothed out his breath. He then opened his eyes gradually and once again recovered the calmness he had.

“Ga Zhi.”

Not long after Xiao Yan opened his eyes, the room’s door was suddenly gently pushed opened. A lovely and pretty figure quietly entered. However, when she saw Xiao Yan sitting on the bed, she was slightly surprised and hurriedly bowed. In a timid voice, she asked, “Young Master Xiao Yan, have you woken up?”

The girl that entered the room did not appear very old. From her appearance, it seemed that she was slightly younger than Xiao Yan. She wore a pale green elegant dress. Her body may be small, but it was strangely quite mature, appearing only slightly unripe.

Her oval face was cute and delicate, much like a pretty porcelain doll. Her timid manner was like a rabbit in a state of anxiety, causing people to be unable to help but pity her.

Seeing this green dressed girl for the first time, Xiao Yan was also at a loss. He then quickly gave her a friendly nod.

“Young Master Xiao Yan, I... I shall help you wash?” Putting the water basin gently on a wooden rack just by the bed, the cute girl said in a soft voice as she anxiously stood by the bed.

“Hehe, it’s not necessary. I will do it myself.” Shaking his head with a smile, Xiao Yan came down from the bed and came to the side of the wooden rack. He randomly washed himself. Tilting his head to watch the girl’s anxious manner, he could not help but smile. “What is your name?”

TL: Wash means wash one’s face/teeth

“Ah?” Hearing this, the girl became a little blank. She immediately said hesitatingly, “I... I am called Qing Lin.”

“Oh.” Nodding his head, Xiao Yan took a face towel and wiped his face. After which, he threw the towel into the basin, faced the sky and inhaled the fresh and cool air.

Seeing that Xiao Yan had completed his wash, Qing Lin held the water basin tightly and briskly headed toward the outside.

Tilting his head and watching the girl’s pretty and small figure, Xiao Yan’s gaze suddenly drifted to the waist that one would desire to hug. He did not know why, but he felt that when the girl’s narrow waist twisted, there was an unusual temptation... it was like... like a beautiful female snake enchantingly swaying her waist.

“Dammit. What random thoughts am I having...” The ridiculous thought caused Xiao Yan to bitterly laugh as he scolded himself. He returned to the bedside, gripped the hilt of the huge Heavy Xuan Ruler and lifted it with his strength. With a soft cry, he placed it on his shoulders. Xiao Yan lightly bounced his body and smiled. After a year of tough training, the current him had already completely gotten used to the heaviness of the Heavy Xuan Ruler. However, each time he removed the Heavy Xuan Ruler, his speed and strength would ferociously rise. Xiao Yan believed that when fighting with an opponent, this sudden increase in speed and strength would catch the opponent off guard.

His palm grabbed the hilt of the Heavy Xuan Ruler again and pulled it out. Following an intense pressuring sound, the wooden rack by his side abruptly cracked apart with the attack.

Seeing the broken wooden rack, Xiao Yan opened his mouth and grinned before replacing the Heavy Xuan Ruler onto his back.

“Ah...” At the entrance, Qing Lin, who had just returned after clearing the water, could not help but let out a soft surprised gasp. After which, she hurriedly ran over, squatted down and picked up the clothes on the ground.

Eyeing the busy little girl, Xiao Yan gave an embarrassed smile. He apologetically squatted down, extended his hand and was about to help pick up the fallen clothes when his shifting gaze suddenly stopped on Qing Lin’s snow white wrist that had appeared from under her sleeve.

The snow white wrist actually grew some green colored - snake scale?

His gaze stared at Qing Lin with surprise. Then, Xiao Yan’s gaze involuntarily swept toward where her legs were, but he did not see a snake tail. He could only see two three inch long small feet.

Qing Lin, who was tidying up the clothes suddenly raised her small face. When she saw Xiao Yan's shocked expression, she followed his gaze and slowly shifted downwards and finally stopped at the arm she had accidentally revealed. Her cute face immediately turned white as she pulled down her sleeves and carefully took two steps back. After which, she hugged her small legs with her hands, leaned against the corner of the wall and squatted down. Her small body also started trembling.

"I'm... I'm sorry... I... I did not intend to scare you." The little girl shivered as she hugged her small legs. Her timid voice had a little anxiety and tears began to fall down her face.

Feeling at a loss from the little girl's sensitive mood, Xiao Yan sighed gently in his heart while staring at the timid manner of Qing Lin. He had heard others mention that in areas near the Tager Desert, there would occasionally be human women who would have relations with Snake-People. According to logic, when a Snake-Person and a human are involved, it would usually not result in pregnancy. However, there could always be an exception to everything. A slight chance existed that women with relations to a Snake-Person could become pregnant and eventually give birth...

Although a child would be born, this kind of baby with both human and Snake-People's blood usually had difficulty living past two years of age. However, the Qing Lin in front of Xiao Yan... seemed to have already reached thirteen or fourteen. What actually happened?

Xiao Yan gazed at the little girl with pity and bitterly smiled. Even if she could live until she was old, what was the use? People like Qing Lin would be viewed as a curse by both the humans and the Snake-People. To live so many years, other than receiving more disdainful looks and ridicule, there did not seem to be anything else in her life...

Slowly moving to Qing Lin's side, Xiao Yan lowered his body and rubbed his hand gently on the little girl's head. After which, he held her hand under her frightened expression and carefully pulled open her sleeves. He watched the green colored snake scales and abruptly said in a gentle and soft voice, "What a beautiful scale."

Hearing this, the little girl's frightened expression turned blank. Since she had been born, Xiao Yan was the first person who said that the scales, which even she herself was afraid of, was beautiful...

Within the trauma filled weak little spirit a strange feeling stealthily surfaced. Opening her eyes which were faintly releasing an unusual and bewitching feeling, she timidly said, "Is Young Master not afraid?"

Staring at the pair of moist eyes belonging to Qing Lin, Xiao Yan realized that they were slightly green in color. Moreover... at the deep regions of the pupils, there appeared to be three extremely small dark green spots that were hidden.

Staring intently at that somewhat demonic dark green pupils, Xiao Yan suddenly felt somewhat absent minded. A moment later, his heart suddenly trembled and he swiftly regained consciousness. A startled expression faintly surfaced on his face. What kind of demonic eyes were these? Even with his Spiritual Strength, he actually became somewhat absentminded?

With his shock still remaining, Xiao Yan once again stared at the little girl's pupils. However, he was stunned to realize that the three tiny dark green spots had actually disappeared.

"Don't tell me that I was seeing things?" Xiao Yan mumbled in a stunned voice. He shook his head violently and once again stared at the little girl for a moment. Other than her eyes being slightly green, there did not seem to be any tiny spots present.

"Ugh... it was most likely the result of me drinking last night." Helplessly shaking his head, Xiao Yan pulled down Qing Lin's sleeves. After which, he helped her to her feet and smiled as he watched this timid girl who was at his shoulder's height. With a smile, he apologized, "I'm sorry. I've frightened you."

Qing Lin hurriedly shook her head. Her small hand was so anxious that she wrinkled the clothes in her hand. Since her birth, Xiao Yan was also the first to apologize to her in all these years.

"Young Master, during this period of time, I will be your personal maid. If there is anything, you can instruct Qing Lin." Qing Lin bowed and said softly.

Xiao Yan smiled and nodded. He rubbed the little girl's head and asked with a smile, "Where are my brothers?"

"Company Leader Xiao Ding and Xiao Li had already gone to manage the things in the Company. They told me that if Young Master wants to find them, I can bring you to the Meeting Room at the forecourt." Qing Lin said in a gentle voice.

"Oh, since they are busy, then forget it." Shaking his head with a smile, Xiao Yan carried the Heavy Xuan Ruler and walked out. He smiled and said, "Let's go, show me around this Desert Metal Mercenary Company."

"Yes." After responding gently, Qing Lin carefully followed.

Walking out of the room, the sunlight outside splashed downwards, causing one's body to feel extremely warm. Although the desert was very hot, it was still currently morning time, where the temperature of the sunlight had not reached the extent of causing one to feel the heat.

While walking with Qing Lin within the inner regions of the Mercenary Company, the mercenaries whom they met would stop and greet Xiao Yan in a friendly manner. It appeared that all of them knew Xiao Yan's identity.

However, when their gaze swept toward Qing Lin by the side, their smiles gradually turned cold. In some of their eyes, there was even a faint bit of disgust.

When faced with such an expression from them, Xiao Yan could only helplessly sigh. It looked like Qing Lin's identity was something these people also knew about. Back when Xiao Yan had become a useless cripple, he had also received such treatment. This was the reason for him to express pity to the helpless and pitiful like Qing Lin. However, the Mercenary Company by the border of the desert all had a blood feud with the Snake-People that was hard to erase. Each time these mercenaries remembered that the little girl in front of them had the dirty Snake-People's blood flowing in her, they would involuntarily display a disgusted expression. This kind of sentiment was something that almost nothing could suppress. This was the disgust that had formed from the long conflicts and the enmity between the humans and the Snake-People.

Having both the human's and Snake-People's blood at the same time, Qing Lin had to bear the discrimination as an abomination from both sides. Thinking about it, she was the most innocent girl.

While she was following by Xiao Yan's side along the way, Qing Lin's small pretty body would shiver slightly each time the disgusted gazes were shot from the surroundings. The cute small face that should have caused numerous people to glance at admiringly was filled with gloominess.

Walking past a corner, Xiao Yan could not help but sigh. He slowly came to a stop, tilted his head toward Qing Lin whose face had suddenly become uneasy because of his sigh. After musing for a while, he gently said, "Qing Lin, don't be too conscious of other people's gazes. All you need to remember is that you do not live for those other people. You live because of yourself!" Having said those words, Xiao Yan rubbed Qing Lin's head and continued to walk into the distance.

Bearing Xiao Yan's words, Qing Lin stood on the spot, at a loss. A long time later, a strange splendor appeared on her the cute and exquisite face. Her pretty face gently sniffed. Raising her small face, the three tiny green colored spots in her dark green colored eyes suddenly surfaced silently.

"Thank you, Young Master Xiao Yan..."

After she softly muttered the sentence, Qing Lin's small face suddenly displayed a smile that was filled with enticement. After which, she broke into a joyful walk and caught up to the back figure of the young man in front of her.

Chapter 187: Competition

“Young master, wake up...”

Early in the morning, Qing Lin softly shouted. Her hands were placed on her narrow waist while her exquisite small face helplessly watched Xiao Yan on the bed, hugging his quilt and sleeping.

Under Qing Lin’s shout, Xiao Yan semi-consciously opened his eyes. With heavy eyelids, he lazily sat up and did not know if he wanted to laugh or cry as he looked at Qing Lin pouting her lips beside him. With a sigh, he gave up the thought of lying lazily in bed. With the support of Qing Lin’s gentle and tender small hands, he quickly put on his clothes.

“Young Master, you cannot blame Qing Lin for disturbing your sleep. Today is the day of Desert Metal Mercenary Company’s competition that occurs once every three months and is also the most lively time of the Company in the three months. Last night you had even reminded me to wake you up, or else...” Having said until this point, a bright redness faintly appeared on Qing Lin’s exquisite small face as she said in a voice that could not be heard, “Else you said that Qing Lin’s bottom will suffer.”

“*Cough*...” During early morning, when a man just woke up, it was the time when he was most potent. Although Qing Lin in front of him was only thirteen or fourteen, her body, perhaps as a result of having both the blood of a human and a snake, protruded and sunk in the correct places. She was full where it should be and narrow at the right places. All of these were lethal temptations to those who had strange likings.

Although Xiao Yan did not have those kind of interests, an excitement would still appear in his heart during such a time. Luckily, he managed to swiftly suppress such an excitement. Otherwise, he would be embarrassed to death.

Qing Lin’s delicate small hands massaged Xiao Yan until he was extremely satisfied. Xiao Yan stretched his lazy waist and teasingly laughed, “This kind of lifestyle is really that of a young master. In the future, when I don’t have such a thoughtful person by my side, won’t I have to return to the life I lead before?”

Hearing this, Qing Lin felt a sweetness in her heart. After these few days of living together, she and Xiao Yan’s relationship had grown increasingly familiar. The gentle treatment that Xiao Yan gave her also caused Qing Lin to be extremely willing to continue serving him.

“If Young Master is willing, Qing Lin can continue to follow by your side as a female servant.” Qing Lin whispered as her small hand flattened the creases on Xiao Yan’s sleeves.

“Haha I also wish to but I will spend at most ten days here. After ten days, I will still have to continue through the desert and proceed with my training. In that kind of environment, if a young girl like you followed by my side, you would be seeking hardship. Relax,

before I leave, I will tell Big Brother to take good care of you.” Xiao Yan rubbed Qing Lin’s head and smiled.

Hearing Xiao Yan’s words, a hint of disappointment flashed across Qing Lin’s downcast eyes. A moment later, however, she hurriedly gave a forceful smile and said, “Alright, Young Master. We should be leaving. The competition may have already begun.”

Nodding his head with a smile, Xiao Yan carried the Heavy Xuan Ruler on his back and strode out of the room. The alert Qing Lin quickly stepped forward to open the door, turned around and gave Xiao Yan a tender and lovely grin.

competition was a strength examination that the Desert Metal Mercenary Company held once every three months. The aim of such a competition was to encourage the members of the troop to put in effort to train. This was because the winner of these competitions would usually earn the right to form their own small group and become team leader.

In order to obtain this right, the general culture within the Desert Metal Mercenary Company was for the mercenaries to be diligent and climb upwards. The rate of growth of the Desert Metal members’ strengths far exceeded other mercenaries because of this kind of competition. Thus, the Desert Metal Mercenary Company was near the top among the mercenary companies Rock Desert City.

Xiao Yan was also in agreement of having this kind of competition that had a positive influence. As Xiao Yan expected, the one who suggested such a competition was his Big Brother whose mind had always been nimble. In additions, the original flaws of this competition had already gradually become solved. Thus, the effect the competition obtained was also increasingly notable. After making a few turns in the compound of the mercenary company, Xiao Yan met a few people in the same boat as him who were rushing about since they just got up. When they met, they smiled and greeted each other before they began madly running toward the training ground in the backyard.

Maybe it was because of Xiao Yan. Now, when the Desert Metal Mercenary Company members met Qing Lin, the disgust on their faces was much more suppressed. Although their treatment of her remained cold, they no longer used vile words on her like they did in the past.

Xiao Yan had no intention of taking part in the competition and, thus he need not rush as much as the others. He and Qing Lin chatted happily as they slowly walked toward the backyard.

By the time the two of them arrived at the training ground, many extremely heated fights had already begun. The battleground had nearly a hundred people in a messy fight while the audience below was yelling with agitated expressions. At some places, there were even people gambling on who would be the five people remaining.

Standing on a huge rock outside the battleground, Xiao Yan pulled Qing Lin up. The two of them stood side by side as they watched the foul battle going on in the training ground. Occasionally, when they saw some underhanded actions, they could not help but laugh in spite of themselves.

“Young Master, Company Leader Xiao Ding and the others are up there.” When Xiao Yan was watching attentively, Qing Lin beside him suddenly pointed toward a high platform on the opposite side of the training ground and smiled at Xiao Yan.

“Oh?” Xiao Yan was still for a moment before he lifted his eyes and looked over. He saw Xiao Ding and Xiao Li seated on the tall platform. Beside them were some people who were wearing the Desert Metal Mercenary Company uniform. It appeared that they were the upper echelons of the company. During the last few days, he had met all of them, so he could vaguely recognize them.

As Xiao Yan was watching them, Xiao Ding and Xiao Li also shifted their gazes over. The three of them looked at each other, smiled involuntarily and waved their hands.

Just as Xiao Yan was about to withdraw his gaze, he suddenly noticed Xiao Li’s gesture and briefly stilled. Afterwards, Xiao Yan pointed at the battleground and then at himself.

Seeing this, Xiao Li smiled and nodded. He lowered his head and said something to Xiao Ding beside him. Under the helpless expression of the latter, he leapt from the tall platform and landed in the middle of the battleground.

Xiao Yan helplessly rolled his eyes as he watched Xiao Li’s action. He said something to Qing Lin beside him and stomped his feet suddenly on the huge rock. Following an explosive sound, his figure shot into the battleground, flipped in the air and stepped onto the battleground with both legs.

“Ha ha, Xiao-Yan-Zi, let me see how strong you, as the little genius of the clan, have become in these few years!” Xiao Li’s voice, which was carried along by Dou Qi, suppressed the noise around the training ground.

“Second Company Leader! Second Company Leader!”

Hearing Xiao Li’s loud shout, the surrounding people were briefly stunned before their gazes became excited as they loudly cheered. Instantly, waves of fanatic cries around the training ground turned into a sound tide that shot to the clouds.

“Second Brother, your younger brother naturally dares not refuse!” The surrounding heated atmosphere gave Xiao Yan a hot-blooded feeling in his heart. His hand held the hilt of the Heavy Xuan Ruler and drew it abruptly. With a ‘qiang’ sound, he held the heavy ruler with an inclined grip and laughed boldly.

“Haha, good!”

Seeing this, Xiao Li laughed loudly. He flipped his hand and a tungsten steel long spear appeared in his palm. Suddenly, a silver colored Dou Qi suddenly soared from his body and formed a silver colored Dou Qi cloak over his skin.

“In these few years that we have not met, Second Brother’s lightning type Dou Qi has become increasingly polished.” Xiao Yan’s gaze swept across the silver colored Dou Qi cloak on Xiao Li’s body and could not resist shaking his head. Xiao Li’s lightning type Dou Qi was extremely rare. Besides having a very strong offensive strength, this kind of Dou Qi also possessed a paralyzing effect. In battle, it really caused people to have a headache.

Gradually releasing a mouthful of air, the Purple Flame Dou Qi in Xiao Yan’s body swiftly flowed. A moment later, a Dou Qi cloak with Purple Flames soaring from it similarly wrapped Xiao Yan within it.

“Oh man...” Seeing the Purple Flame Dou Qi cloak that Xiao Yan had summoned, Xiao Li could not help but praise. He immediately held his long lance tightly and shouted, “Let’s start!”

Just as Xiao Li’s voice fell, his and Xiao Yan’s body moved at almost the same time. Their legs stepped on the ground and their bodies shot out.

Seeing that the two of people had managed to open a pathway in the messy battleground, the surrounding mercenaries once again grew excited. It was rare for them to witness a fight between two Dou Shis. Today, these people who were treated to this battle became extremely excited.

“Young Master, go for it!” Standing on the huge rock, Qing Lin’s small face was bright red as she shouted in a tender voice.

“Haha, Company Leader. Do you think the Second Company Leader or Brother Xiao Yan has a better chance of winning?” On the tall platform, Xue Lan’s gaze drifted to the battleground and asked with a lovely laugh.

Hearing Xue Lan’s question, the few others who formed the upper echelons turned their gazes over and watched Xiao Ding, who made the daily decisions on all matters in the company.

Being the center of attention, Xiao Ding lifted his tea cup as though nothing had happened. He took a sip, swept his gaze across the battleground and said with a smile, “Second Brother is currently a four star Dou Shi. At the rate he is practicing at, he will soon reach the five star level.”

“Xiao-Yan-Zi’s current strength is just that of someone who has entered the Dou Shi class. Moreover, Second Brother uses a lightning type Dou Qi, which everyone here should have experienced before. Although I don’t have a clue about Xiao-Yan-Zi’s

Purple Flame Dou Qi but... you tell me, whose chances of winning is higher?" A cunningness flashed across Xiao Ding's eyes as he answered.

"From the looks of it, won't Second Company Leader win for certain? After all, their strength differs by a few stars..." Hearing this, Xue Lan could not help but twitch her mouth and said in a somewhat disappointed voice. She really wanted to see Xiao Li made a fool of.

"Hehe..." Xiao Ding laughed as he gently knocked on the table with his fingers. His gaze stared at the young man covered in Purple Flame Dou Qi standing on the battleground. In a soft voice, he said, "If it was someone else, he may indeed not have any chance of winning. But... regarding my youngest brother, you cannot use common sense to judge. That little guy liked to hide his true self since he was young. I don't believe that his real strength is just the bit on the surface..."

"This... in this fight, Xiao-Yan-Zi is the one who has a higher chance of winning!"

Chapter 188: A Competition Between Brothers

On the huge empty yard, a silver and a purple human figure appeared to have torn out two pathways in the messy battleground. A long, empty space was left where the both of them passed.

"Bang!" Following the clear sound of metals coming into contact with each other, a ferocious energy wave violently flowed out from the center of the battleground. Instantly, the messy fighting that was going on within a ten meter radius of them both was cleared into an empty circle was formed.

Tightly holding the Heavy Xuan Ruler, Xiao Yan lifted his eyes and stared at the long spear that was trickily stabbing at him like a poisonous snake. At the top of the spear was a silver electric arc that jumped repeatedly. Taking in a light breath, Xiao Yan violently swung the heavy ruler in his hand.

"Clang!" The tip of the spear struck against the huge body of the ruler. Under the pressure of the strength the heavy ruler carried, the narrow and weak long spear was crushed into a alarming arc with the tip closing in on the spear handle where Xiao Li was holding.

"Hee hee, boy, you are quite strong." Seeing that he was at a slight disadvantage after the first exchange, Xiao Li could not help but smile. On his palm, Dou Qi began to agglomerate and knocked violently into the spear handle. A wave of electric energy flowed through the spear and swiftly entered the heavy ruler.

As the electrical flow entered the heavy ruler, Xiao Yan's palm, which was tightly holding the Heavy Xuan Ruler immediately trembled slightly. The Purple Flame Dou Qi in his body continued to flow, quickly expelling the paralyzing energy from his body.

“Xiao-Yan-Zi, when your Second Brother fights with people, there will be no warm-ups. Since we are going to fight, then I will put in all my effort. You better be careful!”

In the instant Xiao Yan’s palm trembled, Xiao Li let out a ‘hee hee’ laughter. The long spear strangely turned and scratched across the heavy ruler, leaving a burst of sparks. After which, it stabbed out explosively.

“Triple Lightning Arc Dance!”

When the long spear began moving, Xiao Li called out softly. Instantly, three snake shaped lightning arcs abruptly appeared on the spear. The lightning arcs flickered as they crossed each other. Amidst a ‘chi chi’ sound, they each carried a very strong energy that no one dared to underestimate.

“Triple Lightning Arc Dance?”

“Ugh... It hasn’t been that long but the Second Company Leader has already used the ‘Triple Lightning Arc Dance?’” Seeing Xiao Li’s attack, numerous surprised voices sounded below the battleground. This ‘Triple Lightning Arc Dance’ was a killer move of Xiao Li. It was unexpected that he had actually displayed it after only exchanging blows for a short while. Was he trying to end the fight quickly?

“Ke ke, looks like Brother Xiao Yan is going to suffer. This ‘Triple Lightning Arc Dance’ of the Second Company Leader is a Low Xuan class Dou Technique. With the paralyzing effect of the Lightning type Dou Qi, even a four star Dou Shi would not easily dare to take it head on. Tsk tsk, they had only just started exchanging blows, but the Second Company Leader has already used it. Looks like Brother Xiao Yan is fairly strong.” One of the members of the Desert Metal Mercenary Company upper echelon on the tall platform could not help but laugh.

“This guy really knows how to bully people. It’s fine that his level is slightly higher than Xiao Yan’s, but he actually used a Xuan Class Dou Techniques...” Xue Lan rubbed her lips together and defended Xiao Yan from the injustice as she said.

“haha, the lightning type Dou Qi of Second Brother belongs to the type that rushes out in one go. If the fight were to drag out, it would be to his disadvantage. Thus, no matter who he fights with, he must choose the fastest method to determine the victor. Otherwise, once his strength weakens, he would find himself in a bad situation.” Xiao Ding smiled, shook his head and mused.

Hearing this, everyone smiled helplessly. They could only pray in their hearts that Xiao Yan could withstand this attack.

In the battleground, Xiao Yan was also a little shocked when Xiao Li displayed his Dou Technique. However, this one year of tough training had caused his mental strength to reach a level that his past self could not compare with. In an instant, he calmed down. A

Purple Flame Dou Qi flowed out from the vortex in his body and covered the ruler's body, preventing Xiao Li's lightning type Dou Qi from using the ruler to enter his body and paralyze him.

After being entirely wrapped by the Purple Flame, the black Heavy Xuan Ruler, spurred on by Xiao Yan's full strength, carried a pressuring wind as it viciously smashed at the long spear that was swiftly piercing toward him.

Under the anxious observation of everyone, the heavy ruler and the long spear clashed violently. An instant later, an explosion sounded and tiny cracks appeared on the rock flooring where their legs stood.

"Ding!" The tip of the spear quickly stabbed at the heavy ruler. A strip of electric arc threateningly and ferociously crashed against the ruler. The strong and violent force that it carried abruptly lifted the heavy ruler. In addition, the contact from the lightning arc also reduced the Purple Flame Dou Qi on the Heavy Xuan Ruler by half. "Hee hee." Seeing that Xiao Yan was forced to take a step back while carrying the Heavy Xuan Ruler in his hand, Xiao Li laughed. However, he did not hold anything back. As Xiao Yan was being pushed back, the long spear violently pierced at the Heavy Xuan Ruler which did not have the time to react as it was being pushed back.

"Ding!" Another clear sound echoed. The Purple Flame Dou Qi on the heavy ruler had totally vanished.

"Ding!" After banishing the Purple Flame, Xiao Li's long spear continued its lightning like piercing. At the same time, the last electric energy also violently sprang from the spear and knocked heavily on the Heavy Xuan Ruler. Following a loud sound, the Heavy Xuan Ruler left Xiao Yan's hand and flipped over ten times before it fell on the ground.

"Little boy, the battle is over." Holding the long spear in his hand, Xiao Li smiled at Xiao Yan.

"Hiss..." Seeing Xiao Yan's weapon leaving his hand, waves of hissing sounded around the battleground. In this kind of fight, losing one's weapon was basically taking a step into the side of defeat.

Under normal circumstances, that was logically the case. However, for Xiao Yan, this situation was totally the opposite. The Heavy Xuan Ruler in his hand could indeed raise some of his offensive strength. However, it was more of a restraint on Xiao Yan. With the Heavy Xuan Ruler on his body, not only was Xiao Yan's speed terribly suppressed but the Dou Qi in his body must be stimulated with all his strength in order to handle a battle of this level. However, with the Heavy Xuan Ruler leaving his hand, the last bond that suppressed Xiao Yan's strength was totally removed.

The Xiao Yan after losing the burden of the Heavy Xuan Ruler was at his peak form!

TL: This isn't even my final form!

Thus, when he heard Xiao Li's words, Xiao Yan noncommittally shrugged his shoulders, "That may not be true."

Seeing that Xiao Yan's face was still calmly smiling, Xiao Li was a little stunned. Immediately, the long spear in his hand lightly shot toward Xiao Yan's shoulders.

"Explosive Steps!"

Raising his face, Xiao Yan gave a brilliant smile. As his voice called out, his feet violently stomped on the ground. With the sound of an energy explosion, his body shot out and appeared beside Xiao Li in an instant.

Within the battleground, everyone who saw Xiao Yan's speed could not help but let out a surprised cry. Clearly, they could not understand how, in such a situation, Xiao Yan's speed could rise so explosively as though he had eaten some medicine.

The sudden appearance of Xiao Yan beside Xiao Li caused a look of shock to flash across Xiao Li's face. His palm which was tightly holding the long spear suddenly pulled backwards. The spear moved along his waist and spun quickly like a windmill. While spinning, threads of electric light leaped and flickered.

Lightly stepping onto the tip of the spear, Xiao Yan's figure once again exceeded everyone's expectations and explosively retreated.

When Xiao Yan was shooting backwards, his palm suddenly extended out and immediately clenched tightly. Immediately, a vicious suction force flowed out from his palm. A short distance away, Xiao Li did not have the time to block it. His body was unsteady and the windmill like long spear was pulled in all directions. The attack could no longer be completed.

With the suction force from his palm, Xiao Yan's body which was flying backwards had strangely come to a stop. He lifted his head, watched Xiao Li who was being sucked over and smiled. His feet once again stepped violently on the ground. Following an explosive sound, his body appeared in front of Xiao Li like lightning.

"Second Brother, that ruler isn't my weapon. What I specialize in, is still... close combat!" Xiao Yan suddenly laughed softly as the two pairs of eyes came into close distance contact. Under Xiao Li's tightly shrunken eyes, Xiao Yan's hand immediately tightened into a fist. Then, swinging his hand so that his body could borrow the strength and rotate halfway, Xiao Yan strangely fell backwards into Xiao Li's chest.

With his back facing Xiao Li, Xiao Yan's elbow paused for a moment before it carried a sharp air sound that seemed to have broken the wind resistance as it violently smashed toward Xiao Li's chest.

Feeling the frightening force that Xiao Yan's elbow possessed, Xiao Li's expression abruptly changed. A serious glint swiftly flashed across his eyes. The right fist that was by his chest suddenly fell heavily.

As Xiao Li's fist fell, a piercing silver light was emitted from his chest and finally formed a small silver shield the size of a washbasin around half an inch from his chest.

"Tsk tsk... Second Brother must have been pushed to the extreme. He even used this life-protecting 'Silver Lightning Shield'..." Seeing the small silver colored shield on Xiao Li's chest, Xiao Ding shook his head and whispered.

"I knew it. Xiao-Yan-Zi would always have his own hidden card. Judging his strength from the surface is an extremely foolish move." Xiao Ding's gaze swept across that huge Heavy Xuan Ruler in the battle ground and smiled. "Everyone, have you all not noticed that since the ruler left him, Xiao-Yan-Zi's speed and strength had rose by about thirty to forty percent?"

Hearing this, surprise and amazement surfaced on the faces of Xue Lan and the others by the side.

Within the battleground, Xiao Yan felt the energy fluctuations behind him. However, the force on his elbow was not reduced. An instant later, it heavily smashed onto the small silver colored shield.

"Bang!" Following a loud sound, everyone could see with their eyes that a cluster of shapeless energy ripples suddenly spread out from between both bodies. It extended over a radius of ten meters before it gradually dissipated.

In the battleground, Xiao Yan and Xiao Li's bodies both came to a sudden stop. Everyone could see that at the point the elbow and the silver shield came into contact, the silver shield was violently releasing one ripple after another.

The ripples swiftly spread. A moment later, they gradually ceased. The two bodies also shot backwards as if they had received an electric shock.

"Boy, I did not expect that you still knew this kind of high level physical Dou Technique. Hee hee, but the difference in our strength is too great. It isn't sufficient to break my 'Silver Lightning Shield'..." Xiao Li suddenly said as his body was swiftly retreating.

"Ke ke... that may not be certain." With a faint smile, Xiao Yan's fist suddenly tightened and he softly cried, "Explode!"

"Bang!" As Xiao Yan's voice fell, a soft muffled sound was suddenly emitted from within Xiao Li, who was falling backwards. Instantly, Xiao Li appeared to have been struck by lightning as his body quivered intensely for a few moments. His face had suddenly become much paler.

Xiao Li's body also started to shoot backwards even more. Each time his feet stepped on the ground, it would leave a deep footprint.

After retreating for around twenty steps, Xiao Li finally stabilized his body. At this moment, however, a human figure flashed in front of him and the sharp tip of a spear was held at his throat.

"Second Brother, you have underestimated your opponent..." Xiao Yan smiled and said softly as he pointed the sharp tip of the spear at Xiao Li.

Chapter 189: Qing Lin's Discovery

Seeing that within a few minutes, the fight within the battleground had suddenly changed, everybody around the battleground widened their eyes, clearly stunned. It was difficult to imagine that Xiao Li, someone who almost no one could match in the company, would actually be mysteriously defeated by Xiao Yan, who was younger than him by seven or eight years.

Within the battleground, Xiao Li stared at the tip of the spear and was stunned for a long while before he finally recovered. His gaze swept across the smiling Xiao Yan in front of him and clicked his tongue as he shook his head. He sighed, "Little boy, how unexpected. You have hid so well. The strength that you had displayed does not appear to be merely that of a normal one star Dou Shi."

"Ke ke, I was merely lucky." Shaking his head while laughing, Xiao Yan inserted the spear into the ground and then headed to where the Heavy Xuan Ruler was a short distance away. He was about to lift it up when Xiao Li beside him stopped him with a smile.

"Let me try. This ruler... seems a little strange." Xiao Li curiously stared at the huge ruler on the ground and laughed as he said.

"Uh?" Hearing this, Xiao Yan was slightly at a loss, but he quickly smiled and nodded his head. He took a step back while his gaze somewhat mocking.

Xiao Li rubbed his hands and gradually stood by the Heavy Xuan Ruler's side. His hand gripped the ruler, then tightly grabbed it. After letting out a breath, he carelessly pulled with his hand. When his hand pulled, Xiao Li's expression changed and he let out a shocked cry. He realized that ever since the Heavy Xuan Ruler entered his hand, the swift surging lightning Dou Qi in his body had suddenly been reduced to the speed of a turtle's jog...

"Wow, there really is something strange..." Mumbling in a stunned voice, Xiao Li tightened his arm. Numerous veins began pulsing on the crook of his arm.

Tightly holding the Heavy Xuan Ruler, Xiao Li's face gradually turned red as he let out a soft cry, "Up!"

As the cry fell, Xiao Li's arm trembled as it slowly lifted up. After which, his two hands firmly grasped the ruler in front of him and waved it left and right with all his strength. Afterwards, the gaze Xiao Li used to look at Xiao Yan had some faint shock.

"You... you were actually carrying this just now to fight with me?" Seeing the smile on the delicate and handsome face of Xiao Yan, Xiao Li's mouth was dry as he said. God, it was already very amazing that one can even carry this and move around smoothly. Yet, Xiao Yan actually carried this and exchanged quite a number of blows with Xiao Li during their fight. How could this not cause Xiao Li to be astonished and stunned?

Eyeing Xiao Li's astonished manner, Xiao Yan smiled and nodded. His palm received the Heavy Xuan Ruler and easily placed it onto his back.

With his eyes staring intently at Xiao Yan's action, Xiao Li realized that when Xiao Yan received the Heavy Xuan Ruler, his hand had merely sunk a little. The instant after it sunk, the small dop was once again perfectly adjusted.

Seeing the relaxed manner of Xiao Yan, Xiao Li's mouth opened. It was a long while later before he sighed in shock and shook his head. "Little boy, how outstanding... have those eyes of Nalan Yanran been blinded? How many in the Jia Ma Empire can be considered as outstanding as my brother? She actually thinks you aren't good enough?"

Xiao Yan smiled, waved his hand and said, "At the very least, Xun Er will not be weaker than me."

"Xun Er? Haha. That girl. I haven't been back for so many years, but that girl must have become very charming, no? It should be known that when she was small, those young masters in Wu Tan City came to the walls of the Xiao Clan to take a look at her. But she seemed to stick to you. Hee hee." Hearing the elegant name, Xiao Li stilled momentarily before he smiled and said yearningly.

Recalling the young lady's beautiful face and moving figure, Xiao Yan also gently smiled emotionally. His hand lightly patted the Heavy Xuan Ruler and smiled, "If there is a chance in the future, I will bring her to visit you. Ah... but now, I have some important matters that need both Big Brother's and Second Brother's help."

"Oh? There's something? No problem! Just tell us. Even if it is beyond our ability, Big Brother and Second Brother will do our best to help." When Xiao Li heard Xiao Yan, he immediately waved his hand and smiled.

"Yes." With a smile, Xiao Yan nodded his head.

.....

The three of them sat within a spacious room while Qing Li carefully carried three cups of tea to distribute to each of them before obediently standing behind Xiao Yan.

“Haha, Xiao-Yan-Zi, you have some problem? Just say it out and let Big Brother analyze it for you.” Xiao Ding smiled and said to Xiao Yan as he lifted his teacup to take a sip.

Xiao Yan nodded with a smile before musing for awhile. In a soft voice, he said, “The reason for me coming to the Tager Desert is to search for something.”

“Something? What thing?” Hearing this, Xiao Li asked curiously with a smile.

“Heavenly Flame...” Xiao Yan whispered as his finger lightly tapped on the table.

“Uh...” When the words ‘Heavenly Flame’ were said, the room immediately became much quieter. Xiao Ding and Xiao Li exchanged gazes before asking in a puzzled voice, “‘Heavenly Flame’? That kind of thing seems to be something only an Alchemist would need. What do you need it for?”

Xiao Yan shrugged his shoulders and smiled indifferently, “Because I am an Alchemist.”

“Huh?” Hearing this, Xiao Ding and Xiao Li’s faces stiffened. A moment later, an unrestrained joy surfaced, “You are an Alchemist?”

“Haha, I was lucky to possess the talent for becoming an alchemist and when I was at Wu Tan City, I also met a teacher, so...” Xiao Yan said with a smile.

“Tsk tsk... incredible. I never expected that our Xiao Clan would also produce an alchemist. Ha ha.” Seeing that Xiao Yan nodded his head and admitting, Xiao Ding and Xiao Li immediately laughed out loud. Their laughter contained both envy and satisfaction.

“The ‘Heavenly Flame’s’ rarity is so great that it is a little frightening. Although we have muddled along in the Rock Desert City for a long time, we have really not heard anyone mentioning anything about where there are traces of the ‘Heavenly Flame’.” After rejoicing, Xiao Ding frowned and helplessly said.

Shaking his head with a smile, Xiao Yan tapped his finger on the storage ring, withdrew a piece of an old goatskin scroll and placed it on the table. His finger pointed at a flame symbol on it and said softly, “This is a map that I managed to obtain. At this region marked by the flame symbol, there should be a higher chance of finding traces of the ‘Heavenly Flame’. However, I am unfamiliar with the surrounding terrain of the Rock Desert City, thus... I cannot find the exact place marked by the Flame Symbol. Big Brother, the two of you been around here for quite some time. Do you know of any strange places around the Rock Desert City?”

Hearing this, Xiao Ding pulled over the map. His gaze roughly swept over the map before he said with surprise, "What a detailed map. This is the first time I've ever seen such a map."

"Yes, it's so detailed it is a little overboard." Xiao Li nodded his head. He frowned and studied the map in detail before saying softly, "The place marked by the flame symbol seems to be at to the east of Rock Desert City."

"Yes. More accurately speaking, it should be a little south-east of Rock Desert City." Xiao Ding nodded his head. He voiced his thoughts, "But the east side of the Rock Desert City does not seem to have any strange places."

"There's indeed nothing. I have once brought people to search that place for a few days during one of our missions but I did not find any strange places." Xiao Li also shook his head and said helplessly.

Seeing the two of them shake their head, disappointment rose on Xiao Yan's face. It appeared that there was no trace of the 'Heavenly Flame' there...

However, just as Xiao Yan was filled with disappointment, a gentle voice suddenly sounded within the room.

"That... Young Master, the east side of the Rock Desert City... seems to have something strange."

Hearing this, Xiao Yan stilled. He quickly turned around and stared at Qing Lin who was twisting her small hands under his searing gaze. He hurriedly said, "Do you know something?"

To the side, Xiao Ding and Xiao Li also shifted their stunned gaze toward Qing Lin. Clearly, they were not informed.

Being the center of attention of the three gazes in the room, the timidness on Qing Lin's small face grew. She said haltingly, "I am also unsure if my senses are accurate... but half a year ago, I really sensed that there was some unusual movement at a region to the east of the Rock Desert City."

"How do you know about it? You don't seem to possess such a strength." Xiao Ding's palm rubbed his tea cup as he said with suspicion.

"I... I don't know. Half a year ago, I sensed a very strong Qi that appeared outside Rock Desert City. That Qi... and the blood in my body, seemed to be a little similar. Even the Company Leader of the Sand Mercenary Company is very weak compared to that Qi." Qing Lin carefully stuck herself tightly to Xiao Yan as she whispered.

“Oh?” Hearing this, Xiao Ding and Xiao Li were a little uneasy. The Company Leader of the Sand Mercenary Company was a Da Dou Shi. If even he was much weaker than the mysterious person. That... Did that mean that the other party was at least at the Dou Huang level?

“A Qi that is similar to your bloodline? Don’t tell me it is Queen Medusa?” After musing for a while, Xiao Li suddenly said in a shocked voice. With Queen Medusa’s strength, it should not be too hard for her to turn the Rock Desert City into ashes. This kind of extremely terrifying person had actually roamed the area surrounding Rock Desert City without anyone knowing?

When the name ‘Queen Medusa’ entered his ears, Xiao Ding’s expression also changed slightly. Around the Tager Desert, this name was as renowned as Pill-King Gu He was within the Jia Ma Empire.

“I don’t know...” Qing Lin shook her head. She whispered, “I could only vaguely sense it. Half a year ago, she had suddenly arrived somewhere to the east of Rock Desert City. There, she seemed to have stayed for a night. During the night, the Qi to the east was extremely irritable. I also know that when she left, she seemed to have been injured...”

Hearing Qing Lin narrating the tale, Xiao Yan sighed lightly. His eyes narrowed as he said softly, “Can you be certain of the exact location where she stayed?”

“I should be. Although half a year has passed, the Qi that she had left behind is pretty dense. I... I can rely on the bloodline in me... I should be able to find that place.” When she mentioned her bloodline, Qing Lin’s face clearly became a little dejected. However, she maintained a forceful smile as she said.

“If Young Master wants to go, Qing Lin will try her best to bring you there!”

“Haha, thank you very much Qing Lin... Let’s go and take a look tomorrow. I hope the results won’t disappoint me.” Xiao Yan smiled and nodded as he said softly.

Chapter 190: Surveying The Terrain

In the vast desert, the yellow sand raged.

“Qing Lin, are you certain that it’s here?” Xiao Yan’s face was filled with surprise as he watched the flat desert in front of him. The terrain here was extremely ordinary with nothing special that would attract one’s attention and there were countless similar places within the deser. It was difficult for Xiao Yan to imagine that there were traces of a ‘Heavenly Flame’ in such a humble place.

Behind Xiao Yan were Xiao Ding and Xiao Li. At the same time, there were tens of elite members of the Desert Metal Mercenary Company. At the moment, however, they were all throwing suspicious gazes at Qing Lin in front of them who was leading the way. For

these people who had lived in Rock Desert City for a few years or even more than a decade, this place was so extremely ordinary. Moreover, some of these people had even come here a couple of times to perform their assignment. They had never felt anything unusual here compared to other places...

Despite being the focus of everyone's attention, Qing Lin, who was a little timid, summoned up her courage, stared at Xiao Yan and said, "Young Master, based on my senses, the unusual occurrence that happened half a year ago originated from here."

Hearing this, Xiao Yan pressed his eyebrows together. He stood at a small sand dune, raised his head and took a look at the surrounding. His face was gloomy.

"There doesn't seem to be any special building or strange cave. But if Qing Lin is correct... since there isn't anything on the surface or in the sky... then, it might be here." Xiao Ding glanced at the surrounds before suddenly squatting down. His hand grabbed some sand and slowly let it fall as he said softly.

"Big Brother, you mean... it's underground?" Hearing this, Xiao Yan momentarily stilled as he said with a stunned voice.

"Yes, although there are many strong people who can use the twist in the air in the desert to create mirages that can fool people's eyes, the degree of distortion in the air surrounding the Rock Desert City is insufficient to create such wonders. Thus, after eliminating this possibility... since there is no mirage concealment and since our eyes cannot see it, then the highest possibility would be that it is underground..." Xiao Ding analyzed with a smile.

Nodding his head, Xiao Yan stepped gently on the ground. He immediately smiled bitterly, "Even if the secret is underground, it is impossible for us to randomly dig around."

"Haha, we naturally cannot. If we randomly dig holes in the desert, we might end up burying ourselves alive. However, Queen Medusa was able to go down, so I guess there should be some hidden passageway." Shaking his head with another smile, Xiao Ding said, "There happens to be some experts in terrain surveyance in our company. As long as we get them to survey the area, it should not be difficult to find the passageway to go underground."

Hearing this, Xiao Yan let out a sigh. He said with a smile, "Since it is like this, then I'll have to trouble them."

"Finding the passageway is a small matter... However, this place isn't far from the Rock Desert City. If we create such a huge commotion by surveying here, I am afraid that other strengths in Rock Desert City will become aware of it. The night in the Tager Desert is very short. If we only work at night, not only does it waste a large amount of time but we might miss some important places due to the darkness... In the Rock Desert

City, with our Desert Metal Mercenary Company's strength, other small strengths would not dare to offend us. But the Sand Mercenary Company... may well come out and do something." Xiao Ding shook his head, frowned and said helplessly.

"Sand Mercenary Company?" Xiao Yan frowned.

"The Sand Mercenary Company is the most powerful strength in Rock Desert City other than the city's military power. Although in terms of overall strength, our Desert Metal Mercenary Company would not lose to them, their Company Leader, Lou Bu, is a Da Dou Shi. You should clearly know of the difference between a Da Dou Shi and a Dou Shi. Thus, if there is nothing important, we would normally not offend the Sand Mercenary Company. However, if we create a huge commotion by searching around here, it would arouse their curiosity. Under such a situation they would naturally not play the role of an observer." Xiao Li, who was on one side, said helplessly.

Hearing this, Xiao Yan pursed his lips. He quietly thought for awhile, then raised his head to watch Xiao Ding and Xiao Li. With a smile, he said, "It's alright. Big Brother, Second Brother, the both of you only need to worry about the search. However, please do not spread the news of the 'Heavenly Flame'. As for the Sand Mercenary Company. if they intend to interfere... then I will handle it."

"Hehe, all the people here have the backbone of the Desert Metal Mercenary Company. They are brothers who have followed us as we fought little by little to create this strength. The issue of keeping it a secret is no issue at all." Xiao Li patted his chest. However, he immediately said in a worried voice, "You can handle Luo Bu from the Sand Mercenary Company? Your strength..."

"Second Brother, relax. Since I have said this, I naturally have my confidence. You just need to send people to find the passageway." Xiao Yan smiled mysteriously.

Looking at the mysterious Xiao Yan, Xiao Ding and Xiao Li helplessly nodded their head. However, they did somewhat believe him. They knew that with Xiao Yan's character, he would never joke around about such a situation.

"It is really getting harder to see through this little boy." After mumbling in their hearts, Xiao Ding and Xiao Li exchanged gazes and saw the same feeling in each other's eyes.

"Alright. Since it's like this, Xue Lan, immediately hurry back to the Desert Metal Mercenary Company. Call all those members who specialize in surveying terrains over. We will try to find where the passageway is within a day." Xiao Ding turned around and ordered Xue Lan.

"Ah, yes. Leave this matter to me!" Nodding her head with a smile, Xue Lan swiftly turned around and blew a whistle from her mouth. A camel that was a short distance away came galloping over. Her pretty figure leaped beautifully onto its back before Xue

Lan drove off, galloping it towards the distant Rock Desert City and leaving a trail of yellow dust along the way.

Seeing Xue Lan gradually disappear from his sight, Xiao Yan let out a gentle sigh. He slowly squatted down and extended his hand into the searing hot sand. He muttered softly, “‘Heavenly Flame’... does it really exist below?”

Not long after Xue Lan left, she brought back all the members of the Desert Metal Mercenary Company that were skilled in surveying the terrain. Soon, all of the members arrived at Xiao Yan’s and the others location. Under Xiao Ding’s order, forty terrain surveying members divided their work and began to conduct the surveyance with precision.

Being a huge strength in the Rock Desert City, there were naturally numerous gazes watching Desert Metal Mercenary Company’s every move. Not long after Xue Lan brought a large number of people out, there were a couple of wandering team who appeared close to where Xiao Yan and the others were and watched Desert Metal Mercenary Company’s actions with faces that were filled with curiosity.

The area outside Rock Desert City which had the possibility of a ‘Heavenly Flame’ hiding there was a secret already tightly sealed by the people that Xiao Ding had assembled. Thus, those mercenaries and other people who came over to observe were all mercilessly stopped outside.

Following the progress of the surveyance, the surrounding people watching also increased. Although Xiao Ding had announced that the Desert Metal Mercenary Company’s large maneuver was because it wanted to hunt for a rank three Magic Beast, the surrounding crowd continued to gradually grow larger.

Standing on a sand dune, Xiao Ding and the others watched the human crowd. They could not resist shaking their head helplessly and bitterly smiling, “Looking at the way things progress, within half an hour, the Sand Mercenary Company will send someone over.”

Xiao Li knitted his eyebrows together. his face faintly contained a cold and ruthless aura. His hand shook as a tungsten steel long spear appeared in his palm, which he violently inserted into the sand dune. With a cold voice, he said, “If they really provoke us too much, that Sand Mercenary Company can forget about living peacefully. Other than Luo Bu, all the others in the Sand Mercenary Company are softies.”

Xiao Ding smiled faintly. His lowered eyes also flashed a similar cold glint.

On one side, Xiao Yan, who was seated on the sand dune, also let out a soft laugh. He lifted his delicate and handsome face and used his squinted eyes to stare at the hot sun in the sky. A cold arc appeared and disappeared from the corner of his mouth.

Sweeping her cautious gaze over the three brothers, Qing Lin suddenly realized that these three people were indeed worthy of being real brothers. Regardless of how different their characters were, there was a ruthlessness in their bones that would chill people. These kinds of people were fine if you did not provoke them. Once you did, they would be like a wounded hungry wolf in the desert who would stare intently at you, waiting for the moment when you became relaxed...

Back then, just because of the humiliation from Nanlan Yanran canceling the engagement, Xiao Yan could abandon the comfortable life in his clan, clench his teeth tightly and fight with Magic Beasts in the mountain range, bear the loneliness and isolation in the desert and endure tough training for three years. If he could be so ruthless to himself, just think about how he's like to his enemies.

When the blazing sun in the sky began to descend, a disturbance suddenly occurred among the surrounding audience. A group of around forty mercenaries slowly split the crowd and walked over in a manner that stood out.

"It's the Sand Mercenary Company. Looks like there will be a good show..."

"Hee hee, the Sand Mercenary Company has finally become impatient." Seeing the mercenary company that had walked over, numerous whispers broke out among the surrounding people who were watching.

"It seems I still overestimated that guy's patience..." Seeing the company heading over, Xiao Ding shook his head and ridiculed.

"Let's go and take a look. Before the situation clears, Luo Bu will not appear. The one leading the company now seemed to be the one second only to Luo Bu within the Sand Mercenary Company, Mo Xing. Hehe, Someone who was once defeated by me still dares to find trouble with us." Xiao Li coldly laughed as he gazed from a distance.

"Yes." Xiao Ding nodded his head. He waved his hand. Around him, twenty members of the Desert Metal Mercenary Company were gathered. Thick cold weapons were held in their hands as they walked out of the blockade region and indifferently watched the small group of mercenaries walking over.

The two groups slowly met and the atmosphere between them was a little tense. Being two powerful strengths in Rock Desert City, they had quite a number of conflicts in the past.

"Halt. The Desert Metal Mercenary Company is conducting a mission here, please do not interfere." Lifting his eyes, Xing Ding said in a calm voice as though he was conducting an official business.

"Hei, Company Leader Xiao Ding. I have never heard of the Mercenary Association announcing such a mission. Moreover, the surrounding tens of kilometers of Rock

Desert City are public places. There isn't anything wrong with me bringing people over, is there?" A man with a somewhat feminine face walked out from within the group of the Sand Mercenary Company. His gaze swept across the people inside the blocked off region as he laughed.

"Mo Xing, if it were not for Luo Bu interfering, you should have become a cripple now, no?" Xiao Li threw a glance at this man who appeared to need a beating as he smiled with ill intentions.

With his face twitching slightly, the man called Mo Xing, swept his gaze at Xiao Li with some fear and enmity. He took a step back and coldly said, "A forthright person does not hide anything. Our Company Leader is also interested in this place, so..."

"So you can get lost..." Indifferent words suddenly spat out from the smiling Xiao Yan who was watching icily by the side.