

Black Iron 1981

Chapter 1981: The Welcome Ceremony

On February 6, the 933rd year of Black Iron Calendar, Zhang Tie's airboat finally landed at the airport of Xuanyuan Hill slowly.

Although Bian Heng had seen the world, when he saw the prosperous Xuanyuan Hill in the sky, he was still greatly shocked for quite a while. He didn't recover his composure until he was awakened by Zhang Tie. After that, he followed Zhang Tie towards the hatch door of the airboat and prepared to get off the airboat.

Besides Bian Heng, only Zhang Tie's eldest son Zhang Chenglei and his cousin Zhang Su followed Zhang Tie here. The others in Jinwu Palace and Iron-Dragon Sect and those women of Yin-Yang Sect in Castle of Black Iron didn't come with him.

Those women of Yin-Yang Sect were busy doing their own jobs in Castle of Black Iron. Their lives were pretty full every day. Therefore, they didn't have time to pay attention to other things. Additionally, the holy war was ongoing; therefore, those women of Yin-Yang Sect didn't want to come out of there for the time being. Zhang Tie just let them do whatever they wanted in Castle of Black Iron. As for Yan Feiqing and the other family members, it was not suitable for them to follow Zhang Tie here as he was here to negotiate about the warfare of the holy war which determined the future of Taixia Country and humans; instead of making a sightseeing tour. Therefore, they just stayed in Youzhou Province.

Before opening the hatch door completely, Bian Heng suddenly heard muffled booms from outside. Closely after that, he released his protective battle qi with shock as he asked, "Is there an assassin?"

"It's not an assassin, but gun salute!" Zhang Tie told Bian Heng with a smile.

"Gun salute? What's that?" Bian Heng asked Zhang Tie out of curiosity.

There was no gun salute in Motian Realm. Therefore, Bian Heng felt very strange about this kind of ritual.

Hearing the thunder-like bangs, Zhang Tie started to explain about gun salute and its purpose to Bian Heng.

"It's so strange; so strange!" After hearing him, Bian Heng shook his head while he replied with an unbelievable look, "According to you, guns were mass destructive weapons on battlefields; however, they finally work as gun salute. I've really not seen people greeting their guests with gun salute!"

"This tradition is not exclusive to Hua people, but originated from the Western Continent. I'm afraid that it's similar to using axes and spikes as ceremonial instruments by Hua people!"

Gun salute in this age was greatly different than that before the Catastrophe. In Black Iron Age, gun salute was an effect of loud sound caused by the fast release of the compressed stream. In order to make it louder, the gun barrels for the ceremonial purposes were even processed with rune technology. The vehicles for gun salute were especially huge. These things could only be seen in Xuanyuan Hill. They belonged to the honor guards of Taixia Country.

In order to welcome Zhang Tie, an over 20,000 m long runway had been cleared at this airport. A square matrix of salute guns was set in the nearby and was discharging their gun salutes tidily and orderly.

The airport was covered with banners and people. Almost all the big figures in Xuanyuan Hill had arrived here.

Three princes were assigned here, who were standing in front of all the others and in the middle location. On the left side of the three princes were the high-level officials of Taixia Country represented by the three councilors of the state and nine ministers. On the right side of the three princes were Hua dignitaries represented by the six lords in Taixia Country.

At this moment, almost all the major officials above LV 3 in the royal court of Xuanyuan Hill had arrived. They were all welcoming Zhang Tie respectfully. Actually, two of the three councilors and nine ministers were not here, namely Meng Shidao, the Premier of State Council of Taixia Country and Li Yunji the former justice minister who was put behind the bars in the prison of Xuanyuan Hill.

It was said that Meng Shidao was sick; therefore, he didn't come here to welcome Zhang Tie. Li Yunji the justice minister was the most unfortunate. Although he showed off his power in Youzhou Province, he was arrested by a commander of God's Will Army on the way back to Xuanyuan Hill and put behind the bars in the Xuanyuan Hill. As for his crime, he colluded with the three major sects, fabricated an unjust case and framed up loyal and upright people. The golden Xiemao rune that Li Yunji presented outside the mountain gate of Iron-Dragon Sect was also proved to be fake. Since Li Yunji was put behind the bars, the position of the justice minister had been vacant.

Except for Lord Fairymere; Lord Guangnan, Lord Xuanwu, Lord Jingtian, Lord Dingxi and Lord Yian were all here and standing in the first row, closely followed by noblemen like dukes, marquises and counts. Those below counts were not even qualified to stand here.

Bai Runtian the Lord Guangnan was standing in the middle of the five lords and looking around complacently. Standing on both sides of Lord Guangnan, Lord Xuanwu, Lord Jingtian, Lord Dingxi and Lord Yian were watching Lord Guangnan with admiration in their eyes.

Previously, except Cao Clan, the clan of Lord Dingxi slightly declined due to various reasons, Lu Clan, the clan of Lord Xuanwu, Sun Clan, the clan of Lord Jingtian and Qin Clan, the clan of Yian were not weaker than Bai Clan, the clan of Lord Guangnan. They were all on the same level. Although Qin Clan's base was in Xuanyuan Hill and didn't appear to own too much territory, Qin Clan controlled Xuanyuan Bank, the largest bank in Taixia Country. Xuanyuan Bank's influence covered the entire country. Therefore, Qin Clan was almost the No. 1 clan among the five lords. However, it was already history. As Zhang Tie was Bai Runtian's son-in-law, of course, Bai Runtian became the lord of lords. Nobody had any dissent about it.

Behind the royal households and major officials and officers were ambassadors, even kings or princes from countries on the Western Continent and subcontinents. They were of different skin colors and in different kinds of uniforms. The population of these people was greater than 3,000.

With gun salutes, all of them were standing there silently, raising their heads and waiting for Zhang Tie.

Such a grand ceremony had been held for over 100 years in Xuanyuan Hill.

After 108 gun salutes, with the long bugles of the honor guards, the Xuanyuan-level airboat's hatch door slowly opened. Zhang Tie then slowly got off the airport and stepped onto the red carpet on the ground, followed by Bian Heng.

The three princes instantly came forward to greet Zhang Tie.

The three princes were respectively the eldest prince Xuanyuan Changqing, the sixth prince Xuanyuan Changhong and the eighteenth prince Xuanyuan Feng.

Xuanyuan Changqing was already a heavenly knight. Xuanyuan Changhong and Xuanyuan Feng were already shadow knights. Pitifully, none of them cultivated the emperor-level secret method *Xuanyuan God Sutra*.

Zhang Tie didn't see Xuanyuan God Sutra before. He just heard about that the conditions for cultivating this emperor-level secret method were very strict, which required exceptional qualification. Therefore, not all the princes of Emperor Xuanyuan were qualified to cultivate Xuanyuan God Sutra. Those who could cultivate *Xuanyuan God Sutra* and had promoted to knights were only late Crown Prince, the third prince and the ninth prince.

However, the Crown Prince had been assassinated, the third prince was killed by Zhang Tie; the ninth prince had been put under house arrest as he was involved with the three major sects and Royal Alliance. Therefore, the entire royal households looked a bit bleak. None of them could bring hope to the royal households anymore.

Perhaps the word bleak was too acerbic. To be honest, as the descendants of Emperor Xuanyuan, all the three princes in front of Zhang Tie were talents with superb flair. It was not hard for them to be outstanding. However, as princes, since they were asserted that they couldn't cultivate *Xuanyuan God Sutra* by Emperor Xuanyuan and had to cultivate other inferior secret methods, they had been doomed to not be outstanding in Xuanyuan Hill which was full of elites and heroes for their whole lives, not to mention ascending to the throne.

After greeting Zhang Tie, the three princes stood aside. After that, a young wife in 3-phoenix coronet and with red eyes and a handsome and stable youth walked to the front of the representatives of royal households, holding the hands of a 7-year old boy in golden royal costume. The three people then knelt down and touched the ground with their foreheads towards Zhang Tie at the same time.

"Father-in-law, my respect to you. I'm Xuanyuan Yunfei..."

"Father, my respect to you. I'm Shini..."

"Grandpa, my respect to you. I'm Xuanyuan Zhu..."

As the 7-year old boy knelt down and crept on the ground, he raised his head and watched Zhang Tie with his black eyes in a flexible and smart way stealthily. The boy's look reminded Zhang Tie of himself in his childhood...

Chapter 1982: Question and Answer

Watching the three people in front of him, especially his daughter Zhang Shini and the little boy who called him grandpa next to his daughter, Zhang Tie felt complex. Before the battle at Yin Hai Desert, Shini, Zhang Tie's favorite daughter was still behaving in a spoiled manner in his arms. Unexpectedly, after he came back, his daughter had already become a wife and a mother...

All parents would be moved to see their children become parents.

Being purely political, the marriage between Zhang Chenglei and Princess Peacepursuit was the bond between Jinwu Palace and the late Crown Prince Changying. It had been fixed before the battle at Yin Hai Desert. Additionally, Zhang Chenglei and Zhang Tie's daughter-in-law were always courteous to each other and had already had three sons and one daughter. Both parties were very satisfied with this marriage.

However, the marriage between Zhang Shini and Xuanyuan Yunfei was not out of political purpose; instead, it was love.

Xuanyuan Yunfei was Princess Peacepursuit's junior brother who shared the same father with Princess Peacepursuit. After marrying Zhang Chenglei, Princess Peacepursuit gave birth to two sons after a few years. Then, the new family went to Xuanyuan Hill to visit Princess Peacepursuit's parents. At that time, Zhang Shini followed her eldest brother and eldest sister-in-law to Xuanyuan Hill for the purpose of sightseeing, where she got acquainted with Xuanyuan Yunfei. As Zhang Shini and Xuanyuan Yunfei were both in their puberty, they gradually fell in love with each other.

Later on, although Zhang Shini had already left Xuanyuan Hill, she always contacted Xuanyuan Yunfei. The two people would meet once or twice a year.

When the two people grew mature and reached the proper age for marriage, Zhang Shini and Xuanyuan Yunfei confessed their secret to their own families. With the consent of the parents of both parties, the two people smoothly got married. The marriage between Zhang Shini and Xuanyuan Yunfei further strengthened the relationship between Jinwu Palace and the party of late Crown Prince Changying.

Zhang Shini, who had already become a mother, was already a black iron knight. Her battle force was even much greater than that of Xuanyuan Yunfei, who was not even a knight. Xuanyuan Yunfei looked handsome and similar to late Crown Prince Changying; however, he was not as domineering as late Crown Prince Changying; instead, he looked like an elegant scholar. Zhang Shini was also lenient and tender like Linda. They were really a perfect couple.

"Shini, you've already grown up. Get up. Let's talk about it later..." Zhang Tie watched the three people for a few seconds with complex moods. After that, he slightly waved his hand, causing the three people to stand up with a wisp of tender battle qi, which poured out of the earth's surface.

It might be Xuanyuan Zhu's first time to be lifted by a sage-level knight with battle qi. When he slowly got up, he was apparently shocked with a flurried look. However, he didn't shout; instead, he recovered his composure immediately. It was hard for a 7-year old boy to make it. Therefore, Zhang Tie cast one more glance at his grandson.

"Who taught you in normal times?" Zhang Tie bent over and asked Xuanyuan Zhu with a pleasant look.

“Grandpa, My parents teach me and supervise my learning usually. Since last year when I was 6 years old, I have started to attend Mr. Fang’s classes five days a week!” Xuanyuan Zhu answered with a clear and innocent voice.

‘Mr. Fang...’ Zhang Tie immediately recalled a familiar image. Only one person could be called Mr. Fang by the party of late Crown Prince Changying, namely the adviser of late Crown Prince Changying.

“I’ve got a question for you.” Zhang Tie said with a smile.

After hearing that Zhang Tie was going to ask Xuanyuan Zhu about one question, all the others near the airboat fixated onto Xuanyuan Zhu.

“Please go ahead, grandpa!” Xuanyuan Zhu took in a deep breath before chesting out and saying, “I will definitely tell you all that I know honestly. If I don’t know about the answer, I will study hard when I come back!”

“Okay, do you know how to make rice brew?”

“Yes, I do!”

Zhang Tie’s question sounded a bit strange; however, Xuanyuan Zhu’s answer was such resolute without any hesitation. Watching this scene, all the others in the surroundings remained silent.

“How do you know it?”

“Mom always made rice brew in the mansion. Mom’s rice brew is aromatic and sweet. I like eating it the most. As I always saw mom cook it at home, I helped mom to make it and gradually learned to make it independently!”

Zhang Tie stroked Xuanyuan Zhu’s head before saying, “Not bad! When I was as old as you, I’ve also learned how to make rice brew. Do you feel it interesting to make rice brew?”

“Interesting!” Xuanyuan Zhu replied as he nodded seriously, “Well-made rice brew is yummy. Besides, Mr. Fang has taught me about the philosophy of rice brew!”

“What philosophy?”

“Mr. Fang told me that all the affairs concerning rice and food are very significant in the world. Nothing else is more important than that. With rice and food, we could live, work, read and cultivate; with rice and food, Xuanyuan Hill could run, fighters in the frontline could have strength to fight demons. Therefore, before deciding whether one could do something or not or what degree could he reach by doing that, he should see whether he could have food or not by doing that. For instance, when one is hungry, one would not be able to cultivate, go too far or have a good play. Mr. Fang said that demons were bad; because they didn’t want us to enjoy food steadfastly. If we’re happy or have enough food, demons would be unhappy about that and would destroy such good days...”

“Hahaha, not bad...” Zhang Tie laughed as he stroked Xuanyuan Zhu’s head. After that, he drew Xuanyuan Zhu’s hand and asked Xuanyuan Zhu to walk together with him.

Watching this scene, many people changed their attitude about Xuanyuan Zhu at once.

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Later on, Zhang Tie coordinated with them and had brief talks with or nodded towards all the three councilors, nine ministers and all the other dignitaries and ambassadors from all the other countries. After that, being escorted by big crowds, he pulled Xuanyuan Zhu into an open limo and had Xuanyuan Zhu sit on his side. After that, the vehicle drove out of the airport with the guard of honor.

It was Pangu Avenue on the central axis of Xuanyuan Hill outside the airport. It had long been in a shocking commotion on both sides of Pangu Avenue. There were full of colorful flags and a dark sense of people on both sides of the avenue and the square. Many people reached their upper bodies and heads out of the windows of the buildings on both sides of Pangu Avenue. Even the roofs of the buildings on both sides of Pangu Avenue had been crowded with people.

Elite fighters in full-body armors which were responsible for the safety of Xuanyuan Hill were standing on both sides of Pangu Avenue, one person per meter. They were maintaining the order on the avenue and preventing onlookers from pouring into the road.

“Monarch Qianji...”

“Monarch Qianji is coming...”

As Zhang Tie appeared, the crowd on both sides of the avenue were instantly in hubbubs as their cheers became as overwhelming as a tsunami. In an instant, the entire Xuanyuan Hill roared like a silent volcano suddenly erupted.

With the boom of engines, 108 heavy airplanes flew over the sky above Pangu Avenue with colorful smokes, leaving a brilliant rainbow in the sky...

Sitting in the open limo, Zhang Tie was waving his hand towards those civilians on both sides of the avenue. Tens of thousands of maidens were scattering their peach petals towards Zhang Tie’s fleet on roadside stones and on the roadside buildings. The entire Pangu Avenue was instantly submerged in the ocean of cheer and fresh flowers.

After being depressed by the holy war for so long, Taixia Country and the civilians in Xuanyuan Hill urgently demanded such a spirited and festive celebration...

In such a festive and inspiring celebration, Zhang Tie could clearly sense that numerous moods turned into colorful energies that couldn’t be discovered by ordinary people and entered the realm of moods at any time across Xuanyuan Hill. The jubilant and inspiring positive energy was completely opposite to those kinds of negative energy on the battlefields. Such energies couldn’t be absorbed by and were hated by the supreme demon powerhouses.

Xuanyuan Hill was the heart of Taixia Country. What happened here could instantly reach the rest of the country. Only after a short while, Zhang Tie had felt that more and more positive energy was entering the realm of moods within tens of thousands of miles in Xuanyuan Hill, many of them were completely consistent with the energy of belief. Zhang Tie could directly absorb and utilize such energy and form his own immortal chakra...

At this moment, Zhang Tie finally understood why Emperor Xuanyuan as the descendant of Dragon Emperor didn't establish an immortal palace in Taixia Country; because the title and position of Emperor Xuanyuan was the very belief of hundreds of millions of Hua civilians...

Chapter 1983: Mourning for Late Crown Prince Changying

——Paved with peach blossoms, the road is for Monarch Qianji; covered with red, they will open for you today every year under sunlight and in the breeze!

The grand welcome ceremony for Zhang Tie's arrival could definitely be described in the above lines.

That poem was not created by Zhang Tie. Actually, Zhang Tie spotted this poem on the piece of red cloth being held high by some excited scholars with bamboo poles on the roof of a building.

The entire Xuanyuan Hill was in hubbubs. Zhang Tie's fleet bathed the rain of brilliant peach flowers and the cheer of the onlookers on the way to Emperor Xuanyuan's royal city.

When Zhang Tie's fleet came to the entrance of the royal cemetery in Emperor Xuanyuan's royal city, Zhang Tie saw Fang Qingming standing at the entrance of the royal cemetery and waiting for him.

After Crown Prince Changying was assassinated, he was buried in the royal cemetery in the Emperor Xuanyuan's royal city in Xuanyuan Hill.

Zhang Tie's first destination in Xuanyuan Hill was the royal cemetery. He would like to mourn for late Crown Prince Changying first. All the other major figures of the royal households and late Crown Prince Changying's family had long been waiting for Zhang Tie in the cemetery. Those officials, officers and ambassadors in Xuanyuan Hill also followed him here.

One of the most important reasons why Zhang Tie chose to come to Xuanyuan Hill today was that it was Crown Prince's memorial day.

Zhang Tie got off the vehicle and walked towards Fang Qingming who was standing at the entrance of the cemetery while holding Xuanyuan Zhu's hand. The three princes then led Zhang Tie towards the mausoleum of Crown Prince Xuanyuan Changying, followed by all the others.

When he saw Xuanyuan Zhu getting off the same vehicle with Zhang Tie, Fang Qingming's eyes sparkled with shock.

"My respect to you, Monarch Qianji!" Fang Qingming greeted Zhang Tie with full respect when he saw Zhang Tie approaching him. Xuanyuan Zhu called Fang Qingming, "Master."

"Mr. Fang, long time no see!" Zhang Tie sighed when he saw Fang Qingming who was old and firm instead of being as young as that over 20 years ago, "Unexpectedly, the departure with Crown Prince Changying in Xuanyuan Hill is for always!"

"If His Highness knew that Monarch Qianji is back safe and sound, he would definitely be very happy!"

"Zhu said that Mr. Fang always lived in the cemetery and kept vigil beside Crown Prince's mausoleum over these years."

“A man cannot serve two masters. Now that I couldn’t protect His Highness with my weak ability, I would feel satisfied with guarding His Highness’ mausoleum!” Fang Qingming said as he made a hand gesture and led Zhang Tie inside the cemetery.

The royal cemetery was on a hill inside Emperor Xuanyuan’s royal city. This hill was verdant all the year round. The two sides of the aisle were full of solemn giant dark steel land turtles which carried 5-6 m high steles with inscriptions. These stony sculptures made the cemetery more solemn and respectful.

Besides the late empress, the most remarkable royal person being buried here was Crown Prince Changying.

With the guidance of Fang Qingming, Zhang Tie climbed the mountain for a short while along the broad main road before entering the exclusive cemetery of Crown Prince Changying.

The table and sacrificial articles had been prepared well for Zhang Tie.

Mrs. Xiao, the wife of late Crown Prince Changying, and all the concubines and descendants of late Crown Prince Changying were standing on both sides of the table and waiting for Zhang Tie. When Zhang Tie burned the joss sticks and scattered alcohol for late Crown Prince Changying, all the family members of Xuanyuan Changying bent over towards him.

With great ambitions, he was buried in the loess. As Zhang Tie’s old friend, he became white bones and rested with the evergreen mountain. When Zhang Tie recalled Crown Prince Changying’s voice and expression and watched this graveyard, he couldn’t help feeling sad.

“Brother Changying, you and I have parted with each other for almost 30 years. I’m especially here to visit you. As it’s your memorial day today, I will offer a demon’s head to you as the sacrifice. Hopefully, I’ve avenged your death and could help you rest in peace...” Zhang Tie heaved a deep sigh with tears at his eye corners. Meanwhile, he took out of the head of Sagus, an abyss monarch whose eyes were still wide open and put it onto the sacrificial table.

After hearing Zhang Tie’s words and watching Zhang Tie taking out of the head of a sage-level demon knight, all the others on the spot were greatly shocked. Mrs. Xiao and Crown Prince Changying’s concubines burst into tears at once. All the descendants of Crown Prince Changying then bent over deeply towards Zhang Tie. All the major officials and officers over there were greatly shocked as they sighed with moods.

“Monarch Qianji, thank you for taking revenge for His Highness. When Crown Prince was alive, he told me that only Monarch Qianji was his bosom friend in this world. After Monarch Qianji disappeared in the battle at Yin Hai Desert, His Highness sighed day and night and didn’t have any appetite. If His Highness knew that Monarch Qianji was back safe and sound and had wiped out demons and evil forces as well as made Taixia Country and humans much more powerful than before, he would definitely feel happy for you!” Mrs. Xiao talked to Zhang Tie as she wiped off her tears.

“I hate I was back late. If I could come back a few years earlier, Brother Changying might not have died for the country!” Zhang Tie said as he shook his head.

“His Highness always said that human power was always limited. It’s not Monarch Qianji’s fault. Please don’t blame yourself!” Mrs. Xiao said as she took a glance at Fang Qingming.

Fang Qingming then implied the four royal knights beside him to carry a dark steel turtle with a huge stone stele on its back over here and put it in front of Zhang Tie and said, "Monarch Qianji, please leave memorial words for His Highness!"

There were already two rows of similar dark steel turtles in the Crown Prince's cemetery. The giant steles on the backs of those turtles were all funeral orations and sacrificial couplets which depicted the lifetime meritorious deeds and meaningful events of Crown Prince Changying. Of course, those who were qualified to leave memorial words here were all top figures like three counselors and six lords.

Zhang Tie also spotted a memorial article left by Meng Shidao among them which was composed of thousands of words.

Watching the dark steel turtle and huge stele on its back, Zhang Tie only considered it for two seconds before reaching out a finger and leaving two lines of sublime words on it with his sparkling battle qi.

——Not being regretful about surname Xuanyuan, you're still a hero after death!

Given Xuanyuan Changying's lifetime meritorious deeds, he afforded such great praise and comment. Few crown prince in the history of humans could behave better and contribute more than Crown Prince Xuanyuan at the critical moment of the country.

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After Zhang Tie's mourning, all the officers, officials and ambassadors consecutively mourned Crown Prince Changying. Then, the welcome ceremony almost came to an end superficially.

After leaving the royal cemetery, Zhang Tie directly returned to Qianji Mansion.

Soon after Zhang Tie entering the gate of Qianji Mansion, Fang Qingming had paid a visit to him. Zhang Tie asked people to take Fang Qingming into the parlor of Qianji Mansion.

"Xuanyuan Zhu, the grandson of Monarch Qianji will administer affairs of state, Monarch Qianji will be conferred as Lord Xuanyuan and act as regent. Your position is above three lords. In this way, the friendship between Monarch Qianji and His Highness could be preserved; the descendants and royal households of Emperor Xuanyuan could still remain decent; the overall situation facing Taixia Country as a whole could be stabilized and people could be reassured; a new situation facing holy war could be opened up; Jinwu Palace's foundation as the No. 1 clan in Taixia Country could be laid. Jinwu Palace doesn't belong to royal households; however, it's more like royal households. If Monarch Qianji agrees, it would bring boundless beneficence to Taixia Country and humans. Even our descendants would benefit from your kindness. Any other choice that Monarch Qianji makes would cause great casualties and turmoil across the country even humans. Besides, even the holy war would not come to an end in a short period of time. It's my sincere words, please consider it carefully, Monarch Qianji!"

Before Zhang Tie opened his mouth, Fang Qingming had deeply bowed towards Zhang Tie and said without any polite greeting or prelude.

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Chapter 1984: Fixing the Major Event

Gazing at Fang Qingming who was bowing deeply towards him expressionlessly in the parlor, Zhang Tie admired the great convincing power of this adviser of late Crown Prince Changying.

Fang Qingming was crystal clear about his target here in Xuanyuan Hill; therefore, he put it straight with enough reasons the moment he saw Zhang Tie.

“Mr. Fang, please get up!” Zhang Tie walked to the main seat and sat down, continuing, “Is that Empress Shaoyi and Mrs. Xiao who asked Mr. Fang to come here? Mr. Fang, do you think I want Xuanyuan Zhu to be the new emperor only because I let him stay with me today?”

Empress Shaoyi was late Crown Prince Changying’s mother. Zhang Tie had not seen her; however, he heard that she was a powerful figure in the royal palace. Only after having a brief talk with Mrs. Xiao today, Zhang Tie had known that Mrs. Xiao could never be matched by ordinary women.

It was said that Monarch Qianji was going to replace the royal households across Xuanyuan Hill. Therefore, all the members of the royal household were in panic. Zhang Tie had sensed it as he was firstly welcomed by three princes today. It was a very rare courteous reception. It was very abnormal for the royal household to do that. It might display the royal household’s fear and concern about Zhang Tie’s ambition. However, the royal household could do nothing to relieve their fear and concern; because most of the people across Taixia Country were standing on Zhang Tie’s side; especially the military and local major clans and sects. The royal households had very few trump cards; additionally, Zhang Tie was not afraid of their trump cards at all. Besides the identity of the royal household of Taixia Country, there was an employed sage-level knight who was said to never leave the royal palace. As for the branch of late Crown Prince Changying, they might not even match the three princes who welcomed Zhang Tie today after Crown Prince Changying was assassinated and Meng Shidao chose another wise owner. Given seniority and cultivation level alone, the three princes could definitely suppress Xuanyuan Yunfei and his brothers and sisters.

Actually, before Zhang Tie returned to Taixia Country, Xuanyuan Lie the ninth prince of Emperor Xuanyuan had already been ready to ascend to the throne and the branch of late Crown Prince Changying had already been completely marginalized. If Zhang Tie didn’t come back, the last obstacles for Xuanyuan Lie to ascend to the throne might have been completely cleaned up after the three major sects joined hands to crack down Jinwu Palace.

Given political tactics alone, if Xuanyuan Zhu became the new emperor, those who benefited the most would be the branch of late Crown Prince Changying, then the entire royal household, Zhang Tie and Jinwu Palace in the end.

Fang Qingming had already got up and sat on his seat calmly.

“Of course Empress Shaoyi and Mrs. Xiao hoped that the descendant of Crown Prince Changying could rule Xuanyuan Hill. It’s human nature!” Fang Qingming admitted in a euphemistic way, “Monarch Qianji, you must be crystal clear about the current situation facing the royal household of Taixia Country. Although those princes are excellent, they’re unable to ascend to the throne without the support of people. Although Xuanyuan Zhu is late Crown Prince’s grandson, he inherits a part of your powerful bloodlines. His flair in cultivation could definitely rank first among the descendants of late Crown Prince Changying. He could definitely cultivate *Xuanyuan God Sutra*

in a couple of years; he has infinite potential in the future. What's more, as long as Xuanyuan Zhu could win your support, nobody else in the royal household would be qualified to scramble with him for the throne. He will smoothly become the new emperor of Taixia Country. Taixia Country has not got a ruler for too long. Many problems have been aroused because of this. Even the third prince and ninth prince have lost their lives. Royal Alliance also raised winds and waves across the country. The whole country urgently requires an emperor to maintain its stability, even though it's just a nominal emperor!"

"Without Monarch Qianji's support, nobody else could take that seat. Of course, you could take that seat yourself; however, if you really do that, the turmoil across the country might not come to an end in a short period of time. When you pacify the entire country by force and have the royal household to give the seat to you with sincerity, it would be many years later. During these years, many more people would lose their lives. I know Monarch Qianji is always magnanimous and compassionate. You would never allow hundreds of millions of Taixia people to suffer from more hardships. As for whether Emperor Xuanyuan could come, it's still of uncertainty. On this occasion, the complete alliance between Jinwu Palace and the royal household of Taixia Country would be the best choice for both parties!"

"Xuanyuan Zhu behaves like a wise emperor. As his teacher, I'm crystal clear about this point. Besides the late Crown Prince's bloodline, he also has your bloodline. He's also your grandson. If you assist him to ascend to the throne, he will never betray his bloodline in the future. It's nothing different than ruling the country yourself. It's just a title! When Xuanyuan Zhu promotes to a knight and could wield power officially, the holy war might have already come to an end!"

Fang Qingming said everything possible. His reasons were sufficient and convincing. As a result, Zhang Tie became silent. Even though Zhang Tie had made a decision, he didn't want to state his own stand so fast. At least Zhang Tie wanted to communicate with the three councilors and the nine ministers and his father-in-law Lord Guangnan. Even though he just went through the moves, it was very necessary for him to inquire about these moguls' opinions. It was of great significance for the overall stability of Taixia Country in the future.

Fang Qingming was the first person who paid a visit to Qianji Mansion. After Fang Qingming left there, more and more people came to Qianji Mansion. After making exchanges with those major officials, officers and influential figures of local major clans and sects in Taixia Country except for Meng Shidao, Zhang Tie gradually formed a unified opinion with them.

The major event was fixed!

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On February 14, the 933rd year of Black Iron Calendar, namely one week after Zhang Tie came to Xuanyuan Hill, Xuanyuan Hill had been in commotions; because on the same day, two pieces of news spread over Taixia Country and the other continents and subcontinents from Xuanyuan Hill. The shocks aroused by the two pieces of news almost immediately covered the situation facing the holy war in the west of Taixia Country.

The first piece of news was Xuanyuan Zhu, the 8-year old grandson of late Crown Prince's ascended to the throne officially and administered affairs of the state on this day and became the supreme ruler of Taixia Country nominally. After Emperor Xuanyuan missed so many years, Taixia Country finally got a new emperor.

The second piece of news was that Zhang Tie, also Monarch Qianji, was conferred as Lord Xuanyuan, the head of seven lords in Taixia Country.

Zhang Tie was conferred as Lord Xuanyuan without the process of dripping his blood on a strange crystal and displaying his meritorious deeds on Heavens Fortune List. However, nobody across Taixia country had any dissent about it; because Zhang Tie's meritorious deeds were greater than that of any lord...

Therefore, Zhang Tie became the only one who was conferred as the supreme lord and was widely accepted by all the humans without the process of dripping his blood on a strange crystal and displaying his meritorious deeds on Heavens Fortune List in the three holy wars.

Chapter 1985: The Regent

Given that the holy war had not come to an end, the procedures of Xuanyuan Zhu's ascension to the throne were simplified. Even though, the entire process still lasted three days from the early morning of February 14 to the evening of February 16.

On February 14, Xuanyuan Zhu offered sacrifice to the heavens and the earth in the round sacrificial altar of Emperor Xuanyuan's royal palace escorted by his royal relatives.

On February 15, after finishing the sacrifice, the three councilors and the nine ministers led all the major officials and officers to the round sacrificial altar to welcome Xuanyuan Zhu. "As Your Majesty has already finished the sacrifice, please ascend to the throne right now." Xuanyuan Zhu then bade farewell to his royal relatives and was escorted by those major officials and officers to the Heavenly Heart Gate of the royal palace, where the councilors, ministers and lords were waiting for him. At Heavenly Heart Gate, there was a golden desk, on which there were the coronet and uniform, especially for the crown prince. When they saw Xuanyuan Zhu, all the dignitaries uttered in unison, "Your Majesty, please put on your coronet and uniform". Xuanyuan Zhu then walked to the front of the golden chair. The protocol officials then helped him put on the uniform. After that, they bowed towards him. Zhang Tie then helped him put on the coronet. Then, Zhang Tie held his hand and walked all the way towards the Nine Heavens Palace from Heavenly Heart Gate while being escorted by the officials and officers. Xuanyuan Zhu then took the jade seal of Taixia Country from the hands of the employed sage-level knight of the royal household who served as a seal keeper at this moment. After that, he ascended to the throne. After all the officers and officials of Taixia Country deeply bowed towards him for three times, he left Nine Heavens Palace for the Imperial Ancestral Temple.

When he came to the Imperial Ancestral Temple, he presented the roster and jewelry and conferred his parents, his grandparents, his grandparents' parents and his grandparents' grandparents with important titles out of courtesy.

On February 16, all the officials and officers wrote letters and congratulated his ascension to the throne. All the ambassadors from other countries in Xuanyuan Hill then presented the letters of credence to meet Xuanyuan Zhu. When those ambassadors finished their visits in the evening, Xuanyuan Zhu handed the jade seal of Taixia Country to Zhang Tie and officially entrusted Zhang Tie as the regent who would supervise the affairs of the state. After that, Xuanyuan Zhu left Nine Heavens Palace, which symbolized the accomplishment of the entire succession ceremony.

From then on, as Xuanyuan Zhu was still a minor, his preoccupation was to learn and grow up. Therefore, he could only administer the affairs of the state on the morning of the first day and the 15th day of each month. As for the other days, he had to study in the royal palace. When he finished his coming-of-age ceremony at 20 years old, Zhang Tie would return the power to him. By then, Xuanyuan Zhu would administer the affairs of the state officially.

...

On February 17, the 933rd year of Black Iron Calendar, Zhang Tie in lord's boa-silk uniform was sitting in the Nine Heavens Palace and watching the three councilors, nine ministers, those officers and officials and the five lords with complex moods.

When he came to Xuanyuan Hill in the beginning, he could only hide his real identity and do everything stealthily. But now he was standing on the highest point of the supreme palace on behalf of Taixia Country and humans. When he retrospected the past, he felt like having a big dream.

Zhang Tie's seat was in front of Xuanyuan Zhu's throne, which was only one step lower than the 9-step stairs of Xuanyuan Zhu's. It was the regent's seat. When Xuanyuan Zhu was not in the Nine Heavens Palace, the place, where Zhang Tie was, became the highest location in Nine Heavens Palace. He would be able to watch everything in the palace.

The officials and officers were standing on two sides respectively. Under Zhang Tie's seat, there were 8 chairs, respectively for the commander-in-chief, the one being responsible for public works, the premier, Lord Guangnan, Lord Xuanwu, Lord Jingtian, Lord Dingxi and Lord Yian.

There were respectively two rows of imperial guards in shiny helmets and armors on both sides on the royal stairs. These guards were at least knights.

Meng Shidao was sitting in the seat of premier and watching Zhang Tie calmly. Zhang Tie also watched him calmly.

One day before Xuanyuan Zhu ascended to the throne, Meng Shidao who was "a bit sick" finally "recovered" and attended the following three ceremonies. In the three days, Zhang Tie had seen Meng Shidao for more than once. However, the two parties didn't make any exchange with each other. Today, it was the first time for Zhang Tie and Meng Shidao to meet each other officially after Zhang Tie's return.

However, one was in a higher position while the other in a lower position.

It was the first day for Zhang Tie to administer the affairs of the state. It was pretty solemn in the Nine Heavens Palace. All the officers and officials in the palace looked calm like Meng Shidao, no matter what they thought. Many people had noticed the subtle qi field between Zhang Tie and Meng Shidao when the two people watched each other. However, nobody opened their mouth. They were all waiting for Zhang Tie to break the silence.

Watching Meng Shidao's calm look, Zhang Tie felt like watching capricious mist. Actually, Zhang Tie always felt that something in Meng Shidao's eyes was observing him secretly.

Meng Shidao behaved very calmly. He didn't even look afraid or flurried at all after knowing that Zhang Tie had entered Xuanyuan Hill.

Meng Shidao was the premier of Taixia Country, one of the three councilors of the country. After Meng Shidao promoted to a sage-level knight, it was absolutely reasonable for him to hurt Yun Zhongzi who was wanted by the supreme court. Even though Zhang Tie couldn't find any loophole from Meng Shidao on this event. Even though he knew that Meng Shidao might have made an agreement with Old Man Taiyi and Grand Master Shengkong privately, he still couldn't condemn Meng Shidao because of this because of the two sage-level knights had already died.

Those knights of the three major sects who were captured by Iron-Dragon Sect didn't even know that Meng Shidao had connections with Old Man Taiyi and Grand Master Shengkong, not to mention the agreement between them. Even Xuanyuan Lie, the ninth prince of Emperor Xuanyuan, couldn't get any intelligence from their mouths; because Meng Shidao didn't have any contact with Xuanyuan Lie at all. Given the above points, Zhang Tie couldn't find any loophole from Meng Shidao at all.

Over 30 years ago, Zhang Tie returned to Taixia Country for the first time. At that time, the Gobbling Party was already a great force in Taixia Country. During these years when Meng Shidao served as the premier of Taixia Country, the influence of the Gobbling Party expanded in Taixia Country rapidly. Besides those disciples of Meng Shidao's, hundreds of millions of people were bewildered by the specious theory of humanity, justice and morality of the Gobbling Party. After so many years, many such people had already become the grass-roots or even middle-level officials in Taixia Country. Their tentacles had already reached every nook and corner of the country; some of them had even become provincial governors and had great influence in the provinces, prefectures and cities across Taixia Country. It was no exaggeration to say that the influence that Gobbling Party posed to the grass-roots civilians of Taixia Country was absolutely greater than that of the three major sects. This explained why Zhang Tie didn't catch Meng Shidao for the time being.

However, it didn't mean that Zhang Tie could tolerate Meng Shidao bringing trouble to him on the position of premier of Taixia Country.

In order to end the holy war as soon as possible, Meng Shidao must leave the position of premier and leave Xuanyuan Hill.

...

"When I arrived at Xuanyuan Hill a few days ago, I've heard that Chancellor Meng was sick. I wonder whether do you feel a bit better these days?" Under the gaze of so many officers and officials in the Nine Heavens Palace, Zhang Tie asked Meng Shidao calmly on the high seat.

After hearing Zhang Tie's first words, many officials and officers in the palace felt that their hearts pounded slightly. Everyone knew the old scores between Jinwu Palace and Gobbling Party. They all knew that Zhang Tie was not actually concerned about Meng Shidao's physical condition.

"Thanks for your concern, Lord!" Meng Shidao replied with a smile, "A few years ago, in order to promote to a sage-level knight, I got into a devil's way when in cultivation and got some sequela. I've not been completely cured even now. Sometimes, I feel a lack of spirit. As it's at the critical moment of holy war, the position of premier is closely related to the holistic situation facing Taixia Country, I feel that I couldn't be qualified for this position any longer; therefore, I especially come here to resign. After resignation, I prepare to return to the Gobbling Province and open a college. I'm going to be immersed in learning and continue to realize the secrets in the far-ancient moral stele!"

Zhang Tie was slightly shocked by Meng Shidao's words. Zhang Tie indeed planned to kick off Meng Shidao today. He had long prepared well some tricks and was going to try them on Meng Shidao. Unexpectedly, Meng Shidao asked for resignation voluntarily. He drew back wisely in the face of overwhelming odds. This really saved Zhang Tie's time.

"I agree!" Zhang Tie didn't even urge him to stay out of politeness; instead, he directly agreed with Meng Shidao to leave like pushing a boat along the current. Meng Shidao appeared to be choked by Zhang Tie's words. However, Zhang Tie didn't continue to see Meng Shidao; instead, he told some guards in the palace in a decisive tone, "We're going to discuss the current situation facing Taixia Country and humans in the holy war; additionally, we should work out the solutions. It would last long. Now that Chancellor Meng doesn't feel good and always lacks spirit, you'd better leave here for recuperation; otherwise, if there's something bad happens to you, people would complain to me about not respecting the elder. Accompany Chancellor Meng to go back to his mansion for rest; have imperial doctors make a diagnosis for and give treatment to Chancellor Meng carefully. Chancellor Meng, if you need any pills, just have people take them from the royal warehouse!"

"Thanks for your concern, Lord!" Meng Shidao appreciated Zhang Tie as he took got up and took a gloomy glance at Zhang Tie calmly. Before those guards approached him, Meng Shidao had walked towards the gate of Nine Heavens Palace.

"Chancellor Meng, please leave the seal of premier in case that I have to have someone to take it!" Zhang Tie said calmly, "Chancellor Meng could leave Xuanyuan Hill at any time; however, Xuanyuan Hill must have a premier every day!"

The entire palace was in dead silence. All the officials and officers in the palace were watching Meng Shidao who had stopped his foot.

Even though Emperor Xuanyuan couldn't dismiss premier, one of the three councilors, in such a simple way. Zhang Tie's strong resolute decision caused many people's heart to palpitate.

Meng Shidao turned around and took a glance at Zhang Tie with a smile. He then lightly took off a space-teleportation finger ring and gave it to a guard. Then, he left the Nine Heavens Palace with the "company" of two guards.

Watching Meng Shidao leaving in such a calm way, Zhang Tie didn't feel relaxed at all; instead, he became intense at once. Actually, Zhang Tie didn't mean to fiercely maul Meng Shidao by the last two sentences; instead, he was just testing Meng Shidao on purpose. Previously, he thought that Meng Shidao would resist him; unimaginably, Meng Shidao just accepted his arrangement calmly. That was too abnormal.

'Did he swallow insult and humiliation wisely or have Plan B?'

Zhang Tie looked a bit solemn...

...

Chapter 1986: The Harm of the Gobbling Party

Zhang Tie saw Meng Shidao off the stairs outside the Nine Heavens Hall with slightly narrowing eyes. Then he glanced over those civilian ministers and military officers in the hall.

Many people among them at present dared not look straight into Zhang Tie's eyes.

'No matter what, I've completed the first step——drive Meng Shidao out of here...' Zhang Tie muttered inside. 'I've got only two things to deal with. Stabilize the domestic situation before resisting foreign aggression. I will completely end this holy war in the homeland of humans and drive all the damn demons back to the underground...'

At this moment, it was the supreme target in Zhang Tie's inner heart.

In order to reach this target, Zhang Tie could do many things that he didn't want to do or felt reluctant to do in the past such as being regent and being completely merciless to all the enemies and opponents.

"The position of the Finance Minister is of great significance and should not be vacant. Now that Mr. Meng has resigned, do you have any proper commendation?" Zhang Tie continued to ask.

Ordinary officers were not qualified to recommend someone to assume such an important position. After hearing Zhang Tie's question, all the Civil Ministers and military officers in the hall fixated onto those people right under the throne of Zhang Tie.

'I'm afraid that Qianji Monarch has long reached a tacit agreement with someone; otherwise, he could never drive Meng Shidao away so decisively.' Many people at present were crystal clear about it.

"I've got a candidate!" Zuoqiu Mingyue stood up and opened his mouth.

"Please go ahead, Military Minister!" Zhang Tie said seriously.

"I recommend Tang Ling the former commander-in-chief and Senior General Bearpower of Imperial Guards to be the new Finance Minister!" Zuoqiu Mingyue took a look at all the others as he opened his mouth. "Before assuming the former commander-in-chief of Imperial Guards, he once assumed the position of minister of agriculture. He has rich experience in political affairs. Later on, when Tang Ling promoted to a heavenly knight and ruled the Imperial Guards, he made illustrious military exploits. Before the holy war broke out, Tang Ling intended to promote to a semi-sage level knight. He then resigned with the consent of Emperor Xuanyuan. According to my knowledge, Tang Ling had promoted to a semi-level sage knight at the end of last year and has just stabilized his realm. He could stop secluded cultivation at any time. My lord, if you send an order, Tang Ling would definitely like to assume this position and contribute to Taixia Country!"

Zuoqiu Mingyu indeed had already communicated with Zhang Tie about this candidate. After knowing that Zhang Tie would never allow Meng Shidao to assume the position of Finance Minister, Zuoqiu Mingyue proposed the most proper candidate in their hearts on behalf of the military and top four armies of Taixia Country.

Undoubtedly, the most proper candidate for Finance Minister that could satisfy the military must be a mogul in the army.

The position of Finance Minister was of great significance which could influence many aspects. If it could be assumed by a mogul in the top four armies, it was definitely a good piece of news for the military of Taixia Country.

Actually, before Meng Shidao assumed the position of finance minister, the military of Taixia Country had been looking for a person who could assume this position. However, at that moment, nobody in the military of Taixia Country could compete with Meng Shidao. Plus the crown prince's great support and many military moguls' unrealistic expectations towards Meng Shidao, the position of Finance Minister finally fell in the hands of Meng Shidao.

Over so many years, the military of Taixia Country had long been disgruntled with Meng Shidao; especially after Crown Prince Xuanyuan Changying was assassinated, Meng Shidao's deeds made many military moguls furious, which mainly contained two points: firstly, since the holy war broke out, a wide area of land had been lost; however, Meng Shidao still didn't give full support to the military; armies still couldn't use many products of official enterprises and receive logistics replenishment timely. Additionally, the trade of fiery oil and fiery-oil weapons were levied with heavy taxes among the people. Secondly, through the interpretation of some members of the Gobbling Party, the theory about humanity, justice and morality publicized by Meng Shidao couldn't be accepted by people at all.

According to some backbones of the Gobbling Party, demons started the holy war because of the problems facing Hua people themselves; instead of demons. If all the Hua people's moral integrity could reach the standard——match moral integrity with one's position, demons would never start the holy war; nor would Hua people suffer from any other disasters.

Generally, in the theory of the Gobbling Party, if someone wanted to kill you ferociously with a saber, you should not resist and kill the opponent first; instead, you should review yourself and check whether there was any defect with your own moral integrity or not. Only people with mistakes could incur others' attacks and encounter disasters. A person with perfect moral integrity would never encounter such things and would live in a perfect world.

Over these years, due to the surging attacks of demons, Taixia Country lost lands constantly and suffered from many domestic issues. Many people at the bottom of the society gradually lost their confidence in humans in the holy war, and had been gradually bewildered by the Gobbling Party and accepted the interpretation and theory of the Gobbling Party——Facing the sabers of demons, many people being influenced by the Gobbling Party didn't think about defeating demons and chopping off demons' heads; instead, they were praying and confessing every day and hoping to find reasons from themselves. They thought it was their own mistakes that incurred the attacks of demons. They wanted to resolve the disasters by becoming perfect people morally and reaching the “free realm” of matching their moral integrity with their positions.

Zuoqiu Mingyue said, if this theory of the Gobbling Party was really publicized, Hua people would kneel down and fight their enemies from then on. Evidently, Hua armies would be heavily inflicted.

Given his current position, even Zhang Tie wanted to jump up and swear at the Gobbling Party after hearing those words. Zhang Tie couldn't understand how humble were those members of Gobbling Party who could attribute the harms brought by bandits and wild beasts to their own mistakes and confess about that.

Before Zhang Tie came back, nobody across Taixia Country could defeat Meng Shidao and the Gobbling Party, not even Zuoqiu Mingyue. After Zhang Tie's return, Zuoqiu Mingyue and the military of Taixia Country finally saw hope...

They had to defeat Meng Shidao. This was a tacit agreement and common view that Zhang Tie had reached with Zuoqiu Mingyue and the other military moguls of Taixia Country.

Even though there were no old scores between Jinwu Palace and the Gobbling Party, given the empty theory that Gobbling Party publicized alone, Zhang Tie would never allow Meng Shidao to continue to assume the position of finance minister. As long as Meng Shidao held this position, the theory of the Gobbling Party would continue to spread across the country which would castrate the spirit of Taixia Country and Hua people completely...

Chapter 1987: Zhang Tie's Arrangements

After hearing Zuoqiu Mingyue's proposal, Zhang Tie instantly agreed with it...

It only took Zhang Tie less than 10 minutes to dismiss Meng Shidao and appoint Tang Ling as the new premier. Additionally, Tang Ling was requested to take office in Xuanyuan Hill right now. Zhang Tie was more efficient compared to those major officials and officers who had to discuss all kinds of issues in the Nine Heavens Palace over these years.

"As Li Yunji, the former justice minister, also one of the nine ministers of Taixia Country, is involved with the case of Royal Alliance, he has already been dismissed and put behind the bars. The position of the justice minister couldn't be vacant. Do you have any proper candidate?" Zhang Tie's voice reverberated around the palace soon after he fixed the position of premier.

After hearing Zhang Tie's words, all the others on the spot remained silent. As the new justice minister had to deal with a major criminal case of Royal Alliance and Jinwu Palace, nobody knew what Zhang Tie was thinking about at this moment. Therefore, they all waited for Zhang Tie to make a decision.

The position of the justice minister was now a pair of scissors in Zhang Tie's hand. As for whether this pair of scissors was suitable or not, it depended on its owner.

Zhang Tie waited there for half a minute. When he found that everybody in the palace was silent, he continued.

"Now that you're silent, I will directly appoint the justice minister..." Zhang Tie said with a smile. Meanwhile, he looked around those major officials and officers who were standing in the palace. When the others were guessing whom Zhang Tie wanted to appoint as the new justice minister, Zhang Tie called out an unpredictable name, "Where's Xue Bingdao, the assistant of the minister of rituals (the head of nine ministers)?"

After hearing Zhang Tie's words, many people fixated onto a Class II official (being closely inferior to Class I officials and officers like the three councilors and the nine ministers of Taixia Country) who was standing in a relatively front position among the officials.

In his 50's, the assistant of the minister of rituals had a beautiful beard, a fair face and stable temperament. Now that he could take this office, he must be a shadow knight. After hearing his name being called out, he looked a bit surprised. Closely after that, he took one step forward and replied while holding a jade plate. "I'm here, Lord!"

"From today on, you're the justice minister of Taixia Country!" Zhang Tie said calmly without any explanation as he watched Xue Bingdao.

After being silent for a few seconds, Xue Bingdao bowed deeply towards Zhang Tie before replying, "Yes, Lord!"

Many people in the palace were greatly shocked by Zhang Tie's appointment. They could understand why Zhang Tie dismissed Meng Shidao; however, they were completely confused by this appointment. Xue Bingdao appeared to not have any connection with Jinwu Palace. He was absolutely nobody for Zhang Tie. Why would Zhang Tie suddenly have Xue Binhao carry this heavy burden by appointing him as the justice minister?

Many people didn't get Zhang Tie's point; however, some understood it immediately. The commander-in-chief, the councilor of public works, Lord Guangnan, Lord Yi'an and some of the nine ministers got Zhang Tie's point first as they all watched Zhang Tie with great admiration. Xue Bingdao also understood it too.

Xue Bingdao was not exceptional among those major officials and officers in the palace; however, he had one advantage over all the others. Before entering Xuanyuan Hill, Xue Bingdao once served as the provincial governor of Xuanzhou Province for over 4 decades. Xuanzhou Province was a big province where Taiyi Fantasy Sect's base was located. As the provincial governor and the provincial governor's clan of Xuanzhou Province, even though Xue Bingdao and Xue Clan were not members of Royal Alliance, they could never avoid having relationships with Taiyi Fantasy Sects or those major sects which propped up Taiyi Fantasy Sect. At this moment, it was a good piece of news for the three flurried top sects and those major sects across the country that supported the three top sects that Zhang Tie appointed Xue Bingdao as the justice minister of Taixia Country. It meant that Zhang Tie didn't want to wipe out the three top sects by force; instead, he would keep them alive. Additionally, he could stabilize the overall situation facing Taixia Country to the utmost degree by making this decision.

Zhang Tie's saber became a stick. Therefore, many people preferred to be beaten by a stick rather than hopelessly face that saber at the risk of their lives and losing their clans without any hesitation.

"Over 1,000 knights of the three top sects are still being in the prison of Iron-Dragon Sect. After a while, the Supreme Court should assign people to take over all the knights of the three top sects in Youzhou Province and deal with them in accordance with laws. However, in the past a few months, Iron-Dragon Sect got a lot of secrets about the details of a major case in Mojiang City, Songzhou Province many years ago. At that time, the three top sects set a trap to intimidate and ambush Zhao Yuan in Mojiang City in order to get his secret methods. Unexpectedly, Zhao Yuan's power was far greater than they could imagine. Later on, Zhao Yuan killed many knights and broke out of the predicament. Even the entire Mojiang City was destroyed in the battle. Those who should claim responsibility for the tragedy in Mojiang City should be Royal Alliance and the three top sects!"

Zhang Tie then sighed. "As an alchemist master, Zhao Yuan should be serving humans on the battlefield at this moment; however, he's always being sworn by the public and wanted by the supreme court because of the tragedy in Mojiang City. It's time for the supreme court to clarify his innocence!"

Before knowing Royal Alliance, Zhang Tie also thought that his master Zhao Yuan should be responsible for the tragedy in Mojiang City. However, after knowing the hideous nature of Royal Alliance, Zhang Tie started to doubt the truth of the tragedy in Mojiang City. This time, after Iron Dragon Sect captured so many knights of the three top sects, Zhang Tie asked his men to interrogate those knights tentatively. As was imagined, they indeed got the details about the tragedy in Mojiang City. Actually, it Royal Alliance was the culprit of that tragedy. His master Zhao Yuan was the greatest victim in the tragedy. His sufferings were difficult to put in a nutshell. When Zhao Yuan witnessed all of his family members being killed by the young owner of Heavens Holding Pavilion in Mojiang City, Zhao Yuan almost lost his marbles with stimulation. Therefore, he usually behaved like a madman later on...

When Zhang Tie thought that the famous alchemist master was thrown out of the Zhao Mansion by the guards like a mad beggar in Whitedragon Town, Hidden Dragon Island, he almost dropped off tears out of pity.

Today, in the Nine Heavens Palace of Emperor Xuanyuan's royal palace, Zhang Tie determined his mind to clarify his master's innocence and expose the truth of the tragedy in Mojiang City to the public.

After having the supreme court cancel off its wanted circular about Zhao Yuan, Zhang Tie felt relieving his burden as his master Zhao Yuan could finally show up in Xuanyuan Hill aboveboard. He finally could do something for his master.

...

After adjournment, Zhang Tie independently met Xue Bingdao, the new justice minister in a study room of Nine Heavens Palace.

"Do you know why I have appointed you as the justice minister of Taixia Country?" Zhang Tie watched Xue Bingdao and asked him, sitting behind the desk.

"Yes, I do!" Xue Bingdao said straightforwardly, "Lord, do you want to keep them alive in case of more trouble in Taixia Country because of Royal Alliance?"

"Glad you know!" Zhang Tie nodded as he continued, "As for this case of Royal Alliance, you will be responsible for dealing with it!"

"Lord, I'm waiting for your guidance!"

"If they tell the truth, they will receive a lighter sentence; if they refuse to confess, they will face harsher punishment; the chief criminal will be severely punished; those being forced to do it will be pardoned. Neither punish those innocent people nor let them go. All of these are my requirements!" Zhang Tie flicked the desk as he specified with profound eyes. "Concretely, there're three points. Firstly, from now on, the three top sects of Royal Alliance will not set the position of owner or suzerain anymore. If they want, Xuanyuan Hill will appoint proper people as their owners and suzerains. It's the necessary price that the three top sects shall pay for their intention to rule the country. Secondly, the three dongtians of the three top sects must be taken over the top four armies of Taixia Country in the following 100 years.

All the preferential policies for reassuring the three top sects across the country shall be canceled off. Thirdly, half of the properties of major clans in Royal Alliance shall be confiscated. Meanwhile, none of the descendants of these major sects in the next five generations are forbidden to be officials and officers. Those who have already been serving as officials and officers shall be demoted for consecutive three levels and shall not be promoted for the rest of their lives. Additionally, they're forbidden to serve as provincial governors, prefectural magistrates or local main officials or officers!"

"The latter two points are reasonable. As for the first point, it might arouse great turmoil among the three top sects. If so, it would be in contradictory with your original intention..." Xue Bingdao said with a worried look.

"Count the quantity and cultivation levels of those disciples and knights in the three top sects and tell those elder knights in the three top sects, if the three top sects want to select their owners and suzerains, they must behave righteously for the sake of humans. They must show me three times the number of heads of demon knights and fighters if they want to atone for their crimes. Any top sect which meets this demand first could select their own owners and suzerains!"

"Lord, It turns out that you have long been considerate about your decision." Xue Bingdao sighed with moods. Closely after that, he left there.

After Xue Bingdao left there, Fang Qingming appeared in front of Zhang Tie with a frown as he said, "I suggest you to keep Meng Shidao in Xuanyuan Hill with an excuse; instead of having him return to the Gobbling Province. If Meng Shidao leaves here so easily, the Gobbling Party would definitely bring us great trouble in the future!"

Fang Qingming had been conferred as Zhang Tie's adviser who helped Zhang Tie deal with major events.

"I am letting him go back to the Gobbling Province on purpose!" Zhang Tie watched Fang Qingming as he said slowly and calmly, "Now that the Gobbling Party was born in Gobbling Province, I will let it die in Gobbling Province too. However, the holy war counts the most. We'd better sweep over the demons in Taixia Country first!"

...

Tang Ling served as the chief minister of the interior...

The case of Royal Alliance started to enter the ending stage...

The armies of Taixia Country resumed Ganzhou Province, Liangzhou Province, Yuzhou Province and Anzhou Province consecutively. The battle situation facing the west territory of Taixia Country started to be reversed. The whole country was in hubbubs.

After making arrangements for personnel affairs and preparations, the entire country had been running at its full speed for ending the holy war. It was the first time for the slogan that "resume homeland and eliminate demons" to spread across the country since the holy war broke out...

On May 1, the 933rd year of Black Iron Calendar, Zhang Tie made an oath convention with a corps of about 500,000 Zodiac guards and over 100 battle general in Xuanyuan Hill. After that, they left for the frontline by airboat with the hope of hundreds of millions of people in Xuanyuan Hill...

“We will never come back if we don’t bury all the demons into the ground!” Zhang Tie declared to all the officials, officers, generals and soldiers on the rostrum. Closely after that, the army of 500,000 soldiers, over 100 generals and Zhang Tie bottomed up their glasses of liquor.

“Kill demons! Kill demons! Kill demons...”

All the 500,000 people roared in unison on the drill ground...

Chapter 1988: Five Years

Starting from the 933rd year of Black Iron Calendar, after Zhang Tie destroyed the three major demon camps and killed four sage-level demon knights, the overall situation facing Taixia Country had been immediately reversed in an overwhelming manner like surging rivers. As a result, the armies in Taixia Country which were always in defense started to attack. They broke into the territory under the control of demons and started to recover their lost territory. Only after more than half a year, Taixia forces had already regained Ganzhou Province, Liangzhou Province, Yuzhou Province and Anzhou Province which were once occupied and managed by massive demon forces in order to threaten Lingzhou Province, Lizhou Province and humans’ defense line at Tongguan Pass.

Even historians considered it as a symbolic event which should be spoken highly off. As it was the first time for Taixia forces to resume its lost territory on a large scale and for demon forces and knights to retreat since the holy war broke out, it was a great turn for humans on the battlefields.

Like the great turn on the oriental battle fields, the north and south battle lines on the Western Continent also came to a turn.

Since the 932nd year of Black Iron Calendar, the allied forces on the Western Continent had suddenly found that those puppet forces of the Sacred Alliance Empire slowed down their offensive tempo. In the beginning, the Sacred Alliance Empire decreased its offensive tempo on the land along with the use of fiery-oil weapons. Then, the air cavalries of Sacred Alliance Empire became slow to respond to attacks of humans in the air; instead, more wing demons appeared. Through constant tentative attacks, the allied human forces on the Western Continent had already secured its advantage in the sky. Later on, through a holistic analysis of intelligence, the allied human forces on the Western Continent finally confirmed that Sacred Alliance Empire couldn’t produce fiery oil within its territory anymore.

As for armies that had been used to rely on fiery oil, as long as they lost fiery oil, it meant that their planes would not fly anymore. Besides, all the fighters would lack frightening fiery-oil weapons. On this occasion, even though the forces of Sacred Alliance Empire had demons on their backs, it was also impossible for them to maintain the previous offensive tempo.

Additionally, when demons’ three major camps were destroyed overnight in Taixia Country, people on the Western Continent could barely see major camps that gathered a large batch of demons anymore. Even the two major demon camps within the territory of Sacred Alliance Empire had disappeared overnight. On this occasion, the morale of allied human forces on the Western Continent soared. After stabilizing the north and the south battle lines, they finally started to launch counterattacks in some theaters of operations.

Through half a year's preparation, on May 1, the 933rd year of Black Iron Calendar, also the same day when Zhang Tie took a mass pledge in Xuanyuan Hill, , the allied human forces in the south and the north battle lines on the Western Continent finally started a massive counter-attack. Meanwhile, human forces rapidly took the upper hand on both Eastern Continent and Western Continent. The forces of demons and demon lackeys started to collapse like avalanches.

In June, the 933rd year of Black Iron Calendar, Zhang Tie arrived at the battlefield in Taixia Country. In the same month, hundreds of corps of top four armies like Black Armor Army, God's Will Army and Forbidden Army divided into five main forces and respectively broke in demon's territory from Tongguan Pass, Ganzhou Province, Liangzhou Province, Yuzhou Province and Anzhou Province which had already been resumed in an overwhelming manner like splitting bamboo. On the 934th year of Black Iron Calendar, the allied human forces continued to recover Xianzhou Province, Pingzhou Province, Jingzhou Province, Dingzhou Province and Luozhou Province. The whole country was in a festive atmosphere.

...

In April, Weishui River had long thawed. From the sky, the Weishui River was running like a green belt on the ground. At noon, the sun was hanging over the sky. The huge air-borne battle fortress of Taixia Country flew over here from the east, leaving a sliding huge shadow on the devastated land.

A 1,000 m high demon battle fortress was standing on the east bank of Weishui River like an odd-looking tree. Only after a short while, the shadow of human battle fortress had covered the demon battle fortress.

Many beetles with iron scales were looking up at the human battle fortress in the sky on the ground nearby the demon battle fortress. Apparently, some iron-scaled beetles appeared to be intense as they were running about. Some beetles were spurting out mucus towards the sky. However, the mucus that the beetle spurted out could at most reach dozens of meters high. Therefore, their attack could be ignored by the air-borne battle fortress which was at dozens of thousands of meters high in the sky. It was like how ants crawling on the ground wanted to drown an eagle hovering in the sky with their saliva.

The responses of those beetles were instantly transmitted to the demon battle fortress. At the same time, the demon battle fortress which looked like an odd-looking towering tree appeared to feel a danger as it started to spew black fog out of its mouthparts, which covered the air zone in the nearby.

However, all these were in vain.

As long as demon battle fortress completely transformed, it would not move anymore. Without the protection of other demons, its air-defense ability would almost become zero.

Pitifully, within 600 miles around that huge airborne battle fortress, they couldn't see any demon knight at all. There were only a few wing demons.

When the demon battle fortress was spewing out black fog forcefully, a hot-white lightning bolt shot down from the human battle fortress in the sky, crushing the demon battle fortress on the ground immediately like a sandcastle encountering tsunami on the sand beach. In an instant, the ground within a few square miles around that demon battle fortress was swept over by the terrifying great heat and

strong impact wave. Those beetles on the ground nearby this demon battle fortress were instantly vaporized and perished...

Only after a few seconds, the ground where the demon battle fortress was located left nothing but a huge pit. Meanwhile, some beetles over 10,000 m away from the demon battle fortress screeched with great grief and ran about on the ground like headless flies.

On the air-borne battle fortress, Zhang Tie slowly drew back his hand with a faint frown. When he watched Weishui River in front of him, he still felt fidgety out of no reason.

Hundreds of generals and knights of Taixia Country were watching his back. As a result, very few people noticed that Zhang Tie had just destroyed a demon battle fortress on the ground. In the eyes of these generals and knights, without the protection of demon knights, demon battle fortresses were destined to turn into ashes. Even the air cavalries behind them could easily destroy that demon battle fortress on the ground.

Just now, Zhang Tie might only want to enjoy himself just like how people who walked on the riverside would skip stones on the river occasionally.

These generals and knights of Taixia Country behind Zhang Tie had not seen him launch a strike for almost 2 years. Zhang Tie's latest attack was in Ningzhou Province. At that time, a heavenly demon knight was in 600 miles away from this battle fortress. Zhang Tie then flew out of the battle fortress. Only after about 10 minutes, Zhang Tie had taken back the head of a heavenly iron-armored demon knight. From then on, there was no target on the battlefields which was worth Zhang Tie's attack.

Nobody behind Zhang Tie spoke. Over these years, everyone behind him had formed a habit. As long as Zhang Tie didn't send an order to have them stop. This air-borne battle fortress which worked as the vanguard of the five major forces of Taixia Country would keep flying forward and crush all the enemies that they could see on the way. Nobody could prevent them. All the obstacles on the way could be ignored in front of this airborne battle fortress. Everyone was deeply convinced that they could clean up demons all the way to the Realm of Disasters...

"Stop..." Zhang Tie opened his mouth. He didn't turn around; instead, he just raised his hand. Closely after that, the airborne battle fortress which was slowly flowing in the sky came to a stop. "We will wait for the ground forces and the other major forces here. When Weishui River freezes in winter, we will cross the river. After that, we will pluck up our courage to drive all the demons back into the earth, end the holy war on the earth's surface and resume the lost land of the whole country..."

After hearing Zhang Tie's words, those generals and knights behind him instantly became thrilled as their eyes almost beamed. Right on the opposite of the Weishui River, demons were still occupying Yinzhou Province, Wuzhou Province, Zhuzhou Province, Yezhou Province and the area from wild provinces to the Realm of Disasters. They would regain these areas sooner or later. However, the speed of recovery didn't depend on these knights who served as vanguards, but how fast the army corps of engineers behind the five major ground forces paved railways and build roads. Only after they fixed railways and roads could the logistics personnel behind them transport materials forward constantly and stabilize the ground forces.

...

As the airborne battle fortress stopped in the air above the south bank of Weishui River, thousands of knights had already hurriedly flown out of the airborne battle fortress squads after squads and started to wipe out the region within thousands of miles. Generally, after they wiped out this region, the air cavalries of Taixia Country would carry out another round of search and attack here. After that, the vanguard ground troops would arrive, followed by the four major forces of the top four armies. Dozens of corps of engineers were following the four major forces and fixing railways, roads and airports for field operations at their utmost efforts. After that, provincial forces arrived. Finally, the first batch of local officials and officers and experts from all walks of life and business groups which had discovered business opportunities...

There were few demon knights within 600 miles in the sky. Therefore, those knights who were responsible for wiping out demons firstly swore inside. They knew that another batch of people had already penetrated through this region earlier than them—the knights of major sects and clans in Taixia Country.

When Taixia Country was in a poor overall situation in the holy war, these major sects and clans behaved more conservatively than regular troops of Taixia Country as they all hid somewhere for the sake of their own safety. When the overall situation started to reverse, these major sects and clans behaved more radical and dauntless than the regular troops of Taixia Country. As a result, all the conservative major sects and clans which hid themselves for the sake of their safety scrambled to assign their elites to the battlefields and served as the vanguards of the countries' regular forces voluntarily.

It had almost been 5 years since Zhang Tie left Xuanyuan Hill and took a mass pledge. The overall situation facing the holy war had long been greatly reversed...

However, not knowing why, Zhang Tie always felt restless these days...

Chapter 1989: The Source of Zhang Tie's Concern

"As the vanguard troops of Black Armor Army, No.117 corps, No.15 corps and Black Armor Battle Fortress have already pushed forward to Peaceuniverse Prefecture in the north of Huanzhou Province, which is about 3,800 miles away from Xuanyuan Battle Fortress. Some demon forces are still resisting stubbornly. According to our estimation, Black Armor Army's vanguard corps will clear up all the small demons quads in Peaceuniverse Prefecture in 2-3 weeks. After that, the vanguard corps will march into Fieryfield Prefecture..."

"As the vanguard troops of God's Will Army, No. 38 corps, No. 215 corps and God's Will Battle Fortress have already arrived at Phoenixwing Prefecture in the south of Huanzhou Province, which is about 4,100 miles away from Xuanyuan Battle Fortress. The vanguard troops of God's Will Army have already discovered a team of 15 demon knights in Phoenixwing Mountain Range in Phoenixwing Prefecture, the most powerful one among them were earth knights. The knights of God's Will Army have already fought those demon knights. After killing 5 demon knights, they have already collapsed the demon team and are chasing after the remains. Three teams of 60 knights in Xuanyuan Battle Fortress have already flown towards Phoenixwing Prefecture and joined the besiege towards the remaining demon knights under the leadership of 9 earth knights..."

“As the vanguards of the middle route army, the two corps of Zodiac Guards have already arrived at Whitetiger Prefecture in Kangzhou Province, which is about 1,500 miles away from Xuanyuan Battle Fortress. As the middle route army always marched forward with Your Highness, they encountered the least enemies. The knights of Zodiac Guards have not seen demon knights for a few months...”

As he always felt restless, Zhang Tie directly came to the command center of the Xuanyuan Battle Fortress and had people report the situations facing the five major forces to him. He wanted to know whether he had forgotten about something or not.

The floor under Zhang Tie’s foot was transparent high-intensity crystal glass. The sand table of the map of the entire country was in the lobby of the lower storey under his foot. Many staff officers were busy collecting various information and present them on the machine sand table. As long as Zhang Tie lowered his head, he could see clearly the overall situation facing Taixia Country in the holy war.

Zhang Tie was standing on the bank of Weishui River on the sand table. A huge convex arrowhead was marked on this place on the sand table. Additionally, there were another four huge arrowheads in Huanzhou Province, Kangzhou Province and Ningzhou Province pointing at the battleline Weishui River-Helan Mountain Range on two sides of this huge arrowhead in a row. The five huge arrowheads coordinated with each other. The distance between them and Zhang Tie’s location was varied from 3,000 miles to 5,000 miles.

Taixia’s forces pushed forward smoothly. Given the current situation, demons were unable to prevent the five arrowheads from gathering at the bank of Weishui River. After that, the five arrowheads would cross Weishui River together and enter Wuzhou Province and Yinzhou Province.

Zhang Tie lowered his head and watched the map under his foot. Meanwhile, he paced back and forth and slightly knitted his brows. Given the intelligence, the five main forces were marching forward without obstacles like splitting bamboos as usual. However, Zhang Tie still felt restless; even severer than before.

It was a young and handsome knight called Zhang Yuteng who was reporting about the situations facing the five main forces to Zhang Tie. He looked similar to Zhang Tie. Zhang Yuteng was Zhang Chengting’s son, also one of Zhang Tie’s grandsons. At this moment, many young knights of Jinwu Palace also joined those main forces and followed Zhang Tie to regain the lost territory and make meritorious deeds all the way here. Because Zhang Yuteng was sensitive and had extensive experience and a good memory as well as a great military talent, Zhang Tie asked him to stay with him as his personal guard. In this way, Zhang Yuteng could also widen his knowledge.

“How’s the Lion Fortress?” Zhang Tie asked Zhang Yuteng.

After resuming Force Province, Lion Fortress had gone back to the Earth-Elements Realm through Force Province. They pushed all the way to the entrance of the first abyss in Earth-Elements Realm. They were safeguarding Earth-Elements Realm and prevented demons from using the same trick. Besides Du Guyi the Demons-Suppressing Commander, Zuoqiu Mingyue was also in the Lion Fortress in Earth-Elements Realm.

“Demon knights in the first abyss are constantly raiding Lion Fortress. However, as they are all small forces, they couldn’t pose any threat to Lion Fortress!”

“When did Lion Fortress meet a heavenly demon knight recently?”

“Four months ago!”

“Where are all the allied human forces on the Western Continent?”

“The allied human forces on the Western Continent have already crossed Gradis Mountain Range. Yesterday, the vanguard corps of the allied human forces had already collapsed Dante City, a major town in the middle of Sacred Alliance Empire. The defense line of the Sacred Alliance Empire has already been full of loopholes!”

Not knowing why, Zhang Tie couldn't be happy, although they were all good news.

“Well, you can leave!” Zhang Tie waved his hand as he added, “I'm going to be in secret cultivation recently. Don't bother me unless it's important!”

“Yes, sir!” Zhang Yuteng made a military salute to Zhang Tie fast. After that, he walked towards the door.

As for Zhang Tie, only heavenly demon knights could attract his attention on the battlefield. Nothing else was important. Everyone in Xuanyuan Battle Fortress was crystal clear about this point.

When Zhang Yuteng pulled open the door and was going to leave there, Zhang Tie abruptly added, “Yuteng, if you don't plan to marry that girl, you'd better not let her misunderstand you. Zhang descendants could behave romantically; however, you couldn't fondle with any woman. If a woman would like to stay with a man, she must want something. Some women could be bought; however, some couldn't be bought. Before going to bed with a woman, you should confirm whether you could give her what she wants or not. If you can't, don't touch her. It's like ordering food in a hotel, don't order something you can't afford. Don't think about having food for free. It's the lowest request for a man.”

Zhang Yuteng stopped at once. Closely after that, he turned around and said with a bit embarrassed look, “I see, grandpa!”

Zhang Tie nodded and implied Zhang Yuteng to leave.

As Zhang Tie's grandpa, Zhang Yuteng was born in a distinguished family; additionally, he was young, able and handsome. Such a man would always be the focus of women wherever he was, even in Xuanyuan Battle Fortress. Zhang Tie was crystal clear about the movements of his grandson. When the other knights hunt demons outside, his grandson also became the prey of many people in the battle fortress. Those tender traps could also hone Zhang Yuteng who had just promoted to a knight and didn't have too many love experiences.

After Zhang Yuteng left, Zhang Tie contacted Jinwu Palace and Xuanyuan hill and was told that everything in Jinwu Palace and Xuanyuan Hill remained normal. After that, Zhang Tie sat in his chair and half-closed his eyes with hands crossed on his lower abdomen. He then started to smooth out his mind.

Recently, it was even out of Zhang Tie's imagination that Taixia forces were too smooth on the battlefields. The others might feel delighted about this victory; however, Zhang Tie couldn't become delighted; because he knew that demons' tactics and war potential were far greater than that.

Even though demons had lost three major camps, 4 sages and over 10,000 demon knights, they would never be willing to be defeated. Given the demon's craze and aggressivity, if they were doomed to fail this holy war, they would definitely launch a counter-attack ferociously at this moment. Like that in the previous two holy wars, when demons couldn't conquer humans, they would always bring damage to humans as much as they could. That was demons' style.

Currently, demons could still use a lot of tactics.

Demon princes didn't appear at this moment, which implied that demons had not fully tapped their war potential.

Demons had not used puppet worms in Taixia Country on a large scale. If demons were doomed to lose this holy war, they would at least use puppet worms without any concern despite the existence of moon-miasma; instead, due to the existence of moon-miasma, demons would even intensify the use of puppet worms in order to consume more humans and turn more places into barren lands where humans could barely survive. Even though demons couldn't use them in the territory of Taixia Country; they could at least use them in the territory under the control of Heavens Reaching Empire. However, demons didn't use puppet worms in their territory; instead, they left the territory to humans. That might contain greater dangers...

There should be many more sage-level demon knights and demon knights below sage in the underground abysses besides those being killed in the three major camps by Zhang Tie.

Now that demons were not driven completely mad, how could they be willing to accept failure?

Therefore, demons must have another trump card that Zhang Tie didn't know about...

It was the source that made Zhang Tie restless when they were going to win the holy war.

'What's the trump card of demons? Why do demons believe that they could reverse the overall situation facing holy war even though I've regained all the lost lands on the Eastern Continent?'

Zhang Tie was in meditation...

Chapter 1990: Zhang Tie's Precaution

Through 2 hours' meditation, Zhang Tie had smoothened out all the detailed information; however, he still didn't know about the demons' trump card.

In order to prevent demons from arousing catastrophe in Taixia Country with puppet worms, strictest food and water source control measures and selective examination about the physical health of mass personnel had been carried out in each household, each town, each city, each prefecture, each province, even each military region across Taixia Country 3 years ago.

Each pass of the city's running water pipe network was strictly defended by people from the source to the water outlets. The water sources of cities were actually even under the strict control of the military of Taixia Country. A drop of water would be tested five times before entering a citizen's home in the city. Additionally, the government of Taixia Country promoted the water source distribution system. Even though those cities could be available to running water, the government of Taixia Country still

suggested people to use water separately. For instance, all the eligible families could make a well in their own courtyard, from where they could get their daily water. Otherwise, they could use stream water or spring water which was close to their homes.

Recently, the government on different levels was looking for people to make wells everywhere across the country. Many public wells were made in each street, each community, each village, each city. Each well was guarded by people around the clock so that people could get water separately and safely. In this way, even though demons wanted to add puppet worms' eggs in water sources, they could only impact very few people.

Even ordinary families had started to pay attention to water safety, not to mention major clans. Starting from the tragedy in Heavenly Cold City dozens of years ago, capable major clans in Taixia Country had already paid attention to the prevention of the risks brought by puppet worms.

Besides water sources, grains and food circulation across Taixia Country were also under strict control.

The circulation of all the preliminary agricultural products was free. However, all the processed ready-to-eat food must stay in the prefectures where they were produced.

It was such strictly controlled among the people, not to mention that in the military. All the food that soldiers ate every day was tested many times.

With these arrangements, Zhang Tie believed that Taixia Country was able to control demon disasters in a small area even if there was another demon disaster aroused by puppet worms.

The ultimate goal for Lion Fortress to enter Earth-Elements Realm from Force Province was to monitor the abnormal actions of the demon army in Earth-Elements Realm and prevent the army of demon knights from reappearing in Force Province.

The army of demon knights was not horrible. They were just seeking death, no matter how many demon knights were there. What Zhang Tie was worried about the most was that the army of demon knights separated and spread across the country. He was afraid that these demon knights would break into the hinterland of Taixia Country, burning, killing and destroying there aggressively. And then, even though these demon knights could be wiped out, Taixia Country would also suffer great losses in the end.

...

The Taixia Country had been ready to cope with various emergencies; however, what was more fatal was that all the precautions appeared to be useless now.

...

'What is the trump card of demons?!'

This question always lingered in Zhang Tie's mind and was hard to catch like a spirit in dark fog.

Among the train of thoughts, Meng Shidao and the Gobbling Party suddenly occurred to Zhang Tie, causing him to pause temporarily.

Zhang Tie and Zuoqiu Mingyue had already reached an agreement that they would drive demons into the Earth-Elements Realm when they dealt with Meng Shidao and the Gobbling Party. It was not the

right moment for them to do that. Tang Ling the chief minister of the Interior had been weakening the influence of the Gobbling Party and disarming the Gobbling Party step by step over these years. The backbones of the Gobbling Party had gradually left the hub of Xuanyuan Hill. Meng Shidao's influence in Taixia Country was gradually weakening. Local forces of the Gobbling Party were also under control. When humans were fighting demons, they should never allow the Gobbling Party to arouse big trouble in Taixia Country...

Zhang Tie then didn't think about Meng Shidao and the Gobbling Party anymore.

...

Even though Zhang Tie had already started to form his immortal chakra, he was still a human. He was not as almighty as legendary gods, who could always have everything in control and reckon accurately.

...

After thinking for a few more minutes in vain, Zhang Tie directly stood up and left for the cultivation room.

After entering his backroom, Zhang Tie instantly disappeared and entered Castle of Black Iron.

The lobby of the palace tree was empty. Nobody was there. The small tree remained unchanged. However, a water pool appeared not far from the small tree. That immortal stone was in the water pool. Nine Heavens Immortal Spring was pouring out of the immortal stone and flowing in the water pool below the immortal stone. Everything was as same as what Zhang Tie had seen in the Heavens of Light.

Zhang Tie ran his spiritual energy as he sensed that Heller was making experiments in the species lab upstairs. A'Gan, Edward and those women of Yin-Yang Sect were not here.

Heller knew that Zhang Tie had returned as he stopped what he was doing.

"Heller, you don't have to go downstairs. I'm heading for the Mountain Ruins..."

"Okay!"

"Where are the others?"

"They're building an immortal palace at the foot of the mountain!"

Zhang Tie then turned around and walked out of the lobby of the palace quietly. After that, he rushed into the sky...

...

Castle of Black Iron had changed greatly.

Its land covered hundreds of millions of square miles, which looked vast just like a small subcontinent being girdled with an ocean. There were also many isles as large as pearls in the ocean. After combining Mountain Ruins, the air zone of Castle of Black Iron instantly increased by dozens of times. Those air-floating mountains were floating in the sky like isles. All the air-floating mountains in Mountain Ruins in Motian Realm had become decorations in the sky of Castle of Black Iron. In the highest place of the sky, it was the remaining core of Buzhou Mountain.

At this moment, some new cities appeared at the foot of the immortal mountain. When Zhang Tie left Motian Realm, he traveled across those cities which were under the control of demons and teleported all the 10 million-odd people there into Castle of Black Iron. Therefore, the current population in Castle of Black Iron was many times greater than that before.

After mastering the force of realm, Zhang Tie could teleport people into Castle of Black Iron easily. As long as he covered a city with his realm, he could teleport a lot of people into Castle of Black Iron with the force of realm.

At this moment, those women of Yin-Yang Sect were in those cities at the foot of the mountain. They were their leaders.

Those women appeared to be too depressed in Motian Realm and they had to behave meticulously over there. Therefore, when they found they could display their capacities in the vast space of Castle of Black Iron, they all became such passionate as they started to have apprentices for the further development of Yin-Yang Sect.

In front of those women who pursued their undertakings, even Zhang Tie was forgotten.

...

Only after a short while, Zhang Tie had entered an air-floating mountain which was as high as tens of thousands of meters deep in Mountain Ruins.

There was a maze-like time-honored mountain cave inside the air-floating mountain. After moving quite a while inside, Zhang Tie deeply entered the mountain cave.

It was pitch-dark all over in the mountain cave. However, there was a cyan 2 m higher light curtain that loomed like a portal. Zhang Tie instantly penetrated through it and came to a strange space.

It was a colossal space being similar to the secret places of major clans that contained many time towers. There were 36 towers of time in this space, no matter large or small. These time towers were divided into three kinds given their sizes; each kind containing 12 towers of time. The three kinds of time towers could allow him to cultivate in for 20 years, 10 years and 5 years respectively.

35 towers of time in this secret place were still freezing. Only a small time tower was already available a few days ago. Zhang Tie could cultivate five years inside...

This secret place once belonged to demons in Motian Realm. Almost none of the humans in Motian Realm knew that demons had such a secret place here. However, after Castle of Black Iron combined Mountain Ruins, all the secrets in Mountain Ruins had been exposed to Zhang Tie; all the secret places in Mountain Ruins had been exposed to Zhang Tie. Therefore, Zhang Tie instantly became the person who understood Mountain Ruins the most in the two worlds closely after Heller. Of course, this secret place which was once occupied by demons became Zhang Tie's rear garden.

Castle of Black Iron had just combined Mountain Ruins. Most of these towers of time were still freezing as they had just been used by demons.

Two years ago, Zhang Tie used a time tower in another secret place in Mountain Ruins. He stayed inside for 10 years, during which period, he reached the 3-change realm of his immortal chakra. Now it was enough for Zhang Tie to reach the 5-change realm of his immortal chakra.

When Zhang Tie reached the front of that time tower, he directly entered it and started his cultivation.

When problems couldn't be solved with intelligence and mindset and he didn't know demons' trump card, the best solution for Zhang Tie to respond to unknown crises was to strength his battle force and make him more powerful.

...

When Zhang Tie was thinking about demons' trump card on the bank of Weishui River, the entire Gobbling Province, the nestle of Gobbling Party became boisterous; because Opening Stele Festival would kick off on April 17, namely two days later.

Opening Stele Festival was not a traditional festival in Taixia Country. It was actually a festival exclusive to the Gobbling Party. Many years ago, the far-ancient morality stele was discovered on the same day.

In order to celebrate the discovery of the far-ancient morality stele, Gobbling Party would hold grand campaign on the same day annually across Gobbling Province. Gradually, this campaign developed into the Opening Stele Festival of the Gobbling Party in Gobbling Province.

In recent years, with the return of Zhang Tie in an unrivaled manner and the dismissal of Meng Shidao as the premier, the influence of Gobbling Party in Taixia Country had already weakened; however, in Gobbling Province, Gobbling Party was still the leading force even though a new provincial governor had taken office...