

Carefree Path of Dreams

Chapter 18: The Plot

Dawn.

The sun inched above the horizon, illuminating the morning fog. The Valley slowly came alive, and the vegetation thrived.

"Song Zhigao, comprador of the Spirit Returning Sect."

"Song Yujie, the Sect Elder's beloved son."

"Song Zhong, Elder of the Spirit Returning Sect."

Fang Yuan was sweeping the floor casually, removing traces of the previous night's happenings. He was deep in thought.

The man in black from last night almost suffered a mental breakdown after being intimidated by the Flower Fox Ferret. Fang Yuan did not even have to interrogate him before he gave away everything.

According to him, Young Master Song Yujie was gifted in both the classics and martial arts and was in every sense a suave and accomplished young man. The most important thing to note was that Song Yujie had developed a serious obsession with Fang Yuan's ex-fiancee Lin Leiyue ever since he laid eyes on her.

Elder Song Zhong observed these developments with interest. After all, Lin Leiyue was the Sect Leader's right-hand disciple and had a bright future ahead of her.

It was too bad that Lin Leiyue did not reciprocate Song Yujie's feelings and rejected him outright.

Song Yujie was enraged but naturally did not dare to pursue the matter further with Lin Leiyue, the Sect Leader's favourite pupil. However, he had no reservations about taking out his anger on Fang Yuan.

"Perhaps he thinks that Lin Leiyue and I are lovers? And because of this, Song Yujie's henchman Song Zhigao, with the help of Old Tian, tried to get rid of me. A shame that I did not budge, hence the follow-up..."

From the information that he gathered, Fang Yuan made a few guesses and had arrived at a reasonable conclusion. This rendered him quite speechless.

"I have nothing to do with Lin Leiyue. Ahh, I'm just an innocent bystander, the most innocent party there is..."

The weak often become prey in this world. Song Yujie had not even designed to make things hard for Fang Yuan and his men were already raring to take action.

"Oh man, I feel like the coming times will be tough..."

Fang Yuan threw his broom away and turned towards the sun. He closed his eyes and stretched.

According to the man in black, there were so many people in Spirit Returning Sect who admired Lin Leiyue that they could form a clique of significant influence. After all, she was the apple of the Leader's eye, one of the future leaders of the Wu Zong!

Even if Song Yujie didn't look him up, a Zhao Yujie or Zhang Yujie would turn up eventually.

At that moment, Fang Yuan felt extremely helpless.

Heaven have mercy on him! Fang Yuan was not interested in inviting trouble, but if people were hell-bent on making life difficult for him, hiding in a corner was not an option.

"Song Zhigao must die!"

Fang Yuan steeled his resolve.

Fang Yuan could bear with anything as long as his interests were not threatened. Events such as the cancelled engagement and the row with the Zhou Siblings, he could tolerate.

However, Song Zhigao had malevolent intentions and conspired to pry open the secrets of the Valley.

To Fang Yuan, other than his own stats, the Spiritual plants of the Valley were things that he would protect with his life.

If his bottom line was breached, he would respond with fire and blood!

"Song Zhigao must be eliminated, but I cannot put myself at risk either...I have to think of a foolproof plan...Of course, the key is still to level up my skills!"

The man in black from last night was Song Zhigao's confidant and knew him very well indeed.

The comprador of the Spirit Returning Sect was undoubtedly intelligent, but he was not well-versed in martial arts. His cultivation level was only around the Third Gate.

He definitely stood no chance against the Flower Fox Ferret.

But the man backing him, Elder Song Zhong, was a different story. That man had broken through the 3 Prosperous Gates, 2 Peaceful Gates, to the level of the 3 Perilous Gates. He was an extremely skilled pugilist and was a known figure in Qinghe County. Song Yujie had every sign of surpassing his master in the near future.

There were the metaphorical 12 Golden Gates in martial arts. One could cruise through the Initial Gate, the Rest Gate and the Life Gate, and unlocking them would lead to a definite increase in powers. Thus they were known as the 3 Prosperous Gates. The following Restriction Gate and View Gate were not too difficult to break through either. They were the 2 Peaceful Gates. It was the Pain, Shock and Death Gates that one had to take caution with. Failure to navigate through these three gates would lead to serious injury and even death. Hence, they were known as the 3 Perilous Gates.

The martial arts were indeed challenging, with so many obstacles to overcome.

Not to mention that after the Death Gate, there were the 4 Heavenly Gates and the Wu Zong Level. It was truly depressing to see that it was such a long and arduous way up.

"Fortunately, the only person we need to deal with right now is Song Zhigao. This should be a piece of cake."

So what if the martial arts were challenging?

With his stats and practice, Fang Yuan had not encountered any impossible problem before.

"Just as well!"

Fang Yuan glanced at his progress bar and saw that he had almost mastered the first level of the Black Sand Palm technique. All he needed was some more proficiency points, equivalent to tens of practice sessions.

"Today, I shall unlock the second gate!"

Fang Yuan had made up his mind.

Fang Yuan could potentially break through the various stages at a phenomenal speed, a speed that could even attract a Wu Zong attention.

After all, every stage of the 12 Golden Gates required meticulous study and intense effort, even the 3 Prosperous Gates.

Fang Yuan, however, only needed to increase his Proficiency points and all would be fine.

Sunrise was the best time of the day to train.

"Huff"

Fang Yuan achieved a state of Zen and displayed the different styles of the Black Sand Palm technique with familiarity. He further conditioned his hands with ointments and potions.

After some time, the Black Palm Sand technique's progress bar in the stats window was finally filled up.

"Kachak!"

Fang Yuan let out a roar as he suddenly felt barriers breaking down within his body. He felt as though streams of energy were exploding from every one of his pores.

As Fang Yuan's Proficiency points reached the maximum, the skill level of the Black Sand Palm technique increased by one.

Black Sand Palm Level 2!

In only a few days, Fang Yuan had accomplished a commendable feat.

"Not only that, but I have broken through the Rest Gate!"

Fang Yuan took a look at his stats window and noticed that there were some changes.

"Name: Fang Yuan

Essence: 1.3

Spirit: 1.3

Magic: 1.5

Age: 18

Cultivation: [Martial Artist (2nd Gate)]

Technique: [Black Sand Palm (Grade 2)]

Skills: [Medicine (Level 1)], [Botany (Level 3)]"

"Having trained the Black Sand Palm technique to Grade 2, its power has been greatly boosted. Whenever I prepare to channel the technique, my palms change!"

Every time Fang Yuan intended to use the skill, both his palms would darken in colour, signifying a tremendous increase in pain tolerance.

"Of course, the most important thing was to have broken through the Rest Gate! My Essence and Spirit points have increased by 0.2?"

Fang Yuan was shocked to see that his Magic Points remained at 1.5.

"Was it because the previous upgrade was due to the Questioning Heart Tea, and a normal breakthrough in martial arts only increases Essence and Spirit points? Or is it because my Magic points are too high and thus, a small increase wouldn't be obvious?"

Too bad his current experience in martial arts was not enough to help him decipher this problem.

Nevertheless, Fang Yuan was satisfied to know that his Black Sand Palm technique could level up quickly through proficiency points and that the sky was the limit when it came to improving.

"Song Zhigao..."

Fang Yuan clenched his fists and felt a surge of energy.

...

"Wang San hasn't returned yet?"

Currently, Song Zhigao was suffering from sleepless nights.

As the Spirit Returning Sect's comprador, he had a genial look on his face at all times, while his little eyes carried a hint of slyness. Every matter that he was put in charge of, he settled it reliably and appropriately.

Until he tried to deal with that poor rascal from the mountains in a bid to gain favour with Elder Song Zhong and Song Yujie. Everything changed since then.

"Damn it!"

The more he thought about it, the more he felt like throwing his beloved rain flower porcelain teacup onto the floor.

That darn kid had no idea of what was good for him.

When he ordered Old Tian to cut off the supply of necessities to Fang Yuan and to give him a warning, Fang Yuan should have heeded it and fled. Why was he still hanging on?

It was the late afternoon now, nearly dusk, and Wang San had not returned yet. Song Zhigao couldn't sit still and paced up and down his hall.

"That kid might be a mysterious character, but Wang San has always been careful, and had only gone on a scouting trip this time. Surely nothing could've gone wrong?"

Song Zhigao clasped his hands together and waited till nighttime. At this point, he felt a chill in his heart, as well as a tinge of regret.

If only he had known better, he would not have messed with the kid.

A shame that there was an enmity between them now. He had no choice but to take action.

Only when the matter was settled, he could answer to his masters. But what if everything screwed up?

Song Zhigao only had to think about Elder Song Zhong's methods before he became numb in the skull. He suddenly lifted his head and whispered to himself as he faced the city.

"It has come to this. There is no other way."

"Men!"

He bellowed.

"Yes, Master?"

A manservant shuffled into the room and bowed.

Song Zhigao might be a comprador, but he was influential enough to have a group of servants at his beck and call.

"Find Old Tian from the medical hall and tell him that if he still wants to make a living in Qinghe County, get his ass over here!"

Song Zhigao had a fearsome look on his face.

"Roger!"

The manservant was flummoxed, but he went about his business dutifully. In no time, he had Old Tian following him back into the hall. Old Tian greeted him with a sheepish smile.

"I hope you have been well, Master Song!"

"Old Tian! The herbs and spices in your medical hall are of rather good quality. The Sect has decided to purchase a larger quantity next year!"

Song Zhigao mentioned the news casually as he sent the manservant away.

"Ah? Thank you so much, Master!"

Old Tian bowed multiple with his hands clasped, delighted beyond belief.

"Of course...this is not without a price though. I need you to do something for me!"

Song Zhigao glared at Old Tian. He was confident that Old Tian would give in. The Sect was the medical hall's biggest client. Old Tian could not afford to refuse him.

"Old Tian is at your service, Master. Old Tian will do anything for you even if it means going to Hell and back!"

Old Tian was a worldly man and continued with his public display of loyalty even though he secretly dreaded what was to come.

"Easy! That is..."

Song Zhigao whispered a string of commands into Old Tian's ear. Old Tian immediately turned pale.

"What? This...this..."

"Hehe, I know that Master Wenxin rescued you once. But you owe nothing to Fang Yuan..."

Song Zhigao laughed coldly and issued a threat.

"If you do not obey me, starting from next month, the Sect will no longer take any of your goods. You might as well crawl out onto the streets !"