

Carefree Path of Dreams

Chapter 23: Continuation

The spring water gurgled gleefully.

Fang Yuan sat by the stream and cleaned up his wounds. He reflected on the mission, checking if he had left behind any incriminating flaws.

'Killing Song Zhigao was akin to maiming the executive arms of the Song family. Who would've known that Song Yujie was at the scene too? He had to die too!'

Fang Yuan did not regret killing Song Yujie one bit.

In fact, given that he was skilled enough, Fang Yuan had no qualms about eliminating Elder Song Zhong if he was there as well.

The enmity ran deep now. Fang Yuan had to uproot all his potential foes.

'Having terminated Song Zhigao, there isn't anyone left who might trouble me for now...it's just that...'

Creases lined Fang Yuan's forehead.

He was aware that even though killing Song Zhigao was not a big issue, but Song Yujie had died as well. This would definitely incur the wrath of Song Zhong and even the whole Spirit Returning Sect.

Once the sect found out, they would not rest until Fang Yuan was dead.

After doing some careful thinking, Fang Yuan was sure that he had not left behind any loopholes.

After all, he had so many potential alibis in the valley. Besides, no one in the outside world knew how he looked like.

As for the Black Sand Palm technique being recognised as his speciality? Well, there were hundreds of the technique's proponents in Qinghe County.

Moreover, his acquisition of the martial arts manual was a very recent development. Not even Minister Lin himself would believe that Fang Yuan's skills could improve by leaps and bounds in so short a time, such that he could overpower Song Yujie!

'As of now, as long as nothing goes wrong in the Valley, I'll be safe...'

Fang Yuan applied some ointment on his chest before putting his shirt back on. He moved about and was relieved to find out that although his wounds still hurt, they did not affect his range of motion.

'Of course, I haven't seen enough of the world yet. I cannot be complacent...'

Fang Yuan gave himself a silent warning.

In this world, the pugilists were considered to be a special group of people by mortals. However, there were other fabled beings including spiritual knights, magical knights, pill masters, or even gods and monsters. These were tales, but there could be some truth to the stories.

Maybe all he needed was just a few unimaginable scenarios to inspire him so that he could discover the secrets.

"Of course...Song Zhong isn't that influential, although he has a large following in the Spirit Returning Sect. There is time left! I have to level up as soon as possible."

Currently, he was but a novice in the martial arts, all alone in the world. He could be picked on by anyone.

But what if he was the Wu Zong or even an immortal spiritual knight foretold by the legends? If that was the case, Song Zhong wouldn't dare to exact revenge for Song Yujie and Song Zhigao.

In conclusion, everything boiled down to power!

Fang Yuan was not powerful enough at this point in time though, which made a personal talisman all the more important.

Fang Yuan peeked at the sun, then sped along the mountain roads towards the back end of the Valley.

"Keke!"

A white figure zipped past and simultaneously appeared as the Flower Fox Ferret. The ferret bowed its head to let Fang Yuan rub it, then frantically waved its paws in a bid to communicate with Fang Yuan.

"Oh, they've taken no action at all?"

Fang Yuan heaved a sigh of relief when he understood the ferret's message.

If the Zhou and Lin families decided to make mischief and pry open the secrets of the Valley, or gained forced entry into the Valley and discovered that Fang Yuan was missing, then he would have been on the run with the Flower Fox Ferret by now.

It wasn't like he couldn't grow the spiritual plants elsewhere again. But he only had one life.

Anyway, everything was going according to Fang Yuan's plan.

"Mm, It's been hard on you!"

After he sent the Flower Fox Ferret away, Fang Yuan delved into a secret passageway which led him into a stone chamber.

Old Zhou was a very important person as well. If he did not make it, it would make life very difficult for Fang Yuan.

With a sinking heart, Fang Yuan lit up the oil lamp, which illuminated a body lying on a stone platform. Its face was bluish-black and had toxic boils oozing with pus.

On the first look, it seemed obvious that Old Zhou had died from acute poisoning.

But Fang Yuan heaved a sigh of relief.

"It is done!"

He knew that although Old Zhou looked terrible, he had barely escaped with his life.

If the Drunk Lover Poison had seeped into the bones, no symptoms would surface on the body. Then as time passed, the poison would be fully absorbed and become fatal.

Old Zhou's deformed appearance meant that the poison was being forced out from his body.

"But from the look of this, Old Zhou was heavily poisoned. This amount of poison could only have been administered over a period of time!"

Fang Yuan shook his head after making the observation and gave Old Zhou a dosage of Yama's Order. He then made an incision on Old Zhou's arm and performed acupuncture so as to drain out the infected blood.

After around half an hour, Old Zhou's breathing became less laboured and the boils on his face had been cleared. His complexion regained some pinkness in colour. The worst was over.

"Whew..."

Fang Yuan wiped the sweat from his brow and exhaled.

If he did not need the Zhou family to become his alibi, he would not have spent so much energy at one go on reviving Old Zhou.

Poisonous Dragon Grass was a key ingredient for the versatile antidote, Yama's Order, and it was a rare find. Thus, Fang Yuan's stocks of Yama's Order were already low to begin with. Fang Yuan also needed to keep some of this medicine on standby because of his exposure to a variety of poisons while honing his Black Sand Palm Technique.

"You lucky old man..."

Fang Yuan grumbled under his breath as he pressed a switch mechanism, which activated a set of stone doors.

"Click, Clack"

The clanking movement of gears pulled the heavy stone doors open and rays of sunlight streamed into Fang Yuan's eyes.

"Young master! How is it going?!"

Outside, the Zhou siblings and Minister Lin were pacing about anxiously.

"It was a success!"

Fang Yuan stepped aside to let Zhou Wenwu enter and carry out Old Zhou, whose recovery was nothing short of a miracle.

"He has already pulled through the most crucial stage. As long as you feed him tonics regularly and allow him to rest well, Old Master Zhou will be able to recuperate fully."

The Drunk Lover Poison worked the same way as bone-gnawing maggots and fed on the tonics that were brewed for Old Zhou.

The Zhou family exhausted many resources in their quest to find rare and coveted herbs for the nourishment of Old Master Zhou. However, they had no idea that this, in fact, hastened his demise.

Fang Yuan also knew that an enemy had infiltrated the Zhou family.

But he did not reveal this to the Zhou family because after all, they were not well acquainted.

"Would young master be compassionate and allow our Old Master to stay on here for a few days?"

Zhou Wenwu was reassured by Old Zhou's condition and gave a deep bow to Fang Yuan.

"Alright, but he will have to stay outside the valley. I like peace and quiet and I do not want to be disturbed."

Fang Yuan rubbed his chin and gave a curt nod of approval.

Since he had already done the Zhou family a favour, he might as well help them all the way. If they went back to the Zhou manor in this state and were attacked, he would be greatly affected.

"Haha, it seems like our young master's healing skills are nearly on par with Master Wenxin's!"

Minister Lin seemed outwardly excited as he said this, but carried a tinge of regret in his heart.

"Yeah, let's call it a day. I'm tired and I will not be sending you all off!"

Fang Yuan flapped his sleeves, showing every sign of impatience.

Usually, such behaviour would be criticised as arrogance. But Fang Yuan had distinguished himself by reviving a man who was nearly dead and had won the respect of this crowd. They looked upon him with awe and immediately retreated from the valley.

After all, only Fang Yuan could make sure that Old Zhou recovered properly. Also, there was no saying if Fang Yuan's healing skills could come in handy in the future. Hence, they could not afford to offend him.

Fang Yuan was relieved when this bunch of troublesome people left.

With such a big number of alibis, Elder Song Zhong had no reason to suspect Fang Yuan of killing Song Yujie. Even if he previously did, these people would convince him otherwise.

.....

Qingye City.

In front of a pile of ruins.

"Yujie?"

Elder Song Zhong only begot Song Yujie when he was past fifty. All the more he cherished his only son.

When he heard the news, he dropped all matters concerning the Spirit Returning Sect and rode to Qingye City in a hurry. He was stunned when he arrived at Song Zhigao's ruined manor.

"Elder Song, we have brought the workers of the manor before you. All of them are accounted for!"

Sect disciples bowed to him and rounded up a group of frightened-looking servants.

That fateful day, although Fang Yuan had killed the Songs and set fire to the manor, he had not massacred the innocent. Having been spared, many of the servants had looted the manor and planned to flee the city.

However, Song Zhong had managed to recapture all of them, which clearly indicated the extent of his influence.

"Tell me everything that transpired that day! Now!"

Song Zhong maintained his composed demeanour, his eyelids half shut, tone mellow. But those who knew better could see that it was the calm before the storm.

"Master Song, please spare us!"

Some of the maids and manservants had begun to cry in fear.

"A man with a bamboo hat charged in and killed Song Zhigao together with Young Master Song. We had nothing to do with it!"

"Yujie...is dead?!"

Song Zhong murmured under his breath. He could not believe his ears. He waved his hands and let a blast of energy radiate outwards.

"Pfft, Pfft"

The force ripped holes into the servant who was talking, and blood gushed out like waterfalls.

"Since Yujie has passed away, why are you still alive?"

Song Zhong muttered, then called over a disciple named Song San.

"Song San, you have followed me since you were a young age. You know very well my way of doing things. I don't care how you interrogate these servants. I want everything there is to know about the man with the bamboo hat!"

"Yes Master!"

Song San behaved most solemnly, but he was in fact overjoyed.

Song Yujie was Song Zhong's rightful heir and had always taken precedence over the other disciples. Until now. Now that Song Yujie was dead, it was Song San's time to shine.

If he could inherit Song Zhong's mantle and estate, he would finally be able to fly high!

"Whoever the murderer is, wherever you are, I have to thank you...since you've already helped me once, help me out one more time. Let me cut off your head to guarantee my bright future!"

Song San cackled with mirth in his heart and yet was able to keep up his sombre and mournful display. He clenched his fists to bring it up a notch.

"We must take revenge for Yujie!"

"Hmph!"

Song Zhong sent Song San away with a wave of his hand, his eyes gleaming with disdain. Song Zhong had seen enough of the world to know the true intentions of these disciples, but he had to bear with them for now. He still needed to make use of them.

The most pressing issue at hand was to exact revenge for Yujie!

"I taught Yujie myself. He had already broken through the 4th Gate in his martial arts training. He was also well versed in the Spirit Returning Swordsplay and Heart Manual. Hardly anyone in the world of martial arts would have been a match for him. How could he have died? How?!"

Song Zhong stared forlornly at the ruins.

"Could it have been my nemeses? Did they deliberate draw Yujie into a trap?"

He would never have expected that Song Yujie's death would be a total coincidence. Song Zhong's thoughts were already running further away from the truth, and he began to plot against his old enemies.