

## E Monarch 161

### Chapter 161 – The eight grand masters

Jun Mo Xie smiled as if he wasn't at fault and then waved his hands to gesture his two men to bring forth the jars of wine they were carrying. The eyes of everyone present immediately shifted to the jars as the two men set them on the table.

"What's this? Only two jars?" the prince was somewhat disappointed.

"You think these two jars are insufficient?" Jun Mo Xie batted his eyelids: "These jars are worth eleven thousand taels of silver each, which makes their combined worth twenty two thousand taels of silver."

Old Song grunted: "I've never heard of a wine which costs eleven thousand! The price of this is over hundred times of what a wine should normally cost, so this itself is an eye-opener for me." It was rather obvious that Old Song was being sarcastic.

"A man with limited knowledge and experience always thinks big of himself! You haven't seen every nook and corner of this world yet." Jun Mo Xie replied back bluntly: "What are you waiting for? Hurry up; I need to go back early tonight."

I've really never seen a blend of wine which is worthy of being this expensive!

The arrogance of the youngster obviously angered the three men. The man in black sized up the jar: "The wine looks fairly normal to me; I don't think it's that special."

"You really won't be able to tell the quality of the wine, and which one is better unless you've tasted them first!" Jun Mo Xie replied coldly.

The three guests sat down on their chairs. The two judges had already made up their minds; if the two wines are similar, or even if this youngster's wine is slightly better, we'll still vote for Old Song! Just look at this kid, he's way too arrogant!

One small jar of wine for over ten thousand taels of silver? No one can afford this! This wine could empty the state treasury!

“Oh? I didn’t realize that there was a little girl present here!” Jun Mo Xie looked at Yang Mo: “You’re very pretty! You’ll certainly turn into a very beautiful woman once you grow up! He he....”

[Mo Yang is the name of the prince’s son.]

“I’m a man! I’m a big man!” Little Mo Yang retorted furiously as he let go of his father’s clothes and clenched his fists tightly, while his big and round eyes glared sharply at Jun Mo Xie.

“Really? I don’t think so.... You even sound like a girl.” Jun Mo Xie shook his head as he tilted his head to glare back at the boy: “Maybe you should peek down your pants and confirm it.”

Jun Mo Xie was obviously joking around; young boys don’t have coarse voices!

“I’m a man!” the little boy tightly clutched his waistband as his face started to flush with the embarrassing thought of removing his pants to affirm his manhood.

“Maybe you’re a man.....” Jun Mo Xie smiled evilly: “But you still look like a young female version of him.” He said pointing towards the prince.

“I am a man!” the little guy shouted back in a sharp voice: “And that’s because he’s my father!”

“Ha ha.....” everyone broke into laughter at the same time. Jun Mo Xie rubbed his hair: “Well good, I won’t say that again, so let’s just believe that you’re a man, okay?”

“Well, well....” The little guy didn’t understand Jun Mo Xie’s words properly, but came closer to him and whispered in his ear: “If you don’t believe me... then I’ll remove my pants and show you.”

Jun Mo Xie was left dumbstruck and..... beaten!

Even though the boy whispered this into Jun Mo Xie's ears, everyone obviously heard it. The men present in the shop were all experts, and their senses were extremely sharp; even if the boy had whispered this in an even softer tone, they would have all still heard it very clearly. Everyone obviously burst into laughter once again, and the atmosphere in the room suddenly eased down.

Jun Mo Xie secretly smiled..... the hitman was experienced enough to understand that it is better to have a contest in a harmonious environment since it helps in maintaining order.

This kid is definitely going to be somebody someday!

Realizing that the kid had a lot of fire within, Jun Mo Xie decided to leave the kid alone..... for his own good.

Old Song went into the back room, and returned carrying two jars in his hands. The thick cover of dust on the jars made it evident that these jars had been in storage for a long time now.

"Since you've only brought two jars of wine, I must also produce only two; for the sake of fairness." Old Song was very proud of these two jars of wine. He had travelled across mountain and rivers to procure the materials for this wine during the prime years of his life, and had fermented this wine with all his skill.

"This wine is twenty-eight years old. I crossed snow-cladded mountains, glaciers, rivers, lakes, forests..... I spent five years travelling around the world to find the right materials for this wine during the prime of my years." Old Song's face reflected a hint of sadness: "These two jars contain the last remaining samples of my finest creation."

His words incited a strong interest in the hearts of the Solitary Falcon and the prince.

"You travelled the world for five years to find the right ingredients for making a wine....." the Solitary Falcon shook his head: "That sounds a little far-fetched to me! But that itself makes this wine worthy of greatness!"

"Worthy? He he....." Old Song smiled in a strange manner, seemingly a bit hurt: "This wine is the best wine that I've ever made.... The best in the world!"

“Well.... The quality of the wine is secondary, but your sheer dedication is worthy of praise.” Jun Mo Xie applauded: “However, dedication isn’t synonymous with success. The quality of the wine isn’t decided by the effort that goes into making it.”

The three men immediately glared at Jun Mo Xie; it was obvious that his words had offended them again. Dedication isn’t synonymous with success? Okay, maybe this wine isn’t the best in the world, but what is he trying to imply here? Does he mean that the referees may be biased?

The Solitary Falcon looked at Jun Mo Xie coldly. The youngster he had taken a liking to earlier, was now turning to someone really annoying. He’s singing a completely different tune now, and it seems that he’s also questioned my ability to judge? He couldn’t help asking in a cold manner: “Young man, what do you mean.... Dedication isn’t important? Off all the success stories from the past, can you recall even one where the person managed to achieve something great without persistence?”

“Dedication is important, but it all depends of the value of that dedication.... And whether the goal is worthy of it or not!” Jun Mo Xie stated fearlessly: “Dedication paves the way for success, and should always be admired, but if you’re dedicated to a lost cause, then you’re no more than a fool!”

“And yes, all the successful people in the world have always had one thing in common, persistence! Once they identified a goal, they never back off, and worked very hard to build something great, which is why their stories serve as an example to us all. For example, Tian Xiang’s founding Emperor, Yang Kai Tian, worked his Xuan Qi to the peak, everyone knows about that! So you’re right about that! But there are several other masters at the peak, but they never made it to the top like the Emperor did!”

“The masters of this world? What do you know about them?” the Solitary Falcon started taking interest in Jun Mo Xie’s words once again.

“The world only believes in the eight grand masters. The first ranked master is untouchable, Yun Bie Chen. People say that he walks with level nine Xuan beasts by his side. It is said that he reached the peak of Spirit Xuan several years ago! They say that he’s capable of turning the entire world upside down on his own!”

“Yes,” the Solitary Falcon nodded slowly. His Royal Highness and Old Song had also heard about this man’s name, and knew what he was capable of. Yun Bie Chen was practically a legend! An immortal legend!

“The Second isn’t as strong, but is still a legend in his own merit, Li Jue Tian! People say that he’s indifferent to everything, and only acts according to his own fancies.... But his Xuan Qi is already at the peak of the world, and I believe that no one can question that fact!”

“The third should be Blizzard Silver City’s overlord, Han Feng Xue.” The moment Jun Mo Xie mention his name, a wave of emotion rippled across the Solitary Falcon’s face.

“The fourth is Mo Wen Tian!” Jun Mo Xie’s eyes were constantly scanning everyone’s reactions secretly: “This master is said to belong to the Tian Xiang Empire.”

“Fifth, would be the cold-blooded Li Wu Bei.”

“The sixth is the imperial teacher of the Shen Ci Empire. It is said that he’s a mortal enemy of Mo Wen Tian’s, and that they would do anything to kill the other! This person is also rumored to be inside the Tian Xiang City at the moment!” Jun Mo Xie smiled coldly.

“The seventh grand master choses to live in seclusion perennially, Meng Hong Chen.”

“As for the eighth, huh ..... ” Jun Mo Xie smiled calmly: “That’s difficult to conclude.”

“What’s so difficult to conclude?” the Solitary Falcon raised his eyebrows, and coldly looked at Jun Mo Xie: “It’s nothing more than a name. Is it really that difficult to say it?”

“The Eighth position is tied in the eyes of the world between two people.” Jun Mo Xie smiled in a mysterious manner: “The Savana’s Solitary Falcon and Kuang Feng’s Feng Juan Yun are both considered to be rank eight. It is said that they tried to sort this out by the means of a battle almost half-a-lifetime ago, but their battle bore no result! Therefore, the eighth spot is shared by the two of them!”

“What difference does it make if there was a winner or not? That Feng Juan Yun doesn’t deserve his reputation! He’s nothing in front of the Solitary Falcon!” the Solitary Falcon snorted.

“I’ve also heard the same before. I’ve heard that the Solitary Falcon often goes off to snow covered mountain peaks alone in order to improve his martial skills; in fact, it is said that he trains with hundreds and thousands of bald eagles! If this rumor is true, then the Solitary Falcon is sure to be a tough man!” Jun Mo Xie said this with a look of worship on his face: “If such is the case, then the Solitary Falcon is definitely superior to Feng Juan Yun!”

The Solitary Falcon couldn’t help feeling a sense of greatness: “I didn’t think that a young man like you would actually know so much about the eight grand masters of the world.... I guess you’re more knowledgeable than I imagined.”

Old Song and the prince simply didn’t get it: Everyone knows about this... there’s nothing great about this! This doesn’t exactly qualify as some great knowledge.....

Chapter 162 – The competition..... had already begun

Old Song and the prince simply didn’t get it: Everyone knows about this... there’s nothing great about this! This doesn’t exactly qualify as some great knowledge.....

Okay, the Solitary’s Falcon’s feats about fighting bald eagles in the snowy peaks for years, and that too alone is quite amazing, but then Feng Juan Yun is also renowned for wiping out entire wolf packs on his own. That’s almost as good the Solitary Falcon’s accomplishments, so how’s his reputation false?

But since these two men were quite involved in their discussion and were convinced about the rankings, neither of the other two objected.

“In addition to the eight great masters of the world, there’s also the king of all killers, Chu Qi Hun.” Jun Mo Xie couldn’t help pondering over Yang Mo’s words: how good must he be to earn the title of the king of all killers?

Is he even stronger than I used to be in my previous life? Really..... now I’m getting very curious ah.

Just the thought of this ignited a war cry in Jun Mo Xie’s heart: Just the way there can’t be two tigers on the same hill, there can’t be two leaders in the same industry! Even more so in the assassination

business! By the virtue of being the uncrowned king of assassins in his previous life, Jun Mo Xie's ego simply couldn't tolerate this competition.

At this moment, Jun Mo Xie suddenly realized that there would be a battle between Chu Qi Hun and himself one day, I'm afraid that there will be a battle soon or later! Its fated.... Inevitable!

"Kid, even though I won't question your knowledge, you must know that I won't agree with you no matter how much you insist." Even though the Solitary Falcon's words were challenging in nature, he still managed to say it in a very cool and calm manner.

"I still don't agree with the explanation. I agree that the Solitary Falcon has fought bald eagles atop the snowy peaks for years, but why is that enough to make him better than the others?"

Jun Mo Xie sighed and said: "Everyone knows that the eagles around the peak of the snowy mountains aren't normal vultures, they are Xuan Beasts. Although they aren't high grade Xuan Beasts, but thousands of them make up for the lack of quality with sheer quantity. We all know that fighting is one of the best ways to improve Xuan Qi. Plus the biting cold of the mountains also tends to have a very mysterious effect on Xuan Qi. And, if one is able to beat so many vultures, then their combat experience obviously increases many fold. Furthermore, the flight trajectories and attack action of these vultures can be very unpredictable.... which teaches a practitioner several new styles!"

The Solitary Falcon smiled and nodded to indicate his agreement, he has an excellent perception: "Yes, that's very true." the Solitary Falcon added with a smug look on his face, which ignited a strong impulse to spit on it within Jun Mo Xie's heart: Just look at that expression on his face..... you may be a great warrior, but have you ever heard the term modesty? Don't tell me that.... you're the Solitary Falcon....?! You do have a look of mystery about you.....

Jun Mo Xie suddenly realized one simple truth: An ordinary man or an official, rogue or an expert.... We're all just wearing masks. And that's what protects us.... and comforts us in front of strangers.

"Although the Solitary Falcon's practice methods are the fastest methods to temper Xuan Qi, but they are also amongst of the most dangerous ones; and for this reason, the Solitary Falcon is worthy of being a great master!"

Jun Mo Xie was somehow holding back the strong desire to vomit as he continued to praise the man. He knew that it was necessary to lay the ground work for his victory, and it would come at the cost of suffering through this....

The Solitary Falcon was obviously very pleased to know that his efforts are winning recognition from some people, but was simultaneously unhappy to see that some others were looking at his methods disdainfully.

“But!” Jun Mo Xie stopped before it started to sound like he was overdoing it, and then quickly took a sharp turn: “Since this is a well-known short cut, don’t you think that others would have also tried this? Do you actually believe that a method which has been known since the ancient times was only attempted by just one person? But still, only one man was able to become one of the eight great masters, and the others are unheard of?! What does this reflect?”

The Solitary Falcon’s entire body immediately straightened-up: “That they’re dead!” the thought of all the bones buried in the snow atop the snowy peaks ignited a sense of pity in his heart, but mostly it made him feel proud about his accomplishments.

“The Old man is right!” Jun Mo Xie wantonly continued to praise: “The shortcut is never equivalent to the easier methods.... All those men were either buried in the snow, or became food for those vultures.”

“They certainly found the right direction, and also chose the right method..... In fact, they were extremely dedicated. I’d even go as far as saying that they were even more persistent than the Solitary Falcon because they continued to try till the time of their deaths!”

“But the world only knows the Solitary Falcon’s name... and no one knows who those other guys were! They all took the same approach as the Solitary Falcon, but we still haven’t heard of any of their names? There is only reason behind it..... the Solitary Falcon succeeded; and they failed! It’s simple!” Jun Mo Xie smiled.

“The anecdotes of the so-called ‘successful’ people tend to turn into inspirational stories for the rest of the world, not because of the story itself..... but because they eventually succeeded! The men who failed took on the same tasks, and even their experiences could be transformed into stories... and their stories would actually be even more epic, shocking, heart-wrenching, but they wouldn’t inspire anyone because in the end they failed and found themselves buried in the ground!”



“Anyone can have a story, and anyone can become a legend; but there must be a prerequisite – you have to succeed! Wealth provides physical comfort, whereas poverty provides spiritual comforts. But we only hear about the rich because they worked their way out of poverty, whereas the poor remained stuck in their miseries!”

Jun Mo Xie had said too much in just one breath, so naturally his mouth felt a bit dry. He grabbed the tea pot, and poured himself a drink, and then drank it. However, no one perceived his actions to be rude since everyone was busy pondering over the profound meaning of his words.

“All I’m trying to say is – even though Old Song worked very hard, and was extremely persistent, but his wine has only ever qualified to be a good quality wine in the eyes of ordinary men, and not necessarily the best one.... because he still hasn’t managed to achieve what the Solitary Falcon has..... success!”

Jun Mo Xie had cleverly drawn this big circle back in Old Song’s direction.

Jun Mo Xie had doubted the black-robed man’s identity from the beginning. Jun Mo Xie’s suspicion had escalated at the time when he exposed Old Song’s true Xuan rank. The entire talk about the eight great masters was just a test to see if he defended the Solitary Falcon; which he did. And his sharp reaction to his nemesis’s praise made it a little too obvious....

He is the Solitary Falcon!

It’s obvious now! I think even Old Song and the Old man know it now.... but if they still can’t see it, then it’s better to beat myself to death with a pillow than explaining it to them in detail!

But the best thing was that since Jun Mo Xie had identified his real identity despite the fact that he was trying to conceal it, it could now be used without him ever realizing about it!

This kid is very.....pleasant to listen to!

“It is as you said..... good or bad.... We’ll only find out after we taste the wines....” Old Song was obviously a bit gloomy now. If we start this contest now, then he’ll win even if our wines are similar in quality!

First he comes late, then he offends everyone, and then rambles incoherently to force his fallacious logic!

Although, he does have a point.....

Even though no one had said it, but the contest had already begun at the time when Old Song narrated the background story of his wine!

Even though Jun Mo Xie had only played around with words, but he managed to obliterate whatever slight advantage Old Song had gained early on!

This was all a part of the competition....

But the biggest advantage that Jun Mo Xie had managed to exploit was the Solitary Falcon! Turbulent winds were rising in the Tian Xiang City, and the Solitary Falcon could be used to turn the tables any time! Jun Mo Xie had been intending on using him to do just that, and had already started laying the ground work.....

“Yes good. Now let’s start the wine tasting! Soon we’ll know which wine is better.” The man from royalty was obviously calmer than Old Song and the Solitary Falcon. After all, he was a member of the royal family, and hence had always been associated with different circles as compared to the other two men. Admiration and worship have always been two mutually exclusive terms.

The Solitary Falcon might be a great warrior, but it wasn’t enough to compete with the Emperor of an Empire! If someone tried to assassinate him, then the unprepared master would be likely to fall prey and may not be able to escape his death, however a King’s legacy would continue to live on long after he’s gone.

“Yes, perseverance may not necessarily pave the way for success, but you need to be persistent in order to be successful!” the Solitary Falcon closed his eyes and considered his words as he slowly stated them: “Your words make me feel as if there’s no real need to admire any man!”

“Uh?” Even though Jun Mo Xie disagreed inwardly, outwardly his tongue hummed a different tune altogether: “Yes, we only need to understand our goals clearly, and then move forward step by step; we

shouldn't pay any heed to the failures of our predecessors, or worry whether the succeeding generation will be able to catch up or not. We should only be concerned about our path to climbing the peak, not of some else's!"

"Well said!" the Solitary Falcon laughed: "We should only be concerned about our path to climbing the peak, not of some else's!" this sentence demands a drink!

Jun Mo Xie smiled and pointed his hands towards Old Song to indicate that he should go first. This action startled everyone present; as far as tasting food items is concerned, the first impression is always the hardest to beat.

Therefore, it is most important to be the first.... Else, even if both items taste the same, the first one will undoubtedly be proclaimed the winner!

Is he really that confident? Jun Mo Xie's actions had raised a big question in everyone's mind.

Old Song didn't hesitate, and immediately grabbed four glasses, and quickly and quietly placed them in front of everyone with just one wave of his hand.

The free flowing, natural and smooth movement of the master earned him the admiration of Yang Mo, which clearly reflected in the boy's eyes.

Then, he opened the cork of the wine flask, and the aroma of the wine's flavor instantly the room's atmosphere; the Solitary Falcon and the prince couldn't refrain from closing their eyes... or inhaling the scent.

The two wine lovers had tasted all kinds of wine over the course of their live, but neither man had ever smelt such an exotic and strong flavor before. Naturally, they couldn't suppress their strong desire to taste it.

They hadn't even tasted the wine yet, but were already convinced that they had never tasted anything better!

“This is definitely better than anything I’ve ever tasted!” The Solitary Falcon judged from the aroma:  
“This wine is indeed the work of a true master; I think that only one or two masters are capable of fermenting anything even close to this!”

Jun Mo Xie’s brows wrinkled, although this wine seems rich and mellow, but the smell is obviously too strong. It’s almost like an expensive perfume.... It’s useful to attract others by spraying just a little on the body, but if the flask breaks then it will just destroy one’s nose....what a cliché!

Song Shang clutched the jar in both his hands with a solemn and sacred look in his eyes. A blue light flashed from his hands as the wine sprayed into the air and flew into the wine glass, filling it straight to the top..... not even a single drop fell out of the cup!

And then the second glass..... all the four glasses were full in a matter of moments. The wine created a magnificent and fragrant rainbow as the wine continued to flow through the air, but not even half a drop fell out of the glasses.

“Please!” Old Song raised his hands and invited everyone to drink, but didn’t touch his own cup.

## Chapter 163 – Pushing it to the limit

Song Shang had contested and won several wine making contests over the span of his life, and so he was obviously not short on confidence! In fact, he would usually remain calm even if he was contesting against hundreds of people at once.

His confidence in his ability had always been absolute! Therefore he had always been sure that no one is capable of beating his wine’s quality! No one can beat me!

However this time Song Shang found himself in a very different situation; he was nervous. Unable to understand the reason behind this nervousness was making him even more uncomfortable. On top of that, the pressure he was being subjected to was coming from by a teenager! He slanted his eyes and glanced at the two jars which Jun Mo Xie had brought with him, is his wine actually better than mine?

Although this wine making contest was the most insignificant one that he had ever participated in, but the quality of the wine he was producing was unprecedented!

Even though there were only two judges for this contest, but one of them was the King's Brother! And the other was amongst the finest and most powerful experts in the Xuan Xuan continent!

And then, the only spectator..... was a prince!

As for the stake of this bet..... that too was unprecedented. Song Shang wasn't just betting his reputation on it, he was also gambling with his freedom!

"If I lose, then I'm willing to accept him as my master!"

Since this sentence had been spoken in the presence of a Prince, it was as solid as a contract!

This is ridiculous! I'm a renowned wine maker.... He's nothing in front of me!

I'm just nervous because I've put up my best wine for this contest... and these guys will finish it all!

But then I can't really say no to these guys then, can I? Offending a prince isn't the best way to seek refuge in his country.....

Even though he was unaware of the mysterious expert's true identity, he knew that the man too wasn't to be offended under any circumstances!

Therefore, even though this was only a small bet, Song Shang had still somehow landed himself on sheer cliffs and precipitous rock faces!

Since he had already decided to ride a tiger, it was hard to get off now..... fighting with his back against the river was the only option left!

"Amazing wine!"

The prince raised the glass to his mouth, and took his first sip. Then, he allowed the wine to roll in his mouth for a while, absorbing the flavor and smell, and then swallowed it down.

He gently closed his eyes and enjoyed the aftertaste of the wine as it brought a wonderful feeling along with it!

I've had a lot of wines in my life, but this wine is something different and special... I really don't think that I've ever had something this special.... I really need to drink more of this! The Solitary Falcon's face was clearly reflecting the same feeling.

No wonder Song Shang was so confident about his wine.... He only staked his life on it since he knew that his wine is extraordinary. Not even the imperial wine maker's wine is capable of overshadowing his work.... In fact, it's not even fair to mention the two wines in the same breath!

Jun Mo Xie smiled as he gently started shaking the wine glass. The originally clear wine started getting blurry, and then a few bubbles started to bubble up. Upon a closer look, it was obvious that the originally clear wine was now becoming slightly turbid.

"This isn't professional enough." Jun Mo Xie shook his head and sighed: "Impurities in wines have always been a taboo!"

Song Shang almost choked while his eyes widened in shock.

His years of mental and physical effort, skill, determination, dedication, and pains had actually been called unprofessional by a kid!

Is this kid just ignorant.... Or is this his arrogance?

Both the judges had already finished their cups, and even though they hadn't asked for more, it was evident that their fingertips were itching to move towards the flask for more. It was obvious that they were eagerly waiting for the contest to end, so they could just announce Song Shang as the winner and then devour the rest of his wine.

“Little Brother, we should taste your wine as well now. This competition has been very interesting from the beginning, and this wine alone has been worthy of making this trip.” The Royal Highness smiled gently as his remark made it rather obvious that he was already expecting Old Song to be the winner. In fact, he had been looking at Old Song’s wine from the corner of his eyes ever since he had tasted it.

The prince’s intentions seemed rather obvious.....after I declare Old Song as the winner, I will ask him to ditch the man in black, and then give these two wine jars to me as a gift. But I’ll have to keep a close eye on this man.... if he steals this wine, then I won’t get to drink it again.... Anyway, Old Song said that these two flasks were the last of it.....

As for the outcome of this contest.... The result is rather obvious now. Song Shang’s wine has always been the best in the city, and this particular wine is even rarer and better than anything he’s ever produced before.

The Solitary Falcon had been maintaining his calm and composure throughout so far, and even though the prince couldn’t read his mind.... Jun Mo Xie could tell that the Solitary Falcon and the prince were both thinking the same thing.

“It’s too early to say anything right now; the outcome of this battle should only be decided once both the wines have had their chance!” Jun Mo Xie leaned over and picked up wine jar, and slapped the cork off in one movement.....

“Bang!” the three pair of eyes flinched at the same time. Even young Yang Mo stared at Jun Mo Xie with a look of nervousness on his face.

“Huh?” The three men exclaimed at the same time.

The smell hasn’t changed even one bit..... there’s absolutely nothing seductive about its fragrance!

Whenever the seal to a wine jar is opened, the aroma of the wine pours out of it.....

But how could there be no scent? What is this kid up to?

The three men couldn't stop their faces from turning red initially, but a closer look revealed that the even though Jun Mo Xie had opened the seal, there was still a thin layer of oil soaked paper which was tightly wrapped around the jar, which was probably blocking its scent!

The faces of the three men reddened once again since Jun Mo Xie was unwrapping this oil soaked paper at a very slow pace.

He was practically teasing their desires!

The oil soaked paper was finally removed, but there was still no scent!

The eyes of the three people simultaneously opened up wide in surprise: wait, is that a real layer of animal skin under that oil soaked paper? It seems that the animal skin actually belonged to a level six Xuan Beast.

But then the three of them noticed something new again: there's a thick layer of orange wood under the animal skin.... That's the real reason why there's no odor!

Orange wood doesn't have any smell of its own, but it's capable of isolating any kind of smell!

No wonder we haven't been able to smell anything so far.

But wait, his wine jar was already smaller than the usual size, and now this just means that the real size of his jar is actually half of its originally perceived size! This is..... way too much... less!

And now what?....

Jun Mo Xie's hands stopped at the critical moment, and then he suddenly stood up and slowly took two steps back. Then, he opened his arms wide and stretched his chest; he took a deep breath, hummed a few times, then placed his hands on his hips and revolved his waist around a few times. Then he twisted his buttocks a bit, and then swung his arms around, and then started stretching and loosening up his neck a bit. Then, he crisscrossed his fingers, and started cracking them all.... one by one.....



His Royal Highness, Song Shang and the Solitary Falcon were all staring at him dumbstruck.

The three men had the same impulse guiding their hearts at the moment: don't waste your energy in stretching your neck, let me twist it for you! I will certainly twist it like it's never been twisted before!

Little Yang Mo wanted to ask Jun Mo Xie if he was feeling alright; perhaps out of innocence.....

Once Jun Mo Xie was done stretching his entire body, he strode forward with cat-like elegance, and removed the orange wood covering his wine without sparing any effort for the task, and then threw it down to his feet with a 'bang'.

The sound of the orange wood's fall broke the silence of the room, and all three men raised their eyebrows provocatively.

Jun Mo Xie's hands were still blocking the opening of the flask, which was still prohibiting the wine's aroma from spreading into the atmosphere. The hearts of the three men were itching: just open the forsaken bottle now!

As the three men continued to stare at him with a look of indignation on their faces, Jun Mo Xie looked down at his wine flask affectionately, and stated in a duck-like voice: "ah! ..... before you drink... smell it; the flavor of its scent is ten times more intoxicating than anything else!"

"Damn you!" the three men cursed in unison; even the usually calm and collected Solitary Falcon was no exception. Jun Mo Xie had obviously tested everyone's patience and had pushed it to the limit by now!

But then, the three people's cursing seized in a flash, while the anger on their faces froze in its place!

Because at that exact moment.....

Jun Mo Xie removed his hand, and allowed the aroma of the wine to infuse with the air.

An unspeakable.... Unspeakably wondrous flavor filled the entire room, suppressing their objections, almost as if a dominant warrior had stepped into a room full of cowards!

Perhaps a better description would be..... the fragrance spread through the room like moonlight from a shiny night sky, and covered every nook and corner of the room!

This is the smell of a transcending dream!

This fragrance isn't from the human world.... It's from a land of wonders! No, not even that! Even a land of wonders isn't capable of producing such an amazing aroma!

The three men felt as if the wine's aroma was the seventh heaven lingering over their heads, and a strong desire to step into its bliss was inciting them to float and rise upwards.... And upwards... and upwards.....

What kind of a wine is this? Is it really possible for a wine from this world to produce such intoxicating aroma?!

Hum.....I'm too moved.....

Jun Mo Xie had already poured the wine into four cups by the time the three men recovered. The wine's amber color felt quite magical in the jade-shade glass.

"Before you drink... smell it; the flavor of its scent is ten times more intoxicating than anything else!" the prince got up, having already forgotten his manners. He roared in a trembling voice as tears streamed his cheeks: "Far more than ten ah ah ah ah ah ah....."

Song Shang picked up his glass with tears in his eyes; he held the glass so carefully that it almost felt as if he was trying to hold onto a priceless treasure.... He stared at the wine for a long time, almost as if he was unwilling to drink it; not because he was afraid of losing the contest..... he was afraid that the wine may not be anything more than a fragrance.... And drinking it would sour his current blissful state.....

Just the mere smell of the wine had sent the three men into a dream like state, and neither of them wanted to wake up from this beautiful dream!

## Chapter 164 – Sky Xuan Apprentice

The Solitary Falcon had somehow been able to maintain his usual expressionless look, along with his composure, but still couldn't stop his face from blushing. His eyes flashed a spark of expectation as he grabbed his glass and slowly raised it to his mouth. He hesitated for a second, and then drained the cup in one gulp!

He clearly felt the liquid as the wine came in contact with his throat, and could even feel his own Xuan Qi stirring up inside his body. As he felt the wine reaching his stomach, he realized that he still hadn't finished it all, which is why he drained the rest of it down in his second gulp.....

The Solitary Falcon was just beginning to enjoy the aroma of the wine even more when he suddenly felt a very intense and extreme sense of burning inside his body....almost as if his limbs, all his blood vessels, and all his meridians were on fire!

Suddenly he felt as if his whole body had been set on fire; his body hair were erect, and even his Xuan Qi wasn't listening to his commands anymore!

The flame which was smoldering inside his body felt strong enough to give him power to beat any man in this moment; even Yun Bei Chen!

"Great wine! This is the best wine in this world!" the Solitary Falcon tried very hard to suppress his words, but was unable to. Even though this low sounding roar came from deep within his throat, the excitement in his voice was evident.

"This man is the god of wine!"

The prince also gulped his wine down, and then suddenly started staring foolishly at everyone. He got up a while later, walked around in a circle, almost as if he sleepwalking, and then returned to his seat. He kept his head lowered for a while, continuously staring at his glass of wine the entire time, after which he mumbled with tears in his eyes: "Today I know the truth behind my life.....I've lived....."

Then he suddenly jumped up, and extended his arms, almost as if he wanted to scream out, but was unable to.... So he reseated himself and moaned: "Great wine ah ah ah ah ah....."

Song Shang couldn't suppress his body's trembling as he held the glass, still unwilling to drink it; after seeing the Solitary Falcon and the Prince's reactions, he had already realized that he had lost the contest.

He had lost without any doubt!

But at this time, especially at this moment, he was very excited despite his loss, and elated despite his defeat! Since his best work had been beaten, he had no regrets! Now he just wanted to experience the taste of this wine for himself!

At this moment, Song Shang wasn't taking this defeat to his heart; like a pilgrim on a holy trail, he just wanted to experience the supreme power!

As he drank, Song Shang felt his soul dance and sing; he could feel every inch of his muscles, each meridian of his body..... and their trembling.....

Soon enough, Song Shang's eyes started to tear while his throat started to whimper..... As his tears started to fall into his cup, his eyes become even more watery..... a little while later, his entire body started to tremble, and then he suddenly lowered his face to the table and completely broke down and burst into tears.....

"I, I, I..... since I've had the good fortune of drinking this wine today..... my life will now be devoid of all regrets..... I've had the opportunity to drink such a divine drink today.... I will even accept my death without any complaints....."

Old Song punched, and punched, and punched the table, and then banged and banged, and banged his head against the table as he pulled his hair out while crying uncontrollably: "I've spent my entire life.... Living like a dog..... ah....."

Jun Mo Xie was left flabbergasted..... goosebumps covered his entire body as he watched the horrifying scene.

He had seen people cry before.

He had seen men cry before.

But Jun Mo Xie had never seen anyone cry like this before!

Moreover, this man was at least fifty years old!

On top of that, this man was a Sky Xuan expert!

And a famed assassin!

And now he was crying uncontrollably over a glass of wine.....

Is this simply because of this one glass of wine?

Jun Mo Xie was completely baffled.

The hitman Jun had always underestimated the power of wine!

The art of making wine had undergone thousands and thousands of years of evolution!

Countless people had gone insane in search of methods for perfecting the art of making wine!

This art had been passed down from generation to generation, and those methods had undergone several changes with each passing generation.

Since Jun Mo Xie had the finalized methods on his fingertips, he had always assumed wine making to be an easy task. But he had always ignored that he was standing on top of thousands and thousands of years of cultural and methodical evolution..... he was standing on top of the life-works of thousands of geniuses!

To participate in a contest with a modern-world method of making wine in an ancient setting would be like standing as tall as the Mount Everest in front of a normal human!

He had never realized that the methods he had used to ferment this wine had been made available to him due to the research and hard work of countless people who had devoted their entire lives to the art of making wine!

And in that ancient world, one such devoted man had just tasted a modern and refined wine.....

The impact was.... Simply unspeakable.....

Old Song's Xuan Qi had already reached the Sky Xuan realm, which ranked him amongst some of the most powerful individuals in this world, and practically made him untouchable in the eyes of the common man. But this very man had always upheld "Making wine is my best attribute". Had he invested the same amount of energy and devotion to his martial training, then his martial achievements would have crossed all barriers!

Old Song's heart was experiencing a storm of emotions, but his emotions were still comforting him in a way. On one hand, his arrogance, pride and confidence on being the best wine maker in world had been shattered, but on the other hand, he had suddenly found a wine which was superior to his best product by a very huge margin!

It was almost unfathomable to imagine Old Song's shock.....

Jun Mo Xie had just transformed into a man beyond compare in his eyes..... almost as if he was.... An incarnation of the god of wine himself!

Oh Heavens! This world actually has such a wine! And there's a man in this world who can actually make such wine! If he isn't the god of wine, then what is he?

From being a proud and confident man, he had been transformed into a beaten one!

This was equivalent to the defeat of his entire life's persistence! The collapse of life's support and driving force!

The pub had gone completely quiet, and remained that way for a while; the prince was the first one to speak: "This wine making contest of today's...." his voice still harbored a lingering taste of excitement....

My wine is nothing compared to this youngster's wine... he's right... my wine is rubbish! My wine has no merit in front of his... there's absolutely no competition... not even one shred of it.....I Song Shang have travelled the entire world, and I've never tasted anything this divine!

Song Shang's voice seemed extremely excited: "I Song Shang, concede!"

Then he stood up as his eyes flashed a trace a frenzy, and walked towards Jun Mo Xie; then, he knelt down on both his knees, and lowered his head to the ground with a 'thud': "Master, please accept your apprentice's respect!"

Jun Mo Xie hastily stood up: "This....."

His Royal Highness and the Solitary Falcon looked at each other dumbstruck!

It was a while before the Solitary Falcon was able to find his words: "Old Song has accepted you as his master, little brother. Your wine is peerless, but don't disgrace him; don't humiliate him!"

The final judgement had been passed!

Jun Mo Xie remained lost in his thoughts for a long while before he finally smiled, and said: "Yes, in that case, Song Shang, get up; I accept you."

What is going on?

Who says the sky cannot fall? The prince had always taken these words as a joke... but watching Song Shang, a dignified Sky Xuan expert, one of the top assassins of the world transforming into a disciple of an ordinary youngster was no joke.....

Becoming an apprentice is a life-changing decision!

There are five cardinal relations in our way of life, parents and child, master and disciple, husband and wife, elder and younger siblings, and friends. Even though master and disciple relationship isn't the first priority, but it's the most important one!

A master is more important than a parent! Parents only shape one's body, but it's one's master that guides one to success in life!

Given Song Shang's identity and status, how can he ever even think of becoming a disciple to this lowly and unknown kid?!

The prince had obviously underestimated Old Song's obsession with the art of wine making!

Knowledge knows no age! As far as Old Song was concerned, this was his path to enlightenment!

Even Jun Mo Xie was a little surprised, and was still pondering; in case Old Song goes back on his word, then he could betray me anytime..... I never really thought that he would.....

But the hitman Jun wasn't the kind to go back on his word!

Letting go of a Sky Xuan apprentice would obviously be a very foolish decision! Even though he only intends to learn the art of wine-making from me, but I can never be sure of trusting him given his identity of being a Sky Xuan expert! He is mysterious, and may be backed by a powerful force.....



So if he becomes my subordinate, will I truly be able to control him?

Jun Mo Xie was a bit excited at the thought, but then he suddenly woke up to the responsibility of being a teacher, and realized that he will now be responsible for his disciple's education! A superficial halo emerged within his mind, which told him to shoulder his responsibility!

"Old Song, do you know why you lost?" Jun Mo Xie suddenly felt the urge to touch his beard, which would have made him look more respectable in appearance, but then suddenly realized that he was only sixteen, and obviously didn't have one..... left with no other option, he stopped his hand from going upwards and redirected it to scratch his legs instead.

#### Chapter 165 – Partnership with the Prince

"Master's wine is the best in the world! This disciple obviously never stood a chance against master's unrivaled expertise, and the disciple conceives it in heart and admits it in words." Song Shang's tone was full of respect.

Even though Song Shang was far more accomplished than his young master, he didn't feel even the slightest of hesitation in talking to his master with humility since he was nothing in front of his master in terms of wine making abilities; in fact, his voice even harbored a strong sense of excitement and privilege with regard to his new status.

"You can go on and on about my skill and the superiority of my wine, but you'll always be wrong. You're mistaken from the start." Jun Mo Xie stated unceremoniously: "You earlier stated that you fermented this wine almost a decade ago, at the peak of your skills, and it's the best wine in the world. It sounded like you were very pleased with your work, and that's the reason which blocked your future progress, and if you continue to believe in that then it will also ruin any chances of progress in the future."

"The moment you started believing that these two jars of wine were the best in the world, you lost; to yourself. You lost because you started to believe that you couldn't be beaten!"

Song Shang's forehead started to sweat the moment he heard this remark. Yes, ah.... Master is right! Ever since I produced this wine a decade ago, I haven't made any progress, not even the slightest bit. I've lived every day believing that that no one can beat me... I got complacent.... I had never anticipated that I would ever lose in this manner.....

“It’s almost like martial training; if a person says, ‘I entered into Earth Xuan three years ago, then at this rate I will make it to the Sky Xuan sooner or later’, then this person is unlikely to ever make it to the Sky Xuan realm till the end of his days... let alone any higher!”

“But the family of such people always puts pressure on them to improve their Xuan Qi as fast as possible, which is the reason they rarely ever lax. But if their practice slows down, then even they wouldn’t be able to move forward.”

“Wine making however, is completely different. There’s no pressure on you.... And you simply weren’t persistent enough. Had you been persistent, then even if you had still lost today, you wouldn’t have lost by such a huge margin.” Jun Mo Xie stated in an earnest tone: “So persistence is the key.”

Song Shang had already accepted Jun Mo Xie as his master, and was willing to take his every word as a command. But the Solitary Falcon and the prince were still not convinced of this situation: This guy just gave us some very eloquent examples to prove that persistence and devotion aren’t that important, and he has actually overturned his previous conclusion in the blink of an eye!

He’s turning colors faster than one can turn the page of a book... he’s such a pretentious folk! But then their eyes resettled onto Jun Mo Xie’s two wine jars, and they both swallowed a mouthful of saliva down their throats.

“A wine fermented with the most ordinary of raw products can also be the best wine in the world; in fact.... that’s real wine!” Jun Mo Xie leisurely stated: “Just as in the world of martial arts, the most basic of moves are capable of producing the maximum amount of power, and can take a man to the peak of the world!”

The solitary Falcon suddenly stared at Jun Mo Xie as he stated this sentence.

A low-level martial artist may not have been able to understand the profound meaning behind this sentence, but to man of his excellence.... this sentence was nothing short of .....Enlightening!

Punch.... What is the most powerful kind of punch in the world? It’s the most ordinary one... the tiger fist punch... and it’s able to produce the most powerful effect. Even if one wraps all kinds of fancy

flowers around their punch and hits the enemy, then the punch still won't be able to do the same amount of damage which a properly executed and concentrated basic one can!

This is basic law of martial arts!

In a duel between two experts, the most basic of moves often decide the victor!

The tiger fist undoubtedly focuses on strength, and is considered to be the king of all strokes, but even then it has a prerequisite: you have to hit the other party..... and the simplest of moves is the solution to get away from it... agility.....

It seemed as if the Solitary Eagle had just been freed from his shackles, and would almost jump out at any moment! If he was able to get more clarity on this thought, then he could surely progress further! And progress a lot further! But he was still helpless since he couldn't really get the idea formulated properly in his head at the moment, and was busy thinking over it which was evident from the frown on his face.

Unintentionally or intentionally, this one sentence of Jun Mo Xie's had brought a great expert on the fringes of a great breakthrough!

While the Solitary Falcon was absorbed in his thoughts, the Prince was simply unable to wait any longer.

"Little Brother, this wine, ah, how much? It's....."

"Well, I already addressed that earlier; it's like I said, this wine is eleven thousand taels of silver per jar... do you still think that it isn't worth it?" Jun Mo Xie quietly tossed the bait.

"Not at all!" the prince hadn't even opened his mouth yet, but Old Song simply couldn't resist the urge: "This wine is a rarity in this human world! Measuring its value in gold and silver is a profanity to the wine's quality! Forget about eleven thousand silver, even eleven thousand gold isn't enough to purchase this wine!"

In his opinion, this wine was no longer just wine; it was an art....a masterpiece! Priceless! A priceless treasure!

"It is indeed worth it in my opinion as well! This wine is indeed a hundred times better than Old Song's wine!" The prince promptly replied back, looked at Jun Mo Xie and sighed: "Although I'm afraid that I won't be able to buy too much too much of it....."

Difficult to buy too much? It's practically impossible....although the prince made sure that he didn't say it like it really was.....

"If that's the case..... then I guess I shouldn't be selling it directly, and I should rather go in for only auctioning it instead! Perhaps I could even fetch a higher price!" Jun Mo Xie smiled as he tacitly put forth his idea.

The three men went silent for a while as they pondered over his idea, and understood his intention soon enough. They could clearly understand the potential behind his idea!

"If you do auction it... when will you auction it? And where will you auction it?" The prince simply couldn't wait to ask this question. Where can I taste a wine like this one once more? And when can I buy it? The price is secondary!

"Song Shang will convey that to you since he will be involved in this auction as well." Jun Mo Xie was a bit worried about trusting Old Song in other matters, but when it came to wine, he was a hundred percent sure about the man.

Song Shang could betray anyone, but he could never betray wine! Jun Mo Xie was confident about this!

"That's great!" the prince clapped his hands in excitement. "In fact, if you face any difficulty then this old man can even help you as long as you're conducting the auction within the city.... but if you conduct the auction outside the city then I won't be able to help you out much." If he auctions it here then I could somehow buy some of it, or at least curry a favor with the winner and drink some!

"I'll make the official introductions; master... this man is the Emperor's brother, Yang Huai Nong. He is the Emperor's only sibling!" although Old Song's tone was very respectful, he still mentioned this fact

right after the prince mentioned that he may not be able to afford this wine too often, which was obviously rather embarrassing considering that he was a prince.

“The Emperor’s Brother.....” Even though Jun Mo Xie had already guessed long back that this man was quite influential, but he still wasn’t expecting him to be the Tian Xiang Empire’s Emperor’s only brother. Even though he was slightly surprised, he immediately regained his composure: “uh, apologizes for any disrespect.”

Everyone was expecting him to be shocked, and even lower his head in worship, after all he was no more than a mere commoner in the eyes of these three men; a proud and talented youngster at best. How’s such a lowly man able to keep his composure in front of a prince? He didn’t even lower his head in submission like the common people usually do.....

In fact, this kid’s eyes didn’t even flinch for one second! The prince obviously wanted to express his thoughts but decided to keep his mouth shut instead..... he could tell that this kid may not be the most respectful of people around....

They were all completely unaware that the boy in front didn’t care about any ‘prince’ or ‘royalty’ owing to previous life’s adventures.... Moreover, they were also unaware of the immoral behavior he had exhibited in front of the second prince just a few days ago.

If the prince hadn’t already taken a shine to Jun Mo Xie’s personality, then he would certainly have felt insulted by his conduct, and wouldn’t have stayed to drink his wine either, and could have even.....

“If necessary, then I will be very happy to co-operate with the prince.” Jun Mo Xie flashed a faint smile as he stated his words in a polite manner. It was very, very evident from his tone and choice of words that he would only co-operate with the prince if it was deemed “necessary”, else he.....

“Whichever suits you best!” The prince wasn’t interested in pestering him about it, and laughed as he squinted his eyes: “Although I can’t afford this wine at the moment, but I certainly cannot allow this wine to get buried either.” Jun Mo Xie’s obvious rejection had added more oil to the flame of his interest.

“I don’t know if the old man would be interested... but I’m willing to sell one share in this wine for every two million silver taels. Even if the old man wishes to pass these shares onto his next of kin, this little

brother would be willing to agree.” This remark came as a bit of a surprise to everyone since Jun Mo Xie referred to the Prince as ‘Old Man’, despite being well aware of his true identity. Moreover, the offer to sell the rights to his wine at two million silver taels per share was an obvious indication of his optimistic calculation about his wine’s prospects.

“This old man is almost fifty years old now, and I only have one daughter and one son.” His Royal Highness smiled: “My daughter is old enough to be married, and I hope that I can find a suitable family for her, and relieve the burden of her future from my shoulders. As for my son... he doesn’t wish to follow in his father’s footsteps, and therefore I’ve already started making the preparation for the rainy days ahead..... and I hope that he isn’t as helpless as his old man someday.”

.....pin-drop silence.....

The previous Emperor had two sons: Crown prince, Yang Haui Yu and the second prince, Yang Huai Nong.

Yang Huai Yu had always been ambitious, tactical, military oriented, political minded and had always taken a very keen interest in the overall governing on the Empire. Yang Huai Nong had never participated in any of it, and had always maintained a low-key profile.... Because he knew that no matter how hard he strived, he’d never be able to surpass his elder brother’s skills; he obviously had no intention of destroying himself by competing in vain.

So basically, the second prince had gradually withdrawn himself from the power-chase right from the start. His lack of enthusiasm for power coupled with his long lasting distance from the Empire’s affairs had brought him to the point where he didn’t even care about its future.

But now the Emperor was looking for his next successor, and the prince who had always been indifferent had started thinking about the future of his children, and was even willing to seek assistance from outside the royalty! This can mean only one thing..... he is competing against his own three nephews... and he feels that the Empire might split..... leaving him with nothing?

Why else would a prince plot against the monarchy in order to secure the future of his children?