

Re: God of Formation.

#Chapter 91: The Jun clan schemes. - Read Re: God of Formation. Chapter 91: The Jun clan schemes.

Chapter 91: The Jun clan schemes.

Seated inside the main hall, two elders of the Jun clan, one a middle-aged man and the other a woman sat with outward calm.

Both were dressed in plain blue silk robes, attire so simple that, had they not been recognized as members of the Jun clan, they might have been mistaken for ordinary village elders.

Yet appearances could deceive.

These two were not mere commoners.

They were Master Realm powerhouses, cultivators capable of commanding wind and rain in the Soaring Cloud Region.

Despite their formidable cultivation, they waited patiently, showing no sign of arrogance, even though the one they awaited was a kid.

Creak!

The great doors swung open, and Jun Wu stepped into the hall. His expression was indifferent, his bearing calm but unyielding.

Without bowing or offering any greeting, he walked directly to the central seat of honor and sat down, his sharp gaze falling on the two elders.

"What do I owe the pleasure of such a sudden visit?" he asked coldly, his tone carrying a faint sneer.

Neither elder's expression wavered, though the woman was the first to respond.

"You are a descendant of the Jun clan," she said evenly. "Do we, your elders, require a reason to visit you?" Her voice was steady and calm, betraying no hint of her true intentions.

Jun Wu's lips curled. "Spare me the nonsense. Just tell me what you want and let's get this over with."

The hostility in his tone was unmistakable.

The two elders blinked in mild surprise.

They had expected some resistance, perhaps a show of dissatisfaction, but not such naked enmity.

"Young Master, we mean no harm—" the male elder began, only to be sharply cut off.

"Get to the point," Jun Wu snapped. "My patience runs thin."

Toward the younger generation, Jun Wu often remained calm and aloof, but in front of these so-called elders, his disgust overflowed.

"Huh!"

The elders studied him closely, stunned by the intensity of his animosity. His hatred was not feigned, not masked hostility.

It was genuine.

Exchanging subtle glances, the two quickly realized the situation was far different than they had anticipated.

They knew Jun Wu might harbor grudges for the way he had been treated in the clan, but they had not expected his loathing to be this deep.

At last, the man abandoned any pretense of probing further. Plans to test Jun Wu about his rumored mastery in array formations vanished into thin air.

He straightened and spoke directly.

"Young Master, you have been summoned by the clan," he declared solemnly.

Jun Wu's eyes narrowed slightly, but his expression did not shift. He stared at the two calmly and asked, "Is that all?"

"What?"

The elders were momentarily stunned.

Being summoned to the clan was no trivial matter. It carried one of two possibilities: either great reward or severe punishment.

But Jun Wu had committed no crime warranting punishment.

On the contrary, since leaving the clan, his actions had brought the Jun name great prestige.

The council of elders had therefore resolved to reward him handsomely, both to recognize his achievements and to elevate his standing within the clan.

After all, compared to other younger generations, Jun Wu had received almost no resources or support from the clan.

Everything he possessed, every step he had taken on his cultivation path, had been achieved through his own struggle.

Now, however, the clan sought to change their stance. They wanted to nurture him, to bind him closer to their power.

Most of all, they sought to secure the secret of the array plates' production. Such knowledge could not be allowed to slip into the hands of rivals.

Though the elders before him would never speak these words aloud, everyone within the upper echelon already understood the true purpose behind this sudden goodwill.

Recovering from their shock, the woman elder leaned forward and asked softly, "Young Master, when will you return to the clan? We have been tasked with your protection."

Jun Wu's lips curled into a disdainful smile. "Who said I would return at all? Since you've completed your so-called mission, you can leave my house now."

Shock rippled across their faces.

They simply could not comprehend his reaction. To refuse a clan summons so bluntly was nearly unthinkable. Yet Jun Wu had not hesitated.

"Young Master, are you truly rejecting the clan's summons? Do you understand the gravity of this?" the male elder asked, his voice solemn.

Jun Wu met his gaze without flinching. "Do you think I care? Leave." He gestured dismissively with his hand, as though shooing away bothersome insects.

The woman tried again. "Young Master, please reconsider. This is for your benefit. Without the clan's protection, you may not be safe."

Jun Wu scoffed, the sound filled with disdain.

"Safe? What has the clan ever done for me? Apart from trying to kill me, what have they given? What protection? Tsk. Laughable."

His tone grew sharper, his words carrying the weight of a blade. "So tell me...are you leaving, or must I find others to deal with you? Don't think that just because you are Master Realm powerhouses, I cannot handle you. I can, and I will."

Inside, however, Jun Wu's heart was resolute. 'I need to grow stronger, quickly.'

If his strength already surpassed theirs, he would not need to threaten them with outside force. He could have personally thrown them out without hesitation.

The two elders exchanged a heavy silence.

They knew his words were not empty.

Jun Wu's grievances were rooted in truth.

The Jun clan politics had long been a mire of throat-cutting schemes, backstabbing, and betrayals. Such struggles had become a tradition of the Jun clan's descendants.

Yet, Jun Wu's situation was different. His hatred was not born merely of ambition or rivalry.

It was deeper, forged in abandonment and betrayal.

Sigh...

At last, the two elders rose to their feet, their expressions complicated.

It was not fear that moved them, but the awareness that pressing further would only worsen matters.

"Young Master," the man said gravely, "think carefully on this. We will remain in the city for two more days. If you change your mind, you may summon us."

With that, the pair turned and left the hall, their backs stiff with unspoken emotion.

Jun Wu watched their departing figures, a cold sneer tugging at his lips.

"I would be a fool to return to the clan."

Chapter 92: Becoming A First Rated Martial Artist.

Jun Wu's life gradually returned to tranquility after the departure of the Jun clan elders. Since their visit, no other strange or uninvited guests had appeared at his doorstep.

With Elder Peng's recent breakthrough as a Grade-1 Blacksmith, their work had become far more efficient.

Elder Peng handled the forging of the plates while Jun Wu focused solely on engraving the runes.

This division of labor elevated their productivity to an astonishing level.

On average, they could now produce three to four hundred array plates each day.

Jun Wu's burden was greatly reduced.

With much free time, he devoted himself to setting up formations at their hidden base of operations and immersing himself in cultivation.

His goal was singular and pressing: to break through as quickly as possible.

To outsiders, his speed of advancement already seemed terrifying.

Yet to him, every step felt painfully slow.

His enemies would not give him the luxury of time. If he lingered, if he allowed complacency to creep in, he would be crushed before he ever had the chance to rise.

He clenched his fists as he cultivated, determination burning in his eyes. *I must seize every opportunity. I must become a master as soon as possible.*

Bang!

A deep rumble erupted from within his body, echoing through the cultivation chamber. A powerful aura surged outward, rattling the walls.

Jun Wu slowly opened his eyes.

A faint smile tugged at his lips.

"Finally," he murmured, his voice low but triumphant. "I've stepped into the First Rated Martial Artist realm."

He checked his body carefully.

Though his outward appearance remained unchanged, he could feel the strength that now coursed through him.

His meridians were stronger, wider, more resilient, capable of accommodating greater energy flow.

More importantly, they could now bear additional arrays.

Breaking through to the rank of First Rated Martial Artist granted him the ability to inscribe another array directly onto his meridians, enabling instant activation without external preparations.

Without hesitation, he began to plan. *Which array should I choose?*

He already possessed an offensive option—the Wind Blade Array, and a defensive one for protection.

His Swift Wind Boots gave him the means to retreat swiftly if escape became necessary.

What he lacked was concealment. A way to vanish when needed, to mask his presence entirely.

"The Concealment Array," he decided after a moment of thought. "That will balance my arsenal."

Following the complex process of primordial meridian cultivation, he began inscribing the Concealment Array onto his newly strengthened channels.

The work was grueling.

The array lines etched across his meridians burned like molten fire.

Agony lanced through his body, drawing a groan from his throat.

His muscles quivered and sweat rolled down his forehead, but he grit his teeth and persevered.

The pain was unbearable, but the reward was worth it.

Meanwhile, in the courtyard outside, Zhang Wei and Mao Yun had just returned from their respective duties.

"How's the progress? When will the base be finished?" Mao Yun asked.

"In a week or two," Zhang Wei replied after a moment's calculation. "And you? How is the training?"

Mao Yun's expression brightened. "Better than expected. With the Young Master spending so many resources, many whose cultivation had stagnated have begun to improve again."

Then, a trace of confusion crossed his face. "But I don't understand why the Young Master insists on training them in fast-movement techniques and assassination methods. It almost feels like he's raising an organization of killers."

Zhang Wei frowned, equally perplexed. "Assassins? Why would he...?" He trailed off, unable to come to a conclusion.

The more they speculated, the less sense it made.

At that moment, Xinyue appeared, her steps light and graceful.

She looked around curiously before asking, "Uncle Zhang Wei, Uncle Mao Yun, have you seen the Young Master?"

"Young Miss," Zhang Wei said with a faint smile, "the Young Master is cultivating."

Her cheeks colored faintly. "Oh. Thank you."

Ever since her relationship with Jun Wu had grown closer, the others had begun addressing her as *Young Miss*.

Though she tried repeatedly to correct them, they remained adamant. She had long since given up arguing.

A familiar voice suddenly echoed behind her. "Don't tell me you're missing me already?"

Xinyue spun around to see Jun Wu walking toward them, freshly bathed and dressed in a simple blue silk robe.

By coincidence, her own attire was also blue.

Her face flushed even redder. "Who would miss you..." she muttered, unable to meet his gaze.

"Then why is your face—"

Before he could finish, she interrupted hastily, "Nothing happened to my face. Young Master, I wanted to ask what you'd like to eat."

Jun Wu studied her silently for a moment, then smiled. "Why don't we take a walk instead? We've been cooped up in the mansion all day. It'll be good to relax."

"You're right, Young Master," Zhang Wei quickly agreed.

"Should we accompany you?" Mao Yun asked.

Jun Wu shook his head. "No, that won't be necessary."

With his recent breakthrough, he had little to fear. Unless a Master Realm powerhouse appeared, he could handle any threat that came his way.

...

Outside the mansion, Jun Wu and Xinyue strolled side by side along the bustling street, blending seamlessly with the flow of ordinary pedestrians.

Xinyue's heart pounded, her stomach fluttering with butterflies. Walking so openly with him felt surreal.

"Do you know of any beautiful places in the city?" Jun Wu asked, glancing at her.

She nodded quickly. "I do. Come, I'll take you there."

On their way, they passed a street vendor—an old man grilling skewers of meat over an open flame.

The savory aroma wafted through the air, and Jun Wu, without hesitation, purchased several sticks.

He bit into one with obvious relish, oil glistening on his lips.

His carefree smile was disarming, worlds apart from the cold, indifferent young master most people knew.

Xinyue laughed softly at the sight, her hand rising to cover her mouth. "Young Master, that's not how you eat it." She giggled, offering him her handkerchief.

"Really? Then why don't you show me?" Jun Wu teased, rolling his eyes playfully as he wiped his mouth. "You're such a terrible manager, letting me embarrass myself like this."

Their lighthearted banter drew smiles from passing townsfolk, though neither of them noticed.

What they also failed to notice was the group of shadowy figures trailing silently behind them, eyes glinting with ill intent.

Chapter 93: Bitter Truth: Underestimating The Enemies.

Jun Wu and Xinyue stood quietly by the **Moonmirror River**, enjoying the gentle evening breeze as the faint fragrance of blooming lotuses drifted across the surface of the shimmering water.

Around them, the riverbank was filled with activity. Lovers strolled hand in hand, whispering sweet words to one another.

Families gathered under the lantern-lit trees, while elderly men sat cross-legged on low stools, playing card games and Go with serious expressions on their wrinkled faces.

The atmosphere was peaceful, almost dreamlike, where the worries of the world seemed to dissolve.

"I never expected such a beautiful place to exist within the city," Jun Wu said, his eyes lingering on the bright, rippling surface of the river, which reflected the moon.

Xinyue tilted her head slightly, a faint, contented smile gracing her lips. "Mystic City has many beautiful places. This is only one of them."

To her, this was one of the most treasured moments of her life.

For years she had only admired the Moonmirror River from afar, convinced she would never have the chance to walk along its banks.

Yet here she was, not merely visiting, but sharing the experience with someone who meant far more to her than she dared to admit.

Her heart beat faster as her gaze drifted to Jun Wu's calm side profile.

'Does he... does he feel the same way about me?' she thought, panic fluttering in her chest.

Her train of thought was broken when a warm hand closed gently around hers.

Startled, she raised her head, only to meet Jun Wu's steady gaze.

He smiled faintly, and in a soft whisper said, "Don't overthink. Just enjoy the moment."

Her cheeks flushed pink, and she quickly lowered her eyes.

"Mm..." she nodded shyly, her heart still racing. 'He's right. I don't need to complicate things. Whatever happens, I'll wait and see how it unfolds.'

She took a deep breath, forcing herself to calm down. A bright, unguarded smile crept across her face.

For this moment, she was content. She wanted nothing else except for this serenity to never end.

After some time, they began their walk back toward the mansion, still holding hands.

Feeling the stares of passersby, Xinyue grew nervous.

Instinctively, she tried to withdraw her hand, but Jun Wu's grip tightened firmly, silently reassuring her.

She glanced at him from the corner of her eyes, only to find him gazing straight ahead with an indifferent expression, as though the stares of others meant nothing.

A surge of sweet happiness bloomed within her chest. Filled with new confidence, she held her head higher, no longer wishing to let go.

But behind them, hidden in the milling crowd, a shadowy figure followed closely.

"When they reach the meeting point, take action immediately," the man whispered to his subordinates.

The others nodded and quickly dispersed into the sea of pedestrians.

They had been lying in wait for days, seeking the perfect chance to kidnap Xinyue.

Who would have thought that she and Jun Wu would casually stroll out into the city, seemingly unguarded?

What they failed to realize, however, was that Jun Wu's sharp gaze had already pierced their disguise.

Earlier, when buying a jade pendant for Xinyue at a street stall, he had noticed the faint hostility hidden in their eyes.

At first, he dismissed it as a coincidence, but as he continued to sense their presence trailing behind, he grew certain they were being targeted.

Feigning ignorance, Jun Wu played along, allowing Xinyue to drag him through shops and restaurants, smiling at her introductions of Mystic City's landmarks.

She laughed happily, unaware of the silent threat stalking them from the shadows.

When they reached the juncture that should have led back to the mansion, Jun Wu suddenly shook his head and continued down another street.

Xinyue blinked in confusion, her brows furrowing. She wanted to ask him why but decided against it, trusting him silently.

Behind them, the assassins cursed in frustration.

"They changed direction?!" the leader spat angrily. "Damn it! Change of plan, prepare another ambush. I don't believe they can escape us today!"

What they did not know was that their every move was being observed.

Another hidden faction had also been trailing Jun Wu and Xinyue, waiting for the perfect opportunity to strike.

The hunters had become the hunted, yet they remained oblivious.

Jun Wu, however, had already realized. His eyes narrowed. 'So it's not just one group after us. Two... maybe even more. I've underestimated the danger.'

As they passed by a silk shop, Jun Wu noticed an ordinary-looking man watching them.

The man's lips curled into a faint smile that was not a smile, the kind that carried hidden malice.

"Young Master, our shop sells the finest silk. Please, come take a look," the man said with a false tone of innocence.

Jun Wu ignored him completely, pulling Xinyue closer and continuing on.

Behind them, the man's polite smile twisted into a sinister grin. He melted into the flow of pedestrians and followed without hesitation.

That night, it seemed every shadow in Mystic City concealed hidden blades.

Countless eyes had been dispatched with one goal in mind: to capture Jun Wu and the girl by his side, no matter the cost.

It was a rare opportunity. For once, Jun Wu had left his mansion without his retainers. Such a chance might never come again.

In the distance, Jun Wu finally spotted the towering facade of the **Alchemist Association Hall**. Relief flickered across his features for the first time that evening.

Watching him, Xinyue grew even more anxious. She could sense his tension, though she didn't understand the reason.

Her brows knitted, and she bit her lip, wanting to ask him what was wrong.

But seeing the gravity in his expression, she swallowed the question. She didn't want to disturb him now.

With quickened strides, they closed the distance toward the Association Hall, its lanterns glowing like beacons in the night.

Behind them, the assassins realized their intention and broke into a frantic chase, abandoning all pretense of subtlety.

The sound of boots pounding against the cold hard ground echoed through the streets.

Suddenly...the pair vanished.

"What?!" one assassin cried out, confusion etched across his face. "Where did they go?"

"They were right in front of us a moment ago!" another shouted, scanning the crowd wildly.

The entire group faltered, stunned.

One heartbeat ago, Jun Wu and Xinyue were there, walking steadily.

The next, they had simply disappeared without a trace, as though swallowed by the night itself.

While the assassins scrambled in panic, Jun Wu and Xinyue were already stepping into the safety of the Alchemist Association's grand hall.

Jun Wu glanced back at the entrance, his expression dark.

A heavy sigh slipped past his lips. He finally admitted to himself the truth he had ignored all evening.

He had made a costly mistake.

He had underestimated his enemies.

Chapter 94: Escaping From The Assassins.

"Young Master Wu, what a surprise visit," The Alchemist President said warmly as she rose from her seat.

Though she held the prestigious position of president of the Alchemist Association, even she felt that her fame and influence paled in comparison to Jun Wu's rising reputation.

In recent weeks, countless factions had sought to curry favor with him.

The Array Plates he and Elder Peng produced had already shaken the entire city.

With the supply so limited and the demand reaching into the millions, people from every walk of life were waiting anxiously for even a single chance to purchase one.

Even the Alchemist Association itself had only managed to secure a small batch.

Yet those few plates had been enough for the elders to notice a tremendous improvement in their efficiency.

The Sound Barrier Arrays in particular had proven invaluable. By shielding alchemists from distraction, they allowed everyone to focus wholly on their research and pill refinement.

This alone had raised Jun Wu's favorability within the association, cementing him as someone far more than just a rising name.

Watching the President, Jun Wu offered a calm smile. "President, I've come today because there is an important matter I need to discuss with you."

"Is that so?" The President arched a brow, skeptical but intrigued. She gestured politely to the empty seat before her.

Her gaze shifted briefly to the graceful young woman standing beside him.

From what she had learned, Xinyue was the manager of Jun Wu's pavilion.

For the briefest moment, the President wondered.

'Is she his woman?'

But almost as quickly, she pushed the idle thought aside.

Xinyue, sensing the President's glance, offered a sweet and courteous smile before lowering her eyes.

She followed Jun Wu as they sat down, her movements calm and composed.

Jun Wu, for his part, showed no sign of unease.

Though he had just evaded multiple groups of assassins outside, not a trace of tension clung to his expression.

He appeared entirely at ease, as if this meeting was the only thing occupying his thoughts.

"President," he said directly, wasting no time on pleasantries, "I need a batch of common pills. I also hope this matter can be kept discreet, away from prying eyes."

This request had originally been scheduled for later, after the hidden base was completed.

But with the current situation escalating, Jun Wu decided it was better to bring the matter forward.

The President studied his face carefully.

His serious tone left no room for doubt, he was not joking.

But confusion stirred in her mind.

Why would someone like Jun Wu, with such lofty ambitions, request a large order of common pills?

Maintaining her professional composure, she asked, "How many are you talking about?"

"Let's start with one hundred of each pill," Jun Wu replied evenly.

"Hiss...!" The President sucked in a sharp breath, unable to mask her astonishment. 'So many? Is he preparing for war?'

There were dozens of common pills: the Recovery Pill, Detoxifying Pill, Healing Pill, Energy Nurturing Pill, and others.

To order a hundred of each was no small request. For a single person, the quantity was absurd.

She struggled to imagine what Jun Wu was planning.

"Is there a problem?" Jun Wu asked, his eyes steady as they settled on her.

"Not at all," the President quickly replied, shaking her head.

She didn't attempt to hide her surprise, but she knew better than to pry into the secrets of someone like Jun Wu.

"When do you require the pills?" she asked instead.

Though they were the Alchemist Association, this didn't mean they had such a vast stock lying idle.

Herbs used in pill refinement were difficult to procure. Even for them, preparing such a large order would require time.

Jun Wu thought for a moment before answering. "One month should be sufficient."

"Good," the President exhaled in relief. "That will give us enough time to prepare. We will make sure your request is fulfilled."

She was determined not to disappoint him, but also not to place her association in a desperate bind.

A month gave her the leeway she needed.

A few minutes later, the two sides finalized the deal, the terms sealed with mutual satisfaction.

Outside the Alchemist Association, the President personally escorted them to the entrance. Her face carried a bright smile, a rare show of genuine goodwill.

"President, you may return to your duties. From here, we can manage on our own," Jun Wu said politely.

"Very well. Young Master, I look forward to your open lecture," the President replied before turning back toward the hall.

As her figure disappeared from view, Jun Wu glanced at Xinyue. "Let's return."

With a flick of his hand, he activated a Concealment Formation around them. He had learned from his earlier mistake, he would not allow himself to be exposed again so easily.

Outside, under the veil of night, the assassins had yet to disperse.

They searched the streets with growing frustration, unwilling to believe that their prey had truly vanished.

They scoured every corner, certain they would find some trace.

But none of them realized that Jun Wu and Xinyue were already walking past them, cloaked by the concealment formation.

A few minutes later, the pair stepped safely into the familiar walls of their mansion.

Inside, Xinyue finally allowed the question that had been burning in her chest to escape.

"Young Master... What is going on? Are we being targeted?"

Jun Wu gave a single nod. "Yes. There are at least three or four assassin groups aiming to capture us."

He explained without hesitation, not trying to keep her in the dark.

Xinyue's eyes widened in shock.

"Three or four groups?! That many?" She hadn't imagined that their beautiful evening stroll by the river had been shadowed by such danger.

Jun Wu's voice turned firm. "From now on, whenever you go to the store, make sure either Mao Yun or Zhang Wei escorts you. Our enemies are growing impatient. We cannot afford to be careless."

Xinyue nodded with solemn determination.

She had no intention of becoming a burden to him. If being careful was the least she could do, then she would do it without fail.

Just as they reached the main courtyard, a figure emerged from the shadows. Elder Peng's face was grim, his expression heavy with worry.

"Young Master," he said, his tone grave. "We have a problem."

Chapter 95: Visiting the City Lord.

The following day.

"How is it?" Jun Wu asked, his sharp gaze fixed on Elder Peng, who stood stiffly before him.

"Young Master," Elder Peng replied, his voice laced with suppressed fury, "they refused. I tried to be reasonable with them, but those piles of shit dared not give me any face."

Jun Wu leaned back in his chair, his expression calm, though a storm flickered faintly in his eyes. "Tell me the clan names."

To say he wasn't furious would be a lie. But he knew...

Anger was useless here.

Dwelling on spilled milk would not make any difference, and Jun Wu was not the type to lash out blindly.

He preferred to move with precision.

Besides, he already knew these clans were nothing but lackeys, pawns dancing to the tune of a greater mastermind.

"Young Master," Elder Peng said solemnly, "They are the Chen clan, the Lian clan, and the Han clan."

Jun Wu's gaze sharpened slightly.

Those were not small fry.

They were the three largest metal ore businesses in Mystic City, their networks sprawling across countless mines.

Without any warning, the three clans had suddenly decided to stop selling metal ore to them.

Even worse, they had returned the money for shipments that had already been paid for, a blatant insult.

Elder Peng's fists clenched tightly.

If not for Jun Wu's carefully laid plans, he would have already revealed his identity as a Grade-1 Blacksmith and crushed those fools to teach them a lesson.

Jun Wu, however, remained composed.

He rose slowly to his feet, the calmness in his demeanor more terrifying than outright rage.

His enemies thought they could cripple his business from the inside out.

Without iron ore, how could he forge the array plates that were now in demand across the city and beyond?

If they thought cutting off his supply would make him bow his head, they were gravely mistaken.

"Tell Zhang Wei to prepare the carriage," Jun Wu said, his tone steady but cold as steel. "We're going to the Array Formation Association."

Elder Peng bowed his head. "At once, Young Master."

Since the enemies had already bared their fangs, Jun Wu had no reason to remain passive.

If they wanted to play this game, then it was time for him to make his move—a big one.

A short while later, a carriage pulled to a stop in front of the grand building of the Array Formation Association.

The streets were bustling, but the moment the carriage appeared, countless eyes turned toward it.

The apprentices and junior members of the association who were stationed outside paused their work and whispered among themselves.

Creak!

The carriage door swung open, and a young man stepped out. His presence alone caused a ripple of excitement.

"Is... is that him?" a young girl stammered, her hands trembling with excitement as she gripped the sleeves of her robes.

"Wow! This is the first time I've seen him up close," another apprentice whispered, eyes wide with admiration.

"What do you think? Should we ask him for a pointer?" one dared to suggest, only to be silenced by the incredulous looks of his companions.

Jun Wu smiled faintly at their enthusiasm as he strode casually toward the association's entrance.

Inside the lobby, the commotion grew even greater.

Everyone recognized him instantly.

In the world of array formation, Jun Wu was a rising star, a celebrity, the undisputed number one genius whose name carried weight far beyond the city.

Elders and senior members poured out of the corridors one after another to greet him warmly, their respect evident in every word and gesture.

Jun Wu responded with polite nods and calm words, but his pace never faltered.

Only after carefully extricating himself from their enthusiasm did he finally manage to find some space.

"Is the president around?" Jun Wu asked Elder Shen, who had just approached him.

"Yes, Young Master. The president was informed of your arrival and is waiting for you," Elder Shen replied respectfully, bowing her head.

She still felt immense gratitude toward Jun Wu. He had once enlightened her and the president when they had been lost in the wrong path of array formation.

His words had shifted her perspective entirely, allowing her to break free of her stagnation. Without him, she might have spent the rest of her life fumbling against the current.

Beside her, Elder Kang also smiled warmly at Jun Wu.

Though he did not know the full story of what transpired between Jun Wu, Elder Shen, and the president, he had noticed the subtle yet profound changes in Elder Shen since then.

The hints she occasionally gave him only deepened his respect for Jun Wu.

After exchanging pleasantries, the two elders guided Jun Wu to the president's office before respectfully excusing themselves.

Creak!

Jun Wu pushed open the wooden door.

The scent of ink and old scrolls lingered in the air. The president sat behind his desk, a smile lighting up his features as soon as his eyes landed on Jun Wu.

"Young Master Wu, welcome," the president said warmly. "Do you care for tea?"

"Perhaps another time," Jun Wu replied with a small shake of his head. His gaze was steady. "President, I need your help with something."

The seriousness in his voice immediately put the president on alert. He set aside his teacup, his expression sobering as he straightened his back.

"Young Master, please speak. If there is anything I can help with, I will do my utmost."

Jun Wu nodded and explained the situation in concise detail—the refusal of the Chen, Lian, and Han clans, their breach of trust, and how they had attempted to choke his supply of iron ore.

The president's expression darkened. His hand tightened around the armrest of his chair.

"Those bastards!" he spat, unable to suppress his anger.

Merchant clans cared for nothing but profit.

Their loyalty was fickle, shifting to wherever the money flowed. Such people were unreliable.

Still, he did not waste time brooding over their treachery. The problem was pressing, and a solution was needed.

"Young Master," the president said solemnly, "I can only think of one solution."

Jun Wu's gaze sharpened. "Which is?"

"The City Lord," the president replied firmly.

"The City Lord controls many of the mines in and around Mystic City. If he agrees to supply you directly, the threats of those clans will mean nothing."

Jun Wu considered it briefly, then nodded. The logic was flawless. "You're right. No clan can compare to the authority of the one who rules the city. How can I meet him?"

"That is easy," the president said with a smile. He rose to his feet. "Young Master, let us go together."

Inside the grand office of the City Lord's manor, Jun Wu and the president sat quietly across from the Mystic City Lord.

The City Lord was not an imposing man by appearance—average in build, with calm features—but his presence carried the weight of authority.

His deep eyes lingered on Jun Wu for a long moment before a faint smile broke across his face.

He remembered clearly the day Jun Wu had restored and even improved the city's defensive array.

Since then, Jun Wu's name had spread through every corner of Mystic City, earning him the favor of both the city and the academy.

And now, an opportunity to repay that debt had arrived.

"Young Master Wu," the City Lord said, his tone steady yet carrying the warmth of sincerity, "this is nothing. From this moment onward, the city itself will supply you with all the iron ore you require."

A faint smile tugged at the corner of his lips as he made his declaration.

Chapter 96: The Night Visitation

The Gong Estate loomed like a mountain at dusk.

Inside the grand hall, the Matriarch sat on her throne, carved wood and cold authority combined.

She fixed the elder in charge of external affairs with an icicle stare that allowed for no delay.

"How is it? Has it been done?" Her voice cut through the chamber; there was no room for hesitation. She wanted an answer, and she wanted it now.

"Matriarch," the elder replied, steady but clipped, "the clans have stopped their supplies. From tomorrow, the Blazing Sun Pavilion will begin to feel the heat." He bowed his head slightly as he reported.

"And what of the smaller ore houses? Have they been warned? I don't want any excuses." Her tone was minimal, an order disguised as a question.

"Everything has been arranged. Every clan that deals in ore within the city has been contacted. They've been advised. Jun Wu will soon come begging." The elder's voice carried the thin confidence of a man certain his orders would be obeyed.

"Good." The Matriarch inclined her head once; expressionless, implacable. "Deploy our men. We cannot delay any longer."

"I will see to it immediately."

.....

Inside Jun Wu's mansion, crates filled with various grades of iron ore were stacked neatly in the storehouse.

Guards moved with practiced efficiency, arranging boxes in precise rows as if preparing for a long winter.

With the deal sealed with the City Lord, Jun Wu had wasted no time. He'd placed orders for hundreds of boxes and arranged for immediate delivery.

With the City Lord's backing, shortages were no longer a looming threat; the Chen, Lian, and Han clans' attempt to cut off his supply had seriously made a huge mistake.

When the last of the carts was pushed away, Elder Peng could not hide his satisfaction.

"Hahaha— I can't wait to see those bastards' faces," he sneered, pacing the courtyard with barely contained fury.

"Now that the City Lord supplies us iron ore, they can all go to hell for all I care." He clicked his tongue in derisive glee.

Jun Wu watched him with a mild smile. "Don't worry. They'll learn their lesson soon enough," he said softly.

Night crept over Mystic City.

Lanterns blinked along the streets.

The city's night life spilled into the alleys, brothels and gambling dens filled with people, the laughter of revelers rising and sinking like waves.

With no moon to pierce the darkness, the lanes took on a thicker blackness.

Drunkards staggered home, dogs barked in hidden courtyards, and distant howls echoed under the veil of night.

In the wealthy western quarter, where most of the affluent clans had their estates, two figures melted into shadow.

"Young Master, this is the Han clan estate," Mao Yun whispered.

Jun Wu nodded.

They moved with the quiet precision of someone who had rehearsed this descent many times.

The guards dozed on their benches, half-asleep and overconfident.

Under Jun Wu's concealment array they were oblivious, breathing slow and even as if the night had swallowed everything around them.

Swiftly, Jun Wu dismantled the estate's protective array formation with practiced motions.

To him, Grade-1 Array Formation was like an open book. He could find their weakness with one eye closed.

They scaled the estate wall and slipped into the compound. Patrols were avoided with ease as if they already knew their routine .

Jun Wu intelligence gathering group— Wei Jian beggars gang had done a perfect job. Who would have a group of begger kids could find out so much about a wealthy clan like the Han clan

Silently, Jun Wu and Mao Yun jumped over the Han clan master courtyard wall and arrived beside his room.

With a slight push, the window was open and they sneaked in.

Inside, the Han clan master lay sprawled on his bed, pot-bellied and snoring, nightcap askew.

Jun Wu set down a Sound Barrier Array Plate. It unfurled with a faint hum, cloaking the chamber in a ring of silence; beyond the dome, the city's sounds continued, indifferent.

Within, it was another world.

Then the interrogation began.

Pah! Pah! Pah!

Mao Yun's slaps landed like hammers. The clan master bolted upright, face streaked and eyes wide with shock.

"H—how dare—" he began, the words cutting off as he recognized Jun Wu standing by the bedside.

"Y-Young Master..." he gasped, voice trembling.

Fear uncoiled inside him.

He had believed the rumor that Jun Wu would not retaliate. His power and influence are weak and without any backing. But now, he realized everyone was wrong.

He wanted to cry but there were no tears in his eyes. Inwardly, he was already cursing all the generations of the Gong clan.

Jun Wu's expression was like winter. Clear, hard, without warmth. "I ask. You answer," he said.

"Y-yes..." the man stammered, nodding like a bird.

"Why did you stop selling me iron ore?"

"The— the Gong clan," the merchant blurted.

Panic gave him no loyalty; merchants bowed to coins, and his life was more important than gold coins.

Jun Wu listened, methodical, filing every scrap of information. Nothing surprised him, though each confirmation tightened his chest.

When Jun Wu judged he had what he needed, he gave Mao Yun a signal.

Bang! Bang!

Ahhhh! Ahhhh!

The room erupted into screams. The Han clan master's protests became animal howls as pain tore through him.

The methods were swift and efficient; within minutes the once-proud merchant lay crumpled on the floor, reduced in size and spirit.

His rounded belly seemed to have shrunk; his arms twisted in an impossible position.

"Speak of what happened, and I will return. But when I do..." Jun Wu's voice trailed off into a promise so cold it seemed to chill the very air. He did not finish; he did not need to.

Watching Jun Wu and Mao Yun disappear from the room, the Han clan master summoned all his strength.

"H-e-l-p," the Han clan master whimpered. Outside, the night kept its indifferent rhythm.

Jun Wu and Mao Yun left as quietly as they had entered, slipping back over the wall and merging with the city's shadows.

Tonight, he would make sure those targeting would have to think twice.

Chapter 97: Raiding the Gong Clan Store.

While the city lay quiet under the shroud of night, Jun Wu and Mao Yun moved like shadows, paying visits to the Chen clan and the Lian clan.

Both clans were taught a lesson they would not soon forget.

Jun Wu did not kill them, but the punishment he delivered was merciless.

Their injuries were so grave that even with the best physicians, it would take months before they could recover.

By the time he left, their leaders understood one truth clearly—provoking Jun Wu came with a price far greater than they could afford.

After interrogating all three clans, the culprit behind the scheme became clear.

It was the Gong clan.

Jun Wu's expression turned cold.

Without hesitation, still cloaked under the veil of night, he and Mao Yun headed toward the Gong clan's main storehouse.

"They want to play games?" Jun Wu murmured coldly. "Then I'll indulge them."

Standing in the shadow of a narrow alley near the pavilion, Jun Wu turned to Mao Yun and asked in a low voice.

"How many First Rated Martial Artists can you handle at once?"

Mao Yun was silent for a moment before answering. "Three... but only for a few minutes at best."

"That's enough." Jun Wu nodded firmly. "Let's go. Tonight, we'll burn everything to the ground."

He was done being passive. If the Gong clan wanted war, he would give it to them.

The two moved swiftly toward the Gong pavilion.

In the past, Jun Wu would not have dared to strike directly at the Gong clan's storehouse.

Without the Concealment Array, such an attempt would have been nothing short of suicide. But now?

Now he was confident.

With the array's protection, he could bypass their defenses and slaughter anyone below the Master Realm.

Jun Wu cast the Concealment Array, and instantly both he and Mao Yun seemed to fade into the darkness itself, invisible to the eyes of ordinary guards.

Slowly, they approached the entrance of the pavilion, their gazes fixed on the guards stationed at the massive door.

Within a few feet of their position, Jun Wu and Mao Yun exchanged glances and gave a single nod.

Whoosh!

Jun Wu struck first, sending six wind blades slicing through the air.

Beside him, Mao Yun moved with equal swiftness, his spear gleaming coldly under the moonlight.

Before the guards could react, three were shredded into pieces by Jun Wu's blades.

The others froze in disbelief, their bodies rooted in fear, giving Mao Yun the perfect opening.

Bang! Bang!

Like a viper, Mao Yun's spear darted forward, cutting through two necks with ruthless precision.

Jun Wu's second volley of wind blades followed immediately, finishing the rest.

Eight guards fell lifelessly to the cold, hard ground.

Blood seeped across the stone, pooling around their corpses.

Until their last breath, they had not even realized how they were killed.

"Move," Jun Wu said.

The two leapt over the pavilion fence and entered the backyard. Another wave of massacre began.

Jun Wu and Mao Yun cut down everyone in their path.

They did not care whether it was a guard, a servant, or a disciple—tonight, the Gong clan would drown in blood.

The slaughter quickly drew attention.

From his chambers, Gong Bo, the store manager, stepped out, confusion written across his face.

Astonishment followed almost instantly.

"Who dares attack the Gong clan?" he roared.

For decades, the Gong clan had stayed in the Mystic City with authority.

Even the Jun clan would not openly attack them without reason.

Yet here, in his very courtyard, blood stained the ground and corpses piled high.

Several guards rushed to him, panic in their eyes.

"My Lord, there are two intruders!" one shouted.

"Two?" Gong Bo was stunned.

Just two men dared to attack *his* clan?

What gave them the confidence?

His face darkened, fury boiling within.

This was not merely an assault—it was a humiliation.

'Has my Gong clan fallen so low that mere rats dare bare their fangs at us?' His rage threatened to spill over.

"Don't kill them!" Gong Bo bellowed. "Capture them alive. I'll make sure they beg for death before the end."

But before his command could echo through the night, a series of anguished screams rang out.

"Lord... they're here!" a trembling guard cried.

Bang!

An explosion rocked the courtyard. Gong Bo's face twisted with rage. "What are you waiting for? Kill them!"

Three Intermediate Stage First Rated Martial Artists rushed forward to obey.

Whoosh! Whoosh!

But as they barely set foot outside the courtyard, six razor-sharp wind blades slashed toward them, while Mao Yun's spear lunged with icy precision.

Ahhh! Ahhh! Ahhh!

Two were instantly torn apart by Jun Wu's attacks.

One had his arm severed, another's chest carved open.

The third was skewered by Mao Yun's spear before he could even scream a second time.

Jun Wu unleashed another barrage of attack, sending the guards to the afterlife without hesitation.

Before, Jun Wu might have struggled against such opponents.

But now, as an Early Stage First Rated Martial Artist, he dispatched them effortlessly.

Even peak-stage martial artists were no longer beyond his reach.

The courtyard filled with the cries of the dying.

Gong Bo's body trembled. For the first time, he realized he had gravely underestimated his enemy.

The ground shook as the doors to the courtyard were blasted apart.

Jun Wu and Mao Yun stepped through the debris, their figures cloaked in killing intent.

When Gong Bo saw the intruder clearly, his body froze.

"J-Jun Wu..." he stammered, disbelief and terror mixing in his voice.

How could it be him?

The so-called trash of the Jun clan?

Never in his wildest dreams did he imagine Jun Wu would dare attack him, let alone with such strength.

Jun Wu sneered. He wasn't surprised to be recognized. Many had seen him during the beast tide, and others had witnessed his rise when he opened his pavilion.

"Surprised?" Jun Wu smirked.

"Your clan has crossed my line again and again. Tonight, I'll make sure the whole city knows what happens to anyone who dares provoke me."

For a moment, Gong Bo faltered. But then he forced himself to straighten, summoning what little courage he could muster.

"What? Just because you killed a few guards, you think you're strong? Naive!" he shouted, though his voice cracked.

"When the masters of my clan arrive, they'll flatten you like the insect you are!"

Jun Wu only looked at him with disdain.

"Idiot."

He raised his hand, and eight wind strikes materialized, lashing out at the three guards still standing beside Gong Bo.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

In an instant, their bodies collapsed lifelessly to the ground.

The difference in strength was overwhelming. Jun Wu's strike was absolute—an overkill.

Now alone in the courtyard, Gong Bo's courage shattered completely.

He fell to the ground, staring up at Jun Wu as if he was looking at a monster.

"How... how did you become this powerful?" he whispered, voice trembling.

"You were supposed to be just an array master..."

But there would be no answer. The only truth awaiting for him was the afterlife.

Chapter 98: Shocking the Whole City.

The sun rose over the horizon, casting a golden hue across the Mystic City. Slowly, the bustling city awakened from its slumber.

The streets, once silent, now filled with the sounds of shopkeepers preparing their stalls, the clattering of carts, and the chatter of servants rushing about.

Yet, amidst this ordinary morning bustle, shocking news began to ripple through the streets like wildfire.

"Have you heard the news?" a woman asked, her voice hushed but urgent.

"News? What news?" her neighbor replied, pausing with curiosity as he arranged the goods in his small stall.

The woman glanced around quickly, her eyes darting left and right to make sure no one else was listening.

She leaned closer, pressing a finger to her lips. "Keep your voice down. This isn't something to shout about."

The old man frowned.

Why so much secrecy?

What kind of news demanded such cautious behavior?

And this only made his curiosity grow stronger.

When she finally beckoned him closer, he leaned in eagerly. She whispered directly into his ear, her breath trembling with excitement and fear.

"I heard the Gong clan's store was raided last night... and set ablaze."

The man's eyes widened. "What!" His shout turned several heads.

"Shhh! Fool!" the woman hissed, glaring at him. "Do you want the whole street to hear you?"

But the man ignored her insult. He stared at her with disbelief. "Are you certain about this?"

"What do you mean by certain?" she snapped, folding her arms.

"Half the city is already talking about it. If you don't believe me, go and see with your own eyes." Snorting, she turned back to arrange her wares, no longer interested in indulging his shock.

The old man, however, felt a chill run down his spine.

The Gong clan was not weak; they might not rival the Jun clan, but their power ran deeper than most dared to admit.

Even the two great academies treated them with respect.

And yet, someone had dared to attack their store?

Burn it to the ground?

Without waiting another moment, he hurried off toward the Gong clan's store, his heart pounding.

....

Inside the City Lord's mansion, the atmosphere was far more controlled.

The City Lord sat calmly, sipping tea as his butler finished recounting the night's events.

"My Lord," the old butler asked cautiously, "Who do you think would dare such a thing?"

The City Lord's expression did not shift, his gaze steady and unreadable. He understood the weight of the matter well.

The Gong clan's store being destroyed wasn't just a private blood feud. It was an open act that threatened the fragile balance of power within the city.

"How would I know?" he said at last, setting down his cup.

"Send the guards to investigate, but do not dig too deep." He waved his hand, signaling the end of the conversation.

"Yes, My Lord." The butler bowed deeply before leaving.

Left alone, the City Lord leaned back in his chair, squinting as he muttered, "Could it be him?"

There was only one name in his mind: Jun Wu.

The boy had been dismissed as trash for so long, yet lately his actions had shaken the entire city.

Still, the City Lord could not fathom why Jun Wu would target the Gong clan.

After a long moment of thought, he shook his head. "This has nothing to do with me," he whispered.

"Let the clans handle their own quarrels."

....

At the Mystic Path Academy, the vice dean sat behind his desk, his sharp eyes fixed on the woman standing respectfully before him.

"Who do you think is responsible for this?" he asked.

The woman bowed her head slightly. "I cannot say for certain. But apart from the Jun clan, who else would be bold enough to kill and set the Gong clan's store ablaze?"

The vice dean drummed his fingers on the table, thoughtful. "Very well. Ensure that no student leaves the academy premises for the next week. We cannot predict how the Gong clan will respond to such a blatant provocation."

"Yes, Vice Dean," the woman replied with a respectful nod before hurrying away.

When she was gone, the vice dean exhaled slowly.

Like many others, he suspected the Jun clan, but he could not understand why.

Unable to unravel it, he resolved to remain cautious and simply observe how the situation unfolded.

...

In the Han clan mansion, the scene was far less composed.

The Han clan master lay wrapped in bandages, his body resembling a mummy, only his weary eyes visible. He winced in pain with every breath.

"W-What... do you say?" he croaked, his voice hoarse.

His butler knelt beside him, his tone grave. "My Lord, the Gong clan store has been razed to the ground. Everyone inside was slaughtered."

The Han clan master's eyes widened, and pain shot through his body so suddenly that he let out a sharp cry.

"My Lord, please, calm yourself!" the butler pleaded, rushing to steady him.

But the Han clan master barely heard him.

His mind was filled with the terrifying face of Jun Wu, a face that haunted his thoughts since their last encounter.

He had originally planned to warn the Gong clan about Jun Wu, but now...

Jun Wu's warning still echoed in his ears.

When had the boy transformed into such a monster?

His heart thudded heavily, fear coiling in his chest.

'From now on, I must avoid that demon at all costs,' he swore silently.

Unbeknownst to him, the Chen clan master and the Lian clan master were arriving at the same conclusion.

They were merchants, not warriors.

They had no desire to provoke Jun Wu again.

Better to let the Gong clan fight their own battles than be dragged into his wrath.

Their only concern now was survival, and perhaps repairing their fractured ties with Jun Wu.

And while speculation raged in the city, a lone carriage galloped through the streets, its wheels clattering against the cobblestones.

It drew to a stop before the Jun Wu's mansion gate.

From within the carriage, a young woman stepped out. She was coldly beautiful, her presence commanding immediate attention.

She lifted her gaze toward the mansion doors, her eyes unreadable.

Chapter 99: Searching For The Ruin Map

Jun Wu stared at Mei Ling in astonishment, his brows knitting slightly as if trying to confirm she was real.

Her sudden arrival was something he had never expected, not now, and perhaps not even for several more months, if ever.

Mei Ling, however, sat with poise, her back straight, exuding a cold, frigid aura that seemed to push the air around her into silence.

People instinctively kept their distance from her.

Her beauty was undeniable, but her expression was as unreadable as frost over a frozen lake.

Clearing his throat, Jun Wu straightened in his chair, his gaze steady. "Miss Ling, what brought you here today?"

Though he already had a strong suspicion about her intentions, he chose not to jump to conclusions.

Mei Ling was not the kind of woman one could afford to misunderstand.

"The map." Her answer was simple, concise, and heavy with meaning.

Jun Wu wasn't surprised.

He had anticipated this, yet hearing her say it made the matter more concrete.

He leaned forward slightly. "Have you discovered something?"

"Yes." Mei Ling's tone remained cool.

With measured movements, she produced an ancient parchment and spread it across the small table between them.

"I found an old map, and it bears a resemblance to the one we already have."

Jun Wu leaned in to examine the fragile parchment.

The ink was faded, the drawings archaic, and the labels nearly unrecognizable.

The landforms etched onto it felt foreign, as though drawn by a civilization long forgotten.

"Don't tell me you've tried to find the map?" Mei Ling's gaze lifted, sharp and penetrating, locking onto him.

Jun Wu froze under her stare.

Caught red-handed, he gave a shameless grin and rubbed the back of his head.

"Miss Ling, you see, I've been rather busy these past few weeks..."

A light scoff escaped her lips, soft but biting.

She understood perfectly well that Jun Wu had been consumed with work.

His array plates were in high demand across the city, and his upcoming public lecture had already stirred an uproar. Excuses aside, his busyness was genuine.

"This," Mei Ling continued, her slender finger gliding across the ancient parchment.

"Is a map of the Soaring Cloud Region, the White Mountain Region, and the Shadowless Region. But as you can see, much has changed."

She unfurled another piece of parchment, this one their Tier-2 ruin map, and overlaid it on the ancient one.

"Look here. When you trace the main roads and compare the landmarks, it matches with this valley—situated right at the convergence of the three regions."

Jun Wu narrowed his eyes, studying the overlapping maps. Indeed, the similarities were undeniable.

Rivers aligned, mountain ranges connected, and the valley she indicated bore striking resemblance to their ruin map.

He raised his head and met her gaze.

"I take it you've already done some research on this valley?"

Mei Ling gave a small nod. "I have. Unfortunately, I found nothing tangible."

Silence settled between them for a moment.

Jun Wu tapped his fingers against the table, thinking.

She had already done the hard work of piecing together the puzzle. It would be shameful to simply sit back.

"Give me a moment." He rose to his feet and stepped out of the room.

Mei Ling watched him leave, her face as impassive as ever, though her eyes glimmered faintly with curiosity.

A minute later, Jun Wu returned, resolve etched across his face. "Miss Ling, why don't we visit the City Lord's mansion? Perhaps their library holds something we can use."

Without a word, Mei Ling reached into her sleeve and pulled out a delicate white veil.

She draped it across her face, concealing her features.

Jun Wu understood immediately.

A woman of her status and beauty could not simply wander about the city without drawing dangerous attention.

....

They arrived at the City Lord's library, a towering hall.

Inside rows upon rows of towering shelves stretched across the vast space, each groaning under the weight of centuries of knowledge.

Jun Wu had already sent Zhang Wei ahead to notify the City Lord of their arrival, and so they encountered no resistance at the entrance.

The guards simply bowed and allowed them through.

As they entered, Jun Wu glanced at Mei Ling and was surprised. Her movements were precise, almost instinctive, as if she already knew exactly where to go.

He watched her stride purposefully deeper into the library, weaving between shelves until she arrived at the ancient texts section.

Her delicate fingers traced the spines of old tomes, pausing now and then.

One after another, she began pulling out history books, stacking them into a small mountain on the nearby table.

"Let's start with these," she said curtly, settling into a chair.

Jun Wu nodded and sat opposite her.

Her dedication left him no room for idleness.

Together, they divided the books and began to read.

Hours seemed to blur away.

The quiet scratching of pages turned, the faint rustle of parchment, and the soft sound of their breathing were the only noises that filled the library corner.

Before long, a small mountain of books surrounded them.

The elder overseeing the library peeked at the sight, his mouth agape.

"What are they doing?" he muttered under his breath. But since Jun Wu had the City Lord's approval, the old man dared not intervene.

He could only shake his head in disbelief.

Eventually, Jun Wu set down one of the thicker tomes, rubbing his temples.

"Anything?" he asked wearily.

Mei Ling closed the book in her hands with a soft thud and shook her head.

"No. It seems everything relevant has been deliberately cut off."

Jun Wu frowned. "I noticed the same. Whole sections are missing—or perhaps erased."

The records were strange, fragmented.

The history they read did not flow in chronological order.

Some passages skipped centuries, and others glossed over entire events with vague, meaningless words.

It was as if someone had intentionally buried the truth.

The more they read, the clearer it became: the ancient era was little more than a rumor.

The Shattered Era was even more scarcely documented, riddled with gaps and contradictions.

Only the Middle Era contained somewhat coherent records, yet even it was marred by blank spaces and unanswered mysteries.

Jun Wu leaned back in his chair, brows furrowed. "How could so much history vanish?"

The world speaks of four great eras: the Ancient Era, the Shattered Era, the Middle Era, and the Current Era—the so-called Age of Uncertainty.

But the first two are practically nonexistent here.

Mei Ling's gaze darkened. "It's as if someone wanted the past erased."

Jun Wu's eyes fell upon one particular missing piece that disturbed him more than the rest.

"Take this, for example...the sudden disappearance of an empire that once ruled the Soaring Cloud Region."

His voice dropped lower, his tone filled with weight.

"The Blackstone Empire."

Chapter 100: Location of the Ruin Map

The Blackstone Empire was one of the many great empires that had vanished without a trace in recent times.

For a long while, Jun Wu and Mei Ling sat in silence, the weight of that knowledge pressing heavily on them.

The history of the continent was already fractured and unreliable, riddled with contradictions and missing pieces.

Yet this revelation unsettled them more than most.

Neither knew how to even begin piecing the puzzle together.

As for traveling to the location marked on the ruin map, they did not dare think about it.

The valley existed only on the ancient map.

On any current map of the Soaring Cloud Region, no such valley was marked.

It was as though the place itself had been swallowed by time.

"It's as if the land itself has vanished," Mei Ling murmured, her cold gaze lingering on the fading ink of the map.

Then she looked at Jun Wu, her eyes sharpening. "Do you know anyone you can ask?"

Her tone was measured, but he caught the subtle caution beneath her words.

The situation was far too sensitive. The fewer people who knew about the ruin map, the better.

Jun Wu frowned slightly, rolling the matter over in his mind. He carefully folded the ruin map, slipping it back into his sleeve.

For a moment, his gaze lingered on the ancient map spread before them.

Then, without saying a word, he stood and approached the elder seated at the front of the library hall.

"Elder, we need your assistance," Jun Wu said politely, bowing slightly. His voice was calm, but there was a quiet firmness to it.

The elder raised his head, blinking in confusion.

The two young stars had been buried in books since early afternoon, and now the sun was already sinking toward the horizon.

What more could they possibly require at this hour?

"Young Master," the elder replied kindly, "Tell this old man what you need. If it lies within my ability, I will certainly help."

"Thank you, Elder." Jun Wu smiled faintly, a rare warmth flashing across his face.

He gestured for the elder to follow him back to their table.

When they arrived, the elder's eyes widened at the sight.

Piles of books, some stacked precariously, others left open on the ground, surrounded their table like a fortress.

"These two..." he muttered under his breath, but he quickly fell silent as Jun Wu pointed at the map laid out before them.

"Elder, could you tell us where this valley might be on the current map?" Jun Wu asked, tapping a small mark drawn upon the ancient parchment.

The elder squinted, leaning closer.

His brows furrowed as he studied the aged paper.

As the guardian of the city library, he possessed vast knowledge of history, maps, and records that few others could rival.

But even so, the past was complicated, fragmented, riddled with gaps, and burdened with mysteries that no amount of study could fully resolve.

After a few seconds, he straightened his back, his voice thoughtful. "I recognize this.

This map is from more than two thousand years ago."

Jun Wu and Mei Ling exchanged a brief glance but kept their silence, waiting for him to continue.

"The world has changed greatly since then," the elder said slowly. "Many strange things have happened. These changes began during the Shattered Era..."

He paused, as though carefully choosing his words. "Our Soaring Cloud Region is one of the largest in the known world, but during the Shattered Era, its boundaries began to shrink. Don't ask me why—it is something even I do not know."

The statement silenced Jun Wu and Mei Ling.

Questions burned on their tongues, but they swallowed them, sensing that the elder was not finished.

"As the Soaring Cloud Region contracted, countless landmarks vanished," he went on. "At the same time, new lands emerged from nowhere."

"New land?" Jun Wu muttered, unable to contain his shock.

Even Mei Ling's usually composed expression faltered. They had scoured countless histories and records, yet not once had such a phenomenon been mentioned.

The elder sighed softly at their reactions. "Like I said, the world is far more mysterious than we realize."

He turned and walked toward the back shelves. "Give me a moment."

Jun Wu and Mei Ling sat in silence, still grappling with what they had just heard.

The idea of land vanishing and reappearing was something they never imagined. And now...

Minutes later, the Elder returned, carrying a large tome bound in dark, worn leather.

Bang!

The weight of the old tome shook the table when he set it down.

Jun Wu and Mei Ling both stared, startled. For such an ancient book to be so heavy.

The elder chuckled at their expressions. "Don't be surprised. Ancient texts were crafted with materials far beyond ordinary leather and ink. To preserve them for thousands of years, they had to be."

With slow, reverent hands, he opened the tome, careful not to damage the brittle pages.

"There..." He pointed at an old map etched in faded ink.

Jun Wu and Mei Ling leaned forward.

The map resembled the ancient one they had studied, though it was far more detailed.

"This is a fragmented map from the Shattered Era," the elder explained. Then, turning the pages, he revealed another map. "And this is from the Middle Era."

The difference was striking.

The Middle Era map bore similarities to the Shattered Era, but new landmarks had emerged, while many old ones were gone.

Before the pair could voice their amazement, the elder flipped further.

Another map lay revealed, this one from the early years of the Current Era.

It bore traces of the Middle Era remained, vast swaths of land had shifted or disappeared entirely.

"Do you see?" The elder raised his head, studying their faces. "In every era, the landmarks are never the same."

Jun Wu and Mei Ling nodded slowly, the truth settling over them like a heavy cloak.

The world they lived in was far stranger and more unstable than they had ever imagined.

The elder seemed pleased that they grasped the gravity of it. "Although the land keeps changing, careful study of the maps can still allow us to deduce many things."

He tapped the ancient valley mark on the parchment before them.

"Take the valley you're so interested in. According to the maps, it once lay at the middle of three regions. Over time, it vanishes—but if we follow the shifts carefully..." He trailed off, his lips curving into the faintest of smiles.

"We can deduce that the valley should now lie within the Shadowless Region."