

### Chapter 621 - Talks of Peace

It happened to be early in the morning. A thin mist floated above the surface of the water. The air was clear and fresh. Everything seemed so peaceful.

However, the sense of danger Li Qingshan experienced did not weaken at all. Instead, it grew stronger. The enemy must have used a method to conceal their figures and aura!

Li Qingshan made a prompt decision and stopped refining the river, erasing his aura completely before swimming upstream, changing his position. He was like a spirit turtle submerging into the sea abyss, completely vanishing without a trace. No matter how sensitive the enemy's soul sense was, they would struggle to find him.

Afterwards, he used his six senses to search for the enemy. Sure enough, his sudden disappearance caused some confusion among the enemy. Although they still did not give off even a sliver of aura, their thought process wavered momentarily, which provided a direction for the spirit turtle's senses.

The Spirit Turtle Suppresses the Seas, Foreboding Fate!

There are three enemies, and they're people who I've associated with in the past. Yep, so it's them. Sure enough, they couldn't help themselves and have come to make trouble?

The corner of Li Qingshan's lips curled into a smile, but his gaze was very solemn. The three people were Si Qing, E Dan, and Jia Zhen. They surrounded him from different directions.

Although they were only Golden Core cultivators, Li Qingshan dared not be careless. He did not forget how the Dark Queen had annihilated all the Golden Core cultivators back then on Burial Mound mountain.

To be able to stand out in the brutal selection of princes and rank eleventh, Si Qing was probably as powerful as the Dark Queen. Moreover, even Si Qing treated Jia Zhen and E Dan courteously, so their cultivations went without saying.

If the three of them struck together, it would definitely be devastating. They would not give up unless they reached their objective.

They've come for me, so I'll play along and use the clone to probe them out! However, I need to wait for them to strike first and avoid the full brunt of the blow. The clone's strength is still too weak after all. If I fail to recall the clone using the Watermirror's Image and they kill it, I'll lose the Water God Seal, and it won't be worth it.

Si Qing constantly scanned the ground with his jackal-like eyes, but he was unable to find a single trace of Northmoon. He instead became even more excited and his lips curled into a smile. "This Northmoon really is as troublesome as the rumors have suggested!"

Aside from duels, the game he loved the most was hunting, but unfortunately, it was already very difficult for him to find suitable prey with his current strength, unless he underwent trials in the places of wilderness like the Mist province.

If there was no danger of being devoured by the prey, then hunting was merely boring slaughter. It would be completely pointless. Northmoon had reignited his passion. The craftier and more vicious the prey was, the more interesting the hunt would be.

Northmoon, I will definitely claim your head personally and treat it as my most prized collection!

Jia Zhen's face sank. Ever since he had come to the Ruyi commandery, he had begun preparing for killing Northmoon, ranging from the innate abilities he used every battle and the speed limit of when he flapped his wings to his regular techniques when attacking and defending and an analysis of his disposition and so on...

Finally, he had come up with a perfect plan to hunt him down, but something had gone wrong right from the first step. He could not divine him, nor could he find his accurate location. Moon Court lake seemed to be his dwelling, but through his investigations, it was only a place a group of night roamers occupied. Many formations protected the area. It would be very difficult to achieve a surprise attack.

At their realm of cultivation, defeating an opponent was easy, but killing them was far too difficult. If they could not kill in a single strike, it would lead to endless trouble, such that they would be better off maintaining the current situation.

In the end, he used the great cauldron in the marquis' estate and observed the real-time situation of the bodies of water being refined to find his location, yet his target seemed like he had sensed something, hiding away in the final moment.

"Old Jia, what do we do now?"

E Dan communicated to Jia Zhen from another side. The impression he had left in Li Qingshan and everyone else's heart was that he was a brutal and restless person. Northmoon had a grievance of killing his disciples and stealing his woman from him. In particular, E Dan had personally nurtured E Feng, who even took on his surname. He was closer with him than an actual son. Such a great grievance was enough to drive a normal person crazy, such that they would do everything for revenge.

Right now, he actually behaved extraordinarily calmly. There was not a hint of restlessness in his eyes. His body was relaxed and at ease. His normal behaviour was merely an extremely good disguise. If anyone truly treated him as a brute, they would definitely pay a heavy price.

"Wait! Northmoon is rather arrogant. As long as we wait until he runs out of patience and comes out to provoke us first, we'll strike together!"

"Alright!" Si Qing and E Dan nodded in agreement.

The sun rose up bit by bit. Unable to see one another, they fell into a silent stalemate, waiting for the other side to show an opening first. The sun rose to the zenith. The scorching sunlight scattered on the ground and water vapour rose up hazily.

Loth woke up from her slumber and saw Northmoon sitting beside her, gazing right ahead as if he was looking at some extremely distant place.

"What are you doing?"

“You’re awake! The new Marquis of Ruyi is currently targeting my clone with his two lackeys. I’m taking them on in a battle of patience!”

Li Qingshan casually pulled Lolth into his arms. His lust had already faded away, but it was still a very pleasant sensation.

Having been so tenderly embraced by him, Lolth found it very difficult to grow accustomed to. She sneered and said, “What? There’s times when you’re afraid too?”

Smack! Li Qingshan slapped her on her plump bottom mercilessly. “This isn’t called being afraid. This is called temporary forbearance. After all, didn’t I call you ma’am Spider Queen in the past and serve as your amusement? Yet now, I’ve turned the tables and become your man.”

“You won’t be able to stay complacent for long!” Lolth’s eyes were filled with viciousness, and her voice seemed to be dripping with venom, enough to strike fear into the hearts of everyone.

Li Qingshan smiled gently and muttered to himself, “The new Marquis of Ruyi is a prince from the Dragon province. Standing behind him is a whole group of Soul Nascence cultivators, and I’ve fallen out with the Daemon race crown prince of the Green province, Mo Yu, so the Dragon King of Ink Sea probably won’t support me. If I want to kill him, not only will I require the strength to defeat him, but I also need to become unafraid of his background somehow.”

Lolth said maliciously, “If you can kill him, I’ll admit you’re my man!”

Li Qingshan laughed aloud and grabbed her by the chin. “It doesn’t matter whether you admit it or not. I just want your body anyway. I have no interest in your heart, so you better just keep it for yourself! Though, I have to say that I love it when you refuse to accept me, yet there’s also nothing you can do about it!” Afterwards, Lolth made the expression that he loved most again.

Time passed by slowly. Li Qingshan teased Lolth, so he did not feel bored. By wasting time with them using his clone, he was not afraid even if he lasted until the end of time. Suddenly, he came to a realisation. This was the way the spirit turtle fought!

Although it was holing up in his shell like a coward, no one could do anything to him, while he had a lengthy lifespan and could destroy all enemies through time.

The sun began to set in the west. Si Qing said, “Looks like he knows about our power and refuses to come out. E Dan said, “How about this? Why don’t we scare him? He’s right in this region anyway.”

Jia Zhen said, “Let’s retreat for now! We’ve already lost the optimal opportunity. If we take action right now, we’ll only alert him and scare him away. What do you think, your highness?”

“My imperial father has once told us that the most important property to hunting is not courage or intelligence, but patience.”

“As you say, your highness!”

The three of them then silently retreated as if they had never been here in the first place. However, they had wasted an entire day for nothing, so they could not help but feel rather vexed.

“You’ve come uninvited before leaving without bidding farewell. Just what has brought you here? You might as well tell me about it!”

Before the three of them could even travel far away, a voice rang out from afar. The bastard Northmoon flapped his wings and stared at them with his arms crossed, smiling.

Si Qing said, “I’ve long heard about your great name, Northmoon. Now that I’ve tried you, sure enough, you do live up to your reputation!” Jia Zhen and E Dan silently flanked around him again.

“Then I’d advise you to stop trying any further, just in case it leads to any misunderstandings, or do you insist on fighting until one of us dies?”

Li Qingshan flapped his wings and retreated to five kilometers away, maintaining his smile but raising his vigilance to the limit. He had already prepared the Watermirror’s Image, ready to recall his clone the moment they struck.

Jia Zhen’s heart skipped a beat. In the information he had collected, Northmoon possessed this special characteristic, which was that he rarely went out of his way to make trouble. He did not have much hostility towards humans either, devoting all of his focus to cultivation. Only when people came to stop him and deal with him would he strike valiantly and kill them all.

He had played a decisive role in ending the chess game that was the Clear River prefecture. Otherwise, with his actual strength, even uprooting the Academy of the Hundred Schools and the various sects would not be difficult. However, he was able to bide his time again and again, even sparing the people of the academy and letting them leave peacefully at Bronze Cauldron mountain. Beneath his arrogant and flagrant appearance, he was rather prudent and knew when to advance or retreat.

This was his virtue, but not something they could not use!

“We’ve come today because we want you as a friend.”

“Heh, the way you humans make friends sure is special!” Li Qingshan mocked.

“We were just confirming whether you had the right or not. If you didn’t live up to your reputation, then you would have deserved it even if you were killed off. The strong never makes friends with the weak,” Si Qing said indifferently, vaguely understanding Jia Zhen’s intentions. By saying that, it did not go against his identity, and it made perfect sense. It was convincing.

“That is true, but don’t the Human race and the Daemon race oppose one another?”

Jia Zhen said, “That’s not the case. When the founding emperor conquered the world, he had also borrowed the strength of the Ten Daemon Kings. Doesn’t the White Hawk commander of the Ruyi commandery, Gu Yanying, possess the bloodline of daemons? Clearly, whether we’re friend or foe has nothing to do with our race. Instead, it has to do with our mutual interests. If interests collided, then let alone clansmen, even brothers connected by blood are willing to go to war with one another. You should have experienced this already, sir.”

Li Qingshan smiled. “That makes even more sense. Though, I’d like to ask where exactly is our mutual benefit? Surely we can’t request each other to go against our interests?”

Jia Zhen said, "With how intelligent you are, sir, can you really be fooled by the likes of us? Our mutual interests must be found together. Peaceful coexistence surpasses risking life-threatening danger and going for each other's throats, doesn't it?"

"That's fantastic! That's exactly what I was thinking too!" Li Qingshan laughed aloud.

### **Chapter 622 - A Promise of Alliance**

"In the past, the founding emperor had only completed his great cause with the support of seniors Hawk God and Wolf God. As a descendant of the imperial family, I'm also willing to follow my ancestor's example and become allies with you so that we rule over the Ruyi commandery together. You can manage the daemons, while I manage the humans. Wouldn't that be perfect?"

Si Qing made a promise, but the killing intent in his heart did not lessen at all. Misleading was also a part of hunting. In order to deal with intelligent prey, he had to use intelligence too.

"That's fantastic, but I want to refine the waters of the Ruyi commandery..." Northmoon's eyes lit up as if he was very interested yet rather doubtful.

"You can refine the rivers and lakes of the Ruyi commander freely. We won't obstruct you at all," Si Qing said generously, but he thought inside, Your Water God Seal is mine. Only by refining the mountains and waters before combining it with the power of belief of the people can you refine the true Seal of Mountains and Rivers. Its power is so great that even Soul Nascence cultivators cannot be careless when facing it.

Li Qingshan smiled. "You sure are much more generous than Jiang Fu. Not bad, not bad!"

Jia Zhen said, "A coincidental meeting is far better than an invitation. Why don't you return to the marquis' estate with us so that we can discuss how we rule over the Ruyi commandery?"

"About this... Is there anything good in the marquis' estate?"

Si Qing said, "Delicious food and wine; music and dance; rare and precious treasures; whatever you want!"

"Are there any beauties?"

"So Northmoon has an interest in this. There are numerous beauties for you to freely choose from."

"That's great, but I just wonder if any of these beauties are prettier than Qiu Haitang? Oh right, I think I killed a few people a few days ago. They claimed to be the disciples of some E Dan person. Don't tell me you're E Dan!" Li Qingshan smiled as his gaze drifted over to E Dan's face.

E Dan showed no anger at all. Instead he laughed aloud. "Sect master Qiu is obviously a rare beauty. Great minds sure do think alike, but she's not the only beauty in the world. Once we return to the marquis' estate, we can admire and evaluate the various beauties of the Ruyi commandery together. As for my disappointing disciples, if you've killed them, then you've killed them. You've saved them from running around and embarrassing me. I really need to thank you for this!"

"Fellow E truly is a straightforward man. I like it!" Li Qingshan praised loudly, but he thought inside, If you had spoken like this right from the beginning, why would I have my mind set on killing you?

“It’s quite late now. Let’s go!”

Li Qingshan considered it and shook his head. “Maybe some other day! I still have to continue with refining the river. Once I complete this, I’ll definitely pay a visit to the marquis’ estate and express my thanks!”

“Alright, then I await your arrival in the marquis’ estate.” Si Qing clasped his hands and flew away with Jia Zhen and E Dan.

Li Qingshan rubbed his chin. He watched the three of them vanish into the horizon as he smiled in thought. “This sure is interesting. Heh, these crafty humans, but I’m no different from you!”

The three of them directly returned to the estate. E Dan asked, “Will he buy this?”

Jia Zhen swung his feather fan gently. “Don’t tell me what I said earlier made no sense? Don’t worry, no matter how cautious someone is, they’ll lower their guard as time goes on. We can still make good use of him before we kill him. The death of your son will definitely be avenged.”

The three of them glanced at each other while smiling. At this moment, caretaker Zheng came in and reported, “Your highness, a Qi Practitioner wishes to see you!”

“A Qi Practitioner? Send him away!”

“He says he has a great secret to offer up to your highness!”

“Oh? Then send him in. If he’s just trying to amuse me, hmph!”

A while later, caretaker Zheng brought in a jittery young man. He dropped to his knees as soon as he saw Si Qing. “Greetings, your highness!”

Si Qing did not answer back, gazing at him from above indifferently. Caretaker Zheng said, “If you have anything to say, make it fast!”

“Please avenge my father, your highness!”

“Hmm? Who’s your enemy?” Si Qing said with some displeasure.

“The Scarlet Hawk commander of the Clear River prefecture, Li Qingshan!” The young man was overcome with rage as he ground his teeth.

“That Li Qingshan again. Didn’t you say you had a secret to tell me?”

“Will you carry out my revenge for me, your highness?”

“Raise your head. Are you trying to bargain with me?”

“I would never. It’s just that the secret touches on something major...” The young man made eye contact with Si Qing, and he immediately turned sheet-white.

“Speak. There’s nothing you can’t say here.”

“I- it has to do with the Painting Tomb!”

“The Painting Tomb!”

As it turned out, Chu Danqing's first senior brother had always been cautious. Before he left, he told this secret to his most beloved son just in case. In the end, he really did not end up returning, and the news of Li Qingshan killing the three spread very quickly.

The son was wracked with hatred and fear. Not only was Li Qingshan's cultivation great, but he had Gu Yanying as a backer too. He even held a recording stone as evidence. With his strength, not only was revenge absolutely impossible, but he was even in constant fear about Li Qingshan coming to tie up loose ends. In the end, he made up his mind to offer this secret up to prince Si Qing who also had grievances with Li Qingshan, just to avenge his father and seek refuge.

Si Qing listened to the entire story and said, "In other words, you only know who possesses the secret of the Painting Tomb, and you only heard that from your father? The veracity of this piece of information is worth doubting."

"It's definitely true. Please believe me, your highness. I'm willing to offer up my head as guarantee."

"Apart from you, no one else knows about this?"

"Absolutely no one!"

Si Qing patted his shoulder kindly. "Don't worry, I will avenge your father, as well as you!"

.....

Li Qingshan left the underground cavern and returned to Moon Court lake. With a wave of his right hand, the water before him condensed into a mirror. A while later, his mirror clone walked out.

Li Qingshan took back the Water God Seal and began practising the Arts of the Boundless Ocean. After breaking through to the sixth layer, his dantian could hold even more spiritual qi. It was like how an expanded pool could hold even more water.

This would require ingesting large quantities of pills to develop. However, having reached his realm of cultivation, his demand for pills became even greater too. Low level pills like Qi Condensing pills already caused more harm than good now, while high level pills were not so easily obtained.

Unless they possessed a background like Gu Yanying or Si Qing, most cultivators were forced to devote large amounts of time and effort to absorbing and refining spiritual qi bit by bit in order to cultivate.

But now, Li Qingshan was borrowing the power of countless rivers and lakes to cultivate, which saved him an immeasurable amount of time and effort.

Li Qingshan shut his eyes and sat down. Specks of light hovered out from the Water God Seal, merging with his body and seeping into his dantian. After being refined, it turned into raging, pure spiritual qi.

The sun rose, and the moon fell. Day and night alternated and time flew by. His dantian had finally reached a state of saturation with water spiritual qi. It was no longer able to accept another strand.

Li Qingshan slowly opened his eyes. Although his foundation was still rather unconsolidated and his mental cultivation was lacking, he had already reached the peak of Foundation Establishment from the perspective of spiritual qi alone. He could basically see the gates of the Golden Core realm already.

Perhaps I might undergo the second heavenly tribulation with my human identity! Looking at the time, the Exhibition Matches of the Nine Provinces seem to have begun already!

### **Chapter 623 - The Lotus Falls**

The brilliant sun shone high in the clear, bright sky.

In the Marquis of Ruyi's estate, Si Qing stood on a thirty-meter-tall terrace, holding a cup of alcohol in one hand while resting the other hand on the railing, gazing into the distance.

Soaring Dragon ships levitated in the air, shooting over from the horizon as streaks of light.

At the entrance to the estate, there was an immense flow of people, all cultivators from various places in the Ruyi commandery. They had come to congratulate him on becoming the Marquis of Ruyi and to partake or spectate the upcoming Exhibition Matches of the Nine Prefectures.

Si Qing looked back and let out a long laugh with his jackal-like voice. "Thank you all for gathering here! Si Qing will drink a toast of respect!" He drank all of the alcohol in his cup.

A banquet had already been arranged on the terrace, with many cultivators seated. There were men and women, ascetic and secular cultivators. Every single one of them possessed an extraordinary bearing. There were both cultivators from the academy and cultivators from sects. To be seated there, there was only a single standard, which was they had to be Golden Core cultivators who had undergone the second heavenly tribulation.

Gu Yanying was also among them. She lifted up her cup and smiled. Si Bao ignored Si Qing and sat with her, asking about Qian Rongzhi, "How is she doing? Is she taking part in the Exhibition Matches of the Nine Prefectures?"

Everyone raised their cups, congratulating Si Qing once again.

Only then did Gu Yanying answer Si Bao. "Her? She's currently cultivating!"

At this very moment, Qian Rongzhi rowed a skiff, causing ripples among the sea of flowers in the Waterside Pavilion of Listening Wind. The refreshing breeze in the air had the flowers bob up and down, permeating with fragrance. It seemed like paradise.

However, her face was not relaxed at all. As her gaze searched through the sea of flowers, she utterly cursed Gu Yanying inside.

All of this was because of what Gu Yanying had said before she left. "I want to drink lotus seed soup!"

As a result, Qian Rongzhi was forced to search through the sea of flowers. Originally, it was an extremely easy task with the lotus flowers that spanned as far as the eye could see, but the climate of this space had always been maintained to resemble spring or summer. Lotus flowers frequently bloomed but basically never withered away. Meanwhile, lotus seeds were things that only ripened after the lotus flowers had withered and fallen away during autumn or winter.

And, the sea of flowers was part-real, part-illusionary. Sometimes, when she saw a lotus flower, she would extend her hand over, only to find nothing. As a matter of fact, she could not even fly through the air and search with her soul sense. She was forced to row the boat and look for them slowly.



She had already searched for several hours, but she had not even found a single lotus seed. However, she could not simply give up either. During the past few days she spent in the Waterside Pavilion of Listening Wind, Gu Yanying had not given her any guidance with cultivation at all. Instead, she often ordered her to carry out various miscellaneous tasks such that she could not even carry on with her regular cultivation.

She basically seemed like she was intentionally using her as amusement, wanting to trap her here for the rest of her life as a slave and prevent her from rising up. If that were the case, she had to find a way to get out of here as soon as possible.

However, what Gu Yanying said in the end dismissed this thought of hers. "During the past few days, your behaviour has been satisfactory, so let's just say this is your last test. If you can complete this task, then I'll teach you the Illustrations of Naraka. If you can't, then I'll expel you, and you'll be free to go wherever you want!"

As a result, all Qian Rongzhi could do was be patient and continue searching. Her mind gradually settled down, and the heavy smell of flowers seemed to pervade her body. The hell snake fell into a slumber again, no longer gleefully feasting on her pain.

She truly did not feel pain anymore. Not only the pain from the hell snake, but all of her worries, fury, envy, and hatred had settled down too. She had virtually already forgotten living in this world was such a relaxing and joyful matter.

She stood at the front of the boat in frustration and gazed back. The Waterside Pavilion of Listening Wind had already vanished. She had already become completely lost in the sea of flowers.

Her memories of the past flooded out in a continuous stream. Her mother washed the clothes nearby and warned. "Be careful!" She completely turned a deaf ear to her mother's warnings and stared at the tiny fish in the clear, shallow stream, only to miss. Her father walked along the ridge in the fields, making his way home as he carried fish he had caught in the paddies while she skipped behind. The boy next door secretly brought her some crunchy candy for her to eat before even visiting her afterwards with a scrunched-up face of sadness...

Had these things really happened before? Then why had she forgotten about them?

She vaguely understood this was very much related to the sea of flowers, but were these memories all real? Or should she say, were they all merely illusions the strange sea of flowers created? She was uncertain, but her eyes did become slightly moist. She felt a strange sense of grief inside. The feeling was not painful. Instead, it was like the tears of happiness, bitter while sweet.

In a trance, she saw a lotus flower in the distance wither and fall away at a visible rate, turning into a lonely lotus pod in the blink of an eye. Even the verdant-green stalk yellowed and withered away as if it had already used up all of its life force during the lengthy flowering phase. Unable to support the weight of the lotus pod, there was a plop, and the lotus pod fell into the lakewater.

Qian Rongzhi could not afford to think too much anymore. She dove into the water to scoop up the lotus pod. Because of the countless lotus leaves, it was pitch-black in the water, and it was surprisingly deep. Lotus stalks extended throughout the pitch-black depths like an underwater forest.

However, they were unable to obstruct her vision. She saw exactly where the lotus pod had landed. Like a fish, she made her way around the stalks, extending her hand over to scoop it up. However, the moment she touched the mud, her body shuddered, and her pupils dilated.

Lotus stalks wormed out of the mud, extending and growing rapidly. The force was so great that it even lifted her upwards, bursting through the surface of the water and blooming into numerous flowers.

She seemed to understand something. As she sat on the nose of the boat, she closed her eyes and sucked in a deep breath, letting the fragrance permeate her lungs.

Beside her, lotus flowers began to wither and fall away. She allowed the lotus pods to fall into the deep, dark water before extending out of the mud and blooming once again, multiplying and multiplying, filling the surface of the lake, clustering around the skiff, piling on top of one another, and completely swallowing her.

Vaguely, the sound of sniffing appeared before turning into hysterical, painful sobbing.

On the terrace, Gu Yanying sensed something, and her lips curled into a faint smile. At this very moment, a great gust of wind arrived on the terrace, making her clothes and long hair flutter. All the cultivators present, even including the buddhist monks, could not help but be touched by her beauty. They all secretly praised that she truly was the daughter of the Hawk God.

Si Qing said, "Yanying, I've heard lately that your subordinate, Li Qingshan, accomplished something great yet again. He flaunted his strength by killing three Foundation Establishment cultivators of the school of Painting."

Gu Yanying nodded. "I've heard about it too, but apparently the three of them had arranged an ambush beforehand and wanted to catch him in a deathtrap, but they were not strong enough and were killed by him instead."

Si Qing said, "Then you might as well have him explain everything clearly. This occurred in the Ruyi commandery. As the Marquis of Ruyi, I can't just turn a blind eye to something like this."

Gu Yanying exhaled. "Sure!" Afterwards, she said, "Li Qingshan, get over here! His highness the prince wishes to see you!" Her voice was not very loud, but it moved with the wind, reaching the ears of the cultivators, which made them all look at one another.

A while later, they did not see Li Qingshan appear. Jia Zhan said, "Looks like just the two of you are unable to demand his presence! Speaking of which, if he even refuses to show up on a day like today, that'll be disrespectful of him."

E Dan said, "I think he has already fled to avoid punishment because he knows he has already committed a great crime. Commander Gu, you better send out a warrant for his arrest right now!"

Before he could even finish, a streak of blue light shot over. Li Qingshan yelled, "You're the one who has fled to avoid punishment. Your whole family has fled to avoid punishment!"

## **Chapter 624 - The Soaring Cloud Terrace**

E Dan's expression changed. "Li Qingshan!"

The cultivators on the ground all stared at the figure in the sky with differing expressions.

Caretaker Zheng flew up and blocked Li Qingshan. "Flying is forbidden above the marquis' estate!"

"Didn't you hear that the marquis wishes to see me?" Li Qingshan did not stop.

"Then please land on the ground and walk over to the Soaring Clouds terrace to be called in."

Caretaker Zheng was frosty, completely behaving like he was handling official business with absolutely no room for negotiation. It formed quite a contrast with his humility when he received Gu Yanying that night.

Before Li Qingshan could even turn around, caretaker Zheng parted his hands and yellow light flooded out, draping down over Li Qingshan.

He thought, I only showed you some respect for the sake of Gu Yanying that day, but are you really going to look down on a mighty Golden Core cultivator like me? I'll show you what's what today!

Among the cultivators below who had come to partake in the celebration, most of the cultivators from other prefectures had heard about Li Qingshan too. When they saw this, they all shook their heads inside. This Li Qingshan is far too arrogant. No matter how powerful he is, he can't be stronger than a Golden Core cultivator. Being suddenly slammed against the ground in front of all these people will be humiliating!

Li Qingshan did not stop at all. He raised the corner of his lips and lifted his hands, pushing them forwards. A great wave surged, growing an inch taller with each inch covered. In the end, it turned into a huge tsunami over thirty meters tall, colliding viciously with the yellow light.

Boom!

The tsunami surged and was smashed to pieces, scattering as light. At the end of the day, it was still a little tough for him to take on a Golden Core cultivator with a cultivation at Foundation Establishment, but Li Qingshan's objective was not to defeat caretaker Zheng, nor did he have any plans to confront him directly. The moment the two forces collided, he pulled back his hand and stepped down with both feet, making waves surge.

Caretaker Zheng shuddered. The force behind the tsunami was surprisingly great. The yellow light had dimmed slightly, and its advance had been momentarily halted.

A figure suddenly rose up, breaking free from the range of the yellow light and making a quick turn in the air, shooting towards the Soaring Clouds pavilion like an arrow.

"Oh no!"

Caretaker Zheng pivoted himself suddenly and launched a violent palm strike. In the moment earlier, he had taken him lightly, and he had held back slightly for the sake of Gu Yanying. He no longer held back now. If Li Qingshan made it to the Soaring Clouds pavilion, he would be completely humiliated. He poured all of his strength into this strike.

Li Qingshan glanced at it, and the yellow light whistled over.

From the ground, the yellow light seemed like a huge fly-swatter, while Li Qingshan was the tiny fly. The cultivators from the Clear River prefecture all cried out, "Dodge it!"

If that landed on him, he would definitely be heavily injured. If he were a regular Foundation Establishment cultivator, it was even possible for him to be killed on the spot. Golden Establishment cultivators had always possessed crushing strength before Foundation Establishment cultivators.

Li Qingshan turned in the air and spread his arms, unleashing the Turbulent Flow Form. The region within several meters of him turned into turbulent rapids, but the power behind the yellow light was far too great. All of the turbulent flow dispersed wherever it passed by, unable to change the trajectory of the attack at all.

"Mere tricks!" Caretaker Zheng sneered and pushed a little harder.

With a thunk, Li Qingshan was sent flying.

"What!" Caretaker Zheng's face immediately changed instead, as Li Qingshan had not been launched away, instead flying right in the direction of the Soaring Clouds pavilion. He was even smiling.

Although he could not change the trajectory of the attack and avoid injury, he could redirect where it struck him. Using this force, Li Qingshan's flying speed suddenly doubled.

Caretaker Zheng was unable to catch up anymore either. All he could do was watch helplessly as Li Qingshan flew towards the Soaring Clouds pavilion. Right when he was about to collide with the pavilion, he gently waved his hands like willow branches in the height of spring, producing an extremely gentle force and drifting upwards. Then he leapt over the railing and slid to the centre of the terrace. After that, he turned around and gained his footing before facing Gu Yanying and Si Qing and exhaling deeply. He folded his hands.

"Greetings to commander Gu and your highness. May I ask why you have summoned me in such a hurry?"

A series of cheers rang out far away from the terrace. For the sake of Si Qing's dignity, the Golden Core cultivators did not say anything, but they were all secretly amazed. Those were some impressive moves. He managed to achieve his objective under the obstruction of a Golden Core cultivator, and he even managed to do so so easily. It's no wonder he's gained commander Gu's trust at such a young age!

"Your highness!" Caretaker Zheng made his way to the terrace too. His gentle face now seemed rather exasperated.

"Old Zheng, you better go receive the guests first!"

Caretaker Zheng shot a vicious glance at Li Qingshan's back. Don't get too ahead of yourself, kid! You'll find yourself facing a horrible death in the Exhibition Matches of the Nine Prefectures!

Gu Yanying smiled. "His highness has a few questions to ask you. All you have to do is answer truthfully."

"Li Qingshan, your cultivation sure has progressed rather quickly!"

Si Qing studied Li Qingshan as he felt indescribable surprise. Just how much time had passed since their last meeting? Yet he had gone from mid Foundation Establishment to late Foundation Establishment. If

he were already about to break through the bottleneck, then it would be nothing strange, but the issue was his aura had already reached the level of peak Foundation Establishment.

Not only did this imply that he possessed extremely great talent and ability to comprehend, but it also implied he had someone's great support from behind. However, according to the information, he had not taken on any masters. As it seemed, Gu Yanying truly valued this kid very much.

But that was not strange either. Reaching peak Foundation Establishment in their twenties would be regarded as extraordinary even among the princes of the Dragon province. In a place like the Ruyi commandery, they were definitely outstanding geniuses. As a result, he became even more determined to kill him, or things would be much more difficult once he underwent the second heavenly tribulation and reached Golden Core.

"It's all thanks to commander Gu's fostering. I have no idea when I'll be able to pay back her great kindness!"

Li Qingshan bowed slightly towards Gu Yanying and put on a grateful appearance. He had already learnt to push everything onto Gu Yanying by now.

Gu Yanying only smiled. She knew he was reminding her. Oi, you still owe me money!

"Li Qingshan, do you know why I've called you here?" Si Qing's voice suddenly sank, like a threatening, jackal's growl. The atmosphere on the terrace became tense.

"I don't," Li Qingshan said calmly.

"Have you killed anyone recently?"

Li Qingshan thought about it. "I have killed three people!"

Even if the Golden Core cultivators present did not know who Li Qingshan had killed in the beginning, they could easily ask each other and find out during that time. Seeing how he answered in such an unfazed manner, they all frowned slightly.

The Green province had enjoyed several millennia of peace. The concept of peace had already become deeply ingrained in people's hearts. Grievances and murder were a little more common between Qi Practitioners, but they would all cherish their lives a little more in comparison when they reached Foundation Establishment. Even when it came to conflict between the hundred schools and the sects, very rarely did they reach a life-or-death struggle, let alone killing fellow colleagues of the hundred schools.

If they had tried to kill each other over a bit of benefit and conflict, then basically the entire cultivation community would be thrown into disorder, and the Green province would become a lawless place like the Mist province.

"You worked with Chu Danqing and helped him murder his own senior brothers and sisters. You are a Hawkwolf guard that represents the school of Legalism, so tell me, what crime have you committed?"

"I'll be honest, your highness, I'm really not from the school of Legalism, so I'm really not that familiar with the laws of Great Xia. However, if other people want to kill me, surely I can't just stay put and let

them kill me! Speaking of which, this should be called justifiable defence. Let me add just one more thing. The three of them had all been killed by me. Chu Danqing had done nothing the entire time.”

Li Qingshan explained everything that had happened before taking out the recording stone from his hundred treasures and playing the recording, proving he was not lying.

Only then did everyone learn the true story. They thought, If this really is the case, the three of them have really been seeking their own doom. Even if they were killed, they deserved it. Though, he even managed to take on three people while being ambushed. This Li Qingshan sure is vicious.

Jia Zhen remarked sinisterly, “I know you’re a novelist, and what you’re skilled in the most is making fiction into reality and bending the truth. Who knows if you captured them first before forcing them to say that. There’s nothing difficult to forge the voices in the recording stone either!”

“If you’re determined to incriminate me, you’ll always find a way to do so. If you insist on badgering on like this, then there’s nothing I can say.”

Li Qingshan said flatly as if he could not be bothered with refuting. Gu Yanying was here anyway. Without concrete evidence, it was impossible for the three of them to frame him with merely a few words.

Si Bao smiled. “Si Qing, all he did was kill three treacherous, despicable people who sold out their master for the sake of glory. Do you have to behave like you’re about to go to war?”

“We’ll set this matter aside for now.”

Bang!

E Dan suddenly slammed the table. “You worked with that wretched daemon Northmoon to kill several of my disciples. What crimes have you committed with that?”

When he mentioned Northmoon, the Golden Core cultivators all leapt up inside. Whether it was Northmoon’s actions of refining the water in the Ruyi commandery en-masse or his terrifying battle record of taking on virtually all the Daemon Commanders in the Ruyi commandery at once, they had all made him the most famous and most powerful daemon in the Ruyi commandery.

Now that the situation between the humans and daemons was becoming tense, Northmoon was definitely a sword hanging over the heads of all the cultivators in the commandery. Once a full-blown war erupted, he would behead everyone. There were not many people present who were confident they could survive a direct clash with him either. This was basically a horrible situation to Golden Core cultivators who had lengthy lifespans and a noble status.

The accusations truly were growing larger and larger!

Li Qingshan countered with a question. “May I ask how I worked with Northmoon and killed your precious disciples?”

“When I asked you what happened back then, you actually dared to mislead me with lies. Only afterwards did I get to the bottom of everything. Tell me clearly. My disciple E Feng had already snatched over the jade tablet used to contact Northmoon in that bitch Qiu Haitang’s hand. Weren’t you the one who personally shattered the tablet, which summoned Northmoon in the end?”

“None of your disciples believed the jade tablet was real. I actually broke it when I clashed with them. Who knew whether it could actually summon the moon demon. You’re afraid to find the moon demon for revenge, so you find me to vent your anger. You’re basically just harassing the weak and fearing the strong. It’s completely unreasonable!”

“When I fought the daemons in the Clear River prefecture, who knew how many times I risked my life in order to kill a few Daemon Generals, yet you now suspect I have a connection with the Daemon race. How absurd!”

Li Qingshan behaved furiously, like he had just experienced injustice. Gu Yanying could not help but smile.

### **Chapter 625 - Northmoon Comes with Blessings**

Si Qing’s face sank. “Yanying, are you just going to allow him to talk wildly here?”

Gu Yanying happened to be enjoying the show. When she heard that, she could not help but stand up. “It’s such a joyous occasion, so why must we haggle over these minor details?”

“Commander Gu, my disciples were ruthlessly killed by the moon demon. Are you saying this is merely a minor detail?”

“Hehe, slip of the tongue,” said Gu Yanying. The moon demon who ruthlessly killed your disciples is standing right before you, so why are you glaring at me?”

“I won’t let this matter be until I get a satisfying conclusion!” E Dan was vicious.

“What do you want to do? You’re welcome to make it clear!”

Li Qingshan knew he had handled the matters in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain rather improperly, giving E Dan a reason to hassle him, which he would not let go of so easily. Even Gu Yanying would struggle a little to protect him.

“The only punishment befitting of colluding with daemons is death. We just happen to be in need of your head for an offering for such a joyous occasion!” E Dan took a step forward. His aura was like an ancient beast’s, where even the Golden Core cultivators present found it difficult to breathe.

At this exact moment, a black line appeared on the horizon and spread rapidly. A swathe of dark clouds flooded over, instantly turning the sunny skies into drizzling rain.

A scarlet figure passed through the clouds with a streak of wind and fire, shooting over here.

“Flying is forbidden above the marquis’ estate!” Caretaker Zheng went up to receive him. He was surprised and furious. He had just made a huge fool of himself, so he wanted to see which ignorant fool dared to take advantage of his bad luck. Did they really think the caretaker did not possess a temper?

However, when he made out the person’s appearance, his eyes narrowed suddenly. Northmoon!

He had a head of drifting, scarlet hair, a handsome and flawless appearance with a devilish smile, and a pair of horns engraved with “North” and “Moon”. Apart from the moon demon, who else could he be?

Most of caretaker Zheng's fury was immediately extinguished. He had no idea what to do with the arcane artifact he was already holding in his hand. During his hesitation, Northmoon brushed past him and did not even glance at him.

"Northmoon, how dare you..." "Everyone, let's get him together and take down this wretched daemon!"

Northmoon arrived on the Soaring Clouds terrace in a flash. With a swish, all of the Golden Core cultivators stood up, flickering with lights of various colours as they drew their arcane artifacts, gazing at Northmoon vigilantly as he strode over. None of them paid any attention to Li Qingshan anymore.

Only Gu Yanying lowered her head and smiled gently. Si Bao asked in confusion, "Big sis, what's wrong?"

"Oh, nothing!"

Li Qingshan communicated to her indifferently, "Why rely on others when you can rely on yourself?"

Northmoon did not look at the Golden Core cultivators on the two sides either. Right from the moment he set foot on the Soaring Clouds terrace, his eyes had been locked onto Si Qing. An enthusiastic smile oozed out on his face, and he walked over to Si Qing's side, wrapping his arm around his neck like they were very close. "Little bro Si Qing, I've come to congratulate you!"

Si Qing stiffened all over and looked at Jia Zhen. Now is the perfect time to kill Northmoon!

Jia Zhen shook his head gently. Northmoon did not conceal his aura, but from the aura he demonstrated, he did not seem particularly strong. He was clearly stating to them intentionally that this was not his original body.

And let alone the Water God Seal, he did not even have a hundred treasures pouch on him, which was why he was so fearless. If they struck right now, all they would kill would be an insignificant clone, and they would fall out with Northmoon completely. Their previous efforts would all go to waste.

Si Qing sucked in a deep breath and smiled. "Fellow Northmoon, you're here!"

"What're you being so polite for? Aren't we allies? I obviously have to come and congratulate you on such a joyous occasion! Didn't you say you even wanted me as a guest a few days ago? Calling me fellow Northmoon would be treating me like an outsider. You can just call me A'yue. I'll call you A'qing!"

Northmoon laughed aloud as he smacked Si Qing's shoulder. Despite the composure Si Qing had developed while competing with the other princes in the Dragon province, even his forehead bulged with veins right now.

The expressions of the Golden Core cultivators all became strange. None of them lashed out with the arcane artifacts they were already holding, and they had no idea whether they should disperse their protective spiritual qi either. They felt rather awkward as they stood there and thought to themselves.

So prince Si Qing is actually so familiar with Northmoon? He's actually managed to get him to come celebrate with him!

Err, let's just say prince Si Qing is extraordinarily capable and possesses startling charm!



With a swish, Gu Yanying opened her jade folding fan, covering the lower half of her face, but smiles oozed out of her eyes.

“Come, come, come. I’ve even written my word of congratulations already. What do you think?”

Northmoon brought Si Qing towards the terrace with his arm around his shoulder, pointing at the sky.

Si Qing raised his head and gazed over, only to see a line of huge, glistening characters in the sky shrouded by dark clouds. This was the effect of sunlight peeking through the clouds.

The other Golden Core cultivators followed along, all looking over. And, it was not just the Soaring Clouds terrace either. The cultivators from the various prefectures of the entire Ruyi commandery were the same, such that even the common folk of the entire commandery city raised their heads and observed this rare sight.

The words written with the clouds were, “Prince Si Qing possesses endless might, accomplished in the office and on the battleground, showing kindness to all for generations on end, uniting the world.” He even placed his signature at the bottom, “From Northmoon”.

Si Qing laughed aloud. “Then thank you for your blessings- A’yue.”

“Hehe, you’re too kind!” Northmoon pointed at the sky, and the clouds rapidly closed together, forming a new row of characters. “May friendship between humans and daemons last forever! For the sake of peace, not war!”

The cultivators all looked at one another. They all found the moon demon’s reputation terrifying, but his thought process aligned with theirs. Speaking of which, ever since Northmoon heavily injured the group of Daemon Commanders that day, the daemons of the Ruyi commandery became much more quiet. The war that was on the brink of erupting actually settled back down miraculously.

If Northmoon really could achieve an alliance with Si Qing, the Marquis of Ruyi, then they would be able to avoid a lot of pointless war. Everyone recognised Si Qing a little more now.

Li Qingshan peered through the eyes of his mirror clone and made eye contact with Si Qing. He smiled inside. If you want to be patient and scheme, then I’ll let you be patient and scheme to your heart’s content. You’ll be accepting my deep friendship no matter what, regardless of whether you want to or not.

Si Qing continued to smile, but he fumed inside, This damned daemon is clearly playing along! He’s forcing me to admit our relationship as allies before everyone. But I have to calm down. Now is still not the time to turn against him!

“That’s exactly what I was thinking, A’yue! We may be of different races, but we’re all fellow cultivators in the cultivation world...”

“Fellow cultivators are nothing. I think we’re quite agreeable, so why don’t we just become brothers here and now?”

“Ah!” Si Qing was taken aback. Who and who were becoming brothers? You can go die, you wretched daemon!

“What, you don’t want to? Don’t tell me you were lying to me that day?” Northmoon’s face suddenly sank slightly.

“Of course not. Though, as a prince, I need the imperial family’s permission to become brothers with other people.”

Northmoon’s face immediately cleared up and began laughing. “I see. But as forthright men, there’s no need to bother with these empty rules and etiquette. You just have to get your imperial family or whatever it is to give permission quickly. Virtuous younger brother, I’m a little older than you, so forgive me as I’ll be calling myself your foolish elder brother. Hahahaha!”

The group of people returned to the Soaring Clouds terrace. Northmoon released his arm from Si Qing’s neck and made his way over to Gu Yanying, leaning forward and saying tenderly, “Yanying, you’re here too!”

Gu Yanying only smiled. She said with her soul sense, “Li Qingshan, don’t forget about what you agreed to!”

“Tsk, how boring.”

Northmoon straightened himself out, turned around, and asked, “A’dan, where are the beauties you spoke of? Send them over so I can take a good look at them.”

E Dan was taken aback, only just realising Northmoon was referring to him as A’dan. He said, “The beauties are coming right up!”

Northmoon did not hold back at all and squeezed onto the same table as Si Qing. Suddenly, he frowned and pointed at Li Qingshan who stood in the centre. “Who are you? Stop standing there like a rigid pillar. Shoo, go away. Hmm? You look a little familiar. I saw you that night in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain. Are you called Li Qingshan?”

“I am.” Li Qingshan bowed slightly as he thought to himself, Is this supposed to be a monologue or a dialogue?

Northmoon said, “Why are you standing here? With your cultivation, you still don’t deserve to be here!”

Li Qingshan said, “I was summoned by his highness the prince. He said I colluded with wr- daemons that night in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain and killed fellow E Dan’s disciples.”

Everyone’s gazes immediately gathered on E Dan. Just earlier, Li Qingshan’s crimes had been colluding with Northmoon, but in the blink of an eye, Northmoon had come to form an alliance with Si Qing. When it truly came to colluding with daemons, just who was colluding with daemons right now?

“Li Qingshan, shut your mouth!” E Dan suffered in silence, unable to say anything.

“Oh? Did this really happen? A’dan, you’re still attached to them? I was the one who killed them, so if you have anything you want to ask, you can just ask me! If you still feel angry and want to vent your anger, I’ll let you punch me three times!” Northmoon raised an eyebrow and pulled apart his clothes, revealing his bare chest.

“Hahaha, you’ve misunderstood. Why would I care about something as petty as that? I only find this kid an eyesore.”

“That’s good to know. Let’s have a cup together and drink away our grievances!” Northmoon raised his cup, clinking it with E Dan’s before drinking it all. Afterwards, he said to Li Qingshan rather restlessly, “You’re done here, so why don’t you leave? Oh right, Haitang told me to thank you!”

He leaned over slightly and said to Si Qing, “How unfortunate. I was in such a hurry today that I didn’t bring anything with me. Virtuous brother, do you have anything? Just reward him with an item or two and send him away!”

You were clearly afraid we’d finish off your clone, so you purposefully didn’t bring anything with you!

Si Qing ground his teeth in hatred, but he continued to smile. “That’s not a problem!” He pulled out a black hoop from his sumeru ring and passed it to Northmoon. Northmoon fiddled around with it and realised. This isn’t an arcane artifact. It’s a demonic artifact! Although the demonic nature was extremely well-hidden, it was unable to fool his senses as he practised the Demon Suppression Statuary.

Sure enough, why would this bastard Si Qing be up to any good? Demonic artifacts can only be used by demonfolk. If regular cultivators refine them unknowingly, it’s very likely for the demonic nature to be drawn into the body, causing them to suffer qi deviation! But it’s perfect for me right now.

Northmoon casually tossed the black hoop at Li Qingshan. “Take it!”

Li Qingshan said, “I don’t deserve this, so I can’t take it!”

Northmoon immediately became displeased. “You’re trying to turn down something I’m giving you? Don’t get too ahead of yourself!”

All Li Qingshan could do was accept the black hoop “helplessly” and leave the Soaring Clouds terrace.

## **Chapter 626 - Singing Loudly**

Li Qingshan glanced back at the Soaring Clouds terrace before turning around again and smiling mysteriously. Hmph, today is a joyous occasion, so I’ll let you have some fun then!

“Qingshan, are you fine?” Han Qiongzhi approached him.

“I’m fine. His highness treated me very well. He even gifted me something!” Li Qingshan showed off the black hoop in his hand with a smile.

Han Qiongzhi was bewildered. Li Qingshan said, “Let’s go!”

“I still have to maintain order. You better go and see prefect Liu. We can take a look around together later.”

The White Wolf guards patrolled the surroundings in groups of two. The woman in the uniform of White Wolf guards standing nearby waited for Han Qiongzhi. Seeing Li Qingshan gaze over, she nodded at him in acknowledgement, and Li Qingshan returned the gesture with a smile. “You better go! Your friend is waiting for you!”

Before the Soaring Clouds terrace was a huge square divided into nine groups. They were led by their respective prefects, while the Scarlet Hawk commanders and generals stood to the left and right. Each group was further divided into over a dozen different colours, which were the attires of the disciples of each school of thought. Coupled with the spectating cultivators from sects on the side, there were over ten thousand people, yet it did not feel crowded at all.

This was also the first time Li Qingshan had seen so many cultivators standing together. He could not help but be amazed. "It really is a grand gathering!"

He passed through the square and discovered that the group from the Clear River prefecture was the smallest among the nine provinces, nowhere close to the flourishing numbers of the other prefectures. However, having been baptised by war, the disciples of the Clear River prefecture possessed a different bearing and edge about them.

Everywhere would fall silent when he passed by. Everyone stopped their conversations and gathered their attention on him. At first glance, he did not seem special at all. He still seemed very young with his bronze face, but having been weathered by wind and frost, it gave off a sense of level-headedness that exceeded his age. However, it was still chiseled, making him seem so resolute that it was almost arrogant and unyielding.

He had a tall and sturdy frame, walking along calmly. His expression was not as arrogant as it was rumored to be. His head was slightly lowered as if he was in thought. However, his gaze drifted about. Everyone could sense that he was not taking any of them seriously, like a vicious tiger silently prowling through the jungle, possessing a natural ease about him.

The school leaders of the various prefectures were all rather worried. If the Clear River prefecture has him, the grand exhibition match at the end probably won't look very good! In particular, the leaders of the schools of Novels were racking their brains about how they could restrain this person's strength during the exhibition match of the school of Novels.

As for the regular disciples, they thought, Just a few years ago, he was still a backgroundless nobody. If he can achieve this, why can't I? As a result, some lofty aspirations were ignited within them.

"Qiongzhi, your Qingshan is basically at peak Foundation Establishment already, right? He sure does cultivate at an alarming speed. I heard back then that you were the one who proposed the marriage, junior sister Han. Your insight sure is admirable! You got any clever tricks you can teach me? Recently, my family is also pressuring me into getting married. They're clearly looking down on me!"

Ding Min said in distress. Ever since Han Qiongzhi became a White Wolf guard, she had been the one who led her around to familiarise with the surroundings. As a result, the two of them became good friends. She also came from an aristocratic clan. If she were unable to advance any further on the path of cultivation, then she would be burdened with the responsibility of fostering descendants for the clan.

"What insight could I have? I just liked him, that's all." Han Qiongzhi drew her gaze back from Li Qingshan and smiled valiantly. "You know how I'm like, Ding sis. If something catches my heart, I stop caring about everything else."

“Then that’s your good fortune. I sure am jealous of Qian Rongzhi! Gu Yanying actually accepted her as a disciple. Your Qingshan is favoured by the commander too, so why don’t you just beg him to ask commander Gu to accept you as a disciple too! Guiding one is no different from guiding two after all!”

“I hate begging people the most, and I don’t want him to beg others for me either.”

“You blockhead!”

Li Qingshan arrived among the ranks of the Clear River prefecture and nodded towards Chu Danqing, expressing that all was fine. Afterwards, he stood beside Liu Zhangqing and waited quietly for the ceremony to begin. The people beside him could see he was in thought and had no interest in talking, so they did not disturb him. He readily embraced this peace and placed all of his focus on his clone.

Under Northmoon’s enthusiastic request, Si Qing arranged for some female dancers to perform. He did not have any interest in such things, but Jiang Fu had kept quite a lot of people like that in the estate. When he inherited the position of Marquis of Ruyi, they had come in the process, so he was able to gather enough people on the spot, albeit after some difficulty.

Northmoon continued to sit with Si Qing, crossing his legs without the slightest amount of self-consciousness, picking up Si Qing’s alcohol cup and drinking from it without even batting an eye. Though, he did not use Si Qing’s chopsticks, just directly using his bare hands to grab the food. He watched attentively as he drank, his eyes glued to the dancers’ special parts as if he wanted to swallow them all in one gulp.

Si Qing was unhappy inside, but seeing how Northmoon behaved, he exchanged glances with Jia Zhen and E Dan and exhibited a sense of joy like his scheme had succeeded. Whether it was humans or demons, they could be controlled as long as they had desires.

Gu Yanying laughed inside. This kid sure knows how to act!

Big sis, you said Northmoon is impressive, but he doesn’t seem special at all to me. You better be careful just in case he gets pulled to Si Qing’s side and works with him to deal with you! Si Bao said to Gu Yanying with some worry.

“I know what to do.”

“Heh. Big sis, as long as you flaunt your beauty a little, you’ll make this Northmoon change sides mid-battle!”

“You’ll be underestimating him a little too much if that’s what you think.”

E Dan smiled at Northmoon. “How are these women? Are any to your liking?”

“The women aren’t bad, but the songs they sing are all so soft. It’s completely powerless. I feel drowsy from listening to it!”

“Oh? I didn’t think you’d understand music so well? Then what has a sense of power? Don’t tell me it’s the roar of wild beasts?” Si Qing smiled.

The cultivators could not help but smile. To think that even uncivilised daemons would blindly criticise the music of humans. He was basically asking to be humiliated. The moon demon was very powerful, but

they still possessed a natural sense of superiority as humans. They only treated him as an extremely-powerful wild beast.

Northmoon acted like he was unable to tell Si Qing was mocking him. He leapt up from his seat. "Speaking of which, when I was refining the river that night, I looked up and saw the stars, which put me in a great mood and I sang this song. I'll broaden your horizons today!"

He arrived beside the musicians in a flash. The musicians were also all female, scattering in fright.

He completely ignored them. He picked up a zither and casually plucked a few strings before shaking his head and throwing it by his feet. Afterwards, he picked up a reed-piped sheng and blew it blindly a few times before tossing it aside.

The cultivators looked at one another, communicating secretly through their soul sense, "Is the moon demon serious?" "Forget it, just treat it as a monkey show!"

Northmoon's eyes drifted out the window before suddenly lighting up. He flew out before flying back in, carrying the huge drum used to report time in his hands and placing it on the ground with a thud.

Afterwards, he swung the drumsticks, thumping away. A fast-paced rhythm suddenly appeared.

Northmoon sang happily at the top of his lungs, "East flows the river! The stars shine 'round beidou! Hey! Hey! 'round Beidou ah! Friendship in a bowl of wine ah!"

The moment he bellowed out, it echoed through the clouds and reached kilometers away. Let alone leaving Si Qing and the others dumbfounded, even Gu Yanying felt like she had just quivered.

I have no idea what it means, but it seems very powerful!

## **Chapter 627 - The Beginning**

Everyone on the huge square beneath the Soaring Clouds terrace stopped talking. They raised their heads. "That voice! It's the moon demon!"

Afterwards, they looked at one another with no idea what was happening on the Soaring Dragon terrace. It would have been easier for them to accept if a great battle had suddenly erupted on the Soaring Dragon terrace. What was this singing all about?

"We'll go if you say go! I'll go, you'll go, we'll all go ah! Hey hey we'll all go ah! With our heads raised at the sky ah!"

Northmoon struck the drum and sang as if there was no one around. When he reached "With our heads raised at the sky", he felt like it suited him very much. When he listened to it in his past life, it did not sound particularly special, but it put him in high, valiant spirits as he sang it today.

Originally, he had intentionally done this to create trouble in Si Qing's ceremony, but he ended up being in a great mood for this. He unfurled his clothes, revealing his bare chest and struck the war drum deafeningly as his scarlet hair blazed like fire.

Although everyone felt like this song completely defied conventional music theory, it was more like a tune sung by northerners, possessing a riling, liberal sense of hot-bloodedness that broke away from

convention. It did not sound bad at all, and even if they were unaccustomed to his crude voice, they could not help but be stunned by his vigour.

Enemies surrounded him, yet he sang to his heart's content, making his enemies fearful and worried, afraid to act recklessly. On and below the terrace, the entire cultivation community of the Ruyi commandery listened along attentively, so how delightful was that!

"Seeing injustice on the road! Give a shout and give it a blow! Roaming the world valiantly ah!"

When Li Qingshan reached the last word, there was a great thump, and the war drum shattered from the drumming. He let out a great laugh.

Si Bao elbowed Gu Yanying. "This guy sure is something else!"

Si Qing clenched his fist firmly. This damned daemon!

Li Qingshan tossed the drumstick out the window. "Bring me alcohol! I'll perform the song, Nunchucks, now!" Since you can't stand that song, I'll sing another song that you won't be able to endure even more! I don't care how you feel or if you want to listen to it or not. He experienced an urge to turn Si Qing's ceremony into his personal concert.

No one had any idea what nunchucks were, but they knew they could not let him continue anymore. They all tried to persuade him. "You've already broadened our horizons with that song. There's no need to keep singing."

"I think it's roughly time. We can announce the beginning of the ceremony!"

Si Qing stood up as well and grabbed Northmoon's wrist. He said softly, "A'yue, I think that's enough. I'm going to declare the beginning of the ceremony."

"Really? Since you've already said something like that, A'qing, then I'll perform for you next time," Northmoon replied like he still had not had enough. He went with the flow and wrapped his arm around Si Qing's shoulder like they were close brothers.

"This place of yours is fantastic. It's way better than my dwelling. The beauties are fair and soft too. Sigh, you have no idea. All of the night roamers are pitch-black!" Liubo, Liusu, don't blame me. I'm making the enemy lower their guard.

With how familiar Northmoon behaved with him, Si Qing could not come off as too cold. He cleared his throat gently. "If you'd like to, then you can continue... I can order people to specially build a residence for you."

Originally, he wanted to use the fine alcohol and delicacies of the marquis' estate to erode away Northmoon's willpower, but as soon as he considered the consequences of Northmoon staying behind, he corrected himself in a hurry.

"That's far too troublesome. And, what's the point if I'm all alone? I'm willing to stay here and drink and have a merry time with you. C'mon, let's go talk!"

Si Qing personally believed that he was not even afraid of death, but when he heard that, his heart skipped a beat. He was afraid he would not be able to hold back his killing intent, which would waste all

of his previous efforts. He silently warned himself, Si Qing, you have to be patient. The most important part of hunting is patience. This prey really is unexpectedly difficult to deal with!

Northmoon basically pulled Si Qing with him to the terrace facing the square. Gu Yanying walked beside them, while the Golden Core cultivators stood up and followed behind them.

By now, the clouds in the sky had already dispersed. Sunlight scattered in the surroundings brilliantly. Everyone raised their heads and looked at the three most powerful people in the Ruyi commandery, or more accurately, a person, a daemon, and a half-human, half-daemon.

Si Qing began talking with his unique jackal-like voice. To his relief, Northmoon did not interrupt him and embarrass him in front of so many people, or he truly would have lost his temper. Northmoon merely smiled foolishly and kept his arm around his neck, pressing up close...

Li Qingshan discovered basically all the leaders in the world could not go without some buzzwords and cliches when they spoke. They would express their gratitude toward everyone before bringing up things like "pool our efforts together" or "we're all in the same boat" like they were worthless. In the end, he formally announced the beginning of the ceremony.

Vertical scrolls draped down from the nine Soaring Dragon ships. They were words of blessing each prefecture had gifted to Si Qing.

"It's completely lacking in vigour!" Northmoon shook his head in disdain.

"It's just their kind intentions. It's obviously nothing compared to our friendship." Si Qing's eyes twitched. Today, everyone came with gifts. Just a wretched daemon like you came with no gift, even taking something from me and giving it to that Li Qingshan.

Afterwards, a grand performance similar to an opening ceremony unfolded. The banquet was moved out of the covered area and onto the terrace. Northmoon continued to sit with Si Qing without the slightest care in the world.

Si Qing forced out a smile. "A'yue, you've traveled a long way, so why don't you go rest up? I'll have those beauties serve you!"

"I'm not tired. The performance here is still quite interesting."

Si Qing gritted his teeth. "The competition between the schools of Miscellany is first. I'll have someone accompany you!"

"Didn't I tell you already? I haven't brought my hundred treasures pouch!"

"That's not an issue. If anything catches your fancy, it'll just be on me."

Northmoon was angered. "Am I the type of person to take advantage of friends?"

"Then... you can just treat it as borrowing from me."

"That's more like it. What about you?"

"I have to stay here and watch over everything!"



“Then forget it. I’ll stay here with you. Come, let’s drink!”

You fucking wretched daemon, can you stay away from me? Si Qing roared inside as he raised his cup helplessly. “Alright then!”

The grand ceremony continued all the way until dusk. Thousands of fireworks were launched into the air, bursting apart brilliantly in all sorts of shapes and sizes. It was far richer in variety than any fireworks Li Qingshan had seen in his past life. Mingling with the glow of the setting sun, it was magnificent. This was obviously the handiwork of the school of Mohism.

Li Qingshan and Han Qiongzhi stood together as they watched the fireworks. Han Qiongzhi turned her head and gazed at his face that constantly flickered with colourful lights from the fireworks, like he had been smeared with make-up. Sometimes he seemed rather funny, but at other times, he seemed rather eerie or even terrifying.

Li Qingshan noticed her gaze and looked over. He asked, “What are you thinking about?”

“Nothin!” Han Qiongzhi grabbed his hand.

When the red glow had completely vanished in the west and the fireworks had died down, Si Qing stood up on the Soaring Clouds terrace and loudly announced the beginning of the Exhibition Matches of the Nine Prefectures. Following the order used in the past, the first competition was the school of Miscellany!

Li Qingshan looked back. Before he knew it, nine stores of miscellaneous goods already formed a ring.

Han Qiongzhi said, “C’mon, let’s go for a stroll!”

### **Chapter 628 - A New Cursive Sword Calligraphy**

The competition between the schools of Miscellany was extremely interesting. It was not a clash or demonstration of strength, but to see who could sell more things and earn more spiritual stones. Not only would the winning prefecture receive a huge reward, but they would have a superior advantage in the trade between the prefectures too.

As a result, whenever it came to the Exhibition Matches of the Nine Prefectures, the schools of Miscellany would all take out their prized items to sell, and the price would often be extremely discounted.

The cultivators of the various schools and sects temporarily set aside their misunderstandings and disputes and all surged into the stores, buying what they required. Everyone was radiating with joy, and it was a very lively sight to behold.

Apart from the nine stores of miscellaneous goods, there were many cultivators who took advantage of this opportunity to sell their own goods. Many mechanical structures rose up loudly as restaurants and tea houses spread out. The empty square had turned into a huge city in the blink of an eye, glowing with lights.

Fireworks would even illuminate the night sky from time to time. The place was enveloped in an atmosphere of jubilation.

Li Qingshan understood the intention of the Exhibition Matches of the Nine Prefectures a little. It was a grand gathering that the entire cultivation community of the Ruyi commandery would take part in. It emphasised exchange and communication; it was not a battle to the death between the various prefectures and schools.

Li Qingshan did not have anything particular he wanted to buy, while Han Qiongzhi mainly wanted to enjoy strolling around with him. The two of them made their way through the stores idly, pointing at some interesting things from time to time and talking. In the eyes of the passers-by, they were a pair of lovers.

Li Qingshan suddenly let out an interjection of surprise. He discovered the messy brush strokes on a certain scroll did not form a painting. Instead, an unruly aura filled the entire scroll. He found it very familiar. It was part of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy.

This part was only a mid grade spiritual artifact, located in an inconspicuous corner with no one to care for it. This was not strange. When Qi Practitioners chose spiritual artifacts, spiritual artifacts that coincided with their elemental affinities would definitely take priority. Only then would it be satisfactory when they used it, allowing them to unleash several times their strength.

The Cursive Sword Calligraphy was powerful, but it placed a huge toll on true qi. At the same time, the profound sword style it was hiding could not be comprehended by everyone. It definitely was not an optimal choice for cultivators.

Han Qiongzhi said, "This one seems to form a set with the one you possess."

"That's right!" Li Qingshan immediately called over a disciple of the school of Miscellany and purchased the Cursive Sword Calligraphy. It put him in the mood to look around some more. "Let's go take a look at the other stores!"

According to his guesses, the fragments of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy had scattered after being broken apart, but it was basically impossible for them to scatter too far away. They were most likely all within the vicinity of the Ruyi commandery.

And, the fragments were not actually suited for regular cultivators. Even if someone managed to come across a piece, they would not treasure it too much. They would probably be more than willing to exchange it for a spiritual artifact that suited their elemental affinity. As a result, there was nothing strange for them to end up in the stores of miscellany as time went on. He could use this opportunity to look around. Perhaps he might find a few more fragments.

Han Qiongzhi had no problem with that, but after visiting all nine stores, Li Qingshan did not find a trace of another part of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy. He could not help but scratch his head. "Was I mistaken?"

"Do you want me to see if I can do anything?" The connections of the Han family spanned the entire commandery.

Li Qingshan shook his head. "There's no need. I'm only fulfilling my small urge to collect." Right now, the Cursive Sword Calligraphy in his possession was only an inferior arcane artifact. Even if he obtained a

few more fragments, he could elevate it to low grade at most, and he would have to trouble Chu Danqing.

The two of them left the stores and walked along the noisy streets, appreciating the scenery on the sides of the street. To Li Qingshan, this was a rare moment of peace, except he could not help but think of Xiao An again. He had spent most of the times of peace in his life by brother ox's side, followed by Xiao An's side.

He could not help but hold Han Qiongzi's hand. He had lofty aspirations, but he treasured every moment of peace, as well as every single person that could bring him peace.

Li Qingshan suddenly frowned and pulled Han Qiongzi into an alleyway on the side.

"Qingshan, what's wrong?" Han Qiongzi asked.

"Nothing. There's just someone following us!"

Li Qingshan explained. Although he had always been the centre of attention as he walked down the street, there had only been a single gaze that constantly drifted around him, following him steadily.

He gazed at the entrance of the alleyway and said flatly, "Please stop lurking around. Come in here, and we can have a talk!"

"Please don't misunderstand, commander Li. I have no ill intentions. I just have something I'd like to discuss with you, commander, except I never got the opportunity! Why don't we go to a tea house on the side and have a cup?"

A Qi Practitioner in grey entered the alleyway lithely and quickly. He seemed to be in his thirties, and his appearance was very ordinary. Combined with his cultivation at the ninth layer, he was the type that would not stand out in a crowd.

"If you have something to say, make it quick!"

"Did you buy a piece of calligraphy earlier, commander? I was wondering if you could sell it to me? And, in my knowledge, you have something else that's similar in your possession, commander. I'm willing to pay a high price to purchase it!"

Li Qingshan was mildly surprised. Originally, he thought this was another scheme from Si Qing, but he never thought the Qi Practitioner had come for the Cursive Sword Calligraphy. He took out both calligraphies and unfurled them with a swish.

"Are you talking about them?"

The man in grey's eyes immediately lit up. His gaze wandered around the calligraphies as if he was appraising them. "Yes I am. May I ask if the commander is willing to part with them?"

"You sure do talk big for a Qi Practitioner. This one's an arcane artifact. Can you afford it?"

Li Qingshan thought to himself, As it seems, I was not mistaken. I am not the only one collecting the Cursive Sword Calligraphy!

“I don’t really have any other hobbies, but I’m smitten with calligraphy. When I see one that catches my eye, I’ll buy it even if I have to break the bank. You can say I’m from a bit of an aristocratic clan, so I do have some wealth. If you’re willing to sell it, commander, I’ll always be able to find a way to buy it!”

“What’s your surname?”

Han Qiongzhi studied this person. There were not actually too many prominent clans in the Ruyi commandery, and they were all in contact with one another. Back when Han Anguo was the great general, the various clans would send descendants over with words of blessings whenever they had a celebration.

Of course, each clan had many descendants, so it was impossible for her to recognise them all. However, the most suspicious part for her was this person’s appearance was far too ordinary. He did not seem like he came from an aristocratic clan.

“My clan is far too insignificant. It’s nowhere close to the Han family, so even if I do mention it, you probably haven’t heard about it, fellow Han.” The cultivator in grey bowed slightly and told a lie before looking at Li Qingshan again.

“I don’t want to sell them unfortunately. Qiongzhi, let’s go!” Li Qingshan stowed the Cursive Sword Calligraphies away again, called Han Qiongzhi, and made his way out of the alleyway.

“Please hold on, commander. The two calligraphies aren’t of much use to me, so please state a price!” the cultivator called out behind Li Qingshan.

Please state a price? He really is speaking bolder and bolder! Li Qingshan thought of something, but he did not stop. “No matter what you offer, I won’t be selling them!”

“Commander, you better not regret it in the future for missing out on such a great opportunity!” The cultivator in grey was rather exasperated. The two calligraphies were far more complicated than an arcane artifact and spiritual artifact to him. If he could not complete the mission, he would definitely be punished when he returned.

“Regret it?” Li Qingshan stopped and suddenly looked back. He actually detected a hint of a threat, which was rather unbelievable to him. A mere Qi Practitioner was threatening him?

The cultivator in grey trembled and stumbled back a few steps. “What are you thinking? Deals may fall through, but that shouldn’t affect our relationship!”

“We won’t regret it. If you want calligraphy, you better look elsewhere. Stop following us.” Han Qiongzhi pulled Li Qingshan along and returned to the main street.

“You’ve changed quite a bit. They all say a leopard can’t change its spots, but it looks like it’s not accurate!” Li Qingshan smiled. In his memory, Han Qiongzhi was a young lady with a fiery temper.

Han Qiongzhi rolled her eyes. “We’re in the marquis’ estate right now, so we can’t fight here. I’m a White Wolf guard after all. I’m responsible for maintaining order.”

“I’m not that petty, where I’ll resort to violent means if someone has offended me by a tiny bit.”

Li Qingshan smiled before glancing back at the alleyway. He held Han Qiongzhi's hand and merged into the flow of people.

On the Soaring Clouds terrace, Li Qingshan teased Si Qing a few more times as Northmoon. He could feel Si Qing's killing intent grow heavier and heavier. He no longer dared to continue, just in case they actually ended up falling out, which would be the last thing he wanted. As a result, he casually said, "I'm tired!"

Si Qing's face lit up as if he had just received a signal. "Caretaker Zheng, please take A'yue to his residence to rest!"

Northmoon grabbed Si Qing by the sleeve. "C'mon, we'll keep drinking in the residence, A'qing!"

"I still have to receive the fellow cultivators, so maybe some other day!" Si Qing's face stiffened and waved his hands in a hurry to decline.

"Fine then. I'll be going first!" Northmoon waved his hand. He arrived in a magnificent palace under caretaker Zheng's lead, with fancy eaves and corners as well as carved beams and painted rafters. It was like the palace of an immortal.

"Welcome, sir Northmoon!"

A group of women knelt down gracefully at the entrance to the palace. They were all dressed in the same style of dress that dragged along the ground. All of them were beautiful, varying in appearance and figures. They were all rare beauties, and their bearings were exceptional. They definitely were not some common women.

"Who're they?"

Northmoon could see that every single one of them practised qi. Their cultivation was nothing special, roughly around the second or third layer of Qi Practitioner, but they could still be regarded as cultivators after all. The woman in the lead had even opened her sea of qi and reached the sixth layer.

"There'll all palace attendants for serving you. This good fortune in love is truly envious." caretaker Zheng smiled in a way that all men understood.

"They're also cultivators, so of all the things they could do, why did they choose to do this?" Northmoon was rather confused. A cultivation at the first or second layer of Qi Practitioner could run around freely in the world of mortals, so why did they become attendants?

"None of them originally possessed the talent to cultivate. They had been chosen when they were young and were bestowed pills, which is why they're barely able to practise qi now. Actually, they're all just slaves. They were sold to the marquis' estate. They're not actual cultivators."

"I see!"

Northmoon nodded. Jiang Fu sure knew how to burn money for him to do something as tasteless as that. Nobles truly lived off the fat of the land!

He took this as a lesson. If Jiang Fu spent a little less attention on sensual pleasures, perhaps he would not have been squatted to death by a single smack from the Dark Queen. Now, it all fell into that grandsonny Si Qing's lap before being offered to his grandfather Northmoon as gifts.

### **Chapter 629 - Assassination**

Even if mortal women were born beautiful, they would possess many flaws if they could not cultivate, and their beauty would rapidly fade away with age. The cultivation methods that these women practised had been specially prepared by the marquis' estate. It only focused on retaining their beauty, elevating their beauty and charm, as well as some techniques for serving men.

However, this was not like what Li Qingshan thought, just for fulfilling momentary lust. Instead, it was also for creating descendants. The children between cultivators would basically all possess the talent to cultivate. As such, larger aristocratic clans would all make these preparations to preserve the bloodline of their clan. The concubines that the Han family had arranged Han Tiewi to take on were mostly women like this.

And, for the women, this was an opportunity to change their fate and become cultivators. Even if they would be cultivators of the lowest level, they would still possess healthier bodies, longer life spans, and more beautiful appearances than mortals. They would be able to enjoy a lavish lifestyle that mortals could not imagine, and once they produced a talented child, the rest of their life would basically be guaranteed.

Caretaker Zheng took Northmoon on a tour through the palace first. The decorations in the palace were extremely beautiful. It had all the facilities a person could ever need. It even had a special cellar that stored several hundred jars of fine alcohol.

Then they arrived behind the palace, only to see white steam permeating the air. It was an open-air hot spring. The sides of the pool were made from softer, white jade, while the surrounding walls depicted images of enchanting women. These women were all scantily dressed, graceful and casting out gentle glances. Within the steam, they seemed like a dream, like they were alive. This was obviously the handiwork of the school of Painting. The female attendants all arrived by the pool, making the dream into a reality.

Caretaker Zheng smiled. "Fellow Northmoon, these are all his highness' kind intentions, so please enjoy yourself. I'll be taking my leave first."

Northmoon smiled, taking off all of his clothes and leaping into the pool, immediately crossing his legs and entering a meditative state. He made the women look at one another, at a loss as for what to do.

Si Qing heard caretaker Zheng's report and slammed his table heavily before letting out a long sigh. "Sure enough, this wretched daemon can't be swayed by fine alcohol and fine women considering how quickly he's risen up."

"Little strokes fell great oaks. Constant effort brings success. There's no rush." Jia Zhen swung his feather fan.

"There's no rush? I think he was clearly using his clone today to mess with me. Am I supposed to continue putting up with him?"

“But this doesn’t mean he’s not showing goodwill and probing us. As time goes on, he’ll end up lowering his guard sooner or later. Our priority right now is still to refine the Asura Field.”

“Yes. As long as we refine the Asura Field and find the location of his original body, I’d like to see if he can still escape from the palm of our hands!” Si Qing opened his fingers before clenching his hand violently.

Actually, Si Qing had overestimated what Northmoon, or in other words, what Li Qingshan was thinking. He was not the kind of hopeless romantic who would only cling to one good thing in life. Most of the time, he would just eat if there was to eat and drink if there was to drink. He would not hold back. Normally, he would kindly accept all of these “gifts”, but Han Qiongzhi was beside him right now. If he were to use his clone to fool around even now, even he would not be able to forgive himself.

The competition between the schools of Miscellany would continue for a few more days. Some cultivators searched for what they wanted tirelessly, but there were other cultivators who returned to their arranged residences. With the vast size of the marquis’ estate, accommodating these cultivators posed no issue at all.

It gradually grew later into the night. After an entanglement, the two of them went to sleep together. Li Qingshan opened his eyes and slowly drew his hand out from under Han Qiongzhi. He knew he could not fool the person beside him with these actions, so he leaned over and kissed her gently on the cheek, saying softly, “I’ll be right back!”

Afterwards, Li Qingshan erased his presence and hid his figure, melding into the night. Han Qiongzhi opened her eyes and held back the urge to follow along and see what he was doing. Qingshan, just what is your secret?

Li Qingshan wrinkled his nose. Among the many, complicated smells, he found the one he was looking for, the smell of the cultivator in grey who wanted to buy his pieces of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy. Afterwards, he followed the invisible track and stalked after him.

He was not petty enough to hold onto a grudge and search for revenge over a slight offence. Instead, the incident today made him think of a minor matter from a few years ago. Under Green Vine mountain, he had obtained a piece of the Cursive Sword Calligraphy, and a masked man in black pursued him, wanting to kill him.

Were the two connected in some way?

Many guards of the estate and Hawkwolf guards patrolled the area, sparing no corner. There were also numerous warning formations operating in secret, maintaining a heavily-guarded interior.

Li Qingshan moved between the building like there was no one around.

The Invisibility technique was the signature water element technique. With Li Qingshan’s current cultivation and talent, he could achieve exceptional effects with it. Even without objects like a Glazed Mirror of Invisibility or the Illusory Water Sword of Invisibility, he could still fool regular Foundation Establishment cultivators.

And, it was no problem at all for him to use the senses of the spirit turtle to avoid the warning formations. He arrived before a tall building. The smell vanished into a room on the fifth floor. Li

Qingshan arrived silently and listened carefully, but he heard nothing at all. He could not sense any auras either. Clearly, they had set up a formation that isolated them from the outside world.

Li Qingshan pursed his lips and gathered his soul sense, condensing it into a point and penetrating the formation silently like piercing a needle through window paper. He could now clearly hear the voices of people, and there was more than a single person.

This feat seemed easy, but it required an extremely powerful soul sense to achieve. He practised the Nine Transformations of the Demonic and Divine, so the powerful wills of the ox demon, tiger demon, spirit turtle, and phoenix filled his sea of consciousness, constantly colliding and clashing together, fire against water, divine against demonic. It tempered his soul sense and made it extremely powerful, such that even the soul sense of regular Golden Core cultivators paled in comparison.

There were a total of seven people in the room. Apart from a Foundation Establishment cultivator, the rest were Qi Practitioners. None of them were dressed in anything special, making it impossible to tell whether they came from any schools or sects. It was like they were intentionally trying to be discreet.

The cultivator in grey knelt on the ground and pleaded with the Foundation Establishment cultivator. "Sir, he turned me down flatly. There was nothing I could do!"

"Hmph, Li Qingshan. He truly is as unruly as the rumors suggest. He really knows how to push his luck!" The Foundation Establishment was a stern old man who turned around furiously.

Li Qingshan thought, Why don't you check yourself in the mirror and take a good look at yourself? You're ancient, and you're only at mid Foundation Establishment. Let alone Golden Core, you don't even have much of a hope at reaching late Foundation Establishment. Though, just what is this bastard relying on for his self-confidence to become so swollen?

The stern old man paced around with his hands behind his back. "Niu Juxia seems to have vanished into thin air. Even the two pieces of the Three Absolutes Calligraphy in his possession have gone missing. We have to obtain the two pieces in Li Qingshan's possession. Only then can we report back to that sir. You've failed to complete your mission, so punishment is unavoidable!"

Li Qingshan shuddered inside. Sure enough, these guys are connected to it! They seem to be serving a figure that's even more powerful. The so-called Three Absolutes Calligraphy they're collecting is the Cursive Sword Calligraphy. Not only is that person tremendously wealthy, but he's quite strong too, which is why these guys are so arrogant under his protection.

Who knows how many fragments the Three Absolutes Calligraphy have been split into. They can't be collected by Qi Practitioners. Probably even Foundation Establishment cultivators aren't capable of something like that. The "sir" they speak of might be one of the Golden Core cultivators I saw today on the Soaring Clouds terrace. However, Li Qingshan felt rather confused. They're only collecting a few spiritual artifacts, so why do they have to be so secretive? Oh, it's probably because they're afraid of inflating the price, which would make everything more difficult!

The cultivator in grey showed fear. "Hold on. Sir, I discovered something strange today!"

"What is it?"



“On the arcane artifact Three Absolutes Calligraphy in Li Qingshan’s possession, I found some of the strokes extremely familiar. They’re extremely similar to the one junior brother Liu lost when Niu Juxia killed him.”

“Are you certain?” The stern man’s face stiffened. Every single Three Absolutes Calligraphy seemed basically the same in the eyes of a layman, all just strokes of ink, but there were actually many differences between each piece. They had been dealing with them for all this time, so they were able to distinguish between them.

A Qi Practitioner on the side added, “It is strange now that you mention it. Basically all the fragments of the Three Absolutes Calligraphy are spiritual artifacts, so why would an arcane artifact appear out of nowhere?”

“Don’t tell me Niu Juxia is connected to Li Qingshan somehow?”

The stern old man pondered for a while. “I will report this to the sir and ask him to take action personally. I refuse to believe we can’t handle a measly Li Qingshan!” A sinister smile appeared on his face. “Since you won’t give us what we want, then you better not blame us for bringing your path as a genius to an end!”

The other Qi Practitioners laughed too. They were all independent cultivators. Their talent was not particularly outstanding and no sects wanted them, which was why they had been gathered to serve the old man. They instinctively envied and hated geniuses.

“Then come at me!” A voice suddenly rang out by their ears at the same time. The doors swung open before slamming shut immediately, but they saw no one. Only a breeze swept through the room as if the wind had blown open the door.

All of the stern old man’s hairs stood on end. He experienced life-threatening danger and pulled back in retreat. Right when he wanted to activate the defensive arcane artifact on him, he discovered he remained exactly where he was before quickly falling towards the ground. He widened his eyes in disbelief, only having just noticed the pain from his neck.

Before he knew it, he had already been beheaded. His body had stumbled back, but his head remained in the air. As for the Qi Practitioners, they all froze up on the spot. Some of them were even at a loss, having no idea what had happened.

Li Qingshan used one of his innate abilities, the Tiger Demon’s Breath. He truly did not have to put in much effort at all against a Foundation Establishment cultivator and a group of Qi Practitioners. He only needed to exhale. This was the marquis’ estate after all. If he made too great of a disturbance and gave Si Qing and the others a reason to persecute him, then that would be bad. As a result, he killed them in a single strike.

Before their heads had even struck the ground, they became wrapped up in a gust of wind. Even their corpses were sent into Li Qingshan’s hundred treasures pouch. After confirming that he had not left behind even a hint of the smell of blood, Li Qingshan took the seven hundred treasures pouches and left the room silently.

After looking through the hundred treasures pouches with his soul sense, Li Qingshan could not help but sigh emotionally. "There really are different ways out when you think you've hit a dead end. You sure can get some unexpected results from pure accidents!"

### **Chapter 630 - Honesty**

In the hundred treasures pouches that belonged to these people of unknown origins, he actually found over a dozen pieces of the Three Absolutes Calligraphy, which satisfied his desire to collect very much. If he could reassemble these pieces...

Originally, Li Qingshan wanted to return to Han Qiongzhi's side, but he immediately changed directions now.

Chu Danqing was currently meditating in his room. Suddenly, he heard knocking on the door, but he saw no one when he opened it. Li Qingshan's voice rang out by his ear. "I'll come in and talk!"

The door was closed again, and Li Qingshan's figure appeared. Chu Danqing said in surprise, "Qingshan, aren't you accompanying senior sister Han? Why have you come to my place?"

"There's something I need your help with." Li Qingshan cut right to the chase and took out all the fragments of the Three Absolutes Calligraphy. "I was wondering if you were as capable as master Chu and could assemble these fragments?"

Chu Danqing said, "Wait, so- Where did you get these from?"

"You don't have to worry about that- fine, I'll tell you. I stole them just now." Li Qingshan considered and felt like it was still better for Chu Danqing to know what was going on, so he roughly explained what had happened.

"Qingshan, you really do become more bold the more capable you are, to actually take action in the marquis' estate. These people have really been down on their luck to plot against you. So it's actually called the Three Absolutes Calligraphy. That sure is fitting. However, considering this is connected to a Golden Core cultivator, there'll probably be quite a lot of trouble."

"Who cares. Can you repair it or not?"

"Of course I can. My master already mentioned it the last time he repaired it for you. It's a pity that my cultivation is insufficient, but using the Jade Blood of Vermillion and Black makes it much easier to assemble these fragments!"

Chu Danqing's face was filled with pride and confidence, as well as some embarrassment.

Chu Shidao had already discovered the way to assemble these fragments, and Chu Danqing understood the entire process, which saved him the largest bit of trouble. Moreover, he was brimming with vigour, so it would actually be much easier for him than Chu Shidao, who already had a foot in the grave back then. Coupled with the assistance from his Jade Blood of Vermillion and Black, he could be described as the optimal choice for this job.

"Alright then. Looks like I'll make you bleed this time. You can take these paintings as remuneration." Li Qingshan took out his spoils from killing Chu Danqing's three seniors.

Chu Danqing said sternly, "Qingshan, I can't accept these."

"These paintings all belong to your school of Paintings. Only you can unleash their power to their greatest extent. You know me. I hate owing people." Li Qingshan placed the paintings on the table, leaving no room for negotiation.

"Being able to study the work of the Five Absolutes Immortal will greatly benefit my painting ability. This is already the greatest remuneration you can give me."

Chu Danqing refused to accept them no matter what. If Li Qingshan insisted on paying him, he would rather not do this job at all.

Li Qingshan never liked haggling around either. "Fine then! I couldn't tell, but you sure are stubborn."

Chu Danqing smiled. "Aren't you persistent too, Qingshan?" He faltered before saying, "Actually, I hope that I can become accomplished with painting one day and specially paint a painting of you."

Li Qingshan shook his head with a smile. "I'm not a beauty, so what is there to paint?"

"Painters like painting beauties, but I'd rather paint the heroes of the world, and then establish a gallery of heroes so that people of the future can all look up to their glorious demeanours!" Chu Danqing's eyes shone.

"I believe a day like that will arrive!" Li Qingshan smiled. Though unfortunately, I'm no hero.

.....

Li Qingshan turned invisible again and secretly returned to his residence, arriving by Han Qiongzhi's side. She laid on her side with her eyes shut as if she was sleeping. Li Qingshan laid down behind her and pulled her into his arms gently, covering her chest naturally. He whispered into her ear.

"What, aren't you going to ask me where I went?"

"You'll obviously tell me what you want to tell me," Han Qiongzhi said with her eyes shut, without responding to his intimate contact.

Li Qingshan forcefully turned her around, and only then was she forced to open her eyes. She pursed her lips and said nothing, but Li Qingshan was able to read exactly what she was thinking, I've already been so considerate with you, so how can you be discontent?

Li Qingshan experienced a great urge to protect and treasure her. She had never been a delicate woman, and after everything that had happened so far, she had developed a sense of tenacity.

"I'll tell you then. I killed a few people just now, and then I paid a visit to Chu Danqing."

Smack! Han Qiongzhi knocked his hand away and sat up. "Stop touching and feeling. Talk properly. I'm listening!"

Li Qingshan sat up too. He told her everything that had happened. He did not even hide his identity of Niu Juxia and how he killed the masked cultivator under Green Vine mountain in the past.

“Niu Juxia!” Han Qiongzhi murmured. Although she did not have any impression of “Niu Juxia”, just the fake identity alone was enough for her to think of many things. If she investigated it carefully, there would be even more mysteries she could think about.

“This is one of my secrets.”

“So you really were the one who killed Zhuo Zhibo!”

“Who let that old bastard go too far?”

Han Qiongzhi let out a long sigh. “Actually, I’d rather just hear from you that you have another woman outside. If only your secrets were so simple.”

“Uhh, about that. I do have another woman outside.”

Before Li Qingshan could even finish speaking, Han Qiongzhi threw a slap over. Li Qingshan caught her hand. “Hey, hey, isn’t this what you wanted to hear?”

“Damn men. Don’t forget what you promised me in the past! You can’t even keep your word, and you’re faithless!”

“Hmm? Didn’t you say it didn’t matter afterwards?”

“Never! Who is she?!” Han Qiongzhi wrapped her hands around Li Qingshan’s neck, baring her teeth like a furious panther and staring at Li Qingshan viciously.

“You’ve changed your mind so quickly!” Li Qingshan felt like he had just been fooled. How stupid of him. This was clearly the last thing women could put up with.

“Forget it. I know I’m not some charming woman. If you ever get tired of me and want to go find some other woman, just tell me. Stop being so indecisive, unlike a man at all, or I’ll end up looking down on you.” Han Qiongzhi suddenly released him and turned around again.

“Yeah, yeah. I’m not some charming man either. If you ever get tired of me and want to find some other man, just tell me. Stop being so indecisive, just like a woman, or I’ll end up looking down on you,” Li Qingshan said seriously.

“You’re saying I’m not like a woman? Hmph, I’ll never find some other man. Being fooled and deceived once is enough.”

“Then there’s nothing I can do. Though, according to my earnest observations, you’re still very much like a woman, Qiongzhi.” Li Qingshan smiled.

He could not act recklessly and do whatever he wanted, even having to behave carefully, but having a fitting partner came with its form of peace and happiness. Although he was tempted to embrace all women that fell into his lap, she was both the most ordinary and the most special existence to him.

.....

It was daytime. Perhaps because Li Qingshan had carried everything out too cleanly, but the disappearance of the cultivators did not raise any attention. Everyone’s attention had been drawn away by the competition between the schools of Miscellany. The schools of Miscellany would stock new items

every day, and their value would climb higher and higher. The atmosphere of the Exhibition Matches of the Nine Provinces gradually heated up.

In the empty room, a cluster of darkness suddenly twisted and expanded, turning into a pitch-black figure who looked around.

“The smell of death pervades this place! They’ve died!”