

Chapter 681 - Returning to the Hometown (Two)

The galloping hooves kicked up yellow, muddy water as the horse sped through the rain, arriving before the Iron Fist school. The rider suddenly pulled the reins. With a whinny, the horse raised its hooves into the air.

“Old school master!” The disciples waiting outside saw the person and all went up to receive him and lead his horse over.

Liu Hong leapt off the horse, no less nimble and powerful compared to the past. He tossed the reins aside and strode through the door. Arriving in the main hall, he noticed Li Long with a single glance and shuddered all over. “You’re really back!”

“Master!” Li Long rushed out of the hall too, dropping down to his knees on the wet ground with a plop. He had studied martial arts in the Iron Fist school with Liu Hong since young, receiving his guidance in many things. He was so close with him that it even surpassed his relationship with his father.

“Good, good, good! As long as you’re back!” Liu Hong was emotional, helping Li Long up with both arms. They entered the hall, holding each other’s arms before taking their seats respectively. Both of them were excited, actually unsure about what to say for a moment.

“Death is unavoidable if you live in this world, unless you’re a cultivator like you. Only then can you transcend death. You can say your father lived a good life with the advanced age he reached, so there’s no need for too much grief. You probably have to return to send me off too before long!”

Liu Hong could not help but sigh when Li Long’s father was mentioned. With his present age, he felt the threat from death growing with each passing day. He was extremely envious of cultivators who could lengthen their lifespans.

“How can you say that, master? Your body is still strong. You can definitely become a centenarian,” Li Long said sincerely.

After almost a decade since Li Long saw him, Liu Hong seemed like he had suddenly grown much older. His face was covered with wrinkles, and a lot of his hair had greyed. Only through practising qi could the ageing process be slowed, so no matter how powerful of a practitioner of martial arts he was, he was unable to withstand the erosion of time. Becoming a centenarian could already be regarded as the limit.

“Yeah, master. Transcending death is nowhere near that easy. You’ll be able to live a few years longer at most. As long as you live your life comfortably, it’s not like a few years will make a difference.”

Wang Lei was in his prime and his body was sturdy, so he did not take the concept of death too seriously. As he listened to how Liu Hong praised cultivators, he did not feel particularly happy inside. He would never envy his junior brother whose martial arts were not even as great as his back then.

Liu Hong shot a glance at Wang Lei. “I’ve lived with my life on the line for all those years, so do I still need you to teach me? Kid, the only reason why you had so many years of peace is all thanks to me, as well as that Li Qingshan.”

Wang Lei was unhappy inside. He was a mighty school leader after all, but Liu Hong still lectured him like a child. However, in the jianghu, the status of their master even surpassed the status of their father. Whether it were the orthodox or the unorthodox, killing your master was a crime that ranked at the top of the list. Everything he possessed came from Liu Hong, so he was unable to talk back.

“Senior brother is right. Life is about satisfaction. Cultivation also has its difficulties. A while ago, I almost lost my life. Honestly, it might not be any better than living your life out peacefully in Qingyang city.”

Li Long persuaded. Although he had spent more time in the fields than having contact with people over the past few years, he could also understand certain things that Wang Lei was thinking, but he had no interest in comparing to see who was better. They already lived in completely different worlds, and he did not want to leave Wang Lei unhappy because of himself. After all, Liu Hong still needed to depend on him once he got a little older.

Hearing how Li Long agreed with him, Wang Lei cheered up again. “You really have understood many things after travelling around. It’s just like what they say. No matter how great it is outside, it can never be better than home!”

Liu Hong said in surprise, “There’s danger too in the Academy of the Hundred Schools? I heard it’s like those immortal dwellings, where all aspects of life are on a completely different level compared to mortals.”

Only now did he notice Li Long’s appearance. He seemed very shabby, but at the same time, he noticed there was not even a speck of moisture on him despite kneeling in the rain earlier. He was still as dry and rustic as before.

Li Long explained what he went through in the Exhibition Matches of the Nine Prefectures and sighed heavily. “There were thousands of cultivators in that battle, but only a few hundred survived in the end. Many people with cultivations greater than me and techniques stronger than mine died. Even when I think about it now, my heart still flutters with fear.”

“I didn’t think the cultivation community would be even more dangerous than the jianghu. I really have to thank that Li Qingshan!”

Liu Hong was amazed. A battle on such a scale was well beyond his imaginations. It was countless times more dangerous than the battles of the jianghu. He found it even more difficult to imagine that the country kid from the past already possessed such exceptional abilities.

“Li Qingshan! I heard he has become someone prominent now!”

Wang Lei behaved like he was listening to a myth, throwing him into a trance for a moment. He imagined how Li Qingshan stopped the fighting on the battlefield, sailing with techniques and dancing with weapons alone. Just how mighty was that?

“Yeah, he’s already become the Scarlet Hawk commander of the Clear River prefecture. He’s close to breaking through the second heavenly tribulation. He plans on getting married to great general Han’s daughter.”

Wang Lei clicked his tongue in amazement. “That’s really impressive. Master, you even gave him a beating back then!”

“It’s not worth mentioning, it’s not worth mentioning!” Liu Hong laughed aloud. Back then, when Li Qingshan demanded ten taels of silver for each punch, he had left him furious. Now that he thought about it, he had actually punched such a prominent figure, which instead made him feel very proud of himself.

Li Long remembered the matters of the past and also began to smile unknowingly. After talking for a while longer, the sky gradually darkened.

Liu Hong said, “It’s getting late. Let’s travel through the night to Crouching Ox village!”

Wang Lei said, “It’s difficult to travel on the mountain paths when it’s wet. Junior brother has travelled a great distance, and he hasn’t even eaten. There’s no need to be in such a hurry. Why don’t you just rest in Qingyang city for a night and wait for tomorrow? Tonight, you can take a proper shower and change into a set of better clothes. That’ll basically be returning home gloriously, with fame and riches.”

“He has to change into mourning clothes anyway once he gets back, so what’s there to change into?” Liu Hong glanced at Li Long again. “Though, why don’t you just change into the mourning clothes here?” He was basically trying to say that he too found his current appearance unpresentable.

The emphasis of returning home gloriously with fame and riches was on “gloriously”. The smaller the village, the more they cared about this “glorious” image.

Li Long could only smile bitterly. Earth elder Huang had personally bestowed these clothes to him. Although it seemed very shabby after being passed down through the school of Agriculture for many generations, it was still a supreme grade spiritual artifact after all. It brought great benefit to his cultivation, so did it really draw so much contempt?

“Master, let’s eat before we head over!”

Wang Lei originally wanted to hold a great banquet in Qingyang restaurant to welcome and wash off the trail dust from Li Long, but after Liu Hong scolded him again, he held a banquet in the hall. He called over a few prominent figures of the Iron Fist school for company. The drink they drank was fine alcohol aged for over twenty years, and the food they ate was delicious local delicacies.

Li Long only drank a cup of alcohol and ate a few mouthfuls before stopping. Wang Lei said, “Junior brother, are they not to your tastes? I can get them to remake it!”

“I’m used to eating fruit and vegetables! I grew these myself, so why don’t we all try it?” Li Long took out some fruit from his hundred treasures pouch and split it among the people at the table. He also took out a jar of fruit wine he had made himself.

Throughout the years, basically everything he ate each day was the crops he had planted himself. They could basically replace the pills normally used for cultivation. He sold off the excess, and it would always fetch a decent price. As a result, as long as there was enough land and they were willing to put in the hard work, disciples of the school of Agriculture were all very wealthy.

“Then let’s try it.” Wang Lei glanced at the hundred treasures pouch on Li Long’s waist enviously. He sneered inside, Why does he seem like a poor relative from the country? He even brought some of his own produce.

Upon tasting it, no one could stop anymore. For a moment, there was complete silence. Only when they finished off the fruit and alcohol did they exhale deeply, savouring the flavour.

These regular fruits were actually more delicious than any of the delicacies on the table, making them feel entirely refreshed. The jar of alcohol went even more without saying. A faint scent oozed through their mouths as if it was rather light, but it immediately began to burn like fire. They felt like all their organs were being massaged as the fragrance lingered about. The fine alcohol they usually drank was as tasteless as water compared to this. To those who loved drinking, even losing a decade or two of lifespan would be worth it if they could drink alcohol like that daily.

One of the leaders beamed with joy. "My inner force has grown by quite a lot!" It was not only him. Everyone felt their bodies change. Not only did their inner force increase, but even some hidden injuries they had accumulated over the years healed without any prior signs.

When they looked at Li Long again, they all felt deep admiration. Just some fruits he had casually shared with him were rare treasures in the jianghu! It would be very common for these items to lead to great bloodshed. After all, a simple spiritual ginseng back then had thrown Qingyang city into chaos.

As a genius disciple of the school of Agriculture, the fruit and vegetables Li Long grew were basically on par with the spiritual ginseng. Although the spiritual ginseng was much older, it had not been tended to with care.

"Junior brother, these items mustn't have come easily!" Wang Lei's feelings were rather mixed. He no longer dared to look down on disciples of the school of Agriculture anymore. Li Long right beside him suddenly seemed unfathomable.

"It was very difficult in the beginning. It took me quite a while before I understood everything. You need to pay particular attention to the control over sunlight, rain, and dew. Most importantly, you also need the corresponding technique..." Li Long explained a few ways of farming from the school of Agriculture, but when he saw how everyone was completely lost, he stopped talking.

Liu Hong stroked his beard, feeling great relief. Li Long had even prepared a jar of alcohol for Liu Hong, but upon considering its value, he no longer dared to take it out so boldly. He wanted to wait for the right time.

After eating these things, everything else from the banquet had become tasteless. And, even though they did not feel full, they did not feel hungry at all.

As a result, they set off through the night. Basically all the disciples of the Iron Fist school were rallied, travelling off to Crouching Ox village as a formidable group.

Crouching Ox village was also drenched in rain. Only caretaker Liu and village head Li's homes were still lit. In a dark house to the west of the village, a man and a woman currently conversed.

The woman said with a deep, gruff voice, "Old man Li is dead, so Li Long will definitely return to the village. He's on speaking terms with Li Er, so we need to get him to pass a letter to Li Er. He's doing well now, so he can't forget about us. We're the ones who took care of him for so many years. If it weren't for us feeding him, he would have starved to death long ago!"

That had once been the voice Li Qingshan hated the most, and this had also been his home in the past, or more accurately, the neighbouring, run-down cowshed had been his home in the past. A yellow ox now occupied the cowshed. There would also be a child playing a flute, riding on the back of the ox to Crouching Ox hill to let the ox out for grazing. However, there was no need for him to stay in the cowshed, and who knew how many times better off he was compared to Li Qingshan in the past.

Elder brother Li rolled over in bed and said with a muffled voice, "He's already severed his ties with us. We haven't spoken in all these years, so what's the point of sending a letter?"

Chapter 682 - Vengeance for Family

"Ouch! You crazy woman! Let go of me!"

Elder brother Li howled in pain. The sister-in-law grabbed him by the ear and forced him to turn around.

"I've used up all the misfortune from my past eight lives to be married with someone as useless as you. You don't even have the courage to pass on a letter, so what's the point of keeping you around? Your brother sure is capable, but he's a heartless, unfeeling bastard!"

The sister-in-law ground her teeth, her face warped with hatred. She hated the elder brother for his uselessness, and she hated Li Qingshan for his heartlessness.

Over the years, the place that changed the most in the village would definitely be village head Li's household. They were already countless times better off than other farmer households, and ever since Li Long left, silver basically flowed back home unceasingly like water. They erupted with wealth, dismantling their original house to build a large courtyard. They ate and drank well every single day, and they no longer worked in the fields.

Then she looked at her own household. They possessed a little more land than before, but they had lost one of their labourers, they had to cover the expenses for the ox, and they had to feed an additional mouth. They were instead much worse off than before. They had clearly heard that Li Qingshan was even wealthier than Li Long, but they could not even get a single penny from him, which left her grinding her teeth in hatred daily.

"Wasn't it all your sh*tty idea back then to take his farmland and chase him out of the house? Yet now you blame me! If you say another word of nonsense, I'll slap you across the face!"

The elder brother became furious too. Over the years, many people in the village had mocked him, saying how his family had produced a decent man after so much difficulty, only for him to be as blind as a bat, chasing him away from home.

"Hit me! Hit me! You might as well beat me to death!"

The sister-in-law squirmed around with her body that was as round as a ball and her thick arms and legs, making an unreasonable scene. Had she not regretted it to the very core either? However, what was done could not be undone. What was the point in still saying all of this now?

"Hmph, you crazy woman!"

"Even if you won't consider for us, you have to consider for 'pebble'. Do you want him to toil away in the fields for his entire life with you?"

Elder brother Li fell silent. Gradually, he began to change his mind. No matter how much grievance exists between us, so many years have passed already. We're still brothers by blood after all. Even if he blames me, he can't blame his own nephew! As long as he relents even slightly, that'll be endless good fortune!

At the same time, there was a dim speck of light within the night rain under Crouching Ox hill outside the village. At first glance, it seemed like a house, but the walls around the place were painted red. It seemed like a memorial temple.

Entering through the door, there was a table for offerings, with a few plates of fruit and a lone lamp. Even without the night breeze, it was already tottering around, about to be devoured by the darkness at any time.

Using the dim light, it was possible to make out a black, wooden statue. It had a hand on its waist and a blade in the other. Although it stood in a very imposing manner, the craftsmanship was very crude. It was possible to tell it was the handiwork of a rural carpenter with a single glance. However, it did bear some resemblance to Li Qingshan, or more accurately, Li Qingshan in his youth.

This was the hut that Li Qingshan had originally used the wild boar to build. Afterwards, he earned the name of "Tiger Butcher" for himself, so the people in the village built a special temple for him, using the hut as a basis, calling it the Tiger Butcher temple. There was even a special temple attendant who was responsible for cleaning it. Actually, he was just a childless, lame old man. Everyone in the village called him "limp Liu".

Old man Liu's responsibility was to ensure that the lamp never went out at night, but it was not like anyone supervised him. On such a stormy, autumn night, he had shut the temple door a long time ago. He ate some pork and drank a cup of unstrained liquor before throwing his blankets over himself and going to sleep. When someone burst through the temple door and entered the temple, he was completely unaware.

The person's stature was extremely thick and robust, and he was covered in facial hair, making it impossible to tell his age. When he stepped into the temple, he happened to be extremely dry. As he gazed at the wooden statue, his eyes shone with hatred. He ground his teeth. "Li Qingshan!"

Suddenly, he took a step forward and threw a palm strike from afar. With a great boom, the statue split into pieces, but the wavering oil lamp continued to shine.

Old man Liu shuddered all over and woke up. He was still bleary-eyed. "Is it thunder?" He limped over to the hall and immediately spotted the sturdy, black figure. "You're..."

Before he could even finish, the person launched another palm strike, and old man Liu exploded like the statue, turning into a scarlet, bloody mist. Only his head remained whole, which the person placed on the offering table before quietly uttering some prayers.

"Father, I'll complete your unfulfilled wish first and destroy the Crouching Ox village. This is the first one. There will be a day when I personally kill Li Qingshan!" Xiong Batian said viciously.

If Li Qingshan were present, perhaps he would find him rather familiar. Of course, it was completely possible for him to have no impression of this person at all. Compared to the enemies he had killed afterwards, the master of the Black Wind stronghold, Xiong Xiangwu, was nothing.

Xiong Batian was Xiong Xiangwu's son, but he had not been in Black Wind stronghold. Instead, he had been learning martial arts with his grandfather. When he learnt about how the Black Wind stronghold had been massacred, he was still a child. He understood that all he could do was silently and patiently wait for the optimal opportunity if he wanted revenge.

However, after over a decade of waiting, he discovered that his enemy had already become a Scarlet Hawk commander, and his chances for revenge were becoming more and more miniscule. Only by massacring Crouching Ox village and slaughtering all of Li Qingshan's friends and family could he relieve himself of this hatred.

Xiong Batian carried old man Liu's head in his hand as he made his way towards Crouching Ox village. He was determined to kill everyone and pile up their heads into a tower so that he could hold a memorial ceremony for Xiong Xiangwu and his uncles. That had always been the Black Wind stronghold's favourite symbol!

Suddenly, he came to a halt, only to see a group of people on horseback travelling through the night rain and entering Crouching Ox village from afar. His face became frosty. "Alright. I'll kill whoever that comes today. The Drawn Reins village and the Iron Fist school too. Everyone who is connected to Li Qingshan must die!"

Li Long's return led to a huge uproar in the courtyard of the Li family. His brothers, Li Hu and Li Bao, both came to receive him, sobbing away loudly. "Big brother, you're back!" "Before father passed away, he was still uttering your name. Why have you come so late?"

By now, both of them had become plump, chubby, and fair from everything Li Long had sent home. They each grabbed one of Li Long's hands, treating him with so much familiarity like he had only left yesterday. The sobbing began to ring out from outside the mourning hall, filled with grief.

Li Long silently changed into his mourning clothes and paid his respects. He entered the mourning hall and looked at the prepared body lying in the coffin. Two streaks of tears ran down his cheeks.

Right after the ceremony was completed, Li Hu pulled him to a side room, and Li Bao followed over in a hurry. Li Long was perplexed, but when he listened to how they vied with each other, he understood that they were fighting over the family property after village head Li had passed away. They were at a stalemate, so they wanted to wait for Li Long's return so that he could preside over the matter. From how they glared at one another, they did not seem sad at all.

Li Long felt disgust. Right when he was about to talk, he suddenly wrinkled his nose. "There's the reeking of blood!"

The heavy smell of blood passed through the rain and wafted over from the other side of the village.

Li Long walked out in a hurry and arrived on the main street, only to see Xiong Batian walking over from the other side. He carried over twenty heads in his hands, whether they were man or woman, old or young. Blood was still dripping down. In a short while, he had already visited six households.

Chapter 683 - Plants vs. Zombies

Seeing Li Long rush out through the door, Liu Hong, Wang Lei, and everyone else followed along.

However, they were unable to see through the dark like Li Long. All they could make out was a blurry, black figure. Liu Hong was startled, and he came to a stop, but Wang Lei continued onwards, rushing towards the black figure. "Who is it!?"

"Be careful!"

Li Long took a step forward, projecting his true qi out of his body as a hand and grabbing Wang Lei.

A huge force overcame Wang Lei, sending him flying backwards uncontrollably. The place where he originally stood suddenly exploded, kicking soil and rain into the air. He shivered inside. If he had still been standing there, he would not even be a whole corpse anymore.

"A tenth layer Qi Practitioner!"

Xiong Batian was alarmed. He never expected a tiny village to actually have a tenth layer Qi Practitioner. He tossed out the heads like hidden weapons before rapidly retreating. He had cultivated for all these years, but he was only at the eighth layer of Qi Practitioner. Even if he had another decade, he might not necessarily reach the tenth layer.

"Where do you think you're going?" Li Long shot off with a flash in pursuit, avoiding the heads.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The heads exploded in the air one after another, sending countless bone fragments flying. It was much swifter and more dangerous than any hidden weapon from the jianghu. Li Long was protected by true qi, so he obviously did not fear such an attack, but Liu Hong, Wang Lei, and the disciples of the Iron Fist school were right behind him. If he ignored the attack, none of them would survive.

Kicking down with both legs, he shot backwards and swung his hands around. There were not any special moves or tricks, but his movements were natural and graceful like he was working in the fields. True qi surged out and sent the bone fragments flying.

There were a few howls. A few disciples of the Iron Fist school were still struck. Although it had not hit vital points, the wounds immediately blackened and hardened. They collapsed and convulsed on the ground, immediately dying on the spot.

"Corpse poison!"

Li Long's eyes narrowed. If they were Qi Practitioners, then he could save them as long as they could last for a moment. However, these regular disciples were no different from mortals, so how could they withstand something like that? The poison would ravage their bodies and kill them as soon as they came in contact with it.

By now, even Liu Hong had not reacted to what had happened. All he saw was Wang Lei rush out before flying back. With another blink of an eye, over twenty heads filled his vision, exploding together.

Li Hu and Li Bao rushed over to the entrance of the building, gasping for air. "What's happened!?" They squinted and used the lantern light to make out the dead disciples of the Iron Fist school. Immediately, they squealed like pigs that were about to be butchered. "Murder!"

Their extremely penetrative voices stirred up the entire courtyard of the Li family before spreading through the entire village and rousing many people from their sleep.

Liu Hong said, "Who was that earlier?"

"I don't know!"

Li Long's face was stern. If the person earlier was a cultivator who knew how to refine corpses, then massacring the entire village to refine corpses would be nothing strange. However, the matter clearly was not as simple as that, or he would not have beheaded everyone.

With his cultivation as a tenth layer Qi Practitioner, killing an eighth layer Qi Practitioner was nothing difficult at all even if he were a disciple of the school of Agriculture that was not skilled with battle. However, once they started fighting, Crouching Ox village would definitely sustain heavy losses.

And, from how the enemy attacked, it made him even more worried. With a flash, a hoe appeared in his hand. He called out, "Who are you? Why are you making trouble in our Crouching Ox village? Don't you know about Li Qingshan?"

"Hmph, Li Qingshan! You're not Li Qingshan! This has got nothing to do with you, so why would you risk your life for mortals? You should mind your own business!"

Xiong Batian's voice rang out from the other side of the village.

"I'm from Crouching Ox village, so how doesn't it have anything to do with me? It's still not too late for you to run away right now, or I'll definitely take your life."

Li Long had immediately understood what was going on. He could not help but find this both infuriating and ironic. This person definitely had grievances with Li Qingshan. Once he left the village, he would definitely chase him down and take his life!

"If that's the case, then you can stay here and die with Crouching Ox village!"

Xiong Batian said some alarmingly big words. He rolled up his sleeve, revealing a series of bronze bangles for controlling corpses. His other hand was the same. Powered by true qi, the bronze bangles lit up together.

Li Long suddenly felt a tremendous cloud of corpse qi. Riding on his spiritual artifact, he arrived in the air, and his heart sank. It was like what he had been expecting.

Densely-packed swarms of Corpse Soldiers appeared from thin air, radiating with an aura that was even colder than the autumn rain. Most of them were regular zombies, or not even zombies as they had not even been refined properly, just walking corpses converted by corpse poison and corpse qi, but they numbered one or two thousand, and there were many Iron Plate corpses among them.

Against such an army of corpses, even a tenth layer Qi Practitioner would be whittled to death if they were alone unless they could kill the controller as soon as possible. However, his enemy was surrounded by these hordes of zombies, taking extremely careful precautions.

During the several years of war between humans and daemons, combined with the rampant famine and banditry, the number of people that died ranged into the millions, and the arts of corpse refining were commonplace. Only when it led to the disaster of Burial Mound mountain did this practise slowly die away.

However, basically every single Qi Practitioner of the Clear River prefecture was in possession of bronze bangles for controlling corpses. The enemy had used explosive corpses and corpse poison right off the bat, so he clearly practised a cultivation method that was relevant to corpse refining, which allowed him to control even more zombies.

“I swear that I will butcher the entire Crouching Ox village today, leaving none alive. I will avenge my father. It’s not too late for you to escape right now, or once you fall into a tight encirclement, all that awaits you is death!”

Xiong Batian was like a general. With a great wave of his hand, the army advanced, slamming against the huts and buildings. With a rumble, the earthen walls were directly pushed over, unable to stop this flood of corpses. He actually wanted to flatten the entire Crouching Ox village!

Liu Hong’s face changed drastically. He had witnessed the trials and hardships present in the jianghu, but never had he seen something so terrifying. It was as if a colossal, terrifying beast was lunging towards him from the darkness. As for Wang Lei, he was completely frightened out of his wits. His legs trembled as he yelled at the sky, “Junior brother!”

“Be careful, everyone!” Li Long said before flying off towards the zombie army.

At this exact moment, the disciples of the Iron Fist school who had been poisoned to death suddenly opened their eyes and slowly crawled up from the ground. Everyone around them scattered immediately. Li Hu and Li Bao basically scrambled away desperately for their lives.

Liu Hong bellowed out and unleashed his “Charge of the Heaven Cavalry”, hurling a fist at a corpse’s head. With a thunk, the corpse’s head split open like a watermelon, and it collapsed on the ground again.

He leapt about, throwing his fists like the wind and unleashing his martial arts to the limit. He struck a head with each punch, making the rising corpses collapse on the ground again.

These were merely regular walking corpses converted by the corpse poison. Although they possessed great strength and did not fear death, their reactions were delayed, so they did not pose a threat to masters of the jianghu like Liu Hong.

The disciples of the Iron Fist school erupted with cheers. Liu Hong stood imposingly among the corpses, but his back was already drenched with cold sweat. He composed himself. “Everyone, don’t be afraid! There’s just a few corpses!”

However, what Li Long faced right now were not only a few corpses, but thousands of them, covering all demographics. They pushed and shoved each other, even producing meaningless growls, which merged together into a terrifying cacophony.

Before he knew it, the unending autumn rain had already stopped. The clouds dispersed, and the moon shone with cool light, illuminating a small part of the village. However, it was a nightmarish scene.

The wave of corpses ignored all obstacles, rapidly pushing forward. Some walking corpses even fell over, trampled and crushed by the corpses behind them, returning to a pile of flesh in the blink of an eye. Cries and screams rang out of the collapsed houses, but they immediately came to a halt, having been ripped apart by the zombies.

Li Long's palms were sweaty, but after going through the Exhibition Matches of the Nine Prefectures, his mental tolerance for things like this had increased greatly. Although his life would not be in much danger today, he could only take a very small number of people with him away from here if he could not stop the zombie horde. His other family would all have to die. He took out a handful of seeds, and with a wave of his hand, they scattered out.

The buildings in Crouching Ox village were not particularly packed. There was a lot of empty ground between the houses, turned into vegetable patches. A seed landed in a vegetable patch and immediately began to sprout, growing up rapidly and turning into a black thistle. It continued to grow and spread rapidly, covering the entire vegetable patch in the blink of an eye.

The other seeds were the same. Thistles grew endlessly, weaving together into a wall of thistles. The black thistles were different from regular thorns. Every single spine was long and sharp, glistening with a metallic lustre.

Xiong Batian did not take notice of it. The zombies were not even afraid of death, let alone pain. They dove head-first into the thistle wall. Originally, with the terrifying strength of the zombie army, they definitely could have ripped through it with ease.

However, the roots to every thistle plant extended several meters underground, and they continued to spread. The thistles themselves were as tough as iron. As they were tugged at, they produced a metallic, grating sound.

The thistle bushes were like monsters that had sprung alive, dancing about madly. The regular walking corpses would directly be pierced and torn apart as the thistles coiled and moved about, reducing the corpses to chunks of flesh. The thistles were like meat grinders working at full capacity. Even when they came across the refined zombies, they could keep them firmly entangled, drawing them in.

The school of Agriculture was not skilled with battle, but they had their own ways to vanquish enemies, which involved wondrous plants. First, they would gather offensive plants and nurture their seeds over long periods of time so that they possessed great life force. That way, they could rapidly grow as soon as they touched soil. What Li Long sprinkled earlier were seeds to "Iron Blood Thistles".

However, plants all needed to be rooted to the ground, so most of the time, they could only be used to defend. And, they could not distinguish between friend and foe, making them very difficult to control. Apart from the person who nurtured them, anyone who entered the thistle bushes would be under attack, but they were perfect for a situation like this.

Li Long riled up with vigour, becoming a little more confident. He took out another handful of seeds and scattered them, but this time, nothing happened on the ground.

“I’d like to see how much longer you can stop them!”

Xiong Batian mobilised the army to concentrate their attacks on places where the thistle bushes were thinner. At the same time, he took out a bronze bell and swung it forcefully. The bell rung frantically, and the zombies became even more frenzied, pushing forward without any regard and forcefully tearing apart the thistles.

Although the thistle bushes had killed many walking corpses, the corpse qi in their bodies were fatal to plants too. The thistles all withered away.

The zombie army burst through the thistle bushes like a flood that had breached a dam. They were about to annihilate the tiny Crouching Ox village.

A leading zombie stepped down with his left foot, and the pressure passed through the ground. Before anyone had realised it, a tuber shaped like a sweet potato had already formed underneath. Sensing the pressure, it exploded loudly and blasted the zombie away, causing the zombies in the surroundings to suffer collateral damage.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

The zombie army advanced mindlessly, leading to a string of explosions. The seeds that Li Long had just scattered were known as “Sweet Potato Mines”. Ancient disciples of the school of Agriculture regularly buried them in the surroundings of their fields to prevent wild beasts from destroying their crops.

Chapter 684 - Incinerating It All

Elder brother Li and the sister-in-law huddled together in bed, trembling in fear. The entire house shook with them as dust constantly sprinkled down.

Countless terrifying voices beyond the understanding of regular people passed through the walls, filling the entire room, even draining their courage to take a look at what was happening.

The yellow ox constantly mooed in the cowshed next door, filled with fear and despair.

A child around eight or nine years old wormed out of his blankets and rushed towards the door.

“Pebble! What are you doing?” The sister-in-law suddenly discovered that the child beside her had vanished, which made her pale in fright.

“Old Yellow is still outside! I’ll lead him in!”

Pebble turned around and answered, having rushed out of the door already. He dared not look around, barging straight into the cowshed. A yellow ox was shaking its head and tugging at the rope restlessly, dripping with blood.

“Don’t be afraid, Old Yellow. Let’s go back into the house!”

Pebble undid the rope and leapt onto the ox's back, hugging the yellow ox's head. Only then did the ox calm down slightly. As soon as it set foot out of the cowshed, there was a great rumble, and a few zombies smashed down the courtyard wall, rushing in.

Under the moonlight, their ferocious figures immediately left Pebble dumbstruck. The yellow ox immediately turned around and fled towards the other side of the village. Pebble leaned on the back of the ox as the wind whistled past his ears. Returning to his senses after quite some difficulty, he looked back and called out, "Dad, mum!"

However, the last thing he saw was his house collapsing. Bricks and rubble flew everywhere, kicking up a cloud of dust. Before he could even worry or feel sorrow, a few zombies charged out of the dust, tailing right behind them. Their movements were stiff, but who knew how many times faster than the yellow ox they were.

The zombie at the very front suddenly lunged over. His ten long and curved nails almost reached Pebble's bottom, reducing the back half of the yellow ox to a mess.

Moo!

The yellow ox let out a miserable cry and collapsed on the ground. Pebble was thrown off its back and hurtled towards a wall. He was about to have his head smashed apart. He shut his eyes firmly, but he felt his body lighten. A gentle and powerful wind wrapped around him. When he opened his eyes, he saw an unfamiliar man holding him in one arm while carrying a glowing hoe in the other.

It seemed like a regular hoe for farmwork, but it plowed through the heads of the zombies with ease. Then it swung around with a silver arc and repelled over a dozen zombies that lunged over.

Li Long did not become entangled with them in battle, rushing into the sky soon afterwards. Who knew whether Pebble was naturally brave or frightened out of his wits, but he widened his eyes as he gazed at the ground in the distance. He saw countless terrifying zombies; his house had completely collapsed, reduced to ruins. He was unable to find it no matter how he looked.

Beneath them, trees grew furiously. Because these plants were extremely close together, they bunched up into a wall. Their roots below coiled together firmly.

After the Iron Blood Thistles and Sweet Potato Mines whittled them down, the zombie army had sustained extremely heavy losses, with less than a thousand remaining. However, most of their casualties were weaker walking corpses. They had lost far fewer refined zombies, and they had not even lost a single Iron Plate corpse.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The flood of corpses smashed into the wall of trees fiercely, sending splinters flying and making the trees shake.

Li Long frowned firmly. These trees were not offensive plants used for battle. Although he still possessed a few more seeds of offensive plants, it was a much smaller number, nowhere near enough to stop the flood of corpses. He gripped a handful of seeds firmly. His palms were full of sweat, but he did not toss them out in a hurry. Instead, he continued to plant trees that could form walls.

Under the frenzied collision from the corpses, splinters flew everywhere and sap spattered about. However, while the zombies were strangely powerful, they were unable to smash through a sturdy wall composed of several hundred trees immediately.

Surrounded by hordes of zombies, Xiong Baitan arrived before the wall of trees. His eyes shone with a vicious light. He never thought the enemy could actually obstruct him so much, using these strange plants to rapidly deplete the zombies under his control.

The wall of trees stood over ten meters tall, and they were lush with foliage. Regular zombies struggled to scale past it; only the more nimble Iron Plate corpses could. However, once the Iron Plate corpses made it over, they would be separated from the majority. It would take an extremely great toll on a tenth layer Qi Practitioner to kill all of these Iron Plate corpses, but it was not difficult.

What Xiong Baitan feared the most was becoming the target of a sneak attack once this happened. He treated these Iron Plate corpses as his bodyguards. Regular zombies were unable to keep the enemy locked in battle, so once he scattered some more seeds, his life really might be in danger.

Although they could detour around the wall of trees, water paddies surrounded the village. Following the endless autumn rain, they were basically no different from swamps. The movements of zombies would definitely be restricted if they entered the paddies.

“Hmph, do you think I’ve fallen for your plan? It’s just a bunch of wood. Since we can’t push it over, then we’ll carve our way through!”

Xiong Batian swung the bell, and the zombies parted to form a path. Xiong Batian personally led several dozen Iron Plate corpses to the wall, and the ringing of the bell suddenly sped up. The Iron Plate corpses at the front swung their claws around furiously.

The tough wood was ripped apart like mud. In the blink of an eye, a huge hole appeared before rapidly extending inwards. Before long, they had carved out a passageway through the wall of trees.

As soon as the first Iron Plate corpse emerged on the other side, a huge mouth riddled with teeth swallowed it in a single gulp. The huge mouth was actually a gorgeous, deep-purple flower, and the stalk connected to the flower squirmed like a snake. The stalk was connected to an even-thicker branch.

There were a total of nine stalks like that, and every stalk had a total of nine flowers at their tips. It was like the legendary hydra, so it was known as the “Hydra Flower”. The buds hunted like pythons, biting down on an Iron Plate corpse each.

The Iron Plate corpses put up a fierce struggle as the soft stalks coiled over like snakes, immobilising them completely while secreting powerful, acidic digestive juices. Even the refined Iron Plate corpses stood no chance as the acid rapidly ate away at them.

The Hydra Flowers blocked a total of eight tunnels through the wall. Coupled with Li Long, he was truly holding them off alone.

Xiong Batian felt a tinge of regret. He should have taken a detour instead. However, with a thought, he came up with an idea. He ordered all the zombies to retreat back into the tunnels. Then, he ordered the Iron Plate corpses to dig to the two sides, avoiding these obstructing plants.

No matter how powerful these plants were, they still could not move freely. Li Long would be forced to replant them if he wanted to continue defending.

“Let’s see how many more seeds you have!” Xiong Baitan sneered.

The seeds of offensive plants in Li Long’s possession were truly close to running out. And, while planting these seeds did not take too much of a toll, the effects built up, and the true qi in his dantian was close to running over. He was holding a spiritual stone in his hand to recover.

However, there was instead a sense of relief and ease on his face. A talisman flew out of his hand. It was only a regular Scorching Fire talisman. If he were lucky, he could kill an Iron Plate corpse at most. The Scorching Flame talisman erupted into a ball of fire in the air, but it did not fly towards any zombie at all. Instead, it flew towards the neat row of trees.

Boom!

The flames spread rapidly. The trees all blazed violently like torches. In particular, the fruits on the branches would immediately explode into a ball of fire as long as a tongue of flame gently licked them.

To disciples of the school of Agriculture, there were only two types of plants that possessed any value. One was offensive plants, but that only occupied a very small fraction of them. Most of them were plants with practical usages, like fruits, vegetables, grain, and medicines.

Among these trees, most of them were tung oil trees the school of Agriculture specially bred. Even their branches contained oil. Once they were set alit, even a storm could not put them out.

A while later, the wall of trees turned into a wall of flames, turning the sky fire-red.

Xiong Baitan led the Iron Plate corpses to carve out a tunnel through the trees. The zombie army tailed right behind him, basically all arriving below the wall of trees, only to suddenly discover that the surroundings had already turned into a sea of fire!

Basically every single corpse had been splattered with a lot of sap. Their withered bodies were rapidly ignited. Even for the Iron Plate corpses that were impervious to regular weapons, their iron plates began to distort and change shape under the flames.

Xiong Baitan’s face changed drastically. He emitted true qi from his body to fend off the flames. He could no longer care about the regular zombies anymore. Leading the Iron Plate corpses, he turned around and rushed out of the sea of fire, only to see a figure descend from above and land on the edge of the fire.

Li Long stood on the firm ground with his feet bare. The firelight reflected in his eyes, making them shine. He gripped a hoe firmly with his crude hands. He scattered the last few seeds before him, which burst through the earth, grew, and danced around one by one, fighting alongside him.

Large swathes of smoke rose into the sky. After momentarily clearing up, the sky was blotted out once again when the dark clouds gathered over, blocking the moonlight. The autumn drizzle fell slowly.

On the boundary between rain and fire, the plants filled with vigour and the zombies reeking with an aura of death became locked in a fierce struggle.

Li Long's eyes were fixed on Xiong Baitian the entire time. He raised his hoe high into the air before swinging down viciously.

By the time the flames had burnt everything to ashes, the sun had already risen. The drizzle fell onto the grey charcoal; with a hiss, a curl of misty, dusty smoke rose into the air.

Within the smoke and mist, Li Long lay on the scorching ground, gasping for air. He still gripped his hoe firmly as he gazed at the gloomy sky.

He propped himself up and gazed out. The entire Crouching Ox village had already been reduced to ruins. With the wooden wall that had been burned to ashes as a boundary, one side was ruins the zombies had trampled, while the other was charcoal the flames produced.

Although it began to rain afterwards, it was inevitable for the fire to spread.

Li Long could not help but become frustrated. After a night of bitter battle, he had killed his enemy, but he had failed to save the village. He did not have Li Qingshan's resolve. This was the hometown where he had been born and raised after all. Countless familiar people and things had vanished overnight. He felt no joy from victory at all. Instead, his heart weighed heavily.

"Dad! Mum! Dad!"

Sobbing and shouting rang out from behind. Li Long turned around, only to see a child digging furiously through the ruins, but he could not even shift a slightly larger stone. His tears and snot formed a mess on his face.

Li Long's heart eased up for some reason. "What's your name?"

The child looked back. "M- my name is Li Qingshi. Please, immortal, please save my dad and mum!"

Chapter 685 - Return

"Li Qingshi?" Li Long was taken aback. He scanned the ruins beneath his feet and understood something. "What a good name, but it's just a little unsuitable."

Pebble wiped away his snot and tears. "My mum said that I have to be like my uncle. I have to become someone impressive!"

Li Long rubbed his head and crouched down. "I'll take you to see him, alright?"

"M- m- my dad and mum are dead, right? Just like Old Yellow?" Pebble asked in fright.

There was nothing Li Long could say in response. He sighed. He wondered how his master and everyone else was doing. With their skill, the fire should not have taken their lives, right?

At this moment, a group of people appeared in the ruins on the other side of the village. Spotting the two of them, the person at the front rushed over.

"Master!"

Li Long's eyes lit up. These people were the disciples of the Iron Fist school being led by Liu Hong, as well as many villagers.

As it turned out, after the great fire had been lit, Liu Hong had led the disciples of the Iron Fist school to evacuate all the villagers, fleeing into the mountains nearby. Only when the sun had risen up and the flames had subsided did they find the courage to return.

“As long as you’re fine!”

Li Hong eased up, while Wang Lei’s gaze towards Li Long became filled with reverence. The great fire that filled the air last night was basically the legendary handiwork of immortals. If it were not for him, probably everyone in Crouching Ox village would die.

The villagers found their ruined homes with their family. Many of them sobbed. Pebble finally understood that his parents had suffered the same fate as Old Yellow. They would never be returning again. He began to wail loudly.

Li Long was relieved that at least his battle had not been meaningless, but he was unable to cheer up inside. He said to Liu Hong, “Master, it’s time for me to go back.”

“Aren’t you going to wait until the burial?”

“My father’s soul has already returned to the netherworld. All that remains is but a shell, and probably even this shell doesn’t exist anymore!”

Li Long gazed at Li Hu and Li Bao from afar. When the fire started, they could not even run away in time, so why would they still care about a dead corpse? It had been reduced to ashes with the courtyard of the Li family.

It was strange now that he mentioned it. They were clearly brothers connected by blood, from the same mother and father, yet he found them to be so distant right now. It was as if they lived completely different lives. The so-called returning home gloriously had become meaningless.

Once he left this time, he would probably never return to this hamlet again. Li Long thought of Li Qingshan again. Had he anticipated this already, which was why he was so resolute?

In the end, Li Long passed enough silver to build a hundred Crouching Ox villages to Liu Hong, together with a jar of medicinal alcohol he had carefully brewed. He handed over a few more things before setting off on the journey back to Clear River city.

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“What a huge river! What a huge boat!”

Pebble leaned on the railing and widened his eyes, gazing at the raging Clear river. He gulped. He probably had yet to properly understand the meaning of death. He had already recovered some liveliness, enamoured by this wondrous sight he had never seen before.

Instead, Li Long’s heart still weighed rather heavily. As he gazed at Pebble from behind, he felt worried. Back then, he had acted on impulse to say that he would take him to see Li Qingshan. Li Qingshan had already severed his ties with the Li family. With that man’s resolve, it definitely was not just for say. The fate of this pitiful child probably would not be so optimistic.

The boat followed the flow of the river. By the time they arrived in Clear River city, it was already dusk. Clear River city blazed with light.

Together, Li Long and Pebble disembarked from the boat. Everyone around them avoided them with faces of disgust. Li Long still seemed as rustic as ever, while Pebble was even worse off. He was as dirty and filthy as a young beggar. Li Long had not even given him a basic clean, let alone changing him into a new set of clothes.

Pebble could not help but cower under the disdainful gazes, but when he saw Li Long striding ahead calmly, it brought him great ease.

After disembarking, Li Long visited the Hawkwolf Guard to ask about Li Qingshan's whereabouts, learning he was holding a banquet in the Parlour of Cloud and Rain. As a result, he brought Pebble to the blazing Parlour of Clouds and Rain. Pebble raised his head and did his best to look up.

The rooftop of the Parlour of Clouds and Rain was currently a scene of prosperity. The warm breeze was intoxicating as a celebration for the current peace unfolded.

Basically all the Hawkwolf guards of the Clear River prefecture were gathered there, but most of them could only sit towards the end, as in front of them were Wei Yangsheng, Liu Zhangqing, and the other Foundation Establishment cultivators. Even Han Tieyi was among them.

Hua Chenglu was there too. She frowned as she gazed at Hua Chengzan, who sat in the secondary seat. This banquet was held for him, except he was drunk, and he held a woman in each arm like no one else was around, playing around with them. He would embrace them in intimate ways from time to time.

If any other man behaved like that, they would inevitably come off as indecent and obscene, but when it was him, it was casual and elegant, like the outstanding son of an aristocratic family.

Sitting behind the primary seat's white, jade table was a robust young man who leaned on his arms, smiling faintly. He fiddled around with an alcohol cup in his hand as if he was admiring the song and dance, but at a closer glance, it was possible to discover that his dark eyes were not focused at all.

His appearance obviously stood no chance against a handsome dandy like Hua Chengzan, but he was like a tiger prowling through the forest, possessing a bearing that could look down on all. Even though he was silent, no one could neglect his existence.

"Isn't Linglong pretty?"

A woman pushed him gently from beside him. Her beautiful face formed a perfect, flirtatious pout. Her figure was very petite, like a fourteen or fifteen year old girl, except it curved delicately and exquisitely. Her gentle baby-face was extremely cute, giving off a special type of charm.

"Very pretty."

Li Qingshan looked down and replied in an unconcerned manner. This woman was indeed very pretty. She even possessed the Aspect of Exquisite and Smooth Beauty. Probably only Hua Chenglu out of everyone present was more beautiful than her.

“Then why haven’t you looked at me at all?” Afterwards, she stifled her voice and whispered in his ear, “Don’t tell me commander Hua is jealous?” Her breath tickled his ears as she gently touched the rim of his ear with the tip of her tongue.

“Aren’t you afraid of being eaten by me because your cultivation is insufficient?”

“I’ll never be afraid.” Linglong stuck out her tongue, but sure enough, she sat up properly.

Li Qingshan shook his head. She had been such a bashful child back then, but after a year of special treatment, she had become bold enough to tease him in public.

“Sir, sect master, there’s a man called Li Long who wishes to see you. He’s currently waiting in the warming house,” a female attendant reported.

“Oh, he’s back.” Li Qingshan stood up and made his way downstairs to the warming house. “You’ve come back so soon! Let’s have a drink together! Huh? This child is...”

“A few things happened...” Li Long thought about how he would phrase it as he explained everything that had happened. Pebble already knew the person he was seeing was his legendary, extremely-powerful uncle. Under Li Qingshan’s gaze, his tiny face became bright red, and he stood as tall as he could.

Li Qingshan shut his eyes before opening them again. “I’ve already severed my ties with the Li family. This child has nothing to do with me. You shouldn’t have brought him to Clear River city!”

Pebble deflated like a balloon. He felt both wronged and furious. He raised his head to say something, but when he met Li Qingshan’s eyes, he could not say anything at all. He lowered his eyes, and his eyes reddened as tears began to flow.

“I understand. However, I want to accept him as my disciple.”

Li Long sighed. He had purposefully avoided cleaning up Pebble so that he could see a little more pitiful. If he could gain Li Qingshan’s recognition, then he would be on a meteoric rise, but it still did not work out in the end!

“The name, Li Qingshi, is unsuitable. You better change it!”

Li Long’s eyes lit up again. “Then, what should he be called?”

“Call him Li Xiaoyao!” Li Qingshan answered without even thinking before changing the topic. “You’re close to Foundation Establishment too. Here are three True Spirit pills. Qi Practitioners have no right to serve as people’s masters.”

Chapter 686 - Trying to Forget

Li Long gazed at the three True Spirit pills, and his heart stirred violently. The value of True Spirit pills to Qi Practitioners went without saying. With these three True Spirit pills, he would definitely be able to establish a foundation successfully and thus inherit the position of the leader of the school of Agriculture. However, he sucked in a breath and did not accept it.

“Benefits do not come without merit.”

“You helped me kill an enemy. That’s the merit. Stop being so fussy! If I tell you to take it, just take it!” Li Qingshan shoved the True Spirit pills into Li Long’s hand.

“I will take good care of this child.”

Li Qingshan smiled. “That’s your problem.”

Li Long clasped his hands and took his leave. Arriving outside the Parlour of Clouds and Rain, he crouched down and said to Pebble, “From today onwards, you’ll be called Li Xiaoyao. It’s a very good name.”

“I don’t want to! It’s not like he knows me, so why can he change my name?”

“Sigh, you’re still young, but you’ll understand certain things in the future. Oh right, don’t mention your relationship with him to anyone in the future.”

“He doesn’t know me. I don’t know him either! Uncle Li, you’ve been nice to me, so I’ll listen to you. If you want me to be called Li Xiaoyao, then I’ll be called Li Xiaoyao!”

“You’ll have to call me master instead in the future.” Li Long rubbed his head with a smile. “C’mon, let’s go grab some food and then give you a shower.”

“Yes, master!”

The two figures, one big and one small, merged with the flow of people. “Xiaoyao, do you like agriculture?”

“What’s agriculture?”

“It’s farmwork.”

“I don’t like it!”

“Alright, then what do you like?”

“I like taking the ox out to graze, but Old Yellow is dead, so he can’t graze anymore. I also like to play around with swords, but my sword is gone too. I can’t play around with it anymore.”

“I better buy you a sword then!”

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In the warming house, Li Qingshan stood around for a little longer and sighed gently. Although he had never lacked resolve, he was not heartless. The gentle sound of steps rang out from behind, and a warm, soft body pressed against his back, wrapping around his waist. “You’re already done talking, so why are you still here?”

Li Qingshan asked, “Linglong, do you think it was a blessing or a curse that you got to know me?”

“It’s obviously a huge blessing! If it weren’t for you, sir, I’d still be a regular disciple. Perhaps I might even be forced into prostitution.”

A year ago, Li Qingshan formally took over the Parlour of Clouds and Rain in order to give the Cloudwisp association another source of wealth. All of the disciples of the Sect of Clouds and Rain presented themselves to him. He obviously had no time to manage the Parlour of Clouds and Rain, so he needed someone else for that.

As a result, he picked someone from all the disciples, who happened to be Linglong. Her cultivation was nothing special, only a sixth layer Qi Practitioner back then. The reason why he picked her was actually relatively simple. When the other female disciples stood with their heads held and did all that they could to demonstrate their charm, only she lowered her head bashfully under his gaze. That moment of charm was rather enchanting.

Linglong could still clearly remember what had happened back then. He had asked with a smile, "What's your name?"

"Linglong."

"From today onwards, you are the master of the Sect of Clouds and Rain."

"Huh!?"

As a result, her fate changed in an overwhelming manner, and the greatest change was she now had a man. From the moment he chose her as the sect master, she had already become his in everyone's eyes. Even she believed that too.

She was the sect master with the lowest cultivation in the Sect of Clouds and Rain's history, but no one dared to defy her. Her senior brothers and sister who had been so proud in the past all became docile. Even powerful Foundation Establishment cultivators would treat her politely in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain. With her Aspect of Exquisite and Smooth Beauty, she became accustomed to this new identity very soon, keeping the Sect of Clouds and Rain in perfect order.

Li Qingshan pulled her over and pinched her cheek. He smiled. "Isn't it no different right now?"

"I'm most willing, so how is it no different?"

"Let's hope you don't regret it in the future!"

Li Qingshan's words made Linglong stiffen up, but she soon brushed it aside. Li Qingshan was as prominent as the midday sun right now. Let alone the Clear River prefecture, he was even renowned throughout the Ruyi commandery. He also had one of the three great sects of the Green province, the Chan Monastery of Deva-Nāga, as his backing. Just who could still do anything to him?"

"I'll never regret it."

"C'mon, let's go back. Let's take a look at how young master Hua is going with his drinking and if he's happy or not." Li Qingshan smiled and said no more.

As soon as they returned upstairs, Hua Chengzan pulled him aside. "Where'd you go? Don't tell me you went off to have some fun in secret? C'mon, drink!"

Li Qingshan accepted the cup of alcohol he passed over and gazed at his handsome, flawless and smiling face. He asked suddenly, "Is it effective?"

Hua Chengzan was taken aback. A hint of sadness appeared in his smile. "It doesn't seem to be!"

Over the past year, Hua Chengzan had truly changed a lot. He had gone from the infatuated romantic of the past to an obscene playboy who regularly slept at brothels drunk.

"It's useless, and yet you still keep drinking!"

To Li Qingshan, Hua Chengzan was basically behaving like a little girl who did not have her feelings reciprocated, drowning himself in alcohol and sinking into depravity willingly. Li Qingshan had no problem with drinking and sleeping with women, but he was confident that when Hua Chengzan sobered up and saw the unfamiliar woman beside him, he would feel none of the joy that a regular man would experience. He might even feel pain from sully himself.

"What else am I supposed to do?" Hua Chengzan smiled drunkenly. When he decided to let go, he felt relief at the very beginning, but even heavier pain and conflict soon followed. His heart lacked the sword of wisdom; he was unable to sever his feelings of love!

Smack!

A clear slap landed on Hua Chengzan's face. In that moment, the entire floor fell silent. Everyone ogled at Li Qingshan blankly. They never expected him to suddenly slap his good friend across the face.

"Big brother Li!" Hua Chengzan exclaimed. Han Tiewei stood up. His face changed too. Since young, Hua Chengzan had never experienced such humiliation.

Li Qingshan said, "It's time to wake up, brother. Weren't I turned down as well?"

Hua Chengzan was irritated at first before smiling self-deprecatingly and rubbing the handprint on his face. "I'm different from you. You surpass me in almost everything, but you have absolutely no idea what love is. I might not be able to obtain her, but I cannot stop loving her!"

Smack!

Li Qingshan said nothing at all, delivering another slap across his face. "You're making me sick saying something like that in front of all these people. These are slaps filled with friendship. You better comprehend it properly. Heh, I've wanted to do this since a long time ago!"

Han Tiewei yelled, "Qingshan, stop!"

Li Qingshan grabbed Hua Chengzan and rushed into the air, turning into a tiny, black speck in the blink of an eye.

"Where are you taking me?" Hua Chengzan asked in alarm. The wind whistled by furiously. They left Clear River city behind, where it rapidly shrank and grew distant.

"To treat your problem!"

A while later, a marsh appeared on the horizon, glistening under the glow of the moon. Hua Chengzan squinted his eyes. "The Lake of Dragons and Snakes!"

"Let's sober up first!"

Li Qingshan suddenly descended and pressed Hua Chengzan into the water, making waves surge and leaving behind a streak on the surface of the water. He entered the Academy of the Hundred Schools like this, arriving on the school of Medicine's Benevolence island.

Hua Chengzan was lifted up by him helplessly. "Why are you bringing me here?" Was the school of Medicine supposed to be able to treat his illness of the heart?

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Li Qingshan knocked on a door, and it opened. Ru Xin walked out in her white clothes. During the past year, she had practised the Heavenly Tome of Cloud Furnace arduously, which made her skin glossy like white jade. Combined with her dark eyes, they seemed like dabs of paint. She looked at the drenched Hua Chengzan first before saying to Li Qingshan with an extremely disdainful tone, "You're finally going to lay your hands on men!"

"Wrong, I don't like men, so can you help me out?" Li Qingshan said as Hua Chengzan trembled in fear inside. He had no idea why Li Qingshan had brought him to see Ru Xin. He was extremely clever, but Li Qingshan's actions could not be interpreted with normal logic. After all, he was a daemon who did whatever he wanted.

"What is it?"

Li Qingshan smiled. "Castrate him!"

"No! Li Qingshan, you're crazy!" Hua Chengzan began to put up a violent struggle, but he stood no chance against Li Qingshan's divine strength. He could not even mobilise a sliver of spiritual qi.

"It's just a woman. I'd like to see how you keep loving her once you're a eunuch! If you don't want to become a eunuch, it's not a problem either. Don't worry, school leader Ru is highly accomplished in medicine. Turning you into a woman is also possible."

Ru Xin smiled. "I can give it a try! With fellow Hua's appearance, you'll definitely be absolutely alluring if you become a woman."

"I don't want to become a woman!"

Li Qingshan said, "Then eunuch it is!"

"Not that either!"

Ru Xin said, "A hermaphrodite works too!"

"I don't want to become anything. Qingshan, calm down. This is my matter. It's got nothing to do with you!" With the rapid exchange between them, Hua Chengzan completely sobered up out of fright. Before the water on him had even dried, he became covered in another layer of cold sweat.

"I just can't put up with how wimpy you are. We're already here. Do you really think you still have a choice?"

Li Qingshan laughed mischievously and carried Hua Chengzan into the room, casually tossing him on the ground. He said to Ru Xin, "How's the refinement of your Water of Oblivion going?"

“Through my re-refinement, the effects are quite good, but I’ve never had a suitable guinea pig to try it on. After all, it targets cultivators.” Ru Xin put on a distressed face.

Hua Chengzan sensed how all the restraints on his body had been removed. He scrambled for the door the moment he climbed to his feet, but when he heard that, he stopped again. “Water of Oblivion?”

Ru Xin smiled. “A form of medicine that can make people forget about certain things. Is fellow Hua interested in trying it?”

Over the past year, she was either cultivating or refining medicine. Chu Tian, or Lin Xuan right now, had requested her to refine more potent Water of Recollection so that he could recall even more memories from his past life.

Among the Myriad Heavenly Tomes, the Heavenly Tome of Cloud Furnace had always been the one that specialised in alchemy the most, and Ru Xin could be regarded as a genius in this aspect. Combined with Lin Xuan’s assistance to improve the formula, the effects of the Water of Recollection was becoming even more potent. At the same time, she also refined some powerful Water of Oblivion that was the exact opposite to the Water of Recollection.

Hua Chengzan gazed at Li Qingshan standing in the doorway and smiled bitterly. “Looks like I have no other choice!”

Li Qingshan said, “Castration is always an option!”

Hua Chengzan looked back and asked Ru Xin, “Is the Water of Oblivion... truly effective?”

“I’ll need your active cooperation. If you reject the medicinal effects mentally and insist on remembering it, then the effects will be much worse!” Ru Xin took out a bottle of faint, purple liquid and shook it around gently in her hand.

Li Qingshan realised something. He glanced at her and frowned. “If you’re supposed to remember it, then remember it. What’re you doing by trying to forget about it?”

Although Ru Xin still refused to confess everything, Li Qingshan knew she held a great grudge inside. She refused to bring it up definitely because her enemy was extremely powerful, where there would be danger even with Northmoon’s strength. As such, she refused to let him become involved. However, Li Qingshan had made up his mind a long time ago. No matter when she wanted to return to the Mist province, he would accompany her and help her bring this matter to an end.

“Do I need a wretched daemon like you to stick your nose into this?” Ru Xin rolled her eyes at him.

“I’ll do exactly that. I’ll stick my nose into it. What can you do about it?”

“You...” How could Hua Chengzan still not understand that Ru Xin clearly knew Northmoon?

“Cut the bullsh*t. Are you going to drink it or not?”

Hua Chengzan gritted his teeth. “I’ll drink it!”

He was willing to drink it all so that he could let go of his obsessions, so that he could forget about her.

Chapter 687 - Forgetting About Love

The faint, purple liquid flowed into his belly, and the Water of Oblivion spread slowly. Like he had drunk a thousand cups of fine wine, Hua Chengzan's vision immediately began to blur. Li Qingshan and Ru Xin's figures both became blurry.

He was unable to describe the taste. It was neither sweet nor bitter, just empty to the bone. Wherever it passed by, his heart began to numb as well.

"Fellow Hua, please close your eyes and try your best to recall what you want to forget so that the Water of Oblivion can come into effect!"

Ru Xin's voice seemed to come from a distant place. It was as flimsy and obscure as a strand of air; it was like the wind could scatter it at any time.

Hua Chengzan closed his eyes. He did not have to try his best at all. Certain things could not be forgotten. From believing she was a fairy when they first met to the various conversations and scenes that occurred between them, everything flooded out from the depths of his memories eagerly. Every twinkle and smile from her was as sweet as it could get, but it was also the source of his pain.

But suddenly, all of his memories faded as if water had washed them again and again. They drifted away uncontrollably.

Hua Chengzan extended his hand subconsciously as if he wanted to grab these memories. He resisted almost instinctively, refusing to forget about her. However, his efforts instead pushed the effects of the Water of Oblivion to the limits.

Li Qingshan watched on from one side, only to see Hua Chengzan frown heavily and kneel on one knee. His face was filled with pain and reluctance, which made Li Qingshan sigh. "Perhaps compared to him, I really don't know what love is!"

Ru Xin said, "Born as humans, who doesn't feel love? If you place a tea leaf in a pot of water, it'll become a pot of tea. However, if you place it in a tank of water, the taste will become very faint. If you toss it into a pond, can anyone still notice the difference?"

Li Qingshan laughed. "Thank you for your praise. It's rare to hear something good come out of that mouth of yours, but we're not a pond. Instead, we are all-encompassing, accepting all rivers, turning into an ocean."

"Actually, what I wanted to say is you're not human!"

"... I know. You're not human either!"

"Otherfolk are also people!" Ru Xin raised her index finger and waggled it gently.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

At this moment, a violent knocking rang out from outside the door. Li Qingshan went to open it, and Han Tiyi barged in. Seeing Hua Chengzan kneeling on one knee with his eyes firmly shut and his face overcome with pain, he grabbed Li Qingshan by the collar. "What did you do!?"

"Big brother!" Hua Chenglu helped Hua Chengzan up in a hurry. She looked back. "Commander, how can you do this?"

“Let go! You might be my brother-in-law, but I’ll still give you a beating!” Li Qingshan warned Han Tieyi before saying to Hua Chenglu, “Don’t worry, this is all for his sake. I can guarantee you that once he recovers, he’ll have turned over a new leaf and thoroughly reformed himself.”

“Chenglu!”

Hua Chengzan slowly returned to his senses. He could still remember Li Qingshan bringing him to the academy, but he had completely forgotten about the reason. With how clever he was, he discovered many blanks had appeared in his memories very soon, and a few matters he still remembered made absolutely no sense. It was like a story that had been cut up into parts and scattered.

Oh right, I just drank the Water of Oblivion, but what exactly did I forget?

He recalled out of reflex, but he found nothing. All of his thoughts had been sucked into a hole, and his heart felt empty, but never did he feel so lively.

Li Qingshan waved his hand gently, and Han Tieyi flew out, falling into the lakewater. He crouched down in front of Hua Chengzan and said curiously, “Oi, Chengzan, do you still remember Gu Yanying?”

“So she’s called Gu Yanying!”

Li Qingshan raised his head and said to Ru Xin, “The quality of your medicine is no good. What’s the point of just forgetting a name? I want a return and compensation!”

Ru Xin frowned. “But that’s impossible! Don’t tell me so-called infatuation can actually resist the effects of the Water of Oblivion?”

Hua Chengzan stood up. His eyes shone with a bright and sharp light. “That’s not true. I have indeed forgotten about her, but through my other memories, I can still deduce her existence. I even roughly know her gender and identity. Fellow Ru’s medicinal skills are truly outstanding. You have my thanks.”

With his intelligence, using a large number of facts as a basis to fill in these blanks was nothing difficult.

“Big brother, is that true?” Hua Chenglu was overjoyed. If it were not for this holding him back, he would have established a foundation successfully a long time ago. It might have even been possible for him to reach late Foundation Establishment by now.

Han Tieyi flew back. He too was taken aback when he heard that. He understood what it meant. He had known Hua Chengzan since young. His talent was already extraordinary, but he personally believed quite a large gap still existed between them in terms of talent and intelligence.

“To think I was worried about the many potential side-effects. If it were a regular person, then perhaps it would throw their thoughts into a mess, but seeing how well fellow Hua is, I don’t have to worry. Since it works, pay up!” Ru Xin extended her hand.

Li Qingshan said, “This costs money?”

Ru Xin shot a glance at him. “Am I supposed to compensate you when it doesn’t work, and then not charge you when it does? If you want to demonstrate your loyalty to your friends and keep up your appearance, pay it yourself.”

Li Qingshan asked, "How much?"

"A million spiritual stones."

"Keep dreaming!"

"Are you saying that fellow Hua isn't even worth a million spiritual stones? I've turned him from a pig-headed piece of trash to a clever and sensible genius!"

A pig-headed piece of trash! The corner of Hua Chengzan's eye twitched, but he never expected Li Qingshan to say firmly, "Of course he's not worth a million spiritual stones!"

"Then how much do you think he's worth?"

"A hundred spiritual stones at most!"

Hua Chengzan wanted to speak up, but he faltered.

Ru Xin wanted to continue disputing with him, but after gazing at Hua Chengzan, she sighed. "Fine, let's just say that's reasonable. A hundred it is!"

Hua Chenglu burst out laughing.

A vein popped up on Hua Chengzan's forehead. What's this supposed to mean? Just earlier, you said I was a clever and sensible genius, but even after treating me, I'm just worth a hundred spiritual stones? So after all this talking and bickering, it was just to indirectly curse me?

"Please stop discussing my worth!"

Hua Chengzan bowed deeply towards Li Qingshan. "Qingshan, thank you."

Li Qingshan waved his hand in an exaggerated manner. "You're welcome."

Hua Chengzan said, "But since medicine like this exists, why did you have to slap me twice?"

"About that, haha, alright, let's not bicker over the small details. Let's go back and keep drinking. We need to celebrate for you!"

Hua Chengzan said helplessly, "Let's go elsewhere. Everyone happens to be here anyway. I think the bamboo forest on Cloudwisp island will do."

A few streaks of light flew through the night sky. Liu Zhangqing and the others returned to the academy too.

Li Qingshan said, "There are no beauties for company on Cloudwisp island!"

Hua Chengzan said proudly, "There are many beautiful women in life, but I only want a single person's heart!"

Li Qingshan, Hua Chenglu, and Han Tieyi looked at one another. Had he been cured or not?

"Everyone, don't worry. I'm not referring to commander Gu. We might not be fated to be together, but I believe there will be a woman waiting for me somewhere throughout the nine provinces. Before that, I'm not going to sleep around and become entangled with other women."

Li Qingshan had no idea how to react. In other words, he was looking for another hole to jump into? Was this an instance of personality determining fate? Just this aspect alone made him very compatible with Qiu Haitang. Out of the two of them, one was highly skilled in dealing with people and affairs, while the other was as clever as they came, yet they just had to be almost-naively obsessive over the word “love”.

Li Qingshan felt deep admiration towards this. Although he possessed the ambition of the Nine Heavens, not everyone was supposed to be like him.

Travelling to the corners of the world, fighting the oceans, picking the stars and moon from the sky, attaining immortality—these were all great, lofty, intense dreams, but to many people, perhaps it even paled in comparison to the ease and comfort of drinking a cup of tea at home. Living in the world, as long as a person could persevere and stick to their heart, that was enough.

“Big brother, you’ll definitely find that person!”

Hua Chenglu encouraged before glancing at Li Qingshan. She could not help but become slightly resentful. This promiscuous man completely paled in comparison to her elder brother in this aspect.

Over the past year, Li Qingshan had spent a little more time at the Hawkwolf Guard. He seemed much more diligent, but actually, he paid no attention to anything just like before. He tossed it all to her. Every time he came, he would tease her, which made it feel like he had specially come to tease her. The most detestable part of it all was he still visited the Hawkwolf Guard as infrequently as before.

Li Qingshan patted Hua Chengzan on the shoulder. “You better give up. You’re no longer a virgin.”

Hua Chengzan shuddered. Sure enough, he behaved like he had just received a huge blow to his morale.

Li Qingshan could not help but laugh. Oi, are you still a man? Don’t tell me you actually care about your “purity”?

“That’s happened already anyway, so you better just keep your eyes fixed on what’s in front of you and cheer up for now! You better not see commander Gu again in the next second and pledge your very life to her at first sight. That’ll be hilarious if that happens.” Li Qingshan shook his head with a smile. Meanwhile, Hua Chenglu became worried.

Ru Xin added, “If you drink a lot of the Water of Oblivion, the effects will weaken.”

Hua Chengzan sighed heavily. “I’ve already made a huge mistake, so I better not repeat it! I will submit a request to switch with Chenglu so that I can continue serving as the vice commander. I won’t see commander Gu again.”

“But... my cultivation is insufficient. I probably don’t have the right to become a White Wolf guard...” Hua Chenglu became hesitant as her eyes shone with uncertainty.

Hua Chengzan felt helpless over that. During the past year, he had been completely absorbed in the anguish he was immersed in, and he neglected his younger sister’s guidance. Originally, he thought she would have a bit more control after receiving the Great Banyan Tree King’s Wisdom Imbuement, but he never thought she would still end up being stuck in trouble.

Li Qingshan smiled. "If you don't want to become a White Wolf guard, just go back and enter secluded cultivation! Stop trying to take my vice commander away from me!"

"If you want to talk, go out and talk. If you want to drink, go out and drink!"

Ru Xin asked for them to leave, so Li Qingshan went to Cloudwisp island and began a new banquet. Liu Zhangqing and the others drank a little more before returning to their dwellings, while the others bade farewell and took their leave in threes and twos. In the end, only Li Qingshan and Hua Chengzan remained, drinking with one another.

Under the bamboo loft, serenity arrived with the late night. Hua Chengzan suddenly said, "I want to see her!"

Li Qingshan stopped drinking. He obviously knew who Hua Chengzan was talking about. Apart from Qiu Haitang, there was no one else that he would require permission from him to see.

"When?"

"The sooner the better!"

"Then we'll go after this cup!"

"Actually, I'd rather you turn me down."

"Why?"

"Because it would prove you care about her enough."

"If she changes her mind, I definitely won't insist on this happening. Going with the flow has always been better than insisting and then failing to get what you want."

"That's only because you still haven't met someone you truly love. Even if you lose her, you won't feel too much pain."

"If you want to talk about love again, I'm going to start slapping you again before plunging you into water."

"Why?"

"You impure man, you should be drowned in a wicker basket!"

TL: Drowning people in a wicker basket, or placing them into a wicker basket and dipping them into a river, leaving just their heads exposed, is a punishment for male adulterers in ancient China. Hua Chengzan is no longer a virgin, which means he's been sleeping around with "other" women, making him an "adulterer".

Chapter 688 - Realm of Cultivation

Qiu Haitang was meditating at the bottom of the lake when she suddenly sensed the water being disturbed. The lakewater parted, and she beamed with joy, standing up in front of the mirror and tidying her hair by stroking through it with her slender fingers. She turned around, and sure enough,

Northmoon appeared. Her joy subsided. Right when she was about to talk, she noticed Hua Chengzan beside him, which left her surprised.

“Little Hua!”

“Haitang?”

The moment she looked back, Hua Chengzan basically failed to recognise her. Dressed in simple clothes, she was more beautiful than any of his memories of her, radiating with enchanting charm.

This was not only because of practising the Heart Dyeing Art of Rouge. When she emerged from the shadows of the past, listened to the soul-stirring, sweet words and regained her confidence, she obviously seemed like she was radiating with cheerfulness.

Qiu Haitang shot a questioning glance at Northmoon. Li Qingshan crossed his arms. “This man came and found me. He said he wanted to see you, and he had something to say to you.”

“I don’t want to see him. Please get him to leave!” Qiu Haitang turned around. She did not want to have anything to do with him anymore, much less cause any misunderstandings.

Li Qingshan looked at Hua Chengzan. Hua Chengzan was as clever as they came, but even he was left rather stumped about how he should face the woman he had left down severely.

“Haitang, it’s best if certain things are made clear. If they hold you back, they’ll be extremely detrimental to your cultivation.”

Li Qingshan shook his head and slid back. As he said that, he disappeared into the lakewater.

“Hua Chengzan, just what do you have to say for everything that’s happened already?” Qiu Haitang sucked in a deep breath and said without even looking back.

“Failing to stand forward for you back then in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain is the greatest disgrace in my life. Ever since then, I’ve always been tossing and turning restlessly, filled with regret. I...”

Reaching there, Hua Chengzan choked, unable to continue.

Qiu Haitang turned around slowly. Seeing him in his current shape, her heart softened. “What’s the use in saying all of this now?”

Hua Chengzan said sincerely, “It’s useless, but please believe me that if I were alone, I’d be willing to die for you.”

“I believe you’re not a cowardly and overcautious person. But, I want to ask you something. If it were Gu Yanying instead, what would you have done?”

“Sorry, I don’t remember her anymore.”

“You don’t remember her?” Qiu Haitang widened her eyes in surprise. She would believe Hua Chengzan if he said he had forgotten about anyone else, just not this woman.

Hua Chengzan told her about his strange experience this night. When he emerged from Gu Yanying’s shadow and his various memories of Qiu Haitang suddenly became so clear, he could not help but

wonder whether there would be a different conclusion if he never met Gu Yanying, or if he had drunk the Water of Oblivion sooner.

Qiu Haitang let out a lengthy sigh. "Then I really must congratulate you! I can answer that question for you. If it were Gu Yanying, you would have tossed aside everything on your mind, just so that you could win a smile from her. I understand how you would have felt."

"But did you know? Back then, never in my wildest dreams did I want you to cast aside everything for me. I only wanted you to lie to me, to coax me. Everything that you could do for Gu Yanying, I could have done it for you too... But that's all in the past now. You're doing well, and I'm not doing bad either, right?"

Qiu Haitang turned her head away and wiped the corner of her eye, letting out a long sigh. After saying these things, she felt her entire body lighten up. Hua Chengzan was still the same Hua Chengzan, but before she knew it, he had already lost the charm that drove her wild in the past.

"Yeah. That's the only thing worth rejoicing over, or I'd definitely be filled with regret for the rest of my life."

"Let's not talk about these negative things anymore. I'll toast us to a cup of tea, to congratulate us from being able to emerge from our shackles and see the light of day once more. We really are childhood friends after all. We're basically unlucky in the same places."

Qiu Haitang smiled faintly, recovering her composure.

"Fair enough. It's time for me to sober up too."

Two tea cups gently clinked together in the air and two pairs of eyes met. Everything in the past had gone from intense back to indifference.

.....

Li Qingshan stood on the surface of the lake, quietly sensing how the Water God Seal had changed. Over the past year, the power that devoured his water territory rapidly spread. It had already taken up a third of his territory now, and it showed no signs of slowing down.

Clearly, they either had a huge Water God Seal or large quantities of Water God Seals. If all of this was just the Dragon King of Ink Sea trying to force him out, then it would be nothing strange at all if there were so many Water God Seals involved.

He only brushed this aside with a smile. Even if he gave up the entire region of water, so what? It was not like he only wanted this region of water.

He did not waste the past year. Under constant attempts and trails, the conflict between the spirit turtle and phoenix had weakened drastically. Although he was still a fair distance off from merging water and fire, he believed he could unlock the true innate ability of the phoenix very soon.

This was all thanks to the two Daemon Kings, the Great Banyan Tree King and the Golden Cicada Spirit King. If Li Qingshan had nothing to do, then he would enter the Asura Field and strike up a conversation with the Great Banyan Tree King. His clone was located in the flames and magma deep underground, so the Golden Cicada Spirit King would talk with him too whenever he had time to spare.

Whether it was cultivation or wisdom, they were existences that stood at the very apex of the nine provinces. Just a few simple pieces of advice would often be able to enlighten Li Qingshan and let him benefit tremendously. The value of this opportunity was immeasurable. It was also no coincidence that Li Qingshan had their good graces. The Nine Transformations of the Demonic and Divine turned him into the most resplendent rising star of the Daemon race, and his aspirations beyond the Nine Heavens gave him the boldness of vision to speak as equals with these Daemon Kings.

Li Qingshan's personal level of cultivation was very important too. After facing the second heavenly tribulation, perhaps his strength had not progressed in an overwhelming manner, but his realm of cultivation was closer to the very nature of this world. With that as a foundation, it greatly diminished the cultivation difficulty of the Nine Transformations of the Demonic and Divine.

According to his estimates, as long as he could truly consolidate the first layer of the Phoenix's Scripture of Nirvāṇa and gain the two innate abilities that belonged to the Phoenix Transformation, then he would be able to reach Daemon Commander.

By then, he would gain another four innate abilities and in total, he would possess twelve innate abilities. His original innate abilities would become stronger too. His overall strength would change qualitatively.

At the same time, he would no longer have any opponents at the second heavenly tribulation, and it would be difficult for people at the third heavenly tribulation to kill him. He would possess the power to protect himself across the nine provinces.

If he could reach the fourth layer with the Phoenix Transformation like he had with the Spirit Turtle Transformation, merge fire and water, and condense a daemon core of interpromoting water and fire, then he would probably reach peak Daemon Commander, giving him the strength to challenge Daemon Kings. If he took another step further, then he would become a true Daemon King. And, he would be one that possessed sixteen innate abilities. By then, he could run amok through the nine provinces freely. He would be able to do whatever he wanted.

And by then, he would have only practised a measly four transformations from the Nine Transformations of the Demonic and Divine—the ox demon, the tiger demon, the spirit turtle, and the phoenix—and he basically would have only progressed through half of each transformation. Probably by the time he burst out of this world and leapt out of the well, he would not have even completed a single transformation. He had no idea whether he would find the opportunity to witness the wonders of the remaining two demonic and divine transformations.

Li Qingshan gazed at the sky. His gaze pierced through the clouds, passing by the moon and stars until it reached a distant region of space. He extended his hand as if he wanted to pick a star from the sky. The corner of his lips curled into a smile.

Ten thousand years? Why would I need that long?

Hua Chengzan rose up from the bottom of the water. When he saw this, he became shocked for some reason. He followed his fingers and gazed out, but all he saw were dark clouds.

What was he looking at? Just what in the sky was drawing him in?

At a limitless height that no one had ever reached, in his heart so deep that even love was unable to influence, his dreams would never rest!

Li Qingshan drew back his arm and looked over with a smile. "How was the talk?"

"The way you looked earlier..."

"What about it?"

"It was admirable and exciting."

"Hah, I have no interest in men."

"I feel the same. Thank you. I've been wrapped up by this for so long. It's about time I set off once again."

Hua Chengzan raised his head and gazed out. After bringing the feelings of love and the feelings of being loved to an end and resolving all of his obsessions, guilt, and pain, could he return to his former glory and reclaim the title of genius?

Of course, there was no point considering the title of the greatest genius. The greatest genius was standing right in front of him. As for the second greatest genius, that did not seem to be particularly likely either. Xiao An held that position firmly. However, apart from the two of them, he believed that he would not lose out to anyone.

He did not say useless nonsense along the lines of "Please take good care of her". Instead, he clasped his hands and left gracefully.

Li Qingshan returned to the bottom of the lake. Qiu Haitang sat in front of her dresser with her back towards him. She glanced at him through the mirror. "Are you very close with him?"

The lake was very deep, but she was worried, as she could obviously hear them if she eavesdropped carefully. She found the way they spoke to be very special, like close friends.

"I've met him a few times, that's all." Li Qingshan arrived behind her and brought his hands to her shoulder.

"You sure meet a lot of people." Qiu Haitang was originally worried he might misunderstand, but seeing how relaxed he was, she instead became very displeased. "Aren't you afraid I'll run off with him?"

Li Qingshan smiled. He bent over and whispered into her ear. "You know, earlier when I was outside, I was going crazy with jealousy, but I believed in you." His messy, scarlet hair mixed with her dark, long hair. She felt a tickle on her neck; she raised her eyebrows, provokingly saying, "If I actually changed my mind and rekindled my former love for him, what would you do?"

"I'd kill him, obviously. If you can't resolve it, then I'll resolve it for you."

"Aren't you afraid of breaking my heart and becoming hated by me for the rest of my life?" The corner of Qiu Haitang's eyes rose a little.

"No one can remain heart-broken forever. I think you're very easy to coax. Compared to being forgotten as a stranger, I think being hated for the rest of your life is a little better."

“How forceful! I’m not easy to coax at all!” Qiu Haitang bit her lip, but her eyes oozed with happiness.

“Really?” Li Qingshan held her face and leaned over, kissing her on the lips gently. She did not put up any resistance, allowing the tip of his tongue to part her lips and taste her saliva. She even actively responded with her own tongue. Her soft body leaned against him as her voluptuous chest heaved gently.

When their lips pasted, a string of saliva dangled, keeping them connected.

Li Qingshan smiled. “Aren’t you very easy to coax?”

Qiu Haitang turned around. “I want to drink!”

“More drinking?” Li Qingshan smiled bitterly. Although he liked drinking, he had drunk a little too many times today.

“What, you don’t want to?”

“We can drink, but I’ll only accept it in a certain way!”

Chapter 689 - Honey Trap

Li Qingshan smiled as he gently smeared her rosy lips, and Qiu Haitang immediately understood what he was trying to say. Logically speaking, if she let him kiss her, feeding him alcohol was nothing, but she understood very well that if he wanted to drink like that, it was impossible for them to sit normally. She would have to sit on his lap and then rely on him to behave himself, which was absolutely impossible. Her face reddened. “With your capacity, wouldn’t you tire me to death?”

“Just tell me yes or no.” Li Qingshan pressed his forehead against her with a smile. Seeing how she was budging, why wouldn’t he take advantage of it?

“You have to promise me one thing. No feeling around.”

Normally, Qiu Haitang would have never agreed to such an over-the-top request, but after experiencing everything that happened today, she desired his embrace and intimate contact. Her eye rippled, vaguely scheming something. For the first time in her life, she was ready to truly take advantage of her beauty.

“Sure, no problem.” Li Qingshan agreed immediately.

After a case of feigned hesitation, Qiu Haitang agreed to it in the end too.

Li Qingshan was overjoyed. Over the past year, he had paid plenty of visits to the bottom of the lake, but it was primarily to talk about love. They had not been as intimate with each other compared to the past. He immediately brought his hands around her slender waist and lifted her onto his lap. With her soft, warm body in his arms, it felt like she was going to melt away.

Qiu Haitang brought her hands around his neck and shifted her body, adjusting to a comfortable position. Her plump, round bottom rubbed against him gently, and Li Qingshan immediately felt his crotch heat up. A certain part of his body made a response.

Qiu Haitang stiffened and lifted up her body in a hurry, shooting a glance at Li Qingshan.

Li Qingshan laid out of his hands. "That's not feeling around. If I still didn't have even the slightest response when I embraced you like that, I wouldn't be a man."

"You aren't a man in the first place!"

Qiu Haitang sat down viciously to teach him a lesson.

Li Qingshan gasped, but not out of pain. His body was tough, which included every part of him. He felt like he had been buried deeply in a clump of softness, which brought him delight he could not put into words. Instead, he made Qiu Haitang frown slightly, but she was helpless about that. However, seeing how he was attracted and tempted by her, it was not like she did not feel a hint of complacency.

"Where's the alcohol?" Li Qingshan brought his face up to hers and licked her lips. "I want to drink three large cups!"

Qiu Haitang took out several jars of alcohol from her hundred treasures pouch. She removed the clay seals, and a streak of light shot out. Fragrance oozed into the surroundings. It was extremely heavy.

Li Qingshan could tell from a single sniff that it was fine alcohol, stuff as intense as it could get. The smell was rather familiar too, but he was unable to recall where he had drunk it before, so he asked, "What is this alcohol?"

"Thousand Days Drunk."

"Thousand Days Drunk!"

Li Qingshan suddenly recalled that when he took part in the entrance examination for the Academy of the Hundred Schools, he had made a bet with the slovenly daoist priest Zhou Tong and drank his jar of Thousand Days Drunk. That was why he had fallen unconscious for so long, forcing him to join the school of Novels in the end. He had never thought he would drink it again today.

Qiu Haitang's eyes flickered slightly. "You've drunk it before?"

Li Qingshan said, "I've only heard about it before. I wonder if I'll actually become drunk for a thousand days if I drink it. I don't really believe it."

"Then try it!" Qiu Haitang poured a cup of alcohol with a smile and delivered it to his mouth.

Li Qingshan kept his lips firmly shut, refusing to drink it.

With no other option, all Qiu Haitang could do was keep the alcohol in her mouth and lean over, delivering it to her lips. Her cheeks bulged slightly, so red that it seemed like she had applied a layer of rouge. She was utterly delicate and charming.

Qiu Haitang leaned forward, so Li Qingshan leaned back. When she moved to the left, he moved to the right. They were extremely close to one another, their ears and hair brushing past one another. Right when the mouthful of alcohol was about to melt away in her mouth, she swooped in on him furiously and delivered the alcohol to his mouth, but when she wanted to pull away, she discovered that it was no longer possible.

Li Qingshan embraced her firmly, stroking her back and sucking on her tongue. Her plentiful peaks pressed against his chest. Through the thin clothes, he could clearly feel their softness and richness.

“It really is fine alcohol!”

With their mouths and lips as the cup, they drank again and again. Before long, basically all of the Thousand Days Drunk had been emptied out.

The alcohol was truly easy to get drunk on. Li Qingshan went for three consecutive rounds, and he disliked using his daemon qi to neutralise alcohol, so he was already seventy percent drunk. But this time, he did not feel sleepy at all. His lust blazed more and more intensely. He kissed and licked her slender, white nape, and at the same time, he had tossed his promise to not feel around to the back of his mind. He caressed her body gently.

“A’yue, don’t!”

Although Qiu Haitang had drunk a little less, her face was also completely red, and her gaze drifted about, lying limply in his arms.

“Don’t what?” Li Qingshan smiled as he gently fiddled around with her chest.

“Don’t abandon me.”

“I won’t.”

As a result, Qiu Haitang remained docile, without putting up any resistance. Only when he tried reaching inside her clothes would she grab his hand and stop him. She had not lost her senses from being drunk. Instead, she had begun to regard him as her love a long time ago. Her body was created for him, so she could enjoy his attention and attachment at ease. However, due to her bashfulness and her thoughts as a woman, she refused to let him succeed too quickly.

Li Qingshan understood where her boundaries were and did not push them. Through her clothes, he massaged her plump breasts that changed shape in his hands. She closed her eyes gently, and her alluring face seemed drunk, but she was not drunk. Her eyebrows would react slightly to his movements from time to time, shy but also at peace. She knew she had already opened herself to him.

Suddenly, he felt a tiny bulge of firmness in the softness. With his thumb and index, he pinched it gently.

“Ahh!” Qiu Haitang let out a soul-stirring moan. She opened her eyes and shot a furious glance at him, but she put up with his unscrupulous actions.

Li Qingshan thought of something. He took out another jar of alcohol and brought it to her lips. Qiu Haitang opened her mouth to drink, but he tipped the jar a little too far. The clear, transparent fluid flowed out from her lips and trickled down, flowing past her slender neck, flowing past her full breasts, and flowing past her belly. Wherever it reached, she felt a cool sensation on her scorching skin.

When she returned to her senses, the jar of alcohol was already empty, having been tossed aside casually by Li Qingshan. The alcohol had drenched her clothes, making them stick close to her body. They were almost transparent, completely outlining her enchanting body. Her simple attire immediately became as provocative and seductive as possible.

Qiu Haitang was embarrassed. She wanted to circulate her spiritual qi in a hurry to dry her clothes, but Li Qingshan grabbed her arm. "You're not allowed to touch my alcohol. I'm going to start drinking." Afterwards, he buried his face in her chest and began "drinking" away. Now this was probably the land of warmth and softness they were talking about!

Qiu Haitang embraced his head, and a sliver of clarity flashed through her wandering eyes. She whispered into his ears, "Qingshan, do you love me?"

"Yeah, of course." Li Qingshan only noticed that something was amiss after he had said that. He stiffened slightly and raised his head. "What did you just say? I didn't hear you properly."

Qiu Haitang pushed him away and said furiously, "Li Qingshan, how long did you plan on deceiving me for?"

Although infatuation could turn people into fools, she had never been a foolish woman. The many coincidences had raised her suspicion a long time ago, while bringing Hua Chengzan here and his conversation with Hua Chengzan on the surface of the lake had already pushed her doubts to the limit.

She had gone as far as to use her appearance to carefully craft a honey trap, which was both propelled by her love, as well as to question him when he lowered his guard as much as possible so that she could relieve herself of these suspicions. The end result confirmed her thoughts, but only then did she discover that it was not so easy to accept. She would rather he be Northmoon, a daemon.

"I really have drunk too much today." Li Qingshan scratched his head and sighed. At this point, arguing had already become pointless.

"I should have known a long time ago. How could Northmoon have appeared so coincidentally in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain? You were the one who shattered the fake jade tablet, and you were also the one who saved me. The moon demon can create clones. I really have been foolish to have actually been deceived by you for so long. What else do you have to say?"

Qiu Haitang shuddered, and her clothes dried. Only the heavy smell of alcohol and the redness on her face that had yet to recede remained as proof of the charming time they had spent together earlier.

"I am me!" Li Qingshan smiled and laid out his hands. He took a step forward and pulled her forcefully into his arms. "Congratulations, you don't have to break your promise anymore. You can pledge yourself to me."

Qiu Haitang put up a violent struggle. "Let go of me!" To her surprise, Li Qingshan actually let go of her. He glanced up. The gentle glow of the rising sun rippled on the surface of the lake.

"It's almost morning. Thank you for your alcohol. It's time for me to leave." Li Qingshan yawned and stretched.

"You're not allowed to leave! Explain yourself!"

"Sigh, what else can I say? Just cultivate properly. Since you can't accept it, then there's no need to force yourself to. Bye bye!"

Li Qingshan waved his hand and vanished into the water. He left without the slightest hesitance.

Qiu Haitang was overcome with pain. She murmured, "You're not allowed to go. You promised me..."

The tiny dwelling recovered its peace, but it became deathly silent. Tears rolled down Qiu Haitang's face like rain. Only then did she discover unknowingly that he had already occupied such an important position in her heart.

Was that saying really true? Those who possessed the Aspect of Peach Blossom Beauty would never have their love reciprocated?

"I'm lying to you. You'll never be able to escape from the palm of my hand."

Suddenly, a familiar voice rang out from behind, and a pair of arms embraced her gently.

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When Li Qingshan returned to the Academy of the Hundred Schools, it was already morning. Just like what he had said, she really was very easy to coax. He only had to apologise a little, show some gentleness and sincerity, and throw in a lot of sugared words. With that, she completely understood the difficulties he faced of being forced to hide his identity. At the same time, she expressed she should not have reacted so violently. Whether he was Li Qingshan or Northmoon, he had truly saved her regardless of danger.

Li Qingshan even tried biting off more than he could chew. "If you doubted my identity, you could've just asked. Did you have to do something like that to deceive me? You sure overthink!" Yet, she ended up apologising sincerely instead, expressing that she would not do that again, which instead left Li Qingshan rather embarrassed.

When Li Qingshan left fully satisfied, even complacent over his own charms, Qiu Haitang sat with her legs crossed in the depths of the gloomy lake water. Her expression was rather mixed. Never did she think the youth from the country back then would end up as her man, and she would actually fall in love with him. Fate truly knew how to toy with people.

Her gaze became determined. She had to cultivate harder and condense the Rouge Heart so that she could use the Lovesickness Dyes the Thread Red. If this were the love she was fated to go through with, then she would do everything she could, regardless of the cost, to tie him together with her forever. Whether it was Han Qiongzhi or some other woman, no one could steal him away from her.

Chapter 690 - The Medicine That Merges Water and Fire

The unending autumn rain turned into flying snow, floating across the entire Lake of Dragons and Snakes.

On Cloudwisp island, the snowy bamboo stood proudly in the pure-white world, which made them seem even straighter and more verdant than ever before.

Li Qingshan sat beside a furnace in the bamboo loft. He held a cup of hot tea in his hands as he faced the tiny lake in the centre of the island. The flying snow fell down, landing on the ice-sealed lake. He murmured to himself, "Water and fire, water and fire..."

He spent another few months; clearly, he had already grasped the vital parts, but there was a thin barrier he was unable to break through, which was a highly dissatisfying feeling.

He took a sip of hot tea. He could not help but admit that sure enough, cultivation took up the most time, which was why both daemons and humans required lifespans of centuries and millennia to face the various difficulties. Succeeding in a single breath was not realistic. Impatience and restlessness was instead detrimental to cultivation.

He practised the Arts of the Boundless Ocean in turn, and the Ocean pearl revolved. Waves of spiritual qi flowed through his entire body, producing a tsunami-like roar. The waves rose up before the previous could subside in an endless fashion.

After over a year of cultivation, he had already completely consolidated the Ocean pearl. His sea of consciousness became stronger and stronger too. The strength of the arcane artifacts on him had all been multiplied. Coupled with the Demon Suppression Statuary that became even more powerful as his demon heart strengthened, there was almost nothing that could stop him anymore even without using the Nine Transformations of the Demonic and Divine.

However, if he wanted to go from early Golden Core to mid Golden Core, it would not be that simple. At this point, the time he spent on both his human or daemon cultivation would be calculated in years. It was a pity that he could not use the Water God Seal right now and mobilise all the spiritual qi from the bodies of water throughout the Ruyi commandery to cultivate, or he would be much faster.

As long as he broke through to Daemon Commander, then he would possess enough strength to face the Dragon King of Ink Sea and break out of this situation!

Li Qingshan caught something from the corner of his eye. A streak of light rushed through the sky, passing through the snow and landing on the icebound lake.

Bang! The ice trembled and cracked open. Snow was sent flying through the air. Dressed in simple robes, Han Qiongzhi stood with a blade on her waist, as valiant and mighty as ever.

“Qiongzhi, what brought you here?”

“You won’t come and look for me, so am I not allowed to come and look for you?” Han Qiongzhi glanced around and feigned surprise. “Hmm? Parlour master Li, why aren’t you having a jolly, romantic time in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain instead of sitting in such a remote place, drinking alone? There’s no beautiful women, nor is there any alcohol. That doesn’t suit you!”

“If I wanted beauties, how difficult could that be? You better not underestimate the school of Novels!”

Li Qingshan smiled. He snapped his fingers, and a beautiful woman materialised, fading into existence. She appeared in front of Li Qingshan and gazed at Han Qiongzhi in a provocative way, radiating with vigour. No one could tell that the Divine Talisman of Great Creation had conjured her.

Clang!

With a flash, a wave of air pushed the snowflakes into Li Qingshan’s face. Han Qiongzhi snorted coldly and sheathed her blade away.

A thin, bloody mark appeared on the beauty’s neck. Her face was filled with shock and fear, just like a real person. Her current state was enough for people to feel pain and sympathy for her. Fortunately,

something as terrifying as her head falling to the ground did not happen. Instead, she immaterialised, fading out of existence.

Li Qingshan touched the tip of his nose. The blade aura had shot right past his eyes. He patted the space beside him. "Stop standing there like a dumb idiot!"

He also felt rather fortunate. Fortunately, he was not in the Parlour of Clouds and Rain and the person beside him was not Linglong. Otherwise, perhaps she would not cut her down in a single stroke, but she would definitely lose her temper.

"You're the dumb idiot!"

Han Qiongzhi said that as she sat down beside him, but she maintained quite a distance between them. Only when Li Qingshan opened his arms and pulled her in, kissing her on the head gently, did the discontent on her face silently melt away. She leaned against him quietly, watching the drifting snow as she quietly waited for a grand wedding.

Over the past year, they had finally spent more time together than apart. In particular, during the time she had absorbed the Virtue Accumulation pills and emerged from seclusion, they spent a total of three months together. Apart from their daily cultivation, they basically spent every moment beside one another, reluctant to separate as if they had returned to their period of passionate love in the past.

Afterwards, Li Qingshan discovered that spending all this time together was not completely a good thing. No matter how passionate the love was, there would always be a time when it cooled off. Han Qiongzhi emerged from the shadow of the past, or in better words, she had cooled her head that had become giddy from love. She had really been quite violent-tempered. For a period of time, she was basically capricious. She even said something along the lines of, "If you're not satisfied with me, then call off the engagement. You're more than willing to marry the woman you like!"

Li Qingshan could understand her apprehension. He had many secrets on him, and he did whatever he pleased, which left her uneasy, afraid that Han Anjun's prophecy would come true. At times like that, he was instead unable to say any sugared words. All he would do was embrace her firmly and unleash the patience of the spirit turtle, which allowed him to survive that difficult period.

Afterwards, when everything settled down, Han Qiongzhi even felt rather embarrassed. She pinched his cheeks and said, "It's best if we don't spend too much time together in the future. You sure look cute, but once I spend enough time with you, you really are quite annoying!"

"I also find you..." Before Li Qingshan could even finish, he felt his neck tighten. A pair of hands choked him firmly as Han Qiongzhi asked viciously, "Annoying?"

By the way, when they said those things, Han Qiongzhi was sitting on top of Li Qingshan crankily. Both of them were completely bare, confronting each other with sincerity.

Faced with a "naked" threat like that, all Li Qingshan could do was yield. He shook his head firmly, and only then did Han Qiongzhi let go of him in satisfaction. "That's more like it!" In the next moment, Li Qingshan rolled over and was on top.

So-called "cultivation partners" were people who could bring help to each other's cultivation. If the conditions were met, then even two men could be cultivation partners and cultivate together. However,

when it came to “partners of love”, there was no need for anything like that. Sometimes, they would instead negatively influence one another.

As cultivators, personal independence was extremely important, but becoming husband and wife like regular people was about sacrificing a part of the independence to contribute to the family, which would lead to a dilemma that was difficult to resolve. It definitely was not as simple as finding each other annoying because they had spent too much time together.

Even Li Qingshan who did whatever he wanted had almost chosen to directly break through to the fifth layer of the spirit turtle for her sake in the past, embarking on a path that was much more difficult. The various dilemmas Han Qiongzi faced because of him went even more without saying. No matter how deep their love for each other was, it could not withstand something like that.

As a result, the two of them did not cohabit like that. Instead, they would meet up once in a while, ranging from every one or two days to every three or five days. They spent their remaining time on cultivation, which created a special way in how they got along.

Han Qiongzi was not the type of woman who would be trapped by this kind of love, bothered by it endlessly. She possessed some of the straightforwardness of a man. As a result, she opened her mind and let him do whatever he wanted without probing deeply into these secrets. If he had not been like that, she would not have liked him in the first place.

However, when they were together, she definitely exercised her rights as his primary woman. She could not even put up with him making intimate contact with the women he conjured. She did not force herself to accept all of him, nor did she force him to do every little thing the way she would like him to.

Actually, she was no less busy than Li Qingshan. Apart from cultivation, she also had responsibilities from the clan and missions from the Hawkwolf Guard. She was different from Qiu Haitang. She did not live purely for the word “love”.

She had also once sincerely told Li Qingshan that if he actually grew tired of her one day, all he had to do was tell her honestly. He would not be forced to do anything. She would personally pen the divorce letter and pass it to him.

At this moment, Li Qingshan felt a familiar aura grow near. Ru Xin trudged through the snow. Perhaps because she sensed Han Qiongzi’s existence, she stopped and hesitated before continuing on her way, eventually appearing in his field of view. Her clothes were even whiter than snow, and her skin was like jade as she stood elegantly.

Han Qiongzi immediately broke away from Li Qingshan’s arms. She stood up and clasped her hands. “Fellow Ru, long time no see!”

It had been a very long time since she had seen Ru Xin. Surprised filled her eyes. In the past, she was already a relatively outstanding beauty, but now, she gave off an icy-cold, transcendent feeling. If it were not for her lively eyes, she might have mistaken her for an extremely delicate jade statue. She could not help but develop a sliver of caution towards this woman who she had heard being mentioned with Li Qingshan the most.

“Fellow Han, apologies, I’ve interrupted your intimate session.”

Li Qingshan spread his arms with a smile. "Actions over words. You can do it too!"

Before he had even finished speaking, an icy-cold blade was placed against his neck. Li Qingshan laid out his hands helplessly. "Looks like we need to wait until this tigress is gone."

Ru Xin smiled. "Alright, big brother Qingshan. Just like usual?"

"Big brother Qingshan!" Li Qingshan felt like he had just been punched in the gut.

"Just like usual?" Han Qiongzhi raised an eyebrow and swung down. Li Qingshan ducked in a hurry, and the sharp blade aura swept over his head.

"Heh, it's just a joke, so please don't misunderstand, fellow Han. Fellow Li has many beautiful women, but I'm fortunately not one of them."

Li Qingshan curled his lip. "Wouldn't it be easier to cause misunderstandings if you say it like that?" Han Qiongzhi said, "Hmph, misunderstandings?"

"When your wedding arrives, I will definitely offer up a lavish gift. Hopefully you haven't been cut down by fellow Han by then!"

"You two take your time. I'll take my leave for now."

Li Qingshan pulled Han Qiongzhi into his arms and said to Ru Xin, "Alright, stop joking around. Come in and have some tea! You definitely didn't come here for nothing. Why are you looking for me?"

Ru Xin said, "Don't worry about the tea. I've already refined the medicine you wanted."

"Medicine? What medicine?" Li Qingshan could not recall him ever asking Ru Xin to refine some medicine for him.

"Hmm? You forgot? It's for erectile dysfunction... Ah, almost slipped up with my mouth!"

"You already said it!" Li Qingshan said vexedly.

"I see now! No wonder!" Han Qiongzhi drew out her voice and looked at Li Qingshan with a disdainful gaze.

Ru Xin took out a glass bottle filled with faint, red liquid and placed it into Li Qingshan's hand. She patted his hand with a smile. "Take good care of your body!"

When the tips of their fingers touched, Li Qingshan felt that her hands were icy-cool, just like cold jade. Was it because of the Heavenly Tome of Cloud Furnace?

He gazed into her eyes. "Tell me, what is this medicine exactly?"

"Medicine for balancing yin and yang, for merging water and fire. It can guarantee an early pregnancy and scaling to new heights. Why don't you test it out?"

Han Qiongzhi heard "balancing yin and yang" and "an early pregnancy". She became giddy.

However, Li Qingshan heard “medicine for merging water and fire” and “guarantee scaling to new heights”. The meaning hidden in that left him extremely interested. He still wanted to say something else, but Ru Xin had already clasped her hands gracefully and trudged away through the snow.