

Insanity 281

Chapter 281: Bear Strength Phantom

When Fang Yuan stepped into the battle stage, all the random thoughts were cast out of his head.

He calmly sized up the opponent in front of him.

Tang Xiong.

He was eight feet tall, wide shoulders and a thick waist. Just his arms alone were as thick as Fang Yuan's thighs, as he stood on the stage without an upper garment or shoes.

His chest was filled with black chest hair, giving off a wild and formidable aura.

"Little scoundrel, you killed my little brother? Today, I shall send you to accompany him in the afterlife!" Tang Xiong looked at Fang Yuan with bloodshot eyes, the flames of hatred could be clearly seen.

The surrounding temperature was burning as if it was the torrid afternoon heat of July or August.

The ground was boiling hot; black and red mixed together to form the lava terrain.

This was a mid-scale battle stage. There were only few spectators about dozens, most of them came to watch how Tang Xiong took revenge.

As for Fang Yuan, he might have obtained two victories but it still wasn't enough for him to be famous.

"Tang brothers grew up relying on each other; now Tang Qing is dead and only Tang Xiong remains."

"Hehe, I am waiting to see how Tang Xiong tortures this kid to death."

"Eh, what is this kid's name?"

"I think he was called Gu Yue Fang Zheng, a no-name junior."

"This kid is too thoughtless, he actually dared to break the unsaid rules and kill his first two opponents."

"He should be a demonic Gu Master who had only recently entered the city..."

"Alas, the young do not know to conduct themselves. This day wouldn't have come if he had shown mercy."

The audience continued talking about the match, but no one was optimistic about Fang Yuan.

Wei Yang was in a disguise and was looking at the battle stage with a burning gaze. Tang Xiong also walked the strength path, he was a rank two peak stage expert but could unleash with the strength of three bears and even won his way through to fourth inner city. He was a strong opponent for the current Fang Yuan.

Ding!

A clear ring of the bell announced the start of the match.

Tang Xiong roared and charged straight at Fang Yuan like a wild bull.

The ground of this battle stage was made of dark red lava rocks. Fang Yuan could feel the scalding heat from the ground even though he was wearing boots. While Tang Xiong was barefooted, he did not pay any attention to the heat.

Tum tum tum.

Every time Tang Xiong's feet stepped on the ground, it produced a loud and deep sound. At the same time, his every step shattered the lava rocks and left a deep footprint in the ground.

Fang Yuan narrowed his eyes, his gaze as sharp as a blade's edge!

He was at ease despite Tang Xiong's aggressive momentum; the corner of his lips curled up into a cold smile as he outrageously charged at Tang Xiong head-on.

"Has he gone crazy?"

"He dares to face Tang Xiong head-on?"

"He could have had a chance to survive if he prolonged the match, this is simply charging towards his doom."

The audience shook their heads as they looked at this scene.

Fang Yuan was young, his body was not even half as muscular as Tang Xiong's. The scene of him charging at Tang Xiong was like a lamb colliding with a big ox.

Bam!

The two fiercely collided against each other, the enormous strength sent both of them flying.

Tang Xiong was thrown back six steps, as a clearly shocked expression showed on his face. 'How could this kid have such huge great strength?'

Meanwhile, Fang Yuan was thrown back three steps, as the white light armor protecting his body shook.

The result of the collision amazed the audience.

Some had their jaws wide open and some repeatedly blinked their eyes, not having expected Fang Yuan to possess such strength.

"My strength is actually less than his? No wonder little brother died at his hands!" Tang Xiong's expression changed, and looked at Fang Yuan properly for the first time.

Fang Yuan shook his numb arm, his expression was still indifferent; this result wasn't beyond his expectation.

He possessed the strength of two boars and a crocodile, there was also some increase to his strength due to using brown bear innate strength Gu these days. And Tang Xiong, he only possessed the strength of two bears.

Grand bear Gu!

Tang Xiong roared, the muscles on his body expanded visibly and his body size grew by a fold; he temporarily gained the strength of a bear.

Bear palm Gu!

A ball of yellow light covered his palms and soles. After the light dispersed, his hands and feet increased in size by over three times; turning into thick and enormous bear palms.

Whooshh!

He jumped with ferocious strength, next, he waved his right palm smashing at Fang Yuan.

The strong wind produced from his motion sent Fang Yuan's clothes fluttering before the bear palm even hit him.

Fang Yuan was still calm, he clenched his left palm into a fist and struck directly at the bear palm.

Fist and palm struck, producing a muffled sound. It was a draw.

However, following immediately, Tang Xiong's arm swept horizontally and another palm also came smashing over.

Fang Yuan used offence against offence; bang bang bang, fists and palms struck each other multiple times, the wind was screaming from their attacks.

The audience revealed astonished expressions when they saw Fang Yuan equally matched as he attacked Tang Xiong head-on.

'This youngster has some skills to be able to duke it out with Tang Xiong!'

"What was his name again?"

"This is a tough nut, Tang Xiong is in trouble. Grand bear Gu has a time limit, and once the effect disappears, he will be disadvantaged."

However, right at this moment!

A fierce bear's roar resounded throughout the battle stage.

A phantom image of a black bear appeared behind Tang Xiong; it opened its bloody mouth and roared towards the skies.

Beast Phantom!

Tang Xiong got lucky and was able to unleash the beast phantom.

The smack that should have been extremely normal, now had the strength of a bear!

Fang Yuan could not dodge in time and hurriedly put up his arms to stiffly block it.

Boom.

With a huge bang, he was sent flying, the white light armor on his body flickered rapidly before dimming.

His arms were numb and would not be usable for some time.

He did his best to maintain his balance in midair; he twisted his waist and landed on the ground on his feet.

The moment he landed, he activated the canopy Gu; the white light armor appeared once more, but this time it looked weak and transparent, its defense had decreased by a lot.

"That is a bear strength phantom, Tang Xiong has flared up!"

"Bear strength specializes in smacking, it is normal for the bear strength phantom to appear since Tang Xiong has already attacked so many times."

"The situation was still in deadlock, but with the bear strength phantom, that kid's momentum is destroyed. Tang Xiong holds the upper hand now."

"According to the previous statistics, Tang Xiong can use the bear strength phantom five times on average in every fight. If that kid has no way to deal with it, he will definitely be defeated."

Outside the battle stage, the audience kept on making a commotion with their comments.

The appearance of a bear strength phantom meant the true battle was starting, and it roused the audience's passion.

"I have the strength of two boars and a crocodile; boar strength is good at charging attacks and crocodile strength is good at bite attacks, but I have yet to acquire the bear strength. I can't bring out the beast phantom by using my fists or palms, moreover the canopy Gu is not good at defending against close combat attacks, and will likely be destroyed by one or two more attacks from the bear strength phantom."

Fang Yuan's thoughts flashed through and he decided to change his battle tactics.

Jumping grass.

He willed, and a spring like grass soon grew out from his soles then pierced through his boots.

Just as Tang Xiong was charging at him, Fang Yuan stamped on the ground and leapt far away like a frog.

At the same time, his left palm swiped at Tang Xiong's direction.

A scarlet colored moonblade immediately shot out of his palms and struck Tang Xiong; the defensive light on his body flickered for a while.

Blood moon Gu might not have high offensive power, but it was a rank three Gu after all.

Tang Xiong was distracted for a moment before he pounced upon Fang Yuan again.

Fang Yuan used the same trick again, throwing scarlet moonblades from afar; he had changed his battle tactics and didn't engage Tang Xiong in close combat.

Tang Xiong had no choice but to use his movement Gu and chase after Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan kept on attacking and retreating. It was not that Tang Xiong didn't have long range attacking methods, but they were many times weaker than his close combat power and simply could not threaten Fang Yuan.

Tang Xiong growled repeatedly in anger, and tried to provoke Fang Yuan by cursing at him; the audience also made booing noises since they wanted to see intense close combat.

However, how could Fang Yuan be so easily provoked?

He did not have a complete set of Gu worms and had yet to make close combat his forte. Even the long range attacks were forcefully improvised by him.

Time passed by, both their primeval essences continually fell.

Fang Yuan's advantage became clearer; he possessed light silver primeval essence of rank three initial stage, while Tang Xiong only had B grade aptitude and red steel primeval essence.

Despite the strength path Gu Masters' advantage in consuming very little primeval essence, they could not last forever.

By the time Fang Yuan's blood moon Gu made five to six wounds on Tang Xiong's body, the latter had no choice but to admit defeat since his healing Gu was not very good and blood kept on flowing out of the wounds.

"Just wait, one day, I will smack you into minced meat!" Tang Xiong covered his wounds and walked out of the stage.

He came with the aggressiveness of the devil but was leaving with a pale face, his steps light and weak.

"To think fourth inner city's Tang Xiong was defeated!"

"What is that Gu? It could form blood red moonblades and blood kept on flowing out of the wounds it inflicted, I have never seen such a Gu before."

"This kid is not one to trifle with, he will advance to fourth inner city's battle stage before long."

Winner takes it all; most of the audience focused on Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan received his third victory, and according to the rules, he took that grand bear Gu from Tang Xiong.

This was the most valuable Gu in Tang Xiong's possession. With this Gu gone, Tang Xiong only possessed the strength of two bears, his battle strength decreased by thirty percent and there was no need to worry about him now.

However, Fang Yuan was not happy.

The legendary Gu was not in the stellar stone used as a leg support, then where was it?

Was there another piece of stone used as a leg support?

However, when Fang Yuan went back to the gambling den, the foot of that counter was already restored.

Maybe, it was not that gambling den?

Fang Yuan inwardly shook at the thought; stellar stone used to support counter in the rock gambling zone, only this gambling den fulfilled this condition.

"Without the legendary Gu, I won't have any advantage in walking on the strength path. Strength path had prevailed since ancient times, but now it is just a shadow of its previous glory. If I want to walk on the strength path without the legendary Gu, at the very least I will need an ancient strength path inheritance. Unfortunately, I only have memories of three ancient strength path inheritance, of which one is at Eastern Seas and another at Central Continent."

"The third one is at Southern Border, but has already been occupied and exploited by Wu Clan for several years now. Now that I recall it, even Empress Wu Ji of Wu Clan walked the strength path. And because of this ancient inheritance, the Wu Clan was able to sit on the throne of Southern Border's number one force."

Of course, this throne was only referring to the mortal realm. Rank six Gu immortals were at a level that crossed the ordinary and could not be calculated in this.

Fang Yuan continued to secretly investigate the next seven to eight days without any results.

"Sigh, only one clue remains now, I can only give up if that doesn't work." Fang Yuan thought, he was not someone who would waste time on an unsolvable problem.

This final clue was Li Ran — the protagonist who obtained the legendary Gu in Fang Yuan's previous life.

Chapter 282: A flash of inspiration Gu

Although Fang Yuan had the purple thorn token, he did not dare to investigate this openly.

But in his memory, Li Ran also participated in the battle stage. After obtaining the legendary Gu, he won his way up and swept the battle stage.

This made it easier.

Fang Yuan still had the once per month enforced challenge unused, thus, he came to the secret reception area using it.

There were three people who were named Li Ran among the ones who had signed up.

Two males and one female.

Eliminating the female since Li Ran was a male in the rumors.

The remaining two, one was an old man around sixty years old, slightly famous. With rank three cultivation, he had gone up to third inner city's battle stage a few years ago, but his body was getting worse as the years went, falling back to fourth inner city eventually. This was obviously not the Li Ran Fang Yuan wanted to find either, since Li Ran in his memories had a tough life.

The other is a middle aged man, over fifty years old. With rank two cultivation, he had arrived in Shang clan city for around ten years, but had remained at the fifth inner city battle stage. He loved gambling, and lived a difficult life. He had married and bore children in Shang clan city, but the couple did not get along and separated.

Fang Yuan secretly investigated, and found that this person was the one he saw at the gambling den.

Tailing him for several days, Fang Yuan found that this Li Ran lived from day to day, sometimes, after eating today, he could not afford food the next day.

But this did not mean he had no capabilities.

He relied on the primeval stones he earned in fifth inner city battle stage to survive.

Fang Yuan investigated his battle records, he won more than he lost.

According to logic, he should not be living such a life. But this person loved to eat, gamble and visit prostitutes, he spent his money without restraint. In order to gamble, he would even use all the primeval stones he has, such that for the next half a month, he would have to borrow money from people, and eat the cheapest food possible to survive.

Similarly, in order to have a feast, he would go to the highest grade restaurant, and spend most of the money he had. He even ate without paying, and still owed several restaurants money now.

"This person must be the owner of the legendary Gu in my previous life. But he could not control his desires, thus even with the legendary Gu, what could he do? No wonder he was like a shooting star, going missing soon after his fame." Fang Yuan shook his head secretly.

"He obtained the legendary Gu in my previous life, would he get it again now? It is not possible for me to continue tailing him for long. The day where he finds the legendary Gu is nearing. Am I truly not fated to receive this Gu?" Fang Yuan frowned.

These days, Fang Yuan spent a lot of time and effort in tailing Li Ran. If he spent this time on cultivating, he might achieve greater success.

Most importantly, Fang Yuan had no confidence of whether he would gain anything from doing this.

And if he continued, he might get found out. Thankfully, Wei Yang was a busy man, only coming over to watch when Fang Yuan had a battle, if not, Fang Yuan would not have the opportunity to tail Li Ran.

If Wei Yang found him doing this, how would Fang Yuan explain himself?

The greatest suspicion now was, why was the legendary Gu not inside the stellar stone, this did not match with the rumors!

Fang Yuan could not understand, this was too unimaginable! All the elements were present, but the Gu was nowhere to be found.

It could just be Fang Yuan's overwhelmingly suspicious nature, but he found this Li Ran very strange. He could not pinpoint what the strangeness was, but it was a feeling, an instinct. It was such a baseless feeling that even Fang Yuan could not be sure of it.

Like this, after another twenty over days, Fang Yuan fell into deep perplexity. That strange feeling became stronger, but Fang Yuan did not know where it originated.

Li Ran's actions had nothing amiss.

He lived in Shang clan city for nearly ten years, if there was anything wrong with him, outsiders would've known already.

"I am too entrenched into this, and have thought about this too much. At this time, I need an outsider's opinion to inspire myself." Fang Yuan was clear of his situation.

But he only trusted himself, although he made a poison vow with Bai Ning Bing, Fang Yuan did not trust Bai Ning Bing one bit. He only used her to cultivate, since the bone flesh unity Gu was much better than the liquor worm.

Without anyone to help, Fang Yuan could only rely on himself. And he had gotten used to relying on himself, and liked it too.

Thus, he came to the shop: "Shopkeeper, do you have a flash of inspiration Gu?"

Fang Yuan had asked a few shops, they did not have it. Finally, a shop had it, but it was priced at twenty nine thousand primeval stones.

A flash of inspiration Gu, a rank three consumable Gu, gone after one use. Who would spend so much primeval stones to buy this?

But the truth is, many people did.

These people were recipe masters who specialized in creating Gu refinement recipes.

When they got into a bottleneck, and were a step from success, they would choose to use this Gu. Once this Gu was used, it would give them that spark of inspiration that would allow them to successfully create the new recipe.

A recipe's worth is far greater than twenty nine thousand primeval stones.

Thus, a flash of inspiration Gu was a Gu with a lot of demand, if Fang Yuan did not have the purple thorn token, the shop would never sell it to him.

A similar Gu to the a flash of inspiration Gu is the cactus pointer.

But the latter was a Tie clan specialty grass Gu, it was not sold in the market.

Fang Yuan gritted his teeth, buying this a flash of inspiration Gu.

This Gu was like a blue jewel tadpole, small and agile, swimming about and waving its tail.

Fang Yuan activated his primeval essence, and this Gu entered his brain, turning into a white spiritual light, and like lightning, tore across the layers of mystery in Fang Yuan's head.

Fang Yuan's eyes shone with brilliance, finally realizing what the strange feeling was.

"That's right, although this Li Ran's life is a mess, without any control over himself, there exists a pattern among this mess. He goes to the restaurant once every three days, goes to the gambling den twice every seven days, and the brothel once every five days. And every ten days, he would go to a restaurant named 'Fu Tai Xiang He'.

From the messy report, under the influence of the a flash of inspiration Gu, the pattern within was revealed .

This was the strange part.

If a person was truly unrestrained and did not think of what to do, his life would be a complete mess, how could it have such a perfect rhythm?

Three days later, in Fu Tai Xiang He restaurant.

"Clerk, the bill." Li Ran looked away from the window, calling loudly.

"Coming, lord Li Ran, five and a half primeval stones please."

"This is six, no need for change." Li Ran tossed out six primeval stones.

"Thank you lord, take care!"

Dun dun dun...

Li Ran walked down the stairs, and as he walked out of the restaurant, he turned into an alley and gradually vanished under the shadow.

Downstairs, Fang Yuan observed silently, before calling the shop assistant, pointing at Li Ran's seat: "The view here is horrible, I want to sit there instead."

According to his understanding, every time Li Ran came here, he would sit at the window seat, that was indeed strange.

"No problem!" The shop assistant laughed: "It is a man's interest to peek at beauties."

"What?" Fang Yuan's eyebrows raised.

"Hmm, isn't esteemed customer trying to see Qin Yan brothel's number one star, Lady An Yu? Hehe, that seat can directly look into her room, if you're lucky, you can even see her body. That Li Ran earlier, he always sits here to look at her. He always makes me reserve the seat for half a primeval stones." The shop assistant said with a lecherous expression.

"Oh is that so?" Fang Yuan replied curtly, sitting at Li Ran's seat.

Through the window, he could indeed see into the brothel.

Qin Yan brothel had eight storeys, the number one lady An Yu was a rank two Gu Master, having a room at the top floor. She had a great body, and her Gu Master identity could invoke men's conquering desires, rumors say it takes almost ten thousand primeval stones to have her for a night.

With Li Ran's fortune, he could not afford this, but was he really here to peek at Lady An Yu?

Looking at the way he left the brothel, he was not such a man.

Fang Yuan looked outside, there were many restaurants around Qin Yan brothel, why did he choose this one?

If he had a Gu worm to improve his vision, then maybe, but Fang Yuan knew he did not have such a Gu.

At this distance, even if Lady An Yu was there, he would only see a blur image.

"Eh? This is..." Fang Yuan's gaze concentrated on a tofu shop opposite the street.

A pair of mother and son were packing up their stall, ready to go home.

Fang Yuan recognised them, they were Li Ran's wife and son!

"Don't tell me, his real motive was to look at them?" Fang Yuan could not help but think.

He closed his eyes, and the map of the street appeared in his head.

There were better places to peek at Lady An Yu, but to observe this mother and son pair, this was the only spot!

"If he really wanted to look at them, why does he have to do it sneakily? According to my findings, he abandoned them years ago, is he feeling guilty? Strange... if he was guilty, and wanted to show concern for them, he could appear in front of them personally, why does he have to be secretive."

"No, it could be that he was too ashamed to face them. But if he was, why would he not turn over a new leaf? This is really weird, he seems to be a mess, and cannot restrain himself, but his life is actually an orderly mess. This evidently shows he has good control over himself."

Fang Yuan's eyes were eerie as possibilities flashed across his mind.

He chewed on the food, but could not taste them at all.

He felt himself nearing the truth, like a blind man in a room getting close to the door.

All the clues and suspicions flew around in his head like a tornado.

Such a thinking speed, caused his eating action to be greatly slowed.

He slowly put down the chopsticks, raising his wine glass, the wine inside glimmering as it emitted a strong fragrance.

Suddenly, Fang Yuan's black pupils expanded!

The wine glass was raised halfway, and his arm stayed in midair, not moving like a statue.

In his mind, a bolt of lightning struck and exploded.

"So that's why... I finally understand!"

He screamed excitedly in his heart, as a great brilliance flashed across his eyes like lightning.

The mystery involving his last life and current life had finally been solved, all the suspicions were lifted and Fang Yuan found the answer he wanted!

At the same time, he 'found' the legendary Gu he lost!

Chapter 283: Got it

"Wu Ran, if we ask you to sacrifice your future for the clan, are you willing to do it?"

"I am willing!"

...

"Wu Ran, if we ask you to sacrifice your reputation for the clan, are you willing to do it?"

"I am willing!"

...

"Wu Ran, if we ask you to sacrifice your life for the clan, are you willing to do it?"

"I am willing!"

...

"I was right about you, Wu Ran. From your grandfather, father, and then you, you were all loyal Wu clan subjects! Now, the clan has a mission for you, this mission would need you to sacrifice your future, your reputation, and maybe even your life."

"Lord clan leader, I am willing to do it for the clan!"

...

In the darkness, Wu Ran opened his eyes.

"Huff ..." He breathed out slowly, sitting up from his bed, muttering: "I dreamed again."

This dream was not fake, but originated from the deepest part of his memory.

'Li Ran' is his fake name, his real name is 'Wu Ran'.

The surname Wu, bore great significance in southern border. It represented the number one overlord in the southern border, Wu clan!

Eleven years ago, Wu clan leader Empress Wu Ji gave an audience to Wu Ran, and assigned him a secret mission —

Making his way into Shang clan's higher up level!

For this, he changed his name, and roamed the wilderness for three years before settling in Shang clan city.

He laid low for eight whole years.

"It has been eight years, an entire eight years. Wu clan's clansmen have mostly forgotten me by now huh? Wu Ran is dead, in this world, only Li Ran remains."

Li Ran sighed in his heart.

He had been lurking for too long. So long that he almost forgot his own name.

Here, he wore a mask, living for eight years, pretending to be a libertine, an ordinary Gu Master of the lowest social level. Even to his beloved wife, he did not say a thing.

During this period, he only left once every half a year to contact Wu clan. It had always been a one-sided contact, hiding all traces to the limit.

Until a year ago, the agent informed him that the clan was going to use him. His excitement then could not be expressed in words!

"After eight years, they have finally activated it, everything will be different now!" Li Ran exclaimed. He willed, and a Gu appeared from his storage.

This fossil was cube shaped, like a brick shining with star light on its surface.

This was a stellar stone.

If Fang Yuan was here, he would find that this rock was very similar to the rock used as a leg support in the gambling den.

Li Ran caressed this fossil gently, frowning slightly.

As a spy, he spent ten years lurking in the city, creating a perfect background for himself. It would definitely gain Shang clan's trust.

But trust is not enough, he needed ability that surpasses the ordinary man, so that he can dominate the battle stage. Only then would Shang clan recruit him, and make him into an external clan elder like Wei Yang, thus gaining authority in Shang clan.

This 'ability' had to appear naturally, and it cannot be too abrupt.

Thus, Wu clan leader Empress Wu Ji chose a Gu worm for him personally.

This was a Gu that possessed a legendary tale.

Obtained from an ancient strength path inheritance, it is an almost extinct Gu in the current world, it was extremely rare!

With this Gu, Li Ran can emerge from his slumber and dominate the battle stage.

As to the method of 'obtaining' this Gu, to avoid suspicion, Wu clan had made preparations.

That is, gambling rocks.

Luck is unpredictable, and an ancient Gu being sealed within a fossil was completely normal.

The demonic Gu Master Wei Shen Jing was a subordinate of Empress Wu Ji. Creating a fake scrap grade fossil was as easy as pie, no one would be able to discern it.

Li Ran spent some effort too.

To make sure people believed this was a fossil from the gambling den, and not his own, he chose a gambling rock that was used as leg support in the gambling den.

This rock was there for many years, people walked about and never noticed it.

Li Ran had communicated with Wu clan, asking Wei Shen Jing to create a similar stellar stone.

Later in his plan, he would swap this rock with the stellar stone in his hand without anyone noticing. He was a Gu Master, after observing for half a year, he knew when was the perfect time to swap the stones without anyone realizing.

When he finally opens the stellar stone, the entire gambling den would testify for him, that it was completely due to luck.

After he obtains this Gu, he would turn over a new leaf, and start the story of a prodigal son. He would rise up, find his wife and child, and become an external clan elder of Shang clan. He would complete his mission, and bring his wife and child back to Wu clan, where they belong.

Thinking of his wife and son, Li Ran felt extremely guilty.

He loved his wife deeply, she is so kind, so strong willed.

At the same time, as a father, he would love to give everything good in this world to his son.

He was only making use of her at the start, but as time went on, their relationship deepened, and he could not stop loving her. After their son was born, his love for them only grew. But eventually, because of his mission and secret identity, he had to temporarily leave them.

"You must hate me now, I've disappointed you too much. But it is alright, soon, soon. I have been deployed, I can bring you happiness!"

Li Ran gripped his fists, his eyes shining with determination.

Tomorrow, he would go to the battle stage, and engage in a battle. The day after, he would bring this stellar stone to the gambling den, and perform his life changing show.

"I had planned to use that stone as a cover, but life is hard to predict, someone actually chose it. Heh, that idiot, choosing a scrap grade stellar stone. But... tomorrow, I will have to be an idiot too."

Li Ran laughed, keeping the stellar stone back into his storage Gu.

Although there was some changes to his plans, it was still fine. He had planned for such a small accident anyway.

He laid down once more, and soon, fell into deep sleep.

This time, he did not have any dreams.

On the second day, he felt great, energetic and full of hope.

He felt that he was like a tourist walking in a dark cavern. After a long journey, he finally saw the light ahead, the exit of the cavern!

Eight years of enduring, everything would become so wonderful!

Everything would definitely become perfect!

With such a belief, he arrived at the battle stage.

He had gotten information of the opponent this time, a rank two peak stage Gu Master often seen in fifth inner city's battle stage, he was a familiar face.

Even the weakest Gu Master, if they can roam in the battle stage without giving up, they have the ability to hold their own.

Li Ran did not look down on his opponent, the Gu Li Ran currently had were quite weak and not considered high quality. He had to conceal himself as well, unable to fight fiercely, thus, this battle could go either way.

Indeed, as they fought, it was as Li Ran predicted.

From probing to fighting, the two were evenly matched, at a stalemate.

The battlefield was ravaged, and the few spectators gasped at the scene.

Suddenly, Li Ran's eyes shone brightly.

A chance!

He found a weak point of his opponent, and was about to attack.

Suddenly, his heart hurt, and his body stiffened; the counter attack from his opponent sent him flying.

Li Ran was heavily injured, groaning in pain. His body flew more than ten steps back, until he stopped himself.

A trace of blood fell from his mouth.

However, the severity of his injuries was on par with the shock and fear in his heart right now!

"My flowerbud Gu, my flowerbud Gu! How did it lose connection with me? The stellar stone is inside it!!"

At the same time, at Li Ran's residence.

The bed was flipped over, showing a secret compartment.

Fang Yuan stood beside it, holding a flowerbud Gu in his hand.

This Gu was rank two, used to store items. It was shaped like a flower, light blue in color but was crystal in material, shining clearly under sunlight.

Although it was Li Ran's Gu, with the Spring Autumn Cicada's aura, Fang Yuan instantly refined it.

Fang Yuan's mind went into the Gu, and saw many things inside. A large sack of rice, some daily necessities, a poor quality block of compressed tea, thirty to forty primeval stones and a few fossils.

"This is it!" Fang Yuan's heart trembled, as he activated his primeval essence, and a black light flew out of the flowerbud Gu.

The black light landed in Fang Yuan's palm, turning into a stellar stone.

It looked extremely ugly, squarish and resembled a brick, almost the same as the leg support rock.

The moment the stellar stone appeared, the entire world seemed to have went silent.

Fang Yuan's pupils expanded.

Thump thump... thump thump...

His heartbeat accelerated, he could clearly hear it.

Including this shabby house and the people walking outside, the surroundings faded away; only Fang Yuan and the stellar stone were left.

He held the heavy stellar stone, and he could feel the cold surface of the rock.

Fang Yuan stared at it passionately, at the same time, his lips curled up as he smiled.

His smile widened, until he opened his mouth and laughed silently!

The legendary Gu, is finally in my hands!!!

He screamed in his heart: "Just as I guessed, this Li Ran is a spy from another clan! When I was at Qing Mao mountain, I used the gambling rock to conceal my liquor worm, he is doing the same thing. No wonder the stellar stone was empty, my previous life's rumor was all part of his act."

"Today, he is going to the battle stage to fight. Whether he concealed his strength or not, according to his previous records, the opponent is around the same level as him, it would be a tough fight. The legendary Gu's stellar stone is so important, it will be tough to fight if he brings it around. With his vigilant nature, he would not hide the stellar stone in the storage Gu and bring it around."

Because if he lost the battle, his opponent would get to take one of his Gu worms.

He knew there was a legendary Gu within the stellar stone, if his opponent took his storage Gu, he would lose the stellar stone!

Chapter 284: One, Two, Five

"I admit defeat!" Li Ran suddenly half kneeled on the ground, shouting loudly.

His opponent stopped charging forward, holding back his attack as he did not want to drive Li Ran into a corner. There was no benefits in doing that for both parties.

Li Ran spit out a mouthful of blood, standing up shakingly.

In order to quickly leave the battlefield, he purposely took a few hits from his opponent.

The hosting Gu Master walked in front, announcing the results of the battle.

Li Ran was extremely anxious, after taking back the vine information Gu, he quickly left the battle stage after pretending to be dejected.

He half-heartedly bandaged his injuries before rushing back to his house.

"God damn it, how can this happen? What in the world happened, why did I lose connection with flowerbud Gu?"

Li Ran's heart was engulfed by a dark cloud.

The flowerbud Gu was a Gu he had refined, the moment Fang Yuan refined it, he could sense it.

"Only two possibilities exist for such a situation. One is that the flowerbud Gu was destroyed, the second is that someone else refined it! Was I discovered? No, maybe the situation isn't as bad as I imagine, a burglar could've entered my house. F*ck, I have lived in Shang clan city for eight years, I know almost all the thieves there are, why would someone want to steal from that house of mine!"

Li Ran walked quickly, the stellar stone was extremely important, even with his calm nature, he could not help but feel anxious.

He was regretting.

He should've hid the flowerbud Gu at a safer location, and not place it in the secret compartment under his bed.

But the truth is, that was not his fault.

He had gone undercover, to conceal himself, he did not have any friends, and for the last few years, he had not contacted his wife or child. He often went to brothels, gambling dens, restaurants, those areas were full of people and he could not hide anything there.

He could hide it at a pawn shop, but placing so much attention on a scrap grade fossil was too peculiar. When Shang clan investigates in the future, that would create huge suspicion.

In Shang clan city, all sorts of people existed, there were many thief Gu Masters. But to forcefully take over the flowerbud Gu, a rank three Gu is required. The problem is, why would any rank three Gu Master want to steal from a run down place like his?

Li Ran had lurked for eight years, so long that he almost forgot his past. When he hid the flowerbud Gu, he was very confident but now his confidence turned into regret and self blame.

"Hopefully, the situation can still be salvaged!"

He returned to his home feeling uncertainty, the door was closed.

He opened it, and saw the place was in a mess.

"It was a thief!" He suddenly had a thought.

Encountering a thief was not scary, as long as his identity was not exposed, all could be salvaged.

"That's right!" Li Ran consoled himself: "Every time I contacted Wu clan, it was a one-sided transmission. There are no evidence on me, and that legendary Gu is inside the stellar stone. If it is not opened, who would know the value of it? As long as I find the thief, with my eight years of experience in this city..."

As he thought about it, he calmed his emotions, and stopped panicking.

"Should I report the case? Using the guards' ability to arrest the thief? No, I should be polite before resorting to brute force, it is best if I can get back the stellar stone peacefully. The city guards can't be trusted too, they would not spend effort for a small fry like me. Maybe I should hire a Tie clan Gu Master?"

"Eh? This is..." At this point, he concentrated, and found a Gu after flipping over his bed.

Heart sound Gu!

This Gu was rank two, green and black in color, around the size of a baby's thumb. It was shaped like a conch shell, one end was large while the other end was tiny, and had a spiral appearance.

"Heart sound Gu comes in pairs, it can allow two Gu Masters to speak internally within a hundred steps. Don't tell me... the thief left this behind specially for me?!"

Li Ran's eyes shone with hesitation, but he gritted his teeth and placed the heart sound Gu into his ear, like a earplug.

"Who are you?" Li Ran injected primeval essence, and activated the heart sound Gu, concentrating his mind and asked.

"That question is not important. The important thing is, Li Ran is a fake name right? Hehehe." Soon after, Fang Yuan's voice appeared in Li Ran's head.

That instant, Li Ran's pupils shrunk as he looked like he was struck by lightning, stunned on the spot.

"Not good, he found out my identity!" Li Ran was horror stricken.

The situation had become the worst!

But he was after all, a spy for eight years, even with this turn of events, he calmed his mind and spoke to Fang Yuan: "Fake name? What fake name, what do you mean?"

He said as he carefully tiptoed, walking around in the shabby house.

He next leaned on the wall, looking at the street outside the window.

"The heart sound Gu has an effective range, only a hundred steps away at most, he must be near me." He rapidly thought of a solution.

To use the heart sound Gu, one has to concentrate in order to speak, ordinary thinking would not be transmitted.

But Fang Yuan was well aware of his mental state, lightly laughing: "Don't bother acting Li Ran. I am not your enemy, as long as you cooperate, to express my sincerity, we can meet up."

"Meet up?" Li Ran was shocked.

Next, Fang Yuan's voice rang in his head: "Now, walk out of your room and turn left around the door."

"Why should I listen to you?" Li Ran called out in his mind.

Fang Yuan laughed: "Don't try to test how much I know, it is beyond your imagination. I will count to five, consider well."

"One." Fang Yuan counted.

Li Ran rapidly thought about the situation.

Even though the flowerbud Gu was in the thief's hands, they had no evidence that he was a Wu clan spy.

He had lurked for eight years, how could there be evidence?

"Two." Fang Yuan spoke casually.

If at this time, he listened to Fang Yuan, and gets spotted by others, that would be concrete proof that he was a spy.

But if he did not listen, what happens to the stellar stone?

"Five." Fang Yuan continued to count.

Li Ran's mind was thrown into chaos, as he scolded: "God damn, can you even count properly?!"

"Hehehe, it seems you have come to a decision." Fang Yuan laughed.

Li Ran breathed deeply, his fists clenched tightly, as he gritted his teeth and left the house.

He walked out of the door, and arrived at a busy street. Next, he turned left.

About fifty steps later, Fang Yuan's voice rang out again: "Turn right, at the third cross junction, turn left."

"He can see my movements, he has to be beside me, but who?" Li Ran had sharp vision, like an eagle sweeping the crowd.

"I would advise you not to look around, that is not your usual behavior. Hehe, after eight years, you want it all to go down the drain?" Fang Yuan quickly said.

"Damn it..." Li Ran gritted his teeth till they squeaked, Fang Yuan's threat made him lower his head as he looked ahead.

Following Fang Yuan's instructions, he turned and walked around in circles, until Fang Yuan told him to stop.

"Turn around." Fang Yuan quickly followed: "In your vision, there should be a restaurant, go to the third storey, I will be waiting there."

Li Ran looked, and his heart jumped.

This restaurant, was the one he often came to, Fu Tai Xiang He restaurant.

"Don't tell me..." He had a bad feeling in his heart. The thief held so much information about him, it felt like he was stripped bare naked in the winter snow plains.

He entered the restaurant.

The familiar shop assistant looked at him, enthusiastically calling out: "Lord Li Ran, you are here, please come upstairs!"

Li Ran's grim face smiled slightly as he carried his utmost vigilance and ascended the ladder.

Halfway through, before the second floor.

"Wait." Fang Yuan suddenly said.

Li Ran stopped his movement, asking: "What?"

"Go downstairs, and out of the door." Fang Yuan instructed.

Li Ran snorted, having no choice but to leave.

The shop assistant looked at him, feeling confused, quickly asking: "What is the matter lord, are you not eating anymore?"

Li Ran waved his hand, asking him to leave, as he walked out of the restaurant.

"Opposite you, there is a shop selling baked pancakes, go buy a few." Fang Yuan continued.

Li Ran's eyes twitched, but he followed the instructions, buying a few pancakes.

"Okay, now return to the third floor of the restaurant." Fang Yuan said again.

Li Ran's forehead was popping with veins as he held the pancake and returned to the restaurant.

The shop assistant saw him entering again, looking at him weirdly: "Lord Li Ran, if you want to buy pancakes, just call me, I can buy it for you."

"Scram." Li Ran shouted, scaring the shop assistant as he shuddered and stopped talking.

He got to the third floor, and stopped after the ladder.

"Continue, take two to three steps and turn left, you will see me." Fang Yuan instructed.

Li Ran followed the instructions, as he walked around a pillar, and finally saw Fang Yuan, sitting at his usual spot.

Next, he saw Fang Yuan stretch out his hand, inviting him to the seat. At the same time, he heard in his mind: "Please take a seat."

Li Ran did not speak, quietly sitting before Fang Yuan, then staring at him without blinking.

The truth is, Fang Yuan's youthful appearance gave him a huge shock.

When they conversed, Fang Yuan held him tightly by the collar, he subconsciously pictured the image of Fang Yuan as an unscrupulous middle aged man, or an elderly wearing a hat, hiding his face in the darkness.

But the truth was completely the opposite.

The voice from the heart sound Gu would always be tuned, it cannot ascertain age, but could easily determine the gender.

If he did not see it with his own eyes, Li Ran would never have thought the mysterious man was so young!

Fifth inner city's street lights passed the windows and shone on Fang Yuan's face. Although he had a plain look, his eyes were as black as ink, like an abyss, deep and mysterious.

Li Ran memorised Fang Yuan's face deep in his heart.

Although this was the first time they met, he could swear, he would never forget Fang Yuan's appearance in this life.

Because it was due to this young man that all his plans were foiled, and in such a helpless way!

Chapter 285: All-out effort Gu

On the dinner table, dishes and wine produced amazing fragrance.

At the surrounding tables, some people were playing drinking games, some recited poems, others were playing around, it was a relaxed and fun atmosphere.

Fang Yuan and Li Ran sat opposite each other, they looked very peaceful, but they were secretly sizing each other up. It was the calm before the storm. Li Ran had deep killing intent in his heart, and although Fang Yuan looked relaxed, he was also wary of Li Ran.

"Who exactly are you?" Li Ran asked using the heart sound Gu.

"I said before, that is not important. Pass the pancake to me." The first half was spoken internally, while the second sentence was using his mouth.

Li Ran was stunned, before pushing the paper bag towards Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan opened the bag, taking out a pancake and biting, nodding: "Now this is the flavor I wanted, I'm so sorry for the trouble."

Next, he used the heart sound Gu: "Do you know, I tailed you for several days below this restaurant, I got hungry and bought a pancake, and found it really delicious, want to try?"

Li Ran had no mood to try the pancake.

He snorted in his heart, asking: "Aren't you afraid I'll poison it?"

But on the surface, he smiled and said: "It is no big deal, no trouble at all. Don't forget we have a great relationship."

"Hehehe." Fang Yuan laughed out loud, staring at Li Ran with deep meaning, transmitting in his mind: "You think I don't know what Gu you have?"

Li Ran smiled more brightly, but his heart sank.

"He is trying to remind me! That's right, the enemy is hiding in the shadows while I am out there, I did not even sense him tailing me these few days. He should've known all about me already. If I fight him now, there is a low chance of success, thus he used this pancake to warn me!"

Fang Yuan saw Li Ran keeping silent, his eyes shifting around, and knew the warning got through, thus he took out the stellar stone.

Li Ran's gaze was attracted, but the stone was quickly taken away.

The next moment, Fang Yuan's voice rang in his mind: "Stop pretending, I know the all-out effort Gu is inside this."

"WHAT?!" Li Ran's heart shook like he had been struck by lightning.

Even if he was a good actor, his expression changed showing fluster and fear.

He had been hoping the secret of the stellar stone would not be exposed. After all, it came from Wei Shen Jing, there were no flaws, but to think the matter had worsened to this extent, the other party knew the all-out effort Gu was sealed inside!

"Wait, the matter regarding the all-out effort Gu, only a few people know about it. Even I only knew about it soon after receiving it, how did he find out?"

"The matter is complex now... I am confident there are no loopholes on my end, thus this should've been exposed on the clan side! Wu clan can send a spy like me here, Shang clan can also send theirs over. The few large clans in the southern border, they infiltrate each other, and there are spies everywhere, they should be clear of each other's matters."

"If not, how could he know about the all-out effort Gu? That's right, I was so vigilant, how could I make a mistake and let him get a hold on me, or even suspect me? To think my home clan has been infiltrated to this extent, it is truly scary!"

"But maybe that isn't the case, in this world, there are too many special Gu worms..."

Fang Yuan left Li Ran ample time to think.

He was a smart person, the more he thought, the more suspicious he would get. Subconsciously, he would imagine Fang Yuan to be stronger, more mysterious, and scarier. That would make him feel inferior during the discussion.

Fang Yuan played with the stellar stone, after a while, when the time was almost ripe, he continued transmitting his voice: "I want the all-out effort Gu."

Li Ran was stunned, not understanding Fang Yuan's deeper meaning.

"But I know, if I take this Gu, I would face the wrath and revenge of your clan. Thus, I need your cooperation." Fang Yuan's gaze was eerie.

To be able to plot against Shang clan, they had to be an equally large clan. If Fang Yuan took the all-out effort Gu by force, he would be enemies with this clan.

This stellar stone was like bait on a hook. If Fang Yuan wanted to eat this bait, he needed to avoid getting stuck on the hook.

Li Ran revealed a mocking smile: "You want me to cooperate with you, what a joke, on what basis?"

"Based on the fact that I do not want to be enemies with you. Even if I have the purple thorn token, I do not want to be enemies with you, because like you, I have people I want to protect." Fang Yuan said in his mind to Li Ran, as he looked out of the window.

At the same time, he said with his mouth: "I heard that shop sells great tofu."

Li Ran squinted, his eyes showing a ferocious gaze, screaming in his mind: "Are you threatening me?!"

Fang Yuan shook his head, in his eyes, there were clouds drifting, as he showed a complex emotion on his face. Li Ran instantly caught his emotion, there were sadness, pain, helplessness, and fondness.

"Are you not clear of your situation?" Fang Yuan said in his mind: "People like us, squeezed between two strong forces, living on the edge everyday, hiding our emotions in the depths of our hearts, and could die anytime. Since we chose this path, we can only continue walking on it. It is all for the clan, we have no regrets. But some people, they are innocent, why should they be implicated into our business, and bear the risks for us?"

Li Ran's heart stirred, staring at Fang Yuan in disbelief: "You... are a spy too?"

Fang Yuan laughed helplessly, in a bitter tone: "What do you think?"

Li Ran saw this smile, and his eyes watered, as he stared tightly at Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan's expression did not have a tint of unnaturalness, as he turned to look outside the window.

Li Ran knew he was looking at his own wife and children.

Fang Yuan's gaze was so gentle, so dazed, as if he was recalling certain memories.

Li Ran did not think he was acting, because this youngster was too young, how could he fake such true emotions? Even at his age, Li Ran could not act to this level.

This was his true emotions!

Unknowingly, a sense of acceptance towards Fang Yuan grew in his heart.

As people in similar situations, they did not need a deep relationship to understand each other.

Fang Yuan blinked, looking back at Li Ran, and said: "Li Ran, you have lurked in Shang clan city for eight years. If your identity is exposed, your mission would fail. Your failure may cause you to lose your life, but more importantly, the clan would suffer a loss, and you would let down their expectations."

Li Ran clenched his fists.

Fang Yuan's words pulled the strings in his heart.

He was loyal to the clan, almost religiously. Otherwise, the clan would not have chosen him to be the spy.

Fang Yuan said again: "If you fail, your wife would lose her husband. Your son is only five now, he would lose his father. If your identity is exposed, there is a high chance of them dying because of you. You only have one step left to succeed, the position of clan elder is your goal, am I right? But do you think that is the end? No, you will continue lurking, as long as Shang clan existed, the clan would need your spying."

Li Ran gritted his teeth.

Fang Yuan's words hit the nail on the head.

All these things, did he not consider them? He only dared to think about them for a moment before stopping. The more he thought about it, the more pressure he felt, the future was really too long, it would cause him to lose the courage to continue!

"Thus, you need alliance mates, brother Li Ran." Fang Yuan continued speaking: "You will not betray your clan, I won't either. You have people you want to protect, so do I. We can cooperate, we need external force to ensure our family's safety. We have to live in order to make contributions to our clans. And the Shang clan is our mutual goal."

'Of course, this cooperation is only in private. If our clans want to wage war, you will be the first person I will eliminate." After pausing briefly, Fang Yuan added.

Li Ran snorted coldly, Fang Yuan's truthful declaration only made his words more trustworthy.

To him, loyalty to the clan is the top priority, next is his family, and then his own life.

Fang Yuan's suggestion catered to his three needs.

"But can this person be trusted? We are from different forces, cooperation between spies is wishful thinking! Maybe... it is because he is young, and coupled with his intellect and courage, he thought of this method? If I was this young, I'm afraid... I may do the same... or not."

The more Li Ran thought about it, the more he felt Fang Yuan's sincerity.

Most importantly, he had no other way out! He was completely exposed before Fang Yuan.

If Fang Yuan exposed him, his mission would fail, his ten years of hard work would go up in flames, how could he accept this?

Human nature is complex, they have this thing called fluke mentality.

Li Ran was like someone who was driven to a cliff, with his enemies approaching, he could only jump down. Even if he did not know what was below the cliff, he would still pray that there is a water body below, or maybe he would be saved by some tree branches while descending.

He fell into deep silence for a long time.

After a few minutes, he used the heart sound Gu: "How can I believe you?"

Fang Yuan smiled, taking out a poison vow Gu.

...

Three days later, Fang Yuan opened the all-out effort Gu in the gambling den, causing the entire district to go into chaos.

"Did you hear? Someone opened an all-out effort Gu in Lan Chao gambling den!"

"Is that really the all-out effort Gu? It is a near extinct ancient Gu, able to summon the beast phantom a hundred percent of the time!"

"You guys only knew now? Hehe, I know more than you. This extremely lucky person is called Gu Yue Fang Zheng. I don't know why, but he has a purple thorn token. The all-out effort Gu was not supposed to be his, but was chosen by a Gu Master called Li Ran, but he knocked into Gu Yue Fang Zheng who decided to find problems with him, taking away three fossils from him as compensation. That all-out effort Gu was within those fossils."

"Oh dear, he really is unlucky, the all-out effort Gu should've been his!"

"This is fate..."

"Lan Chao gambling den, no, I have to go take a look!"

At once, rumors spread all over Shang clan city.

Chapter 286: A Small Test Run

"This is the all-out effort Gu?"

In the secret room, Wei Yang held this Gu in his hand as he exclaimed, strange light shining in his eyes.

All-out effort Gu, it was shaped like a rhinoceros beetle.

Now, it was sitting quietly in Wei Yang's palm, its body was almost the size of Wei Yang's palm, and was quite heavy.

It was oval in shape, and had a strong armor exoskeleton. There was a strong horn on its head, looking heavy and powerful.

It had three pairs of legs, all strong and thick. Its body was dark brown, and glistened with a metallic surface. People only needed one glance to know it was not ordinary.

"That's right, this is the rank three all-out effort Gu. Once used, it would summon a beast phantom, able to move according to my will." Fang Yuan was sitting on a cushion opposite Wei Yang, as he explained.

Wei Yang breathed in deeply, handing the all-out effort Gu back to Fang Yuan.

"At this timing, is it fate? Brother Fang Zheng, are you truly bent on the strength path?" He gave his last attempt.

Fang Yuan nodded, not speaking, but his determined expression said everything.

Wei Yang sighed again.

If previously, he was confident of changing Fang Yuan's mind, at this moment, after obtaining the all-out effort Gu, he knew that Fang Yuan's decision was final, there was no hope in changing it.

"Fate is really mystical, obtaining the all-out effort Gu would greatly help you on the strength path. The all-out effort Gu is undoubtedly the core Gu worm in assembling your set. If you are so determined, I shall say no more. But I have one final thing to remind you, just treat it as my nagging."

Fang Yuan became serious: "Not at all, please give me your advice!"

"Although you have the all-out effort Gu, times are different now. If this all-out effort Gu is your core, you have to ensure its safety. It is only a rank three Gu now, if you want to refine it into rank four or rank five in the future, there is too much danger in refining it if it is not your vital Gu. If the all-out effort Gu is destroyed in the process of refinement, your entire set would collapse without the core. Thus, my first advice to you is to convert it into your vital Gu. Shang clan can help you to achieve this."

"To make a set, just one core is not enough, you need several important support Gu. Regarding this, you need to choose carefully, and think ahead. If your choice is wrong, it will not allow you to display the full value of all-out effort Gu. Sigh, actually, during ancient times, when strength path flourished, there were much more Gu worms that complemented the all-out effort Gu. Now, most of them are extinct, if you want to assemble a Gu set, you cannot use ancient methods, but can only explore this yourself."

"I have another extremely important matter that you have to take note of. Although you have the all-out effort Gu, you have no corresponding refinement recipe. But thankfully, most of the recipes from the Olden Antiquity Era were passed down. There should be some in certain recipe masters' hands, you have to collect them. If not..."

Saying so, Wei Yang hesitated.

"You can try your luck in exploring ancient strength path inheritances. Wu clan found such an inheritance several years ago, if you can find one, your future would be set. I really want to see the strength path flourish in your hands!"

After saying these things, Wei Yang took his leave.

Fang Yuan sent him off, and watched Wei Yang turn into light and fly away.

Fang Yuan stood at the door of the secret room, his gaze concentrating.

The advice Wei Yang gave, he had considered all of them long ago, and had plans already.

He already had a copy of the all-out effort Gu's recipe, obviously from Li Ran.

Wu clan provided Li Ran the all-out effort Gu, they naturally gave him the recipe.

But this recipe only allowed the rank three all-out effort Gu to reach rank four. Any higher, Fang Yuan needed to find out himself.

But in this aspect, Fang Yuan was only rank three initial stage now, in the short run, he had no worries about the rank five refinement recipe.

As for what Gu to choose, in order to complement the all-out effort Gu, and become support for the core, Fang Yuan had his plans.

He had always been the type to walk one step and plan ten ahead, he was extremely confident.

"The strength path Gu set, should use the all-out effort Gu as the core, self-reliance Gu and bitter strength Gu as the support. With a few other Gu worms accompanying, this set of Gu worms can be considered initial success. But to reach greater success, I have to rely on the three kings inheritance."

Spending two to three years in Shang clan city, assembling a set of Gu and reach initial success stage.

When the three kings inheritance activates, he will use the advantages of rebirth and add in useful Gu worms to cause his Gu set to reach greater success stage.

This was Fang Yuan's plans for the near future.

"This plan has to be executed perfectly. Because after the three kings inheritance, it would be the righteous demonic battle at Yi Tian mountain, if my battle strength is not high enough then, I would not be able to gather enough benefits for myself. Time, is really tight..."

As for the third, his vital Gu.

Fang Yuan's vital Gu is Spring Autumn Cicada, this cannot be changed.

Then the refinement of the all-out effort Gu would be much more difficult. Since there is a risk to the Gu, the refinement would need to be done extremely carefully.

If Fang Yuan was unlucky, and caused the all-out effort Gu to die during refinement, his set of Gu worms would lose their foundation, like a human without a soul.

If that happens, the outcome would be disastrous, almost equivalent to Fang Yuan's strength path cultivation being crippled.

But, there were ways to ensure the all-out effort Gu survives during refinement even if it was not his vital Gu.

Wei Yang did not know because he was a frog in a well.

Fang Yuan knew three methods.

First method was to head to the "Land of Bu Bai". This was the Bu Bai inheritance, far away in central continent, the sacred land for refinement masters.

Secondly, he could use the undefeated hundred battles Gu, when refining Gu, it could ensure a hundred percent success rate.

The third was also a Gu, called "green mountain remains". 'As long as the green mountain remains, one need not worry about firewood.' Only by keeping something vital is there a chance for a comeback. Using this Gu, it can protect the core Gu, even if refinement fails and the other Gu are destroyed, the all-out effort Gu will still remain.

The land of Bu Bai was too far away, it was impossible to get there. Undefeated hundred battles Gu, an extremely rare rank five Gu even during ancient times, right now it was extinct. "Green mountain remains" was in the hands of several refinement masters, this was a rank four Gu, it was difficult to obtain but there was at least some hope.

"There is one undefeated hundred battles Gu in the three kings inheritance. If I can get it, the all-out effort Gu's advancement to rank four would be ensured. Next, I can only think of other ways... now, it is time to replace everything."

Fang Yuan had a careful nature, before he obtained the all-out effort Gu, even though he had hundreds of thousands of primeval stones, he did not spend them.

Now that it is in his hands, he finally decided to act.

He did not need to leave Nan Qiu garden, instead going to the study room and taking out a large number of invitations.

Ever since he 'gambled' and won the all-out effort Gu, rumors flew about in Shang clan city, and everyone were acting like cats who saw fish, swarming at Fang Yuan's place.

Fang Yuan had the purple thorn token, and attended Shang Yan Fei's clan banquet before, he had a unique identity and no one dared to force him.

They had sent all sorts of invitations, but Fang Yuan stayed in his house for several days, not meeting a single guest.

Now, Fang Yuan took out the invitations, and saw that a portion were from recipe masters, hoping to meet Fang Yuan and become acquaintances, so that they can borrow the all-out effort Gu for research. A Gu from the Antiquity Era would be great help towards their recipe creation.

Another portion were established Gu Masters, holding all sorts of titles, they either wished to spar with Fang Yuan or wanted to exchange Gu worms with him.

But mostly, the invitations came from all the famous shops, and all the large clan's Gu Masters, hoping to purchase the all-out effort Gu.

Fang Yuan chose a small portion of them, and instructed his servants to send a message to them.

Not long after, a group of Gu Masters came running.

Fang Yuan met them at the reception hall: "I am not selling the all-out effort Gu, I am meeting everyone here today for other trading purposes."

This caused everyone to be disappointed, but some did not give up, only after Fang Yuan's firm attitude did they give up.

Three hours later, a few business were settled, and everyone left.

Two days later, the Gu worms arrived.

Fang Yuan's battle strength surged, but he paid a huge price.

Gu worms were seriously too expensive, he spent several hundred thousand primeval stones for them. The old man made of clouds in the primeval elder Gu was already hunching his back as he showed a painful and worried expression, in an extremely pitiful state.

Another day later, Fang Yuan stepped into the battle stage.

At once, everyone went wild.

Outside the battle stage, people were crowding to the point where there was no walking space.

His opponent was none other than Li Ran.

He stared at Fang Yuan, his expression twisted and his eyes burned with fire, as he screamed: "Gu Yue Fang Zheng, you stole my opportunity, that is extremely despicable! Today, I will take back what belongs to me."

"Hmph, who told you to knock into me? I asked for compensation but you refused to pay primeval stones. Those stones covered your debt, you were willing as well." Fang Yuan laughed coldly as he answered.

The viewers outside started to discuss among themselves as they became extremely noisy.

Fang Yuan and Li Ran's conversation testified the truth behind the rumors these days.

"Ahhh!" Li Ran grabbed his hair, screaming to the sky: "Fang Zheng, you tyrant, I was forced by you! I only knocked into you by accident, but you refused to let me go. Today, I will seek justice for myself!"

Saying so, Li Ran pounced at Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan snorted coldly, seeing him get close, he willed.

Vertical crash Gu.

Howl!

The winds blew as he took a step, and his body charged forward by fifty steps.

Li Ran felt his vision blur as Fang Yuan had already charged up to him.

All-out effort Gu.

Fang Yuan willed, and light burst forth, forming the phantom image of a wild boar charging in mid air behind him.

The wild boar was black and had sharp tusks, showing a fierce expression as the winds blew!

"Not good!" Li Ran screamed, dodging.

Fang Yuan charged right past him, although Li Ran was not hit head on, his arm was scratched.

Next, with a 'crack', his forearm bone broke, and the defensive light on Li Ran's body vanished, as he fell to the ground, unable to get up.

"Just one hit!"

"Was that the all-out effort Gu?"

"That Li Ran is too weak, he is definitely not Fang Zheng's match!"

Outside, the spectators exclaimed, expressing their shock.

Chapter 287: Reputation Gu

Fang Yuan charged for fifty steps before he stopped. He turned around, facing Li Ran, about to launch his second attack.

But Li Ran had already raised his hand, shouting loudly: "Wait, no more, I admit defeat!"

Once he said so, the surroundings went quiet, before exploding.

"What, no more?"

"We spent primeval stones to come here and see the all-out effort Gu."

"You coward, are you even a man, stand up and fight!"

Everyone shouted furiously.

Many people were angry and breathed roughly, feeling that their primeval stones were wasted, starting to grumble and scold. But a portion of the people understood Li Ran.

"There's no way to win, it is wise to concede."

"That hit earlier showed their difference. If they continue, Li Ran's life would be in danger.

"This Li Ran is a veteran in the battle stage. With his rich experience, I am not surprised he did that."

Clank.

A loud ring from the bell, and this match was over.

The spectators started to leave the stage, as Fang Yuan took his leave as well.

"Fang Zheng, wait first." Li Ran suddenly called, stopping him.

Fang Yuan frowned, turning around and looking at him: "What do you want?"

Everyone's footsteps halted.

"Fang Zheng, you are indebted to me, but now you hurt and injured me, this is repaying kindness with vengeance, you have to compensate me!" Li Ran shouted.

These words were shameless, he wanted to challenge Fang Zheng without knowing their difference, now that he got injured, how could he say his opponent was "repaying kindness with vengeance".

Many people heard this and snorted, feeling disdain towards Li Ran.

Challenging Fang Yuan forcefully, that was because he could not take it lying down, many people understood his emotions. But after losing, he still continued to pester Fang Yuan, that was going overboard.

Fang Yuan shook his head, turning to leave: "Your brain was damaged by my attack too?"

Many people jeered and laughed.

But Li Ran struggled to get up, shouting at Fang Yuan: "Fang Zheng, I know your personality! You distinguish kindness and hatred clearly, the acclaimed 'a droplet received in need will be repaid with a whole spring, a spark of hatred will result in the burning of an entire forest!' Shang Xin Ci showed you a little kindness and you risked your life to protect her, escorting her to Shang clan city. Shang clan leader wanted to reward you but you rejected all of them, saying that your kindness had been repaid. The Shang clan leader even had to force you to accept the purple thorn token!"

"Fang Zheng, to be honest, I have done you a favor. If I did not choose that stellar stone, would you be able to get that all-out effort Gu? No! Hehe, nevermind if it is another person, but I know you, I understand you. Although you are oppressive and tyrannical, you have to repay kindness or you will be unable to sleep. Isn't that so? Think about it, you owe me a favor, can you sleep tonight?"

"Heh, that is because you have never seen Fang Yuan's true colors!" Among the crowd, Bai Ning Bing heard Li Ran's words and snorted coldly.

Fang Yuan obtaining the all-out effort Gu had made her curious.

After all, Fang Yuan was her rival.

Suddenly, Fang Yuan stopped in his steps.

As everyone watched, he turned around and faced Li Ran, with a serious expression.

"If you put it like that, it seems I owe you a favor. But firstly, it was because you offended me, and second, I cannot give the all-out effort Gu away. What do you want me to do?"

Fang Yuan's words made everyone who was leaving stop their steps and observe their conversation again.

Bai Ning Bing gasped in her heart, feeling shocked.

"Although the all-out effort Gu is rank three, it originated from the Olden Antiquity Era, it is considered unique now, its true value cannot be estimated. Give me a hundred thousand primeval stones, and your favor will be considered repaid!" Li Ran thought about it and said.

"Is this Li Ran stupid?"

"He dares to ask for such a ridiculous sum, such stupidity, sigh..."

"Making such a request, he is so shameless!"

Everyone shook their heads, feeling disappointed at Li Ran's shamelessness.

Fang Yuan thought about it, shaking his head.

"A hundred thousand primeval stones is insufficient, I'll give you two hundred thousand, that would put me at ease." Saying so, he waved his hand and summoned the primeval elder Gu, pouring all the primeval stones out.

On the floor of the battle stage, a mountain of primeval stones appeared.

"This is eighty thousand, that's all I have now. I'll give you the rest when I have money!"

"What?!" Fang Yuan's words sent everyone into shock.

"He actually gave it? And... and even raised it to two hundred thousand!" Everyone was tongue-tied.

"Did I see wrongly?! Although this Li Ran did not obtain the all-out effort Gu, getting so much primeval stones as compensation is almost as good." Everyone blinked, seeing those primeval stones, they almost drooled.

"This Fang Zheng is really..." Many people saw Fang Yuan leave and felt weird in their hearts, not sure of what to say.

Although they did not manage to see the power of the all-out effort Gu, hearing Li Ran and Fang Yuan's conversation made the trip worth it.

News about this battle quickly circulated, and spread around Shang clan city.

The fact that Fang Yuan had a purple thorn token also circulated, resulting in people who had ill intentions to vanish without a trace.

Many people started to be envious of Li Ran, while others also felt doubt towards Fang Yuan's promise of two hundred thousand primeval stones.

But no matter what, Fang Yuan's 'distinguish kindness and hatred' reputation also became well-known.

Back at Nan Qiu garden.

"Do you really intend to give that Li Ran two hundred thousand primeval stones?" Bai Ning Bing asked suspiciously.

This was not Fang Yuan's style at all.

"Of course." Fang Yuan replied curtly. He was obviously not going to tell Bai Ning Bing that this was his secret agreement with Li Ran. Li Ran would act with Fang Yuan, and tell him the refinement recipe, while Fang Yuan compensates him two hundred thousand primeval stones.

Bai Ning Bing was solemn for a while, not believing him, then laughing coldly: "Two hundred thousand just for a reputation, is it worth it?"

Fang Yuan snickered: "Have you never heard the story of reputation Gu?"

Bai Ning Bing's gaze was hesitant: "What are you trying to say?"

"Reputation is a bridge, one that allows people to cross through the abyss. Reputation is a travel token, more important and precious than the purple thorn token, it allows one to move about with ease. Two

hundred thousand cannot even buy the purple thorn token, yet i spent that amount to obtain this reputation. This is the best trade in the world. Hahaha." Fang Yuan laughed.

Bai Ning Bing snorted, but thinking that he had a precognitive Gu, she chose to believe him for now.

Regarding the reputation Gu's story, it originated from the legends of Ren Zu...

One time, Verdant Great Sun got very drunk, when he woke up, his head hurt and he forgot all that happened when he was drunk. He did not know why he was trapped on a lone hill, one which was surrounded by a bottomless abyss.

The abyss was filled with spiral winds, pale green color, this was the 'usual wind'. The winds blew dust into the air, those were the dark yellow color 'mortal dust'.

Verdant Great Sun's heart sank, because he recognised that this was the ordinary abyss. No living being had ever managed to fly past it. He was trapped on this lone hill, unable to get out; he would die of starvation eventually.

Thankfully, there was a forest on the lone hill. Verdant Great Sun was hungry, and came into this forest to find fruits to eat. But this forest was very strange, the black soil was like a swamp, smelling extremely pungent. The trees had no leaves, and the branches looked like strange claws. But when the wind blew, there was the sound of leaves moving in the wind.

Verdant Great Sun could not find food, and fell into despair, knowing he was going to die soon.

A few days later, he was so hungry he could not move, leaning on the tree trunk as he laid on the ground.

He eventually fell unconscious.

In his slumber, he could hear many voices talking.

"Hey look, this person finally passed out."

"Mm, as I expected, he's finished."

"Actually, it is possible to leave the ordinary abyss, you just need the reputation Gu."

"Reputation Gu is at the center of the forest, hidden under a rock. Too bad he doesn't know, hahaha..."

"Sshhh, speak softer, it will be bad if he hears us."

"It's okay, it's okay, he has fainted already, before long, the black soil will bury him, and turn him into nutrients for us trees."

Hearing this, Verdant Great Sun jolted awake.

It turns out this forest is Xi Yu forest, what he had thought was leaves brushing in the wind turned out to be the whispers of the trees.

After hearing the information, Verdant Great Sun walked to the center of the forest, lifted the rock, and obtained the reputation Gu.

Reputation Gu was like a chrysanthemum, its petals were golden yellow, emitting a fragrance.

Reputation Gu said to Verdant Great Sun: "Young man, thank you for lifting the rock, and saving me. To repay you, I have decided to help you get across this ordinary abyss."

Reputation Gu told Verdant Great Sun the method to use it.

Verdant Great Sun was overjoyed, arriving at ordinary abyss, and placed the reputation Gu in his mouth, shouting as loud as he could...

The strange thing was, no matter how loud he shouted, there was no sound, but the vibrations in the air caused the ordinary abyss to shake, as the commotion got bigger, it was like an earthquake. The air was even filled with a brilliant fragrance.

Verdant Great Sun did not feel anything weird, as he had known from the reputation Gu: Reputation itself has no voice, but it can spread wide and create tremors.

As he shouted, a golden bridge appeared in midair, but the bridge's length was limited, there was still a long distance to the other side.

Verdant Great Sun was too hungry, too tired, after trying several times, the effect continue to diminish, and his chance for salvation seemed dim.

Reputation Gu sighed: "Sigh, you have not eaten anything in a while, even though you have a breath left in your stomach, it is too little. From your diaphragm, it has to go through your stomach, chest, throat, and finally your mouth, the journey is too long, we have to reduce it, here, place me between your two buttocks.

Verdant Great Sun did as instructed.

Reputation Gu landed near his private part, and turned into a chrysanthemum cave.

"Okay, you can start shouting again." Reputation Gu said.

Verdant Great Sun forced that last breath of his, out of this hole, out of his body.

Prrrrrrrt—

In his daze, Verdant Great Sun heard a loud sound. The air was filled with an unimaginable stench, but that golden bridge became majestic and large, stretching over a thousand miles, reaching the other side.

A shitty reputation compared to good reputation, is always easier to obtain and maintain.

Verdant Great Sun quickly crossed the bridge, leaving the ordinary abyss and reaching the other side, saving his own life.

Chapter 288: The Crux of Strength Path Cultivation

Eight days later.

Nan Qiu garden.

At the small square, the ground paved with starry stones shone under the starlight.

Fang Yuan stood in the square with his hands folded, legs slightly open and his eyes closed. His breathing was deep and long.

In front of him were a dozen stone pillars.

Every stone pillars were twenty feet thick, and were dark and rigid. The stone pillars were spaced apart so that it almost covered the small square.

Whish...

Fang Yuan let out a breath of turbid air and suddenly opened his eyes.

At that very moment, a ray of lightning seemed to flash through the void!

Dash!

He took large steps forward and in a few steps reached a stone pillar.

His steps stopped, he bent his waist before swinging his arms vigorously and punching at the pillar.

Bang.

With a dull thud, the stone pillar shook, stone fragments flew about and a spherical dent appeared on the pillar.

Again.

Fang Yuan held his breath then used his fists and palms to attack in turns. Not only that, he also used kicks, flying kicks, elbow strikes, knee strikes, shoulder bash... every part of his body became sharp, strong weapons.

Bang bang bang....

The dull sounds continued along with the stone pillar's continuous shaking and the stone fragments scattering in the air.

Fang Yuan attacked like a storm and gale in one breath, his attacks continuous and endless.

Within seconds, the stone pillar was reduced to half, like a small tree in a storm.

Crack.

Fang Yuan whipped his leg horizontally as a clear sound echoed; the stone pillar that was already hanging by a thread could not endure it anymore and broke into two, falling into the ground.

Fang Yuan relaxedly retracted his leg, his breath was only slightly affected and droplets of sweat seeped out of his forehead.

He looked at the ground.

The appearance of the two broken parts of the stone pillar were changed beyond recognition; their surfaces were filled with dents, results of Fang Yuan's punches and kicks.

"Indeed, it is difficult to bring out the beast strength phantom without using all-out effort Gu, and with just normal attacks."

Ha!

He shouted and in two large strides, he reached the nearest stone pillar.

His right palm smacked heavily towards the stone pillar.

Growl!

A brown bear phantom image suddenly appeared in mid air behind Fang Yuan. It was quite plump, and its mouth was filled with dense white sharp fangs. At the same time as Fang Yuan, it raised its right palm and smacked, the movement strikingly similar to Fang Yuan's.

In that instant, Fang Yuan felt a sudden surge of strength in his right palm!

BOOM.

A huge sound thundered at the impact of Fang Yuan's smack on the stone pillar.

The stone pillar, which needed two people to wrap around it, immediately broke by the smack, producing a loud sound as it collapsed and formed a small pit on the floor.

The countershock immediately struck Fang Yuan and shocked his right palm into numbness.

Fang Yuan had been using brown bear innate strength Gu since he bought it and now he mastered it, increasing his strength by the strength of a bear.

"I needed to hit the stone pillar dozens of times before I could break it. But after using the all-out effort Gu, I broke it in just one smack..."

Fang Yuan clearly perceived the difference.

All-out effort Gu was a support type Gu and not an attack type. But once used, it could produce a devastating blow!

Fang Yuan's battle strength before and after getting it was like the difference between night and day.

Using a support Gu as the core was quite rare. Most of the Gu Masters used support Gu in their Gu set, as an assistance to the core Gu.

For instance, Wei Yang used rainbow light Gu, a movement Gu, as the core; the offensive broadsword light Gu as one of the main support and light source Gu as another support. As a support, light source Gu could only decrease the primeval essence expenditure of light type Gu worms.

However, the all-out effort Gu was completely capable of filling the core position even as a support Gu. Just from this, one could tell how precious it was.

"But... canopy Gu might have impressive defense but it is too rigid. If I change it to golden shield Gu, there should be a clear difference in results." Fang Yuan pondered.

During the punching and kicking test just now, he used canopy Gu, otherwise his hands and legs would certainly be destroyed.

The effect of force is mutual.

Although Fang Yuan's bones were iron bones, his skin, flesh, tendons and blood were all normal. Without the use of canopy Gu, the smack attack just before would have mangled up his flesh and muscles, although his bones would be fine.

However, golden shield Gu was temporarily not available.

Fang Yuan also did not have money right now.

At the start, he had over nine hundred thousand primeval stones, but Bai Ning Bing took half of it. Then, he spent a lot strolling around the rock gambling dens for all-out effort Gu. The expenditure for basic needs along with feeding his Gu worms were rather high especially in Shang Clan's third inner city. Next, he used a lot of primeval stones to change his Gu line-up; eight days ago at battle stage, he gave eighty thousand primeval stones to Li Ran in front of everyone.

Now, Fang Yuan not only had no money, he was also in debt. Because, according to the poison vow contract, he still needed to give a hundred and twenty thousand primeval stones to Li Ran.

Fang Yuan knew this was a necessary investment.

Reputation was second, the important thing was to stabilize Li Ran by showing an attitude of sincere cooperation, despite him already using eating one's words Gu to disperse the poison vow Gu on him several days ago.

Li Ran was an unexpected gain for Fang Yuan. There would be traces left behind if he killed Li Ran which would attract Shang Clan's doubts and ruin his plans, so he did not do it.

To Fang Yuan, Li Ran was a chess piece which was not easy to use but had its own use. Someday in future, he might be able to obtain the rank five refinement recipe for all-out effort Gu from Wu Clan through Li Ran.

Right now, the most important thing was to stabilize Wu Clan through Li Ran.

Three days earlier, Li Ran used the emergency contact method to contact the emissary. He expressed that Fang Yuan could be used well. Like this, the chance of Wu Clan taking revenge was small.

Fang Yuan possessed purple thorn token which meant Shang Clan was paying attention to him. Fang Yuan was also a rank three Gu Master and his battle strength increased sharply with the all-out effort Gu. If Wu Clan really wanted to retaliate, they would have to send rank three or rank four Gu Masters. Mobilizing these elder level strengths would smash apart the tacit understanding of secret battles between high-tiered clans.

The benefit of saving Li Ran was evident here.

"Again." Fang Yuan swept away his unorganized thoughts and gave a low shout.

He lowered his body, held his arms and with a shift of his mind, five percent of his light silver primeval essence poured into vertical crash Gu.

Vertical crash!

The Gu's mystical ability immediately and uncontrollably sent his legs rushing forward.

Bang bang bang!

He dashed forward dozen of steps in a perfectly straight line, continuously knocking down three stone pillars. When he reached the fourth stone pillar, the pillar shook continuously but did not fall down in the end.

This was the result of Fang Yuan not using all-out effort Gu.

Vertical crash Gu was a movement Gu Fang Yuan bought, its ability was to break through by force.

If there were no obstacles, the straight charging momentum could last for fifty steps before it stopped. If there were obstacles, the momentum would last for less than fifty steps.

This Gu was more suitable for Fang Yuan compared to jumping grass.

Jumping grass's jumping ability came from the Gu worm's strength, while vertical crash Gu's strength came from Fang Yuan's body.

As Fang Yuan becomes stronger, the vertical crash Gu's forceful break through ability would also increase. In the battle with Li Ran, Fang Yuan had used vertical crash Gu in combination with boar phantom; the combination was perfect and inflicted heavy injuries to Li Ran!

Horizontal charge!

Fang Yuan activated a Gu, his whole body immediately charged horizontally like a tyrannical crab, smashing the stone pillars.

This was horizontal charge Gu and was similar to vertical crash Gu, except it charged horizontally.

Fang Yuan had sold jumping grass and bought horizontal charge Gu and vertical crash Gu as his movement Gu.

These two Gu allow the Gu Master to exert force while moving and were extremely suitable for strength path Gu Masters. The movement itself became a means of attack.

"When I reach rank four, I can then fuse these two Gu into charging crash Gu and continue using them."

This was a long term investment which also indirectly saved money.

Next, Fang Yuan alternatively used these two Gu and crashed here and there on the small square, like a wild bull.

This time, he multi-tasked.

Not only did he use horizontal charge Gu or vertical crash Gu alternatively, he also simultaneously used all-out effort Gu.

The stone pillars were sent flying before collapsing fiercely on the ground and producing dull thuds now and then.

"Using boar strength phantom can send five stone pillars flying and knock down eight. Using bear strength phantom can send seven pillars flying and knock down five. Using crocodile strength phantom can send three stone pillars flying and knock down four."

Fang Yuan carefully experienced these subtle differences.

It was clear that boar was suitable for charging and the longer the distance of the charge, better the result. Brown bear possessed formidable strength at first before becoming weaker later. As for the crocodile, it was clearly not suitable method for charging attack.

"Right now, all-out effort Gu can only activate the phantom of one Gu. I can't use boar strength phantom and bear strength phantom at the same time. That is to say, my strength of two boars is somewhat wasteful. If it was changed to some other beast strength, they could strengthen other aspects of attacking."

"Now I have strength of two boars, strength of a bear and strength of a crocodile; this has reached the limit of what my body can bear. It is time to use steel tendon Gu."

Fang Yuan had already bought steel tendon Gu.

Steel tendon and iron bones perfectly complemented each other.

But steel tendon Gu was different from iron bone Gu. The latter was an expendable type Gu while the former needed to be continuously used for a period of time before it could bring qualitative change to Fang Yuan's tendons, turning them into steel tendons.

Fang Yuan called for a servant to clean up the messed up square and returned to his secret room.

He did not want to waste even a second and began using steel tendon Gu to reform his body.

Three days later, fifth inner city's battle stage.

A blue shirt burly man stood in front of Fang Yuan, his breathing was rough and his heart still had lingering fear.

"I only crossed five to six moves with this kid and suffered heavy injuries. The all-out effort Gu really can't be stopped... every move can bring out a beast phantom. Truly terrifying!"

This blue shirt burly man stared tightly at Fang Yuan, barely raising his spirits.

"I can't lose! As long as I defeat him, I can get all-out effort Gu as per the battle stage's rules. With this Gu, I can also cultivate strength path!"

As the blue shirt burly man thought of this, he gave a fierce growl and pounced upon Fang Yuan.

Water prison Gu!

He opened his mouth wide and spit out a blue ball of water. The water ball rapidly expanded and trapped Fang Yuan inside it.

Fang Yuan coldly snorted and casually punched inside the water.

Boar strength phantom!

The water ball shook thrice before becoming deformed but did not collapse.

"It is no use. To deal with you, I purposely took a high interest loan and bought this rank three water prison Gu." The blue shirt burly man proudly laughed.

Fang Yuan's gaze turned cold and without any panic, punched again.

Bear strength phantom!

The water ball fiercely shook, deforming intensely and almost collapsed, but still returned to its original state in the end.

"Beast strength is hard, the flow of water is soft. Use softness to subdue hardness, you can't break it." The blue shirt burly man took a deep breath and relaxed his mind.

But right at this time.

Fang Yuan raised his leg and kicked to the side. Crocodile strength phantom!

Crocodile strength was different from boar and brown bear; it was an amphibious creature and was very adept at the water element.

Bang!

The water prison was smashed into pieces.

"What?!" The blue shirt burly man was pale with fright.

Vertical crash Gu!

Thump.

The blue shirt burly man was sent flying by Fang Yuan, blood spurted out of his mouth in large amounts and he only landed on the ground after flying for twenty full steps.

He struggled violently to get up, but he fell down again before he could stand even a little.

There were no movements anymore.

He was dead.

Chapter 289: Can't stop me

"Even Wang Han lost and died in the battle stage."

"This lad is too ruthless, he does not know how to show mercy!"

"The all-out effort Gu is strong indeed..."

Outside the stage, spectators discussed.

Fang Yuan kicked and destroyed the water prison, charging over and killing the blue shirt man from the impact, causing the battle to end.

The blue shirt man's chest was completely caved in, as his white ribs were exposed, soon, blood dyed the battle stage's field red.

The hosting Gu Master walked onto the stage and declared Fang Yuan's victory.

The blue shirt man's corpse was left lying there, no one was dealing it with at the moment.

From the hosting Gu Master, Fang Yuan took back the vine information Gu, and looked into the Gu, he had seventeen victories now, with zero losses.

After all, this was the fifth inner city battle stage, it was mostly made up of rank two Gu Masters, Fang Yuan had the cultivation advantage plus the all-out effort Gu, after his first few matches, in the subsequent battles, he only took a few moves to win.

These victories earned him a large number of primeval stones.

Winning in the battle stage, you not only get your opponent's Gu worms, you can also receive primeval stones as a reward from the battle stage.

The more the spectators, the more primeval stones you earn.

"Li Ran, this is fifty thousand primeval stones, I'm passing this to you in public in case you try to defame me in the future." Under everyone's watchful gaze, Fang Yuan took out a bag of primeval stones.

Li Ran walked out from the crowd, receiving the primeval stones with a smiling face as numerous envious people watched.

"Fang Zheng, you truly kept your word. First, you passed me eighty thousand, and now fifty thousand, a total of a hundred and thirty thousand primeval stones already." He cupped his fists, saying that as he left.

The crowd went wild.

"This Fang Zheng, first he gave eighty thousand, next fifty thousand, where did he get all those stones?" Some did not understand.

"It is not strange, during these two weeks, he got consecutive victories in the battle stage, the fame of the all-out effort Gu attracted many spectators. Every match earns him thousands of primeval stones. After a few battles, he would have several tens of thousands." Someone replied in a sour tone.

"Not just that, this lad is ruthless, killing his opponent almost every match. Very few people can survive a match with him, thus he can get around two to three Gu worms per battle. After selling them, that is another sum of primeval stones." Someone snorted, revealing Fang Yuan's brutal acts.

"This Fang Zheng is too much, he is advancing by stepping on our corpses." Someone was furious.

Someone sighed: "We are all demonic Gu Masters, why is there a need to kill each other? Sigh..."

Someone exclaimed: "But to speak the truth, this Fang Zheng has his merits. Actually passing Li Ran two hundred thousand primeval stones as promised. To speak the truth, if I was in that position..."

Once he said so, the crowd became silent.

But someone quickly retorted: "He hasn't finished paying the two hundred thousand primeval stones. We can talk again after he pays the full sum."

Looking at Fang Yuan leaving, someone laughed coldly among the crowd: "His good days are coming to an end. In five days' time, it would be the date where Li Hao forcefully challenges him."

"Li Hao? Didn't he ascend to fourth inner city already?"

"Just a little bit to go, hmph, I can't wait to watch this battle!"

"Hehe, this lad is too arrogant, let Li Hao teach him a lesson."

Swish swish swish...

In the aperture, primeval essence ebbed and flowed, waves appearing on surface of the light silver primeval sea.

Steel tendon Gu swam in the sea, absorbing primeval essence as it emitted a black light.

It was shaped like an earthworm, but had a black body and the surface was not as soft as an earthworm, instead, there was an oily and shiny exoskeleton.

It emitted an eerie light, penetrating the aperture and shining on every part of Fang Yuan's body.

Under the influence of the eerie light, Fang Yuan's muscles and tendons were covered in an oily dark color, causing them to become more firm and strong.

After half a day, Fang Yuan stopped using the steel tendon Gu.

He had sweated a lot, his breathing was rough, and his head felt slightly dizzy.

The feeling of using the steel tendon Gu was not comfortable, it gave a sort of numb, painful and itchy feeling, invading his nerves, it put the endurance of the Gu Master to test.

An ordinary Gu Master, when using the steel tendon Gu, it would take half a year to complete.

But in Fang Yuan's plans, he condensed the time to a month.

This means, the amount of time Fang Yuan uses on the steel tendon Gu a day is six times of an ordinary person, it was a strict test of his willpower and endurance.

"I have to treasure every minute and second, to cultivate! Increasing my strength as fast as possible!"

"I need primeval stones, the battle stage is the best way to earn. But if I lose a match, I would lose the all-out effort Gu. I might be able to use the purple thorn token to stop them, but I would have to pay a huge price in other aspects!"

"I cannot lose at all! I am like a battle horse charging rapidly now, as my battle strength rises. But if I lose one match, it would be game over. My rapid growth would experience a huge setback."

"Shang clan city is merely a starting point, how can I fall here? In this life, I have to become a Gu Immortal, I have to breakthrough to rank seven, eight, and nine. I want to ascend to the peak, and see the view that I did not manage to in my previous life. Legend says that beyond rank nine, it is the supreme realm of immortality! It is easy to have a long life, but to be an immortal, no one has ever managed to do it."

"The highest point for a lifeform is to reach immortality, their greatest desire is immortality. What is the point of wealth, it is merely a hoarding addiction. What men and women, it is just primal instincts. What reputation, it is just bullshit people spew about you, carrying the stench of depravity."

"Wealth, beauty, reputation, status, people who pursue all these are short-sighted. Back on Earth, there was no choice, as everyone was going to die eventually, thus they can only pursue these or life would be meaningless. But in this world, where primeval essence is rich, why would we not pursue immortality given the possibility?"

"For the sake of immortality, wealth, beauty, reputation, status, I can make use of all of them, and I can also discard them as easily! For immortality, fear cannot stop me, I will charge forward relentlessly! For immortality, laziness will not stop me, I will never slack even for a moment! For immortality, pain cannot stop me, gods and demons cannot stop me, even heaven and earth cannot stop me!"

As he affirmed his belief, Fang Yuan's black eerie eyes seemed to burn with a scarlet red demonic blaze.

After his rest was over, he activated the steel tendon Gu again without hesitation.

The dark eerie light shone on his body, even penetrating his skin.

In the silent secret room, his expression was extremely cold, like a statue made of steel, giving off the feeling of an everlasting toughness.

What numbness, pain or itching, they were merely tiny ripples in his heart.

Others might not be able to stand it, but that does not mean Fang Yuan cannot!

If stubbornness is demonic, then Fang Yuan is a demon among demons.

No matter how many times he dies, it would not influence his resolve! No matter what setbacks he faces, they would only be firewood that allows the demonic ambitions in his heart to burn even more brightly.

...

Bam!

The loud sound reverberated in the battle stage.

Rocks and soil flew, as a blast of air swept the battlefield, although his opponent escaped the fatal blow, he was still pushed away by the air current and retreated over ten steps.

The dust cloud dispersed, and the culprit behind this attack revealed its true form.

This was a giant toad!

It was larger than a mammoth, having two eyes as large as stone mills. Its body was grey and had a huge stomach and strong limbs. There was green moss on its skin, and even some tiny rocks on the surface.

What gathered the most attention, was its back.

Its back was extremely swollen, like it was carrying a small hill!

This hill was the real deal, completely made of mountain rocks, about ten and a half feet high. It had many layers and folds, like it was shaved by swords and axes. Grass and weed grew on the mountain rocks, and there were even two or three trees.

This was the rank three Gu, named mountain back toad. It was heavy and cumbersome, its signature move was to leap up, and crash down like a mountain.

Earlier, it had displayed this move, and caused an earthquake to strike the battle stage, many spectators lost their balance and many things toppled.

"This attack is too strong, really too strong!"

"What a grand sight, even a spectator would feel his heart thumping."

"The mountain back toad is like a castle, attack and defense all in one. The only weakness is a lack of speed, but its owner perfectly covered up this weakness!"

Everyone discussed as they looked at this mountain back toad, but quickly shifted their gaze to a Gu Master.

This Gu Master wore a flowery robe, was thin, and had a delicate appearance.

Although he was a man, he had makeup and powder on his face, as he stood at one end of the battle stage, playing with his long fingernails.

His name is Li Hao, rank three cultivation with a rich combat experience. He was especially proficient in dealing with strength path Gu Masters.

"Just you alone, you want to compete with me? Hehe, admit defeat, don't waste my time." Li Hao stared at his fingernails, not even giving his opponent a glance.

"Scoundrel, looking down on me! Take this!" His opponent was also someone commonly seen in the battle stage, being humiliated in public like this, his face contorted with anger as he gritted his teeth and pounced on Li Hao.

Li Hao looked at him silently. As the opponent rapidly approached, Li Hao laughed coldly: "You have not learnt your lesson, was it not enough? Then, I'll let you experience it again."

Position swap Gu!

Li Hao's gaze gave off a strange light as he looked at his mountain back toad.

In a breath's time, he vanished on the spot, appearing at the mountain back toad's location.

At the same time, the mountain back toad appeared at his former location.

Using the position swap Gu, he swapped places with the mountain back Gu.

His opponent was rushing towards Li Hao, but in a split second, the mountain back toad appeared before him.

Bam!

Mountain back toad jumped, and like a flying mountain, it sent the opponent flying.

The battle ended just as expected!

"Mountain back toad with position swap Gu, such a battle strategy is unbeatable."

"That's right, the position swap Gu can not only change the mountain back toad's location, it can also swap with the opponent. This completely eliminates the mountain back toad's weakness of low movement speed."

"After this battle, Li Hao has twenty-nine net victories. Just one more, and he can rise to fourth inner city."

"Hurry and leave, no one can stop him here anymore."

"Who is his final opponent? Eh, it is that super lucky guy who got the legendary Gu."

Chapter 290: Fang Yuan vs Li Hao (1)

In the blink of an eye, five days passed.

Fang Yuan had another battle scheduled.

"Your opponent today has quite the background." Wei Yang walked towards Fang Yuan, instructing him to be careful.

Fang Yuan nodded.

He had never fought without adequate preparations, after being in an alliance with Li Ran, he obtained a lot of valuable information about the battle stage participants.

Li Ran was a spy, undercover for eight years, his job was to gather information anyway. His understanding of the battle stage surpasses even Wei Yang.

"Li Hao was also once a strength cultivator, rising to fourth inner city. He once had a glorious past, but encountered a bottleneck. In terms of strength cultivators, they were strong at the start, but start to show weakness in the middle stage, stuck there with no way to progress further. Li Hao was greatly traumatised, giving up on the strength path and changing to a support style."

"Well, it was due to him finally getting lucky, choosing a good rock in the gambling den and obtaining the rare position swap Gu. With his rich experience, he immediately sold all the Gu he had and purchased a mountain back toad in the auction house."

"Next, he relied on the cooperation between these two Gu and won all the matches he participated in. Relying on the Gu and primeval stones he won, he slowly accumulated his assets and gathered a new set of Gu worms. He is forcefully challenging you because he wants that all-out effort Gu, you have to be careful."

Wei Yang said, as he patted Fang Yuan's shoulders and blended into the crowd.

Fang Yuan looked deeply at Wei Yang, as he walked onto the arena.

Whenever there was an important battle, Wei Yang would come and watch. Fang Yuan understood he was mere to act as mental support for Fang Yuan. One reason was because Shang clan wanted to recruit him, but more likely...

It was because he treated Fang Yuan as a real brother!

Relationships between people is this weird.

Some people interact for tens of years without getting closer. Some people just talk once and become close friends.

Fang Yuan understood Wei Yang's emotions. He could see his former shadow in Fang Yuan. This strong sense of acknowledgement, as well as Fang Yuan's candid nature, made him treat Fang Yuan as a close friend.

"Wei Yang..." Fang Yuan thought, as he walked to the center of the arena.

The terrain of this arena is a large sized swamp. Black rotten mud, giving off a putrid smell, and there were even puddles everywhere.

Li Hao had not arrived yet.

Outside the battle stage, large number of spectators were gathered.

This was the most people Fang Yuan had seen at any of his battles. Standing on the arena, he looked around to see people all around him.

Everyone conversed at the same time, causing the entire battle stage to be full of noise and chattering.

"This Fang Zheng is in trouble today!"

"He had been so arrogant these days, he should be taught a lesson."

"Youngsters think too highly of themselves, he really thinks one all-out effort Gu makes him invincible!"

"Li Hao is here." Someone shouted.

The crowd went silent, before going wild again, their voices bursting through the roof.

At the entrance, Li Hao appeared.

"Lord Li Hao, we're all counting on you!"

"May you win your thirtieth match and advance to fourth inner city."

Among the crowd, many people shouted, some screamed.

Compared to Fang Yuan, they thought more highly of Li Hao. When Fang Yuan first came, he was extremely arrogant, killing many opponents, ruthless and cruel. He had the purple thorn token, causing everyone to be jealous of his good luck.

In contrast, Li Hao was a veteran in the battle stage. He had first walked on the strength path, then fell from fourth inner city. He had risen from the lowest part of his life, signifying the spirit of 'never give up' in the battle stage, it would ignite everyone's passion.

Li Hao carried a light smile as he walked onto the stage.

He was thin, wearing a flowery robe and makeup, as he walked casually towards Fang Yuan.

But around sixty steps away, he stopped, not advancing further.

Fang Yuan, in his previous few fights, used the vertical crash Gu to assault his opponents, sending them flying, easily winning in one strike. Li Hao was a veteran in the battle stage, he obviously made preparations for that.

The vertical crash Gu's effective range was fifty steps, he was safe at the sixtieth border.

"Strength cultivator, hehe..." He gave Fang Yuan a sweeping glance, filled with disdain: "Young man, unfortunately, your consecutive victory ends here. Do you know, looking at you now, it is just like me in the past. There is no future in the strength path, so what if you have the all-out effort Gu? Thank me, after I defeat you today, you will know it is for your own good, letting you understand the insufficiency of the strength path."

He started lecturing Fang Yuan with his status as a senior.

"You sure talk a lot, can you shut up?" Fang Yuan folded his arms, with a plain expression.

"You..." Li Hao's face flushed with fury, as his laughter was filled with animosity: "Hehehe, young man, you do not respect your elders, you are bound to suffer."

At this time, with the sound of the bell, the hosting Gu Master announced the start of the battle.

Vertical crash Gu!

Fang Yuan took a big stride, charging forward.

Pew!

The soil under his feet danced like waves, splashing high up on his left and right.

"Wow, what a grand sight." Li Hao laughed lightly.

He knew very clearly the vertical crash Gu could only charge fifty steps ahead. Every time it is used, there is a cooldown period of five breaths.

He was sixty steps away, it might seem dangerous, but he was completely safe.

This terrain was advantage to him. A muddy terrain was unlike a rough and flat surface, it was not suited for charging type attacks.

As expected, Fang Yuan charged forty-five steps and stopped.

But soon after, Fang Yuan turned his body to one side, facing Li Hao with his side view.

Horizontal charge Gu!

The soil and mud were split apart as the phantom image of a wild boar appeared, with a charging action, its speed raised sharply, wild and tough. In the blink of an eye, Fang Yuan reached Li Hao.

If he was hit, he would definitely vomit blood and break a few bones.

Li Hao went pale, at the crucial moment, he activated his vital Gu.

Position swap!

In an instant, he swapped with Fang Yuan.

Fang Yuan was facing Li Hao as he charged, but now, Li Hao was behind him as he charged ahead, getting further away from Li Hao.

"I was careless!" In just this moment, Li Hao's forehead was pouring with sweat.

He did not think that Fang Yuan would be much of a threat to him. After knowing Fang Yuan had the vertical crash Gu and horizontal charge Gu, he did not think much about it, but that almost caused him to be severely injured.

At the crucial moment, his years of experience saved him.

Compared to defending, why not dodge.

One position swap, and Fang Yuan missed.

No matter how great your strength, as long as you hit air, you cannot cause damage, it is pointless.

"This lad has the all-out effort Gu, every move of his strikes hard. I sold my strength Gu and got rid of the beast strength in my body, I cannot compete with him head on."

Li Hao calmed his nerves, and retreated.

He used his movement Gu, his body turning light as the wind, floating backwards, rapidly pulling distance from Fang Yuan.

At the same time, he raised his finger and pointed at the sky, as a green light shot out from his aperture, towards the sky.

It was a jade green light, stopping in mid air, then exploded.

Under the glaring light, the body of the mountain back toad showed itself, descending.

There was a black shadow on the ground, engulfing Fang Yuan, and got larger over time.

Five breaths had long passed, Fang Yuan looked at Li Hao, and activated the vertical crash Gu, charging over.

He raised his speed rapidly, quickly getting out of the shadow's range.

The moment he got out, the mountain back toad landed.

Bam!

A loud bang, and the entire battle stage trembled, as black mud and soil flew into the air like tidal waves.

The waves splashed to the edge of the arena, causing the spectators to dodge instinctively, but a huge dark red shield protected them.

The battle stage obviously had defensive Gu to protect the audiences.

"It appeared, Lord Li Hao's mountain back toad!" Seeing this, someone screamed in excitement.

"Even if Fang Zheng charges at Li Hao, it is pointless. Li hao only needs to use the position swap Gu, and easily change position with the mountain back toad... hehehe."

But Fang Yuan did not charge at Li Hao.

He stopped in his tracks.

The black mud splashed on him like a wave, but were repelled by the canopy Gu's white armor.

Horizontal charge Gu.

After the waves subsided, he tilted his body away from the mountain back toad, and charged horizontally towards it.

Howl!

The roar of a bear was heard, as a brown bear phantom appeared, howling at the sky, giving off its wild aura.

Bam!

Fang Yuan slammed on the mountain back toad's body, causing the toad to sway.

But that was it.

The mountain back toad's unique hill was made of mountain rocks that have great density. It was one of the heaviest rank three Gu.

Once its four legs stood on the ground, it was like an unmovable mountain, causing everyone to gasp at its firmness.

But Fang Yuan did not care, he raised both arms and smashed on it like a hammer.

Howl!

Above his head, the phantoms of boar, brown bear, and crocodile appeared one after another.

His punches tore through the winds as he attacked without restraint. Hitting on the mountain back toad, thunderous sounds went off like firecrackers.

Such a fierce attack sent the spectators into deep fear, as cold sweat ran down their back.

"If I was the target, I would not have a complete corpse by now!"

"The all-out effort Gu is too strong, really too strong."

"But Fang Zheng's brain is fried, not attacking Li Hao but instead, punching that mountain."

...

The defense of the mountain back toad was impressive, even with Fang Yuan's ferocious attacks, it did not move, causing people to feel helpless against it.

But Fang Yuan had a cold expression, the more he attacked, the fiercer it got, like this toad had a great feud with him.

Li Hao's expression changed.

No matter how tough the mountain back toad was, it had its limits, it could not endure this rain of punches anymore.

Gua gua gua...

The mountain back toad started shouting, as the pain was exceeding its limits.

"This cannot go on!" Li Hao's heart jumped, as he willed and rode on the mountain back toad.

Mountain back toad started to counter attack, stepping on the mud and charging at Fang Yuan.

With its weight, if Fang Yuan took this head on, he would definitely be sent flying.

Horizontal charge Gu.

His eyes shone brightly, moving away at the last moment, dodging the mountain back toad's attack.

Getting around the toad's body, and hitting again!