

M. Slaying 111

Chapter 111: Taotie City

"Awooo!"

The high-pitched and piercing howl of a beast resounded through the long mountain ridges and even dispersed the clouds. The cultivator riding on the beast's back whipped the huge beast lightly, and it obediently lowered its head, becoming extremely docile.

There was a continuous string of these huge beasts carrying large quantities of goods and people. It ran for several li, forming a long winding line down the mountain.

At the end of the line were the towering gates of the city situated at the foot of the mountain. The city's walls were incredibly tall, and its ancient stone bricks were worn from age, resembling a crouching colossal ancient beast.

Despite being located in a desolate land, numerous cultivators flying on auspicious beasts from all over the world converged there. Yet, these cultivators would all automatically descend and queue up outside the city, waiting to be let inside.

It was the norm for all large immortal sects to enforce such a rule to control their airspace. Otherwise, the traffic going in and out of the city would be too difficult to manage.

All of Taotie City's city gates had two entrances—one large and one small. The large gate had been made incredibly wide to accommodate huge spirit beasts and groups transporting large amounts of goods into the city. However, the processing speed of that line was very slow, so there was a very long queue for that gate. The small gate was only for people and small spirit beasts, so that queue could be processed very quickly.

Obviously, Taotie City wasn't on the same scale as Panyang City, the capital of Yu, in terms of size and population. Nevertheless, it was the only city in the world that was primarily inhabited by cultivators, with ordinary people making up less than half of the city's population.

Chu Liang was currently standing in one of the queues, moving forward little by little. He had on embroidered clothes with cuffed sleeves, similar to how a young man from a wealthy family would dress. No one would be able to tell that he was a cultivator.

Beside him was Di Nufeng, who was wearing a red and white high-waisted dress. As she walked, her exceptional proportions drew everyone's attention.

Upon passing through the deep and long tunnel extending from the entrance gate, Chu Liang lifted his head and saw a wide main street with many pavilions with four or five stories on both sides. The various signs hung on the shopfronts showed that these were all stores selling cultivation-related items.

From time to time, figures flitted between the pavilions. However, they weren't flying; they were just making lithe jumps. Flying was prohibited within the city too, so they had to abide by the city's rule that stated no one could not leap above the tallest of the pavilions in the city. Otherwise, law enforcement would rush over to punish them.

Taotie City was a huge city, so it was necessary for them to have a high number of law enforcement officers. A small number of them were Taotie City's disciples, while most of them were honored allies of the sect who had been recruited with the promise of remuneration.

Taotie City's honored allies were divided into nine ranks. Among them, the lower-ranked ones were more like hired thugs in comparison to the rest of the honored allies. Taotie City was the only sect in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten where its honored allies, who weren't actually part of the sect, outnumbered its disciples. That was the power of the wealthy.

"Let's go exchange some money first," Di Nufeng called out to Chu Liang from beside him.

This obviously wasn't Di Nufeng's first time in Taotie City. Unlike Chu Liang, who was stunned by what he was seeing, Di Nufeng walked with her hands hanging languidly in her sleeves.

The first store anyone would see upon entering Taotie City was a currency exchange store. It had been built there to make it convenient for those entering the city to exchange their money for the local currency.

Taotie City's currency was celestial-beast coins. It was more versatile than Mount Shu Sect's sword coins and had been made more meticulously. The celestial beast coins had been split into four denominations: the Azure-Dragon coin, the Tiger-Head coin, the Vermilion-Bird coin, and the Black-Tortoise coin, ranging from largest to smallest.

One Azure-Dragon coin was equivalent to ten Tiger-Head coins, and the rest of the coins followed the same value conversion ratio of one to ten. The Vermillion-Bird coin, the second smallest denomination, was of equal value to the Mount Shu Sect's sword coin.

"Please exchange these for a thousand Vermilion-Bird coins and a hundred Black-Tortoise coins," Chu Liang said as he handed a bag of sword coins to the cultivator in the currency exchange store.

That cultivator took the bag of sword coins and inspected them briefly before nodding in agreement to Chu Liang's request.

Right after that, the cultivator handed Chu Liang a bag of small spirit-stone coins that had been carved into the shape of Vermilion Birds. Chu Liang took one out, and he could indeed sense that there was a unique spiritual nature within it.

All immortal sects used spirit stones as the material for their money because spirit stones were durable and contained spiritual qi. This made it easy to give them a unique spiritual nature, thus making it difficult for counterfeits to be made, which was especially important. After all, if anyone could make counterfeits by simply carving spirit stones into the shapes of the coins that were being used, it would be difficult to control the flow of money within the city.

"Oi," Di Nufeng said with a smirk from behind Chu Liang while looking him up and down. "Little rascal, seems like you've saved up quite a bit of money, 'ey?"

Chu Liang stared at her cautiously and replied, "It's money that I worked hard for."

As they left the currency exchange store, Di Nufeng saw that Chu Liang still had his hand on the money bag. He seemed to be protecting it unconsciously.

Di Nufeng chuckled and said, "Relax a little. And don't act like a country bumpkin visiting a city for the first time... even though you certainly are one. Let me tell you something. The more nervous you are, the more likely thieves will target you."

"Hehe," Chu Liang let out a laugh in response.

Esteemed teacher, do you really think I'm trying to guard against thieves?

...

"Moooooo."

A dull roar, much like the bellow of a large bull, rang out behind them.

When Chu Liang and Di Nufeng turned around, they saw a giant beast lumbering over in the middle of the street. It was as tall as a three-story building, and it had a bald head with thick gray skin. Wrapped around the beast were several dozen lengthy chains connected to the long wooden carriage behind it, allowing it to steadily pull the carriage forward.

This beast was called a Mountainous Beast. It was diligent and gentle to humans. This demonic beast was most commonly used to transport heavy loads.

However, this massive Mountainous Beast wasn't pulling goods; it was transporting people. It was a carriage that made rounds around the city. Visitors who didn't want to walk around could get on and look around the city with the Mountainous Beast.

Di Nufeng pulled Chu Liang into the rear section of the carriage. There was a cultivator sitting at the entrance of the section with a temple offering box^[1] beside him. Chu Liang dropped two Black-Tortoise coins into the box, but the cultivator didn't even bat an eyelid.

As the teacher-and-disciple duo rode in the carriage, they enjoyed the scenery outside the window with a leisurely and carefree mood.

Chu Liang noticed that the stores along the street did not cater exclusively to cultivators. There were cultivation-focused stores selling spirit plants, pills, and enchanted tools, but there were many restaurants, inns, teahouses, and gambling dens too... Common establishments that were present in ordinary cities could be found in Taotie City as well.

While observing the city, Chu Liang and Di Nufeng overheard the conversation of the two cultivators sitting next to them.

"Eh? Has this month's issue of The Seven Stars Gazette been published already?" one of the cultivators asked with an eager smile.

"Yeah, it's got some pretty exciting news," the other cultivator replied.

He was quite engrossed in reading The Seven Stars Gazette in his hands.

Upon hearing that, Di Nufeng's eyes lit up.

She leaned over and asked, "Hey, buddy. Is there any news about the Mount Shu Sect's Di Nufeng in this issue of the Chronicles of the Nine Provinces?"

Ever since the incident in South Gate City, Di Nufeng had been keeping an eye out for any news about it. She would never feel satisfied if she couldn't squash that old man Wang Xuanling by doing a great meritorious deed.

"There is!" the cultivator replied with a nod. "The first article is about her."

He then read the headline aloud, "Shocking news! The Mount Shu Sect's tyrannical peak master explodes a man's head with a single punch! Then she discovers he is the marquess."

Di Nufeng furrowed her eyebrows. "Hmm?"

She'd thought that she would surely be commended for her glorious meritorious deed this time. Yet, she'd unexpectedly gotten another negative headline.

"Esteemed teacher, please calm down..." Chu Liang whispered, hurriedly pulling on Di Nufeng's sleeve. "We're outside the sect..."

"I'm not angry," Di Nufeng said with a forced smile. Then she turned to the cultivator and ordered fiercely, "Keep reading!"

"Ah..." the cultivator uttered.

He was so frightened that his hand shook and almost dropped The Seven Stars Gazette. However, confronted with Di Nufeng's terrifyingly mighty appearance, how could the cultivator possibly dare to disobey her order?

He immediately proceeded to read the article out loud.

"That day, Di Nufeng, the peak master of the Mount Shu Sect's Silver Sword Peak, received a call for help from her disciple. She immediately rushed to South Gate City to help him. Upon arriving there, she encountered a similarly enraged middle-aged man. The two got into an argument. Then under the gazes of a huge crowd, Di Nufeng unabashedly punched the man's head to smithereens!

"It was only after the fact that she realized the man had been the Mountain-Subjugating Marquess!

"Why exactly did this tragic incident occur? What secrets lie behind it? The two young heroes of the Mount Shu Sect demonstrated both wisdom and courage when they cracked the mysterious case of the unspeakably licentious father and son of the House of the Mountain-Subjugating Marquess...

"Read on as I tell you about it in detail..."

Chu Liang, who was sitting beside Di Nufeng, felt a wave of scorching heat hit his face. It seemed that his teacher was about to burst into rage!

Chu Liang hurriedly made a signal to the cultivator and whispered to him, "Stop reading it..."

Then Chu Liang urged Di Nufeng again, "Esteemed teacher, please don't get angry, don't get angry. Anger opens the door for the devil..."

While Chu Liang was urging Di Nufeng, he couldn't help but think, Zhang Xiaohan is really something... Why does she write everything in such a sensationalized manner...

Even if it's true, it shouldn't be written like that. It's very humiliating for the person in question...