

## M. Slaying 191

Chapter 191: The Honor of an Assassin

The Dual Wielder died a peaceful death.

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Previously...

Before arriving at the Tree Demon Mountain, the Dual Wielder had the determined mindset of "If I cannot succeed, then I will die."

"You are in such a dangerous situation. You cannot afford to fail this time," pressured the crow perched on his shoulder.

"I know. I brought the Soul-Suppressing Banner. I will not fail again!" the Dual Wielder exclaimed with determination.

As long as someone nearby was killed, the Soul-Suppressing Banner would immediately capture and suppress their dispersed soul, refining it into nothingness.

It was an enchanted artifact of the diabolical path that gave people no chance of surviving.

"You have attempted to assassinate him on multiple occasions, yet somehow he always manages to escape. It seems he must have been alerted," the crow said. "It was quite a challenge for our spy within Mount Shu to orchestrate this opportunity for you. This time, the target has just formed the ultimate-tier Golden Core. Our spy discreetly mentioned this task to someone at the Sword Exchange Pavilion, giving our target the chance to accept a mission. If you fail in this attempt, he surely won't leave this mountain again easily."

"I know!" The Dual Wielder frowned as he snapped.

Regarding the crow's persistent nagging, irritation was evident in the Dual Wielder's tone.

Enough with the squawking. The more you talk about it, the more annoyed I feel.

As a proud assassin, it was the first time he had faced such repeated setbacks when assassinating a target. The most frustrating part of this was that he had no idea of the reason for his failures.

A mere disciple at the third realm couldn't possibly possess any advanced divine skills or cultivate any immortal arts.

How did he manage to come back to life every time?

There must be some hidden mystery.

The Dual Wielder really wanted to take Chu Liang hostage, torture him, and interrogate him.

However, upon further consideration, he concluded that it would be prudent to avoid complications and instead opt for a single decisive strike when the opportunity presented itself.

Soon, he spotted Chu Liang.

Fire blazed on the Tree Demon Mountain, and Chu Liang was fleeing from the raging flames while focusing his divine sense on something behind him. It seemed that something was chasing Chu Liang.

It was an excellent opportunity for the Dual Wielder!

As a professional assassin, the Dual Wielder sensed this prime opportunity. Without any hesitation, he drew his blades and leaped into action!

A black streak of light flashed forward with a thunderous roar.

Swoosh—

First, Second, Third...

This was the third time he had cleaved this disciple of the Mount Shu Sect in half.

At the moment he felt the separation of flesh and blood, the Dual Wielder even offered a small prayer in his heart, hoping that there would not be a next time.

He flipped his hand to unfurl the Soul Suppressing Banner, yet the banner remained completely still, devoid of any movement whatsoever.

The Dual Wielder felt a sense of despair.

Then came the most embarrassing moment of his life.

The towering trees around him all transformed into humanoid forms, with over two hundred tree demons surrounding him in all directions.

Oh crap! An ambush!

Dual Wielder wouldn't believe that it was a mere coincidence.

It was clear that Chu Liang was already aware and had set up this trap!

Very cunning indeed!

Looking at the target right in front of him and the large group of tree demons, the Dual Wielder made a decision.

As an assassin, he refused to accept such a humiliating failure.

With his cultivation level, if he had tried to escape, these tree demons might not have been able to stop him.

Nevertheless, he didn't escape.

The Dual Wielder asked, "If I said I was just passing by, would you all believe me?"

Just when everyone was on the verge of laughter, the Dual Wielder suddenly sprang into action!

Swoosh!

A streak of black light shot towards Chu Liang!

Even if he couldn't escape, he was determined to kill his target this time! He refused to believe that a person could still survive after having been killed multiple times. He believed that this would be the last time!

Even if he died in the process, he was determined to complete this mission!

Indeed, it was the honorable choice befitting an assassin of his caliber!

However, as Chu Liang faced the swiftly approaching black streak of light, he remained unusually calm and composed, showing none of the panic he had exhibited during previous encounters.

He formed a finger seal with his index finger and middle finger as he shouted, "Watch this!"

The Dual Wielder glanced at it and saw a sudden burst of intense light emanating from Chu Liang's fingers, shining brilliantly like the sun in his hand!

Swoosh—

Countless golden rays were blindingly bright. The Dual Wielder exclaimed in pain as he felt his eyes instantly scorched and stinging.

No wonder Chu Liang shouted loudly! This technique would only work if it had been seen!

The intense light not only stung his eyes but also stopped his momentum. In the presence of the sun-like radiance, all shadows were exposed!

This was the countermeasure Chu Liang had prepared.

When he was at the Hall of Conservation previously, he asked Yuan Zhuo how he should deal with the Shadow-Severing Seal: Black Light.

Yuan Zhuo explained that this type of divine skill was most suitable for assassination done in the dark, leveraging shadows that were extremely swift and difficult to defend against. If one's cultivation was lower than the performer of this technique, achieving victory would be even more challenging. To counter it slightly, one could use the Blazing Sunlight Seal to emit strong light suddenly and disrupt the manipulation of shadows.

The Blazing Sunlight Seal was a relatively basic minor skill. Therefore, Yuan Zhuo didn't even accept payment from Chu Liang; he simply described it, and Chu Liang quickly grasped it after some study.

It was easy but rather useful.

This also made Chu Liang realize the importance of mastering various divine skills and techniques. Someone like Yuan Zhuo, who had a vast knowledge of divine arts, could quickly devise strategies against any opponent in a short amount of time.

However, Chu Liang's cultivation level was still inferior to that of the Dual Wielder, and even if he managed to withstand the first strike of the shadow, he lacked the means to win. If they continued to engage in this fight, he would still inevitably face the outcome of being killed.

Moreover, the tree demon brothers surrounding him were not ones to be trifled with.

They might not be able to handle the Winged Fire Python, but they wouldn't be intimidated by a sudden assassin attack like this.

Especially since Chu Liang had just rendered meritorious service to the tree demon clan, the Dual Wielder immediately emerged to try to kill him, enraging all the tree demons.

Led by Elder Qinghuai, they all shouted angrily, "Capture him!"

Swoosh swoosh swoosh—

In the blink of an eye, countless green vines obscured the sky, surging out from the long arms of the tree demons and completely enveloping the Dual Wielder.

He wielded his two blades, transforming into a black wind, and in an instant, shattered countless vines with unparalleled ferocity!

But in the next moment, a huge green dragon formed by the branches and leaves of the green vines followed behind the rampant vines, swallowing the Dual Wielder whole!

Elder Qinghuai formed a seal with his fingers, guiding the enormous green vine dragon in the air, his robes fluttering, exuding a majestic aura!

Roar—

After swallowing the Dual Wielder, the green dragon stood upright, revealing flashes of black light within its body, with several black light gaps permeating through its breath.

The Dual Wielder still attempted to break free from within!

His blades were incredibly sharp!

In terms of strength, his cultivation level was definitely superior to Elder Qinghuai's, and the tree demons were not particularly adept at combat. Although they were numerous, their quantity still couldn't bridge the gap in cultivation level, and it seemed like they couldn't stop him!

Seeing that Elder Qinghuai was about to fail to trap him, Chu Liang pointed to the sea of flames not far ahead and said, "Throw him in there!"

Upon hearing this, Elder Qinghuai waved his hands, and with a flick, he threw the green vine dragon into the sea of flames!

Boom!

The green dragon instantly transformed into a fire dragon!

The divine fire from the Winged Fire Python had two main traits: it burned really hot and it stuck to things like glue. Once it touched something, even a rock could keep burning for days until it was all gone.

The Dual Wielder, trapped within, immediately sensed that something was amiss as the temperature suddenly soared. Flames engulfed him, surrounding him as if he was about to be burned to ash! His body transformed into a blazing silhouette in an instant!

"Ahhhhh—" Feeling the excruciating pain, he screamed, yet miraculously, his strong cultivation kept him alive! As the green dragon was consumed by the flames, he burst out, shrouded in a cloak of black light!

Just as he was about to leap into the air, two copper balls exploded above his head!

Boom boom!

Without hesitation, Chu Liang hurled both of the Shadowburst Thunder Bombs in his grasp!

The explosions from the Shadowburst Thunder Bombs were extremely powerful and came with terrifying effects. The Dual Wielder's upward momentum was abruptly stopped.

In this momentary pause, countless vines wrapped around him, dragging him down into the sea of flames.

He was bound and burned.

"Ahhhhh! I'll kill you!"

The Dual Wielder, severely injured by the intense flames, intensified his already fierce killing intent to an unparalleled level, almost reaching the sky!

He locked onto Chu Liang with his aura, unleashing the final technique with the last of his cultivation energy. Suddenly, he transformed into a black blade light!

The killing intent was overwhelming! Chu Liang shuddered as he sensed the blade's presence from a distance. He couldn't comprehend why, but he felt powerless to evade it!

Was this simply the insurmountable gap in cultivation levels at work?

But how could he sit back and wait for death? With a swift movement of his sword, he promptly mounted it as he attempted to escape!

The surrounding tree demon clan members swiftly erected one sturdy vine wall after another, each remarkably solid! Yet the blade light conjured by the Dual Wielder appeared unstoppable, effortlessly slicing through dozens of vine walls in an instant!

The intent to kill was resolute!

If he didn't kill Chu Liang today, he would never be able to rest in peace!

"Arghhhhhhh—"

In his almost hysterical roar, Chu Liang's figure was finally forced closer.

Chu Liang had managed to escape the pursuit of the Winged Fire Python, but he couldn't outrun the black light of the Dual Wielder!

This strike harbored his deep-seated resentment and came too fast!

Whoosh—

Blood splattered everywhere.

The Dual Wielder's figure was revealed, falling to the ground in a sorry state.

He had been burnt beyond recognition, with only one intact eye left. He struggled to prop himself up on the ground. His gaze turned back to Chu Liang, now sliced in half and lying motionless.

The Dual Wielder grinned triumphantly. He had just managed to kill Chu Liang amidst the blockade of wood demon clan members, using up nearly all his strength in the process. It didn't seem like he'd have the energy to escape today.

But so what? He had fulfilled his mission and enjoyed the glory befitting an assassin.

"You've met your end at my hand at last," the Dual Wielder laughed maniacally, cloaked in ashes and blood.

"Hehe..." came a response to his laughter, as someone emerged from the distant forest.

"Hmm?" The Dual Wielder sensed something awry at the sound of the voice. He turned his gaze, only to see Chu Liang stepping out once more.

Why? What kind of immortal existence are you?

The Dual Wielder's mind reeled in disbelief. "Impossible! I must be mistaken!" he screamed frantically within himself. He rubbed his only uninjured eye with his hand, smeared with dust and blood, hoping to see the distant figure clearly.

But the more he rubbed, the blurrier it became.

"Knowing that your cultivation level is much higher than mine and that you can kill instantly, why would I risk facing you in my true form?" Chu Liang met the Dual Wielder's gaze, followed closely by the Golden-Furred Hou.

He approached calmly and continued saying, "By now, you can't move, right? Can you enlighten me on why you sought to end my life? I bear no grudges against you. What motivated you to target me? If you explain well, I might consider sparing you."

Indeed. The one who had appeared previously was merely a clone who had been given some enchanted tools. It was formed from the third strand of golden hair.

It was only now, at this moment, that Chu Liang revealed his true form.

"Hahaha!" The Dual Wielder suddenly started laughing loudly.

As he stared at Chu Liang, something about him, despite being a new disciple in the fourth realm, seemed almost devilish, like a king of the devils. Could there truly be someone unkillable in this world? In that moment, all the pride and convictions of being an assassin shattered within him, replaced by a seething resentment.

"You want to know?" he spat, his voice thick with bitterness. "I'll never tell you! Even in death, I'll haunt you!" With those words, he unexpectedly plunged the blade into his own chest, choosing to maintain his dignity through self-inflicted death.

Pierce!

As he died with bitterness and resentment, he believed he would become a vengeful spirit, seeking vengeance on Chu Liang. Chu Liang was surprised by the assassin's resolve. He had no idea.

Under normal circumstances, the Dual Wielder wouldn't have shown such determination. But his hatred towards Chu Liang blinded him with rage. He even wished to return as a vengeful spirit for revenge.

Then... the Soul-Suppressing Banner nearby stirred slightly. The Dual Wielder's soul was drawn into the banner, extinguishing his hopes of vengeance as a vengeful spirit.

His body, with the blade plunged into his chest and covered with burnt wounds resembling charcoal, presented a grotesque and horrifying sight, inducing nightmares. His facial features were indistinguishable, except for one bloodshot eye, which still reflected intense hatred.

And then, as if on cue, his hatred dissipated into thin air.

His deathly state appeared eerily peaceful.

Chapter 192: Let's Feast

Chu Liang looked at Dual-Wielder's corpse and couldn't help but think, This guy's a true man. He chose to commit suicide so that he wouldn't reveal who was behind the assassination order.

Out of respect for the enemy, Chu Liang raised his flying sword and stabbed Dual-Wielder dozens of times[1]. Once Chu Liang was certain that Dual-Wielder was dead, he approached and searched the corpse.

However, after searching up and down for quite a while, Chu Liang found that Dual Wielder had carried nothing valuable with him except the black twin sabers. He did not even have a storage enchanted tool, which was an essential item for cultivators.

This was part of an assassin's professional conduct. Before each operation, they would discard anything that could prove their identity. Their weapons were all they took with them to execute the operation.

"Haa..." Chu Liang sighed.

All he could do was take the twin sabers and the Soul-Suppressing Banner as a consolation.

Chu Liang then stood up and bowed to the Tree Demon Clan.

He told Elder Qinghuai, "You saved my life today. I'm truly grateful to your clan for helping me."

"Please," Elder Qinghuai uttered, waving off Chu Liang's words, "there's no need for you to be so polite, Young Hero Chu. It was you who first showed kindness to us. How could we just stand by and do nothing?"

After the two parties exchanged some pleasantries, Chu Liang said, "When I went into the heart of the wildfire earlier, I saw something."

"Oh?" Elder Qinghuai immediately became concerned. "What was it?"

"It's a Winged Fire Python!" Chu Liang said.

The Tree Demon Clan members' expressions turned grim as they voiced their shock.

"A Winged Fire Python?"

"That's a notoriously vicious beast from the ancient times! It's ruthless and bloodthirsty! Our ancestors even once encountered a Winged Fire Python at the ninth realm—the Heavenly Origin Realm!"

"But the Winged Fire Python lives in the Evil Demon Mountain in the southwest. Why did it come here?"

After a moment, Elder Qinghuai spoke up. "That Winged Fire Python is just a fifth-realm spirit beast, but its fire attribute is in opposition to our attribute. It's just too difficult for us tree demons to handle. I'm afraid we'll have to ask the Mount Shu Sect for help again. Young Hero Chu, please go back and report this to your sect elders."

"Don't worry," Chu Liang replied. "I'll head back now and report this matter to the elders. I will definitely come back here as soon as possible to eliminate this menace."

Bearing the weight of the Tree Demon Clan's trust, Chu Liang rode the Golden-Furred Hou and hurried back to Mount Shu.

Upon hearing Chu Liang's report, Elder Shen was quite astonished.

"The Winged Fire Python left the Evil Demon Mountain? That's something that hasn't happened in many years. Many vicious beasts inhabit that place, but it has always been uneventful. I wonder if anything's changed over there? I'll ask the other elders about it to see if we need to send someone to investigate that," Elder Shen said, already focusing on the matter regarding the Evil Demon Mountain.

As for the situation on the Tree Demon Mountain, it didn't need as much attention because a fifth-realm Winged Fire Python didn't pose that big of a problem for Mount Shu.

After a moment of contemplation, Elder Shen stated, "As for that creature on Tree Demon Mountain, it's only at the fifth-realm, so it should be easy enough to deal with. I'll look for a disciple at the sixth or seventh realm with some free time and send them over."

This was how immortal sects worked. When there was a situation with unknown specifics, they always dispatched the lower-ranked disciples to investigate first. If they could resolve the problem, then that would be the end of it. If they couldn't, they would return to the mountain to ask the more powerful members of the sect to intervene.

If Eminent Ones were needed for every little matter, there wouldn't be enough of them to resolve all the problems. They would be spread too thin.

"Elder Shen, there's no need for you to go to such trouble," Chu Liang said with a smile. "My teacher is free."

"Oh, I forgot about Di Nufeng." Elder Shen smacked his forehead lightly. "If she's willing to help, that would be best."

Elder Shen hadn't actually forgotten about Di Nufeng; rather, he just hadn't ever thought of asking her to help. Who in the Mount Shu Sect dared to ask Di Nufeng to do anything? It was to the extent that those at the Sword Exchange Pavilion didn't think about her at all, regardless of whether something good or bad happened. Going through Chu Liang was the only way that had any chance of successfully requesting help from Di Nufeng.

However, Chu Liang actually had ulterior motives. The Winged Fire Python was a fifth-realm spirit beast! Even if it were killed, it would still be a treasure trove.

Its gallbladder alone was very useful. The Winged Fire Python's gallbladder was only a grade lower than the Pure Gold Dragon-Snake's gallbladder that the Whale-Riding Immortal had given to Jiang Yuebai. The other parts of the Winged Fire Python, like its scales, blood, and even the flesh, were all valuable as well.

These treasures would fall into the hands of whoever killed the Winged Fire Python... so Chu Liang volunteered his teacher without hesitation.

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When Chu Liang went over to Di Nufeng's pavilion, Di Nufeng was initially half asleep. Yet, the moment Chu Liang told her there were benefits to be had, she immediately felt very awake... especially after Chu Liang said that the spirit beast in question was a Winged Fire Python.

Di Nufeng sprang up with beaming eyes. "Snake meat! I've been craving that lately."

Chu Liang's eyebrow twitched uncontrollably. She's so wild.

The teacher and disciple rushed over to Tree Demon Mountain.

When Di Nufeng descended, the tree demons in the vicinity were unable to withstand the pressure she exuded.

They transformed into their humanoid forms and begged, "Oh, Eminent One, please withdraw your divine ability!"

Yet, upon sensing the demonic qi around her increase, Di Nufeng unleashed the strongest pressure she could.

The might of Di Nufeng's divine fire was far greater than that of the Winged Fire Python. Just the scorching waves of heat from her divine fire were enough to cause great discomfort to these little tree demons.

"Esteemed Teacher, these tree demons are all allies. The Winged Fire Python that we're after is further inside," Chu Liang said, pointing at the blazing wildfire that was growing increasingly large.

"Oh," Di Nufeng responded casually.

She leaped and soared into the air once again. Then she looked down at the divine fire that had left the tree demons helpless.

With an indifferent gaze, Di Nufeng suddenly took a deep breath, "Huu..."

With that one inhale, the raging fire on the mountain instantly found its final destination. The flames parted from the earth and rose toward the sky, converging as a massive fireball in the blink of an eye!

Once the fire was gone, a scene of devastation was revealed. The areas scorched by the wildfire were left with nothing but bare, charred ground. The fire had even spread several zhang underground, burning the underground rock formations. The massive wildfire had damaged the Tree Demon Mountain immensely.

Meanwhile, the arsonist, the Winged Fire Python, was lying on a pitch-black boulder. It had been frolicking in the fire, enjoying the sea of fire it had created. Then suddenly, its bed had been snatched away. Even its home had been torn down, exposing it to the gazes of everyone present.

The python's eyes flitted to the left and right. It looked a little flustered as well as a little stunned.

Either way, Di Nufeng didn't even spare it a glance. With both hands, she lifted the massive fireball in the sky that looked like a sun and compressed it with great force.

Compress...

Di Nufeng actually managed to compress the fireball, which had appeared to occupy half the sky, down to the size of her palm. She held it in her hand and gave it a squeeze.

Di Nufeng kept squeezing it until it became a hard walnut-sized, violet-gold sphere. The sphere didn't look like it had been formed from flames; it seemed more like metal.

She rolled it around in her hand a few times before lowering her head to look at the Winged Fire Python below.

"Didn't your elders ever tell you that children shouldn't play with fire?" Di Nufeng asked languidly.

The Winged Fire Python opened up its wings. Regardless of whether it understood Di Nufeng's words, it definitely sensed what kind of situation it was in—a dangerous one!

With a flap of its wings, the Winged Fire Python turned around to flee into the sky!

However, would Di Nufeng give the Winged Fire Python the chance to do that?

Winged Fire Pythons were inherently savage and bloodthirsty. They specialized in killing living beings and amused themselves by burning everything in sight. Winged Fire Pythons caused disasters wherever they went, so simply driving them away wouldn't be enough.

Di Nufeng didn't do much else; she just flicked the walnut-sized violet-gold sphere out of her hand.

Whoosh—

A streak of purple light chased after the Winged Fire Python.

Boom! Rumble—

The sphere exploded instantly!

The compressed fireball burst open and engulfed the Winged Fire Python in endless blasts of air and blazing waves of fire. The fire was the python's, but the force of the explosion was more than the python could handle.

A cloud of fire even spread across the sky for tens of li around the Tree Demon Mountain. That massive explosion shook the heavens and the earth.

"Esteemed Teacher! Make sure you leave its body intact!" Chu Liang called out.

Di Nufeng waved him off. "Don't worry, I know what I'm doing."

Chu Liang felt reassured. Di Nufeng might be unreliable in everything else, but when it came to fighting, she could always be trusted.

As expected...

After a long while, the smoke dissipated, and Chu Liang saw the charred corpse of the Winged Fire Python on the bare peak of the Tree Demon Mountain. The Winged Fire Python had likely never imagined that after a lifetime of playing with fire, it would end up dying in the flames of its own divine fire.

The Winged Fire Python's body had been preserved pretty well, with the only exception being that its scales had been destroyed. This Winged Fire Python had been killed purely by the explosive pressure of the explosion; it hadn't been blown apart. Di Nufeng had truly used the perfect amount of force.

"Bring it back. We'll cook hotpot with it," Di Nufeng said happily as she landed.

"Yes, a snake this large can feed us for many days," Chu Liang replied, "or to serve as a meal for many."

Di Nufeng waved her fist excitedly. "Let's have a feast!"

### Chapter 193: Group Cultivation

Gurgle, gurgle. The boiling hotpot sizzled and bubbled, with various ingredients bobbing up and down in the richly flavored broth, filling the entire cave with a mouthwatering aroma.

"This Winged Fire Python meat is indeed delicious," Jiang Yuebai exclaimed happily as she dipped a piece of meat into the bubbling oil and savored the steamy delicacy, her face beaming with satisfaction.

Today, she was wearing a dark cyan fringe skirt with trousers, which made her fair skin and slender legs stand out. As she enjoyed her meal, she instinctively wanted to curl up one leg in contentment but quickly held back, remembering that Chu Liang was sitting next to her.

"Yeah, my teacher said that Winged Fire Python meat is spiritually nourishing and invigorates the blood and qi. It's excellent food," Chu Liang smiled. "I immediately asked you to come and taste it."

Once Senior Sister Jiang started eating, she lost the elegance of Fairy Jiang and reverted to the carefree and unreserved "Jiang Xiaobai" that Chu Liang had first met. Yesterday, he brought back a large Winged Fire Python to the Silver Sword Peak, and the first thing he did today was invite Jiang Yuebai to taste it.

"Not bad," Jiang Yuebai smiled brightly, her eyes curving with joy. "It's nice to see you remembering me when you get good things. My efforts in teaching you divine skills all this time have not been in vain."

"Absolutely," Chu Liang affirmed with a firm nod. "I will always remember and be grateful for all the kindness you've shown me. I won't stop at just hunting fifth-realm spirit beasts. As I grow stronger, I'll even hunt creatures from the sixth and seventh realms for you to enjoy."

"Only meat?" Jiang Yuebai chuckled again.

"Of course, if you want something else, I'll get it. I'll gather various spiritual plants, treasures from heaven and earth, and ensure we have a balanced diet of meat and vegetables," Chu Liang improvised.

"It seems like you only see me as someone who loves to eat, huh?" Jiang Yuebai felt a bit off hearing that.

"Hehe," Chu Liang chuckled nervously before changing the subject. "Senior Sister Jiang, have you been studying the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony's riddle these past few days? Any progress?"

"Why? Are you trying to gather information?" Jiang Yuebai's eyes narrowed suspiciously.

"Just asking," Chu Liang replied. "Your team is the best on Mount Shu, so I'm naturally curious about how you're doing."

"But I don't mind telling you. The riddle this time is really tricky, and we have no idea what the answers are," Jiang Yuebai said.

Her team wasn't alone in this. Every team in the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony was just as clueless. When all the teams got the riddle, cries of frustration echoed throughout Mount Shu.

"The theme of this year's ceremony is to find the White-Jade Porcelain Cup that belonged to the Weapons Masters. It's similar to previous years, where an elder gives a treasure and a general location, and teams then explore to find it." She sighed. "But the clues this time are really vague and hard to understand."

"Half of December. Peak of the Valley Mountain. Right of the Jinlin River. Manifestation of the Mountain God.[1]" muttered Chu Liang.

"Yes," Jiang Yuebai said, "It's only the beginning of summer now, and by December, the Mount Shu Summit will already be over. So why would we be searching for treasure then? And as for this Jinlin River, no one has any idea where it is."

Her question reflected what all the disciples participating in the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony were feeling. The hints about the date and location were completely confusing.

Chu Liang had been busy with other things recently and hadn't thought about the riddle. Now that he did, he found it quite puzzling.

"Never mind, let's not worry about it," Jiang Yuebai said, waving her hand. "After we finish eating, I'll teach you the Dimension Compression."

"Huh?"

"Chu Liang's eyes lit up with excitement. "Trading a snake meat hotpot for an immortal technique? That's a fantastic deal!"

"I told you before that I would teach you immortal techniques once you reached Core Formation. I just didn't expect it to happen so soon," Jiang Yuebai said with a smirk. "But whether you can master it or not is up to you."

"Great!" Chu Liang responded eagerly.

...

After they returned to the Silver Sword Peak, Chu Liang couldn't stop thinking about the Dimension Compression. This was the first time he felt completely lost trying to understand an immortal technique.

It wasn't that the technique was especially complicated, but it contained many insights into the "Dao," which were still far beyond his current understanding.

The seventh realm of cultivation was known as the Dao Attainment Realm. Cultivators usually began to explore Dao at the sixth realm.

It was precisely for this reason that those who could comprehend immortal techniques at the fourth realm were considered geniuses. The technique Jiang Yuebai would be teaching him, Dimension Compression, required an understanding of the Dao of Distancelessness, which pertained to space.

Before learning this difficult technique, Chu Liang needed to understand the very deep and complex Great Dao of Space, which was quite hard for him. Even after listening to Jiang Yuebai's explanation, he was still confused.

Seeing Chu Liang confused for the first time, Jiang Yuebai couldn't help but smile a little. Finally, she saw him struggle to learn a new skill.

However, since it took Jiang Yuebai six months to master Dimension Compression during her training, she knew she shouldn't celebrate too soon.

Jiang Yuebai advised Chu Liang to take his time and think deeply about it. When he could sense the first hint of the Dao essence from the space around him, he would have understood the basics.

However, getting from nothing to even a little understanding was really tough, and nobody knew how long it might take for him to sense that first bit of Dao essence.

Typically, cultivators at the Earthly Gate advance by gathering enough resources, while those at the Heavenly Gate focus on understanding profound concepts like the Great Dao.

Despite Chu Liang having just advanced into the fourth realm, he was already trying to understand the Dao. This was like trying to reach the doors of the Heavenly Gate despite still being a beginner at the Earthly Gate. Naturally, it was an extremely tough task.

However, he wasn't in a hurry. While it would be great to master an immortal technique, he didn't want to rush and risk messing up his mental state.

After a fruitless period of contemplation, he immersed his divine sense into the space of the White Pagoda and prepared for the practice of dual cultivation with the Golden-Core Puppet to strengthen his basics.

As he looked at the two Large-Headed Dolls sitting together, he realized he hadn't practiced enough. Since he got these dolls, he hardly ever did the Qi-Circulation Technique himself.

Although the technique of dual cultivation allowed for rapid progress, the limited time spent in cultivation resulted in modest improvements.

If he were to dedicate a significant amount of time to cultivation every day, it would be somewhat challenging. With the increasing number of divine techniques he had mastered and the frequent busyness of his affairs, time needed to be allocated accordingly.

Chu Liang honestly wished that someone could practice dual cultivation in his place.

Eh? He stared at the two dolls and suddenly fell into deep thought

Would it be possible for him to let the two dolls practice dual cultivation with each other?

As he kept thinking, he couldn't seem to stop his thoughts from running wild. The Large-Headed Dolls moved in a predictable way, and he wondered if they would keep moving like this if he used the dual cultivation method.

It seemed very likely!

However, expecting the two dolls to connect with each other using the Qi-Circulation Technique by themselves was unrealistic. Chu Liang understood that he would have to guide the dolls first.

This meant that he would first practice...triple cultivation.

In the past, some practitioners tried group cultivation, which was even more intense than dual cultivation. However, succeeding in this type of cultivation was very challenging.

Each person's foundational qi differed in some way. Even if several people were practicing the same cultivation technique, their foundational qi would still be different, leading to chaos and disorder.

Synchronizing and smoothly circulating foundational qi between two individuals was already an extremely difficult task. Adding another person into this circulation of qi would increase the difficulty by tenfold or even a hundredfold.

In the end, these people could likely experience qi deviation[2].

However, this greatest challenge was no big deal for Chu Liang.

Indeed, the foundational qi generated by the Large-Headed Dolls was identical to his own. This uniformity between them would be impossible if they were real humans. Consequently, he could effortlessly integrate the other Large-Headed Doll into the circulation of qi within his body.

With that said, Chu Liang started the work.

He moved the two Large-Headed Dolls together, allowing them to lean against each other. Then, he sat down beside them, placing his hands on the shoulders of each doll.

Phew.

He activated the circulation of his foundational qi. Then, he first included the Golden-Core Puppet in his qi circulation. As both he and the Golden-Core Puppet began circulating their qi, the vortex expanded. After the circulation stabilized, Chu Liang then included the other Large-Headed Doll in his qi circulation, causing the vortex to suddenly expand even further!

Boom!

Triple cultivation!

This exhilarating sensation far surpassed that experienced during the practice of dual cultivation, causing Chu Liang, who was accustomed to rapid cultivation, to tremble! He could even hear the roaring sound of qi flowing like a river within his body.

His cultivation speed skyrocketed!

After a while, Chu Liang abruptly withdrew his foundational qi from the circulation, leaving the Golden-Core Puppet and the other doll to continue circulating qi together within their bodies due to inertia.

It worked!

As expected, the Large-Headed Dolls continued to operate according to their previous pattern. With this, Chu Liang's cultivation speed would significantly increase once again.

He had been experiencing a speed boost every three days.

Chu Liang smiled contentedly as he thought back to the group cultivation he had just experienced.

How exciting!

## Chapter 194: A New Version

The following day, he arrived at the Sword Exchange Pavilion early in the morning.

He had been wanting to come here to see Wen Yulong. However, Wen Yulong hadn't been standing by in the hall for the past two days and he only had time today.

He hadn't been standing by in the hall because he had been busy working on the Green Leaf enchanted tool.

Wen Yulong had poured a considerable amount of effort and energy into crafting this comprehensive enchanted tool. Consequently, he dedicated even more meticulous care to each subsequent restoration.

Previously, Chu Liang made a small profit, hence why he had told Wen Yulong not to care about the price and just use the materials with the best effect.

Ironically, it left Wen Yulong in a dilemma, unable to make a decision.

Since he had called Chu Liang over, he must have completed the task.

"Senior Brother Chu," Wen Yulong exclaimed with a proud smile upon seeing Chu Liang.

He resembled a Golden-Furred Hou eagerly awaiting praise.

As he observed the talented craftsman beaming with pride, Chu Liang felt a twitch in his brow... He couldn't fathom the surprise that awaited him.

"Initially, I thought that the damage was caused by improper use of the enchanted tool." Wen Yulong said, "But as I thought about it, I realized that it was not your fault. I am the problem."

Wen Yulong then placed the Green Leaf, which had doubled in size, on the table.

"You had used the defensive function as a tool to control your enemies because you lack the means to exert control. If there was such a function, you wouldn't have to use your defensive function this way."

True. Upon hearing this, Chu Liang nodded.

Although the Demon-Binding Rope is useful, it is not powerful enough in a fight against a skilled opponent.

As my cultivation level becomes higher, it is bound to be replaced.

Besides this rope, he didn't have any other effective tools for movement-restricting.

"And so, I tried many materials and methods. Eventually, I added a very powerful movement-restricting inscription on the Green Leaf enchanted tool." Wen Yulong pointed at the dummy in the corner and continued, "Because it is so powerful, you should test it with that dummy."

So powerful? Chu Liang was puzzled. With this being a movement-restricting inscription, what damage could it cause?

As he thought about this, he carefully took the Green Leaf enchanted tool. In an attempt to activate the newly added inscription, he infused a strand of foundational qi.

Whoosh!

As soon as he infused his foundational qi, the enchanted tool immediately flew out, leaving behind a green afterimage. It elongated and twisted, almost as though it had transformed into a large green snake in an instant.

"Hiss!"

With its fangs bared, the enormous snake bit down on the dummy's head!

Clang!

The copper-made dummy's neck was bitten off in an instant, causing even Chu Liang to feel a sudden chill around his own neck.

What a powerful guillotine!

The dummy's head had already fallen off while the green snake remained suspended in the air motionless. Chu Liang then activated his divine intent and summoned the tool back.

It fell back into his palm, leaving behind a green afterimage.

"You call this movement-restricting?" Chu Liang stared at Wen Yulong weirdly.

This was much more powerful than the offensive inscriptions that had existed before.

"Of course," Wen Yulong continued, "Look at how powerful the movement-restricting function is! I've thought about this for quite some time. Humans can be easily restrained. The most vulnerable and crucial part of the human anatomy is the neck. Therefore, I combined the Green Cloud Lock with the Giant Python Soul, creating this formation tailored to lock onto people's necks. Its biting force is immense! Once it clamps down, even ordinary individuals won't be able to move!"

This was true.

Chu Liang stared at the headless dummy.

With just one bite like this, anyone would be immobilized.

The best form of control would be to turn the opponent into a corpse, right?

After several attempts, regardless of the material of the dummy, this guillotine could bite its head off with no room for negotiation.

"Not Bad. This movement-restricting is basically suffocating, " Chu Liang said with a nod.

"Hehe," Wen Yulong smiled and said, "The defensive inscription was damaged too many times and can't be fixed at all. So, I scrapped it and constructed a new one."

Indeed, it made sense why the repair took so long. He made quite a lot of changes. Chu Liang thought to himself.

Chu Liang pondered as he activated the defensive inscription.

Whoosh!

As a light flashed, the leaf didn't transform into a zongzi. Instead, an unfolded green umbrella appeared in his hand.

"You mentioned the issue of immobility in the previous defensive form. I pondered over this and came to the conclusion that it made sense. If you're consistently immobilized and subjected to attacks, even the strongest defense will eventually be breached. Therefore, despite this hurting me, I discarded the comprehensive defense and instead concentrated all the power on offense, molding the defensive form into this umbrella form."

"This is amazing." Chu Liang praised.

The defense in zongzi form was outrageous. And now, Wen Yulong finally crafted a normal-looking defensive form.

By holding this green umbrella, he could defend himself while remaining nimble.

Wen Yulong instructed, "I even grouped the defensive inscription and the flying inscription into one so that you can dodge the attacks. You can try activating both at the same time."

"Eh?"

While feeling puzzled, Chu Liang activated the defensive inscription and the flight inscription at the same time.

Whizzz——

The umbrella suddenly started spinning at an intense speed, stirring up this gust of wind.

As Chu Liang tried moving his foot, a sudden bam sounded!

He had instantly moved a few zhang and smashed himself on the wall of the room, creating this loud noise.

It turned out that holding this umbrella while flying could boost one's speed by a dozen times. As long as he opened this umbrella, his speed was faster than flying by sword manipulation.

"This is my newest idea. By spinning the umbrella intensely, the foundational qi will be stirred up to aid with flying." Wen Yulong continued, "This way, your dodging speed will improve greatly and the defense will naturally be greater."

Great. Killing is the best way to restrict someone's movement while dodging is the best form of defense.

Wen Yulong's design concepts had reached a higher level of enlightenment.

"Not bad." Chu Liang said as he collected the Green Leaf enchanted tool. He then asked, "Nothing else, right?"

"Nope," responded Wen Yulong.

"Phew..." Chu Liang finally let out a sigh of relief.

Overall, this unexpected update could be considered an optimization, resulting in a superior version.

The two of them sat down again.

This repair cost a little over a thousand sword coins in total, mainly because some of the materials were quite expensive. Wen Yulong was worried that Chu Liang would find the materials too costly, so he didn't dare to ask for labor costs this time.

The effects of the newly added inscriptions were noticeably stronger than before. No matter how skilled Wen Yulong was, he couldn't change the fact that the quality of the material determined the quality of the tool.

Honestly speaking, if Chu Liang had money, he would never skimp on any expense that would enhance his combat abilities.

After making the payment, Chu Liang took out the items he had found on the Dual Wielder and asked, "Junior Brother Wen, what do you think of these items?"

"Oh? Another new find?" Wen Yulong immediately perked up.

He first examined the black dual blades carefully, remarking, "These are quite good. They're crafted from black meteorite iron, similar to the material of the previous dagger but more intact and made from even more materials. Even if sold as raw materials, they would fetch a good price."

Glancing at the Soul-Suppressing Banner, he commented directly, "This is an extremely sinister artifact from the diabolical sect. It is called the Soul-Suppressing Banner. It can gather and refine the lingering souls of the dead nearby, completely eradicating them."

The Dual Wielder had repeatedly attempted to assassinate him, and now, such an item was found on him, indicating the ruthless nature of the Dual Wielder. However, Chu Liang couldn't discern the true origins of the Dual Wielder or the number of people hidden in the dark.

As Chu Liang pondered over this, he felt a chill down his spine.

It seemed he needed to be careful during this time and refrain from venturing down the mountain.

"I'll leave these two items with you to submit to the Sword Exchange Pavilion," Chu Liang said. "Let's see what rewards we can get."

"Sure," Wen Yulong responded. He was accustomed to doing such tasks and took the items very quickly.

As Chu Liang was about to leave, he heard footsteps outside the door, followed by a loud bang as the door was pushed open.

It was Lin Bei.

"I finally found you!" Lin Bei said urgently when he saw Chu Liang. "Chu Liang! Hurry back home! Someone just beat up your Golden-Furred Hou!"

#### Chapter 195: Hit the Hou

Seeing Lin Bei's panicked expression, Chu Liang sprang to his feet and asked, "What happened?"

Chu Liang had been riding the Golden-Furred Hou just a while ago. Once they reached his destination, he'd told the Hou to head back to their peak on its own.

Big Head was the second-best fighter in Chu Liang's arsenal—with the best being his teacher, of course. He couldn't let anything happen to Big Head.

"It's just outside Heaven-Reaching Peak. You need to see it for yourself. Let's go," Lin Bei said, leading the way.

Lin Bei had come to Heaven-Reaching Peak to deal with some matters. On the way in, he'd seen the Golden-Furred Hou fighting with someone outside. So, he'd guessed that Chu Liang had to be here too and quickly found Chu Liang after asking around.

...

Chu Liang flew out behind Lin Bei and saw a crowd gathered around the square, watching something. The square was filled with the incessant roars of an angered beast and the explosive cracks of a lashing whip.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

There was a white-robed man standing on a white cloud in midair, repeatedly swinging down a long whip. He wielded the whip gracefully and powerfully from above, holding a resemblance to when the White Dragon dominated the skies. Each time the whip landed a hit, an explosive crack would blast through the air.

The Golden-Furred Hou was restrained to the ground. It tried many times to jump and attack the white-robed man, but it was struck down each time. The Hou got so angry that it roared incessantly.

Chu Liang could see that the Hou's golden fur was ripped, and there was crimson blood on the ground. This meant it had been inflicted with some serious injuries. Despite having accompanied

Chu Liang on various adventures, the Golden-Furred Hou had never once shed any blood in a fight before.

Standing behind the man in white robes was a child, who was five or six years old.

With an excited gaze, the child pointed at the Golden-Furred Hou and yelled, "Kill it! Kill it!"

Chu Liang vaguely recognized that this child was the great-grandson of the Alchemy Master. The child had great talent in cultivation and had started cultivating before he was even six years old. After developing the ability to sense the flow of his qi, he reached the first realm of cultivation—the Body Refinement Realm. News of this had recently created a small stir in the sect.

As for the man in white, he looked to be in his thirties or forties and at the fifth or sixth realm of cultivation. It was obvious that he wasn't from the same generation of disciples as Chu Liang and the others.

Chu Liang swiftly flew over and stopped in front of the Golden-Furred Hou, protecting it from the man.

"Stop!" Chu Liang shouted.

"Raaaaar!"

The Golden-Furred Hou was about to charge forward.

However, Chu Liang pressed its head back and ordered, "Don't move."

Despite Chu Liang's interference, the whip continued moving downward. It was about to lash Chu Liang, but he remained still. He just stood there, glaring at the white-robed man with a fiery gaze.

The whip sent a burst of wind toward Chu Liang. Yet, just as he felt the wind brush against the hairs on his skin, the whip came to an abrupt stop.

Seeing that the white-robed man had finally stopped attacking, Chu Liang asked, "Senior brother, may I know what wrong my spirit beast has committed to provoke such ruthless treatment from you?"

"Hmph,

" the white-robed man snorted. He said angrily, "This unruly beast almost harmed the Alchemy Master's great-grandson. I punished it, yet it's still behaving so aggressively. Giving it a beating was a lenient punishment. If it had harmed the child, I would have killed it right on the spot!"

"Hmph!" the child snorted too, as if flaunting the power he had on his side.

"Grrr..." the Golden-Furred Hou let out a low growl, seemingly irate.

Distress gripped Chu Liang's heart as he saw the Hou's blood continue to drip onto the ground.

At this moment, Lin Bei jumped out from the side and refuted, "That's not the case at all! I saw this child throw stones at the Golden-Furred Hou. That was why the Hou then landed and roared at him twice. You took action right after that! You were clearly bullying the Hou!"

"It's merely a beast. What's the big deal if I hit it?" The man in white robes looked down at them coldly with an air of superiority and dominance. "If you dare to allow it to roar freely in Mount Shu ever again, I will report it to the elder and have all of you punished!"

"Raar!"

The Golden-Furred Hou's talons, its front feet[1], dug into the ground. It wanted to try launching into the sky again and ripping that white-robed man to shreds.

"Don't move!" Chu Liang ordered once more.

Regardless of whether what happened was justified, it was fortunate that the Golden-Furred Hou had not hurt anyone. That meant it would be able to get off with just a beating. However, if it had hurt someone, the sect definitely wouldn't let it stay alive.

This didn't apply just in the Mount Shu Sect. All laws in the world were always biased toward humans. If a human were to injure a demonic beast, no one would hold them accountable. On the other hand, if a demonic beast were to injure a human, it definitely would not be allowed to live even if its actions had been justified.

Chu Liang tilted his head upward and said, "Senior brother, the child did not get hurt. And my spirit beast has been punished, so it definitely won't dare to hurt anyone in Mount Shu in the future. Let's put an end to this matter for now."

"You'd better discipline it properly when you return to your peak. You kids, don't you dare think that you're extraordinary just because you have a mount. If something were to happen, you wouldn't be able to bear the responsibility for it!" the man in white warned coldly.

Then he turned around and brought the cloud into a descent, shielding the child as they left. Right then, the child stuck out his tongue at Chu Liang and made a funny face to mock him.

Once the white-robed man and the child were gone, Lin Bei said angrily, "That little brat really needs to be taught a lesson. If he had been alone, I would have given him a good smack!"

"Let's head back first. We'll talk about it then," Chu Liang replied with a solemn expression.

He reached out and stroked the Golden-Furred Hou's neck. The Hou whimpered and nuzzled against him, feeling quite aggrieved.

...

Chu Liang asked Lin Bei to fetch Chen Su. Then he returned to Silver Sword Peak with the Golden-Furred Hou.

After the incident with the Winged Fire Python demon, the higher-ups of the Mount Shu Sect became extremely concerned about what was happening at the Evil Demon Mountain. The incident involving the fifth-realm Winged Fire Python hadn't been a big deal. Despite that, there were many vicious beasts living on the Evil Demon Mountain, and it would be a major problem if they were to leave the mountain.

As a result, three seventh-realm peak masters were sent there to investigate it. Di Nufeng had been dispatched there as well since she had finished resolving the problem at the Tree Demon Mountain.

During this time, Chu Liang was in charge of Silver Sword Peak.

If his teacher were around, he would undoubtedly bring the Golden-Furred Hou to his teacher, weeping and complaining about what had happened. Then he would follow Di Nufeng to get compensation—no, to get an explanation from the other party.

Unfortunately, Chu Liang's teacher wasn't around, so all he could do was tend to the Golden-Furred Hou's injuries for now.

There were no medical professionals in the Mount Shu Sect. Matters of a medical nature were usually handled by the Hall of Alchemy's attendants. However, the person that Chu Liang had just had a conflict with was from the Hall of Alchemy, so it wouldn't be a good idea for Chu Liang to go there to ask for help. Consequently, he asked for help from Chen Su, a senior sister with whom he was well acquainted.

The Golden-Furred Hou was lying on the ground whimpering. It had gaping wounds and seemed to be in a lot of pain. To comfort it, Chu Liang stuffed two berries into its mouth.

"Raar?"

The Golden-Furred Hou put two and two together, and it immediately let its body go limp and howled incessantly, making it look like it was dying...

Seeing this scene made Chu Liang angry and amused at the same time. Yet, seeing as the Golden-Furred Hou was injured, Chu Liang decided to indulge it for once. He stuffed a couple more Golden Vein Berries into Big Head's mouth one by one.

Big Head finished one berry in one bite, enjoying its food so much that it was smacking its lips. Its eyes were filled with bliss; it had quickly forgotten about the pain it felt. Big Head probably wouldn't mind getting beaten up every day if that meant it could just lie down and wait for someone to feed it fruits.

After a while, Chen Su rushed over.

"Let me take a look..." Chen Su said. She carefully inspected the Golden-Furred Hou and then stated, "They are all superficial wounds and can be treated by rubbing on some medicine. Don't worry."

Chu Liang finally felt at ease.

Chen Su rubbed the medicinal powder onto the Golden-Furred Hou's wounds and wrapped its body in bandages. It should have been quite a painful process, but Big Head didn't resist at all, only shaking a little.

"This big fellow is pretty well behaved. I wonder how Brother Liu could bear to be so heavy-handed to it," Chen Su commented.

Looking at the adorable Golden-Furred Hou, Chen Su felt rather outraged on its behalf.

"Who was the person that hit the Golden-Furred Hou?" Chu Liang asked without much thought.

"Senior Brother Liu Qin—the Alchemy Master's seventh disciple," Chen Su answered. "The Alchemy Master only has one great-grandson, Xiao Tong[2], and he dotes on the boy immensely. However, he doesn't have time to take care of Xiao Tong all the time, so he often places Xiao Tong in the care of his disciples."

"The kid's a bit unruly," Chu Liang remarked nonchalantly.

"Haaa..." Chen Su sighed. She said, "Xiao Tong doesn't have parents, and he's really smart. Because of that, the Alchemy Master has been taking really good care of him, so much so that he's always spoiling the boy. That's why Xiao Tong is quite a naughty child."

After listening to Chen Su's brief explanation, Chu Liang figured out the gist of the situation.

He was certain the unruly kid had provoked the Golden-Furred Hou by hitting it. The Golden-Furred Hou wasn't a mild-tempered beast, but it had likely descended with the intention of just scaring the boy. After all, Big Head knew it couldn't harm people on Mount Shu; it wouldn't have attacked the boy in the first place.

Nevertheless, Liu Qin had probably been afraid that he would be accused of not properly caring for the boy. So, he'd taken a heavy-handed approach to show he was taking his job seriously.

"All done," Chen Su announced with a clap.

She'd finished bandaging the Golden-Furred Hou's wounds.

The Golden-Furred Hou had bandages all over. The ends of the bandages had even been tied into pretty little bows, making the Hou look like an elegant creature.

"Thank you, Senior Sister Chen," Chu Liang said.

"Don't mention it," Chen Su replied with a grin. She hesitated for a moment before reminding Chu Liang, "I know you must be very upset that someone hurt the Golden-Furred Hou, but Xiao Tong is the Alchemy Master's favorite, and Brother Liu was just protecting him. If you continue pursuing this matter, you may incite the Alchemy Master's wrath. He could make things difficult for you on Mount Shu in the future or worse..."

What Chen Su said was true. The Alchemy Master held a high position of authority in the Mount Shu Sect, so offending him would indeed place Chu Liang in an extremely difficult spot.

"Don't worry, Senior Sister Chen," Chu Liang smiled. "Please deliver a message for me when you head back to the Hall of Alchemy. Tell them that my mount frightened the Alchemy Master's great-grandson today, and I'm extremely sorry about that. I will definitely go over and apologize in person."

Chapter 196: Let's Go Greet It

Gurgle~

On the Silver Sword Peak, a hotpot bubbled with red oil.

Shang Ziliang sat at the table with his lackeys A and B, alongside Chu Liang and Lin Bei.

All the members of this Mountain God Memorial Ceremony team gathered together.

Shang Ziliang asked, "Big Bro, did you call us here because you figured out the riddle given by the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony?"

"I have some clues on the answer to the riddle. But that's not urgent," Chu Liang nodded and said, "I managed to obtain some Winged Fire Python meat, so I called you all here to try it."

He had already hosted a meal at Silver Sword Peak, followed by another with Sister Jiang, and now this was the third meal he was hosting.

"Life is good being led by Big Bro!" Lackey A immediately exclaimed, flattering.

"Mhm." Lackey B nodded sullenly.

"We're simply collaborating. No one is following anyone's lead," Chu Liang smiled, then continued, "However, there is indeed something I'd like your help with this time."

"Hey!" Shang Ziliang patted himself on the chest as he said, "Big Bro, there's no need to be so formal with us. You saved my life. Whatever you need, just tell us!"

"Yes! We promise to give it our all!" Lackey A chimed in.

"Mhm." Lackey B mumbled while keeping his head down.

"Thanks in advance." Chu Liang said, "Let's dig in."

"Hehe, I've heard that Winged Fire Python meat is great for replenishing qi and blood. It is a real tonic. It is all thanks to Big Bro that I have the chance to eat this today..." Suddenly, Shang Ziliang stopped talking.

Chu Liang lowered his head and saw that the plates in front of him were all empty. Within just a short while, all the food on the plates were gone. There wasn't much left in the pot either.

What's going on?

He looked around and noticed Lin Bei, who had been unusually quiet, and Lackey B, who had been keeping his head down while eating, staring at each other while holding their chopsticks.

There seemed to be sparks flying between their eyes.

It was like two unparalleled swordsmen meeting at a narrow path.

In the moment when the slices of meat were cooked through in the boiling pot, two pairs of chopsticks darted out like lightning, swiftly grabbing their targets.

In the blink of an eye, Lin Bei's chopsticks had snagged a large piece of meat, which he happily dipped into the oil dish before devouring it with gusto, his eyes gleaming with satisfaction.

On the other hand, Lackey B's expression turned serious, his demeanor cautious as if facing a formidable foe.

In the next moment, a hint of murderous intent flashed in his eyes as his chopsticks traced a cunning arc, deftly plucking a fish ball from the pot. With a gentle flick of his wrist, the fishball drew a graceful trajectory before landing in his mouth, where he chewed it without flinching from the heat.

This time, it was Lin Bei's turn to wear a solemn expression.

The battle between the two unfolded silently yet intensely, filled with silent determination and excitement at encountering a worthy opponent.

...

Chen Lingtong, at the age of seven, was in the prime of his youthful exuberance.

With his thick eyebrows and large eyes, he had a bright and clever appearance. His orphaned background elicited sympathy from others. As a smart kid, he had started sensing Qi and had become a cultivator at a very young age.

As a result, he received special favor from the elders of Mount Shu since childhood. Even the headmaster treated him amicably.

However, those elders didn't have time to supervise him every day, so the only ones accompanying him were disciples of the Alchemy Master. Yet, those people didn't dare to restrain him. Whenever this kid cried, they would be scolded by the Alchemy Master.

And so, Chen Lingtong led a very carefree life every day.

The person watching over Chen Lingtong today was the ninth disciple of the Alchemy Master Lu Xun. He was an attendant at the Hall of Alchemy. Cultivators of their level naturally felt reluctant to be assigned the task of accompanying children, but they dared not be careless. Lu Xun sat quietly on the side, meditating and cultivating, allowing the child to play on his own.

Chen Lingtong was chasing the monkeys in the hill area in the back, running around in a frenzied manner.

He hurled stones at the monkeys, and whenever he would hit one, he would laugh non-stop.

He was almost proclaiming to the world that he was a naughty kid.

At this moment, the Golden-Furred Hou with its massive size descended from the sky.

Chen Xun immediately opened his eyes.

Chu Liang stepped forward and said in a respectful manner, "Senior Brother, I am here to apologize."

Lu Xun stared at Chu Liang with a complicated expression.

He paused for a moment before he said, "Be careful not to hurt Xiaotong."

"I won't." Chu Liang said with a smile.

Lu Xun then closed his eyes and no longer bothered to pay any attention.

Chu Liang brought the Golden-Furred Hou closer to the naughty kid and asked with a smile, "Do you remember this creature?"

"Hmph!" Chen Lingtong responded with an arrogant and cold expression. "Of course I remember! This big guy tried to bite me yesterday!"

"It made a mistake. I brought it here to apologize to you." Chu Liang waved his hand and said, "Golden-Furred Hou!"

Upon hearing the call, the Golden-Furred Hou stood up and bowed repeatedly with its front paws folded together.

It really appeared to be apologizing.

The kid immediately laughed, "Haha."

Chu Liang then explained, "Actually, it was just trying to play with you. It is a spirit beast and spirit beasts enjoy it the most when someone is throwing stones at it. It would think that you are playing with it."

"Eh?" It was Chen Lingtong's first time ever hearing something like this as he questioned, "Really?"

"Of course it's true. If you don't believe me, just watch!" Chu Liang picked up a stone and threw it at the Golden-Furred Hou.

The Golden-Furred Hou jumped up and grabbed the stone with its mouth. Then, it started spinning happily.

"Try it." Chu Liang said to the naughty kid.

"Eh?" Chen Lingtong thought it looked fun.

He picked up a stone and hurled it towards the Golden-Furred Hou.

"Roar~" Golden-Furred Hou leaped up and grabbed the stone. Then, it did two spins happily.

Chen Lingtong smiled and remarked, "Hehe. This big guy is so stupid."

"You did a fantastic job! Your throws were right on target!" Chu Liang gave a thumbs-up. "Put more strength into it. The harder you throw, the more enthusiastic it will think you are."

Noticing that they were getting along well, Lu Xun decided to ignore them even more. He just glanced at Chu Liang from time to time while being deep in thought.

At this moment, a passerby behind Chu Liang stepped forward and called out, "Senior Brother Lu?"

He turned around and saw that it was the son of Shang Shuwen, the Peakmaster of Cloud Horizon Peak. He couldn't recall the name, but he knew that Shang Shuwen's son was a rather mediocre disciple.

"I am Shang Ziliang, we've met before," Shang Ziliang greeted with a smile.

"Junior Brother Shang, of course I remember." Lu Xun nodded with a calm expression.

"I have some questions about pill refinement. Since I passed by you, I am wondering if it's a convenient time to consult you," inquired Shang Ziliang.

Lu Xun glanced over at the side and saw Chu Liang and the kid playing happily. And so, he didn't pay much attention. He then turned back and said, "If that's what you're here for, feel free to ask. If I know the answer, I'll help you out."

He then started talking to Shang Ziliang.

Another beam of white light descended from the distant sky and raced toward them. It was a mystical beast resembling a horse in size, with antlers like a deer and scales like a dragon. Its body was silver-white. It was the Baize youngling.

Chu Liang pointed at the spirit beast running over and asked, "Do you know the Baize youngling?"

"My great grandfather said that it is a Baize and warned me to stay away from it..." answered Chen Lingtong.

"Baize also loves playing with people, so there's nothing to worry about," Chu Liang said with a smile. "Let's go greet it!"

"Okay!" Chen Lingtong picked up a large stone and threw it towards the Baize youngling's head.

Bang!

The stone struck Baize on the head as it joyfully approached. Baize stopped abruptly, fixating on the mischievous child standing next to Chu Liang, frozen in disbelief.

Chu Liang whispered, "It probably thinks you are not being friendly enough."

Chen Lingtong swiftly grabbed a larger stone and hurled it with force.

Whoosh!

Baize narrowly avoided being hit this time. It dashed forward fiercely, leaving a white afterimage trailing behind it.

The mischievous kid was the one who felt its enthusiasm.

Bang!

The Baize youngling appeared right beside Chu Liang, while the mischievous kid who had been standing there earlier was knocked flying several zhang away. The kid shouted loudly as he flew so far up into the sky that he vanished like a speck among the stars.

Chu Liang leaned up against the awning and stared afar as he remarked internally, "He flew really high up in the sky..."

On the side, Lu Xun glared at Chu Liang, his eyes blazing with anger.

Sure enough, whenever this fella shows up, trouble follows!

Chapter 197: A Letter from Yun Chaoxian

"Chu Liang!"

Lu Xun dashed over and glared at Chu Liang. As the current caretaker of the child, he felt a deep sense of responsibility. If anything happened to the child, he knew he would be held accountable.

"Oh no!" Chu Liang panicked as he glanced over at the Baize youngling. While stroking its head, he scolded, "How can you push the Alchemy Master's great-grandson...I mean use such force on him with your horns? He is still a kid!"

There was a sense of tranquility and honesty in the Baize youngling's large innocent eyes. It let out a couple "hreoohhh" and seemed to be saying that it was also a kid.

"Senior Brother Lu, look at how things turned out!" Chu Liang exclaimed, opening his hands in a gesture of helplessness. "I did not expect this at all!"

With a wave of his sleeves, Lu Xun shouted angrily, "You don't have to put on an act. If something happens to Lingtong, you should take full responsibility!"

"Why do you say that?" Chu Liang retorted with an innocent expression. "Everyone saw it. He hurled a stone at the Baize youngling, which provoked the Baize youngling to attack him. This has nothing to do with me."

"True," Shang Ziliang, who stood nearby, hastily nodded in agreement, indicating that everyone had witnessed the incident.

"If you never taught Lingtong to do such a thing, he wouldn't have done that." Lu Xun paid no heed to Chu Liang's eloquence.

"It isn't his first time doing such a thing, right? Everyone knew that he has been behaving this way for fun," Chu Liang declared boldly, as though reasoning was on his side.

"That's true." Shang Ziliang nodded again as an indication that everyone knew about this.

"Senior Brother Lu, aren't you going to check on him? What if he is stuck on a tree? He is still a child." Chu Liang stared at the direction where Chen Lingtong had flew away with a hint of smile on his face.

"Yeah." Shang Ziliang chimed in, supporting Chu Liang, "There's a cliff over there. It wouldn't be good if he fell off."

"I heard him scream earlier. Why isn't he making a sound now?" asked Chu Liang.

"Good lord... If something happens, the Alchemy Master will be really upset," Shang Ziliang added.

"But the Alchemy Master can't do anything to the Baize youngling so he will most likely punish the caretaker," said Chu Liang.

"Well, this is really unnecessary trouble," Shang Ziliang said as he shook his head.

...

The two of them kept bantering back and forth, their exchange resembling that of comedy duos working together. As they continued, Lu Xun's face darkened. He couldn't be bothered to argue with these two any longer, so he flew away with a wave of his sleeves.

He continued flying for several zhang until he spotted Chen Lingtong hanging from a tree, just as Chu Liang and Shang Ziliang had predicted. Chen Lingtong was frozen in disbelief as he clung to the branches.

Since this kid had gained self-awareness, he had never received such a treatment. At this moment, his initial reaction wasn't to complain about the pain, but rather to question why the Baize youngling would dare to attack him.

"I was just hitting it with a stone, so how would it dare to attack me?" Chen Lingtong muttered to himself, baffled by the unexpected turn of events.

It wasn't until Lu Xun gently lowered him from the tree that Chen Lingtong's wail pierced the air, his voice trembling with pain as he cried out, "It hurts so bad!"

Lu Xun carefully examined Lingtong's entire body. Fortunately, this mischievous youngster had already attained the Body Refinement Realm. His physique was significantly sturdier than that of other children, and he had only broken a few bones.

If other seven-year-old kids were to endure such a fierce attack from the Baize youngling, there was a high likelihood that they would not have survived.

"Don't cry. I'll take you back to get treated," Lu Xun said soothingly, offering reassurance to Chen Lingtong.

Lu Xun had no choice but to stabilize Chen Lingtong's qi and blood with his foundational qi. Then, he leaped up and swiftly carried Chen Lingtong back to the Hall of Alchemy.

But Chen Lingtong wouldn't heed Lu Xun's words. When Lu Xun asked him not to cry, he wailed even more uncontrollably. The pain and the feeling of being bullied flooded over him all at once, especially after he regained consciousness.

In the Hall of Alchemy, Seventh Senior Brother Liu Qin and Eighth Senior Brother Xu Wen were both present. As soon as they saw Chen Lingtong so severely injured, they were immediately alarmed and panicked.

If the Alchemy Master saw this, he would have surely reprimanded and punished the disciples caring for Lingtong.

The three scrambled around in panic, hastily administering medicine and treating Chen Lingtong's wounds. They carefully set his bones and provided pain relief, promoting blood circulation and dispersing blood clots. Given the Hall of Alchemy's specialization in such matters, they were naturally efficient in handling external injuries. After working tirelessly, Chen Lingtong's injuries were mostly healed within less than an hour.

But even as his physical wounds healed, the emotional trauma Chen Lingtong experienced lingered like a shadow.

Chen Lingtong continued to wail inconsolably. "I'm going to tell my great-grandfather to beat that Baize youngling to death! How dare it knock me off and cause such pain! Boohoo—" His cries echoed with indignation and anguish.

As soon as Chen Lingtong made his threat, the three disciples of the Alchemy Master fell silent for a moment.

While you may be pampered and loved on Mount Shu, there are varying levels of adoration. Compared to the Baize, which holds the potential to protect Mount Shu for the next few thousand years, even the Alchemy Master can't win, not to mention his great-grandson.

After a moment of contemplation, Lu Xun spoke up. "Lingtong... The Baize youngling is not the one at fault here. The true wrongdoer is the one who taught you to throw stones at spirit beasts! That person named Chu Liang is the real villain!"

The moment Lu Xun uttered those words, Liu Qin's face flushed with embarrassment.

Chen Lingtong stomped his feet in frustration and cried out, "Then I'll tell my great-grandfather to beat Chu Liang up! I'm so angry!"

"Lingtong, please don't tell your great-grandfather about this. We'll seek revenge for you, alright?" Liu Qin hastily said.

If Chen Lingtong were to cry and complain to the Alchemy Master, those responsible for his care would undoubtedly face punishment.

"You'll help me take revenge?" Chen Lingtong's eyes lit up with a mischievous spark as he shouted, "You must give him a good beating!"

"Of course." Liu Qin said.

"Seventh Senior Brother, Chu Liang's teacher is Di Nufeng..." Xu Wen reminded Liu Qin with a hint of concern.

"This..." Upon being reminded of this, Liu Qin hesitated.

But Chen Lingtong started wailing again. "If you don't dare to do it, I will tell my great-grandfather!"

"What's there to worry about? Di Nufeng is not on Mount Shu now," Lu Xun declared, his tone tinged with sinister intentions. "We can take advantage of this opportunity to go to Silver Sword Peak and teach that fella a lesson. If Di Nufeng wants us to take responsibility later on, we'll just ask our teacher to deal with it. We're standing up for Lingtong. If our esteemed teacher finds out about it, the situation will be better than it is now."

When Liu Qin heard this, he agreed.

If Chen Lingtong were to cry and report the incident to the Alchemy Master now, they would undoubtedly face punishment. However, if they stand up for him and then have him tell the story to their teacher while laughing, their teacher would likely protect them.

As for Di Nufeng, their esteemed teacher would surely have his ways of handling her. No matter how highly ranked she was, could she be of higher status than the Guardian Elder?

Moreover, the strained relationship between the Alchemy Master and Di Nufeng was widely known among many people at Mount Shu Sect. Considering this, they suddenly felt less anxious about the potential consequences of their actions.

The biggest task ahead of them was to stand up for Chen Lingtong!

They might even be praised by their teacher.

"When your injuries heal tomorrow, we'll go see that scoundrel from Silver Sword Peak!" Lu Xun declared decisively.

At the same time, he harbored another thought.

If he could stir up some internal conflict and cause a bit of trouble for Chu Liang... It would indeed be a brilliant move.

...

Achoo!

Chu Liang sneezed, rubbing his nose, wondering why he had been the subject of conversations for many people recently.

After teaching the Alchemy Master's great-grandson a lesson, he felt a bit uneasy as he knew that there was a possibility of retaliation. With his teacher absent, he wouldn't have much room to resist.

The Alchemy Master wouldn't dirty his own hands in retaliation. However, those core disciples of his were all older than Chu Liang by twenty or thirty years. They were disciples who had participated in the previous Mount Shu Summit or even the one before the last one.

Such disciples who had participated in the previous few Mount Shu Summit had usually reached the fifth or sixth realm and were busy searching for resources outside. They spent very little time on Mount Shu and maintained a very low profile.

The Alchemy Master's disciples were the exception. By relying on the Hall of Alchemy, they didn't have to venture out to fight for resources. As long as they serve by the Alchemy Master's side, they wouldn't lack any treasures of nature. Therefore, they would spend a lot of time on Mount Shu.

Chu Liang pondered whether he should hide out in Azure Fall Peak for a while. With Daoist Yan's close relationship with his teacher, she wouldn't leave him be. Besides, he would have the opportunity to spend more time with Senior Sister Jiang.

Upon returning to his cabin, he suddenly found a letter delivered by a white crane.

As he retrieved and examined the letter, he realized it was from the Great Astral Sect, and the sender was someone he hadn't heard from in a long time—Yun Chaoxian.

I wonder what's the major event.

Among the sects in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten, there were demonic beasts and flying creatures specialized in delivering letters. However, if it wasn't for something important, it would be unnecessary for them to make such a trip to send a letter.

Chu Liang opened the letter and furrowed his brows immediately.

It turned out that Yun Chaoxian mentioned in the letter that someone from the Great Astral Sect wanted to mess with Chu Liang.

This matter stemmed from some time ago in Black Whale Mountain, where Chu Liang had killed a white ape. The dying white ape had sent out a white beam of light, and Chu Liang had suspected it was a distress signal. Now, it seemed his guess was correct.

He hadn't expected that the white ape was actually a demonic beast that had followed the cultivation of the Great Astral Sect.

The senior whom the white ape followed had passed away many years ago, but that person has a junior brother, who knew the white ape. This junior brother was named Zhang Juque.

Zhang Juque was also a famous martial arts grandmaster within the Great Astral Sect. Known for his fiery temperament and hatred for evil, he held the title of "Strongest Sixth-Realm Cultivator" in the cultivation world.

Despite being a genius and once flourishing greatly, Zhang Juque couldn't break through to the seventh realm and was stuck within the Earth Gate. Nevertheless, his understanding of martial arts had reached an unparalleled level, allowing him to even hold his ground against some seventh-realm cultivators.

He was always considered the strongest among those in the sixth realm.

The information provided by the white ape included scenes of Chu Liang and his Golden-Furred Hound defeating it, as well as its accusations of Chu Liang invading its cave and stealing its spirit plants.

Chu Liang was depicted as an unforgivable bandit, not only plundering treasures but also ruthlessly killing the ape to cover his tracks.

Upon receiving this information, Zhang Juque was furious. After confirming Chu Liang's identity, he was ready to come to Mount Shu to teach this utterly sinful cultivator a lesson.

Fortunately, Yun Chaoxian coincidentally received this information and promptly advised Zhang Juque. He mentioned his friendship with Chu Liang and portrayed him as a brave and loyal

cultivator who didn't seem like someone who would commit such an evil act. Yun Chaoxian suggested to Zhang Juque that there might be some misunderstanding.

However, when Zhang Juque asked if he could vouch for Chu Liang, Yun Chaoxian hesitated because he didn't understand the situation either. So he quickly wrote to inform Chu Liang, urging him to reply and explain the situation.

If Chu Liang couldn't explain clearly, Zhang Juque would come to Mount Shu to kill him.

This martial arts grandmaster had spent many years hunting demons and evil spirits, and he was highly respected in the cultivation world. If Chu Liang had truly done something wrong, the Mount Shu Sect might not be able to protect him.

As Chu Liang stared at the letter, he also read between the lines of Yun Chaoxian's message. It subtly hinted at Chu Liang, suggesting, "If you really did something wrong, run now."

After pondering over the letter for a while, Chu Liang picked up a writing brush and wrote a reply.

"Brother Chaoxian, seeing your letter feels as though I am seeing you in person.

"I have received your letter, and I appreciate your concern. Regarding the matter of the white ape, there are indeed many twists and turns. If convenient, please have your senior come to Mount Shu, and I will explain everything in person. If there are any lies, your senior can punish me on the spot."

Chapter 198: Esteemed Senior, Did You Hear All of That?

The next morning, Silver Sword Peak welcomed three guests.

At the front of the group was a white-haired old man with straight, sloping eyebrows and a gaze so bright and intense that it was frightening. He had the air of a man that was as calm as still waters and as immovable as a mountain. The old man even carried a massive sword the size of a door on his back, which was rather attention-grabbing.

Behind the old man was a handsome young disciple in white robes. His straight posture accentuated his slim and tall figure. He also carried a heavy broadsword on his back, but it wasn't as absurdly sized as the old man's.

The person at the rear of the group was a burly man with thick eyebrows, large eyes, and a huge halberd on his back. It was Yun Chaoxian. He looked a little nervous as he glanced at the old man—his senior uncle, Zhang Juque. Yun Chaoxian seemed really afraid that his senior uncle would get violent the moment he heard something he didn't like.

These three men were martial artists from the Great Astral Sect.

As expected, Zhang Juque was an impatient man. After receiving Chu Liang's reply yesterday, Zhang Juque charged over to find Chu Liang first thing the next morning. The handsome young man behind Zhang Juque was his disciple and one of the four core disciples of the Great Astral Sect, Li Fujian.

Yun Chaoxian was tagging along entirely out of his loyalty to Chu Liang. He thought that if things didn't go well, he might be able to help mediate and ease the tension.

Chu Liang was very grateful to Yun Chaoxian for that, but he was confident that this conversation would go well.

Chu Liang raised his hand and said, "Let's welcome our guests!"

Behind Chu Liang, Liu Xiaoyu'er stood on one side and the Golden-Furred Hou stood on the other. The two of them gave slight bows to the group from the Great Astral Sect. Every living being on Silver Sword Peak had come out to welcome them, and even the flower beds had been pruned. It was a considerably grand reception.

Zhang Juque's status in the martial world was worthy of such a grand reception. If his visit were reported to the Mount Shu Sect, they would give him a reception that was, at the very least, on par with welcoming the grand peak master of another sect.

Chu Liang stepped forward and spoke in a clear voice. "Esteemed senior, upon hearing that you were coming to honor us with your presence, I could not help but fear we wouldn't be able to treat you with the level of hospitality that you deserve. Please forgive our inadequacies."

"No need for pleasantries." Zhang Juque shifted to Chu Liang as he cut straight to the chase. "I'm here to investigate the death of the demonic beast White Ape that used to be under the care of my sect. Didn't you want to explain it to me in person? Tell me about it now."

"This isn't a good place to hold discussions. I've prepared a special hotpot we have here at Mount Shu. It's made with the flesh of a recently slain Winged Fire Snake demon. Esteemed senior, why don't we go inside? You can eat while listening to my explanation," Chu Liang suggested.

He then led the three men into Di Nufeng's pavilion. Chu Liang couldn't possibly entertain these guests in his small cabin, so he borrowed the hall of Di Nufeng's pavilion.

Zhang Juque sat down, but he had no intention of dining.

Instead, he said coldly, "There's no need to rush. If you are truly innocent, I'm willing to feast with you. But if you are a crafty and evil person, I won't eat your food."

"Esteemed senior, you can rest assured that's not the case," Chu Liang replied with a small smile.

He recounted the events that had occurred on Black Whale Mountain, starting with how he and the White Ape had fought over the Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower. Then he spoke of how the White Ape had killed someone just so it could frame him and the Golden-Furred Hou for the crime and that it had ultimately led to Chu Liang killing the White Ape.

Hearing Chu Liang's account made Zhang Juque furrow his brows. "White Ape cultivated in my sect for so many years. Would it really kill someone out of spite? Do you have evidence to prove this?"

Chu Liang replied, "The Misty Waters City's chief officer and city supervisor can testify. Moreover, I'd already left Black Whale Mountain that day. Why would I go back? If I wanted to kill to take the treasures, why would I leave and give it time to set up an ambush for when I returned? The White Ape intended to use the power of the Great Astral Sect to get revenge against me."

Zhang Juque said, "If that's indeed the case, it wouldn't be right of me to wrong you. However, I still need to head to Misty Waters City and verify what you've said before I can believe it to be true."

Despite saying that, Zhang Juque was already eighty percent convinced by Chu Liang's detailed and plausible account.

The White Ape's actions had indeed been its final desperate attempts, while on the verge of death, to exact revenge on someone it hated.

However, the White Ape's master had died many years ago, so how could the Great Astral Sect offend the Mount Shu Sect because of it? The only person who might do that was Zhang Juque, who hated evil with a vengeance. Nevertheless, as long as Chu Liang was confirmed to be innocent, Zhang Juque wouldn't do anything to him.

"Hehe." Yun Chaoxian laughed. "I told you, Brother Chu's like me. We both embody justice and wisdom. How could he do anything bad?"

Zhang Juque glared at Yun Chaoxian and warned, "If you dare to commit any crimes in the future, I won't hesitate to punish you."

Yun Chaoxian flashed a sheepish grin.

Zhang Juque let out another sigh. "The White Ape had been with my sect since my youth, so you could say that I'd known it for many years. I did not realize that it had such a bad temperament..."

Chu Liang replied, "Esteemed senior, forgive me if it is inappropriate for me to say this, but... several decades may seem long for humans, but it's just a short time for demonic beasts. It's not enough for you to fully understand what they're like."

Yun Chaoxian let out a deep sigh. "It's like if Junior Brother Fujian's raising a spirit pet, and I grow with it. But Junior Brother Fujian ends up dying before me and then that spirit pet leaves the Great Astral Sect and does some bad things... I'd probably feel the same way as you're feeling now, Senior Uncle."

"Mm..." Li Fujian uttered. He was about to express that he agreed, but just as he was nodding, he realized there was something off about Yun Chaoxian's words. Li Fujian furrowed his brows and said, "Why would I die before you?"

"I'm just saying hypothetically. Don't take it seriously." Yun Chaoxian chuckled. "Besides, your cultivation level isn't as high as mine, so would it be strange if you went before me?"

"What bu—what drivel are you spouting?"

Li Fujian had been about to use some rather uncouth words, but he remembered his teacher was present and immediately changed his words.

Li Fujian retorted, "Even if I do end up dying before you do, it's because I'm stronger than you! When battles occur, our sect always has our strongest on the frontline! Those who survive are always the weakest!"

Zhang Juque glanced at his rebellious disciple and furrowed his brows disapprovingly.

As Chu Liang watched the two young men squabble, he merely chuckled.

However, in his mind, he was mocking them. It's widely rumored in the martial world that the disciples of the Great Astral Sect share one brain. It seems there's some truth to that...

While the squabble inside the pavilion continued, some people were causing a din outside as well.

Someone called out, "Chu Liang, get out here!"

...

Chu Liang stepped outside and saw three people standing in the spacious clearing on the Silver Sword Peak's hillside. They were people Chu Liang had met before—Liu Qin and Lu Xun, two of the Alchemy Master's disciples. Standing in front of them was a disgruntled little brat.

It was clear they hadn't come with good intentions.

"Do you have something to discuss with me, senior brothers?" Chu Liang asked.

Lu Xun replied, "Yesterday, you instigated Xiao Tong to provoke the Baize youngling. We've come here today to demand an explanation from you about that!"

"Demand an explanation?" Chu Liang said.

Chen Lingtong stood arrogantly with his hands on his hips and shouted at Chu Liang, "We're going to beat you up!"

"Haha," Chu Liang chuckled as he looked at the kid. Then he asked, "Do you now know that you shouldn't throw stones at spirit beasts?"

"Ugh!" Chen Lingtong uttered angrily.

Chu Liang's words immediately sent Chen Lingtong into a rage.

Chen Lingtong yelled, "Hurry up and beat him up!"

"Hmph," Lu Xun snorted. He muttered darkly, "Di Nufeng isn't here, yet you dare to behave so arrogantly—"

"Wait a minute!" Chu Liang said loudly, suddenly raising his hands. "You can beat me up, but I want to clarify the matter first! Besides, I'm no match for you anyway. Once I'm done talking, I definitely won't fight back."

"What do you want to clarify?" Liu Qin asked coldly.

"First, you indulged this child and let him throw stones at the Golden-Furred Hou. Then when the Golden-Furred Hou resisted a little, you beat it up. That's what happened, right?" Chu Liang asked, pointing at Liu Qin. "I apologized of my own accord for that incident. The child then threw stones at the Baize youngling and suffered the consequences of his bad behavior when the Baize youngling struck back. Yet, instead of going to the Baize youngling, you came to cause trouble for me. This is a fact too, isn't it?"

Chu Liang's voice was sonorous and powerful as he continued, "You're clearly just using your power to bully others. You step on the weak but fear the strong. Do you admit it? That you're acting so brazenly just because your cultivation level is higher than mine?!"

"What a load of nonsense." Lu Xun flung out his sleeves dismissively. "So what if our cultivation level is higher than yours?"

He leaped forward, eager to attack.

Lu Xun had no interest in stopping Chu Liang from taking the moral high ground because he hadn't come to fight with words. Instead, he'd come to find some opportunities to mess with Chu Liang. After all, Lu Xun had worked hard to incite his senior brother to take action with him. He didn't want to waste any more time on useless words. With his senior brother here, Lu Xun couldn't be blamed if any "mishaps" were to occur in the chaos of the battle later...

At this moment, Chu Liang suddenly turned slightly to face the pavilion behind him.

He asked respectfully, "Esteemed senior, did you hear all of that?"

Before Chu Liang even finished speaking, an old man carrying a massive sword on his back slowly emerged from the pavilion with a dark expression.

The old man said, "To think that the Mount Shu Sect, which has been prestigious and upright for thousands of years, has produced such unruly disciples like you. It seems that I must teach you a good lesson today on your teacher's behalf."

Lu Xun and the others looked at this obviously extraordinary old man and felt rather confused. Where did this person come from? Why hadn't they ever seen him on Mount Shu before?

Liu Qin was the first to recognize who the old man was. Looking at the massive sword on the old man's back, Liu Qin's eyes filled with fear.

He raised his hands high, but he didn't have the time to do anything else except let out a cry.

"Esteemed senior, it's a misunderstanding—"

The screams on Silver Sword Peak were especially loud that day.

Chapter 199: Teacher, You Are Finally Back!

After recognizing Zhang Juque's identity, there was no thought of resistance in the minds of Liu Qin and Lu Xun. Their first reaction was to escape.

Although they were both at the beginning stage of the sixth realm while Zhang Juque was at the pinnacle of the sixth realm, it didn't seem like the gap between them and Zhang Juque would be that significant, especially if they were to attack Zhang Juque together.

The third and sixth realms were both significant thresholds in cultivation. As one progressed to higher realms, the disparities between individuals in the same realm grew wider.

The gap between individuals in the sixth realm could be likened to the difference between humans and dogs. This perfectly described the gap between them and Zhang Juque.

The two individuals swiftly turned around and vanished into the clouds. They paid no attention to Chen Lingtong on the ground as they soared upwards into the sky. With a reputation to uphold, Zhang Juque wouldn't beat up kids, but his actions towards them remained unpredictable.

In an instant, the two of them displayed an almost telepathic connection, splitting up in opposite directions without exchanging a word. They instinctively knew to split up.

However, escaping proved to be no easy task.

Suddenly, Zhang Juque moved, with almost no visible trajectory, appearing in the air above Liu Qin's head. The speed at which he burst forth was almost on par with the immortal technique of Dimension Compression! It was terrifying!

Liu Qin was flying face forward when a flat-patterned sole appeared before his eyes.

Bam!

In the next moment, this sole was imprinted on his face.

Boom!

Liu Qin's body crashed to the ground at a speed faster than his flight, slamming heavily onto the mountainside, kicking up a cloud of dust.

Immediately, Zhang Juque's body swayed.

Meanwhile, Lu Xun, who had quickly left the airspace of Silver Sword Peak, was already far away. But the Old Man with the Sword only needed a flash to erase all his efforts.

Bam!

A large hand grabbed Lu Xun's ankle, causing the white-clad man suspended in midair to momentarily halt before being forcefully flung to the ground.

Boom!

He was smashed to Liu Qin's side.

The two were stuck in the same pit.

It felt as though Zhang Juque had struck them lightly. Though seemingly gentle, those two moves rendered the cultivators unable to rise from the ground. They paused momentarily before struggling to stand upright.

The old man raised his hefty sword high before descending to the ground.

He also possessed a sense of restraint in his actions and naturally refrained from directly killing these two disciples of Mount Shu. Instead, he used the back of his broadsword to slam down fiercely!

Bang! Bang! With two heavy strikes, the two disciples of the Hall of Alchemy were knocked down once more.

Lu Xun was slightly smarter. This time, he remained on the ground and refrained from attempting to get up again.

However, Liu Qin was a bit slower; despite still trying to struggle to rise, he received another forceful blow from the broadsword with a resounding bang!

Throughout the entire process, Zhang Juque seemed to employ no martial techniques or profound divine skills. He relied solely on pure speed and strength, overwhelming with sheer force alone!

The two Mount Shu disciples, both at the sixth realm, were like toys in his hands, utterly powerless to resist.

"Taking advantage of one's position to bully others... Bullying the weak... What's the difference between this kind of righteous sect and the diabolical sect?" Zhang Juque remarked with a pause. "I wonder who your teacher is. I should have a good talk with him."

As he spoke, he deftly slammed down twice with the broadsword in his hand.

Bang! Bang!

"Yes! Yes! Senior, we know we did wrong!"

"Senior, please stop hitting us!"

The two of them cried out loudly for mercy. Zhang Juque wasn't the only one longing to see their teacher. They themselves wished fervently that their teacher could show up quickly and rescue them from this dire predicament.

At the same time, Chen Lingtong stealthily retreated, slipping away unnoticed.

He wanted to escape.

But suddenly, the sinister Chu Liang emerged, blocking his path to escape.

Chen Lingtong stared at him fearfully. "What do you want? My grandfather is the Alchemy Master... I-I'm just a child! You can't hurt me!"

"Of course I wouldn't lay a hand on you," Chu Liang smiled sinisterly. Suddenly, he snapped his fingers lightly while saying, "But you have trespassed into the Silver Sword Peak. The peak's guardian beast, the Golden-Furred Hou, does not recognize children."

Bam!

The massive figure of the Golden-Furred Hou leaped out from the side, lifting a paw, and slammed down—

The naughty kid let out a miserable cry of "Ah—" as he was sent flying high once again, landing dozens of yards away.

Chu Liang leaned on the awry with his hand and looked over.

"That was quite a height, but still slightly inferior to Baize. Keep up the good work!" Chu Liang remarked.

...

After a moment, Zhang Juque lifted the unconscious disciples of the Hall of Alchemy and headed straight for Heaven-Reaching Peak.

He intended to bring these two disciples before the Alchemy Master and observe as he educated them properly. Although this was the territory of Mount Shu, and he was slightly inferior in seniority to the Alchemy Master, it didn't matter.

Over the years, the Great Hero Zhang had traveled the world, fighting on the side of reason.

Li Fujian accompanied his teacher to keep up appearances, while Yun Chaoxian stayed at Silver Sword Peak with Chu Liang for some time.

Yun Chaoxian said, "Brother Chu, after returning to the Great Astral Sect last time, I've been contemplating your Brick Combat Technique and have created a new method," he said.

"Oh? Brother Yun, please continue," Chu Liang immediately responded.

"The brick, as a weapon, mainly has two advantages that can be used," Yun Chaoxian analyzed seriously. "Firstly, it's readily available and can be found everywhere, but this aspect isn't particularly useful for you. Secondly, it's small in size, making it discreet to wield and difficult to notice."

Chu Liang nodded in response.

Yun Chaoxian was indeed proficient in close combat.

He had countless times utilized this point, diverting the enemy's attention slightly and then launching a surprise attack with the Demon-Revealing Gold Brick.

"So, besides close-range Brick Combat Techniques, I think it can also be used as a concealed weapon," Yun Chaoxian said. "I can teach you some throwing techniques for these heavy concealed weapons."

"Well, that sounds good," Chu Liang said with a smile.

For martial artists of this level, employing concealed weapons wasn't as straightforward as merely throwing them with brute force. There were intricate techniques involved.

Because martial artists were at a slight disadvantage in long-range attacks, some of them would resort to using concealed weapons to compensate for the lack of long-range offensive capabilities. The concealed weapons they wielded were incredibly fast!

In comparison, divine skills that allowed cultivators to exert control over objects were much inferior in terms of strength.

Yun Chaoxian then proceeded to teach Chu Liang some techniques for using concealed weapons, mainly focusing on the manipulation of "force" and "qi". Since Chu Liang had previously studied the flight trajectories of the Razor Leaf, he already had some experience and learned quickly.

In less than half an hour, he was able to hit targets within a hundred zhang accurately.

Compared to simple manipulation of objects, throwing concealed weapons required much more accuracy and strength. If one could achieve absolute precision, it would be quite formidable.

In the future, he could formally incorporate a Flying Brick as a legacy technique into his Brick Combat Techniques.

"Brother Chu, you truly have a talent for martial arts," Yun Chaoxian couldn't help but admire. "If you ever find it difficult to break through the sixth realm in Qi Refinement, you might as well consider joining our Great Astral Sect. You definitely have the potential to achieve enlightenment through martial arts."

"Hehe, Brother Yun, you flatter me," Chu Liang modestly smiled in response.

Even if one day he were to switch to martial arts cultivation, he probably wouldn't consider joining the Great Astral Sect, as their temperaments just didn't match.

"Brother Yun, this time you helped me explain to Senior Zhang and also took the trouble to teach me concealed weapon techniques. I really don't know how to thank you," Chu Liang sincerely expressed his gratitude.

"Hey!" Yun Chaoxian waved his hand. "We're friends, and if it weren't for your honorable conduct, I wouldn't have been able to explain for you. Plus, your defeat of the demon god's divine envoy last time elevated my status within the sect."

"Of the four core disciples, no one but the Eldest Senior Brother can surpass me in ranking," Yun Chaoxian said proudly with a grin. "And my Eldest Senior Brother is not as sharp as me, so I believe I have a very bright future in the Great Astral Sect."

The Eldest Senior Brother he mentioned was Ren Hongdao, the most renowned among the four core disciples of this generation. Alongside him, Li Fujian, and a spear practitioner, they represented the future of the Great Astral Sect.

"That is awesome." Chu Liang praised.

When he first heard Yun Chaoxian boasting about being the smartest within the sect, Chu Liang thought he might have been exaggerating. However, after meeting Li Fujian, Chu Liang suddenly felt there might be some truth to it.

After a while, Zhang Juque returned with Li Fujian.

He explained that he had already discussed the matter with the Alchemy Master. The elder promised to take proper measures to discipline his disciple and great-grandson in the future. Therefore, Zhang Juque decided to let the matter rest.

Chu Liang expressed his gratitude once again.

With the matter settled, Zhang Juque took the two juniors back to the Great Astral Sect. Before departing, Yun Chaoxian promised Chu Liang that he would attend the Mount Shu Summit.

...

After seeing them off, the Silver Sword Peak fell silent for a moment.

Now that the matter had been brought to the attention of the Alchemy Master, Chu Liang was not worried about further retaliation. Even if the Alchemy Master wanted to seek revenge, he would surely wait for Di Nufeng to return before taking action, rather than bothering a junior disciple like him.

Just as he was contemplating, a burst of firelight came straight towards them from the southwest.

Upon seeing this, Chu Liang immediately waved his hand and summoned the Golden-Furred Hou.

The Golden-Furred Hou's wounds had healed in just a day, and the bandages had been removed. Now, Chu Liang swiftly rewrapped its large head with bandages.

Bam!

A loud explosion sounded.

This lively and urgent atmosphere indicated that Di Nufeng had returned home.

Her expression wasn't exactly pleasant.

Three Eminent Ones of Mount Shu arrived at the Evil Demon Mountain only to find that the ferocious beasts had escaped and wreaked havoc in multiple locations in the surrounding areas.

Aside from the Mount Shu Sect, other immortal sects had also taken notice and dispatched individuals to investigate the situation.

And the reason behind all these events was the emergence of the ferocious beast Taowu.

Hidden within the depths of the Evil Demon Mountain lay the legendary Taowu, the king of all ferocious beasts, sealed away. However, not long ago, Taowu broke free from its confines and its current location remained a mystery.

The outcome of their investigation proved unfavorable, and the three Eminent Ones spent another two days assisting in the extermination of the scattered ferocious beasts. It was a busy and hectic time, leaving Di Nufeng with a rather disheartened mood.

As soon as she returned to the Silver Sword Peak, she saw Chu Liang walking over with the Golden-Furred Hou, its head bandaged. Both of them looked dejected, as if someone had bullied them.

"What happened?" she asked while frowning.

"Esteemed Teacher, you are finally back!" Chu Liang cried, "Someone bullied our Golden-Furred Hou!"

Chapter 200: I Won't Do It Anymore

"What?" Di Nufeng exclaimed in astonishment.

Although it was somewhat expected, this incident still felt too extreme for her, challenging her understanding[1].

"It's not that kind of bullying," Chu Liang hurriedly explained. "The other day, the Alchemy Master's great-grandson..."

Immediately, he recounted how Lingtong had attacked the Golden-Furred Hou, how Liu Qin had beaten the Hou, and how later disciples from the Hall of Alchemy had come for revenge. Thanks to the intervention of Senior Zhang from the Great Astral Sect, they had narrowly avoided a disaster... He narrated the entire series of grievances they had suffered.

"If it weren't for Senior Zhang's righteous intervention, Teacher, I truly wouldn't know if I could still see you!" Chu Liang's eyes welled up with tears as he spoke emotionally.

"Dammit!" Di Nufeng fumed after listening, her anger flaring. "I've heard about that old guy raising a mischievous great-grandson before. If he isn't disciplined properly, won't he become a problem of the Mount Shu Sect in the future!"

Esteemed Teacher, does your anger stem from the sense of crisis over losing your title?

Chu Liang mused internally before asking, "Esteemed Teacher, what should we do?"

"What should we do?" Di Nufeng stared at him strangely as she said, "You've worked with me many times before, aren't you familiar with the procedure?"

"But that's the Alchemy Master," Chu Liang pointed out.

Di Nufeng waved her hand dismissively. "Just watch how I will stand up for you!"

...

"Esteemed Teacher, you must stand up for us!"

In the conference hall of the Hall of Alchemy, Liu Qin and Lu Xun knelt on the ground and cried bitterly.

Zhang Juque had beaten them up and then brought them to the Alchemy Master for a stern reprimand. Though their injuries were not severe, the spread of the news would undoubtedly tarnish their reputation and dignity, leaving them feeling uneasy.

Meanwhile, Chen Lingtong clung to the Alchemy Master's leg, wailing loudly, "Great-grandpa!! I'm in so much pain! You have no idea how Chu Liang bullied me! Because of him, the spirit beasts hurled me into the sky... twice!"

The Alchemy Master sat at the center of the hall, his expression dark and serene, resembling calm water.

Despite his esteemed status, Zhang Juque showed him no respect, bringing his disciples and great-grandson directly to him, forcing him to scold them in person and refusing to leave until he was finished.

Naturally, this behavior left the Alchemy Master feeling furious.

But there was nothing he could do. Firstly, Zhang Juque had the backing of the Great Astral Sect, a powerful faction within the Divine Nine, similar to the Mount Shu Sect. Additionally, the Great Astral Sect possessed the Xuanhuang Battle Armor, ranked seventh on the Catalog of the Mortal World's Ten Thousand Treasures, further strengthening their influence. Their strength surpassed even that of the Mount Shu Sect.

Secondly, Zhang Juque's actions were justified.

His great-grandson was mischievous, and his disciples had indeed been caught causing trouble on someone else's territory. These were undeniable facts. Although he personally might not have considered the act of throwing stones at the spirit beast a big deal, his disciples were perceived as the instigators of the incident, leaving him with no grounds to argue.

He had no choice but to reprimand these junior disciples in front of Zhang Juque, aiming to swiftly send this esteemed figure of high status out. Then, he intended to resume the conversation in private.

He paid little heed to the tears of those two inept disciples, but his great-grandson's cries stirred a sense of distress within him.

Both his grandson and his grandson's wife had sacrificed their lives for the Mount Shu Sect, leaving behind only Chen Lingtong, the clever and precious child of his grandson, who always held a special place in his heart.

This was his cherished child, whom he had never dared to harm in the slightest. The sight of this precious kid being beaten up outside ignited a palpable fury within the Alchemy Master. However, the situation became somewhat complicated when considering Chu Liang's affiliation as a disciple of Di Nufeng.

Di Nufeng was not one to show him any respect.

"That's enough! Stop crying!" The Alchemy Master suddenly reprimanded.

The two disciples immediately fell silent, afraid to shed another tear.

Chen Lingtong froze in shock. The Alchemy Master immediately embraced the child's head, comforting him, "Xiaotong, don't cry. I won't let you suffer."

"Great-grandfather, will you help me give him a beating?" Chen Lingtong immediately asked.

"Erm..." The Alchemy Master paused in contemplation before responding, "As an elder, I am restricted in what I can do. When his teacher returns, I will escort you to his peak and demand justice. He will apologize and make amends for what happened, alright?"

"Just an apology? At the very least, he should be hung from a tree... twice!" Chen Lingtong pouted, ready to burst into tears once more.

The Alchemy Master felt somewhat helpless. Given his status and position, he could never physically punish a junior.

At this moment, Lu Xun stood up and said, "Esteemed Teacher, why don't we, the disciples, handle this matter ourselves? We've brought shame upon you this time, and we hope to have a chance to redeem ourselves. This is between us junior disciples, so let us deal with it ourselves!"

He had surmised that there were certain actions their teacher couldn't take due to his status, so he volunteered to help share the burden.

The Alchemy Master glared at him and shouted, "Both of you! Leave at once!"

Despite the harsh tone, it was evident that he had tacitly consented.

Lu Xun swiftly grabbed Liu Qin, and together they exited the main hall.

...

The next moment, the expression on the Alchemy Master's face suddenly shifted. He abruptly rose to his feet, positioning himself protectively in front of his young grandson.

Then, two thunderous sounds reverberated through the air.

Just as Liu Qin had exited the door, he was sent hurtling back at lightning speed, slamming violently into the wall. The force of the impact caused the walls of the main hall to fracture, and his body became lodged in the wall, contorted like a curled shrimp.

It was evident that he had lost consciousness.

If the walls of the Hall of Alchemy hadn't been made of extremely sturdy materials, he might have already broken through several walls and been propelled out to the peaks outside.

Immediately after, Lu Xun followed, crashing into Liu Qin's body, and both of them became embedded in the wall.

However, perhaps because Liu Qin took the brunt of the impact, Lu Xun's force was slightly lighter, and he didn't lose consciousness. He could barely manage to open his eyes.

As he struggled to open his eyes, he saw a tall and voluptuous woman, dressed in a fiery red gown, entering the main hall. With every step she took, the dress swayed, revealing a glimpse of fair legs through the high slit.

Following behind her was a young man dressed in embroidered clothing. With a harmless smile on his face, he took small and cautious steps as he entered the hall. It was Chu Liang!

As Lu Xun saw Chu Liang, he felt his blood boiling in his chest.

This guy is definitely a harbinger of disaster. Ever since I met him, everything's been a mess. My secret schemes keep flopping, and now I've been beaten up twice in plain sight... Lu Xun thought to himself.

"Di Nufeng!" The Alchemy Master's voice thundered with fury as he shouted, "How dare you come to the Hall of Alchemy and beat up my disciples!"

"He's just a nobody, what's the big deal about beating him?" Di Nufeng replied in a lazy tone. "Are you trying to cause a scene?!"

The Alchemy Master's hair bristled as he raised his hand, summoning a furnace with imposing force, seemingly ready to strike at the slightest disagreement!

"Hold on." Di Nufeng suddenly waved his hand and said, "I am not here to fight with you. I just came to seek justice because I heard that my disciple and our Golden-Furred Hou were bullied."

"And my disciples were beaten up by Zhang Juque. And you said that your disciple was bullied?" The Alchemy Master said angrily.

They were the ones who had suffered a setback and were still contemplating how they could exact revenge against Chu Liang. Despite this, Di Nufeng dared to show up at their territory demanding justice?

This was truly intolerable!

"Zhang Juque was the one who beat them. What does it have to do with me, Di Nufeng?" Di Nufeng looked puzzled. "I'm not the one who laid a hand on them, am I?"

As she spoke, her gaze drifted downward toward Chen Lingtong, who was being protected by the Alchemy Master.

As Chen Lingtong peeked out from behind the Alchemy Master, she suddenly asked while smiling at him, "Was it you who threw stones at my Hou?"

With that smile, a glint of fierceness briefly flickered in her otherwise relaxed gaze.

Ah... For the first time since birth, Chen Lingtong experienced a fear so profound, it felt as if he had plummeted into the depths of hell. His expression froze for a moment, and his face instantly turned pale white.

It seemed like he was petrified.

After a moment, he came back to his senses. Fear was evident in his eyes as he opened his mouth wide and cried out, "I was wrong! I'll never dare to throw stones at the spirit beast again!"

"Great-grandpa! Save me!"

"Waaah—"