

## M. Slaying 201

Chapter 201: That's Fair

"Xiao Tong!"

The Alchemy Master protected Chen Lingtong, sending a stream of foundational energy into the boy so that he could resist the pressure of Di Nufeng's might.

Rather than physical harm, the damage that Di Nufeng dealt to this boy was psychological. The intense fear that the boy felt could lead to something minor like a bad dream or develop into a major problem like negatively affecting his Dao heart in the future.

Upon seeing his great-grandson get harmed, the Alchemy Master couldn't restrain his anger any longer and toppled over an alchemical oven. A huge beam of multicolored light poured out and enveloped Chen Lingtong.

The Alchemy Master pointed at Di Nufeng and said, "If you want to fight, come with me!"

He was still rational and well aware that they couldn't fight on Heaven-Reaching Peak, which was an important place for the sect.

Hearing the Alchemy Master's words, Di Nufeng was filled with an overwhelming desire to fight. "All right, you old bastard. It's been many years since we last fought. I've been wanting to teach you a lesson for a long time."

Despite that, the two people didn't end up fighting.

At the very first moment when their streams of qi clashed, it was like a meteor hitting the earth, and everyone on Heaven-Reaching Peak sensed the terrifying vortex of qi.

Right after that, several voices rang out.

"What are you doing, Old Chen?"

"How dare you fight on Heaven-Reaching Peak?!"

"Stop it, all of you!"

Three people appeared on the scene seemingly out of nowhere.

One of them was an old man in a large white robe. He had a gray beard, black hair, and a robust figure. His right eye had the colors of blue and gold. It didn't seem like an eyeball but rather an embedded gem. His left arm was pure black as if made from meteoric iron.

He's the Weapons Master!

Chu Liang had seen this old man once before. The Weapons Master was Wen Yulong's teacher.

The second person was a middle-aged scholar that carried the unmistakable air of an intellectual. He was dressed like a scholar and had a cultured and refined demeanor. His scholarly appearance was completed by the gentle smile on his face.

He stood between Di Nufeng and the Alchemy Master like a boulder in the middle of a torrent, effortlessly blocking their clashing streams of qi.

This man should be the Conservation Master.

Chu Liang had never seen him before, but judging from the identities of the other people present, that was his most likely identity.

The third person was a tall old woman in black robes, who had her hair tied up in a bun at the back of her head. She wore a frosty expression on her wrinkly face, but her eyes were as bright as torches.

She's the Discipline Master!

Of the Four Guardian Elders, the Discipline Master had the greatest presence in the Mount Shu Sect. Whenever disciples violated the sect's rules, she would appear and punish them. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the Discipline Master, who had always been cold-blooded and merciless, was the person that the disciples of Mount Shu feared the most.

Whenever Di Nufeng caused trouble on Mount Shu in the past, it had always been on a small scale—small fights and minor disturbances. So, the Guardian Elders never paid much attention to them. However, this situation involved two seventh-realm cultivators clashing, so it was a very serious issue.

The moment they engaged in a standoff, the other three Guardian Elders arrived together!

The Weapons Master looked at the Alchemy Master and asked puzzledly, "Old Chen, why are you fighting with her again?"

"She took action against Xiao Tong. How could I just stand by?" the Alchemy Master answered grimly.

"Hey, you old bastard, don't you talk crap about me. That little bastard did something wrong. I just came to ask him about it. What, does this mean that your descendant can do whatever he wants just because you're a Guardian Elder?" Di Nufeng retorted loudly.

After hearing that, even the other three Guardian Elders were unable to remain calm.

The Discipline Master said coldly, "Don't say such nonsense. We're not unreasonable people. If you have any grievances, you can tell us."

Di Nufeng looked at the Discipline Master and pouted a little. If there was anyone Di Nufeng ever feared while growing up in Mount Shu and still feared now, that was the Discipline Master.

Di Nufeng gently pushed Chu Liang forward. "It's time for you to reason with them."

In the past, this would have been the moment when Di Nufeng be at a disadvantage. However, ever since she took Chu Liang in as a disciple, she had been finding these moments rather delightful.

Chu Liang looked at the Four Guardian Elders. It'd be a lie if he were to say that he wasn't nervous. Nevertheless, he remained composed and bowed respectfully.

He began, "Esteemed elders, it was just a small matter at first."

Then he recounted the incidents of Chen Lingtong throwing stones at the Golden-Furred Hou and the events that followed.

Chu Liang concluded, "I believe the Alchemy Master was unaware of these matters. It was probably just his disciples abusing their power. Had the Alchemy Master known about this, he surely wouldn't have acted so unreasonably, right?"

"Moreover, Esteemed Senior Zhang Juque is already aware of this matter. If it's not handled properly and news about it gets out, it will definitely tarnish Mount Shu's reputation. Esteemed elders, I humbly request that you make a decision for us as to how this matter should be resolved."

After Chu Liang finished speaking, everyone shifted their gazes to the Alchemy Master.

The Alchemy Master froze; his expression looked a little strange.

After a moment, the Alchemy Master said, "I did just find out about these matters. Zhang Juque already punished my disciples, and I was preparing to punish them severely as well. That should have settled it. But before I could do anything, this person barged in and acted extremely unreasonably, even injuring my disciples!"

The Alchemy Master pointed at the wall on which Liu Qin and Lu Xun were still hanging, clearly displaying their injuries.

Di Nufeng persisted boldly with conviction. "I didn't see Zhang Juque hit anyone, and I only made one move against them. How can that be considered settled?"

"Enough," the Conservation Master said, gently gesturing with his hands for them to stop arguing. "It seems this is just a misunderstanding. Since the Alchemy Master was preparing to punish his disciples for their wrongdoing, he should have no intent of shielding them. Di Nufeng was just a bit hasty. At this point, none of your people have suffered any losses, so let's not argue any further."

Hearing this, Lu Xun, who had become a mural, felt like he was about to cry.

What do you mean by that?

The two of us accompanied one child. We were all beaten up twice, while on Silver Sword Peak's side, a Golden-Furred Hou was the only one that got injured. Counting only those who belong in the people category, we have suffered huge losses!

"What do you mean by that?!" Di Nufeng shouted. "They deserved to be beaten. My adorable Golden-Furred Hou was just walking on the road and got beaten up for no reason. Who will compensate it for this tragic incident? The Hou is traumatized. It has shut itself inside Silver Sword Peak. It won't eat or drink. It's afraid to go outside. Who will compensate for this long-term damage?"

The Alchemy Master replied angrily, "You just won't let it go. I haven't even held you accountable for harming Xiao Tong—"

"He deserved it!" Di Nufeng shot him an enraged look. "Do you know why he was beaten up? It's all because of you! If it wasn't because an old scoundrel like you had been indulging him at every turn, how could he have grown into a little scoundrel? We're actually protecting him by beating him up on Mount Shu. It's to make him understand that when he leaves the mountain in the future, not everyone will treat him like his great-grandfather does!

"If you still refuse to educate him properly, then getting beat up will be the easiest lesson he'll ever have..."

Di Nufeng shifted her gaze and glanced at Chen Lingtong again.

This glance didn't exert any pressure; Di Nufeng was just looking at him. Yet, Chen Lingtong felt a surge of fear once more.

The little brat felt that this woman might actually kill him at any moment. His young mind was instantly shrouded in darkness. He didn't even have time to cry before he blacked out!

The Alchemy Master caught his great-grandson and noticed that the boy wasn't injured. It was likely that the boy had been overwhelmed by fear, so the Alchemy Master didn't try to wake him up.

At this moment, the Discipline Master nodded and said, "You have indeed indulged this great-grandson of yours too much. He has caused a lot of trouble on Mount Shu in the past two years. You should be aware of that."

The Weapons Master added, "Children need proper discipline. Otherwise, they might go astray despite their great potential for cultivation."

In fact, many people on Mount Shu knew that the Alchemy Master was indulging his great-grandson too much. Nonetheless, considering his status in the sect, few were willing to make a fuss over minor matters.

However, the Alchemy Master and his great-grandson encountered the boorish woman from Silver Sword Peak this time. She made such a big deal out of it that there was no way the Alchemy Master could simply ignore the matter.

"Fine." The Alchemy Master gritted his teeth and yielded. He knew he was in the wrong anyway. "I will discipline my great-grandson properly in the future, and I will also punish my disciples. You've already beaten them up, so let's just leave it at that for what happened today."

The whole affair was quite embarrassing for the Alchemy Master, so he just wanted to end this dispute quickly.

"Did you not hear me clearly?" Di Nufeng asked with a frown. "I hit them just to vent my anger; I gained nothing from it. My mount was injured. How will you compensate for that? At the very least, you have to compensate for the medical expenses, right?"

"As well as the psychological damage," Chu Liang added quietly.

You still want compensation... the Alchemy Master thought, inwardly seething with anger as he glared at Di Nufeng.

He was finally experiencing what it was like when someone was unrelenting in pushing a point.

"Di Nufeng, you shouldn't go too far," the Discipline Master warned, aiming to smooth over the conflict. She then turned to the Alchemy Master and said, "Your great-grandson and your disciples are at fault, and they should indeed compensate the other party. Since the injured party is a spirit beast, why not give them a Spirit-Enhancing Pill? How about it?"

Huh? Chu Liang was puzzled. Why does it sound like the Discipline Master is on our side?

"Aunt Tian," Di Nufeng said, giving the Discipline Master a thumbs up, "That's fair."

## Chapter 202: The Weather is Nice Today (I)

When Liu Qin quietly regained consciousness, he found himself lying on a sickbed within the Hall of Alchemy, with Lu Xun occupying the bed next to him.

He asked groggily, "What happened?"

"Don't you remember? Di Nufeng came to the Hall of Alchemy and caused a scene. When we were going out, she happened to run into us. She attacked us." Lu Xun reminded him. "She kicked each of us once."

Liu Qin shuddered suddenly, recalling some fragmented memories. Due to Di Nufeng's swift and fierce attack, he hadn't even managed to see her face clearly before losing consciousness.

After a while, he inquired once more, "So Di Nufeng beat us up when she visited our hall. Our teacher wouldn't have let it slide easily. What was the outcome?"

"It's all sorted out now," Lu Xun replied, "Our teacher offered a Spirit-Enhancing Pill as compensation, and Di Nufeng has forgiven us."

Liu Qin felt so confused.

Is my brain malfunctioning because I just regained consciousness? Why does this sentence just sound so weird?

Lu Xun didn't elaborate further but rose from his bed, stating, "You rest a bit more. I'll go to the restroom. I will fill you in on the details when I am back."

Although Liu Qin held the position of senior brother, Lu Xun's cultivation level was significantly higher, which explained why his injuries weren't as severe.

Lu Xun exited the room, glanced around, and then left the Hall of Alchemy. He soared to the rear of a desolate mountain peak and discovered a secluded spot to settle down.

An illusory figure immediately separated from his body.

He was using the Immortal Art: Roaming the World!

He sensed a summoning call from the depths of his consciousness, and there was only one person who could directly summon him through his divine consciousness.

"Boss."

Lu Xun's ethereal form materialized in the quiet room. The typically dim space was now illuminated by candlelight, and indeed, there was another person present.

It was an elegant-looking man dressed in white.

His name was Lu Chengchou.

For individuals like Lu Xun, Lu Chengchou was like a foster father. He had raised them since childhood and imparted to them divine skills and techniques.

This mysterious organization was also founded single-handedly by Lu Chengchou, with the sole purpose of undermining the Mount Shu Sect. Although Lu Chengchou had never revealed the exact reasons behind this grudge, they were very aware that he absolutely hated the Mount Shu Sect.

Seeing Lu Xun's arrival, the black-clad man beside Lu Chengchou spoke first. "Why did you take so long? The boss has been summoning you for a while."

"I got into some trouble at Mount Shu, and... I was seriously injured by someone, so it wasn't very convenient for me to leave," Lu Xun explained.

"Hmm?"

"Lu Chengchou raised an eyebrow and asked, "Trouble?"

"It's unrelated to our plan..." Lu Xun hurriedly clarified, then hesitated before continuing, "Well, I can't say it's entirely unrelated. If the Dual Wielder had killed Chu Liang, perhaps none of this would have transpired..."

With that, he briefly recounted the series of conflicts.



Initially, they had been arguing about who to bear the greater responsibility for the failed assassination of Chu Liang, but with the Dual Wielder dead, the issue was resolved. They could simply blame it on the dead.

It was entirely the Dual Wielder's fault for not performing this task well.

"For such a trivial matter?" Upon hearing the explanation, Lu Chengchou pondered for a moment and advised, "You better not provoke her in the future. Let's put aside the task of assassinating Chu Liang."

"What?" Lu Xun was surprised. He never expected such a statement from their usually ruthless and decisive leader. He expected Lu Chengchou to boldly launch a revenge plan following the Dual Wielder's death.

"I've summoned you to let you know that I've successfully lured Taowu out of the Evil Demon Mountain, and everything is proceeding as planned. We simply need to await the opportune moment to attack. During this time, you should lay low on Mount Shu and avoid getting into any trouble," Lu Chengchou said. "People like Di Nufeng are lunatics, so it's best not to provoke them anymore. Otherwise, you might suddenly find yourself dead one day."

Lu Xun hesitated. He wanted to explain but found himself at a loss for words. He had heard that Di Nufeng was fierce but he had no idea she could really display such fierceness.

He paused for a moment and eventually said, "Understood."

"You have been on Mount Shu for a long time. You should know who you can provoke and who you can't," said Lu Chengchou.

"I've only heard of her fierce reputation over the years. It was my first time interacting with her..." Lu Xun responded with a hint of apprehension.

"In any case, remember this from now on. There are two absolute lunatics on Mount Shu that you should steer clear of," Lu Chengchou said sternly.

"Aside from the first problem of Mount Shu, Di Nufeng, who is the other lunatic?" Lu Chengchou asked curiously.

He had lived on Mount Shu for about thirty years, but he wasn't entirely familiar with the people and events from the past.

Lu Chengchou said slowly, "The Discipline Master, Tian Lingxin."

...

"What exactly is your relationship with the Discipline Master?" Chu Liang finally asked the question.

Ever since he returned from the Hall of Alchemy, he had been curious about this. Over the years, he hadn't witnessed his teacher interact or contact the Discipline Master much. Yet, she was addressing the Discipline Master as Aunt Tian in such a casual manner, as though she had been doing so for a long time.

No one else on Mount Shu dared to address the Discipline Master that way.

"Maybe it's similar to ours," Di Nufeng said casually as she sat in the lofty hall of the pavilion.

She continued, "I lost my mother at birth, and my father didn't want me either. It was Aunt Tian who brought me to Mount Shu... She faced a lot of pressure in doing so. I heard that even the sect leader was against it at the time, but she stood firm and raised me."

"Is she your teacher?" Chu Liang inquired.

Before this, he had never heard Di Nufeng mention her teacher. Does this mean that the Discipline Master is my grandteacher? Chu Liang wondered.

We have a big shot to rely on!

"No," Di Nufeng shook her head, "I don't have a teacher. No one on Mount Shu taught me any divine skills and techniques."

"Eh?" Chu Liang was confused.

As he pondered over it, he realized that his teacher followed the Dao of physical cultivation. No one on Mount Shu could teach her. Still, even if she had never been taught by the Discipline Master, she should have formalized their relationship as teacher and disciple.

Di Nufeng's background appeared somewhat mysterious. In the past, Chu Liang had asked her about it out of curiosity, but she had always been very vague in her responses.

But it was understandable why she would keep her background a secret. After all, the fact that his teacher could use the Samadhi True Fire hinted at a possible connection with the imperial family.

"Anyway, I grew up under her guidance," Di Nufeng said. "I seized this Silver Sword Peak because I wanted to break away from her and establish my own foothold."

It all started to make sense.

Chu Liang naturally had no idea of these events from decades ago. And now, it sounded as though the Discipline Master played at least the role of Di Nufeng's guardian.

No wonder she was able to thrive and grow despite her tyrannical behavior on Mount Shu. It turned out that she and the Discipline Master were family!

Even if the Discipline Master remained impartial in enforcing the law and would handle Di Nufeng's matters justly, it wouldn't change the fact that the enforcer and the offender were from the same family. This meant that anyone in conflict with her had to carefully consider their options.

It was no wonder that she had been concerned about that little troublemaker, Chen Lingtong, stealing her title as the first problem of Mount Shu.

Every time Di Nufeng, who was well over seventy, looked at Chen Lingtong, she probably saw her seven-year-old self.

Since his teacher didn't want to say anything more, Chu Liang obediently chose not to ask any further questions. He turned around and fed the pill to the Golden-Furred Hou.

When they went to the Hall of Alchemy to scam...claim compensation, they received a Spirit-Enhancing Pill. This pill was intended for spirit beasts and could assist them in maturing and breaking through to the next realm.

It was extremely valuable.

The Baize youngling, which had yet to reach maturity, would naturally progress to the seventh realm. As a celestial beast, it had a chance of attaining the eighth realm without needing the Spirit-Enhancing Pill.

However, beasts like the Golden-Furred Hou, which were already mature, had little hope of advancing in cultivation level. Even if they could advance to the next level naturally, it might take hundreds or thousands of years. Therefore, they were the kind of beasts that truly needed Spirit-Enhancing Pills.

Feeding the pill to the Golden-Furred Hou was not difficult at all. Chu Liang simply needed to place any edible items near its mouth. Even if it was asleep and had its eyes closed, it would extend its tongue and maneuver the food into its mouth.

Moreover, it was currently full of energy.

However, shortly after consuming the Spirit-Enhancing Pill, the Golden-Furred Hou began to feel drowsy. The pill didn't take effect immediately; it required a digestion process that wasn't short.

It seemed probable that the Golden-Furred Hou would remain in this drowsy, hibernation-like state for some time to come.

But once it fully digested the Spirit-Enhancing Pill, Silver Sword Peak would have a spirit beast of the sixth realm!

At the thought of having a sixth-realm spirit beast, Chu Liang just felt so excited.

Normally, only the Eminent One at the seventh realm could possess such a mount. However, in the future, he would also relish the prestige of owning a mount from the sixth realm!

He patted the Golden-Furred Hou's head.

This beating was worth it!

Chapter 203: The Weather is Nice Today (II) [End of Book 2]

The following afternoon, Chu Liang convened the team members for the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony. The three juniors from Cloud Horizon Peak arrived first, with Lin Bei following shortly after.

"Big Bro! Have you called us here because you have some ideas?" Shang Ziliang asked excitedly.

"Actually, I thought of something earlier, but I was worried about you guys leaking the news, so I didn't tell you," Chu Liang said with a smile. "With the deadline drawing closer, we should investigate together."

"Ah? So you knew about it a long time ago," Shang Ziliang said, his expression shifting. He seemed to be feeling a tinge of sadness, perhaps because Chu Liang hadn't shown him full trust.

Then, he turned around and asked Lin Bei, "Did he tell you?"

Lin Bei shook his head and replied, "No."

A grin then reappeared on Shang Ziliang's face.

Soon, Chu Liang brought them to the Red Cotton Peak.

In the hill area behind the desolate streets of the Red Cotton Market, there stood an abandoned altar.

In ancient times, this place was dedicated to worshipping the gods of Mount Shu. Over the years, it gradually fell into disrepair and was later chosen by the Mount Shu Sect as the mountain gate.

It's a dilapidated open-air altar made of white stones, occupying a vast area. Many pillars surround it, most of which have collapsed and are in ruins, leaving only a small portion intact.

Chu Liang led them to a more secluded spot and had a few of them sit in a circle.

"Why are we here?" asked Shang Ziliang.

"The clue we had before was actually just a simple riddle," Chu Liang explained.

"The Riddle?" someone asked.

Chu Liang started explaining, "Half of December is June.

"At the summit of valley mountain. The word valley is written as 谷 and the top of this 谷 is the character 八, which means eight.

"Right of Jinlin River. To understand this, all you have to do is replace the right half of the character Jin, which is written as 锦, with the character wood, which is written as 木. That would then create the character 棉, which means cotton.[1]"

"As for the Manifestation of the Mountain God..." Chu Liang continued, dissecting each segment of the riddle until he finally concluded, "Naturally, I considered the Mountain God's Altar at the highest point of Red Cotton Peak."

"Today is the eighth of June. Does this mean that there will be an anomaly tonight at this Mountain God's Altar?" Lin Bei exclaimed, "No wonder the timing and location seemed so unusual earlier, it all had profound meaning. You're truly remarkable!"

The riddle mentioned the half of December, in which the Mount Shu Summit would usually occur had already passed, and mentioned the Jinlin River that no one knew, had indeed stumped many disciples of the Mount Shu Sect. However, upon listening to Chu Liang's explanation, they felt a moment of enlightenment.

"Compared to the straightforward hints we've had before, this one was just a little trickier, but not too hard," Chu Liang laughed. "I'm sure if everyone thinks about it carefully, they'll get it."

That was indeed a fact. Once one started connecting the dots in that direction, the riddle didn't seem all that difficult. The challenge lay in breaking away from the usual pattern of straightforward hints given in the past.

However, they didn't have much time to figure it out.

"Heh, who knows what clues might show up here today, but we'll definitely be the first ones to get our hands on them! Advantage is ours!" exclaimed Shang Ziliang excitedly.

I don't think I'm the only one who thought of this... Chu Liang said inwardly.

...

As they were chatting, they heard gentle footsteps approaching from the distance.

As they glanced upward, a group of women approached them. All of them were female cultivators from the Azure Falling Peak and they were all at the Golden Core Realm. At the forefront strode a woman draped in a flowing white gown, exuding an ethereal and graceful air, akin to a cloud drifting from the peak of a mountain.

Of course it was Jiang Yuebai!

As they approached, Chu Liang and the others stood up and greeted them.

"Senior Sister Jiang." He nodded gently.

Jiang Yuebai smiled and nodded in return. She then asked, "What are you all doing here?"

"Um... Well, the weather is nice today, so a few of us friends came here for a picnic," Chu Liang immediately replied.

Without knowing the other party's intentions, he naturally couldn't reveal any information.

"Heh." Jiang Yuebai blinked and said, "I see."

"Senior Sister Jiang, what about you?" Chu Liang asked in return.

"The weather is lovely today, so a few of my sisters and I came out for a stroll," Jiang Yuebai said calmly.

"Well, isn't that a coincidence," Chu Liang chuckled. "We won't disturb your outing then. Let's each go on our way."

"I think the scenery here is quite nice, and the ground is clean," Jiang Yuebai said with a gentle smile. "Why don't we have a picnic together?"

"Well..." Chu Liang hesitated.

"You wouldn't mind, would you?" Jiang Yuebai glanced at the others behind him.

Chu Liang glanced behind him and noticed that although his companions remained silent, their faces were all flushed.

Hopeless men... Chu Liang thought to himself.

But who could resist the opportunity to picnic with Fairy Jiang?

As they sat in a circle, with five young men on one side and five young women on the other, the atmosphere suddenly became a bit awkward.

Jiang Yuebai smiled and broke the silence, saying, "Did you all come out for a picnic without bringing any food?"

Chu Liang chuckled awkwardly, realizing he only had some Golden Vein Berries with him. Just as he was about to retrieve them to alleviate the awkwardness, Lackey B spoke up.

Lackey B, who had been standing at the edge, suddenly interjected, "I brought food."



With that, he unfurled a red carpet in the center and began laying out an array of snacks, fruits, preserves, candies... roast chicken, roast duck, pork trotters, braised beef... osmanthus cake, water chestnut cake, crispy pastries, sweet date cakes... accompanied by osmanthus wine, plum wine, and red bean soup.

As he unpacked, everyone around was left speechless.

Everyone could infer the size of his storage tool. The sheer quantity of food it contained implied that there wouldn't be enough space for anything else important.

This dude was basically a walking pantry.

Chu Liang silently gave him a thumbs up in his mind... This guy was truly something else!

Lackey B alone organized this "picnic." Everyone was about to dig in and commence the picnic when they heard footsteps approaching from the other side.

As they looked over, they saw Xu Ziyang leading five others from the Jade Sword Peak, walking over from a distance.

Seeing the lively scene here, Xu Ziyang was also somewhat surprised.

"You guys..." Xu Ziyang said as he glanced around at everyone.

Chu Liang grinned as usual as he explained, "The weather's great today, so we decided to have a picnic here."

Initially, Xu Ziyang thought Chu Liang was lying, but seeing all the food laid out, he began to doubt himself.

Maybe they really were here for a picnic... Xu Ziyang mused.

Jiang Yuebai then asked, "What brings Senior Xu here?"

Xu Ziyang hesitated for a moment before replying, "Well, the weather is indeed nice today, so my junior brothers and I decided to take a stroll."

"In that case, we won't disturb you," Chu Liang raised his hand, indicating they were free to go about their business.

"Hmm..." Xu Ziyang pondered for a moment, then suggested, "Since we've run into each other, why don't we have this picnic together?"

Chu Liang had expected that Xu Ziyang wouldn't leave so easily, so he glanced at Jiang Yuebai and said with a smile, "Shall we?"

Jiang Yuebai nodded with a smile as she said, "Let's go together then."

And so, on the deserted altar on the Red Cotton Peak, a lively scene unfolded, unprecedented in the long years of its existence.

Fifteen young men and women sat together, enjoying each other's company.

...

In the midst of the group, Xu Ziqing fixed her gaze on Chu Liang, lost in contemplation.

Ever since she accidentally stumbled upon Chu Liang purchasing the technique for dual cultivation at the Hall of Conservation, a burning curiosity had ignited within her. Senior Brother Chu had already advanced to the stage of Dual Cultivation with someone... but who could that person be?

Her desire to explore wasn't fueled by jealousy, but by pure curiosity.

Because the Senior Brother at the Hall of Conservation had specifically mentioned the issue of Dual Cultivation between a Golden Core of Lesser Yin and Golden Core of Lesser Yang, she concluded that the woman involved must have already formed her core, and it was a Golden Core of Lesser Yin. Otherwise, Chu Liang wouldn't have asked any question about this.

And almost all the women on Mount Shu who had formed their cores were present here. Her eyes wandered among the senior sisters of the Azure Falling Peak, and among them, she noticed that two had formed Golden Cores of Lesser Yin.

Among the two, Chu Liang seemed to be a bit more attentive to one of them, occasionally offering food and drinks, displaying a level of thoughtfulness. To those unaware, it might appear merely polite, but to those reading into these actions with other thoughts, such behavior indicated an ambiguous relationship.

That senior sister was none other than Jiang Yuebai!

Little detective Xu Ziqing's eyes sparkled as if she had uncovered a massive secret, her excitement barely contained.

Goodness gracious...

Senior Brother Chu and Senior Sister Jiang...

No wonder Chu Liang had to do it secretly. With Senior Sister Jiang's popularity in the world of immortal cultivation, they had to be careful.

Xu Ziqing had always thought that Senior Sister Jiang and her brother were the perfect match, considering they were the two most outstanding geniuses of their generation on Mount Shu. They were the two unparalleled talents. If Senior Sister Jiang ended up with someone else, she would have felt heartbroken.

But now, the harmonious interaction between Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai appeared rather natural.

After all, Senior Brother Chu was also an extraordinary cultivator who had formed an ultimate-tier Golden Core, a rare occurrence that would usually occur once in a hundred years. He was a rising star at the Mount Shu Sect. Coupled with his intelligence, good nature, and charismatic personality, Xu Ziqing silently stamped the words "perfect match" in her mind.

Although Chu Liang had treated her with aloofness, which had caused her some heartache, if he were to end up with Senior Sister Jiang, Xu Ziqing reckoned that her defeat wouldn't be unbearable.

She resolved to keep Senior Brother Chu and Senior Sister Jiang's relationship a secret, promising inwardly that she would keep this secret safe for them.

Still, it was a pity her brother wouldn't have a chance anymore. But compared to him, Chu Liang indeed had a better way with girls. She glanced at Xu Ziyang and noticed him also gazing at Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai with a pensive expression.

Did her brother also noticed something fishy between them? Xu Ziqing wondered.

Sigh.

Well, it seems he has a sensitive side too.

And at this moment...

Xu Ziyang's eyes darted between Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai as his mind raced with thoughts...

These two couldn't have just randomly appeared here. They must have also solved the first riddle of the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony at the Red Cotton Peak. There's bound to be a fight!

I must defeat both of them!

The Jade Sword Peak will take the top spot at the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony!

1. There is only one place that has the character cotton in its name. 📖

GLTD Alternate Universe's Thoughts

Translator: GT

Hi guys! How are you all doing? Hope all is well! We are at the end of book 2, which somehow includes a Chinese writing lesson. Hope you all enjoyed that! xD

I am looking forward to reading comments about book 3 just because I find myself enjoying book 3 even more. If I have to describe how I felt reading book 3, it would be lots of surprises. There are still some jokes, but the mystery deepens even further, giving us more clues. The one thing I quite enjoy doing while reading is attempting to predict what would happen next but there were many times I was so wrong in book 3. But I do notice in the comment section that you guys are quite good at guessing.

Looking forward to sharing more thoughts and surprises with all of you as we continue this journey together!

#### Chapter 204: One Moonlit Night [Start of Book 3]

The moonlight cast a gentle and enchanting glow.

The deep sea was incredibly calm, with a solitary island perched upon it. At the edge of the island sat a man, wearing a bamboo hat and a cloak that covered half of his face, revealing only a glimpse of his stubble.

If Chu Liang were here, he would surely recognize this man as the Whale-Riding Immortal he had encountered before.

By his side was a white coffin tinged with purple hues, its surface gleaming as if it was made of jade. But upon closer inspection, one could see a faint frost emanating from the grass and soil surrounding the coffin. The material used to construct this white coffin was unmistakably ice!

The man looked up at the sky and fixed his gaze above the moon.

A crescent moon hung in the sky, casting a delicate and graceful shadow, resembling a peerless beauty dancing gracefully.

Somehow, as he continued to watch, the shadow of that beauty appeared to draw closer. Her sleeves flowed with the wind, and her garments fluttered. In the blink of an eye, she stood before him.

It wasn't as if she was drawing nearer; she was already here.

When the Whale-Riding Immortal looked back, the surrounding sea had already frozen over. This island, along with its underwater portions, was indeed massive. When this behemoth moved, even ordinary icebergs would be shattered.

But at this moment, everything froze.

From an aerial point of view, one would see that the sea area for tens of miles around had turned into a mirror-like surface of ice! In an instant, the vast sea had turned into an icy expanse!

This method was simply unimaginable.

But the Whale-Riding Immortal didn't panic at all. He merely revealed a hint of helplessness. He chuckled bitterly and said, "Pretty one, why are you still bothering me?"

"It was bold of you to trespass into our cult's forbidden ground, the Moon Tomb, and steal our ancient ice coffin. You have chosen the path of death. I have come today to take your life." A cold voice echoed ethereally from a distance.

As the voice carried over, a figure floated over the ice surface.

It was a woman with disheveled long hair, dressed in a black waist-tied long robe, her skin as pale as moonlight. Her lips were red and alluring, yet her eyes were filled with icy killing intent.

"I already said from the beginning that I wanted to negotiate with you, but you refused. So, I had no choice but to take it myself." The Whale-Riding Immortal continued to grin foolishly, seemingly unaware of the woman's murderous intent. "You can discuss compensation. As long as the price is reasonable, we can negotiate. Why make things unpleasant for everyone?"

"You have already disrespected our cult. There is no room for negotiation," the lady declared firmly.

The Greater-Yin Cult was located in the secluded Moon Deity Palace in the Northern Regions. Historically, the cult has been exclusively composed of women, with very few members venturing into the outside world. It has been considered one of the most mysterious sects in the Divine Nine.

However, its power remained unquestionable. Anyone who dared to provoke the Greater-Yin Cult would eventually meet their demise, and news of their death would spread far and wide. Ruthlessness and mercilessness were among the few labels associated with this cult.

But not long ago, this man actually went to the Moon Deity Palace and made a rather unreasonable demand.

He wanted the Ancient Profound Ice Coffin in the Moon Tomb.

The so-called forbidden ground, Moon Tomb, was the burial place of all Greater-Yin Cult's predecessors who had reached the seventh and eighth realms. And this man wanted a coffin inside, which meant that they would have to remove the remains of a predecessor in that coffin.

It was impossible for the Greater-Yin Cult to agree to such a request.

However, the unexpected happened.

The following night, the man broke into the Moon Tomb, bypassing the layers of formations as if they didn't exist. He seemed to be a man of principle, taking only the ice coffin and not sparing a glance at the more valuable remains of the predecessors and accompanying artifacts.

The people in the Moon Deity Palace were furious.

The technique "Searching the Heavens and Earth" was unable to uncover his whereabouts. By relying on the secret techniques of the Moonlight Sky Palace, the lady gradually traced his footsteps until she caught up with him.

"Haaa..." sighed the Whale-Riding Immortal.

Without waiting for him to say anything else, the lady from the Greater-Yin Cult launched her attack.

With a deafening roar, a dense mist of ice billowed forth like towering waves, sweeping towards the man on the island.

Earlier, the woman had considered freezing the man along with the sea, but her powers seemed to falter when it touched the island and nothing would change.

She mustered even greater strength, channeling the foundational qi that didn't touch the island into a mist of ice. As this mist surged higher and higher, a colossal wave over a hundred feet tall was unleashed in an instant.

"Your cultivation is commendable even in the Moon Deity Palace. Return and relay this message to the leader of the Greater-Yin Cult leader: I am not taking this ice coffin for no reason. Consider this a favor I owed to her, to be repaid in due time. However, if you persist on showing aggression, I won't hesitate to take severe action." The voice of the Whale-Riding Immortal reverberated through the icy barrier.

The moment he said that, the hundred-foot ice abruptly stopped, forming a towering ice wall that stood still.

In the next moment, the ice wall suddenly extended and instantly engulfed the woman within its confines.

Rumble!

Upon the vast expanse of ice, the ice wall expanded infinitely, swiftly constructing a grand fortress over a hundred feet tall. Meanwhile, the woman found herself trapped in darkness within one section of it.

Her special divine technique was this ice technique. She really hadn't expected that the guy would take control, turning the tables and trapping her instead.

She activated her foundational qi and attempted to regain control over the ice, only to find that she had lost all connection with the ice in this domain. The Great Dao of Ice, which she had mastered, now felt so unfamiliar!

What's going on? Has the Great Dao lost its effect? No!

These ice elements have betrayed me!

To this lady, ice was like her weapon, yet now her weapon was just easily dismantled!

After a moment of contemplation, she understood the origin of her predicament. The man's affinity with the ice elements surpassed hers, allowing him to easily take away her "weapon."



How is this possible? I have attained enlightenment in the Great Dao of Ice, and I am a seventh-realm cultivator who dedicated myself to this Dao, the lady thought to herself.

Without time for astonishment, she immediately gave up on the use of the Ice-Manipulation Divine Technique. She leaped into the air, smashing through the thick ice wall with a resounding palm strike!

As expected, she could easily escape using her physical strength alone.

However, as she surveyed her surroundings, her gaze suddenly froze.

In the distance, there stood a lofty mountain that embraced the moon's radiance, with a silver palace shrouded in mist atop it, appearing ethereal and surreal.

This scene was all too familiar to her.

That mountain was none other than the Greater-Yin Cult's mountain gate, the Brilliant Yin Summit. And the palace atop the mountain was the legendary Moon Deity Palace.

How could it be that in the blink of an eye, that man had sent the entire ice fortress, along with herself, back to the headquarter of her sect?

Could someone with such means be an eighth-realm cultivator? A cultivator at the Heavenly Origin Realm?

If so, within the sect, besides the leader, Yin Guyue, there wouldn't be a second person capable of fighting him.

As she thought about this, the lady looked up and flew towards the Moon Deity Palace confidently.

...

The sea reclaimed its tranquility.

The island glided serenely ahead, its gentle movement stirring subtle ripples that danced in its wake.

With a sharp yet solemn sound, the lid of the white coffin was soon lifted, revealing a small delicate visage within.

It was the young girl who had been taken away by the Whale-Riding Immortal.

This ice coffin was prepared for her.

"Why did you wake up so quickly?" the Whale Riding Immortal asked with concern.

".... Noi-se," the young girl struggled to form the word, her voice hesitant and somewhat awkward.

"Oh, sorry if I disturbed you earlier," the man said with a chuckle. "Let's play for a while, shall we? Would you like something to eat?"

The little girl nodded gently.

With a flick of his hand, the Whale-Riding Immortal conjured a live eagle out of thin air. The eagle had a fierce expression, perhaps just moments ago it was hunting, but somehow in the next moment, it became a prey. Its expression of fierceness instantly became confusion.

The Whale Riding Immortal handed it to the little girl and said, "There aren't many nearby creatures with fresh blood, so try this."

Furrowing her brow, the young girl puckered her lips in response.

"Not a fan?" The Whale-Riding Immortal observed her expression and inquired, "Well then, what would you prefer to eat?"

The girl's mouth moved a few times, and she struggled to spit out two words, "Fruits..."

"You mean those berries with the scent of qi, blood, and dragon's breath?" the Whale-Riding Immortal said. "Indeed, they taste good, but we've already finished them. If you want more, we'll have to go to Mount Shu to get some..."

The girl's throat moved as she tilted her face up, looking at him with pleading eyes.

Haihh... The Whale-Riding Immortal sighed as he placed his hand on her head and gave her a gentle pat.

"I can't allow that," he murmured, his hand still resting on her head. "I haven't found a solution to reverse the calamity you're causing. We'll need to continue drifting at sea for a while longer. Occasionally, I'll have to use the ice coffin to suppress your powers. Going ashore could result in many casualties."

The girl humped softly, seeming a bit unhappy.

Then, the sea around them churned, roiling with an ominous energy.

The sea had experienced too much tonight. As the massive ice had been released, rumbling sounds began echoing one after another, as if the sea itself was boiling!

"Alright, alright, hurry up and eat something, then let's go back and lie down," the Whale-Riding Immortal said in a gentle tone, "If we delay any longer, we might attract attention."

The girl grabbed the somewhat mysterious giant eagle, which looked so big in her hands... yet so weak. She opened her mouth and gently bit down, breaking the eagle's neck.

A fresh stream of blood flowed into her mouth.

It should have been her favorite taste. However, since she had tasted those incredibly delicious fruits when she emerged into the world, she found herself less fond of the purely fresh blood, which carried a hint of raw scent.

Suddenly, she found herself missing the person who had given her the fruits.

...

Achoo! Chu Liang rubbed his nose and wondered, Why do I keep feeling like someone is talking about me?

Nevertheless, he didn't have much time to dwell on it as he immediately scanned his surroundings.

As evening descended upon Mount Shu, the sky ignited with the brilliance of the setting sun.

The three teams had spent the afternoon here. Following the picnic, Lin Bei busy organized games for everyone.

In terms of overall strength, the Silver Sword Peak team was significantly inferior to the other two. However, when it came to social skills, Lin Bei could single-handedly take on both teams.

The three captains tacitly allowed their team members to participate, while they watched from the sidelines, ready to handle any unexpected situations.

Amidst the laughter and chatter, the last rays of sunlight faded from the sky over yonder.

Soon, it was night time.

At that moment, a sudden change occurred at the abandoned altar on the side!

A colossal shadow of light materialized above the altar, vaguely resembling the form of a deity. It hovered in mid-air, its left hand resting behind its back while its right hand pointed forward, its eyes filled with compassion.

This was the appearance of the legendary deity of Mount Shu.

The Mountain God had manifested!

Everyone was startled, stopping whatever they were doing to gaze at the illusion of the Mountain God.

Chu Liang was the first to turn his head and look in the direction indicated by the Mountain God's right hand. There, standing prominently, was another peak.

The Sword Sheath Peak!

Chapter 205: Breaking Through the Shell

At this moment, all of Mount Shu's disciples that were outside saw the Mountain God's giant figure on Red Cotton Peak.

"What's that?"

"Looks like a projection of Mount Shu's Mountain God?"

"Could it be a clue for the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony?"

"Hurry. Let's go and take a look!"

This was how the first clue was designed to work. Even if no one managed to solve the first puzzle, they would still get to see this projection and find the location of the second puzzle.

Of course, those who managed to solve the first puzzle, the riddle, had the advantage and would take the lead.

Among the elite disciples on Red Cotton Peak, around half of them had realized that the next puzzle might be hidden in the direction that the Mountain God projection was pointing.

Several beams of swordlight immediately soared into the sky! Dozens more swords lit up in succession, streaking across the night sky. Three beams of swordlight swiftly pulled ahead of the rest.

Xu Ziyang, who was at the fifth realm, burst forth with full force, flying at a terrifying speed. The moment he put one foot onto his flying sword, he pretty much flew out of Red Cotton Peak.

Jiang Yuebai was proficient in the abilities that came with her Transcendent Spirit, so she would obviously execute the Sword Manipulation Technique, which was the most basic technique, much

better than her peers. She pursued Xu Ziyang closely without even the slightest sign of falling behind.

Chu Liang's performance was the most astonishing. To everyone else, he had just advanced to the fourth realm. They knew he had an ultimate-tier Golden Core, but that didn't explain why there wasn't a gap between him and the other two people in the lead.

After all, Chu Liang was the only one who knew he had two ultimate-tier Golden Cores running inside him! And they were rotating wildly! The vortex in his Dantian was a Yin-Yang Dual Vortex!

As the dual vortex hit maximum speed, a boom reverberated from his Sea of Qi!

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh—

The three swordlights in the lead drew long rainbow-like trails behind them and swiftly arrived overhead the Sword Sheath Peak.

This was where the Violet and Azure Twin Swords had been hidden. Sword qi often surged wildly at the top of this peak, so the Mount Shu Sect's disciples usually knew not to approach this place.

Nevertheless, Xu Ziyang, Jiang Yuebai, and Chu Liang weren't bothered by that. The three of them scanned the area with their divine sense and discovered there were some special spots on the peak. Four flags had been planted in the east, south, north, and west parts of the Sword Sheath Peak.

Xu Ziyang flew without hesitation toward the flag in the east, which was the closest to him. Seeing that, Jiang Yuebai flew in the opposite direction toward the flag in the west. Chu Liang didn't compete with either of them, flying straight toward the flag in the south.

He pulled the large flag out from the ground and realized there seemed to be a map painted on it, but the map was incomplete... It seemed that all four flags needed to be placed together to complete the map.

Chu Liang didn't have much time to think. He folded the flag and flew speedily toward the last flag in the north.

The three people had each obtained a flag without injury. However, now that they were all trying to acquire the last flag, it seemed inevitable that there would be a conflict.

Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh—

The three of them flew forward simultaneously. They were all around the same distance away from the fourth flag, so it was very likely that they would reach it at the same time.

Yet, just when they were only tens of zhang away, Jiang Yuebai suddenly made a hand seal.

Whoosh, whoosh!

She left behind two consecutive afterimages, each one showing she had covered a distance of over ten zhang. Jiang Yuebai arrived in front of the flag in the blink of an eye; it was now within her reach.

She'd used Dimension Compression!

Chu Liang exclaimed inwardly, she's so shameless to use immortal arts at this time!

Nevertheless, there was nothing he could do about it. Jiang Yuebai had told him about the seal for the Dimension Compression a few days ago, but he hadn't grasped the elusive Dao of Distancelessness yet.

Chu Liang wasn't the only one anxious; Xu Ziyang tense grew tense too.

Upon seeing that Jiang Yuebai had gained the advantage and was about to grab the second flag, Xu Ziyang raised his hand and released a beam of swordlight!

It was inevitable for the disciples to fight during the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony. The ceremony was part of the Mount Shu Summit after all. Nonetheless, Xu Ziyang didn't attack Jiang Yuebai to harm her; he just wanted to impede her momentum.

Things played out as expected... With swordlight surging toward her back, Jiang Yuebai had no choice but to turn around and draw her sword to defend herself. Her sword qi clashed with Xu Ziyang's, and their swordlights illuminated the area.

Jiang Yuebai was momentarily delayed from grabbing the flag. That was enough for Xu Ziyang to catch up and reach out from the side to grab the flag!

Still, how could Chu Liang let Xu Ziyang do as he pleased?

Chu Liang's Dustless Sword surged with the power of his two Golden Cores and unleashed the Cloud of Determination sword qi, accompanied by a deafening burst of wind!

Even Xu Ziyang did not dare to face Chu Liang's attack head-on. He swung his sword against Chu Liang's sword qi, intending to cut through it. Yet, he was instead forced to take two steps back.

Chu Liang was now the closest to the flag. Going by how the three people had clashed so far, with Xu Ziyang impeding Jiang Yuebai and then Chu Liang impeding Xu Ziyang, it should be Jiang Yuebai's turn to stop Chu Liang from grabbing the flag.

Yet, even after Chu Liang grabbed the flag, Jiang Yuebai didn't make a move against him.

It had all happened so quickly that Chu Liang didn't have the time to think about why that was the case. However, once he had succeeded in grabbing the flag, he looked at Jiang Yuebai and felt rather astonished.

"The map can only be complete if we place the four paintings together, so it doesn't matter if you get one or two doesn't matter," Jiang Yuebai said with a smile. "There's no need for us to fight each other so seriously over this."

"Senior Sister Jiang, thank you for letting me have it. This fourth map belongs to both of us; I definitely won't keep it to myself," Chu Liang replied immediately.

"That's good. In that case, we can make a trade to view the other parts of the map."

"Why don't our teams form an alliance?" Chu Liang asked, suggesting to take the cooperation with Jiang Yuebai one step further.



"Eh?" Xu Ziyang uttered.

Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai's conversation was taking an odd turn.

Xu Ziyang thought, These two are just talking among themselves. How did the situation suddenly become so strange? I'm still here, you know!

Are they forgetting I'm a person too?

He stepped forward and looked at Jiang Yuebai.

Xu Ziyang asked, "Are you really going to form an alliance with him?"

Jiang Yuebai responded with a question. "Why are you asking?"

Xu Ziyang hesitated for a moment before saying, "Actually, I can form an alliance with you too. We have the two strongest teams, so we can work together to eliminate the other teams first and then compete against each other."

"Eh?" Chu Liang uttered.

It was his turn to feel something wasn't right.

There are only three of us here. Who are the "others" you're referring to?

All of a sudden, the two young men were now trying to win over Jiang Yuebai.

Jiang Yuebai couldn't help but smile and ask, "Why can't you two form an alliance?"

Chu Liang and Xu Ziyang glanced at each other and spoke simultaneously.

"That's true."

"That would be acceptable."

If all three teams contesting against each other were to form an alliance, then it would be like there was no alliance at all.

Jiang Yuebai continued, "Regardless of whoever wants to ally with me, I will only agree to make a trade when all four parts of the map are present."

Chu Liang and Xu Ziyang nodded in agreement.

Jiang Yuebai was very quick on her feet and had already analyzed the current situation.

Each party had a part of the map, so the information they possessed did not overlap. That meant each party needed the information the other parties possessed. However, if two parties were to exchange their parts of the map, then they would possess the same information.

After that, whichever of the two parties that made a trade with the last party first would acquire all of the information. In that case, the party who had yet to make an information exchange with the last party would be kicked out of the alliance, as they wouldn't be needed anymore.

To avoid being the party that would get kicked out, there were only two options. One was to fight to be the first of the two parties to exchange information with the last party, but the fight would cause the parties to end up in a mutually disadvantageous situation. The second option was to stand firm and be the last party. They would be able to completely avoid the risk of getting kicked out of the alliance before acquiring all of the information. Nevertheless, none of them were fools, so there would be no way for them to complete the information exchange this way.

To avoid being in a mutually disadvantageous situation, the best solution was to do a simultaneous three-party information exchange. That way all three parties would acquire all the information at the same time, and no one would be placed at a disadvantage.

While the three people were conversing, more beams of swordlight descended toward the ground.

Some of them were the teammates of the three people. They had flown over from Red Cotton Peak in pursuit of their leaders. There were also other disciples of Mount Shu who had rushed over from elsewhere.

Chu Liang said, "There are too many people around now who might listen in on our conversation. Let's just head back to our respective peaks and study the parts of the map that we have. We can arrange for a time tomorrow to discuss it further."

"Sure."

Jiang Yuebai and Xu Ziyang both agreed to Chu Liang's suggestion.

...

Upon returning to Silver Sword Peak, Chu Liang initially intended to study the two parts of the map first.

Yet, before he could even take them out, he suddenly felt a slight shift in the White Pagoda.

Is it that egg?

Once Chu Liang realized what it was, he took out the mysterious beast egg from the White Pagoda.

Recently, he had been diligently incubating the egg every day. Whenever he was free, he'd hold it in his hands and infuse it with foundational qi. After doing that for many days, the egg finally showed some signs of change.

It seemed like something was about to hatch from it!

Chu Liang quickly activated his foundational qi and gently passed it through the eggshell. The response that he got from the creature inside the beast egg grew increasingly stronger, causing the egg to sway slightly. It was a clear sign of life; the creature in the egg was very eager to break out of its shell!

However, Chu Liang couldn't do much to help it. All he could do was stay by its side, guarding it silently. After waiting for an hour, the first crack finally appeared on the eggshell.

Crack.

It was a tiny crack that looked as if it had been created by a needle pricking the eggshell. That dot quickly extended into a line that then expanded into a split in the eggshell.

A green and white liquid flowed out. There was a lot of it, and it quickly made a little pool around the egg. Soon after, a very small creature appeared on the table.

Chu Liang gasped in surprise.

It was such a large egg, yet what hatched out of it was this little thing? And this thing...

The small creature on the table was about half as long as a phalange[1], slightly thicker than a needle, pure white in color, and slightly transparent. It was currently doing its best to wriggle about.

Isn't it clearly a... maggot?

Chapter 206: The Larva

Scratch, scratch, scratch.

On the empty table lay a wriggling, milky-white larva of some kind... perhaps a maggot? Chu Liang regarded it with a mixture of amusement and exasperation.

After diligently nurturing it for so many days, did I really hatch a maggot in the end?

Accepting this reality was really difficult.

The sense of accomplishment of being a male mommy vanished instantly.

In the realm of immortal cultivation, whether scouring the skies for five thousand years or delving deep beneath the earth for five thousand years, it was impossible for any cultivator's spiritual companion to be a maggot.

The larva crawled on the table, its movements sluggish, and the short distance seemed like a vast wilderness to it. Nevertheless, it persisted, occasionally changing direction as if searching for something.

Is it hungry? Chu Liang speculated.

But what should I feed a little maggot...

Chu Liang pondered for a moment, wondering if he should just release this maggot into the toilet and set it free.

In the moment of distraction, Chu Liang blinked and found that the hardworking larva had disappeared from the table.

Huh?

It had been moving so slowly just now. Did it fly away?

Chu Liang looked around, puzzled, before finally noticing where it was located. There was a hole in the table that was as small as a needle's eye and was barely noticeable. With a sweep of his divine sense, he realized that the larva had already burrowed into it.

This little creature is like a needle. It sure likes to burrow into holes.

Chu Liang smiled and carefully used a strand of foundational qi to gently lift it out. Holding it on his fingertip, he was afraid of accidentally squeezing it.

He placed the larva on the table again. This time, it seemed to have found a path, immediately burrowing downward on the wooden surface, disappearing into a small hole it created.

This tiny creature looked soft, and it was a mystery how it could burrow like that.

However, Chu Liang soon noticed something unusual.

As its upper half burrowed into the wooden table, there was immediately a small strand of golden dust emitted from its rear. Because it was so tiny, it was scattered around by the slightest breeze in the air.

But its burrowing action did not stop, and the golden dust continued flying out.

What is this?

Chu Liang speculated whether it was not actually burrowing but foraging instead. Perhaps it didn't have anything to eat, so it resorted to gnawing on wood?

With this idea in mind, he fetched a porcelain bowl and once again sucked the larva out from the wooden table, placing it into the bowl. He was about to feed it to the larva to see if it would do as predicted.

But the larva, once again, burrowed downward.

It continued gurgling from the beginning until the end at an unexpectedly fast speed. It instantly burrowed through the porcelain bowl, with its lower half now inside.

This time, the golden dust appeared again from its rear, looking more substantial, forming tiny particles that connected into a golden thread.

It could penetrate even hard porcelain? Chu Liang was slightly astonished.

Looks like this little thing isn't an ordinary larva. It has very strong teeth! Chu Liang thought to himself.

Not only does it have very strong teeth, but it can also immediately digest wood and porcelain after swallowing them, which is quite a terrifying digestive ability.

If it were a large spirit beast like a Golden-Furred Hou, it wouldn't be surprising for it to chew on two pounds of raw iron, Chu Liang mused. This larva had just been born and doesn't seem to show any special characteristics, so it's quite astonishing that it could suddenly do something like this.

But even if you are powerful, can you eat something normal please?

Chu Liang lifted the porcelain bowl and placed it on an iron plate to prevent it from burrowing through again. But before he could feed it anything else, to his astonishment, the larva burrowed through the iron plate!

Ah? It ate through the iron plate?

Chu Liang frowned and took out his green leaf artifact, activating the defensive array pattern and opening the green leaf umbrella.

The umbrella surface could even withstand at least the ordinary attacks of a fifth-realm cultivator, unquestionably solid in that regard. Chu Liang placed the larva on it, wanting to see what it could do next.

The larva had just been born and it seemed that its first lesson had been to find food by burrowing downwards. It did so without hesitation as its head had moved straight down.

Then, its upper body burrowed into the surface of the green leaf umbrella.

It can even do that?

Chu Liang hastily used his hand to channel his foundational qi to suck it out, afraid it would really damage the array pattern on the surface of the green leaf enchanted tool.

He lifted this tiny creature on his finger. Worried that it might start burrowing into his fingers, he remained extremely careful. Just the thought of it burrowing into his fingers felt extremely terrifying.

Upon closer inspection, he found that this little thing had actually grown!

When it had burrowed through wood, porcelain, and iron plates, its size didn't change much. However, after it had burrowed into the green leaf artifact, its size doubled.

Of course, because it initially had the width of a needle, it still wasn't considered big now.

Yet the speed of its growth was quite astonishing.

Chu Liang guessed that it was because the material of the green leaf artifact contained a lot of spiritual energy. It seemed to be growing by consuming this spiritual energy.

He took out a Golden Vein Berry and placed the larva on top of it. Without hesitation, the larva burrowed into it again. Given the fruit's soft surface, it could easily pierce through.

It appeared that it consumed not only hard objects but also soft ones.

Before long, it had burrowed through the entire Golden Vein Berry. Although it hadn't completely consumed it, Chu Liang noticed that the golden patterns on the surface of the fruit had disappeared.

This meant that all of the spiritual energy contained within this fruit was gone. It was now just a normal, tasty fruit.

This larva can absorb all the spiritual energy while it's eating the treasure of nature?

That's a bit powerful.

Currently, Chu Liang was thinking that there was nothing this tiny creature wouldn't eat and there wasn't anything that it couldn't bite through.

If that was the case, where should he keep this creature?

With how enthusiastic it is burrowing downward, if he had left it on the ground, he might see it emerging from the other side of the world in a few years.

After pondering for a while, he tried to bring the larva back to the White Pagoda.

As a brilliant light flashed, the larva actually appeared in the space within the White Pagoda. However, the moment it entered the space within the White Pagoda, it seemed to have fallen into a deep sleep and wasn't moving at all.



Chu Liang had assumed that since it was born from the beast egg rewarded by the White Pagoda, it should also be able to return to the White Pagoda. Just like the Golden Vein Berries grown from seeds rewarded by the White Pagoda, they could be stored in the space within the White Pagoda.

This saved him a lot of trouble.

It seemed that in the future, he should find more items with spiritual energy to feed it and help it grow quickly.

The sense of disappointment he felt in the beginning completely vanished. A larva that could eat anything seemed amazing!

He looked forward to witnessing the evolution of this larva in the future.

It wouldn't really turn into a fly, would it?

...

After fussing around for quite some time, it was getting late, so Chu Liang decided to rest.

The next morning, Lin Bei came knocking on his door.

Chu Liang looked at Lin Bei with curiosity. "Why are you here so early?"

"Naturally, there's something important," Lin Bei said with a smile. "Do you know that I've recently become an attendant in the Foreign Affairs Hall?"

"I had no idea." Chu Liang shook his head and said, "Congratulations!"

On Mount Shu, besides the four Guardian Elders and their halls, there are actually quite a few other elders and halls in charge of various affairs, although their status may not be as high.

Take Elder Shen from the Sword Exchange Pavilion.

Elder Shen would be the supervising elder of the Sword Exchange Pavilion.

The supervising elder of the Foreign Affairs Hall was the elder ranked right below the four Guardian Elders. The Foreign Affairs Hall, as the name suggested, was the hall for handling affairs outside of the sect.

Aside from significant events that require the presence of the sect leader and the four guardian elders, the routine matters involving interactions with other sects in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten, as well as the minor affairs, were all managed by the Foreign Affairs Hall. This included tasks such as distributing letters from other sects and overseeing construction projects aimed at enhancing the image of the Mount Shu Sect in the realm of immortal cultivation.

Moreover, in comparison to other halls within the sect, the competition for the position of attendant in the Foreign Affairs Hall was the fiercest. The Foreign Affairs Hall frequently interacted with the imperial court and other immortal sects, making it the sect's least dangerous hall to serve but one with tasks of high prestige and substantial potential returns.

Chu Liang stared at Lin Bei and recalled his remarkably impressive social skills. He thought that entering the Foreign Affairs Hall was indeed a suitable placement for him, allowing Lin Bei to make the most of his talents.

"But I didn't come to bring you good news today. Right now, I'm just on probation, and it's not confirmed whether I'll get to stay in the Foreign Affairs Hall permanently," Lin Bei explained. "I'm here to inform you that there's something that requires your assistance."

"Why does the Foreign Affairs Hall need me?" Chu Liang asked in confusion.

"Specifics are unclear. It's a task assigned by the Foreign Affairs Master[1], and all I know is that the individuals involved are from the Greater-Yin Cult," Lin Bei explained.

"Greater-Yin Cult?"

Chu Liang couldn't fathom any connection between himself and the most mysterious immortal sect. Nevertheless, since this was an order, he had no choice but to accompany Lin Bei on this journey.

"Anyway, we'll find out what's going on when we get there," Lin Bei suddenly asked with a mischievous glint. "Do you know why I joined the Foreign Affairs Hall?"

"Because you talk a lot?" Chu Liang replied.

"..."

Lin Bei was momentarily speechless before he answered, "It's because the Foreign Affairs Hall gives me the opportunity to engage with disciples from other sects in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten. Naturally, there are sects like the South Melody Conservatory and the Greater-Yin Cult with their assembly of beautiful women. There are too few senior and junior sisters on Mount Shu, and besides, they're all local beauties. In the future, I'll need to broaden my horizons."

"...Hope you get what you wish for." Chu Liang said.

"My first task today is to liaise with the members of the Greater-Yin Cult. This is a golden opportunity bestowed upon me." Lin Bei said, "Previously, you snatched my chances with Miss Song and Miss Xue. This time, I am determined to be one step ahead."

Chu Liang immediately looked around and said, "You better not talk nonsense on Mount Shu. What chances did I snatch away?"

"The chance to know them first? What were you thinking?" Lin Bei responded puzzledly.

"Nothing." Chu Liang shook his head and quickly changed the topic. "I heard that the members of the Greater-Yin Cult all follow the cultivation path of the Supreme Mind and are extremely cold and ruthless. Are you sure you can do it?"

"Not everyone can master the cultivation of the Supreme Mind. There were many cultivators of the Greater-Yin Cult who ended up getting married." Lin Bei said confidently, "Even if she's an ice queen, I'll just melt her with my warmth," Lin Bei said confidently.

As they spoke, the two arrived at the Heaven-Reaching Peak, where a quiet room had been prepared for the Foreign Affairs Hall.

As soon as Lin Bei entered the room, his eyes lit up.

A young woman, dressed in black with her hair tied up, sat in the room. Her skin was as fair as porcelain, and her features emitted a heroic vibe. Despite the clean appearance of her brows and eyes, she exuded a faint air of indifference.

Before coming, Lin Bei hadn't seen this disciple from the Greater-Yin Cult, but now that he laid eyes on her, he couldn't help but feel that her appearance and demeanor were indeed befitting of her background.

"Hehehe!" Lin Bei approached with a cheerful laugh, "Hello, hello, hello! I presume you must be the disciple of the Greater-Yin Cult. I've heard that the Greater-Yin Cult is renowned for producing beauties, and today, seeing you confirms the rumors are true."

"This is Chu Liang, the person you are looking for! I'm Lin Bei," Lin Bei approached again.

He continued smiling as he said, "After we're done here, do you have some time? How about we grab a meal together? You can't come to Mount Shu and not try our spicy and fragrant hot pot! Or maybe you'd like to enjoy the romantic moonlight on Mount Shu tonight?"

Chu Liang was very observant.

He saw her lips move twice, appearing to be forming the word "idiot."

However, Lin Bei remained oblivious and, seeing her silence, continued with a laugh, "Don't be afraid. The disciples of Mount Shu have always been very friendly."

The lady in black finally couldn't tolerate it anymore. Her eyebrows furrowed tightly as she opened her mouth, and with a deep, manly voice, she coldly spat out every single word, "Get lost."

Chapter 207: Luo Xiaoyong

"I am the Mortal-Realm Wanderer of the Greater-Yin Cult. I came to Mount Shu Sect to see you." The lady in black...Erm...the black-clad individual whose gender remained ambiguous said to Chu Liang.

The Mortal-Realm Wanderer of the Greater-Yin Cult was like the head disciple of Mount Shu. The sect would have the most talented individual of the generation handle affairs in representation of the sect.

Chu Liang and Lin Bei were both really shocked. The person in front clearly looked like a girl, but their voice sounded a bit hoarse and deep?

"You..." Chu Liang stared at the black-clad individual as he contemplated on how he should ask the question.

Then, the black-clad individual said with his deep voice, "My name is Luo Xiaoyong.[1]"

Great. I don't have to ask anymore.

No girls would be named Luo Xiaoyong.

"Brother Luo, I am sorry." Chu Liang apologized as he took a seat, "My friend here misunderstood earlier... It was a bit presumptuous. But your appearance is quite deceiving. Anyway, I apologize for that."

"It's alright. It's not the first time this has happened." Luo Xiaoyong said indifferently, but then added with a change of tone, "Although, among the many lustful individuals I've encountered, there aren't many as presumptuous as him."

"Hehe." Chu Liang could only smile awkwardly.

"However..." Lin Bei still had a trace of curiosity, "Isn't the Greater-Yin Cult known for exclusively accepting female disciples? How did you manage to join?"

Luo Xiaoyong replied, "I came to investigate some matters. I shouldn't have to explain these to you guys."

Lin Bei scratched his head as his eyes filled with a gleam of admiration.

The only male disciple in the Greater-Yin Cult, amidst a sect known for its abundance of beautiful women... That sounded too good to be true.

Chu Liang asked, "I wonder what Brother Luo came to ask me about?"

"A few days ago, a man claiming to be a Whale-Riding Immortal came to the Greater-Yin Cult. He wanted the coffin that held one of our cult's predecessors from our forbidden grounds. The elders naturally refused, so he broke into the tomb that night and stole the ancient ice coffin," Luo Xiaoyong explained. "Now, our sect has issued a Mortal-Realm Wanted Notice, seeking this person across the Nine Provinces. I heard you had an encounter with him in the South Sea before. Can you provide any clues?"

"The Whale-Riding Immortal..." Chu Liang pondered.

Is he the person who might be Senior Sister Jiang's father?

Come to think of it, the lantern fish he caught at that time could also be considered the ancient tomb of an Eminent One at the Heavenly Origin Realm. Now he has gone to steal from the Greater-Yin Cult's tomb... Is he just a professional tomb robber?

If Chu Liang was honest, there was indeed some information he could provide to the Greater-Yin Cult, such as the mysterious little girl he met, and the Whale-Riding Immortal's connection with Senior Sister Jiang... but Chu Liang certainly couldn't reveal everything.

I need some time to think, Chu Liang thought to himself. And so, he asked, "Before I answer that question, I actually want to know how you joined the Greater-Yin Cult?"

Luo Xiaoyong looked at him strangely.

"Everyone knows that the Greater-Yin Cult only accepts female disciples. With doubts about your identity, I really don't know whether I should answer your question," Chu Liang said.

"..." Luo Xiaoyong pondered for a moment and said, "I guess it is okay to tell you guys about it."

He explained, "My family was originally a landowner in a mountain village in the north. My parents thought I was talented and didn't want my life to go to waste, so they hoped I would embark on the path of cultivation. My father spent a lot of money to purchase a set of cultivation techniques from the black market, claiming to be techniques of the first three realms from an immortal sect in the Divine Nine. He brought it back home for me to practice."

"I studied the techniques on my own and managed to reach the pinnacle of the third realm."

Hearing this, Chu Liang was surprised.

Without any guidance and without any access to cultivation resources, only one out of ten thousand people could grasp the basics of a random set of techniques.

Those intricate and complex cultivation paths were often incomprehensible to ordinary people, let alone to practice. Yet, Luo Xiaoyong managed not only to grasp the basics but also to reach the pinnacle of the third stage all by himself!

It was simply astounding!

This level of talent could almost be described as monstrous.

"After practicing for several years, I began to notice something was off. My appearance became more feminine, and my temperament grew increasingly indifferent. It seemed like this set of techniques was changing me," Luo Xiaoyong explained.

"But having never ventured out and knowing almost nothing about the cultivation world, I didn't realize until I reached the end of the techniques that I needed to seek out fourth-stage techniques elsewhere. After wandering around the martial world for a while and joining some small sects, I quickly realized that none of their techniques were compatible with what I had practiced before," he continued.

Chu Liang began to understand what had happened.

Most cultivators of unconventional paths practice a combination of techniques. Even if they cultivated a blend of methods, they could still make progress in their cultivation.

Only those practitioners of extreme techniques, like those involving cultivation of greater yin or greater yang, would face difficulty in finding a suitable technique for the next stage of cultivation.

"It wasn't until some time later that I found out the truth. It turns out that the techniques my father bought were indeed from an immortal sect of the Divine Nine... but they were techniques from the Greater-Yin Cult!"

Pfft. Lin Bei couldn't help but laugh, quickly stifling it.

"What are you laughing at?" Luo Xiaoyong glanced at him.

"It's nothing. I just remembered something happy." Lin Bei explained promptly.

Luo Xiaoyong ignored Lin Bei and continued, "So, I climbed the Brilliant Mountain of Yin, which was located in the north, in hopes of asking the Greater-Yin Cult for the manual to the next stage of cultivation. It wasn't until later that I found out they only accept female disciples... The elders in the sect were all shocked to see me. They were surprised that I could cultivate to this level and even more surprised that I was a man... They were especially shocked that a man could cultivate the techniques of their cult to this level..."

Pfft. Chu Liang couldn't hold back a snicker either.

This was truly quite a pitiful story.

A truly unparalleled genius ended up following the cultivation path of greater yin due to learning the wrong cultivation method... This was indeed a rather sad story.

With Luo Xiaoyong's talent, if he had cultivated Mount Shu's techniques, his progress would likely rival that of Xu Ziyang.

At the same time, this was amusing.

This laughter might cost them ten years of virtue.

"What are you laughing at now?" Luo Xiaoyong glared at him again.

"I was just reminded of something amusing," Chu Liang said, covering half of his face with his hand, no longer showing his expression.

Luo Xiaoyong continued, "They discussed for a long time and ultimately decided to let me stay. They taught me to form the Golden Core of Greater Yin. I didn't disappoint the elders either; my



cultivation quickly surpassed my peers and became unparalleled in the sect. Consequently, I was chosen as the Mortal-Realm Wanderer for this generation."

This wasn't surprising.

From Luo Xiaoyong's perspective, if he had wanted to switch to another cultivation method back then, he would have had to abandon all his current progress and start over from the foundation. However, such a decision would essentially sabotage his chances of reaching the Golden Core Realm in this lifetime. It meant jeopardizing the potential of a once-in-a-generation talent, cutting off his promising cultivation journey prematurely.

From the Greater-Yin Cult's perspective, keeping such a talented individual was obviously a favorable outcome.

Even if he was a male talent.

But so what?

Times have changed, and gender shouldn't matter.

Chuckle.

...

"Brother Luo, your experiences are truly astonishing. You deserve the title of a peerless genius," Chu Liang said as he adjusted his mood and spoke earnestly.

"Now that I've shared my background with you, I hope you can answer my questions truthfully," Luo Xiaoyong replied.

"Alright." Chu Liang nodded and answered, "I have met that Whale-Riding Immortal before..."

"Previously, I went to the Immortals' Marsh to search for the Celestial Herb of Ascension. I jumped into the depths of the marsh to save a drowning little girl and stumbled upon an ancient tomb inside a fish's belly, where I unexpectedly found the Celestial Herb of Ascension," Chu Liang recounted,

carefully choosing his words. "Shortly after, when I escaped from the fish's belly, I found myself in the Southern Sea. That's where I encountered the person who had caught the big fish, claiming to be the Whale-Riding Immortal. He then took the little girl with him, while I returned to Mount Shu. We barely interacted."

Chu Liang's account was mostly truthful, omitting only the part about Jiang Shijie. Concealing too much would make his story less coherent, and Luo Xiaoyong might become suspicious. It was better to tell the truth, with strategic omissions.

Luo Xiaoyong nodded and then suddenly asked, "Do you know anything about the identity of that little girl?"

"No," Chu Liang immediately replied. "At the time, I was just curious about how a little girl ended up in the Immortals' Marsh. I wondered if she was some evil spirit in disguise, but later found out she wasn't. That's why I went down to rescue her when she fell into the water."

"So you followed that girl into that tomb in the fish's belly. You accidentally entered, but did she?" Luo Xiaoyong continued asking.

Chu Liang felt a slight pressure; this person was indeed sharp. Instead of dwelling on Chu Liang's shallow impression of the Whale-Riding Immortal, he focused on the details.

He answered honestly, "I don't think she did. It seemed like she had intentionally entered that place."

This was the safest answer, as the actual situation was that the little girl seemed to be returning home. Chu Liang also didn't want to reveal the fact that the tomb's owner belonged to the Jiang family or disclose the secrets of the origin of the Celestial Herb of Ascension, so he omitted some details.

"Do you know the owner of that tomb?" Luo Xiaoyong asked.

"I don't," Chu Liang said as he shook his head.

Ripples appeared in Luo Xiaoyong's eyes. The Supreme Mind makes everything appear as clear as if looking at a mirror.

Luo Xiaoyong immediately pointed out, "You are lying."

Chu Liang immediately understood that Luo Xiaoyong was probably able to use a similar method as the Mind-Reflecting Candle.

He had omitted some crucial details earlier, though the rest of the experience he recounted was true. Consequently, he managed to avoid discovery. However, when he spoke words contrary to his heart, he was immediately caught.

So he chuckled lightly and said, "Because this matter involves the origin of the Celestial Herb of Ascension, it is an extremely important secret. However, it has no connection with the identity of that Whale-Riding Immortal. Therefore, I feel it would be inappropriate to speak frankly to Brother Luo. Please forgive me."

Luo Xiaoyong nodded gently.

Chu Liang immediately admitted to his lie in a straightforward manner, which actually dispelled any suspicion Luo Xiaoyong might have had. After all, he came to request assistance and information, not to interrogate a suspect. The other party was not obligated to disclose everything, especially when it concerned the interests of the sect.

"You mentioned that he used a fishing rod to catch the big fish. That fishing rod must have been an enchanted tool, right?" Luo Xiaoyong suddenly asked. "Do you remember what it looked like?"

Such a tricky question... Chu Liang thought to himself.

But Chu Liang immediately understood why he asked it. It was very rare and peculiar to have a fishing rod as an enchanted tool. As long as it wasn't a personally crafted item, it wouldn't be difficult to trace its origin. This meant that they could uncover the identity of the person by tracing the origin of the fishing rod.

Pursuing someone with such a high cultivation level worldwide and capturing them was practically impossible. However, if they could trace the origin of the fishing rod, there might be a lead.

Chu Liang didn't conceal anything as he described it vaguely, saying, "It was a white rod with a golden lines around it. The material looked quite valuable."

"Alright," Luo Xiaoyong said. "That's about it. Thank you for your cooperation."

As he rose to leave, Lin Bei suddenly asked, "Brother Luo, actually, I have another question."

"Hmm?" Luo Xiaoyong turned to look at him.

His gaze seemed to say, "Let's see what nonsense you're about to spout..."

With a sincere expression, Lin Bei asked, "I was wondering, since the Greater-Yin Cult has already accepted its first male disciple, which was quite a break from tradition, is there any possibility of recruiting a second one? Um... I don't have to practice the sect's techniques, I just want to contribute... because since childhood, I have dreamt of joining the Greater-Yin Cult..."

Luo Xiaoyong looked at him and, once again, in a deep voice, uttered, "Get lost."

#### Chapter 208: Business Opportunity

On the small hillside of Silver Sword Peak, Chu Liang's team gathered again.

Lackey A stood in front of them and voiced his opinion loudly like a scholar giving a lecture. "Currently, Mount Shu's disciples are spread across three peaks, and Silver Sword Peak is the weakest of the three. In my opinion, it's better for us to ally with the Jiang Team against the Xu Team and slowly form a plan. If we make sure we're fully prepared and wait for the right timing to strike, we can dominate the competition."

"That makes sense." Chu Liang nodded. "As long as we join forces, we can definitely achieve good results."

"We will strive to do our utmost to succeed, right until death comes for us," Lackey A vowed, bowing deeply.

"All right. There's no need for such literary lines." Lin Bei pulled Lackey A down, forcing him to sit. "In my opinion, both Senior Sister Jiang and Senior Brother Xu are good choices as allies; there's no need to offend either side. We can profit by working both sides. Let's build high walls, accumulate abundant provisions, and wait for the right time to take over as king[1]."

Lin Bei was from Jade Sword Peak, so he naturally didn't want to be at odds with Xu Ziyang.

"That makes sense too," Chu Liang replied, nodding again.

"It's easier said than done to try and benefit from both sides, my lord. Don't listen to such drivel!" Lackey A urged.

Lin Bei glared at him. "Who are you saying is talking drivel?"

"You, of course!" Lackey A replied.

"Nonsense!"

"Quite the opposite!"

"..."

"Alright, alright." Chu Liang smiled helplessly and stopped the two of them from continuing their fight. "I've got my own thoughts on what to do. I'll change my strategy accordingly as the situation unfolds."

"They're here!" Shang Ziliang said, pointing at the sky.

In the distance, there were numerous beams of swordlight flying over, making a sudden arrival. The two teams from Jade Sword Peak and Azure Falling Peak came from two different directions and landed simultaneously.

Today was the day that the three teams had agreed to meet to discuss the map. The location was Silver Sword Peak.

If they had the meeting on either of the other two peaks, it was inevitable that there would be many people watching them. However, that wasn't a problem at Silver Sword Peak.

"Senior Sister Jiang, you're here!" Chu Liang went over and greeted Jiang Yuebai first. Then he turned and gave a light nod to Xu Ziyang. "Senior Brother Xu."

Xu Ziyang didn't bother exchanging pleasantries.

He just said, "Just take out the parts of the map."

"Sure."

Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai took out their parts of the map.

Chu Liang held out his parts of the map. He had already spent some time examining them carefully before the meeting. They depicted a wooded mountain and various plants, much like a normal map. However, the ink was very thick and had many overlapping parts, so much so that it was difficult to see the details clearly. He hadn't been able to discern much from them.

With everyone present, Chu Liang, Jiang Yuebai, and Xu Ziyang put the four parts of the map together. All of them had the same thick golden ink lines and overlapping features. They vaguely depicted a wooded mountain, but the details weren't clear.

"I still can't tell where this is," Xu Ziyang said.

Before long, someone on each team had finished making a copy of the map. It wasn't difficult for cultivators to create a duplicate from memory, especially since they could refer to the original.

Regardless, having a duplicate didn't mean much because no one could understand the map at all.

They'd initially thought that they would acquire a map with the treasure's location once they put four flags together. Yet, this painting turned out to be another puzzle they had to solve.

Chu Liang looked at the painting and said pensively, "Let's just head back to our peaks and think about it. We're done with the information exchange. As for the answer, that will be dependent on who has the ability to figure it out."

Jiang Yuebai agreed with Chu Liang.

Everyone had arrived in a hurry, and they left just as hurriedly to study the painting.

Before Jiang Yuebai left, Chu Liang stealthily stopped her from leaving and told her about how the Greater-Yin Cult was hunting down the Whale-Riding Immortal.

Upon hearing that, Jiang Yuebai was extremely calm. She nodded casually, seemingly unbothered by the news.

...

Once the people from Azure Falling Peak and Jade Sword Peak were gone, Chu Liang called his team members over.

"Come here quickly. I have something to tell you."

"Big Bro! Did you find something significant?" Shang Ziliang asked excitedly.

"That's right," Chu Liang said with a nod. "I found... a business opportunity."

The others stared at him blankly. "Huh?"

"There are over a hundred teams participating in the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony, but only three teams have obtained the puzzle of the second stage. Based on how the previous years went, this means the other teams will be eliminated in the first stage," Chu Liang said.

"That's right," Shang Ziliang agreed.

He couldn't help but feel a little emotional. If they hadn't clung to Chu Liang, they would probably have been eliminated in this stage as well.

"If someone were to tell them now that they could buy the full puzzle of the second stage for fifty sword coins, do you think they would buy it?" Chu Liang asked.

"Eh?" Lin Bei uttered. "For sure. They'll definitely buy it. Each person in the team just needs to contribute ten sword coins, and they'll be able to participate in the game again. But... which of the teams that have acquired the puzzle would be foolish enough to sell it so cheaply? Hey, wait a moment..."

Lin Bei saw Chu Liang's smile and seemed to understand what he was thinking.

"Big Boss, are you planning on selling this painting?" Lackey A was quite surprised. "Wouldn't that just give us more competition?"

Instead of answering, Chu Liang asked, "Can you figure out the secret hidden in this painting?"

"I... can't," Lackey A answered quietly.

Chu Liang gazed at him with bright eyes. "If even you, with your high level of intelligence, can't figure out the mystery, how could those who lost to us in the first stage possibly surpass you?"

Lackey A looked stunned for a moment.

Then, looking as if Chu Liang's gaze had lit a fire within him, Lackey A nodded vigorously and replied, "Indeed!"

"But..." Shang Ziliang muttered, feeling there was still something a little off about this idea.

"There's no need to hesitate. Just do as I say." Chu Liang patted Shang Ziliang's shoulder reassuringly. "Head out immediately. Split up and look for the team captains. Have a private talk with them. Just say... it's secret information you stole from me behind my back and that it shouldn't be leaked to anyone else. Sell it for fifty sword coins. I believe there won't be many teams that will refuse. We can earn at least several thousand sword coins through this business."

That wasn't a small sum, and there was almost no cost involved for them.

"But what if other teams sell it too?" Lin Bei asked.



Chu Liang answered, "That's why I need you to act swiftly and in secret. Finish making the deals before the news spreads. As for the teams we sell it to, I doubt they'll sell it. Who would want to increase their competition for such a small amount of money?"

Upon hearing him say that, his four team members looked at him with baffled expressions.

"..." Chu Liang grinned sheepishly. "This isn't a small amount to me; it's a lot of money!"

Shang Ziliang had witnessed firsthand the way Chu Liang loved money as much as his own life. In fact, Shang Ziliang's father was withholding more than half of Shang Ziliang's monthly allowance and would continue to do so until the total was enough to cover the five thousand sword coins that had been given to Di Nufeng and Chu Liang as compensation. One could say that Shang Ziliang was a victim of Chu Liang's love for money.

Actually, Chu Liang wasn't in dire need of money right now, but how could he pass up an opportunity to make money? After all, a disciple could never have too many sword coins. In particular, after reaching Earthly Gate, the fourth, fifth, and sixth realms... all required many resources, so it was always good to save a bit more money.

Under Chu Liang's urging, everyone headed out at top speed and got to work.

...

Chu Liang didn't participate in that work. Instead, he returned to his cabin. Nevertheless, he wasn't simply going to slack off after ordering his juniors around; he had other work to do.

He erected the scrolls with the duplicates of the four paintings in a square in the center of his room, arranging them in the orientations of east, south, north, and west respectively.

The flags had been placed in specific parts of Sword Sheath Peak. Chu Liang couldn't mess up the placements of the paintings; they had to be placed according to where they'd been placed on the peak.

After that, Chu Liang placed a candle in the middle, turning the setup into something like a lantern. He blocked all light from going into the room through the windows and the door and lit the candle gently.

Swoosh.

The light from the flame shone through the scrolls and projected the paintings onto the walls. The details of the complicated and messy paintings suddenly became clear in 3D. Vivid scenery unfolded before him as if he'd been thrown into a forest.

The forest was dense with plant life and weirdly shaped jagged rocks. It seemed just like a lush valley surrounded by wooded mountains.

It turned out that the solution for the second stage's puzzle had been concealed using such a smart trick.

Nonetheless, if Chu Liang hadn't solved the second puzzle yet, how could he have possibly decided to sell it?

In fact, Chu Liang had already figured out that this was no ordinary map when he saw that it still made no sense despite being complete. He racked his brain for a while. Fortunately, he had seen a 3D film before, so he made the connection and thought of the trick to crack the puzzle.

The duplicates weren't as good as the originals. If he had used the paintings on the four flags instead, the projection would have given him a magical feeling of having been transported to a whole new place.

The second puzzle had indeed been designed ingeniously.

Chu Liang looked around. The projection was rather blurry, but he could still roughly recognize the valley and the surrounding forest and identify the location.

Coincidentally, he'd been there before!

Chapter 209: Urgent Mission

Chu Liang once again returned to the Treasured Pagoda Peak.

This was the spot where Chu Liang frequently met up with Senior Sister Jiang in private, hence why he was much more familiar with this place. However, aside from the secluded waterfall cave, there were many other places on this peak.

The peak's most striking feature was a huge valley, said to be the very site where the formidable Demon-Suppressing Pagoda once stood. When the pagoda went missing, all that remained here was a huge crater. Over time, this crater unexpectedly evolved into a valley.

Many disciples of the Mount Shu Sect were believed to have visited this site and admired the remnants of the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda and its surroundings.

The answer to the second puzzle lay in this area as the paintings bore a striking resemblance to the scenery observed in this valley.

Chu Liang descended, casting his gaze left and right as he sought out the location. He scanned the surroundings with his divine sense as he slowly advanced.

At last in the heart of the dense jungle, he figured out the rough location.

There stood a massive stone and it seemed like he would have to push this stone aside.

Chu Liang raised his arms and effortlessly pushed the massive stone aside. Despite its weight, he moved it with ease. Such a task might pose a challenge for a third-realm cultivator.

Even if Chu Liang's cultivation energy were to suddenly surge, it wouldn't be necessary, as his physical strength alone was sufficient to move the massive stone.

With a rumble, the massive stone was shifted to the side.

As Chu Liang had expected, a dark opening lay before them, surrounded by soft, dark soil. It was evident that this hole had been recently excavated specifically for the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony.

As he was about to venture inside, he heard a rustling sound nearby, followed by a lightning-fast streak of silver light racing towards him, seemingly about to collide.

Whizz—

Just as the streak of lightning was about to collide with Chu Liang, the creature suddenly recognized him and abruptly halted, leaving two deep tracks on the ground.

"Why are you here?" Chu Liang burst out with a question as he embraced the Baize youngling that crashed into him.

As the Baize youngling lifted its head with a proud expression, it called out, "Hreeooorh!"

Chu Liang stared at it and burst into laughter. "Did the elder assign you to guard the third puzzle? This seems like quite a bully move, doesn't it?"

This has become quite a conundrum.

If anyone else were to push the massive stone open, the Baize youngling would emerge and block their path. For ordinary disciples at the third and fourth realms, they wouldn't stand a chance against it. Even if they joined forces to fight it, who would dare to act ruthlessly against the celestial beast of Mount Shu?

Perhaps this had been the intention of the one who came up with the challenge.

To prevent a single small team from easily gaining access to the next puzzle, they arranged for the Baize youngling, which required the effort of many to drive away, to stand guard here. This would then force several teams to unite for the sake of securing the third puzzle.

Luckily, this stage posed no challenge for Chu Liang whatsoever.

He gestured towards the opening ahead and calmly instructed, "Lead the way!"

"Hreeooorh!" The Baize youngling immediately cried out as it bounded forward cheerfully, displaying no hesitation as it defied the elders.

With it leading the way, the journey into the tunnel became really remarkably smooth. There were some enchanted formations set up along the path, but their attacks simply collided with the Baize

youngling. Due to its incredibly thick and robust skin and flesh, it effortlessly walked by the formations.

The higher ups of the Mount Shu Sect wouldn't have expected that the second challenge they had set up would ruin the third challenge.

They reached the end of the tunnel and discovered a wall adorned with intricately carved jade.

There was a picture carved on the wall, depicting a moon suspended in the center of the sky. In the center of the moon was a white translucent glass cup.

It was a White-Jade Porcelain Cup.

What is the meaning of this carved jade wall? Is it saying that the White-Jade Porcelain Cup is on the moon? Chu Liang thought to himself.

Chu Liang recognized that this was the third puzzle to figure out, and solving it successfully would lead him to find the White-Jade Porcelain Cup[4]. However, this puzzle was even more difficult to unravel than the previous one.

After dedicating some time to pondering and ensuring that any additional clues hadn't been overlooked, Chu Liang decided to leave the tunnel.

He could have destroyed the jade wall before departing. By doing so, he would have been the only one at Mount Shu to see this third puzzle.

However, that was an action he hadn't done.

...

Two days later, the entire Mount Shu Sect was engulfed in a fervor.

Everyone delved into deciphering the puzzle at the second stage of the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony, contemplating the meaning of the four paintings if they were assembled together.

In the beginning, the people who had gotten their hands on the puzzle thought it was a secret and analyzed it quietly. However, people soon realized that all the teams participating in the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony managed to purchase this painting[1].

However, it didn't matter as the fact that everyone knew about it made discussing this puzzle convenient. As a result, many of the people who should have been eliminated long ago found joy in participating.

Throughout the generations of the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony, there had never been a first round where nobody was eliminated. Thanks to the selfless dedication of a handsome lad, everyone was able to advance to the second round.

"Wow... So many sword coins."

Chu Liang and the team members participating in the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony gathered together, marveling at the sword coins resembling miniature mountains. This time, almost all the teams from Mount Shu had purchased the puzzle, resulting in earnings totaling nearly seven thousand sword coins.

The amount was much more than what Chu Liang had imagined.

Such remarkable achievements were largely thanks to Lin Bei; he alone sold more than half of the drawings. Some teams, initially uninterested and considered hopeless business opportunities by the three lackeys from the Cloud Horizon Peak, only agreed to purchase the drawings because Lin Bei sought them out for a second time and successfully persuaded them into making the purchase[2].

As Chu Liang watched Lin Bei's excited demeanor, he felt that if Lin Bei were to be in real estate, he could probably single-handedly sell all the units in a building.

"Since everyone has put in a lot of effort, everyone should get this amount," Chu Liang said as he lifted his hand and gestured the number two.

Everyone felt exhilarated.

If everyone was getting twenty percent, this meant that this amount would be equally distributed among the five of them. This was a substantial amount.

Upon further thought, they felt slightly embarrassed.

This was particularly true for Lin Bei. He had received an equal share of the earnings from the mission at Black Whale Mountain and had already made a fortune. If he had taken advantage of Chu Liang again this time, it really wouldn't sit right with him.

He then asked, "Is that really okay? You've been leading the entire time. If each of us is taking that amount, wouldn't it be unfair to you?"

"I think it's fine," Chu Liang said with an honest expression. "Ninety-two percent is already a lot for me."

"...I see how it is." Lin Bei no longer felt that sense of shame.

However, even if it was a mere two percent, each of them would get over a hundred sword coins. To the disciples at the Spiritual Awareness Realm, this amount was already a lot. If they weren't following Chu Liang, it would have taken them a long time to earn this much sword coins.

Lackey A said, "Actually, we didn't put in the same amount of effort. Brother Lin Bei sold much more than us."

"Hehehe," Lin Bei laughed as he waved his hand and said, "Let's not dwell on these matters."

"Yeah," Chu Liang also said, "You three can just work harder next time."

"Uh..." Lackey A nodded, suddenly sensing that something was wrong. "What do you mean by next time

?"

As they were happily splitting the earnings, they suddenly heard the cry of a white crane from outside. Once again, it was a letter for Chu Liang from the Heaven-Reaching Peak.

Chu Liang opened it and discovered that it was a summons from Elder Shen.

Recognizing the urgency in the tone of the writing, and with matters settled here, he hurried over.

Upon arriving at the Sword Exchange Pavilion, he saw Elder Shen waiting there with a welcoming smile.

"Do you know why I called you here this time?" he asked Chu Liang.

"I suppose there's another challenging task for me?" Chu Liang replied.

"Very smart." Elder Shen nodded and said, "It's no small matter this time either. Signs of the diabolical sect, the Soul Destroyer Sect, were discovered in the Misty Waters City near the East Sea and almost ten mortals already died. Their deaths were suspected to have been caused by the remnants of the Soul Destroyer Sect, the ones at the third realm. Therefore, we need a disciple at the Golden Core Realm to lead the team and capture the remnants. You were the first on my recommendation list."

"Thank you for the recommendation," Chu Liang hastily expressed his appreciation.

Chu Liang was not very familiar with the name Soul Destroyer Sect because it had been destroyed a few hundred years ago. Occasionally, remnants of the sect would surface only to be swiftly crushed and attacked by the sects in the Divine Nine.

When diabolical sects were involved in harming citizens in mortal cities, addressing the issue became of paramount importance.

For a task this important, a recommendation would certainly bring Chu Liang to the attention of the higher-ups in Mount Shu Sect. However, he had already caught their attention by following his esteemed teacher around and scamming people.

Successfully completing this mission would offer him an opportunity to improve his reputation.

Elder Shen added, "Put your best effort into completing this mission. If you successfully lead the team and accomplish the task, you might get the same type of treatment as Xu Ziyang and Jiang Yuebai."



If his treatment within the sect matched that of Xu Ziyang and Jiang Yuebai, he would be treated as a core disciple.

"I will try my best!" Chu Liang declared.

"You will need two to three disciples at the Spiritual Awareness Realm. Are you going to recruit them yourself or would you like me to handle the recruitment?" asked Elder Shen.

When Chu Liang heard this, he couldn't help but feel emotional. Not long ago, he had been the one supporting the team. But now, he had become the disciple at the Golden Core Realm that led the team.

He pondered for a bit before he answered, "Let me ask two of my fellow disciples. It's easier to work with people you know."

"Alright," Elder Shen agreed.

After Chu Liang went back home, he asked Shang Ziliang and Lin Bei to visit him.

"We've been assigned an urgent task from the higher-ups, and we need two cultivators at the Spiritual Awareness Realm. If you're free, join me," Chu Liang said.

Shang Ziliang was at the peak of the Spiritual Awareness Realm and was preparing for Core Formation. Lin Bei was only at the later stage of the Spiritual Awareness Realm, but he played a significant role when traveling.

Lin Bei could save him a lot of trouble on the road.

Since they were familiar with each other, Chu Liang chose them without any hesitation.

Lin Bei readily agreed, while Shang Ziliang suggested, "Going on a mission? How about I bring my two brothers along? Having more people makes us stronger."

"Hmm..." Chu Liang pondered for a moment and replied, "With your two brothers, our overall strength might not necessarily increase significantly, but the increase in food expenses will be quite significant[3]. Maybe next time."

Shang Ziliang had no choice but to nod and say, "True."

#### Chapter 210: Hostility

The Misty Waters City, located near the East Sea, was a prosperous place in the Eastern Regions that bustled with activity. Chu Liang and Lin Bei had passed by here recently, but hadn't entered the city.

They merely spent the night outside the city walls.

This time, however, they had the opportunity to explore the city as part of their mission.

The Golden-Furred Hou, having consumed its Spirit-Enhancing Pill, was now in a drowsy state and had been left behind.

The trauma Chu Liang experienced from the recent assassination attempt by the Dual Wielder lingered in his mind. He wondered if he had any accomplices.

With some time having passed since then, he was hoping that the danger had subsided.

After all, while it was important to remain vigilant, Chu Liang couldn't spend his whole life confined to the mountains due to the possibility of assassins. With Fei Qi, the Battle Soul at the Sixth Realm, tucked into his embrace, he had some confidence.

And so, accompanied by Lin Bei and Shang Ziliang, the trio made their way to Misty Waters City.

The city appeared vast, yet an oppressive atmosphere hung over it. People in the streets and alleys whispered about the recent series of mysterious incidents. The flow of merchants and travelers at the city gates was notably reduced compared to what one would expect in a major city of the Eastern Regions.

These consecutive mysterious incidents had impacted the Misty Waters City greatly. With a diabolical cultivator on the loose, who would dare to enter the city, knowing that they might not even escape alive?

However, it was also strange to note that ordinary diabolical cultivators, if they were killing for cultivation purposes, wouldn't confine their crimes to one location. Typically, they would commit a crime in one place and then immediately flee to another, making it harder to track them down.

In the case of the incidents in Misty Waters City, seven people had consecutively died, each victim gruesomely having their hearts ripped out of their chests, with no more than three days between each occurrence. Naturally, this instilled fear and anxiety among the citizens.

While ordinary homicides might not have sparked such widespread panic, the involvement of cultivators made the situation far more perilous for ordinary people, who were vastly weaker compared to cultivators. Encountering one could mean instant death.

A hypothesis had been formulated for this case: that the crimes had been committed by a diabolical cultivator at the pinnacle of the third realm from the Soul Destroyer Sect.

The Soul Destroyer Sect was one of the diabolical sects that inherited the most ancient cultivation legacy. Historically, this sect would rise when chaos ensued in the world, only to quickly fade away upon the return of peace and prosperity.

This was because the defining feature of the sect was its use of human lives in replacement of resources.

It was commonly understood that cultivation demanded substantial resources. This was true even for diabolical cultivators. For example, even the Fiends from the Dark King Sect, with whom they had interacted previously, had to worry about securing natural treasures.

That was not the case for Soul Destroyer Sect.

For cultivators of the Soul Destroyer Sect to achieve Core Formation, the primary materials required for refinement of the pill were nine live human hearts.

The founder of the Soul Destroyer Sect was indeed innovative. Initially, he may have only wanted to find an alternative to traditional cultivation resources, and he did succeed... Otherwise, he wouldn't have met such a tragic end.

Obviously, such cultivators would be killed immediately upon being sighted.

When Chu Liang and his two companions entered the city, they went straight to the city supervisor's office. After all, they had been summoned by the city supervisor, Du Ce.

In a city, the government cultivators usually consisted of military generals and officials from the city supervisor's office. The military generally wouldn't participate in investigations of city mysteries like these, as the city supervisor's office was short-staffed. When a major case would happen, they would request assistance from the capital of Yu. When manpower was tight in the capital of Yu, they would seek help from the Divine Nine and the Terrestrial Ten. This was not uncommon.

Du Ce shared a good relationship with the Mount Shu Sect, which was why he had asked disciples from Mount Shu to come to the Eastern Regions to help with the case.

Of course, the disciples of Mount Shu weren't the only ones he had requested.

...

Young Hero Chu, Young Hero Lin, it's good to see you again," Du Ce greeted warmly. "Haha, and Nephew Shang, you're here too."

Du Ce was still dressed like a scholar.

Shang Ziliang's arrival this time was quite timely, as Du Ce happened to be his father's junior brother. They had exchanged visits several times over the past few years and were quite familiar with each other.

"City Supervisor Du," Chu Liang greeted with a bow.

"Uncle Du!" Shang Ziliang called out loudly.

Lin Bei glanced at him, then immediately clasped his hands and said, "Big Brother Du."

But then, Shang Ziliang pushed him away.

Chu Liang laughed and explained, "It's just some playful banter among fellow disciples, City Supervisor Du, please don't mind them."

"No worries, they're just young people," Du Ce said, with a good temper, not minding at all.

With such warm greetings, everyone walked into the hall of the city supervisor's office.

Inside, there was a young man sitting.

The young man appeared to be around eighteen or nineteen years old, with a complexion resembling smooth, radiant jade, emitting a lively aura. He tied his hair into a simple bun, with some strands framing his face. His eyes exuded vitality, indicating that he wasn't some ordinary person. He wore a long robe made of blue and white silk brocade, with a white tiger pendant hanging from his neck. There was a pearl-adorned hairpin on his head, adding to his dignified presence.

He glanced at Chu Liang and his group as they entered, his expression remaining indifferent. Instead of standing up to greet them or offering any words of welcome, he continued to sit there in a lazy manner.

The three didn't bother as well.

Du Ce ushered the three from Mount Shu Sect into the hall and gestured for them to sit down. He then took his seat at the main position and introduced, "These are three young heroes from Mount Shu Sect, here to assist in capturing the diabolical cultivators. And this is a young hero from the Penglai Supreme Sect, Yang Yuhu."

Chu Liang couldn't help but glance at the person opposite him.

The name Yang Yuhu was frequently featured on the Seven Stars Gazette.

Though there wasn't a strict ranking among the Divine Nine and the Terrestrial Ten, the Penglai Supreme Sect of the East Sea was widely recognized as the top immortal sect. With deep heritage and numerous powerful cultivators, they had dominated the righteous path for centuries.

Among the disciples of Penglai Supreme Sect in this generation, the most famous were a pair of brothers, Yang Shenlong and Yang Yuhu.

The duo were known as the twin stars of Penglai Supreme Sect.

This was particularly true for Yang Shenlong, the elder brother who had been recognized as a genius since birth. His path of cultivation was marked by relentless determination, never encountering a worthy opponent. He consistently defeated foes of higher cultivation realms, earning widespread fear and respect. Few dared to compare him to others of similar status. While the Divine Nine and the Terrestrial Ten housed many talents, his name stood out as the most frequently mentioned when discussing the foremost talent of their generation.

Due to his elder brother's towering reputation, Yang Yuhu, the younger brother, though also a genius, was often overshadowed, often appearing as a mere accompaniment to his elder brother.

Upon seeing him today, it was clear that he was indeed from the prestigious Penglai Supreme Sect, as he exuded the typical arrogance associated with his sect.

After hearing Du Ce's introduction, Yang Yuhu simply nodded lightly in greeting to the three from Mount Shu.

Chu Liang smiled in response but remained silent.

When interacting with members of other immortal sects, if they appeared distant, it was natural not to be overly warm in response.

This was not merely a matter of courtesy. If their attempts at friendliness were met with indifference, it would only bring embarrassment to the Mount Shu Sect.

"Young Hero Yang is a disciple of Elder Huang Long from the Penglai Supreme Sect. He has long been famous since his youth. I am sure you have heard his name before," Du Ce said as he observed the tension. He then chuckled and introduced, "This is Young Hero Shang, the son of my senior brother. He is undoubtedly talented. This is Young Hero Lin, the disciple of the grand peak master of Mount Shu. I won't bother stating the obvious. And this is Young Hero Chu, the top-notch disciple of Di Nufeng. They have all traveled a long way here. I hope that you can put your utmost effort into this collaboration..."

Du Ce had good intentions. When he noticed that both sides weren't engaging in conversation, he immediately sought to facilitate a deeper connection between them and foster mutual understanding.

Yet, even before he finished talking, Yang Yuhu appeared to be frowning.

Yang Yuhu glanced over at Chu Liang and asked, "You are a disciple of Di Nufeng?"

"Indeed I am," Chu Liang nodded in response.

Yang Yuhu went silent for a moment before stating, "For this peculiar case, we will each handle it individually. I'm overlooking the fact that you all have low cultivation levels. Just don't cause me any trouble."

When Chu Liang heard this, he frowned as well.

The hostility was so obvious.

Wait a second...

Yang Yuhu had been just slightly arrogant.

However, he suddenly started speaking harshly. It seemed to have started when he heard Di Nufeng's name.

Chu Liang instantly connected the dots.

The Penglai Supreme Sect had long resided in the East Sea for generations, establishing the coastal areas as their sphere of influence and making it natural for them to handle matters in Misty Waters City. On the other hand, the involvement of the Mount Shu Sect members, invited due to Du Ce's connection with the sect, seemed out of place. Hence, Yang Yuhu's aloof attitude was understandable.

However, Yang Yuhu's attitude must have become worse because he found out that Chu Liang was a disciple of Di Nufeng.

Previously, when the esteemed teacher went to the East Sea to gather resources, the members of the Penglai Supreme Sect drove her away. She claimed to have handled the situation sensibly without much conflict, but the actual process was likely not as peaceful. Something unpleasant must have happened.

Sigh. City Supervisor Du, it's all because of you...

Whenever I am out, I would never even dare to mention my teacher's name, but you just exposed me like that...

When I go back next time, I must remind my teacher...not to mention my name if she caused a scene outside.

Regarding Yang Yuhu's attitude, Chu Liang's first course of action couldn't possibly be apologizing for his teacher.

He simply shrugged, not bothering to glance at Yang Yuhu. He then smiled at Du Ce and said, "We're here to capture the diabolical cultivator, whether we collaborate or not makes no difference."

Du Ce gave a wry smile, seemingly puzzled by Yang Yuhu's sudden hostile attitude, and replied, "Then, you all can proceed independently as you see fit."

He promptly signaled for an attendant to bring two sets of documents and presented them to both sides.

"Here are the case files for this investigation. Take your time to go through them and see if you can find any clues. He still needs two more hearts to complete the refinement of the pill, and we suspect that he'll strike again within three days. Therefore, we'll need to patrol the entire city at night. If our City Supervisory Office is short-staffed, we'll rely on your assistance to monitor the city's activities. You're free to act as you see fit; I won't give you any commands."

"Alright!" Everyone responded in agreement.

...



As dusk arrived, Du Ce lifted his head from the documents, closed his eyes for a moment, and then regained his focus.

Administrative tasks were particularly draining, even for a fifth-realm cultivator like himself.

Dealing with these matters daily left him quite exhausted. Lately, with the recurring mysterious incidents within the Yu Dynasty's borders, the tasks of various city supervisory offices had become increasingly burdensome, and his pressure was greater than ever before.

Since the rumors of the demon god's return and the recent surge in mysterious incidents across the land, it seemed as though a storm was brewing.

As the local city supervisor, he couldn't help but feel anxious.

He pushed the door open and called out to the attendant waiting outside, asking, "Have the cultivators from the Mount Shu Sect and Penglai Supreme Sect set out?"

The cultivators of the Divine Nine and the Terrestrial Ten were accustomed to their freedom and generally disliked being commanded by the imperial court.

And so, he didn't assign any rigid tasks to the youths, only letting them act as they saw fit. However, while not commanding them, it was still necessary to monitor their movements to prevent any instances of actual laziness on the job.

In the past, some young cultivators sent by their sects to assist with tasks would sneak off to brothels as soon as they entered the city, completely disregarding their responsibilities, which was extremely bad.

The attendant replied, "Young Hero Yang from the Penglai Supreme Sect left early and headed to various locations where bodies were found, seemingly to investigate the lingering fluctuations of foundational qi."

"What about the members of the Mount Shu Sect?" Du Ce inquired.

The attendant hesitated for a moment before answering, "Um... Young Hero Chu left just now, and before he left, he inquired about the best brothel in the city. He might have made plans of his own..."

What? Du Ce was confused.