

M. Slaying 281

Chapter 281: The Legend of the Berries

Zhang Xiaohan left Silver Sword Peak in tears.

Fortunately, Zhang Xiaohan was a girl, so Di Nufeng hadn't made things too difficult for her. Di Nufeng had merely shot her a dark glare.

Nevertheless, as a seventh-realm Eminent One, Di Nufeng could create a mountain of corpses and a sea of blood just by raising her hand. This meant the pressure of that glare wasn't something Zhang Xiaohan, who had a low cultivation level, could withstand.

Zhang Xiaohan trembled, overwhelmed by the fear that washed over her.

She had long known of Di Nufeng, the peak master of Silver Sword Peak. However, as she had grown up in the Celestial Pivot Pavilion, everything she knew about Di Nufeng had been from The Seven Stars Gazette.

It had described Di Nufeng as a savage and barbaric scourge of Mount Shu, so Zhang Xiaohan had imagined Di Nufeng as a hideous and ferocious fiend-like existence. Who would associate that image with the tall and gorgeous woman standing in front of Zhang Xiaohan?

When Zhang Xiaohan was done crying, she reflected deeply on the matter.

I didn't recognize Di Nufeng because, although her name was well-known, I've never seen her in person or even a painting of her before. Compared to using words, using a painting would certainly have been a more accurate way of informing readers about Di Nufeng.

In The Seven Stars Gazette, there were usually only paintings included for the items in the "Catalog of the Mortal World's Ten Thousand Treasures," providing its readers with a rough idea of what the legendary artifacts looked like. The articles and tales in the "Chronicles of the Nine Provinces" and the "Uncommon Tales of the Martial World" were never presented with illustrations.

Zhang Xiaohan began to wonder, Should I include some illustrations with my future news articles?

That way, she could convey her observations better and allow readers to have a better understanding of the nine provinces' influential figures.

It just so happened that she had some talent and a bit of experience in painting. Thinking of that, Zhang Xiaohan's sadness turned into joy.

I'll become the first person in the Celestial Pivot Pavilion to publish illustrated articles! I might even start a new trend with this!

Let's begin by making an account of the scene at the Mount Shu Summit tomorrow!

That's right. Zhang Xiaohan had experienced something traumatic, but she had no intention of going home. The finals of the Mount Shu Summit would be held the next day, and it would have the attention of everyone in the nine provinces. As a professional disciple of the Wind-Catching Hall, how could she possibly miss it?

Zhang Xiaohan was staying in the accommodation the Foreign Affairs Hall had arranged for her. It was in the same place as where the other visiting disciples from the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten were staying.

After she rested there for just a short while, a knock came at her room door.

"Miss Xiaohan?" someone called out softly.

Zhang Xiaohan was surprised to hear that voice.

It sounds like Chu Liang...?

She opened the door, and just as she'd expected, it was indeed Chu Liang.

Chu Liang stood at the door with an innocent smile, looking as if he wouldn't hurt a fly. He was carrying many boxes of various sizes.

Zhang Xiaohan welcomed Chu Liang in and then asked, "What brings you here, Young Hero Chu?"

"My teacher was quite discourteous to you earlier. She probably gave you a fright. I'm here to apologize on behalf of Silver Sword Peak as well as check how you're doing," Chu Liang said warmly. "I've brought some small gifts for you as a token of apology. Please accept them."

"Oh, no. How could I?" Zhang Xiaohan hurriedly waved off the apology. "I was rude to your teacher first. How could I let you apologize to me?"

"Oh, but we must. You're a guest here. Besides, you came here to interview me. How could we mistreat you?" Chu Liang sat down and laid out the items he'd brought. "This is a gift box of Silver Sword Peak's specialty—Golden Vein Berries. And this is a Blackwater Calming Lotus, which can dispel fear and calm the mind... It can also be used for concocting high-grade Golden Pills..."

"Eh?" Zhang Xiaohan uttered, taken aback.

She had heard about Silver Sword Peak's berry gift box when she first got to Mount Shu, but she hadn't asked around for more information on it. Zhang Xiaohan had assumed that it wouldn't be that valuable since Silver Sword Peak had produced it.

However, the Blackwater Calming Lotus was an important ingredient for concocting Golden Pills, as it could improve the quality of a Golden Pill and make it high-grade. It was equivalent to the Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower that Chu Liang had sought out and used for his Golden Pills. The Blackwater Calming Lotus was incredibly valuable!

In fact, it was especially valuable for Zhang Xiaohan, as she was currently at the Spiritual Awareness Realm. She would need this Blackwater Calming Lotus pretty soon. That meant this gift wasn't just valuable; it would save her a lot of effort too. It was a very thoughtful gift.

Zhang Xiaohan was astonished that Chu Liang would give the Blackwater Calming Lotus as a gift.

After staying silent for a moment, she ultimately forced herself to shake her head. "Young Hero Chu, this gift is truly too valuable. I can accept the berry gift box, but I really can't accept the Blackwater Calming Lotus."

Fortunately, Zhang Xiaohan was a disciple of the Wind-Catching Hall. The Wind-Catching Hall was quite well-off and raised its disciples in wealth. If she hadn't grown up in such an environment, it might have been hard for her to refuse the gift.

"Hehe, Miss Xiaohan, you don't need to refuse it so quickly. This is just a small token of appreciation from my peak to show that we want to be friends with you." Chu Liang said with a smile. "Aside from this, I have a really small request to ask of you."

Oh, so it's because he wants me to help him with something.

Zhang Xiaohan finally felt more at ease.

"Young Hero Chu, please feel free to tell me what it is."

"It has to do with the berry gift box," Chu Liang explained. "I was selling these berries during the summit... and I've got some interesting stories to tell you about what happened during that time..."

He recounted the story of the Eminent Ones stealing berries from Mount Shu's visitors.

This was Zhang Xiaohan's first time hearing about it.

Blinking in surprise, she remarked, "This is indeed rather strange. It could be included in the 'Uncommon Tales of the Martial World.'"

"That's right. So, I came to you to ask if you could write about these berries in The Seven Stars Gazette," Chu Liang said slowly. "Additionally, don't you want to know why that Eminent One stole the berries? I can tell you in detail about the berries' origin and effects as well as the interesting backstory behind their discovery."

Zhang Xiaohan was stunned. "Backstory?"

It's just a fruit. What kind of backstory could it have?

"Oh, yes. You have no idea what a tale[1] it is." Chu Liang smiled. "In the previous dynasty, there was a man in Jiangnan named Xu Xian. He was handsome and refined, and his family ran a medicinal herb shop..."

"One day, he went on a boat ride on a lake and encountered two young women, one dressed in green and the other in white. Right then, it started to rain.

"...[2] Shopkeeper Xu believed the monk's words and gave his wife some realgar wine[8] to drink. Suddenly...[3]

"... The white and green snakes then broke into the Mountain of Immortals and stole the legendary Celestial Fruit, which can resurrect the dead and restore flesh and bone. They returned with the fruit and forcefully fed it to Xu Xian, shoving pieces of the fruit down Xu Xian's throat and into his stomach. And like that, he was resurrected. The name of this story is Stealing Fruit From the Mountain of Immortals."

Chu Liang's vivid narration of Stealing Fruit From the Mountain of Immortals left Zhang Xiaohan entranced.

The young lady asked eagerly, "What happened next? What happened to Xu Xian and his wife, Madam Bai?"

Chu Liang smiled and said, "Miss Xiaohan, if you agree to write these tales and publish them in the gazette, I'll continue telling you the story."

Zhang Xiaohan agreed to Chu Liang's request without hesitation. "This story is quite extraordinary. It can definitely be included in The Seven Stars Gazette."

Consequently, Chu Liang made good on his promise and continued narrating the tale of Stealing Fruit From the Mountain of Immortals

.

"After that, Madam Bai and Xu Xian planted the seed of the Celestial Fruit in the ground, and it bore new fruits. Those new fruits are our Golden Vein Berries...

"Then Lady Bai got pregnant. Pregnant women shouldn't get agitated, but Xu Xian just had to...

"... Jinshan was flooded with stormy waves that never seemed to end! Nevertheless, old Fahai[4] was not an easy opponent...

"... Xu Hanlin[5] saved his mother, and his family lived happily together," Chu Liang said, finally bringing the tale to an end.

"That's wonderful!" Zhang Xiaohan exclaimed. "Madam Bai's family finally reunited."

"That's right. In celebration of Madam Bai's courage, unwavering determination, and great willpower to fight the world to be in a relationship with Xu Xian, this tale is called..." Chu Liang said slowly word by word, "The Berry Legend."

"It's also known as The Legend of the Golden Vein Berries. Miss Xiaohan, you can use this title when you write the story down later," Chu Liang suggested, gently guiding Zhang Xiaohan to fulfill his wishes.

Zhang Xiaohan furrowed her brows slightly. "Huh?"

...

Early the next morning, Mount Shu was extremely noisy.

The beats of gongs and drums[6] filled the air, played in harmony with the music of immortals. As red flags fluttered in the wind, a sea of people flooded Mount Shu!

They consisted of many disciples from various immortal sects located all over the nine provinces as well as numerous unconventional cultivators. Even though they hadn't watched the previous competitions held during the Mount Shu Summit, they weren't going to miss the final match of the main competition. They wanted to see which handsome young man or beautiful young woman would become the next head disciple of the Mount Shu Sect and the representative disciple of this top-tier immortal sect.

However, the final match of this year's Mount Shu Summit had gathered more visitors than ever before. All kinds of cultivators rushed over to Heaven-Reaching Peak.

During the Mount Shu Summit, Mount Shu was made accessible to all, and its visitors could roam freely on Heaven-Reaching Peak. There were some important locations, which were guarded by disciples, but visitors were free to explore everywhere else.

Amidst the bustling crowd, there was a long-haired woman dressed in a veil and a high-waisted dress[7], giving off a rather ethereal vibe. She was wandering around while holding the hand of a little boy who looked rather strong.

At this time, the final match had not yet begun, and they were casually looking around like the other visitors.

The woman in the high-waisted dress whispered, "Today, I'll teach you a phrase: 'Rather than steal someone's fish, it is better to steal their fishing net.'"

"La... La..." the child stammered.

He seemed to have difficulty pronouncing the words.

The woman continued with her lesson. "And what does this phrase mean? It means that if you steal someone's fish, you'll finish eating all of them at some point. But if you steal their net, you can catch your own fish, so you'll always be able to eat fish."

The child clearly repeated, "Always be able to eat."

"Ha! Why is it that you always learn so quickly whenever the word 'eat' is mentioned?" The woman couldn't help but laugh. "You little rascal, there's really nothing else in your mind, is there?"

Chapter 282: Weren't You Quite Arrogant Earlier?

The lady and the boy were actually the Whale-Riding Immortal and the little girl.

A while back, they robbed some people of their berries outside Mount Shu, which was honestly a very risky move. However, the berries they stole were quickly eaten up, and the little girl started making a fuss again, giving the Whale-Riding Immortal a headache.

Initially, he believed these berries were exclusive to Mount Shu, perhaps a rare and exotic species, so he intended to take only a few berries and leave it at that. Later, he discovered that Chu Liang had started packing these berries into gift boxes and selling them, indicating that the production volume must be substantial.

And so, he planned to transplant a few plants to the Holy Mountain to feed the little girl every day.

Since these berries did not require much spiritual energy, he believed that the soil and water requirements were not that high.

And that was why he set off to Mount Shu with the little girl.

However, Mount Shu was a bustling place with a diverse group of people, and there might be people who would recognize them. After all, a middle-aged man with a ruggedly handsome appearance accompanied by a little girl with a speech impediment was still a slightly conspicuous combination.

But this small dilemma didn't stump him.

Obviously, he knew that ordinary camouflage wouldn't work. With many Eminent Ones on Mount Shu, their disguise might be exposed with just a glance.

Among diabolical sects, there was a divine technique named the Painted Skin Technique, a mystical technique that could change one's appearance and create a disguise that was hard to see through.

For instance, the Vermillion-Azurite Hall of the Dark King Sect possessed the most advanced Painted Skin Technique in the mortal realm. It was said that the hall master of the Vermillion-Azurite Hall had a thousand faces, and no one had ever known his true appearance. As long as he had seen someone once, he could instantly transform into that person, making it extremely difficult for anyone to recognize the disguise.

This was a technique that the Whale-Riding Immortal happened to have some mastery over as well. Transforming into someone else's appearance was difficult, but altering his own was quite simple.

And that was what led to the present circumstances.

The lady and the boy wandered around for a while until they heard a commotion coming from the center of the square. Someone shouted, "Jiang Yuebai is here! Jiang Yuebai is here!"

"Fairy Jiang is about to take the stage!" someone added excitedly.

"Wow—"

The crowd immediately surged in that direction, with some of the lighter individuals almost lifted off their feet. Whether they wished to go or not, they were swept along by the wave of people.

The Whale-Riding Immortal was no exception. He leisurely walked over, holding the little girl's hand.

Jiang Yuebai stood on the elevated platform, dressed in a white gown cinched at the waist, her clothes fluttering in the wind. With a figure ethereal like a goddess, she spun around, her eyes shining brightly like the light shining through drifting clouds.

The Whale-Riding Immortal watched Jiang Yuebai standing in the center of the crowd, radiating immense glory.

He suddenly smiled, a smirk playing at the corner of his mouth for no apparent reason.

Then, Jiang Yuebai's opponent climbed onto the platform opposite her.

It was that slender young man in the white sword attire, always wearing a harmless smile on this face. Amidst the overwhelming cheers for Jiang Yuebai, there were faint, scattered cheers for Chu Liang.

When the girl saw this young man, she immediately smiled as well.

She immediately wanted to rush toward Chu Liang, but the Whale-Riding Immortal seized her hand and whispered, "Patience."

Chu Liang gazed at Jiang Yuebai and clasped his hands together gently. "I owe my presence on this stage to Sister Jiang's assistance. However, out of respect for you, I will give my all."

Jiang Yuebai smiled gently and replied, "You've reached this point because of your own abilities. I won't hold back either."

"I am satisfied with wherever I am in this journey," Chu Liang remarked emotionally. "Half a year ago, I would have never expected to have the chance to fight Senior Sister Jiang in the finals of the Mount Shu Summit."

Jiang Yuebai was deeply moved by this. When they first met, she never imagined that Chu Liang would one day stand opposite her in the finals of the Mount Shu Summit.

At that time, she had simply regarded him as a talented junior brother, but the speed of his cultivation progress had surprised her on numerous occasions.

"I am very happy for you," she said softly.

"If Senior Sister Jiang becomes the head disciple, I will be very happy for you," responded Chu Liang.

The audience below was a bit puzzled. They had never heard of these two knowing each other, but based on how they interacted, they were clearly very familiar and there seemed to be some history between them. Their conversation was just too peaceful.

Wasn't he acting quite arrogantly previously?

The supervising elder in the center of the stage quickly waved his hand to stop their conversation.

Trash-talk would usually happen before the match, but these two were here to chat!

He quickly shouted, "The finals of the Mount Shu Summit! Chu Liang from Silver Sword Peak versus Jiang Yuebai from Azure Falling Peak!"

"Start!"

...

Rumble!

The announcement electrified the atmosphere, setting off a wave of excitement. The sheer size of the crowd created a wave of heat, even as they held their breath in anticipation.

On the spectator stand, Scholar Sun smiled and remarked, "It seems both of them are quite confident. Elder Huang, who do you think will win?"

Elder Huang considered the situation carefully. "Jiang Yuebai has been famous for a long time, and being at the fifth realm of cultivation does make her the stronger one. She hasn't revealed many of her trump cards either. However, Chu Liang's ultimate-tier Golden Core appears to compensate for some of the difference in cultivation energy, and his physical strength exceeds Xu Ziyang's. It will be a tough fight for Jiang Yuebai. This should be an evenly matched fight and it's really hard to predict who the winner might be... If I have to choose, I think it has to be Chu Liang."

"Oh?" Scholar Sun chuckled. "Why are you finally rooting for Chu Liang this time?"

"When I supported him previously, I lost. Maybe there's something magical about him?" Elder Huang chuckled, feeling a hint of pain.

Upon hearing this, Scholar Sun looked very pleased.

It was because he supported Chu Liang last time that he won the right to use the enchanted artifact Omniscience from the Celestial Pivot Pavilion.

Elder Huang remarked, "With Chu Liang's physical strength and resilience, as long as he continues to fight in close combat, Jiang Yuebai will have a difficult time. Let's see how she will counter his attacks. I believe this will be a fierce competition... Oh?"

The fight on the stage began.

"Hah!" Chu Liang wielded the Dustless Sword and unleashed thirteen different talismanic scripts, creating a dazzling and intricate chaotic sword qi. "Senior Sister Jiang, what do you think of my current talismanic sword technique?"

"Not bad," Jiang Yuebai said with a smile. She raised her hand and countered with a talismanic sword technique, also unleashing more than ten talismanic scripts.

Boom!

The clash of sword seals in the air caused an explosion, generating a wave of heat that spread far and wide.

"Ten Thousand Swords Seal!" Chu Liang shouted again, pointing his polearm upwards.

Swish, swish, swish—

The Dustless Sword flew up into the sky and transformed into hundreds of swordlights, converging towards Jiang Yuebai.

Jiang Yuebai flipped her hand and activated her flying sword, also transforming it into hundreds of swordlights to counter the attack.

Her swordlights were slightly more numerous than Chu Liang's, but Chu Liang's were more agile, slightly compensating for the numerical disadvantage.

The collision of swordlights produced countless clashing sounds.

Clang, clang, clang...

After a chaotic exchange of attacks using the Ten Thousand Swords Seal, the swordlight dispersed. With dozens of swordlights remaining, Jiang Yuebai used the last of her momentum to manipulate these swordlights toward Chu Liang.

Swish!

Chu Liang's figure flashed, suddenly appearing ten zhang away, dodging the bombarding swordlights.

"My use of Dimension Compression," he mentioned.

Swish! Jiang Yuebai smiled faintly as she darted forward. In the blink of an eye, she flashed forward, moving a distance of ten zhang.

When Chu Liang used the Dimension Compression, the distance he moved was slightly shorter than her. However, his strength was in the higher frequency of Dimension Compression he was using. Even though the distance was shorter, he was able to make up for it by doing it again.

Yet, he didn't dodge. He whipped his sword out and met Jiang Yuebai head-on.

Unexpectedly, it was Jiang Yuebai who sought close combat with Chu Liang first, which surprised everyone, including Chu Liang.

However, the exchange of attacks had already silenced the audience.

The wave of excitement had died. At this moment, they were all very quiet.

The initial exchange of attacks and counters felt more like a friendly spar than a life-and-death fight. Every move conveyed love and peace.

Hey! Everyone is watching! You guys were not fighting like this earlier!

Are you guys here to bond with each other?

Chapter 283: Shadow of Radiance

“Fairy of the mortal realm! Jiangjiang is here! Evil can never prevail! Jiangjiang will win!”

“I will carry the banner for Jiangjiang! Who would dare fight her?”

“The most beautiful Jiang Yuebai! The most talented Jiang Yuebai! Love of my life Jiang Yuebai!”

“My wifey!”

“...”

If there were ten thousand people watching this match, probably nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine of them were rooting for Jiang Yuebai. The cheers that echoed from the spectator stands were almost one-sided.

As the wave of excitement surged, flags embroidered with the character Jiang[1] were being waved all over the hill.

When Chu Liang won the fight with Xu Ziyang, his reputation received a positive boost, and some people started to have a good impression of him. However, even if these people found themselves starting to like Chu Liang, these positive feelings would need time to build before they could become genuine fans.

Plus, Jiang Yuebai was incredibly popular. Even those who liked Chu Liang would remain neutral the moment they saw that his opponent was Jiang Yuebai.

As a result, Chu Liang had almost no supporters.

In fact, even the few people on the team from Silver Sword Peak were pondering on the side.

"Should we cheer for Chu Liang or Senior Sister Jiang? This is such a difficult choice," Lin Bei said, rubbing his chin.

"What's so hard to choose?" Lackey A whispered. "Brothers are like your limbs, but women are like your clothes... you can leave the house without a limb, but can you go out on the street without clothes?"

"Hmm..." Lin Bei fell into a deep contemplation.

On the other hand, Shang Ziliang said, "Big Bro saved my life. He is the one who gave me a second chance. How can I not support him?"

With that, he took out a small flag with the word Chu embroidered on it from his sleeve and gently waved it.

Lin Bei glanced at the huge banner with the word Jiang set up behind Shang Ziliang and fell silent.

The members of Chu Liang's team were torn, not to mention those who didn't know Chu Liang. Competing with Jiang Yuebai and her overwhelming popularity would be daunting for anyone.

Yet Chu Liang remained calm.

Even though it seemed like he was in Jiang Yuebai's territory, he didn't feel nervous.

Being so close to Senior Sister Jiang, he didn't think in terms of ownership.

If we're this close, aren't her fans my fans too?

With this thought, the resounding cheers felt more supportive.

But then he saw Jiang Yuebai flying toward him. At first, he was as confused as the spectators. Based on the skills and abilities Jiang Yuebai had previously shown, it didn't seem like she had refined her body to such an extent.

Her physical resilience and strength were nowhere near Ling Ao's level.

What is her intention?

Obviously, Chu Liang didn't think she intended to let him win. Immediately, he became more vigilant, paying close attention to the divine techniques Jiang Yuebai might employ and the surroundings.

Just as he expected, he sensed a wave of foundational qi spreading out gently.

She was indeed executing a divine technique!

In the next instant, Jiang Yuebai charged forward with a brilliant sword light.

The beam of sword light charged forth. Instead of dodging, Chu Liang stepped toward the sword light and executed the Turbulent Stream Movement Art. With a twist of his wrist, he swung the Dustless Sword at Jiang Yuebai!

Swish!

The sword qi pierced the wind and was about to slash Jiang Yuebai when her figure disappeared in front of Chu Liang in a flash.

Eh?

Chu Liang was stunned as he saw Senior Sister Jiang reappear on the other side of the stage, dashing toward him again in the exact same posture as before.

What's going on?

He twisted his body and clashed forward again, but just as his sword qi was about to touch Jiang Yuebai, she suddenly disappeared again.

She reappeared on the other side of the stage, dashing toward him once more in the exact same posture!

Something's wrong!

Chu Liang could hear the warning sirens within his mind. He knew he had fallen into the trap of a divine technique.

But what was the abnormality? He couldn't tell! No!

He had spread out his divine sense and secretly extended it beyond the stage. One of the audience members in the spectator stand had repeated the same cheer three times.

As Chu Liang extended his divine sense further, he realized that everyone was repeating the exact same cheer!

Jiang Yuebai dashed forward again. As Chu Liang swung his sword, she disappeared once more.

An illusory technique! This thought crossed Chu Liang's mind.

Only illusory techniques could create such a scene, but this was definitely not a simple illusion.

This was a type of attack he had never experienced before.

What should I do?

Chu Liang felt his mind spinning wildly. While he didn't know much about illusory techniques, there was only one solution to cracking this illusion.

The solution was to attack with his strongest divine technique. As long as his attack was strong enough to break through the limits of the illusion, the illusion would naturally disappear.

Chu Liang immediately retrieved the Dustless Sword and activated the Heavenly Sword Seal!

In terms of divine technique combinations, the Heavenly Sword Seal was the strongest.

This was the most powerful divine technique he had purchased from the Hall of Conservation and learned on his own.

Techniques of greater power than the Heavenly Sword Seal would be considered immortal arts, which were impossible to learn on his own.

Rumble!

As the massive sword light unleashed explosive power toward the sky, waves of energy rippled through the air.

Chu Liang infused the Heavenly Sword Seal with foundational qi to the maximum!

Rumble!

With a tremendous exertion of force, the sword light broke through the void, and all light around it instantly darkened!

It was still the same scene. Senior Sister Jiang appeared before him again, and the surroundings remained the same—the public square.

It was as though nothing had changed.

At the same time, it felt as though something had changed.

A burst of light emanated from the Ten Thousand Swords Seal executed by Jiang Yuebai.

Countless beams of sword light approached with blinding speed.

The short moment in the illusion had only lasted about a second in reality.

Chu Liang quickly snapped back to reality. At this point, Jiang Yuebai's attack had yet to reach his body, and there was still enough time for him to save himself.

As Chu Liang watched the beams of sword light crashing on his body soon, he instantly demonstrated the Dimension Compression and moved ten zhang back in a flash.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

The beams of sword light missed.

This was the beauty of Dimension Compression: it allowed the user to instantly move as if the destination was right next to them, regardless of the actual distance.

As long as he used it before the attack reached him, it would never touch him.

When Jiang Yuebai saw that Chu Liang had dodged, she did not seem disappointed.

Instead, she smiled.

"Shadow of Radiance?"

Scholar Sun, who was at the spectator stand, felt a little surprised as he said, "There are very few illusory-technique experts on Mount Shu. I have no idea where she learned this technique. She doesn't seem to be very skilled at it yet. Otherwise, her opponent, who has a lower cultivation level, would have had no chance of escaping."

Shadow of Radiance was an immortal art with illusory effect. It could record an entire scene and later recreate an illusion based on that scene. Compared to other techniques that create illusions, Shadow of Radiance felt incredibly real, like a world constructed inside a mirror.

If someone suddenly found themselves in a strange location during a fight, even a fool would know they had fallen into an illusion. However, if the scene remained unchanged, it would be difficult to detect without careful observation.

If it weren't for Chu Liang's sharp reflexes, he might have been confused for some time, and his true self would have been eliminated.

"Using Shadow of Radiance is undoubtedly impressive, but Chu Liang's ability to escape so quickly is equally remarkable," Elder Huang said. "Had he been trapped even a moment longer, the outcome of the fight would have been decided."

"Eh?" Scholar Sun looked at him curiously, "Why are you suddenly speaking up for Chu Liang? Weren't you always supporting Jiang Yuebai?"

Elder Huang hesitated for a moment and said, "Old Sun, haven't you noticed that... whatever I say, the opposite tends to happen? I'm worried that if I keep supporting Jiang Yuebai, she'll end up losing."

Scholar Sun gave him an insightful look and nodded, saying, "I realized that a hundred years ago."

"What?"

As the two of them conversed, the situation on the stage changed once again.

After escaping from the illusion, Chu Liang realized that Senior Sister Jiang possessed too many divine abilities and immortal arts. Dragging the fight out any longer would not be in his favor.

And so, he immediately threw out four Puppet Pills and executed the Army of Beans

These four puppet pills served as auxiliary gadgets for performing divine abilities. Replacing them with four beans would achieve the same effect, but the pills were more effective. This was also why the pills did not count as enchanted tools and did not take up a slot for enchanted tools in the fight.

When the four puppets appeared again, Chu Liang, as everyone had expected, set up the Celestial Trap formation diagram!

Unlike the previous fight against Xu Ziyang, where he frequently used surprising moves, Chu Liang had now exhausted most of his techniques. There were no more surprises left. On the other hand, Jiang Yuebai still seemed to have countless hidden techniques.

Boom!

Regardless of how many divine techniques she possessed, she would still struggle when facing absolute power. Chu Liang activated the Celestial Trap with his four puppets, pushing the vortex of chaotic energy generated by the formation towards Jiang Yuebai. The powerful vortex was about to engulf her!

At this critical moment, Jiang Yuebai raised her right hand in a gentle motion.

A flying sword soared into the sky, unleashing a terrifying power.

Heavenly Sword Seal?

Chu Liang thought the sword qi felt familiar

He quickly dismissed his initial thought.

No!

This is the Heaven-Raising Sword!

Chapter 284: Scoundrel!

Chu Liang couldn't help but wonder, How many immortal arts has Senior Sister Jiang mastered, exactly?

He recalled that time in the cave when they'd met for the first time. Jiang Yuebai had struggled greatly against a fifth-realm demonic beast, so there was no doubt that she had yet to master many powerful immortal arts. After all, she wouldn't have held back in such a critical situation where their lives had been in danger.

Chu Liang thought about it some more and realized it made sense that Jiang Yuebai could now use numerous immortal arts.

She possessed the Transcendent Spirit. That made her naturally attuned to spiritual qi and gave her an affinity with the Great Dao, which meant all divine techniques and skills were relatively easy for her to learn.

It was likely that her cultivation level at the time had hindered her from mastering everything she had learned.

Then when she broke through to the fifth realm, her foundational qi became much stronger. That allowed her to quickly master some immortal arts she hadn't been able to use previously.

After that breakthrough, she went into closed-door cultivation and likely spent her time doing the same as me—expanding her repertoire of divine techniques and skills.

That's why she chose to clash with me head-on!

The Heavenly Sword Seal was supposed to be the most powerful sword technique, with the exception of immortal arts. However, it was like the poor man's version of the Heaven-Raising Sword. Jiang Yuebai's Heavenly Sword Seal was evenly matched with Chu Liang's, but her Heaven-Raising Sword was a hundred times more powerful!

Like a roaring waterfall, Jiang Yuebai's massive swordlight descended with a blast of sword qi. It collided with the Celestial Trap that Chu Liang had sent forth!

It was fortunate for Chu Liang that this formation diagram had been the prize for winning the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony. Otherwise, with Chu Liang's current cultivation level, he wouldn't have had any divine skill that could be a match for the power of a fifth-realm cultivator.

Without that formation diagram, Chu Liang wouldn't have lasted till this stage of the competition. Xu Ziyang would have easily defeated him with overwhelming force.

Regardless, Chu Liang still had a major problem. His most powerful attack was still weaker than Jiang Yuebai's Heaven-Raising Sword.

That was no surprise, as the Heaven-Raising Sword was known as the top immortal art for slaying! Daoist Yan had used the Heaven-Raising Sword to slay enemies for a thousand li, so how could it be a lie?

The Heaven-Raising Sword gradually pierced through the chaotic vortex. Before it even reached Chu Liang, its terrifying sword qi exuded such great pressure that Chu Liang felt like he was suffocating!

How am I supposed to withstand this?

"Heaven-Raising Sword!" Scholar Sun exclaimed. "Jiang Yuebai has mastered even this! She is undoubtedly the strongest among Mount Shu's current generation of disciples!"

"She mastered this sword technique even at an even younger age than when her teacher did," Elder Huang remarked. He smiled and sighed in relief. "Now, I can finally say with confidence that Jiangjiang will win—"

Before he finished speaking, something unexpected happened in the match.

Chu Liang looked so small in the face of such a massive and overwhelming force that would have made anyone else despair, but he did not give up.

The qi around his body suddenly burst into flames.

Whoosh.

Intense red-gold flames of qi enveloped him, and his black pupils were replaced with dazzling vertical golden pupils!

In the spectator stand, Ling Ao was dressed in black and sitting in a corner as he watched the match.

"It's the Divine Dragons' Great Blood-Burning Technique!"

Ling Ao furrowed his eyes when he saw Chu Liang use the same divine technique he had used. Yet, the power Chu Liang unleashed was far greater than what Ling Ao had produced during his match.

Ling Ao's bright gaze turned dim. The sight of Chu Liang's dragon aura soaring into the sky left Ling Ao gritting his teeth in anger.

Chu Liang trembled uncontrollably as the incredible power he was gathering by exhausting his blood flooded into him.

He had indeed stolen this move from Ling Ao. Chu Liang had been inspired to buy this divine technique from the Hall of Conservation after seeing Ling Ao acquire explosive power by burning his blood.

Chu Liang had known that using the blood-burning technique would leave him in a weak state for a period. He hadn't had much time before his match, so he never actually tried using it and had kept it as a last resort.

This was his first time using it, and just as he'd expected, it was a powerful technique.

Chu Liang had cultivated using the Secret Dragon Blood Technique and the Blood-Refinement Technique: Divine Light for so long that the spiritual energy in his blood was superior to Ling Ao's in both quality and intensity, so the power he unleashed was naturally far greater than Ling Ao's.

As the flames of qi shrouding him raged, Chu Liang turned the Celestial Trap. The five formation diagrams contracted in front of him to form a shield, staunchly blocking the Heaven-Raising Sword's advance!

Boom! Rumble!

Claps of thunder suddenly rang out.

Chu Liang managed to withstand the formidable slaying technique!

Elder Huang was quite surprised. "What's going on? Do all of Mount Shu's disciples know how to burn their blood?"

Scholar Sun chimed in, "And the power Chu Liang acquired by burning his blood is even more incredible than when Ling Ao did it. Indeed, the two disciples who made it to the finals are the strongest among them!"

Boom, boom, boom—

The Heaven-Raising Sword and the Celestial Trap collided and exploded thunderously, wiping each other out. Dazzling waves of qi swept across the stage.

Just before the effects of his divine technique lapsed, Chu Liang leaped high into the sky.

He still remembered how Jiang Yuebai had made Ling Ao collapse with one move—Flow of Time. So, he didn't dare to get close to her and continued to use his divine skills from a distance.

The Dustless Sword rose and turned into a hundred beams of swordlight. Then the beams of swordlight each wrote a talismanic character and flew simultaneously.

Chu Liang was combining the Hundred Swords Seal with the Talismanic Sword Seal! He turned them into the Hundred-Character Talismanic Sword!

Thanks to the blood-burning technique, Chu Liang's abilities were greatly enhanced, so he could attempt combining these two divine skills.

Disciples from Mount Shu's previous generations had done studies on this in the past. They discovered that when a cultivator had drawn more than ten or so talismanic characters for the Talismanic Sword Seal, their drawing speed would slow down. Even if the cultivator had enough

foundational qi to sustain more than ten talismanic characters, they would take too long to draw the characters, giving their opponent ample time to prepare a way to counter the attack. That meant increasing the number of talismanic characters to harness more power through the Talismanic Sword Seal would actually result in reduced power instead.

So, if a cultivator wanted more power than that of ten or so talismanic characters, the best method was to combine the Talismanic Sword Seal with the Hundred Swords Seal. With a hundred beams of swordlight, the cultivator could harness the power of a hundred talismanic characters simultaneously.

Chu Liang's one hundred beams of swordlight rained down on Jiang Yuebai!

Seeing the oncoming attack, Jiang Yuebai pivoted subtly.

Whoosh, whoosh.

Leaving behind two afterimages, Jiang Yuebai moved forward more than twenty zhang in the blink of an eye. She'd evaded the rain of swords and even closed in on Chu Liang!

Jiang Yuebai had used Dimension Compression yet again!

Chu Liang immediately stopped using the blood-burning technique!

Now that he was within the range of effect for Jiang Yuebai's Flow of Time, he would just be courting death if he were to continue using the blood-burning technique.

Chu Liang had burned some of his blood earlier to withstand the force of the Heaven-Raising Sword. This technique might work well against others, but it wasn't that effective against Jiang Yuebai.

Once he stopped burning his blood, Chu Liang was overwhelmed by an intense feeling of weakness. With just a thought, a few Dragon-Blood Crystals dissolved into his body. He regained some strength and was able to push through, continuing with the duel.

Chu Liang now saw it as a good thing that Jiang Yuebai had closed the distance between them. He decided to take advantage of it and attack!

It was time for close combat again!

"Jiangjiang's acting foolishly!" Elder Huang cried out. "She's clearly physically weaker than Chu Liang. Why did she take the initiative to close the distance between them—"

However, Elder Huang fell silent midspeech when he saw Jiang Yuebai getting covered with a layer of gold[1].

A cultivator could attain the fifth realm's Metallic Body by integrating geng metal spiritual qi into their body. If Xu Ziyang knew it, there was no way Jiang Yuebai wouldn't know it too! She hadn't used it before, but that didn't mean she hadn't mastered it!

Nevertheless, Chu Liang wasn't afraid in the slightest. After all, he had fought Xu Ziyang's three-headed, six-armed, metal-bodied form in the previous match. No matter how strong Senior Sister Jiang's Metallic Body was, it couldn't be stronger than Xu Ziyang's.

Before Chu Liang's train of thought ended, Jiang Yuebai's flying sword pierced through the air, flying toward him at lightning speed!

Using the Turbulent Stream Movement, Chu Liang darted around Jiang Yuebai like an evil spirit, thrusting his sword toward her from behind.

Yet, Jiang Yuebai seemed to have eyes on the back of her head. Without looking first, she spun around and countered Chu Liang's sword strike with her own!

Chu Liang darted around and attacked her repeatedly, but his sword strikes were intercepted each time.

Chu Liang felt that Jiang Yuebai seemed to be predicting all of his moves. This feeling reminded him of Daoist Yan's secret technique—the Omniscient Sword State.

Jiang Yuebai had used that secret technique in her match against Ling Ao. Chu Liang had only heard of the technique's existence and didn't know much about it, so he hadn't been able to glean much from what he'd seen in the match.

However, now that Chu Liang was being subjected to this divine technique, he realized this was that very same technique Jiang Yuebai had used in her match with Ling Ao.

Jiang Yuebai could predict all of Chu Liang's moves, making her nearly invincible in close combat. Fortunately for Chu Liang, Jiang Yuebai wasn't particularly fast at attacking. Otherwise, he would have already been defeated.

Regardless, Chu Liang couldn't retreat any further.

He had used up quite a lot of his cultivation energy when he exchanged blows with Jiang Yuebai and burned his blood. It would take time for Chu Liang to recover his cultivation energy.

But if I widen the distance between us again so that I can recover, who knows what divine skills Senior Sister Jiang may use... Either way, I'm at a serious disadvantage.

Ultimately, all Chu Liang could do was use Army of Beans and summon his puppets. He was going to launch a group attack on Jiang Yuebai!

Even if you can predict my moves, you won't be able to block them as long as I'm fast and strong enough!

Chu Liang was staking it all on this, hoping to find a way to turn the tables!

Yet, just as the puppets surrounded Jiang Yuebai, her eyes lit up. She used her left hand to form a hand seal and her right hand raised her longsword, pointing it at the sky!

Crackle!

A streak of lightning flashed past. Then at the next second, dazzling streaks of purple lightning spread out over an area spanning five zhang with Jiang Yuebai at the center.

It was like a huge pool of lightning!

The pool of lightning swallowed Chu Liang and his puppets.

"Well done, Jiangjiang!" Elder Huang clapped his hands. "I knew she wouldn't act rashly. As I expected, she had it all planned out. She drew close to Chu Liang so that she could use the Five-Lightning Heart of the Sky!"

It was the immortal art Five-Lightning Heart of the Sky!

This immortal art was almost on par with the Samadhi True Fire. Who would have thought Jiang Yuebai had mastered even this!

Of course, Jiang Yuebai's control over the lightning wasn't that great yet, but it was enough to deal with Chu Liang. It was likely that Jiang Yuebai had moved closer to Chu Liang just so she could use this lightning immortal art!

Chu Liang instantly felt numb all over as alarm bells rang in his mind. Fortunately, he had a strong physique and managed to endure getting struck by lightning. If his physique were weaker, he would have just fainted immediately.

Right when he got struck, his mind was still analyzing the situation to decide what he should do next. He wouldn't be able to avoid getting struck with lightning again if he moved backward. The nearest spot that was free of lightning was in front of him!

The pool of lightning had spread out with Jiang Yuebai at its center, but she obviously wouldn't include the spot where she was standing in the target range for the lightning, so it had to be safe.

Consequently, Chu Liang mustered the last bit of strength he had left and leaped forward!

Whoosh—

Under the illumination of the purple lightning, the two shadowy figures in the pool of lightning suddenly overlapped.

As the sky filled with lightning, Chu Liang had no time to launch any attacks. All he could do was hastily embrace Jiang Yuebai to escape the pool of lightning!

However, his embrace was more like a tackle. He threw himself onto her, unable to do anything else.

At this moment, both of them had a sense of panic in their eyes.

The venue fell silent as the spectators stared at the pair.

Chu Liang's numbness quickly faded, but it was too late for him to take any action.

Jiang Yuebai, who looked a little annoyed, was already in the midst of dealing a knifehand strike[2].

Thud.

The strike was done at such a close distance that Chu Liang's vision went black instantly. Yet, even though he'd fainted, he still had his arms wrapped tightly around Jiang Yuebai's waist, and the pair fell to the floor together.

That was when the spectators finally burst into an uproar.

That guy actually hugged Fairy Jiang!

"SCOUNDREL!!!"

After falling to the floor, Jiang Yuebai finally managed to break free from Chu Liang's grip and stand up. She had won the duel, but she didn't have the composed look of a winner. Instead, she looked rather flushed.

All the spectators were filled with righteous indignation, rolling up their sleeves with a great desire to charge onto the stage! The venue was about to descend into chaos!

Seeing that, the supervising elder on duty hurriedly flew onto the stage.

Raising his hand to calm the crowd, he shouted, "The winner is Jiang Yuebai!

"Jiang Yuebai will become the head disciple of the Mount Shu Sect's current generation of disciples! Attendants of the Hall of Alchemy, come wake Chu Liang. Xu Ziyang and Ling Ao, come

onto the stage as well. The four of you, the top four disciples, will be taken to Sword Sheath Peak later, where you will have the chance to be selected by the Violent and Azure Twin Swords.

"The rest of you, don't be impulsive! Stay calm! Quiet! Who dares to come up here? Go back down!"

"Go! Go! Go!"

Chapter 285: The Future Belongs to You

When Chu Liang opened his eyes, he felt a bit strange.

He lay on the ground at the edge of the stage with a blanket beneath him, while a disciple from the Hall of Alchemy circulated his qi to aid his healing.

Though he suffered minor injuries, the aftermath of burning his blood left him feeling even weaker than the palm strike delivered by Jiang Yuebai.

He was, however, in better condition than Ling Ao. When he burnt his blood, he promptly replenished it using the Dragon-Blood Crystal, mitigating the severity of the exhaustion. The two ultimate-tier Golden Cores would help him recover quickly, so he would soon be back in peak condition.

What puzzled him was the way people around him were looking at him. Their gazes were complex, subtle, filled with mixed emotions, and carried varying degrees of malice.

It was as if he had done something unforgivable.

Wait a minute?

A sudden flash of memory hit Chu Liang, and the events before he lost consciousness came rushing back to him in a torrent of recollection.

At that moment, Senior Sister Jiang unleashed the Five-Lightning Heart of the Sky, an ancient art renowned as the strongest method used by qi practitioners in ancient times against demons and devils. This advanced lightning art had the power to destroy the heavens and earth.

With mastery of this art, even a physically weak cultivator would not have to fear the approach of a physically powerful demon, making it a classic counter to melee combat. Jiang Yuebai's deliberate use of this divine ability against him was not a spur-of-the-moment decision.

Not only would evil entities be restrained within the range of the Five-Lightning Heart of the Sky, but the use of arts and techniques would also be inhibited because the paralysis triggered by the art of lightning would affect both the physical body and delay the flow of qi and the use of divine intent.

This was the reason why Chu Liang could not teleport using the Dimension Compression.

Instead, he could only throw himself at Jiang Yuebai to avoid the attack.

Mm, that was exactly what happened.

It was all just a simple accident during the fight.

Why are you all glaring at me?

Sensing the overwhelming hostility from everyone around him, Chu Liang felt very wronged.

"Haaa," he heaved a sigh.

He lost when he was only one step away from becoming the head disciple. However, this defeat was justified. Most of the time, such matches were indeed competitions of trump cards. Jiang Yuebai mastered a multitude of divine techniques, and since she hadn't revealed any in previous matches, Chu Liang was unaware of the methods she could employ and had no means to defend against them.

On the other hand, he had unveiled all the methods he could employ during the bout against Xu Ziyang, hence why the outcome of this fight was within his expectation.

Moreover, he was of a lower cultivation level than both Xu Ziyang and Jiang Yuebai. The fact that he reached this level in fights against a fourth-realm cultivator and a fifth-realm cultivator was no easy feat.

Although he did not win the title of head disciple, he was satisfied with this achievement.

I will just need to head back and work even harder cultivating. The journey of cultivation is long, and I have only just begun, Chu Liang thought.

“Are you awake?” As Chu Liang remained in a daze, a voice suddenly interrupted his train of thoughts. It was the Weapons Master, who was walking over.

"I'm fine now," Chu Liang immediately stood up.

"Then get ready to go on stage. In a while, I'll take you all to Sword Sheath Peak," the Weapons Master called out, turning to walk toward the stage.

Although the tournament had ended, the audience didn't leave. They were still waiting for the sword-bearing ceremony, a highlight of the Mount Shu summit.

Jiang Yuebai, Chu Liang, Xu Ziyang, and Ling Ao, the top four disciples, stepped onto the stage together. The surrounding area erupted in thunderous applause and cheers, celebrating these rising stars of Mount Shu.

Chu Liang stood beside Jiang Yuebai, the gentle breeze lifting her hair and carrying a familiar, sweet fragrance.

"Senior Sister Jiang..." he called softly, "sorry about earlier..."

"Let's focus on the important matters first," Jiang Yuebai said, casting a glance at him. "I'll deal with you later."

Chu Liang gave an awkward smile and didn't dwell on it further.

From the spectator stand, the sect leader of Mount Shu, Venerable Wen Yuan, gracefully descended and landed on the stage.

The four promising disciples immediately showed a solemn expression.

For the past hundred years, Venerable Wen Yuan had been living in seclusion and rarely ventured outside. Among this batch of disciples, some might have caught a glimpse of him during the Mount Shu Summit ten years ago. However, those who joined later had likely never seen the sect leader before.

It would have been impossible for them to have met the sect leader face-to-face.

The sect leaders of the immortal sects in the Divine Nine, even the one from Mount Shu, which was ranked the lowest in the Divine Nine, were considered one of the most powerful and influential figures in the world.

Even without this status, the sect leader of the Mount Shu Sect was an eighth-realm cultivator. He was an Eminent One at the Heavenly Origin Realm...

The mere fact that he had control over the Heavenly Origin carried immense authority and pressure.

However, Venerable Wen Yuan did not exude an overwhelming sense of superiority. Instead, he wore a gentle smile and his eyes appeared clear and calm, making those in his presence feel as if they were basking in the warmth of a spring breeze.

"Whenever this time of the decade comes, I feel deeply emotional. Having talented young people in the Mount Shu Sect is truly a blessing," Venerable Wen Yuan said as he gazed at the young woman and young men before him. "The future belongs to you."

The four disciples nodded and bowed in respect.

Venerable Wen Yuan turned to address the audience and declared, "From this day forth, Jiang Yuebai shall stand as the head disciple of the Mount Shu Sect! The Mortal-Realm Wanderer of our sect! She shall represent the Mount Shu Sect! Fellow cultivators and members of immortal sects from all corners of the nine provinces, join me in witnessing this."

He wasn't loud, but his voice, like a stone dropped into the sea and stirred up waves of excitement.

The crowd erupted in thunderous cheers and shouts, banners bearing Jiang Yuebai's name waving vigorously. This moment of celebration truly fulfilled everyone's expectations.

For the next ten years, Jiang Yuebai would serve as the face of Mount Shu, representing the sect in the mortal realm.

Jiang Yuebai stepped forward. Chu Liang, who was behind her, stood with a warm smile, feeling genuinely happy for her.

Xu Ziyang's gaze appeared sharp and steadfast, conveying the same determination and enthusiasm as always.

As for Ling Ao, his eyes burned with a fierce intensity, filled with a powerful longing and determination.

With the twist of his wrist, Venerable Wen Yuan took out a white jade token and placed it on Jiang Yuebai's hand.

"Guard this Human Authority Token with utmost care. With this token, it will be as though Mount Shu itself stands beside you. As the head disciple from this moment onward, you must work even harder in cultivation, uphold the righteous path, and proudly carry the banner of Mount Shu," he advised earnestly.

Jiang Yuebai accepted the Human Authority Token and responded firmly, "I will heed your teachings!"

On the Mount Shu Sect, there were three tokens of authority: the Heaven Authority Token held by the sect leader, the Earth Authority Token belonging to the grand peak master, and the Human Authority Token held by the head disciple. All these tokens symbolized the most powerful individuals of their respective generations.

The sect leader, of course, managed all affairs within the immortal sect. However, the sect leader, being the strongest in the sect, generally would not be the one to venture outside.

Thus, the grand peak master assumed responsibility for numerous day-to-day affairs and frequently represented the sect leader when they were absent, receiving treatment equivalent to that of the sect leader from other immortal sects. Should the sect leader fall, the grand peak master would be the first in line to succeed.

The head disciple was the face of the immortal sect. They were the Mortal-Realm Wanderer of the sect.

Jiang Yuebai was undoubtedly a fitting representative in every aspect.

Venerable Wen Yuan turned around and spoke, "The turbulent times ahead present both opportunity and challenge for your generation. It is within such tumult that the Violet and Azure Twin Swords have emerged. Should these swords select you, you will shoulder considerable responsibility for Mount Shu. Given your outstanding performance during this Mount Shu Summit, the four of you will accompany the Weapons Master to Sword Sheath Peak. There, you'll see if you have been chosen by fate to wield the Violet and Azure Twin Swords."

"Yes!" The four replied at the same time.

Even before the Mount Shu Summit began, rumors spread that the Violet and Azure Twin Swords would choose their masters from the disciples who performed exceptionally well.

Yet, the definition of exceptional disciples remained somewhat flexible.

While choosing only the two finalists was an option, it might feel like imposing specific masters onto the Violet and Azure Twin Swords, which the notoriously picky sword spirits might not appreciate.

However, if the Violet and Azure Twin Swords were to choose a master who proved to be too weak, it would undoubtedly result in a loss for Mount Shu. Even if a disciple with only average talent were to acquire the swords, it remained uncertain whether they could effectively safeguard Mount Shu.

Therefore, after consulting with the sword spirits, the leaders of Mount Shu decided that the top four finalists of the Mount Shu Summit would participate together in the selection process.

In the martial world, rumors suggested that the spirits within the Violet and Azure Twin Swords were once lovers. It was believed that because of this bond, they preferred to select couples as their masters. The theory was that with both sword wielders in a harmonious relationship, the power unleashed by the swords would be even greater.

As for whether this rumor was true, no one knew for certain.

Back in those times, the most powerful disciples in many Mount Shu Summits were men. If this were the case back then, would these men have needed to make adjustments to align with the preferences of the Violet and Azure Twin Swords? The idea sounded very absurd.

A more logical explanation was that the two individuals chosen as sword masters would naturally spend ample time together for cultivation purposes and would share responsibilities equally.

Under such favorable conditions, it was more likely for these sword masters to form romantic relationships and become couples.

Over time, this rumor could have arisen, suggesting that the Violet and Azure Twin Swords only select couples.

Following this reasoning, it suggested that Jiang Yuebai was very likely to be chosen as one of the sword masters.

However, there were many who envied those who might become the master of the other sword. They envied the guy who would get the chance to perform the dual sword combination with Fairy Jiang so intensely that they were almost going mad!

The audience observed the three young men on stage, speculating which of them would be that fortunate bastard.

Logically, Chu Liang had advanced the farthest in the competition, but his cultivation level was somewhat lower. Xu Ziyang seemed like the heroic figure capable of saving Mount Shu, making him the safest choice to entrust with the swords. Ling Ao, on the other hand, had an even lower cultivation level than Chu Liang—a fact that surprised many. Yet, he possessed a mysterious and intriguing appeal, akin to a dark horse candidate with unexpected potential.

It was hard to predict the preference of the Violet and Azure Twin Swords.

Many people stayed behind, eagerly awaiting the final news from Sword Sheath Peak.

Under the watchful eyes of the crowd, the Weapons Master transported the four disciples on a cloud, swiftly flying them to Sword Sheath Peak in an instant.

Chapter 286: A Meaningless Victory?

"What a pity..." Di Nufeng shook her head repeatedly. "We were so close to winning..."

"I knew this would happen," Wang Xuanling said with a humph, as though he had anticipated Jiang Yuebai's victory all along.

Old Man Sikong, who stood at the side, cast a glance at him and smiled without saying a word.

Although Wang Xuanling had maintained an upright posture with a stoic expression earlier, his lips had betrayed a slight tremble, and he had secretly clenched the ends of his clothes. It appeared as if he were softly chanting, "Jiang Yuebai will surely win."

Old Man Sikong had noticed all these signs.

Wang Xuanling has likely been far more nervous than Di Nufeng.

If he really lost the position of grand peak master to Di Nufeng, even the founding fathers of the Mount Shu Sect would feel ashamed of him.

To put it bluntly, if anything were to happen to Venerable Wen Yuan, wouldn't Di Nufeng become the sect leader of Mount Shu?

Such a scene was horrifying to even imagine!

"What do you mean you expected it? Regardless of how weak my disciple might seem, he still made it to the finals after defeating your disciple. How dare you continue boasting?" Di Nufeng immediately retorted.

"You..." Wang Xuanling felt a surge of rage coursing through him.

After the head disciple was issued the Human Authority Token, Venerable Wen Yuan flew back to the spectator stand, preparing to leave.

At that moment, someone from the audience suddenly stood up, leapt onto the center of the stage, and captured everyone's attention.

The individual, dressed in scholarly attire, with a broad, clean-shaven face and a calm demeanor, smiled as he landed on the stage. He called out loudly, "Venerable Wen Yuan, please stay. I have a question for you."

"Hmm?" Every member of the Mount Shu Sect immediately rose to their feet, their attention fixed on the individual who had seemingly appeared out of nowhere.

Venerable Wen Yuan raised his hand slightly, signaling for everyone to remain calm. From a distance, he inquired, "Who are you, and what do you wish to ask?"

"I am Lu Chengchou, a nobody," the scholar answered loudly. "As everyone knows, the head disciple of Mount Shu holds the Human Authority Token, the grand peak master holds the Earth Authority Token, and the sect leader holds the Heaven Authority Token. Venerable Wen Yuan, having led Mount Shu for many years, you must have the Heaven Authority Token in your possession, correct?"

Hearing this, everyone felt puzzled. Wasn't it natural for the sect leader of Mount Shu to hold the Heaven Authority Token? What was there to inquire about?

However, the faces of the most senior elders of the Mount Shu Sect, including the Alchemy Master, the Discipline Master, and Old Man Sikong, displayed a subtle change in expression.

Venerable Wen Yuan asked calmly, "Mr. Lu, why are you concerned about the tokens of the Mount Shu Sect?"

"Heh, don't play dumb," Lu Chengchou said, sneering coldly as he looked up. "Today, in front of all the immortality cultivators, I have just one question for you: if you don't have the Heaven Authority Token, how did you become the sect leader of the Mount Shu Sect?"

"What!"

The sudden question elicited gasps and murmurs from the crowd.

Having led the Mount Shu Sect for many years, Venerable Wen Yuan had earned the respect of everyone. His reputation extended far and wide across the vast world. Yet, today, a nobody dared to question him so boldly. It was no wonder that many considered this nobody remarkably brave.

After all, Venerable Wen Yuan was a powerful eighth-realm cultivator.

In a world where the Hallowed One had yet to emerge, eighth-realm cultivators stood at the pinnacle of cultivation. Despite his kind and amiable appearance, Venerable Wen Yuan possessed the power to shatter mountains and part seas with a mere wave of his hand!

How did you summon the courage to question him so boldly? People wondered.

But when faced with Lu Chengchou's questioning, Venerable Wen Yuan remained calm. He paused for a moment before responding, "Indeed, the Heaven Authority Token of Mount Shu was lost many years ago and has yet to be recovered. However, although I do not have the token, I have held the position of sect leader of Mount Shu for many years. If there are any concerns regarding this matter, they should be addressed by the disciples of Mount Shu Sect, not by you, Mr. Lu."

Hearing this, everyone found it reasonable.

After all, this was an internal matter of the Mount Shu Sect. The fact that Venerable Wen Yuan was taking the time to explain this demonstrated his good temperament. Moreover, having held the position of sect leader for many years, he no longer needed a token to validate his authority.

"Hmph, am I not a member of the Mount Shu Sect?" Lu Chengchou shook his head. "My family has upheld a cultivation legacy within the Mount Shu Sect for over a thousand years. Who in Mount Shu dares to argue that the Lu family is not part of the Mount Shu Sect!"

"The Lu family..."

Everyone exchanged glances, starting to whisper and inquire amongst themselves.

Di Nufeng nudged Old Man Sikong with her elbow and asked, "Is that true?"

"Haaa..." Old Man Sikong sighed, "In the early years, the Lu family was indeed the foremost family in the Mount Shu Sect. Among their ancestors, two served as sect leaders, and a third nearly did as well."

"I see. If you're a descendant of the Lu family. In that case, you are welcome to stay on Mount Shu, and we can discuss any issues in detail," Venerable Wen Yuan responded kindly.

"So, you acknowledge that I am part of the Mount Shu Sect?" Lu Chengchou sneered again, "Then, take a look at this."

With that, he raised a white jade token high, infusing it with foundational qi until it glowed brightly. The token felt like an antique, with the character of Heaven[1] faintly visible on it. Its shape and style closely resembled the token just given to Jiang Yuebai.

"The Heaven Authority Token?"

Recalling his earlier words, everyone instantly recognized what it was.

Lu Chengchou enunciated each word clearly: "I am part of the Mount Shu Sect, I stand on Mount Shu, and I hold the Heaven Authority Token. Who dares to command me?"

...

"The Violet and Azure Twin Swords reside here. If you walk to the very end of this cave, you will see them," the Weapons Master instructed, standing outside a cave on Sword Sheath Peak. "When the time comes, the swords will choose their own masters. Those selected will become their sword masters. For those not chosen, please don't be disheartened. Ultimately, this depends on fate."

"Yes!" the four disciples responded in unison.

The cavern ahead was spacious, and they ventured inside together. The lingering remnants of potent sword qi indicated that the Violet and Azure Twin Swords often passed through this area.

Without the elders' permission, ordinary disciples wouldn't dare to enter. Otherwise, they risked having their limbs severed when the Violet and Azure Twin Swords flashed by.

As they ventured deeper into the cave, they suddenly came upon a raised platform with two jade pedestals. Each pedestal bore intricate inscriptions that radiated sword qi, indicating they were the sword beds prepared by Mount Shu for the Violet and Azure Twin Swords.

However, at that moment, the Violet and Azure Twin Swords were not on the jade pedestals, and the cave was empty.

"They're not here?" Ling Ao asked.

"The twin swords love their freedom. They might have gone out for some fun," Jiang Yuebai replied.

Chu Liang frowned. For some reason, he sensed that things might not be so simple.

Just as the thought crossed his mind, he heard a rushing wind behind him. A violet streak of lightning hurtled toward him, immediately followed by an azure dragon-like flash. Two beams of sword light flew straight toward Chu Liang's face!

The intense and sharp sword qi made Chu Liang's scalp tingle, and he instinctively leaped backward. However, the sword light was too fast; it had already surpassed him in an instant.

As he retreated, he collided with a cold, icy blade behind him. The azure sword swiftly followed, and the violet and azure beams of light began to circle around him.

An ethereal voice echoed in the cavern, carrying a distinct Sichuan accent.

"I chose him, so find someone else," a deep male voice declared.

"I chose him too. Why don't you pick someone else?" a clear female voice responded.

According to legend, the Violet Draconic Sword was the male sword spirit and the Azure Ophidian Sword was the female sword spirit. This meant that the male-sounding voice was the spirit of the Violet Draconic Sword and the female-sounding voice was the spirit of the Azure Ophidian Sword.

"I have to choose a guy. It's not like there are no girls for you to choose," the male sword spirit said.

"Who said a female sword spirit has to choose a girl? You can have your eyes on other women, but I can't find another man? It's not like I've never done that before," the female sword spirit retorted angrily.

"Don't do this out of spite. This is a serious matter," the male sword spirit responded.

"I don't fucking care! I am choosing him!" the female sword spirit said angrily.

The two beams of sword light continued to circle around Chu Liang, refusing to leave. They argued back and forth, causing Chu Liang to feel quite perplexed.

What's going on here? Are we witnessing a lover's quarrel? This is why they say colleagues shouldn't fall in love. Look at how much it's affecting important matters...

The remaining three disciples looked at each other, feeling awkward.

The Violet and Azure Twin Swords were both fighting to have Chu Liang as their swordmaster, ignoring everyone else, which made the others feel quite embarrassed.

Jiang Yuebai blinked as she stared at the scene. As the head disciple and a girl, everyone thought she would definitely get a sword.

But the current situation showed that... her victory might be meaningless?

"I have told you many times that I was discussing serious matters with Baize. Even though she's a girl, she is a celestial beast. I am a sword... It's not possible for us to do anything," the male sword spirit said helplessly.

"Why must you discuss serious matters behind my back? Just tell me," the female sword spirit persisted.

Chu Liang thought to himself, This is bad. Everyone at Mount Shu was hoping for the dual sword combination, but if this fight can't be resolved clearly, the twin swords might end up getting a divorce first.

The male sword spirit sighed and said, "Alright, alright! You leave me no choice. Let me explain to you."

The female sword spirit said, "I won't listen! I won't listen! Explain to another woman!"

The male sword spirit was completely baffled.

Chu Liang, Xu Ziyang, and Ling Ao were all equally confused.

Jiang Yuebai couldn't help but interject, "You need to watch your attitude. She shouldn't have to force you to explain. You should take the initiative to explain to her."

The female sword spirit chimed in, "Exactly."

Chapter 287: The Lu Family Causes Chaos, Taowu Appears (I)

During the era when the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda went missing, Lu Yu was the sect leader of the Mount Shu Sect.

At the time, the sudden loss of the sect's legendary artifact had thrown the Mount Shu Sect into panic. Internal strife and external threats descended upon the sect thick and fast. It was considered the greatest crisis that the Mount Shu Sect had faced since the demon god.

Under Venerable Lu Yu's command, the Mount Shu Sect made it through numerous difficult situations while preserving the sect's manpower as much as possible. The sect had fallen from the top of the ranks to the very bottom. Without Venerable Lu Yu's perseverance, Mount Shu would likely have faced the same fate as other fallen sects. Unable to rise back up, they had disappeared from the spotlight and become a forgotten part of history.

However, it was precisely because he had put in so much effort into keeping the Mount Shu Sect afloat that Venerable Lu Yu's vitality had been in an exhausted state for a prolonged period of time. Consequently, he met an early end. Venerable Lu Yu became one of the sect leaders with the shortest lifespans in Mount Shu's history.

Before he died, Venerable Lu Yu was troubled by a difficult decision.

The Mount Shu Sect was still in a bleak situation. In this time of adversity, what the sect needed was a strong leader. The most outstanding candidate at that time was Venerable Lu Yu's son, Lu Wuqi—who would later be known as Venerable Wuqi, Junior Sect Leader Lu.

Ever since Lu Wuqi was a child, he had been extraordinarily talented—a peerless genius. It could even be said that he was more remarkable than his father. He had great influence in the Mount Shu Sect and was the best candidate for the next sect leader.

Nonetheless, there had never been a precedence in the Mount Shu Sect where the son of a sect leader would take his place when he died. The Mount Shu Sect wasn't a family clan, so how could there be a tradition of hereditary succession? If Venerable Lu Yu were to pass the position of sect leader over to his son, he would likely be criticized greatly. It would also set a bad example for future sect leaders.

In a peaceful era, Venerable Lu Yu would definitely have chosen someone else to be the next sect leader, no matter how excellent his son was. Nevertheless, that wasn't the case. The Mount Shu Sect was still in a precarious position in the Divine Nine, and their plentiful resources attracted the attention of greedy eyes. They needed a leader with great strength and wisdom so that they could turn the tide.

In the end, Venerable Lu Yu decided not to hand the Heaven Authority Token to his son personally, leaving the choice to the sect's Four Guardian Elders instead.

Venerable Lu Yu slowly closed his eyes for the last time. Then the Four Guardian Elders unhesitatingly proclaimed Venerable Wuqi as the new sect leader of the Mount Shu Sect.

After Venerable Wuqi took over, the Mount Shu Sect's continuous decline was swiftly brought to an end. They formed geographically distant alliances and attacked nearby foes, restoring the Mount Shu Sect's prestige across the four seas!

Upon becoming the sect leader, Venerable Wuqi put forth the idea that the Mount Shu Sect did not need to compete against the other sects in the Divine Nine because they no longer had a legendary artifact. He was certain that as long as they could suppress the Terrestrial Ten, they could secure their current position in the Divine Nine. It was far better to rank at the bottom of the Divine Nine than to be one of the Terrestrial Ten.

The Mount Shu Sect continued to act in line with that idea even to this day.

It was also during Venerable Wuqi's time as sect leader that the Mount Shu Sect established their own system of fostering disciples, which was still being used in the present day. This system focused on giving their disciples great autonomy. It was an educational approach that was rare among the older and more traditional immortal sects that placed great value and focus on fostering disciples. Instead, it was a little similar to how diabolical sects fostered their disciples, but they were, of course, very different overall.

The older immortal sects like the Great Astral Sect and the Fog-Hidden Mountain of Immortals still followed the ancient practice where a teacher would only take on a few disciples with exceptional talent. The teacher would provide the disciples with resources and arrange missions as well as opportunities for them to gain experience. One teacher would foster several geniuses simultaneously.

However, under Venerable Wuqi's reforms, the Mount Shu Sect established a system where resources and missions were made accessible to all disciples in the sect. Enchanted tools, pills, divine techniques and skills... the disciples could acquire anything they needed, but they had to rely on their own abilities to earn those things.

In this system, a teacher didn't decide on everything for their disciple. It might seem like a free-range style of fostering, where the teachers didn't supervise or guide the disciples much. Nevertheless, as long as a disciple was talented and skilled, they could rise to the top. The teachers did not decide how resources should be distributed among their disciples; instead, majority of the resources would end up with disciples who used their talents and skills to earn the resources.

If it wasn't for this system, Chu Liang wouldn't have thrived so well like a fish in water.

During the later years of Venerable Wuqi's life, a major event occurred in Mount Shu.

At the time, the Mount Shu Sect had regained stability under Venerable Wuqi's leadership, and there wasn't much internal strife within the sect.

There were two contenders competing to become the next sect leader: Venerable Wen Yuan and Lu Cang, Venerable Wuqi's son. Compared to Wen Yuan, Lu Cang wasn't particularly outstanding. Rather, it could be said that the two were evenly matched.

Considering everything Venerable Wuqi's had accomplished for the sect, no one could criticize him even if he wanted to pass the position of sect leader to his son. Some might find it inappropriate, but it was unlikely anyone would oppose the decision openly.

However, that would mean the Mount Shu Sect was truly adopting a hereditary succession system. Consequently, a significant number of elders supported Wen Yuan instead.

Nevertheless, Lu Cang, was very ambitious. He boldly used his father's name without restraint to gather his own supporters, and some people did indeed support him out of respect for Venerable Wuqi.

Wen Yuan and Lu Cang continued to compete for the role of sect leader for over a decade, fighting in the open and scheming in secret.

During this time, Venerable Wuqi stayed silent on the matter, and no one could guess what he thought. He maintained his silence until he neared the end of his life.

It was said that all ninth-realm cultivators would enter the Divine Ruins upon nearing the end of their lives. No one knew if they were responding to the call of a preordained fate or if there was a way to defy the heavens and change their fate hidden in the Divine Ruins. Nonetheless, even some eighth-realm cultivators at the end of their lives would enter the Divine Ruins as well to try their luck.

Likewise, Venerable Wuqi decided to give it a shot. He entered the Divine Ruins and even took Wen Yuan and Lu Cang with him.

Everyone in the Mount Shu Sect speculated that Venerable Wuqi intended this trip into the Divine Ruins to be a test for the two contenders. Whoever passed it might just become the next sect leader.

In the end, Wen Yuan returned alone.

He claimed that Venerable Wuqi had indeed given him and Lu Cang a test, which resulted in Lu Cang going missing in the Divine Ruins. Wen Yuan was the only one who managed to emerge from the Divine Ruins.

Many of the details of what had happened at the Divine Ruins remained unknown, but Wen Yuan ultimately succeeded the position of sect leader without any objections. Soon after, the Mount Shu Sect realized that the Lu Family had mysteriously vanished from the mountain, and no one knew where they'd gone... or if they were even still alive.

Since then, Venerable Wen Yuan had stayed in power for a hundred and fifty years. He had done a great job at continuing Venerable Wuqi's legacy and direction for the sect, steadily nurturing the sect's growth. Simply put, Venerable Wen Yuan was a very competent sect leader. That was why no one had brought up the controversy surrounding his succession to the role even throughout all his years as the sect's leader.

...

Many of the visiting cultivators were unaware of the story behind Venerable Wen Yuan's succession as the sect leader of the Mount Shu Sect. Therefore, when Lu Chengchou suddenly appeared, they just thought he was rather strange. Yet, this man was holding the Heaven Authority Token, which was something that only the sect leader of the Mount Shu Sect should possess. It was a truly shocking scene.

The crowd burst into an uproar.

Yet, confronted with Lu Chengchou's domineering attitude, Wen Yuan chose to remain silent.

Chapter 288: The Lu Family Causes Chaos, Taowu Appears (II)

Then two people stood up.

One of them was the red-robed Di Nufeng. Just as she was about to say something, she realized the stern black-robed old woman had stood up as well. So, Di Nufeng decided to stay silent.

The Discipline Master, the stern old woman, said coldly, "A member of the Lu Family has returned. It is indeed a joyous occasion. Furthermore, you've even brought back the Heaven Authority Token, which had been lost for so long. You've done a great service to the sect. It will be no problem at all for you to become a member of the sect again."

"Hmph," Lu Chengchou snorted coldly. "Discipline Master, do you think that you can take the Heaven Authority Token from me just by saying that?"

"It's not like we're not giving you anything in exchange. Aren't we letting you join our sect again? Do you think it's that easy for others to join our sect?" Di Nufeng chimed in. "If you don't think that's enough, how about we give you five hundred sword coins as a reward? And once you're a member of our sect again, you can join my peak and become Silver Sword Peak's second senior brother. Wouldn't that be great?"

The noisy venue suddenly fell silent.

Even the uninvolved spectators thought that Di Nufeng had spoken extremely shamelessly.

"Haha..." Lu Chengchou laughed angrily. "It seems all of you are Wen Yuan's cronies. Your status is too low to say such words. How could I, the rightful successor of the role of the Mount Shu Sect's sect leader, be subordinate to you?"

"Why are you insulting me?!" Di Nufeng roared.

Her pupils dilated, and a threatening aura burst out of her.

Lu Chengchou shouted, "Everyone's watching. You want to attack me here?"

"This is a personal grudge between you and me. It's got nothing to do with Mount Shu," Di Nufeng said as she flew down to the stage.

Just as they were about to fight, someone yelled, "Stop!"

That man suddenly landed behind Lu Chengchou.

Dressed in white, the man had a medium build and looked to be around forty years old. His eyes were totally white, without even the slightest trace of black. This man was Enlightened Bai Lin, a visiting elder from the Penglai Supreme Sect.

"The Mount Shu Sect is a prestigious righteous sect, with a legacy spanning thousands of years. If there's a dispute over who the true sect leader should be, how could that be resolved with a fight? That is simply improper!" Enlightened Bai Lin said loudly.

"So, you do

know that this is Mount Shu." Di Nufeng glared at Enlightened Bai Lin. "Since when did you have the right to bark here?"

"Hmph," Enlightened Bai Lin snorted coldly. Ignoring Di Nufeng, Enlightened Bai Lin looked up at Venerable Wen Yuan instead. He cupped his hands together and said, "Venerable Wen Yuan, two

generations of the Lu Family made remarkable contributions to the Mount Shu Sect during the time they each spent as sect leader. This is a fact that is known to all righteous sects.

"If what this descendant of the Lu Family says is true and that he is the true successor of the position of sect leader, then as members of fellow righteous sects, we cannot just sit idly by."

Venerable Wen Yuan's gaze shifted back and forth between Enlightened Bai Lin and Lu Chengchou for a moment. Then, as if he'd figured something out, the corners of Venerable Wen Yuan's lips rose in a slight smile.

Venerable Wen Yuan replied, "My teacher personally passed the position of sect leader to me. So, the matter of who is the true sect leader of the Mount Shu Sect is, of course, not something that all of you need to worry about. The identity of this descendant of the Lu Family still needs to be investigated further. However, since the Heaven Authority Token has been brought back to Mount Shu, it must not be lost again."

"That's nonsense!" Lu Chengchou said sharply. "You killed my grandfather and father in the Divine Ruins. Then you returned to Mount Shu and falsely claimed my grandfather passed the position of sect leader to you, but you couldn't present the Heaven Authority Token to the sect. Precisely because the Heaven Authority Token had been passed to my father along with the position of sect leader! It's just that it hadn't been announced to the sect!"

"After returning to Mount Shu, you secretly tried to kill my whole family. That's why my mother took me and fled. For so many years, I've longed to come back here to seek revenge against you. I'll rip off that mask of kindness and expose your true self! Wen Yuan, today, you're going to get payback for everything you've done to my family!"

The visiting cultivators had their mouths open, gaping in shock. "Wow."

What an interesting turn of events, they thought.

Initially, they had been worried that the wait for news from Sword Sheath Peak might be boring. However, this was great. They didn't expect that the last event of the Mount Shu Summit would have a halftime show like this!

Venerable Wen Yuan had been the sect leader of the Mount Shu Sect for over one hundred and fifty years, without a single blemish on his record. He had such a good reputation that it wasn't far off

from that of a saint. Who would've thought that he'd be accused of having used such despicable methods to get his position of sect leader?

The disciples of the Mount Shu Sect who were present felt quite shaken by the allegations. They didn't know much about the incident in question, but they knew the Heaven Authority Token in Lu Chengchou's hand couldn't be faked.

Lu Chengchou's words had sown a small seed of doubt in everyone's heart. Could what he said be true?

Actually, everyone was well aware that even if the shocking allegations were true, it was far too late to have any effect. Wen Yuan's position in the Mount Shu Sect was too secure to be shaken by a dark past. Nevertheless, people loved drama. This controversial collapse of Wen Yuan's saintly image would be a hot topic of discussion for a very long time.

As Lu Chengchou voice reverberated throughout the venue, he got so worked up that his face was flush with anger.

Meanwhile, Enlightened Bai Lin, who was standing behind Lu Chengchou, remained expressionless. It seemed like he was just there to ensure Lu Chengchou wasn't silenced, giving him the chance to make those shocking allegations. As for what happened after, it had nothing to do with the Penglai Supreme Sect.

The astute observers among the spectators could tell that Lu Chengchou's appearance today couldn't have happened without him having prior communication with the Penglai Supreme Sect. Enlightened Bai Lin was obviously there just to back Lu Chengchou up. This wasn't the first time the Penglai Supreme Sect had used internal strife to weaken other sects.

Nevertheless, the Penglai Supreme Sect didn't normally intervene directly in such situation, so what was it about Lu Chengchou that brought Enlightened Bai Lin there to back him up? Just what amazing power did Lu Chengchou have that could harm the Mount Shu Sect?

Despite all that, Venerable Wen Yuan remained composed, totally unaffected by what Lu Chengchou had said.

Venerable Wen Yuan said nonchalantly, "If you are truly Lu Cang's son, you would have only been an infant when the Lu Family disappeared. That means someone else must have told you the things

you mentioned, so it's inevitable that there are some incorrect details. However, if you are an imposter, your intent to disrupt the peace here is punishable by death.

"I already explained what happened to the sect's elders back then. If there were any doubts about what I said, how could they have allowed me to succeed as the sect leader?"

"Men, take him down from the stage first. We will question him further later."

Venerable Wen Yuan deflected the allegations and turned the tables on Lu Chengchou, quelling some of the spectators' doubts.

That's right. Just because Lu Chengchou had the Heaven Authority Token didn't mean everything he said was true. If Venerable Wen Yuan's actions hadn't been thoroughly investigated back then, how could the elders have allowed him to take over as the sect leader?

"You want to force me into silence?" Lu Chengchou shouted. "Dream on!"

He made a hand seal, and a burst of darkness shot up into the sky from the public square on Heaven-Reaching Peak!

Whoosh—

When the burst of darkness reached the horizon, a celestial portal opened up, and a huge head emerged from it! It looked like a tiger as well as a leopard, and it had saber-like fangs! The creature exuded a terrifyingly vicious aura, accompanied by a chilling and bloodthirsty murderous intent!

"Taowu!" the crowd cried out in alarm.

This was the vicious beast that had disappeared from the Evil Demon Mountain recently! How did Lu Chengchou summon such a giant creature just by raising his hand? There was no doubt that he had set up an enchanted formation on the Heaven-Reaching Peak in advance!

It was now clear what power the Heaven Authority Token held. Lu Chengchou wasn't using it to deal with the members of the Mount Shu Sect; instead, it was for everyone else!

If he didn't have the Heaven Authority Token when Taowu appeared, the righteous cultivators from the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten would step in to help subdue the beast.

To combat that, Lu Chengchou had revealed that he possessed the Heaven Authority Token before summoning Taowu, making it clear that this battle was an internal conflict within the Mount Shu Sect. That meant outsiders had no reason to intervene, regardless of what methods Lu Chengchou used.

The visiting cultivators from various sects immediately retreated like a large flock of mountain birds startled into flight.

Meanwhile, the disciples of Mount Shu drew their swords, preparing to fight!

So what if you're a vicious beast?

This is Mount Shu, where there are as many powerful cultivators as there are clouds! Even Di Nufeng can't act willfully here, let alone you—a lone Taowu!

During this moment of chaos, someone shouted from amid the crowd, "Darkness never dies!"

Chapter 289: The Master of the Twin Swords

The chaos unfolding at Heaven-Reaching Peak remained unknown to the four most talented disciples within the cavern of Sword Sheath Peak.

At this moment, they found themselves confronted with another issue.

The fact that there were sword spirits residing within the Violet and Azure Twin Swords was common knowledge among the disciples of the Mount Shu Sect. However, they had always understood these sword spirits as spiritual energy that was brought to life by the sword qi.

It was their first time seeing sword spirits capable of speaking and arguing.

"Please, listen to me," Chu Liang said, sitting on the ground helplessly. "As the saying goes, a couple may quarrel at night but make up by morning. Why don't you both just sit down and talk about it? If you talk things out, everything will be fine."

"That is if we can talk things out," the male sword sighed as it leaned against the stone steps beside Chu Liang. "It's the same thing every time. She turns a small issue into a life-or-death situation. Why can't she just talk calmly?"

"Haven't I tried to talk calmly? Who's the one not telling the truth and making me angry?" the female sword retorted, not backing down an inch.

"You see, she's giving you a chance," Chu Liang said. "Bro, just explain the truth clearly, and there won't be any more issues."

"I've explained it so many times, but this stubborn woman just won't listen," the male sword said. "I promised Baize to keep it a secret!"

For some reason, Chu Liang felt that if the Violet Draconic Sword had hands, they would be spread out helplessly right now.

"So, you're saying she shares her secrets with you but keeps them from me? How many other secrets do you have?" the female sword shot back.

"What haven't I told you? Anyway, I've chosen this boy. You go find someone else," the male sword replied, unwilling to argue further.

"I don't care! If you want to fight over this, then let's fight!" the female sword declared.

With that, the spirit of the Azure Ophidian Sword transformed into a streak of azure light and shot into Chu Liang's body.

"I should never have trusted you!" the spirit of the Violet Draconic Sword shouted, transforming into a streak of violet light and following the spirit of the Azure Ophidian Sword into Chu Liang's body.

In an instant, Chu Liang, trying to mediate the argument, felt a chill run through his body as two intense streams of sword qi, one violet and one azure, surged into his meridians.

Though both sword spirits were careful not to harm Chu Liang, the sensation of their simultaneous entry was far from pleasant. If he had been chosen by just one sword spirit, Chu Liang would have been elated. However, having two sword spirits was overwhelming.

The azure and violet sword qi visibly clashed within Chu Liang's body multiple times, each clash growing more intense. At one point, the left half of his body turned azure while the right half turned violet. The two colors then fused into a chaotic mass before separating again, leaving his right side streaked with azure and his left side streaked with violet.

As the battleground for the clashing sword spirits, Chu Liang dared not move a muscle.

Just a moment ago, he had talked about how couples quarreled at the head of the bed and made up at the foot. Little did he know that he would become the bed himself!

Watching Chu Liang stand there rigidly, Jiang Yuebai, Xu Ziyang, and Ling Ao fell into silence.

This situation perfectly illustrates the saying: those who don't have it, crave it, while those who do, find it burdensome.

Now, they could only wait for one of the swords to lose the struggle for Chu Liang and emerge to choose a new master.

If the female sword spirit lost, it would most likely choose Jiang Yuebai. However, if the male sword spirit lost, then Xu Ziyang and Ling Ao would still have a chance.

Although sharing a sword master with Chu Liang would be strange, they were willing to endure it for the sake of Mount Shu.

After a long struggle, Chu Liang suddenly let out a loud cry, "Ahhhhhhh!"

He fell backward, and a muffled thud echoed from deep within his body.

"Are you alright?" Jiang Yuebai and Xu Ziyang stepped forward, their faces filled with concern.

"I'm fine..." Chu Liang waved his hand, gasping for breath. "Those two troublesome spirits have finally finished their fight..."

"Haha, I knew you'd lose to me," the female sword spirit boasted, hovering in the air with a triumphant glint as its azure light flickered.

"What nonsense are you talking about? Clearly, I won," the male sword spirit retorted.

"This boy's meridian system is already mine. He's my swordmaster now. What did you win?" the female sword spirit declared loudly.

"If you have his meridian system, then what do I have?" the male sword spirit countered.

The two sword spirits hovered in the air, stunned for a moment, then suddenly transformed back into beams of swordlight and re-entered Chu Liang's body.

Swish, swish—

After another round of flashing sword light, the two sword spirits emerged again, looking somewhat surprised.

"You've got some impressive skills, kid. Multiple sets of meridian systems? That's quite something," the male sword spirit remarked.

Chu Liang understood what they meant by meridian systems. It referred to the channels used during the Qi-Circulation Technique. The recognition of a master by the Violet and Azure Twin Swords seemed to require a connection with his meridian system.

Normally, a person has one Golden Core, and thus only one set of meridian systems when performing the Qi-Circulation Technique.

However, Chu Liang had two Golden Cores and an additional Qi-Circulation Puppet without a Golden Core, all operating within his body. This gave him a total of three sets of meridian systems.

Jiang Yuebai, watching from the side as Chu Liang and the two sword spirits completed their recognition of him as their master, was both surprised and puzzled. "Qi pathways are formed through the Qi-Circulation Technique. How do you have multiple sets? This is..."

"Hehe..." Chu Liang couldn't reveal the secret of his two Large-Headed Dolls, so he could only scratch his head and chuckle awkwardly. "That's my little secret."

Upon hearing this, the female sword spirit immediately approached Jiang Yuebai and said, "Dear, let me offer you some advice. Never trust men who keep secrets."

The male sword spirit immediately interjected, "What did you say?"

The female sword spirit gestured at Chu Liang and replied, "I didn't say anything about you. Why are you so worked up?"

"He's my swordmaster, so I have the right to intervene!" the male sword spirit countered.

"He's my swordmaster too, and I can say whatever I want!" the female sword spirit retorted defiantly.

The two swords started bickering again, and it seemed like another heated argument was about to erupt.

At this point, Chu Liang felt a terrible headache and he pondered how he could stop this fight.

Suddenly, Ling Ao, who was standing to the side, shouted, "Enough!"

He raised his hand, revealing a black jade token.

A sudden burst of light emitted from the token, and a celestial portal appeared in the air.

"Shattering the Void?" The other three exclaimed in shock upon seeing this.

There were a few immortal arts derived from the Great Dao of Space. Among them, Dimension Compression, Golden Path, and Shattering the Void were the most classic techniques.

Dimension Compression covered the shortest distance but was the fastest and could teleport through anything. The Golden Path was suitable for long-distance travel and was unmatched in terms of

range. Shattering the Void, however, could directly break through the barriers of the void, allowing one to descend from afar. Compared to the Golden Path, this form of teleportation was even more straightforward.

However, the immortal art Shattering the Void couldn't allow its caster to go anywhere at will. A marked token was required to determine the descending location.

The higher the cultivation level of the person descending, the stronger the marked token needed.

For example, an enchanted formation had to be set up in advance if one wanted to teleport a Taowu to the top of Heaven-Reaching Peak. However, in this scenario, the person descending from the void was not as powerful, so a simple portable token was sufficient for the teleportation.

And Ling Ao was the one who had brought in that token!

Facing his sudden betrayal, the three were stunned as an outsider descended from the sky!

"Hee-hee-hee..." A black-clad figure descended from the void, releasing a slow, eerie giggle. He said to Ling Ao, "Well done! From now on, you shall be the only genius of the Mount Shu Sect, and the title of the head disciple will only belong to you. Hee-hee-hee..."

Chapter 290: Master of the Northern Abyss Hall

Long before Ling Ao was defeated by Jiang Yuebai, the spy in the Mount Shu Sect, Lu Xun, came to see him and told him that he would only have to take an item with him to the Sword Sheath Peak.

By doing so, he could become the head disciple of the Mount Shu Sect.

"A powerful cultivator would descend from the void and kill all three of them and you will then become the head disciple of the Mount Shu Sect. By then, there will be chaos throughout the entire sect, and no one will know that you helped."

Lu Xun's voice, like the devil's whisper, was full of temptation in Ling Ao's ears.

At this moment, he was holding a piece of black jade in his palm that was engraved, appearing like a ferocious tiny statue.

Chu Liang had seen this item before. Previously, he had obtained a similar Evil Ksitigarbha from the hands of the Southern-Route Guiders. The Evil Ksitigarbha he had seized was more powerful, while the black jade in Ling Ao's hand was merely a marker to guide the immortal art Shattering the Void.

Anyone who could execute the immortal art Shattering of the Void and descend from the void was definitely not a weak person.

Jiang Yuebai stared directly at Ling Ao and questioned, "Why did you do this?"

Ling Ao remained silent.

Then, a figure slowly appeared—a tall man in a black robe, with a dark, cold, and indifferent face. Accompanying his descent was a dense, vast, and icy aura, as if the other end of the void connected to a glacier!

Northern Abyss Hall!

A name appeared in Chu Liang's mind. He had known that the Dark King Sect wanted to make a move against the Mount Shu Sect. When he felt the icy and dark aura, he immediately thought of the Northern Abyss Hall.

The Four Halls of Darkness in the Dark King Sect were the Northern Abyss Hall, the Scarlet-Robe Hall, the White-Bone Hall, and the Vermillion-Azurite Hall. Among them, the Northern Abyss Hall was considered the strongest. They had fewer members than the White-Bone Hall, but their members were more powerful.

This was because the Northern Abyss Hall inherited the most authentic cultivation legacy, the Heavenly Star Unusual Art, from the Dark King Sect. The other three halls, on the other hand, held cultivation legacies from various diabolical sects that joined after the Dark King Sect became known as a diabolical sect. Compared to the authentic practices of the Northern Abyss Hall, these were clearly inferior.

As the man in black descended, he let out a loud and eerie guffaw.

The individuals before him were like the sprouting seeds of the Mount Shu Sect, possessing the potential to cultivate immortality. The fact that they were not yet fully grown meant that killing them would be easy. By doing so, it would also deal a devastating blow to the Mount Shu Sect.

If this group of promising disciples died here, the Mount Shu Sect would never be able to keep its top-ten ranking during the upcoming Assembly of Immortal Sects. If they failed to be in the top ten for five consecutive times, Mount Shu's status in the Divine Nine would be revoked.

And so, the Dark King Sect placed great importance on this operation and even dispatched the Eldest Senior Brother of the Northern Abyss Hall, who was a renowned sixth-realm powerhouse.

As the three youngsters from the Mount Shu Sect felt the overwhelming pressure from the powerful cultivator, their expressions turned very grim.

Although Chu Liang had just completed the master recognition process with the Violet and Azure Twin Swords, he was unable to activate these two legendary artifacts. To wield the swords' full powers, he needed to master a unique sword seal for each, a task as challenging as learning the immortal arts. On top of that, each sword required a different seal.

This was the greatness of legendary swords: each could only be activated with its unique sword seal.

During the master recognition process, the two swords were imparting the key techniques of the sword seal into his body. This was the reason why the Violet and Azure Twin Swords required two separate meridian systems.

This was precisely why the Violet and Azure Twin Swords differed from other legendary artifacts. They could not be activated by adults and could only choose young individuals as their swordmasters. The swords needed to reshape the qi pathways of their wielders, a process that was not possible in the bodies of adults.

Every unusual occurrence has its cause.

Normally, these two swords would never be able to coexist because they required their own meridian system to execute the sword seal. Chu Liang was the only weirdo with two Golden Cores, which was why it was possible to activate these two legendary swords at the same time. However, at this very moment, he couldn't achieve this.

Aside from this, his only trump cards were Old Fei and the Crimson Executioner.

However, Old Fei, a sixth-realm battle soul, was usually only capable of bullying those below the sixth realm.

When fighting against a powerful cultivator at the sixth realm, especially a top-tier one, Old Fei would stand no chance.

As for the Crimson Executioner, it was able to unleash an explosively powerful force. However, while the opponent was still on guard, it would be impossible to land a hit.

If he worked with Jiang Yuebai and Xu Ziyang...

Chu Liang quickly ran through the many scenarios in his mind and eventually came to a conclusion.

In all of the scenarios, they would end up dying.

As Chu Liang's thoughts raced, the man in the black robe had already raised his hand and grasped at the air, as if an invisible weapon existed in his palm.

Chu Liang and his two companions felt a sudden and intense sense of impending doom.

Once this divine ability was unleashed, it would surely result in the death of one of them!

But just then, an unexpected change occurred.

...

Swish—

A bright white light suddenly rose from beneath, and Ling Ao's body swiftly appeared at the entrance of the mountain, several dozen zhang away. In his place stood an elder in a white robe with blue eyes and black hands.

It was the Weapons Master!

He should have been waiting at the entrance of the cave, which was very far from here, yet he arrived in an instant!

Upon seeing the glowing enchanted formation, Chu Liang suddenly realized that the Weapons Master had not rushed over. Instead, the Mount Shu Sect had already set up an enchanted formation! This was a classic trap to lure the enemy in!

He looked at Ling Ao beside him, only to see that Ling Ao remained expressionless.

Pierce!

With his black-iron hand, the Weapons Master pierced through the black-robed individual without hesitation, penetrating from his chest to his back as if his body were made of soggy paper.

In face of death, the black-robed individual remained eerily calm. His gaze seemed to pass through the Weapons Master, settling on Ling Ao, as he murmured, "It was you..."

Ling Ao's gaze looked very cold. "I do want to be the head disciple, but I would never achieve it in a way that would harm the Mount Shu Sect. If you think you can use such tactics to make me betray my sect, you've chosen the wrong person."

"Heh," the black-robed man sneered, "You will regret your choice."

Sensing something amiss, the Weapons Master quickly withdrew his black-iron hand and struck the man, sending him flying through the air!

The black-robed individual flew into the air and suddenly transformed into a black sphere of light, as dark as ink, suspended in midair. From the black sphere, a head and four limbs swiftly popped out, gradually forming a complete human figure.

Then, another one popped out, followed by another one.

Chu Liang stared at this ball of light and suddenly remembered how Feng Chaoyang from the Celestial King Sect had performed the Divine-Light Clone Art, which looked rather similar to the one happening before his eyes.

It seemed that the immortal sects that branched off from the Heavenly Star Divine Cult truly shared the same origin.

When the light faded away, two figures were suspended in mid-air. Besides the black-robed individual, whose body had recovered to its unscathed state, there was another man wearing a tall hat[1]. His expression was so cold and gleaming that it seemed as though he was wearing a mask, and his slanted eyes were filled with chilling malice.

"Chen Mingcang..." the Weapons Master called out.

The moment he sensed something was wrong, he realized that an Eminent One had descended. If it weren't for this person's intervention, the black-robed individual would have already died.

With the death of the White Silver King and the Violet Gold Marquess getting severely injured, only one person within the Dark King Sect, aside from the leader, was powerful enough to fight the Weapons Master.

It was the hall master of the Northern Abyss Hall, Chen Mingcang!

To kill the most promising disciples of the Mount Shu Sect, the Dark King Sect was willing to dispatch such a top-tier powerhouse, a move that the Mount Shu Sect had not expected.

"I once had a brief encounter with the Weapons Master, but we didn't have the chance to fight. It seems like today is the day I can witness your skills," the hall master's voice was eerie and lifeless, hardly sounding human.

"By wreaking havoc on Mount Shu, you have decided to stay here forever," the Weapons Master declared.

With his reputation well-established over the years, the Weapons Master showed no fear of the hall master of the Northern Abyss Hall.

"Heh... well... there's no telling if Mount Shu will still exist after this fight," the hall master of the Northern Abyss Hall responded with a cold laugh.

As the qi between these two powerful cultivators clashed at such close proximity, the wave of pressure caused immense pain to the nearby disciples.

With a wave of his left hand, the Weapons Master caused the light of the enchanted formation to flicker, instantly sending the three disciples to the edge of the cave.

"Hei Shui, go... Kill them," the master of the Northern Abyss Hall said in an indifferent tone.

"At your command," the black-robed man who had initially descended immediately responded and flew after them!

The Weapons Master cast a cold glance, a flicker of light flashing in his blue-gold right eye.

Boom!

Before the black-robed man could make a sound, his entire body exploded!

The top-tier cultivator at the sixth realm, whom Chu Liang and the others couldn't defeat, was like a bug to the Weapons Master. That guy was unable to withstand the power that a single glance had unleashed!

However, as the hall master of the Northern Abyss Hall waved his hand, a black light emanated from the fragments of shattered flesh, causing them to reconnect and transform back into the complete form of a human.

As the light faded, the black-robed man floated once again in mid-air, completely intact.

This technique was nothing short of miraculous!

This was like the legendary technique, the Last Drop of Blood, but it seemed to have even more powerful effects.

"Weapons Master, I am your opponent," the master of the Northern Abyss Hall said in an indifferent tone.

Suddenly, he opened his mouth and emitted a piercing scream. "Ahhhhhhhhhhhh—"

Boom!

With his sharp cry, everyone in the cavern felt their souls tremble. If this continued for a few more moments, Chu Liang and the others would have their souls shattered!

Seeing this, the Weapons Master waved his hand, causing the enchanted formation to shift once more. A glowing light ascended, forming a barrier that contained the destructive power of the hall master's scream within the enchanted formation. As a result, the Weapons Master bore the brunt of the suffering alone.

Due to the barrier, the power of the enchanted formation waned, and the Weapons Master could no longer protect everyone.

The Weapons Master locked down the master of the Northern Abyss Hall with one hand. He couldn't bother to deal with the black-robed man at this moment and instead moved forward, throwing a punch.

The black-robed man seemed poised to fly towards Chu Liang, but it turned out to be a fake move as he suddenly pivoted and headed towards Ling Ao instead.

Ling Ao was about to dodge, but he found himself locked in a gaze with the black-robed individual.

Bam!

Ling Ao suddenly felt his entire body freeze, unable to move at all.

Just as the black-robed man was about to capture Ling Ao, a voice called out from the side.

"Halt!"

It was Jiang Yuebai!

She extended a finger from a distance, pointing at the black-robed man.

An immobilization spell!

Although this wasn't an immortal art, its usefulness in certain situations surpassed that of immortal arts.

Once again, Chu Liang marveled at Jiang Yuebai's mastery of so many divine abilities. Despite having shown so many techniques during the competition, she had not revealed all her techniques and skills. However, at this critical moment, he had no time to think about it.

Even before she pointed at the black-robed man, Chu Liang had already drawn the Crimson Executioner and launched an attack!

Boom!

Though Jiang Yuebai's immobilization spell had little effect on the black-robed man, causing only a brief pause that wasn't even perceivable, it was enough.

The moment the black-robed man appeared, the Crimson Executioner had already been feeling agitated. Now, fueled by deep-seated anger, it transformed into a massive crimson sword light, slicing through the cavern!

Compared to the usual Heavenly Sword Seal unleashed by Chu Liang under normal circumstances, the Heavenly Sword Seal executed with the Crimson Executioner released sword qi with power several times stronger. Enveloped in crimson karmic flames, the sword of justice burned with righteous anger.

The crimson flames erupted into a blazing inferno, poised to slay all evil!