

## M. Slaying 401

Chapter 401: One After Another

"Aaaaaah!!"

Within the grand formation, Xu Hongqiu did her utmost to move the saber, but she found it extremely difficult to shift the saber even a tiny bit.

Jiang Shenting, on the other hand, resisted with all his might, as if his flesh and blood were made of steel. He was still trying his hardest to break free from the formation's constraints.

Right then, someone's hand suddenly reached out from the side and grasped the hilt of the saber.

"Miss, let me teach you..." the person said with a soft laugh. "This is how you should cut."

His hand easily moved the saber leftward from Jiang Shenting's shoulder, severing his right arm in one fluid motion!

"Aaarggh!!!" Jiang Shenting roared in pain. Nevertheless, his gaze remained sharp as he shouted, "You—"

He had something to say, but he held it back when he saw who the person was.

The person was a beautiful youth dressed in fine clothes. He had skin that was fair and smooth like jade, a pair of lustrous golden eyes, and a silver scale on his forehead.

This youth was Ji Lingjue—the person who had captured the South-Sea Inferno Dragon!

Xu Hongqiu did not know who this youth was. He had helped her sever Jiang Shenting's arm, but she felt a strangely sinister vibe from him.

So, Xu Hongqiu asked him, "Who are you?"

"Me?" Ji Lingjue uttered, shifting his gaze to Xu Hongqiu. When their eyes met, dark golden rays of light shone out of his eyes. With an extremely entrancing tone, he said, "I am your ally..."

Whoosh.

The dark golden light shone into Xu Hongqiu's eyes, and her eyes gleamed with that dark golden light. Suddenly, she fell still and seemed very dull and lifeless.

A moment later, she regained some life in her eyes.

Meanwhile, Jiang Shenting noticed that the constraints on him had gotten lighter. It seemed that the Grand Primal Origin Immortal-Binding Formation had been broken when his arm got severed!

For Jiang Shenting, the grand formation had been like incredibly heavy iron chains wrapped around him, impossible to shake off. However, for Ji Lingjue, it was a simple matter that could be resolved with a swing of a saber.

As cultivators advanced through the cultivation realms, the gap in power between two cultivators at the same realm would widen. It seemed that was precisely the case for Jiang Shenting and Ji Lingjue; Ji Lingjue was much more powerful than Jiang Shenting even though they were at the same cultivation realm.

Finally free from his constraints, Jiang Shenting surprisingly did not strike at Xu Hongqiu.

Instead, he retreated swiftly and shouted, "Hongqiu, you should stop persisting down the wrong path!"

The burly man, Chi Menshen, blocked Jiang Shenting's path of retreat and yelled, "Jiang Shenting! You still think you can escape?"

Chi Menshen swung his right fist, and a glowering Blood Vajra Warrior appeared behind him. His fist struck forth heavily!

Boom.

Jiang Shenting blocked the punch with one arm, but the force of the punch sent him flying dozens of zhang away.

Ji Lingjue immediately grabbed him with one hand.

"That's Chi Menshen!" someone in the hall shouted. "He used to be a member of the Buddhist Cloud Monastery, but he betrayed them. I've seen him before!"

"Ji Lingjue?" someone else quickly recognized the silver-scaled youth. "Isn't that the traitor of the Ji Family? It appears that they're all from Celestial Charm Sect."

The powerful figures from the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten sects broke through the blood fog one after another. There were several seventh-realm Eminent Ones among them.

Once they saw suspected members of the Celestial Charm Sect appear, they no longer held back. They immediately surrounded the suspected members of the Celestial Charm Sect!

Ji Lingjue lifted Jiang Shenting with one arm and said to Xu Hongqiu, "Miss, didn't you say you wanted to kill him? Go ahead and kill him..."

Upon hearing that, Xu Hongqiu raised her saber.

Jiang Shenting shouted, "Hongqiu, how could you conspire with those demons from the Celestial Charm Sect to harm me!"

"Hongqiu?!" Huang Hanshan uttered from amid the crowd.

He was greatly astonished to see Xu Hongqiu like that. She had told him about her plan, but there had definitely been no mention of the Celestial Charm Sect being involved. She couldn't possibly be colluding with those demons from the Celestial Charm Sect!

Huang Hanshan keenly sensed that something was amiss. If Xu Hongqiu were to kill someone now, the situation would change drastically.

So, Huang Hanshan yelled, "Put down the saber!"

However, Xu Hongqiu could not hear him. At this moment, there was a command echoing repeatedly in her mind like the resounding gongs of a massive bell.

Kill him...

Kill him...

Your enemy is right in front of you.

Before Xu Hongqiu could take action, Jiang Shenting broke free from Ji Lingjue's grip!

With divine light flashing in his eyes, he swiftly leaped into the crowd, shouting, "Don't let those demons from the Celestial Charm Sect escape!"

Those words were unnecessary though. The powerful figures from the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten were already attacking the members of the Celestial Charm Sect... but Xu Hongqiu was among them too!

"Don't harm Hongqiu!" Huang Hanshan shouted loudly from the side.

He summoned three vicious beasts, and they thundered over to protect Xu Hongqiu.

Nevertheless, Jiang Shenting was not going to allow Xu Hongqiu to live any longer. Once he got out, the first thing he did wasn't treat his wounds. Instead, he took out a long spear and raised it high.

He locked his stream of qi onto Xu Hongqiu! With this spear, he would root out his problem completely!

From this moment on, this traitor who colluded with the Celestial Charm Sect to cause chaos in the Whale Gang would disappear along with her father!

Suddenly, the sky turned dark.

...

Rumble.

It was still morning, and the sun was shining brightly, so how could the sky suddenly get dark?

All the powerful figures were too preoccupied with the battle to notice the darkened sky. Nonetheless, the tens of thousands of people watching from below the steps all noticed it.

Only those at the seventh realm or above could get involved in the battle at the top of the steps, so the people in the square could only watch. That was why they were very quick to notice the sky darkening.

When they looked up, they saw what seemed to be an endless mass of dark clouds.

What is that?

It's... It's filled with dense demonic qi!

Could it be...?

"RAAAAARRRRR!!!"

A resounding roar[1] filled with feelings of distress and despair ripped through the skies and shook the nine provinces.

One of the Eminent Ones present yelled, "The Heaven-Devouring Python!"

Jiang Shenting's gaze darkened. He cursed Ji Lingjue inwardly, How could someone who seems smart do something so foolish?

Calling the Heaven-Devouring Python over only confirmed that it was connected to the Celestial Charm Sect and pointlessly drew suspicion to them. After all, could Xu Hongqiu truly have gotten someone to have her father devoured?

Jiang Shenting could have condemned Xu Hongqiu to death by pinning the crime of colluding with the Celestial Charm Sect on her, but that wasn't possible now.

Regardless, Jiang Shenting didn't care about anything else. He was filled with rage; he had to kill this woman no matter what!

Jiang Shenting charged up the spear to full power and threw it! As it flew through the air with thunderous force, it was accompanied by whistling wind that sounded like a dragon's roar!

Whoosh—

Nonetheless, Jiang Shenting had no idea... that Ji Lingjue was astonished to see the Heaven-Devouring Python. How did it get here?

Ji Lingjue had made the Heaven-Devouring Python a tamed beast, so as its master, he could sense the Heaven-Devouring Python's location with just a thought. However, he had been so focused on the chaos within the Whale Gang that he hadn't bothered thinking about where the Heaven-Devouring Python might be. It had been precisely because of his deep focus on the situation at hand that he had been able to quickly think of framing Xu Hongqiu.

However, while he had been doing that, the Heaven-Devouring Python had been moving at a high speed in a panic. Well, to be more precise, it had been fleeing for its life!

As a tamed beast, the Heaven-Devouring Python knew its master's location, so that was where it went.

As a great fearsome beast that dominated the four seas, the Heaven-Devouring Python rarely had moments when it felt scared. But the more fearsome the beast, the more terrified it would become when encountering something that was even more fearsome than it.

The Divine Phoenix that was chasing the Heaven-Devouring Python was its worst nightmare ever! So, it could only seek its master's help!

Nevertheless, it didn't know that its master was also surrounded at this moment.

"Raaar!"

As the Heaven-Devouring Python lowered its enormous head, countless terrified cries rang throughout the Giant Whale Mountain Manor. Its gaping mouth was large enough to swallow the whole manor along with the mountain it was on!

However, the only one who knew that wasn't its intention was Ji Lingjue. He heard the Heaven-Devouring Python's roar as a cry for help.

Di Nufeng had transformed into a Divine Phoenix by using the Samadhi True Fire, so her form was tiny in comparison to the Heaven-Devouring Python. Nonetheless, the difference in spiritual qi was not determined by size.

"I've caught you!" Di Nufeng exclaimed.

She waved her hand toward the Heaven-Devouring Python, and the Divine Phoenix's claw swiped through the python's tail.

Shhk.

Another chunk of the python's thick tail fell to the ground.

Boooooom.

It crushed a nearby mountain peak!

The Giant Whale Mountain Manor was located near the capital of Yu, so the commotion drew the attention of those in the imperial city. Several streams of qi soared into the sky and flew toward the manor!

The Heaven-Devouring Python howled in pain. "Raaaaar..."

Its roar shook the Central Region!

Ji Lingjue frowned. Why are there so many unexpected things happening today?

While he was thinking that, yet another unexpected event occurred.

A crimson-gold Inferno Dragon suddenly appeared with a trail of blazing Divine Dragon Flames!

It let out a thunderous roar that shook the heavens. "RAAAAAAARRRRRRR!"

And what is that?

The members of the various immortal sects present were dumbfounded, feeling overwhelmed by the events.

As everyone stood in stunned silence, the Dragon Spear that Jiang Shenting had thrown was already flying toward Xu Hongqiu!

"Hongqiu!"

Two people called out her name simultaneously. One was Huang Hanshan, and the other person was on top of the Inferno Dragon.

In an instant, the Inferno Dragon swooped down, darting straight toward Xu Hongqiu. Then it coiled around her, blocking the mighty Dragon Spear!

The Dragon Spear pierced through the Inferno Dragon's scales, going halfway in. This showed just how ruthless and malicious Jiang Shenting's attack was. If it had managed to hit Xu Hongqiu as intended, there was no chance she would have survived!

While everyone was left speechless by the waves of shocking events, a young man in fine clothes stood tall atop the Inferno Dragon's head.

Amid the group of people from the Thunderbolt Stronghold, Wei Tiandi suddenly uttered in surprise, "Lin Bei?"

Chapter 402: Indeed Quite Impressive



Capital of Yu, Imperial Supervisory Bureau.

Within the capital of Yu, at the Imperial Supervisory Bureau, there was a modest backyard garden with flowers and plants. At first glance, the plants appeared ordinary, but the dense spiritual energy lingering in the air hinted at their extraordinary nature.

An elderly man, his black hair streaked with gray at the temples, stood quietly among the plants. Though he seemed to be in his fifties, his face was serene, and his demeanor exuded a gentle calm. His eyes gleamed with a divine light, and wherever his gaze fell, the plants would unfurl as if his mere glance nourished them with spiritual energy.

Despite the late autumn chill that gripped the Central Region, this small courtyard was imbued with the warmth of spring.

In the capital of Yu, where every inch of land was precious, it was a rare luxury for an old man to possess such a courtyard. But even more remarkable was his identity.

This elderly man was Qi Yingxuan.

Few knew this name; perhaps it had not been spoken aloud for over a century. Yet, if one mentioned his titles—Imperial Supervisory Commissioner of the Yu Dynasty, Dao Master of Tai'a, Grand Ritualist of Panyang Temple, Guardian of the Abyss of the Hidden Dragons—everyone would recognize them.

In simple terms, he was the protector of the Yu Dynasty.

During the struggle for the throne, the Xia family, one of the three great families, decisively rose in rebellion, ultimately fulfilling their destiny and establishing the Yu Dynasty across the nine provinces[1]. After the nation was founded, disputes naturally arose between the court and the immortal sects.

The immortal sects supported the Xia family in their struggle for the throne, driven by their desire for greater power in the new dynasty. Given the structure of these sects, their primary needs were public support and resources rather than territorial expansion. Assisting the court in vanquishing evil and upholding the righteous Dao was merely a means to enhance their influence.

However, the court naturally sought to have the immortal sects obey their orders, intending for them to act as vassals of the dynasty.

At its core, this was a struggle between imperial authority and divine authority.

Without the imperial court's backing, the immortal sects couldn't extend their influence across the nine provinces; similarly, without the support of the immortal sects, the imperial court couldn't effectively govern the vast nation. After a period of intense conflict, both sides eventually reached a compromise.

To mediate their differences, an institution known as the Imperial Supervisory Bureau was established, tasked with recruiting cultivators to guard the nine provinces. When the Imperial Supervisory Bureau or the Municipality Supervisory Bureau[2] encountered evil entities beyond their control, they would turn to the immortal sects for assistance.

The Imperial Supervisory Bureau thus became a crucial buffer, carrying out the emperor's orders while coordinating with the immortal sects to eradicate evil in the mortal world.

In this way, the responsibilities of the Imperial Supervisory Commissioner became immensely significant.

The life of the current Imperial Supervisory Commissioner, Qi Yingxuan, could indeed be described as legendary.

He was originally named Qi Yingwen[3]. From a young age, he dedicated himself to the study of literature and took the imperial examination at sixteen, but after three attempts, he failed to pass. At twenty-eight, he changed his name to Qi Yingwu[4] and abandoned literature in favor of martial training. He spent seven grueling years honing his skills, only to be beaten by thugs while trying to act heroically on the street. At thirty-five, he renamed himself Qi Yingxuan[5] and joined Panyang Temple in the capital of Yu to cultivate Daoist techniques.

It was exceedingly rare for someone to begin cultivating at the age of thirty-five, and typically, they wouldn't achieve much starting so late in life.

Yet, Qi Yingxuan seemed to have found his true destiny, rising against all odds. Within twenty years, he reached the seventh realm, and within thirty years, he attained mastery over the Great Dao of Tai'a, achieving the Heavenly Origin Realm.

Throughout history, anyone who could achieve the eighth realm at the age of sixty-five was considered a rare prodigy. Given the relatively short time he spent in cultivation, his accomplishments were nothing short of extraordinary.

To this day, he has served as the protector of the Yu Dynasty for one hundred and eighty years, remaining undefeated.

This legendary journey inspired countless middle-aged individuals to pursue their own dreams, many of whom spent all their wealth to begin cultivation in their thirties or forties, only to make no progress and lose everything...

It was just another ordinary, sunny autumn day. After watering the spirit plants in the garden, Qi Yingxuan leisurely sat in a chair in the courtyard, basking in the warm sunlight.

He wasn't a lazy person, but as the Imperial Supervisory Commissioner, his moments of leisure were a testament to the peace that reigned over the Yu Dynasty.

So Qi Yingxuan greatly enjoyed his idleness.

But then...

A terrifying giant python that blotted out the sky appeared in his field of vision.

The Heaven-Devouring Python had emerged above the Giant Whale Mountain Manor, and the capital of Yu, located a hundred li away, offered the perfect vantage point. The citizens of the city only needed to look up to see the enormous creature swimming through the sky, its head descending from the clouds.

They could even see the scales on the python's body clearly.

The Imperial Supervisory Commissioner frowned.

For such a giant demon to appear somewhere to the left of the imperial capital was a serious matter.

He softly said, "Chengfeng, go and see what's happening."

In truth, the Imperial Supervisory Commissioner could easily employ immortal arts to observe the heavens and earth; with just a thought, he could investigate the situation. When he said "go and see," it was clear that he intended to do much more than simply observe.

"Yes."

A voice responded from an unknown direction, and in an instant, a whirlwind had already swept hundreds of li away.

...

Currently, the scene was extremely chaotic in the Giant Whale Mountain Manor located hundreds of li away.

Just moments earlier, the manor had been the site of Jiang Shenting's inauguration ceremony, and the atmosphere was one of harmony and peace.

However, the sudden activation of the Grand Primal Origin Immortal-Binding Formation and the arrival of Xu Hongqiu shattered that tranquility. Huang Hanshan's intervention then caused this disruption to continue further.

As the crowd began to comprehend what was happening, Chi Menshen and Ji Lingjue suddenly appeared, further complicating the already tense situation.

These two seemed to be working with Xu Hongqiu, stepping in only after her assassination attempt had failed.

But then, the Heaven-Devouring Python appeared, which confused everyone. The giant python seemed to be the beast of someone from the Celestial Charm Sect, as could be deduced from its targeted flow of qi.

But if the Celestial Charm Sect was on Xu Hongqiu's side, how could they also command the Heaven-Devouring Python?

Could it be that Xu Hongqiu had conspired with outsiders to kill her father?

Did she plan to kill Xu Bashan first and then Jiang Shenting? But even if she had ten fathers and killed them all, she would never be able to ascend to a high position in the Whale Gang, given that she was only at the fourth realm of cultivation. There seemed to be no logical reason for her to betray her father.

Among the over ten thousand spectators, at least eight thousand were rugged men of the martial world, and by this point, their minds were already overwhelmed.

What happened next, however, was beyond anyone's wildest imagination.

The Heaven-Devouring Python opened its mouth and spat out a crimson-gold Inferno Dragon!

What kind of divine ability is this?

The Inferno Dragon carried three people, one of whom was a strikingly handsome young man dressed in fine clothes, standing confidently on the dragon's head. His appearance was refined, his body radiating intense flames of qi, and he held a sword in his hand, exuding an extraordinary aura.

On the dragon's neck rode a tall, imposing man, as sturdy as an iron tower, exuding a powerful presence. He looked astonishingly like the missing Chief of the Whale Gang, Xu Bashan!

Those with sharp eyes could see a young man clinging desperately to the dragon's tail, barely holding on and shouting frantically as the tail seared his hands.

This strange trio, of course, was none other than Chu Liang, Xu Bashan, and Lin Bei, who had just burst out of the Heaven-Devouring Python's mouth. They had experienced an intense shock as the Inferno Dragon broke out of a hidden realm. At one point, they encountered immense spatial resistance, but Chu Liang led the charge, wielding the Dustless Sword to sever the void, allowing them to break through!

As they rode the Inferno Dragon out of the Heaven-Devouring Python's mouth, the first thing they saw was the chaos unfolding at the Giant Whale Mountain Manor.

Chu Liang immediately spotted Jiang Yuebai in the crowd and exclaimed, "Senior Sister?"

He had never expected to see Jiang Yuebai the moment he emerged from the hidden realm.

Meanwhile, Xu Bashan's gaze locked onto a familiar face amidst the throngs of people. "Hongqiu!" he shouted.

He never imagined that his journey would end right in front of his own home.

Lin Bei, on the other hand, felt a sudden chill. His eyes widened as he watched in horror. "Oh no," he muttered. This was entirely out of his expectation. His belt had been singed mid-flight, and now, to his utter dismay, his pants were sailing through the air!

The pair of pants was not costly. While the pair of pants flew in the sky, he felt the gust of cold wind against his legs. Thankfully, he still had a pair of shorts underneath, so he didn't end up exposing himself in front of tens of thousands of people.

Amidst the turmoil, Jiang Shenting saw an opportunity to strike. He intended to use the confusion to eliminate the confused Xu Hongqiu, silencing her forever and solidifying his claims of her treachery with Celestial Charm Sect.

But Xu Bashan's attention was entirely on Xu Hongqiu, so he naturally saw Jiang Shenting's intent. If he were at his peak cultivation level, he would have flown over and killed Jiang Shenting directly.

However, with his cultivation suppressed by eighty percent, he couldn't reach in time and could only place his hopes on Chu Liang!

Luckily, Chu Liang was not one to disappoint.

In a heartbeat, he commanded the Inferno Dragon. The majestic beast plunged from the sky, its fiery tail wrapping around Xu Hongqiu, pulling her to safety just in time.

Ssht—

Jiang Shenting's powerful spear strike pierced through the Inferno Dragon's scales, igniting its fury. With a roar, the dragon opened its mouth to unleash a torrent of Divine Dragon Fire!

But before the flames could reach their target, they were intercepted by the elders of the Eastern Whale Division standing behind Jiang Shenting. The Whale Gang's First Elder bellowed, "Enough!"

Why did everything have to unfold all at once, crashing down like relentless waves upon them?

Who was the Heaven-Devouring Python looking for?

Why did the dragon breathe fire?

And how did the Chief return so suddenly?

What?

Even the wisest elder of the Whale Gang found himself overwhelmed, his mind struggling to keep up with the rapid succession of events unfolding before him. He soared into the sky, shouting for everyone to cease their actions, hoping to bring some order to the chaos.

He wanted everyone to take a moment together and make sense of the whirlwind of events.

Meanwhile, the guests from the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten, who watched from the sidelines, remained calm and composed. As long as they weren't in immediate danger, they took pleasure in the escalating chaos—the more spectacular the scene, the better.

Among the onlookers were two core disciples from Thunderbolt Stronghold, Wei Tiandi and Deng Yixiao. When Wei Tiandi caught sight of Chu Liang, he blurted out, "Lin Bei."

This was because, on a previous occasion, Chu Liang had used the alias "Lin Bei" and misled Wei Tiandi with false directions. The mistake sent Wei Tiandi on a wild goose chase after Huang Ling'er, leading to nothing. It wasn't until later that he learned someone had spotted Huang Ling'er heading in the opposite direction.

Wei Tiandi had been wanting to teach this Lin Bei a lesson the next time they crossed paths, but he never expected to encounter him today, and certainly not in such a grand and formidable manner.

To be honest, he felt a bit intimidated about approaching him now.

After all, even if he combined all his spirit beasts, they likely wouldn't stand a chance against the Inferno Dragon's searing flames.

Beside him, Deng Yixiao was puzzled by what he had overheard.

He had been present at the Mount Shu Summit that day and had witnessed Chu Liang summon the Violet and Azure Twin Swords to slay the Taowu—a sight he would not easily forget.

In fact, he also knew Lin Bei, as Lin Bei had served in the Foreign Affairs Hall, where he had interacted with various disciples from the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten, enough to become familiar with them.

But you haven't been to Mount Shu, so how did you know this seemingly ordinary disciple? Deng Yixiao thought.

So he asked, "Senior Brother, do you know him?"

"Of course I know him," Wei Tiandi said with a nod. "He was the one who gave me the wrong directions that day. I was planning to teach him a lesson the next time we met, but I didn't expect him to be so powerful..."

He was referring to Chu Liang's astounding ability to command the top-tier, seventh-realm Inferno Dragon with such ease—a feat that left even a seasoned beast tamer from Thunderbolt Stronghold in awe.

But Deng Yixiao's eyes drifted toward the real Lin Bei.

Powerful? He thought.

Lin Bei had barely managed to cling to the Inferno Dragon's tail. He almost fell off and his legs were exposed as he wore nothing but a pair of black shorts. He looked thoroughly disheveled. Yet, the moment he touched the ground, he stood tall with an air of confidence, as if completely unbothered by the potential embarrassment.



In fact, he seemed almost proud.

Hmm... Deng Yixiao couldn't help but nod. The thickness of his skin was indeed quite impressive.

The Whale Gang aimed to stabilize the situation before diving into any further discussions, but the two from Celestial Charm Sect couldn't afford to wait. The moment the Heaven-Devouring Python appeared, Ji Lingjue cursed the beast under his breath.

Ever since he had tamed the Heaven-Devouring Python, he had kept it hidden in the deep sea, never daring to let it surface for fear of drawing unwanted attention. But now, this colossal demon had chosen to reveal itself just three hundred li from the capital of Yu, soaring through the sky for all to see!

It was as if the creature was intent on making a spectacle of itself.

Immediately, Ji Lingjue made a decision. This beast has to die.

He felt a deep sense of loss for the powerful annihilation weapon that was the Baxia Inferno Dragon. He tried activating the mark he had imprinted deep within the Dragon Soul of Baxia, but there was no response.

How had that kid at the fourth realm managed to wrest control from him? With just that faint dragon aura on his body? It seemed impossible, Ji Lingjue thought.

But now was not the time for a brainstorming session. If the righteous heroes managed to regain their footing, their first act would be to unite and take him and Chi Menshen down. It didn't matter who in the Whale Gang had been working with them; they would all face swift and unforgiving annihilation.

While others scrambled to distinguish friend from foe, Ji Lingjue and Chi Menshen had no such confusion—for them, everyone was an enemy now.

So, taking advantage of the ongoing chaos, he shouted at Chi Menshen, "Let's go!"

Chapter 403: Beaten into Nothingness

Chi Menshen left this world peacefully.

...

If he were given another chance, he would have never chosen to fly eastward.

No. He would not have come here today.

He wielded the legendary weapon from the Ocean Tempest Hall and sent a blood fog spreading, causing the experts from the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten to hesitate in action.

He then moved to the public square and was attacked by three to four seventh-realm experts.

Even as he activated the glowering Blood Vajra Warrior and fought fiercely in all directions, he remained unharmed.

Ji Lingjue shouted at him to leave, then transformed into a golden light and instantly fled westward. He used the immortal art Golden Path.

Ji Lingjue's cultivation power was already stronger than most of the seventh-realm Eminent Ones present, so when he was determined to leave, no one could stop him.

Chi Menshen's cultivation power was not weak either, and he did not linger in battle but obediently followed Ji Lingjue's command.

He immediately shouted, "Back off!"

Boom!

As he formed hand seals, the towering Blood Vajra Warrior statue exuding flames of qi exploded with a loud bang!

After the explosion, a sudden burst of blood-red light spread out. His divine blood was extremely poisonous and anyone whose cultivation level was not high enough to fight back the toxins would instantly dissolve into pus upon contact!

If this explosion were to spread, at least half of those present would die!

This was exactly the effect that Chi Menshen was trying to achieve.

He didn't care about the number of people that might die. His only regret was not killing more!

Immediately, the Eminent Ones attacking him were intimidated. In an attempt to save the others, they all worked together and tried to stop the blood light from spreading.

But this also meant that no one was going to stop Chi Menshen from escaping.

Although he could not perform the Golden Path, he mastered a powerful Buddhist technique, Heavenly Traversing Foot, which was another top-tier divine technique.

Escaping to another direction after the misdeeds was a basic survival principle in the martial world.

Since Ji Lingjue fled westward, he took large strides to flee eastward, stepping up to the heavens! If he took a second step, he would disappear from everyone's sight and escape without a trace.

But at that moment, a blazing apparition of a divine phoenix rushed toward him from the east!

Chi Menshen instinctively thought this was someone coming to stop him. Immediately, he shouted, "Get lost!"

He swung a punch at it!

The Eminent One within the divine phoenix apparition seemed surprised. However, upon sensing Chi Menshen's diabolical qi and noticing that he not only refused to give way but also attempted to throw a punch, the Eminent One in the form of the divine phoenix saw no reason to be afraid.

So, they responded with a punch of their own!

Boom—

In his desperation to escape, Chi Menshen poured all his strength into his punch, channeling sixty years of combined cultivation from both his Buddhist and Celestial Charm Sect practices.

His right arm turned entirely blood-red, like some kind of translucent jade. He was confident that this punch could pierce through any living being in the world! The true power wasn't in the force, but in the divine blood power infused into his fist.

But...

For the first time in his life, he lost in a clash of fists.

And he lost completely.

The divine phoenix apparition raised its right claw, clenched it into a fist, and met his blow, like thunder striking the earth!"

But the usual scene of bodies melting from his punch didn't occur; instead, the blood-red color on his arm evaporated wildly, leaving it completely clean in an instant. The flames surrounding his opponent's arm were similarly eroded by his divine blood.

Then it came down to a direct clash of fists.

At this moment, Chi Menshen had only one thought... was his opponent a celestial beast in human form?

In his simple understanding, no human could possess such strength.

Absolutely impossible!

Boom—

After the muffled sound of fists colliding, there was an immediate rumble as Chi Menshen was smashed into the ground, sent flying back to where he came from!

The ground of the public square cracked, and the earth groaned as the people below scattered in panic like birds and beasts.

They were fortunate. Those below the seventh realm who felt the residual force of this punch would likely have died on the spot.

The divine phoenix apparition then descended above the square and immediately saw Chu Liang standing atop the Inferno Dragon.

Chu Liang shouted in surprise and joy, "Esteemed teacher!"

The figure within the divine phoenix was, of course, Di Nufeng!

She had been chasing the Heaven-Devouring Python all the way here; although she had just caught up, it took some effort to fly from the python's tail to its head.

When Di Nufeng saw her disciple, she immediately smiled, about to speak. But before she could say anything, Chu Liang shouted, "That man is a member of the Celestial Charm Sect, the mastermind behind the assassination attempt using the Heaven-Devouring Python. Don't let him escape!"

"Hmm?" Di Nufeng frowned.

Chi Menshen, who had just been smashed into the ground by her, had regained consciousness. At that moment, he was seen attempting to flip and escape once more.

A sinister smile suddenly appeared on Di Nufeng's face.

No wonder you survived my punch—turns out you are an evil member of the Celestial Charm Sect...

So you were the ones trying to harm my disciple?

If Chi Menshen knew what she was thinking, he would probably have knelt down and begged for mercy, loudly explaining that it wasn't intentional, pleading with Di Nufeng to spare his life...

He would have explained that the Heaven-Devouring Python wasn't even his pet and that the actual owner of the Heaven-Devouring Python had already escaped. He would have even offered to lead her to the owner of the Heaven-Devouring Python.

But it was too late for all that.

In the next instant, Di Nufeng had already turned into a fireball and smashed down!

Boom—

Chi Menshen had just managed to get half of his body out when he was suddenly stomped down again. Di Nufeng's foot came crashing down on his chest, driving him one zhang into the ground and creating a large pit around him!

When had this notorious figure ever been trampled like this?

The land of Giant Whale Mountain Manor had never been specially reinforced and simply could not withstand the full power of Di Nufeng's stomp.

But this was just the beginning.

Next, Di Nufeng bent over slightly. As she swung her fists, the flames around her body soared up another zhang high!

She rained punch after punch down on him!

Thump, thump, thump, thump, thump, thump—

With each punch, she hit harder, deeper, faster, and with growing enthusiasm. Gradually, her figure disappeared from view, leaving only the surging flames visible. The pit grew deeper and wider.

Thump, thump, thump, thump, thump, thump—

This flurry of punches lasted for who knows how long and what felt like a moment seemed to stretch into ten years. The chaotic scene that even the repeated shouts of the Whale Gang elders couldn't bring order to suddenly fell quiet.

Everyone—whether standing, flying, or sitting—watched in stunned silence as Di Nufeng relentlessly punched and smashed Chi Menshen like a maniac.

With every punch that landed, everyone's pupils would dilate, and their eyebrows would twitch involuntarily.

The more timid ones were on the verge of tears, though they couldn't explain why; they just wanted to go home and be held by their mothers.

This was just too terrifying...

Even Chu Liang was dumbfounded, his eyelids twitching in fear. He really wanted to say... Esteemed teacher, that's enough...If you keep digging down, you'll reach the petroleum deposit.

But he didn't dare say it out loud.

Who would dare stop a rampaging Di Nufeng?

Considering how fierce she was, even an eighth-realm expert at the Heavenly Origin Realm would likely have to think twice before fighting her.

After what felt like an eternity—maybe fifteen minutes or maybe half a lifetime—the rumbling underground finally stopped. Di Nufeng then leaped back up with a satisfied expression on her face.

In all these years, Chu Liang had rarely seen his teacher so happy.

She really was a violent maniac!

Can beating someone really bring that much joy?

Everyone present who knew her thought the same thing: thank goodness for Mount Shu's education. If she'd ended up in the martial world, she'd have been a top-level wanted criminal for sure."

Whether they were from the diabolical sect or the Celestial Charm Sect, everyone would respectfully call her "Big Sis" upon seeing her.

When Di Nufeng finally approached him, Chu Liang managed force a weak smile and asked, "Esteemed teacher, are you done?"

Di Nufeng calmly waved her hand and said, "He's been beaten into nothingness."

...

As the dust settled and the smoke cleared, no one dared to make a sound or move. All eyes were on Di Nufeng. It was clear to everyone: the only thing that can stop violence is even greater violence.

Hearing about it is one thing, but witnessing it firsthand is another.

Most of those present hadn't lived through the era when the immortal realm was in turmoil because of Di Nufeng, so they had only heard stories of a crazy woman from Mount Shu who was a fierce figure back then.

But they had no idea just how fierce she really was.

As for those who had lived through that era, the memories came rushing back all at once. Even the seventh-realm Eminent Ones trembled with fear.

After all, Chi Menshen had been able to resist the combined attack of at least four Eminent Ones.

How many opponents as powerful as Chi Menshen could Di Nufeng fight? That was unclear, but how long he could endure her relentless attacks in a one-on-one fight depended entirely on how sturdy he was.



They vaguely recalled that...Di Nufeng was strong, but they didn't remember her being this powerful.

Could it be that she had achieved a breakthrough after being in closed-door cultivation at Mount Shu for decades?

Could she have already approached the eighth realm?

She was able to beat a powerful Eminent One from the Celestial Charm Sect into nothingness... quite literally. With the repeated tempering of Samadhi True Fire and her relentless punches, his flesh became so fragile that it disintegrated.

Under the silent gaze of the entire crowd, Di Nufeng naturally stepped onto the head of the Inferno Dragon beside Chu Liang.

The previously ferocious Inferno Dragon, which no one dared to provoke, allowed her to step on it without any resistance.

Humans were not the only ones who feared her.

Between the teacher and disciple, the disciple had ridden the Inferno Dragon out from the mouth of the Heaven-Devouring Python in a grand and imposing manner, while the teacher descended from the sky, single-handedly killing Chi Menshen with a burning, murderous aura.

As they stood together, their presence radiated an aura that sent shudders of fear through everyone around them.

Di Nufeng turned around and finally noticed that no one was speaking; all eyes were on her. She frowned in confusion and said, "Why are you all staring at me? Go do what you're supposed to do."

It was as though these insects wouldn't dare to chirp even if spring arrived, unless she had made a sound first.

"Yes, yes..." The crowd hastily turned their heads and started moving.

Whether they had something to do or not, they just started moving.

Once everyone realized their roles and positions, they began cleaning up the mess.

Surprisingly, the first to move was Jiang Shenting, who had lost an arm. Regenerating a severed limb wasn't difficult for a sixth-realm cultivator, and for a seventh-realm Eminent, it was even less of an issue as long as the divine technique's attack didn't cause any additional erosion.

So, instead of tending to his wounds, he hurried over to Xu Bashan, while he himself was covered in blood, and said heavily, "Chief! You're finally back! The brothers and I were so worried sick about you!"

Chapter 404: Celestial Official

Everyone watched with their eyes and mouths gaping in shock as Di Nufeng punched Chi Menshen.

Meanwhile, the Heaven-Devouring Python was hanging around idly in the sky.

Ji Lingjue had already fled. The Heaven-Devouring Python wanted to escape with its master, but its size didn't allow for a stealthy retreat... It did its best to try and follow. Its head moved out of the vicinity of the Giant Whale Mountain Manor, but its tail was still within it.

As the ginormous creature flew overhead, the sky darkened wherever it passed by, and its scales reflected flashes of light from amid the clouds.

The Heaven-Devouring Python was flying in the densely populated Central Region. The sight of it had the people below fleeing in terror.

Right then, a figure appeared in front of the Heaven-Devouring Python's enormous head.

"You've got a lot of guts, hey. You dared to act recklessly near the capital of Yu despite your size," the figure said leisurely.

He was dressed in white, with a jade belt at his waist and a gold hairpin in his lustrous hair. Judging from his face, the man appeared to be around thirty years old. He had distinctively red lips, white teeth, and skin that was fair and smooth like jade. This man seemed to have a rather carefree demeanor, as characterized by his attitude and posture.

He stood in midair and calmly gazed at the Heaven-Devouring Python. Compared to the ginormous beast, the man in white looked like a speck of dust.

In the next second, the man in white flipped his hand over, summoning a sword that glowed brightly with divine light. He gave it his all and unleashed an incredibly powerful slash.

Whoosh.

A beam of white light appeared in front of the Heaven-Devouring Python and cut into the space. It sliced straight down from the same height that the python's head reached, creating a very long black rip in the sky. As the length of the rip grew, so did its width. In an instant, the rip widened into a portal-like black hole.

The black hole was incredibly wide, stretching across the sky. The people gazing up at it from below were scared out of their minds. Yet, even such a massive black hole seemed a bit narrow compared to the Heaven-Devouring Python.

Whoosh—

Due to its tremendous size, the Heaven-Devouring Python couldn't maneuver nimbly, so it couldn't veer to the side in time to avoid the black hole. The Heaven-Devouring Python just crashed straight into it.

The sides of the python's head hit the sides of the black hole. It turned out that the hole was indeed too narrow for the python. Fortunately, the rip in the sky appeared to be elastic; it stretched slightly to accommodate the python. Once the head was inside, the rest of the python's body would have no issue entering.

However, as soon as the python's head entered the black hole, it had no desire to continue going inside and immediately tried to pull its head back out.

It seemed that there was a tremendous force pulling the Heaven-Devouring Python from inside the black hole. The Heaven-Devouring Python thrashed about in midair, struggling violently against the force. Nevertheless, it was completely unable to defy the force inside the black hole.

Boom!

A thunderous noise rang out as the black hole finally swallowed the Heaven-Devouring Python. The man in white raised his finger to the sky, and the black hole slowly closed with a loud rumble, gradually disappearing from the sky.

Just a moment later, the sky returned to a clear blue, like when dark clouds dissipated after the rain. In fact, the sky was even bluer and clearer than before, as the Heaven-Devouring Python's collision with the black hole had dispersed all of the clouds in that part of the sky.

The alarmed people below watched in wonder as the sky suddenly brightened. It was as if the ginormous python had never appeared.

"It's gone?" someone cried out in surprise. "That demonic creature disappeared?"

"You're making a fuss over nothing!" someone else sneered. "That demonic creature dared to disturb the peace near the capital of Yu, so of course, the esteemed cultivators from the Imperial Supervisory Bureau would take action. Isn't that to be expected? I don't know what you were all so afraid of."

"If you weren't scared, why are your pants wet?"

"Don't you know the urine of young boys wards off evil? I was just planning to use this to scare the demonic creature off in case it dared to come down and cause trouble."

"Stop being stubborn. Just go home and change your pants..."

"Huh? It seems there's no need to go home. Why has a pair of pants just floated down from the sky? Is this... a sign from the heavens?"

"..."

After dealing with the Heaven-Devouring Python, the man in white didn't return to the capital of Yu. He transformed into a gust of wind and headed straight to the Giant Whale Mountain Manor.

At that moment, Di Nufeng was still pounding Chi Menshen into the ground while everyone in the square watched on, dumbfounded.

Upon landing, the man in white sensed something was strange about this scene and decided not to get involved yet. Instead, he scanned the area with his divine sense until he spotted a familiar face. Then he swiftly flew over to that person's side.

"Master Dong, what's going on here?" the man in white asked.

That question was directed at a short man with a 八-shaped mustache standing on the edge of the crowd. He was Xu Hongqiu's teacher, Formation Sage Dong Futu.

"Hmm?" Dong Futu uttered, turning his head to find the man in white beside him. His face lit up with an amused smile as he said, "Chengfeng? You're just in time. Look, Di Nufeng is beating someone up again."

Overhearing the conversation, several people nearby glanced at the pair and then nodded respectfully. "Celestial Official Li."

There was a very clear hierarchy in the Imperial Supervisory Bureau. The lowest-ranked personnel were ensigns. The heads of small stations belonging to the City Supervisory Division were flag-bearing officials, and the heads of large stations were senior flag-bearing officials. The personnel in charge of the cities were seal-holding officials, and the personnel overseeing the provinces were senior seal-holding officials.

A senior seal-holding official guarded an entire province and reported directly to the Imperial Supervisory Commissioner. This reflected the strict hierarchy and layered governance.

An exception to that hierarchy were the celestial officials. They had no subordinates, but their rank was second only to the Imperial Supervisory Bureau Chief, and they answered only to him.

The Imperial Supervisory Commissioner currently had four celestial officials under his command, all of whom were undoubtedly powerful.

Li Chengfeng was one of them. Known as the White-Robed Sword-Wielding Immortal, he was a handsome man who was famous all over the Capital of Yu. During his younger days, he was

extremely popular, attracting countless female admirers of all ages. At the peak of his fame, he was as popular as the most popular disciples of the South Melody Conservatory.

Even the current top disciples of the immortal sects, like Yang Shenlong and Jiang Yuebai, couldn't compare to him. After all, their main battlefield was in the world of immortality cultivators, so their fanbases would certainly be smaller than that of Li Chengfeng, who had been active in the nine provinces.

Unfortunately, Li Chengfeng had married young and no longer appeared in public much, so his fanatical fans eventually lost interest in him.

However, Li Chengfeng had not retired. He had simply stopped handling minor affairs, as his cultivation level had increased. After all, the Imperial Supervisory Commissioner relied on the four Celestial Officials the most for missions.

Li Chengfeng was a sword cultivator, so there were even rumors that he was being groomed by the Imperial Supervisory Commissioner to be the next Dao Master of Tai'a!

Dong Futu was an honored ally of the High Heavens Pavilion and operated in the Capital of Yu. As fellow members of the cultivators' circle in the capital, Li Chengfeng was naturally well acquainted with Dong Futu.

"What just happened here, Master Dong? Could you explain it to me in detail?" Li Chengfeng asked as he joined the crowd in watching Di Nufeng beat someone up.

"It was quite chaotic earlier," Dong Futu said, blinking in disbelief as he recalled the absurd chain of events. "It was supposed to be Jiang Shenting's inauguration ceremony, and everyone was preparing to feast. Then... Then suddenly, someone set up some kind of enchanted formation here, and it was extremely powerful!"

...

After everything settled down, Jiang Shenting rushed to Xu Bashan's side with a concerned expression.

However, Xu Bashan ignored that and shot him a cold cold glare. "Why did you try to kill Hongqiu?"

Jiang Shenting pointed at Xu Hongqiu. "Chief, it was the Young Lady who conspired with the demons from the Celestial Charm Sect to kill me!"

At this moment, Xu Hongqiu finally came to her senses.

The moment she saw Xu Bashan, she threw herself into his arms and cried out, "Father! You're finally back!"

"I'm back." Xu Bashan patted Xu Hongqiu. "No one will hurt my daughter again."

"Chief..."

"Chief!"

"..."

The elders of the Ocean Tempest Hall quickly gathered around Xu Bashan. After becoming a huge mess in Xu Bashan's absence, the Whale Gang finally regained their pillar with his return.

"Everyone, please remain calm," Xu Bashan said, gently nodding to the crowd. Then he looked down at his daughter and asked, "What happened earlier?"

"I don't know either..." Xu Hongqiu murmured.

Realizing the elders of the Whale Gang had gathered around them, Xu Hongqiu pulled herself together. Once again, she hid her child-like demeanor as a loving daughter under a serious expression.

Xu Hongqiu continued, "I wanted to avenge you, but... the moment that person appeared, I lost consciousness..."

She lowered her gaze as she sifted through her memories. All she could recall were a few vague images, like fragments of a dream.

That demon from the Celestial Charm Sect grabbed my saber and cut off Jiang Shenting's arm... Jiang Shenting threw his spear at me... An inferno dragon coiled around me... and standing on top of the inferno dragon was a young man, who looked familiar even from the back...

Ah.

Xu Hongqiu looked to the side.

In the hazy scene earlier, she had indeed seen Jiang Shenting throw that Dragon Spear at her. She wanted to dodge, but her body wouldn't obey her. It was as if she were just a spectator. All she could do was watch that long spear approach her with such great momentum that it shimmered with rainbow-colored light. However, just before the Dragon Spear pierced Xu Hongqiu, an Inferno Dragon suddenly descended and blocked the strike, saving her life in the nick of time.

Her father had been standing on the dragon's back, while a familiar-looking young man was standing on the dragon's head.

That person was indeed Chu Liang! Xu Hongqiu realized.

When she looked over at Chu Liang, she found he was reuniting with his teacher, Di Nufeng. There was also a certain pantless hairy-legged young man standing beside them.

The situation was still a total mess in the hall. Xu Hongqiu wanted to go over and thank Chu Liang, but she couldn't leave yet. So, she turned to look at her father instead.

Xu Bashan looked at Jiang Shenting with a dark expression and asked, "You said that Hongqiu colluded with the demons from the Celestial Charm Sect to harm me?"

"I don't know why, but everyone else saw what happened," Jiang Shenting replied.

Covered in blood and looking deathly pale, he appeared quite weak.

"That demon took action, but it was to help you break the enchanted formation!" said an elder that supported Xu Bashan.



"He was just taking the chance to escape. How could it be that Chief Jiang was the one colluding with the Celestial Charm Sect instead?" retorted an elder that supported Jiang Shenting.

With the situation more stable now, the Whale Gang gradually returned to its usual state.

Before Xu Bashan's disappearance, there had always been overt and covert strife between Xu Bashan's and Jiang Shenting's supporters. Now, that familiar tension had returned.

"I will thoroughly investigate this matter," Xu Bashan declared. "Whoever it was that colluded with the Celestial Charm Sect to harm me, I will not let them off easily!"

"If you conduct the investigation, won't it be easy to frame someone?" someone said. "Chief Jiang has already taken the helm; he should be the one leading the Whale Gang now."

"Don't forget. He only took over because Chief Xu wasn't here," someone else countered.

"Everyone, please stop arguing," Jiang Shenting urged. "Let's not talk about who is at fault for now. When I agreed to take over as chief, I said that as long as Chief Xu came back, I would return this position to him. If we keep fighting like this, we'll just end up tearing the Whale Gang apart!"

His words served as a timely reminder to everyone.

Someone immediately continued on that train of thought. "Just as well then! Rather than stick around to get falsely accused right after experiencing an assassination attempt, Chief Jiang should take the Eastern Whale Division and separate from the Whale Gang!"

"That's right. Who knows if this was all just a big scheme by the father and his daughter. Perhaps he just pretended to disappear so that his daughter could pretend to seek revenge. Right when his daughter's assassination attempt failed, he immediately appeared to save her! How could there be such a ridiculous coincidence?"

Several of Jiang Shenting's supporters chimed in one after another.

Nevertheless, Xu Bashan had just as many loyal followers, and they gave a rational and well-reasoned retort.

"You're talking out of your momma's stinky ass!"[1]

"..."

The tension between the two sides escalated. If not for Xu Bashan and Jiang Shenting suppressing them, they would have engaged in a physical fight.

Amidst the chaos, someone said loudly, "Everyone, there's no need for you to argue among yourselves. It is we, the Imperial Supervisory Bureau, who should be thoroughly investigating this matter."

The elders and members of the Whale Gang turned toward the person who spoke and saw Li Chengfeng was now standing among them.

"We wouldn't normally interfere with the internal affairs of the Whale Gang. But since this matter involves the Celestial Charm Sect, we'll have to intervene," Li Chengfeng declared, looking at Jiang Shenting and Xu Bashan.

He continued, "All elders and members of the Whale Gang present here today, please do not leave. The Imperial Supervisory Bureau will soon send people to investigate. We will find out exactly who colluded with the Celestial Charm Sect and provide you with an answer."

Xu Bashan nodded. "Since this matter is being handled by the Imperial Supervisory Bureau, I can rest easy now."

Jiang Shenting smiled. "I agree."

However, when Li Chengfeng looked at Jiang Shenting, his eyes suddenly lit up in alarm. "You're trying to leave?!"

Chapter 405: Intimate

Normally, for sects in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten, outsiders would never be involved in internal conflicts.

But if the Celestial Charm Sect was involved, the Imperial Supervisory Bureau had the power to step in. Even the emperor himself didn't have the authority to do so, but the Imperial Supervisory Bureau did.

The Imperial Supervisory Bureau had been established through a collaboration between the immortal sects and the imperial court, with the purpose of eradicating the various evil entities that plagued the nine provinces. When needed, the Imperial Supervisory Bureau could summon the immortal sects to join the fight at a moment's notice. Disciples from the immortal sects would often join the Imperial Supervisory Bureau for training. As a result, the two entities shared a mutually dependent relationship.

The Celestial Charm Sect, being a group that caused chaos across the world, had always been a primary target of the Imperial Supervisory Bureau.

The Whale Gang, now split into two factions, was unable to resolve their internal conflict.

If both sides persisted in their claims and refused to back down, neither side would trust someone from the opposing faction to investigate the matter. It would be ideal if the trustworthy Imperial Supervisory Bureau intervened and conducted the investigation.

Both the people on Xu Bashan's side and those on Jiang Shenting's side would agree to it.

If anyone was against the Imperial Supervisory Bureau's investigation, it would likely be the one who had actually colluded with the Celestial Charm Sect.

And so, while Jiang Shenting verbally agreed, he secretly activated a divine technique.

As Li Chengfeng shouted, Jiang Shenting transformed into a sweeping whirlwind.

It was only when the others extended their divine senses and scanned the area that they realized this body of Jiang Shenting was a clone!

He had used the Immortal Art External Manifestation!

This immortal art not only allowed one to create a clone with cultivation similar to the original body, but it also enabled the clone to remain in place and maintain its posture while the true form escaped.

That was exactly what Jiang Shenting did. The moment Li Chengfeng entered the scene, he sensed that something was wrong and had his true form traverse the earth and escape.

With Li Chengfeng's sharp senses, he noticed something amiss the moment the clone spoke.

Immediately, he went after the true form of Jiang Shenting.

Although Jiang Shenting traversed the earth quickly, Li Chengfeng had transformed into a whirlwind and was even faster.

In the blink of an eye, he had caught up to Jiang Shenting!

Though everything happened in an instant, Jiang Shenting had already escaped beyond Giant Whale Mountain Manor, and Li Chengfeng, from mid-air, slashed out a black line on the ground.

This cut off Jiang Shenting's passageway underground and he was forced to emerge from the ground.

As he was injured, he had no intention of fighting Li Chengfeng. In an instant, he multiplied into many clones and countless Jiang Shentings fled in all directions!

Scattered like stars across the sky!

Every eminent figure who had roamed the martial world for years possessed a unique escape technique, and this was Jiang Shenting's divine method of evasion. It wasn't merely a simple disguise; as long as one of his forms escaped, he could slip away unscathed!

Unfortunately for him, he ran into Li Chengfeng.

Li Chengfeng, clad in a white robe, suddenly multiplied into countless clones. Each wielded a sword and darted out with incredible speed, leaving behind a blur of afterimages that danced back and forth!

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh—

In the blink of an eye, all of Jiang Shenting's forms were sliced apart.

The countless white shadows converged back into a single white-clad figure, now standing before the last true form of Jiang Shenting.

One strike!

Swoosh—

Jiang Shenting had no way to avoid it. As the swordlight flashed before his eyes, he realized in a daze that Li Chengfeng hadn't struck him directly but had instead created a black fissure behind him.

Then, Li Chengfeng kicked out.

Bang.

He sent Jiang Shenting hurtling straight into the fissure.

After all, Jiang Shenting had only recently achieved the seventh realm and stood little chance against these top-tier Eminent Ones.

After capturing Jiang Shenting, Li Chengfeng returned to Giant Whale Mountain Manor.

The elders of the Eastern Whale Division were immediately devastated. Many of them had no idea that Jiang Shenting was colluding with the Celestial Charm Sect; they truly believed him to be a righteous and talented leader.

As for who among them might have been Jiang Shenting's accomplices, that would have to await further investigation by the Imperial Supervisory Bureau.

...

After handling the situation over there, Li Chengfeng approached Di Nufeng.

"Elder Sister Feng," he called out.

"Oh, Little Feng," Di Nufeng said as she smiled warmly at him. "I was the one who chased that little snake here, but it gave you a chance to achieve great merit."

"Thank you for your assistance," Li Chengfeng replied with an unusual degree of politeness. "However, since this matter involves you and your disciple, we may need to ask for more details afterward."

"No problem, I'm happy to stop by the Imperial Supervisory Bureau to cooperate with your investigation," Di Nufeng responded confidently. Then, she suddenly asked, "How's Little Yu doing? Is she okay?"

"She's fine," Li Chengfeng replied.

"Hehe..." Di Nufeng grinned. "It's been so many years since I last saw her. I miss her so much."

Li Chengfeng's expression immediately became wary as he responded, "We've been married for a long time."

"She's married now?" Di Nufeng's smile grew even brighter.[1]

"..." Li Chengfeng looked utterly shocked and confused.

Chu Liang, standing nearby, wanted to suggest that his esteemed teacher tone it down a bit. However, as a junior, he knew better than to interject while his teacher was conversing with someone else.

Just then, Li Chengfeng's gaze shifted to him, perhaps to steer the conversation or out of genuine interest.

"This must be your disciple?" he remarked. "I've heard of how he slayed the Taowu with the Violet and Azure Twin Swords during the Mount Shu battle. And now he's subdued the South Sea Inferno Dragon. As expected, the heroes of tomorrow are found among the youth of today."

Chu Liang quickly responded modestly.

"Hehe," Di Nufeng chuckled as she gave Chu Liang a pat on the shoulder. She then said, "He's my disciple. Of course he will take after me."

"Hmm..." Li Chengfeng blinked and then said, "I have some matters to attend to, so I'll take my leave."

Since the Inferno Dragon was mentioned, Chu Liang decided to go take a closer look at this massive creature.

After having its head stepped on by Di Nufeng, the Inferno Dragon obediently lay on the ground, not daring to move recklessly.

In truth, it naturally disliked the aura around Di Nufeng. After all, both the Inferno Dragon and the Divine Phoenix were celestial beasts of the fire path, and they had always been rivals.

But it didn't dare to act aggressively toward her.

It lay there, feeling aggrieved.

Chu Liang stepped forward and looked into its golden eyes as he asked, "Do you want to come home with me? The Mount Shu Sect is big and comfortable..."

"Roar..." The South-Sea Inferno Dragon seemed to have thought about it with its limited intelligence but ultimately shook its head.

Chu Liang sighed softly. As expected, it was a proud True Dragon, not something that could be easily subdued. If it had followed him that easily, there wouldn't be only three sects in the world guarded by True Dragons.

If he could take this dragon back to the Silver Sword Peak, the Silver Sword Peak would be guarded by two vicious beasts—his teacher and the Inferno Dragon. Who would dare provoke them?

Unfortunately, this beautiful vision could only remain a fantasy.

The Inferno Dragon let out a low hum, then opened its mouth and released a crimson-gold glow that shot toward Chu Liang. He felt a warm current flow through his body, finally settling on his wrist with a sizzling sound.

Chu Liang raised his wrist and saw a patch of crimson-gold scales on his right wrist.

This is...

Did the Inferno Dragon just impart knowledge to me?

Chu Liang had previously experienced receiving the teachings of the White Dragon, so he immediately recognized what this was. It was the foundation of the Inferno Dragon's cultivation. With this, he would be able to cultivate the Art of the Inferno Dragon, which was entirely different from the White Dragon's technique.

The White Dragon's technique enhanced his qi and blood, which Chu Liang referred to as the Secret Dragon Blood Technique. The purpose of this technique was to strengthen his physical strength.

But the Dao of the Inferno Dragon was like a fire seed. This was the cultivation of Divine Dragon Fire.

In essence, what the Inferno Dragon had given him was like a fire seed.

It became clear that each True Dragon had a unique cultivation path, much like how humans cultivated different arts and techniques.



At present, Chu Liang's cultivation levels were quite varied.

Roughly, he was at the peak of the fourth realm with Mount Shu's techniques, the second realm with the White Dragon's techniques, and the first realm with the Inferno Dragon's techniques...

After bestowing the crimson scale upon Chu Liang, the Inferno Dragon raised its head and let out a long cry, then soared into the sky, flying southward.

This commotion caught the attention of everyone around.

On the other side, Xu Bashan had just finished dealing with the gang's matters. Seeing the scene unfold, he remarked, "It's all thanks to Chu Liang and that Inferno Dragon that you and I are able to reunite."

"Indeed," Xu Hongqiu said as she nodded gently in agreement.

Xu Bashan suddenly asked, "What do you think of Young Hero Chu as a person?"

"Hmm?" Xu Hongqiu was caught off guard by the sudden question. She hesitated for a moment, lowering her gaze before softly replying, "I don't really know; I've only interacted with him once or twice. He seems gentle and refined, but sometimes there's a hint of cunning about him, and at other times, he appears quite heroic..."

"I'd like for the two of you to have a more intimate relationship. Would you be willing to do that?"

"Ah, this...?" Xu Hongqiu's eyes flickered with a touch of panic. "Where did this come from...? It's not that I'm unwilling, but it all feels a bit too sudden. After all, we've only met twice... Of course, I'll leave the decision to you, but..."

"Oh, come now, we're people of the martial world. Why overthink it?" Xu Bashan waved his hand dismissively and strode over to Chu Liang.

As he approached, he laughed heartily and said, "Brother Chu, today, you alone saved the lives of my daughter and me. I won't waste words on thanking you..."

"I, Xu Bashan, propose we become sworn brothers. Even though we bear different surnames, we will be brothers nonetheless. What do you think?"

Ha? Xu Hongqiu was utterly bewildered.

Chapter 406: Hmph

Chu Liang was momentarily stunned when he heard this.

It was well-known in the martial world that Xu Bashan, the Chief of the Whale Gang, had a fondness for forming sworn brotherhoods. His reputation as a sworn brotherhood enthusiast was well-established, with at least four or five of his sworn brothers being widely recognized.

However, those who managed to become sworn brothers with the Chief of the Whale Gang were all prominent figures in the immortal realm, such as Huang Hanshan, the Lord of Thunderbolt Stronghold.

Chu Liang never imagined he would encounter such a situation himself and could only conclude that this man truly had a deep fondness for forming brotherhoods.

But he couldn't find any reason to refuse.

After all, having an older brother like this in the martial world would certainly boost his confidence when venturing out in the future.

And so, he agreed without any hesitation.

However, Xu Hongqiu, who had been silent until now, spoke up from behind, "Father, if you do this, how am I supposed to interact with Young Hero Chu in the future? Wouldn't he be a whole generation older than me?"

"Oh, what's the big deal?" Xu Bashan dismissed his daughter's concern with a wave of his hand. "From now on, you each address him as you see fit. You can call him Uncle, and he can call you Elder Sister."

Well then, you are clearly well-versed in the art of swearing brotherhoods.

Since he had said this, Chu Liang naturally agreed, "Since Chief Xu has extended such a gracious offer, I wouldn't dare refuse."

Xu Hongqiu, standing nearby, couldn't argue any further.

Today, she and her father truly owed a great debt to Chu Liang and his teacher. If Chu Liang hadn't rescued Xu Bashan from Python Belly City, or if Di Nufeng hadn't driven the Heaven-Devouring Python to this place...

The outcome might have been Xu Hongqiu's wrongful death, with the added accusation of colluding with the Celestial Charm Sect, while Xu Bashan would have remained trapped in Python Belly City for life.

One had to admit that Xu Bashan's actions were an excellent strategy.

Considering that Chu Liang had saved the lives of the Chief of the Whale Gang as well as his daughter, what could he even give to show his gratitude? Although he had lowered himself down to swear brotherhood with Chu Liang and he might need to look out for Chu Liang later on, Chu Liang was not an ordinary person.

Maybe in a dozen years, Chu Liang would end up being the one looking out for the Chief of the Whale Gang.

With hundreds of thousands of members in the Whale Gang, anyone who could become the Chief would naturally be well-versed in social matters.

Immediately, Xu Bashan grabbed Chu Liang. As they stood before the members of the immortal sects and the brothers in the martial world, he declared loudly, "Listen up! Everyone! Today is the day that I, Xu Bashan, swear to be brothers with Chu Liang. Even if we are of different surnames, we shall be brothers! From now on, as long as he doesn't go against morality or commit crimes, all his affairs are my affairs as well! I ask you all to bear witness!"

Naturally, the crowd was stunned. Everyone knew Chu Liang had saved Xu Bashan, but none of them expected such an extravagant display of gratitude.

However, given that it was Xu Bashan, this sort of grand gesture was entirely in line with his character.

If this had happened on its own, it would have been the talk of the martial world. But on a day already packed with one dramatic event after another, it merely added to the chaos, causing only a minor stir among the crowd.

In the blink of an eye, the members of the Whale Gang had already set up the altar, incense, candles, a rooster... and all the other items needed for a brotherhood ritual, leaving Chu Liang momentarily stunned. It seemed this new Big Brother was indeed highly experienced in these brotherhood-forming rituals, as even his subordinates were well-versed in the process.

After all the chaos, the forces of the Imperial Supervisory Bureau quickly arrived and started questioning everyone present, inquiring about specific details.

Of course, the observers from the immortal sects received slightly better treatment, being questioned briefly before being allowed to leave.

It wasn't until they left the Giant Whale Mountain Manor that Chu Liang finally had a chance to speak with Jiang Yuebai.

...

Chu Liang and Di Nufeng, being the most involved, were the last to leave this session of questioning.

Since this involved the people in the Python Belly City, Chu Liang reminded the Imperial Supervisory Bureau to check on those people as soon as possible since they had captured the Heaven-Devouring Python. He was concerned that a conflict between the demon race and the human race in the city could result in unnecessary casualties. However, with the Heaven-Devouring Python already in Li Chengfeng's hands, it was only a matter of time before the people inside were rescued, so there was no need for excessive worry.

The Imperial Supervisory Bureau took this matter seriously and immediately dispatched people into the hidden realm to investigate.

By the time the teacher and disciple came out from the hall, it was already evening. The group from the Mount Shu Sect who had come to attend the ceremony was waiting in an open field outside the manor.

"Senior Uncle Wang and fellow disciples," Chu Liang greeted as he stepped forward and nodded slightly. He glanced over at Jiang Yuebai and said, "Senior Sister Jiang."

Although Chu Liang appeared fine, Jiang Yuebai still asked softly, "Are you alright?"

"All is well," Chu Liang replied with a smile, shaking his head.

On the other side, Di Nufeng greeted Wang Xuanling in a much more straightforward manner.

With her hands tucked into her sleeves, she walked up to him, frowned, and bluntly said, "Let's go, old man."

Wang Xuanling's expression immediately darkened again, but he was too tired to argue with her. With a flick of his sleeve, he turned to leave.

Di Nufeng, however, refused to follow behind him, unwilling to let it seem like he was leading her group. She quickly took a few steps to overtake Wang Xuanling.

Wang Xuanling, not wanting to walk behind Di Nufeng, immediately quickened his pace, taking a few swift steps to overtake her.

The rivalry between the Jade Sword Peak's master and the Silver Sword Peak's master flared up, driving them to quicken their pace. What began as a brisk walk soon escalated into a full-blown race, until they both unleashed their divine abilities, disappearing from sight in the blink of an eye.

"..."

The disciples who had just started walking exchanged helpless glances. These days, the disciples of Jade Sword Peak, like Xu Ziyang and Lin Bei, got along quite well with those from Silver Sword Peak, including Chu Liang. The old rivalry between the two factions had long since faded.

Their two teachers were their only worry.

In any case, the disciples knew their way home, so they let the two go on ahead.

Just as everyone was about to take off and head back, a voice suddenly called out from behind, "Young Hero Chu!"

Chu Liang turned around and saw that it was Xu Hongqiu once again.

"Miss Xu?" He was a bit puzzled as he turned back to meet her. Naturally, he couldn't call her "niece."

"Things were quite chaotic earlier, and I didn't even get a chance to thank you personally," Xu Hongqiu said with a smile. "I wanted to take this moment to express my gratitude before you leave."

"Miss Xu... Didn't Chief Xu already swear brotherhood with me?" Chu Liang replied with a smile. "As I travel the martial world, I'll surely rely on the protection of the Whale Gang, so there's no need for further thanks."

"My father and I are not the same person. I truly don't know how to repay you for saving my life..." Xu Hongqiu said solemnly, her gaze fixed on Chu Liang.

As she spoke, her thoughts drifted back to that moment of despair, when he descended on the back of the Inferno Dragon and...

"Cultivators like us should always be loyal and heroic. What I did at that time was something anyone would have done, so it's really not worth mentioning. If you keep talking about repayment, I'll start to feel a bit embarrassed," Chu Liang said, waving his hand dismissively.

But then, with a sudden change in tone, he added, "However... now that I think about it, there is a small favor you could help me with."

"Hmm... Hmm?" Xu Hongqiu was about to respond to Chu Liang's generous words when he suddenly shifted the conversation, catching her off guard.

She quickly asked, "What favor?"

"Your Whale Gang..." Chu Liang smiled and said, "has quite a few businesses in Taotie City, right?"

After a brief conversation with Xu Hongqiu, Chu Liang rejoined the group, only to notice everyone watching him with a peculiar glint in their eyes.

Yet, no one uttered a word.

The atmosphere seemed a bit awkward.

Lin Bei's expression revealed the internal struggle he was facing as he held back a wave of teasing remarks. If Senior Sister Jiang weren't present, he would have surely teased Chu Liang.

As they walked together, Jiang Yuebai finally broke the silence. With a soft smile, she teased, "From the way Miss Xu was gazing at you, one might think she's ready to propose marriage."

"What?" Chu Liang blinked in surprise. "I can't believe you guessed it right!"

Without missing a beat, Jiang Yuebai quickened her pace, putting some distance between them.

"Hey, wait!" Chu Liang called after her, chuckling. "We were just discussing business, I swear!"

"Hmph."

Chapter 407: Everyone's Doing Well

On Silver Sword Peak...

Two young ladies held hands as they took a stroll, admiring the scenery of Silver Sword Peak.

They were quite similar in appearance; both had fair skin and beautiful features. One seemed slightly a little older and taller, with a calm but significantly more guarded demeanor. The other was more lively. She was bouncing around in colorful clothes, looking innocent and carefree.

They were the koi fish sisters, Liu Xiaoyu and Liu Xiaoyu'er.

Following their long-awaited reunion, Xiaoyu'er stayed with her older sister in the water mansion on the riverbed for a while. Before Chu Liang left the river, he had invited Liu Xiaoyu to stay at Silver Sword Peak for a while.

Some time had passed since then, and Xiaoyu'er decided to take her older sister to see her home on Mount Shu. However, Liu Xiaoyu was still quite wary of going to a mountain where human cultivators gathered.

"It's just as well that they're away. I've seen enough anyway. There's nothing special about Mount Shu," Liu Xiaoyu said. "Why don't we go back to the river?"

"Hmm..." Xiaoyu'er frowned, looking troubled. "But it's lively and fun on Mount Shu. It's always wet and dark in the water. I don't feel very comfortable there."

Liu Xiaoyu looked at her sister in astonishment. "Do you know what you're saying? You're a fish, you know."

"Ah."

Xiaoyu'er finally realized that unbeknownst to her, she had at some point come to prefer being on land over being in the water.

She hadn't studied biology before, so her little brain probably couldn't figure out that it was only natural that being on land was better than being in the water. Otherwise, the aquatic creatures wouldn't be the ones evolving and growing legs to go ashore. Instead, land creatures would be the ones evolving and growing fins to go into the water.

Nevertheless, Xiaoyu'er quickly lost interest in trying to figure that out.

Xiaoyu'er hugged her sister's arm and tried to persuade her. "Pleeeeeease, Big Sis. Just stay here for a while. Everyone on Silver Sword Peak is really nice, and I'm very comfortable here. I have a huge house. It's even a little bigger than Big Bro Chu Liang's.

"Peak Master Di Nufeng is a warm and friendly and cheerful elder sister. She's really nice to me. Big Bro Chu Liang is a gentle and kind elder brother. He saved me quite a few times in the past, and he gives me money to buy food every month. Oh, and there's the Golden-Furred Hou. It's a very simple-minded and well-behaved spirit beast. It's super cute!"



"Haaa..." Liu Xiaoyu sighed. "You say that every day."

"Hehe," Xiaoyu'er giggled. She was just about to say something else, but she suddenly froze and looked around for a while. Then she uttered, "Huh? Where's my house?"

When Xiaoyu'er first arrived on Silver Sword Peak, they built her a wooden house next to Di Nufeng's pavilion, and it became Xiaoyu'er's little happy place. However, when Di Nufeng made a breakthrough a few days ago, she had burned up half the mountain peak. So, when the disciples from the Hall of Construction went over to rebuild the houses, Chu Liang had them build Xiaoyu'er's house a bit farther from Di Nufeng.

Luckily, Xiaoyu'er hadn't been in the house at the time of Di Nufeng's breakthrough. If Xiaoyu'er were still staying beside Di Nufeng's pavilion the next time Di Nufeng had a breakthrough, Xiaoyu'er might end up as grilled fish... if she's lucky. If she's unlucky, she would get burned to ashes and scattered everywhere.

It wasn't just Xiaoyu'er's house that got moved. Chu Liang even had the Golden-Furred Hou's home moved several li<sup>[1]</sup> away. Di Nufeng now had a status on Silver Sword Peak of being disliked by humans and feared by the Hou.

However, no one had informed Xiaoyu'er about this, so she didn't know.

Seeing her younger sister in a daze, Liu Xiaoyu asked, "What's wrong?"

Xiaoyu'er stood there for a long time, feeling extremely sad and aggrieved.

In the end, she said, "My house was stolen..."

"How could that be? Did you remember the location wrongly?"

"No way!" Xiaoyu'er exclaimed with certainty. "I walk this path home from the fruit garden every day. I memorized it a long time ago."

All she did was leave the mountain for a bit, and when she returned, her home was gone. This left the little fish totally puzzled.

...

While the two sisters were at a loss as to what to do, they suddenly heard a rumbling sound from afar, and a ball of fire descended from the sky.

Boom—

Frightened by the sound, the sisters turned around to find a tall figure emerging from the dust and smoke. It was, of course, Di Nufeng. She had raced Wang Xuanling back to Mount Shu.

Di Nufeng's lips curled into a complacent smirk. "That old guy still wants to race me? He must have fallen behind by at least thirty li, right?"

Then she quickly caught sight of the figures ahead, and her eyes lit up. "Xiaoyu'er! You're back!"

"Big Sis Feng!" Xiaoyu'er called out warmly as she ran over, pulling her older sister along with her.

"Oh, I'm guessing this is your older sister? You really do look alike... hehe," Di Nufeng said, grinning even more brightly.

"Mm. This is my older sister, Xiaoyu," Xiaoyu'er introduced. Then she told her older sister, "This is the peak master I mentioned, Big Sis Feng."

"It's been so long. I've missed you sooo much!" Di Nufeng exclaimed happily.

She stepped forward to pat Xiaoyu'er's head, but she abruptly withdrew her hand.

"What's wrong?" Xiaoyu'er asked curiously.

"Earlier, I smashed someone into minced meat with my bare hands and steamed him until all the moisture evaporated. My hands still have a bit of a smell." Di Nufeng sniffed her palms. "I'll go wash up first, then I'll come back to play with you."

With that, she zipped back to her pavilion in a streak of fire.

The sisters were left standing there, their eyes wide with terror. They stood frozen in place for a long while before they finally came to their senses.

"Ah..." Liu Xiaoyu gasped.

She had been a demon king for a while now. Yet, even with the experience she'd accumulated and the mentality that she'd developed in the martial world, she could not withstand even a single blow from Di Nufeng. It wasn't even an intentional attack, but Liu Xiaoyu's mental defenses were completely shattered.

How could she so casually say something so terrifying?

What kind of psychotic homicidal maniac is she?

That wasn't just the process of killing someone; it's clearly a recipe for making fish paste!

Wait, fish paste?

Aren't we fish?!

Liu Xiaoyu gripped her younger sister's hand tightly.

With a trembling voice, Liu Xiaoyu said, "T-that's the warm and cheerful elder sister you talked about? She's super scary! We should probably run away quickly now. We may not be able to leave later. She's too powerful. Just one look from her, and I feel like I'm going to suffocate."

Xiaoyu'er felt a bit conflicted, not knowing what to say. "Big Sis Di Nufeng is really nice to me. She's just a bit fierce sometimes... Even if she did kill someone, it must have been a bad person."

What kind of good person kills people like that?

Liu Xiaoyu had initially suspected that her naive younger sister was being deceived. However, now she wasn't worried about that; she was worried that one day her younger sister would get fattened up, smashed into minced meat, and then steamed until dry...

The two sisters were still arguing when a swordlight fell from the distant sky. It was Chu Liang returning home.

As soon as he landed, he saw the two sisters.

Chu Liang was pleasantly surprised. "You came!"

"Big Bro Chu Liang is back!" Xiaoyu'er exclaimed. "Brother Chu Liang is even nicer to me. He gives me a lot of sword coins every month, and I can spend them however I like!"

Liu Xiaoyu gazed at Chu Liang suspiciously. "Is he really that nice?"

"Actually, that doesn't count," Chu Liang said with a smile. "Xiaoyu'er works at my Berry Wonderland, so she earned all of that money."

Xiaoyu'er chimed in, "That's right! Brother Chu Liang said that working is the most honorable and glorious thing to do! He gave me a chance to work and even pays me to do it![2] It's wonderful!"

Liu Xiaoyu: "...?"

She didn't have much experience in the human world, but her instincts told her something was off about what Xiaoyu'er just said.

Chu Liang hurriedly explained with a smile, "Xiaoyu'er is amazing. There are many people who come here just because they like her. During the time that she was away, business at the Berry Wonderland plummeted."

Xiaoyu'er chimed in again, "That's right, that's right. There are lots of people who like me."

Liu Xiaoyu keenly caught on to the issue. "So, you've been working there all this time?"

If the fruit garden couldn't do without Xiaoyu'er, did that mean she never left?

"It's not like that. Big Bro Chu Liang told me to balance work and rest. He taught me something called 'big week, small week.' Work five days and rest two days, then work five days and rest one day. I get a total of six days off a month!"

Liu Xiaoyu: "..."

Chu Liang once again hurried to explain. "It's only because Berry Wonderland has just opened. Xiaoyu'er plays a very important role, so she couldn't leave. But once the other businesses are established, it won't be like this anymore. Additionally, Xiaoyu'er usually doesn't have much to do, so she spends her time working instead. If she has something else to do, she definitely doesn't have to work—just like how she recently spent some time with you. Everything was fine."

"Yes, yes!" Xiaoyu'er nodded. "Big Bro Chu Liang is very easygoing. He said I could stay for as long as I wanted as long as I adjusted my work schedule. However many days I take off, I'll just deduct from my future rest days. Big Sis, I can stay with you for as long as I want. I'll just work for a year or two straight to make up for it!"

Liu Xiaoyu: "...!"

Yet again, Chu Liang hurriedly explained, "No, no, Xiaoyu'er is part of our Silver Sword Peak family. That rule is just in name only..."

Liu Xiaoyu let out a cold laugh, "Hah. A gentle and kind older brother, sure..."

To her, the person who came up with that nonsense about big and small weeks and schedule adjustments... was even more hateful than that psychotic homicidal maniac. After all, that maniac had only harmed one person. Chu Liang, on the other hand, was harming who knows how many people... and how many fish.

Chu Liang covered his face with his hand and said, "Since we're only in the early stages of the business and Xiaoyu'er really likes going to the fruit garden to play with the visitors, I let her go more often. If she didn't like it, I would never force her to work."

That was indeed the truth. After all, it's not like he was a slave driver.

If Xiaoyu'er didn't like working there, he wouldn't force her to do it. However, Xiaoyu'er usually got bored on being by herself on the peak. When she went to the Berry Wonderland, she could meet many people who liked her, and that made her very happy.

Her job was pretty much just to go there and play. All she needed to do was throw the flying disc for Big Head and the Baize youngling to fetch, and the sight of that would attract a large crowd. Xiaoyu'er could earn money and walk about with Big Head; she saw no reason not to do this job.

On the contrary, Chu Liang often reminded Xiaoyu'er to rest and to focus more on her cultivation. As a demon, Xiaoyu'er had a long lifespan, so she didn't feel any urgency in that regard. However, considering she had obtained a True Dragon's cultivation legacy, it would be a waste if she did not cultivate seriously.

So, if she wanted to, she could take a break from work for as long as she liked. The problem was that she loved her job.

Xiaoyu'er added, "That's right. It's really lively there, and everyone likes me, so it's really fun."

Despite that, she noticed that her older sister's expression seemed to be getting darker.

Just then, heavy footsteps rang out in the distance. As soon as Xiaoyu'er heard them, she knew the Golden-Furred Hou was approaching.

She grabbed her older sister's hand and said, "Quick, let's go see the adorable Golden-Furred Hou! You'll definitely like it!"

Liu Xiaoyu ran with her younger sister to the hillside and saw...

This "simple-minded," "well-behaved," and "super cute" spirit beast was dashing bounding toward them with its two claws and two paws flying off the ground. Its golden fur was standing on end as it exuded an intense murderous aura!

Astonishingly, there were two legs sticking out from its huge mouth. They swung up and down helplessly, struggling as hard as they could against the Golden-Furred Hou's jaws. There were even muffled screams coming from inside.

The Golden-Furred Hou was holding a person in its mouth!

Chapter 408: Empty Promises

"Wahhhh..."

"Stop crying."

"Wahhhh..."

"Everything's fine, isn't it?"

"Wahhhh..."

"..."

On a hillside on Silver Sword Peak, a middle-aged man sat hunched over. Clutching his knees to his chest, his head drooped as he cried bitterly. Chu Liang and the koi sisters circled him, their attempts to console him falling flat.

"Senior Dan Lingzi, I'm really sorry..." Chu Liang said, his tone filled with awkwardness. "The Golden-Furred Hou might have mistaken you for a thief."

He had been chatting with the koi sisters when the Golden-Furred Hou suddenly bolted over. At first glance, Chu Liang was startled. The Big Head had someone clamped in its jaws!

Chu Liang hurried over and forced it to release the person, only to be even more astonished when he saw who it was.

It was none other than Dan Lingzi from Taotie City.

At this moment, Dan Lingzi had completely lost the air of a master. As he sat on the ground, he looked pitiful and helpless.

Clearly, the Golden-Furred Hou had scared him out of his wits.

"Esteemed Senior, please wipe yourself," Chu Liang said as he handed over a large towel.

Dan Lingzi only stopped crying after being consoled for some time. As he took the towel, he suddenly froze. "Do you all use towels to wipe away tears?"

"You're covered in the Golden-Furred Hou's saliva; that's what it's for," Chu Liang explained.

"..." Dan Lingzi pursed his lips, looking like he might burst into tears again.

After much back and forth, they finally pieced together what had happened.

Previously, when Chu Liang visited Taotie City, he had discussed with Dan Lingzi the idea of opening a shop on Red Cotton Peak and offering free rent. Dan Lingzi was intrigued but wanted to maintain his dignified air, so he hesitated, planning to wait for Chu Liang to extend the invitation a few more times before accepting.

But nothing more happened.

So, he sent a letter, mentioning that a new batch of flavored Qi-Gathering Pills was ready and "incidentally" brought up about opening the shop.

Even after waiting for a few days, Dan Lingzi still hadn't heard back from Chu Liang. In fact, Chu Liang hadn't even shown up to collect the newly made flavored Qi-Gathering Pills. Dan Lingzi began to panic. Could it be that Chu Liang hadn't been able to secure the deal and that the higher-ups at Mount Shu had rejected the idea?

This was very likely.

After all, Chu Liang was just a young disciple, and decisions like this wouldn't be up to him.

And so, Dan Lingzi decided to pay Chu Liang a visit and ask him about it personally. However, when he arrived at Heaven-Reaching Peak, he discovered that Chu Liang wasn't there. After making some inquiries, he ran into Wen Yulong.



Wen Yulong, being Chu Liang's right-hand man, was well-informed about these matters. He told Dan Lingzi that Chu Liang had recently left Mount Shu and might not return for a few days. If he was in a hurry, he could try checking Silver Sword Peak.

Dan Lingzi then hurried over to Silver Sword Peak, eventually finding himself at Berry Wonderland. Although he had helped Chu Liang make numerous batches of berry-flavored Qi-Gathering Pills and had seen plenty of berries, this was the first time he had seen a field of Golden Vein Flowers.

He wanted to fly over the wall for a closer look, but not only was he stopped by a restrictive barrier, he also triggered a thunderous roar.

The ever-dutiful Golden-Furred Hou mistook him for a fruit thief. How could it allow such a thing to happen? It immediately darted out and caught him in its jaws. The Hunting Hou's instincts took over—having captured the "thief," it intended to bring him straight to Di Nufeng and Chu Liang.

As Dan Lingzi faced the sixth-realm Golden-Furred Hou, he found himself utterly powerless. At that moment, he was gripped by fear, knowing that just a bit more pressure from the Golden-Furred Hou's jaws would be enough to snap him in two.

Fortunately, Chu Liang had repeatedly instructed the Golden-Furred Hou not to kill humans without proper cause. Big Head could also sense that this person was too weak to pose any real threat, so it didn't bite down hard.

After hearing the story, Chu Liang couldn't help but feel relieved for Dan Lingzi.

Luckily, the guardian phoenix of the fruit garden isn't around today—only the guardian Hou.

If it had been the phoenix, we wouldn't be comforting you right now...we'd be mourning over you.

So, he offered a sincere apology and explained, "I ran into some danger while I was out these past few days and only just managed to make it back today. I had no choice but to keep you waiting. Otherwise, I would have gone to Taotie City long ago to invite you again."

Dan Lingzi's expression turned serious once more. He nodded and said, "I'm not in a hurry. I was just concerned that any delay might hinder the development of your Red Cotton Peak, which is why I've been keeping a close eye on it."

"Esteemed Senior, you value promises over profit, I understand," Chu Liang said with a respectful bow.

The corner of Dan Lingzi's mouth involuntarily curled into a smile, but he quickly composed himself and nodded slightly. "This is exactly how cultivators should behave. It's nothing worth praising."

Chu Liang then stood up and said, "It's getting late today. Esteemed Senior, please rest at Mount Shu tonight. I'll take you to choose a location for your shop tomorrow. Miss Xiaoyu, why don't you and your sister join us tomorrow? You can also enjoy the scenery of Mount Shu."

"Sure!" Xiaoyu'er immediately agreed on behalf of her sister.

...

On Red Cotton Peak, stalls lined both sides of the long street.

Thanks to Chu Liang's recent plan of offering Qi-Gathering Pills to visitors, the Red Cotton Market had grown more bustling than ever, with at least twice as many Mount Shu disciples setting up shop. The place thrummed with life.

Yet, Dan Lingzi frowned deeply.

The Red Cotton Market was livelier than usual. However, in comparison to Taotie City, it was like a small night market to a grand festival.

The koi sisters, on the other hand, were thrilled. Liu Xiaoyu, who seldom smiled, couldn't help but let her delight show in this rare bustling scene.

"Young Hero Chu, surely you don't mean that the 'shop' you mentioned is just a mat for me to set up a stall here?"

Even with the top prodigy of the Mount Shu Sect leading the way and two beautiful girls by his side—what he thought was pretty impressive—he still couldn't help but look down on the sight of the Red Cotton Market before him.

Chu Liang wasn't surprised by this reaction.

Anyone who had visited Taotie City would naturally make comparisons. That was why Chu Liang had to rely on personal connections to recruit shops. But unfortunately, his attempts were blocked by the young master of Taotie City.

Hearing Dan Lingzi's skepticism, Chu Liang smiled and replied, "Of course not. Red Cotton Peak is still in its early stages and hasn't begun large-scale recruitment. My plan is for your Spirit Pill Pavilion to become the very first official shop on this peak!"

He pointed to the distance, gesturing as he spoke, "By then, the largest Spirit Beast Paradise in the land of the nine provinces will be constructed there. You will see celestial birds soaring and exotic beasts roaring."

He then shifted his gaze to another spot, his finger tracing the air. "And right there, the Legendary Weapon Hall will stand—a place where ancient divine weapons, radiating such powerful murderous auras, will be displayed that even the clouds above will tremble. Your pill shop will be nestled right between these two marvels. Cultivators from every corner of the world will travel great distances just to request a pill from you, forming long lines—so long that even the top talents of the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten will have to wait their turn..."

"Hehehe..." Dan Lingzi, captivated by Chu Liang's vivid depiction of Red Cotton Peak's future, found himself laughing out loud.

Upon realizing that he was behaving improperly, he quickly straightened his expression and asked, "It sounds promising, but can it truly reach that level?"

Chu Liang replied, "If you don't join, it definitely won't happen. But if you do, it might just be possible."

Dan Lingzi was taken aback by these words as he muttered, "I never realized I was so important..."

But as Dan Lingzi looked at the rows of stalls ahead, he hesitated again. He had almost fallen for Chu Liang's empty promises. Chu Liang was like a baker promising cookies he'd only sketched on paper. He didn't even have the flour to make bread with. At this stage, he was just about to start planting wheat, and the first seed was still in his hand.

"Young Hero Chu, your storytelling skills are truly remarkable, but I still have to make a living, and this situation..." Dan Lingzi said slowly, his voice tinged with hesitation.

"I completely understand your concerns," Chu Liang said as he nodded with respect. "This matter indeed requires careful planning, and you should take your time to think about it."

"You're absolutely right... Hmm? What's that?" Dan Lingzi suddenly exclaimed, his eyes widening as he gazed into the distance.

It wasn't just him; the crowd on Red Cotton Peak all started murmuring.

It turned out to be a massive floating ship flying through the air, clearly heading straight for Red Cotton Peak.

The ship was a striking jade green, with two enormous red sails emblazoned with black whale symbols. One sail bore the character "North," while the other displayed "Whale Gang." The vessel was nearly half the size of Red Cotton Peak in length and as tall as a small mountain, hovering in the sky and instantly casting a shadow over half the landscape.

In the immortal realm, only the Four Seas Whale Gang was known for using such colossal enchanted flying boats. When these ships weren't activated, they could be used to navigate the seas; when activated, they could take to the skies, making them ideal for both travel and transporting goods.

But there were likely only a few ships of this magnitude even within the entire Four Seas Whale Gang.

It floated above the sea of clouds with an imposing presence!

As the crowd marveled, a bright red figure appeared at the ship's bow.

"Young Hero Chu, I've come to fulfill our agreement!" a voice rang out.

#### Chapter 409: The First Shop is Reserved for You

Yesterday, when Xu Hongqiu mentioned she wasn't sure how to repay him, Chu Liang casually offered a small suggestion.

The Whale Gang, being the powerful business group in the realm of immortality cultivation, had influence over all the rivers and seas. They naturally had an advantage. Their presence in Taotie City was unmistakable, with enough shops to fill an entire street—each one offering a wide array of goods across various categories.

Chu Liang suggested that the Whale Gang could open branch stores on Red Cotton Peak for all their different businesses from Taotie City. They could just send a few people to manage the shops, with goods moving back and forth between Taotie City and Red Cotton Peak. Even if the profits weren't huge, they wouldn't be losing money either. This plan alone would temporarily make Red Cotton Peak look impressive, and Xu Hongqiu readily agreed.

This was no big deal to the Whale Gang. Compared to how Chu Liang saved her and her father's lives, this was hardly worth mentioning.

But when Chu Liang saw the scale of the operation today, it was clear she hadn't just brought a few people to open a branch store.

A massive flying ship hovered in the air, and Xu Hongqiu descended from it. Chu Liang quickly went to greet her.

"Miss Xu, what's all this..." Chu Liang asked, glancing at her and then at the flying ship. He was a bit confused.

"Didn't you ask the Whale Gang to open shops on Red Cotton Peak? After I told my father, we spent the night calculating all of our shops in Taotie City and decided that we would move everything we could over here first," Xu Hongqiu said with a smile.

"Wait a minute..." Chu Liang said as he raised his hand. "What I suggested was... opening branch stores? Just to make Red Cotton Peak look more impressive, that's all."

This setup might actually be too overwhelming for Red Cotton Peak to handle.

"You did say to bring just a few people and some goods to make Red Cotton Peak look more impressive," Xu Hongqiu replied with a smile. "But my father said that now that you're his sworn brother, if the people in Taotie City don't respect you, they're not respecting him. So, why bother with Taotie City anymore? We might as well move everything here."

"This..." Chu Liang said with a sigh. "Elder Brother Xu is such a good bro."

But with a quick thought, he immediately grasped the situation.

When he had initially reached out to those four or five pill shops, Taotie City had responded with a strict ultimatum: either stay in Taotie City or move to Red Cotton Peak, but not both.

Those shops were definitely afraid.

They were insignificant compared to the might of Taotie City. Their absence would go unnoticed in the bustling streets, making no difference to the city's grand presence. Yet, if they left Taotie City entirely, their businesses would be at risk of survival.

The Whale Gang, however, was a different story. If this massive entity pulled out all its businesses, Taotie City would lose an entire street overnight.

In that case, it would be Taotie City that had something to fear.

This would cause a massive scandal and harm their reputation. In addition, if the Whale Gang pulled out all its businesses, Taotie City would also struggle to find another major merchant with such widespread influence and abundant resources.

Therefore, if Xu Bashan released news of potentially moving the businesses, Taotie City would surely be forced to compromise.

Even though Xu Bashan had significant influence within the Whale Gang, the Ocean Tempest Hall still held power, meaning he couldn't make decisions on his own. Moving the entire gang's businesses just because someone saved his life was simply unrealistic.

In the end, the most likely outcome would still be opening branch stores.

Chu Liang had asked for a small favor, and Xu Bashan had made a small effort, but it ended up being a big help.

Surely, only those who were experienced could come up with such an effective strategy.

This sworn brother of mine really understood the intricacies of human relations, Chu Liang thought, as he immediately decided that this Big Bro was definitely someone he could rely on.

When Xu Hongqiu heard Chu Liang call her father "Elder Brother," she felt so weirded out by it. She knew it made sense, but it still made her smile falter for a moment.

She quickly changed the subject and said, "Let's get the brothers to start unloading. They don't have to wait up in the sky. We've already registered with Boundless Palace, so everything's in order."

There was naturally a need to register such a massive enchanted tool with the higher-ups of the Mount Shu Sect before it even arrived. Otherwise, they would have already been warned or shot down by now.

"Great! Let's get moving then!" Chu Liang said with a grin. "I'll go contact the brothers in the Hall of Construction to start building the shops."

When Dan Lingzi saw all of this, he immediately became anxious.

He hurried over to stop Chu Liang and asked, "Young Hero Chu, didn't we agree that my shop would be the first?"

"Weren't you still thinking it over?" Chu Liang asked.

"I've made up my mind! No more thinking—I'm settling down on Red Cotton Peak for the rest of my life!" Dan Lingzi quickly replied.

He had hesitated before, but after witnessing the sheer scale of the Whale Gang's operation, he knew this place was destined to flourish. Even a fool could see that.

What was there to hesitate about?

"Alright, the first shop is still yours," Chu Liang assured him. "But they're in a hurry, so I'll help them build the second and third shops first... The first one will stay reserved for you, and we'll get to it later."

With that, he rushed off to Heaven-Reaching Peak, leaving Dan Lingzi standing there, mulling over Chu Liang's words.

Why does this feel stranger the more I think about it?

...

Meanwhile, on that gently swaying pleasure boat in the Southern Regions, only the silver-scaled youth remained in the cabin.

Ji Lingjue took out a jade cup, poured a drink into it, and with a flick of his fingers, there was a sharp sizzling sound. The liquid in the cup seemed to encounter something scorching, instantly transforming into a swirling cloud of vapor.

The vapor in the air began to condense, forming a vague human figure.

As the apparition gradually solidified, it took on the silhouette of a graceful woman, though her face remained indistinct.

"Chi Menshen is dead," Ji Lingjue stated bluntly.

"Hmm?" The vapor rippled as the woman spoke. "Didn't I tell you to keep an eye on him?"

"It's my fault," Ji Lingjue admitted. "The plan to control the Whale Gang was already in motion, but when I was capturing the Inferno Dragon, I brought in two Mount Shu disciples, which led to the arrival of Di Nufeng... It was that teacher-disciple duo that ruined everything."

"Di Nufeng..." The woman mused, as if recalling a distant memory. "The child from eighty years[1] ago, right?"



"Yes," Ji Lingjue confirmed. "She was the only one who survived after the night of the Dragon Assassination in the capital of Yu."

"Heh..." The woman chuckled softly. "Last time, it was her disciple who killed Taowu, ruining Lu Chengchou's plan. And now, she's personally taken down Chi Menshen. Seems like some twisted form of retribution, doesn't it?"

"If it weren't for what we did back then, she wouldn't even exist in this world," Ji Lingjue replied coolly. "If there's any retribution owed, it should be gratitude."

"Sigh, it's that fool Lu Chengchou's fault," the woman cursed under her breath. "We had been laying low for eighty years, flying under the radar. He just had to stir up trouble at Mount Shu. Now the situation is tense again, and our other plans will be affected."

"Where is that bastard now?" Ji Lingjue asked.

"How could he dare let us know?" The woman sneered. "Besides Xunyang, who wouldn't want him dead? He's nothing more than a cripple now, yet he knows too much about the Celestial Charm Sect. When we find him, we'll make sure his soul and whatever remains of him are utterly destroyed."

"We have failed to take over the Whale Gang, so I need to lay low for a while," Ji Lingjue continued after a pause. "This was my mistake, but I'll make up for it when I have the chance."

"It doesn't matter," the woman replied. "Though the Whale Gang, with its hundreds of thousands of members, was an important piece in our plans, it's really just a force in the martial world. We have other ways. Ultimately, the key lies within the imperial court."

...

Deep within the sealed underground cavern, a wine jar filled with the aura of death had made its return.

Xuan Yinzi gently caressed the wine jar. He was so excited that he almost cried. He had been waiting for this jar for too long!

He had expected a single wine jar to accumulate enough aura of death in just three to five days, but it had taken so many days before the first jar finally returned.

He held it tightly, rubbing it for a long time before taking a deep breath and sucking in the aura of death in one gulp. It was like pouring water on parched earth—not enough to make a big change, but enough to quench the thirst for a while.

He had been so drained of energy and blood that he had nearly given up, even suspecting that some malevolent force was intercepting his Spirit-Slaying Jars.

Now, with renewed strength, he could create more Spirit-Slaying Jars!

The first one had returned, so the second couldn't be far behind.

As long as even one Spirit-Slaying Jar returned, it brought him a hundredfold benefit. At this rate, the day he would regain his strength and break free was within reach!

As Xuan Yinzi thought of this, he couldn't help but laugh eerily, "Heheheh—cough, cough!Cough, cough, cough!"

...

That night, Chu Liang arrived once again at the banks of the Bombax River.

Even though Red Cotton Peak was abuzz with activity, he couldn't ignore the pressing matters at hand.

He hadn't killed any wine-jar monsters in the past few days to collect more rewards, so they had surely accumulated.

Now was the perfect time to clear them all out.

Haha!

## Chapter 410: Is That All?

Sizzle.

Under the moonlit night, Chu Liang merely flicked his finger, and a crimson-gold spark shot out. It landed on the wine-jar monster, which was heavily shrouded in yin qi.

There was what sounded like silk being ripped. The wine-jar monster was suddenly pretty much incinerated, turning into a ball of fire that rose into the sky and then dissipating into nothing. All that remained at the spot where the wine-jar monster had been was a faint trace of dragon breath.

The yang qi in the Divine Dragon Fire was so intense that it could be considered the nemesis of ghastly creatures like that, which were filled with yin qi. It was extremely effective against them.

While dealing with the wine-jar monsters, Chu Liang assessed how his cultivation was progressing. He was currently at the fourth realm of the Mount Shu Sect's cultivation legacy, the second realm of the White Dragon's cultivation legacy, and the first realm of the Inferno Dragon's legacy.

It was a bit chaotic for one person to cultivate three cultivation legacies. In fact, it was rare for people to cultivate two cultivation legacies, and even rarer for there to be someone cultivating three cultivation legacies like Chu Liang.

The reason was that the enhancements from the different cultivation techniques often overlapped.

For example, by cultivating the Mount Shu Sect's Divine Nine's Profound Mental Cultivation Technique to the fourth realm, Chu Liang's vitality, qi, and spirit had all been elevated to the level of an average cultivator at the fourth realm. The Mount Shu Sect's cultivation techniques were well balanced; they didn't bring about outstanding enhancements in specific aspects, but neither were there any weaknesses.

If Chu Liang were to switch to the Penglai Supreme Sect's cultivation technique now, he would have to start cultivating from the first realm again. However, doing that would not be of much benefit to him, as the enhancements would overlap with the ones he had already gotten from cultivating the Mount Shu Sect's technique. That meant the enhancements to his vitality, qi, and spirit would be minimal unless he cultivated the Penglai Supreme Sect's cultivation technique to the fourth realm too. It was only at that point that new enhancements might appear. Even then, they would be quite limited.

Ultimately, it was a waste of energy. It would be much better to spend that energy on advancing to a higher realm with the first cultivation technique. Only cultivators at the pinnacle of the sixth realm who could advance no further would switch to a different cultivation legacy. That was what Old Fei had done in the past.

On the other hand, it might be more beneficial if Chu Liang were to cultivate the martial arts of the Great Astral Sect. Martial arts focused on enhancing qi and blood, which did not overlap with the enhancements he had gotten from the Mount Shu Sect's cultivation technique. Thus, some cultivators took up martial arts as a secondary cultivation legacy, but they would not invest the same level of energy in it.

However, the dragons' cultivation legacy was quite different. Its distinctive feature was that the dragons' cultivation techniques didn't use up a lot of energy, and the enhancements it gave differed greatly from those that could be gained from human cultivation techniques. Chu Liang had benefited greatly just from cultivating to the first and second realms using a dragon cultivation technique.

Having a human cultivation legacy as the primary cultivation method and a dragon cultivation legacy as the secondary cultivation method made for an exceptional cultivation system.

So, why had so few people done this before? Well, it's not that they didn't want to.

The reason was that dragon cultivation legacies were too difficult to obtain. There were only a few True Dragons in the world, and those capable of forcefully acquiring a True Dragon cultivation legacy didn't need one, whereas those who needed one would not be deemed worthy by the dragons. There were very few in history who were like Chu Liang, managing to gain the full favor of two True Dragons.

Moreover, unlike human cultivation legacies, dragon cultivation legacies provided vastly different enhancements, so it didn't matter that Chu Liang cultivated the cultivation legacies of two True Dragons. The White Dragon primarily enhanced qi, blood, and spiritual energy, while the Inferno Dragon enhanced divine fire and dragon breath, leaving Chu Liang with a powerful seed of fire.

The Divine Dragon Fire was a top-tier divine fire on par with the Phoenix Spirit Fire, ranked just below the Samadhi True Fire. The difference was that the Phoenix Spirit Fire's spiritual nature leaned toward yin, focusing more on the destruction and annihilation aspects of the Dao of Fire. Those who cultivate this Dao to the highest level would find the Great Dao of Incinerating Heaven.

On the other hand, the Divine Dragon Fire's spiritual nature leaned toward yang, focusing more on the blazing and illumination aspects of the Dao of Fire. Those who cultivate this Dao to the highest level would find the Great Dao of Heavenly Radiance.

Now that Chu Liang was proficient in using these two divine fires, he had gained some insights into the Dao of Fire.

"Huh?"

After killing the last wine-jar monster, Chu Liang noticed something was off.

He muttered, "I haven't been here for four days, so including tonight's, there should be fifty of them... Why are there only forty-nine?"

"Did one get stolen?"

...

Chu Liang searched up and down the stream, but he still couldn't find the missing wine-jar monster.

The pleasant monster-hunting journey ended with disappointment.

One wine-jar monster could be exchanged for one Intoxicating Spirit Flower Seed. The seed would eventually grow into a plant with flowers. The flowers would bloom and produce more seeds, continuing the cycle for generations. The leaves of the flowers could be turned into Fragrance of Enlightenment, making them worth a fortune altogether...

The more Chu Liang calculated, the more he felt he had suffered a huge loss.

How infuriating.

Chu Liang headed back and rested for the night.

The next morning, Lin Bei went to find him with some news. The son of Taotie City's city lord wanted to meet Chu Liang. He had put in a very formal request for a meeting through the Foreign Affairs Hall.

The person in question was already at Heaven-Reaching Peak.

Chu Liang couldn't help but laugh. "Heh."

Just a few days ago, he had gone to the City Lord's Residence in Taotie City to find the young city lord, only to be led to that ancestral relay waiting room.

In the blink of an eye, the city lord's son had now come looking for Chu Liang instead.

It's truly like the saying, "For thirty years, the Yellow River flows to the east, and for the next thirty years, it flows to the west. Do not treat the youth with disdain just because he's poor, for times are ever-changing..." and you never know who may suddenly find a powerful backer.

Chu Liang stood up. "I'll go right now."

"Didn't you say last time that he ignored you and left you hanging? Why not make him wait a bit?" Lin Bei asked.

Chu Liang shook his head. "No point."

He could have arranged a meeting time in advance before coming over, but he just came straight here, clearly intending to let me make him wait a bit to vent my anger.

So, even if I make him wait a whole day, he's probably mentally prepared for it.

Nevertheless, Chu Liang didn't play along. Instead, he swiftly went over to Heaven-Reaching Peak and entered the private room the Foreign Affairs Hall had prepared for them.

He got there so quickly that the son of Taotie City's city lord was quite surprised to see him.

Huyan Bin[1] was dressed in a long brocade robe, with a jade belt around his waist and a folding fan in his hand. He wasn't particularly handsome, but he had the air of an aristocrat. His cultivation level was neither high nor low, somewhere between the middle to late stage of the fourth realm.

It wasn't bad for someone in their early twenties, but considering the near-limitless resources he had access to in Taotie City, that meant Huyan Bin was considered only averagely talented within the ranks of the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten.

Despite his average looks and talent, he had been rumored to have romantic ties with many beautiful female cultivators in the world of immortality cultivators. It was likely due to his outstanding unique talent.

"Oh? You're here, Young Hero Chu?" Huyan Bin said, standing up to greet Chu Liang.

"City Lord Junior, you seem very surprised," Chu Liang responded with a smile, extending his hand.

The two men warmly shook hands for quite a while before sitting down.

This left Lin Bei, who was standing behind Chu Liang, stunned. Those who knew them would understand they were rivals meeting for the first time, but those who didn't might think they were long-lost brothers reuniting.

Aren't they treating each other a bit too warmly?

"To be honest, I knew about your visit to Taotie City last time, but I didn't meet you then. So, I feel a bit ashamed coming to see you today," Huyan Bin said, addressing his error without any hesitation.

"Oh!" Chu Liang waved off the notion that it was anything to be offended about. "It's nothing! Back then, I wanted to see you for a favor, and now you want to see me for a favor. Let's not bother with trivial matters."

"You are indeed intelligent, Young Hero Chu," Huyan Bin praised. "I've always thought highly of you, and you've not disappointed my expectations."

Chu Liang felt puzzled. "Thought highly of me?"

"That's right. I've always had many grand plans that I wanted to put into action, but I've struggled to communicate across the nine provinces. When I saw your announcement in The Seven Stars Gazette, I suddenly realized that it could be done this way!" Huyan Bin exclaimed with a clap of his hands. "That's when I took notice of you. After that, I investigated your background, and I got a huge shock. In just a few months, you've amassed a fortune using various innovative methods. You're truly a genius!"

"Not a genius, just someone standing on the shoulders of a giant."

Huyan Bin thought the giant that Chu Liang referred to was the Mount Shu Sect, so he smiled and said, "Young Hero Chu, you're truly modest. While it's true that the fostering you've received from the sect must have played an important role, not all disciples would have such innovative ideas."

Huyan Bin's expression turned serious. "So, when I heard about your plan for Red Cotton Peak, I immediately felt a sense of crisis. If it were someone else, a small market like that wouldn't be a concern to Taotie City. But seeing that you're the one in charge, I had this inexplicable feeling... that in time, it might actually threaten my family's position. That's why I decided to block your efforts."

"In that case, I'm flattered," Chu Liang replied with a soft smile. "So, what exactly brings you here today? Please speak your mind. I'm all ears."

"Then I'll get straight to the point. Taotie City will lift all restrictions and even allow some of our shops to open branches on Red Cotton Peak. However, the Whale Gang's businesses cannot leave Taotie City."

After a pause, Huyan Bin added, "I truly didn't expect that you would become sworn brothers with Chief Xu of the Whale Gang. But even if it's because of that relationship, moving all of the Whale Gang's businesses to Mount Shu would be a huge loss for both the Whale Gang and Taotie City... It's simply impractical. However, since this issue arose because of me, I've come here in person to inform you that I will lift all the bans. I just hope to maintain the status quo."

Chu Liang suddenly asked, "Is that all you have in mind?"

"Hmm?" Huyan Bin responded. "Do you have any other ideas?"



Chu Liang said without hesitation, "Give me another three hundred thousand Vermillion-Bird coins."

"Huh?"