

M. Slaying 491

Chapter 491: I Will Never Make Another Spirit-Slaying Jar Again!

As the sun shone down on Silver Sword Peak, spirit birds were perched peacefully in the warm, cozy shade of the trees. Then two people suddenly descended onto the peak, startling the birds away.

It was Di Nufeng, the peak master of Silver Sword Peak, and Chu Liang, the deputy peak master and the peak's eldest senior brother landed. They had returned home.

However, the moment they got back, Chu Liang said in surprise, "What's going on here?"

He walked to his small wooden cabin and saw two tables set up in front of the door. There was a row of people standing there, holding their breath as they watched something.

Lin Bei, Shang Ziliang, Lackey A, Lackey B, Xiaoyu'er, and Liu Xiaoyu...

Chu Liang's entire work team was there, watching the two people seated at the two tables.

One of the two people was Yuan Zhuo from the Hall of Conservation, with his honest-looking squarish face and determined gaze. The other was Little Chu Yi. The small child needed to sit on an extra cushion so that he reached the right height to use the table properly. His snowy little face was all serious.

One was big, and the other small, but both boys had a towering pile of books stacked on the table in front of them. They each held a book in their hands, flipping through them so furiously that the sound of the turning pages merged into a continuous rustle.

Seeing Chu Liang return, Shang Ziliang stepped toward him and said, "You're finally back. It's the day to verify our accounts with the sect, but we don't know how to do it, and you were nowhere to be found. Fortunately, Senior Brother Yuan said we could let Chu Yi give it a try..."

He spoke very quietly, afraid of disturbing Yuan Zhuo and Chu Yi.

"Oh, that's right," Chu Liang muttered, smacking his forehead.

He had been busy with other matters these past few days, so he had forgotten about the scheduled date for reconciling accounts[1] with Mount Shu.

Red Cotton Peak was not solely his. Twenty percent of the shares belonged to the Mount Shu Sect and ten percent belonged to Taotie City, so it was necessary to reconcile their accounts regularly. There had been a myriad of financial transactions due to the many merchants and all the promotional events for the grand opening of the shopping district.

The sheer volume of transactional information meant that even seasoned accountants might take several days to sort through it. Yet, judging from the current situation, it seemed Yuan Zhuo and Chu Yi were nearly done.

Chu Liang was well aware of how amazing Yuan Zhuo was. Yuan Zhuo was considered to have the most formidable mind in the Mount Shu Sect. Even Chu Liang felt inferior to him when it came to memorization.

So, that was not what surprised Chu Liang.

I had no idea that Little Chu Yi's this amazing. He's actually keeping pace with Senior Brother Yuan.

I've truly found a treasure.

After a long while, Little Chu Yi finally closed the last account book in his hand. He stretched up to place it on top of the pile that was large enough to bury him.

Then he pulled his hands into his sleeves and let out a long breath. "All done."

"Yay!" Xiaoyu'er suddenly cheered. "Little Yi won!"

"Hmm?" Chu Liang was stunned. "Was it a competition?"

Xiaoyu'er blinked. "Weren't they competing to see who could flip through the pages faster?"

Behind her, Liu Xiaoyu quickly covered her younger sister's mouth and pulled her away in embarrassment. "All you understood was that they were flipping pages..."

Next to them, Di Nufeng was shocked too. "Wasn't that the case?"

Seeing the teacher-disciple duo return, Little Chu Yi jumped off the stool and walked over to them.

He greeted them respectfully with a bow. "Big Sis Feng, Big Bro Chu Liang."

At this moment, Yuan Zhuo put down the last account book in his hand.

He walked over, cupped his hands together, and bowed respectfully in greeting. "Peak Master Feng, Junior Brother Chu."

Chu Liang looked at Little Chu Yi's actions and then at Yuan Zhuo's, suddenly feeling they were quite similar.

He took a closer look at Chu Yi. This little guy has only spent two days in the Hall of Conservation. Yet, why do I feel like the more I look at him, the more I think that his little head has become... a little squarish?

He couldn't help but feel a bit afraid for the child. I let you learn from Senior Brother Yuan, but I didn't mean for you to learn everything...

After looking Chu Yi over several times, Chu Liang cupped his hands together and bowed respectfully in greeting. "Thank you for your hard work, Senior Brother Yuan."

"It wasn't hard," Yuan Zhuo replied calmly. "Chu Yi is a very talented child. He's so young, but he's exceptionally gifted. I hope you can foster him well."

"Don't worry." Di Nufeng chuckled. "As long as this child stays with us on Silver Sword Peak, nothing will go wrong."

Yuan Zhuo looked at her like he had something to say, but he held back. He then continued, "We're done checking the ledgers. There are no major issues. I'll go back and report to my esteemed teacher."

He turned to leave, but after taking a few steps, he turned back.

Yuan Zhuo said earnestly to Chu Liang, "You have to make sure the child learns good things."

Chu Liang's gaze was just as sincere and determined. "I know."

"Influences are very important."

"I am the sturdiest barrier."

After that rather cryptic conversation, Yuan Zhuo finally felt at ease and left.

None of the lines they said mentioned Di Nufeng, yet every line was about Di Nufeng.

...

That night, Chu Liang went to the Bombax River again.

He had been staying at the Imperial Supervisory Bureau these past two days, so he had not had the time to slay the wine-jar monsters.

When he got to the river, it was just as he had expected. Yet another one had gone missing.

However, he was no longer surprised.

If one's missing, so be it.

During this period, the Intoxicating Spirit Flowers had been growing very well on Silver Sword Peak. The second batch of Intoxicating Spirit Flower Leaves was ready for harvest.

The Fragrance of Enlightenment was still exclusively supplied to the disciples of the Mount Shu Sect, but it was no longer as scarce in supply as before. Disciples of other immortal sects had even begun to buy the Fragrance of Enlightenment at high prices from the disciples of the Mount Shu Sect.

Yet, Chu Liang did not stop those scalpers. After all, the point of selling the Fragrance of Enlightenment was to benefit his fellow disciples, so as long as they were benefiting from the sales, it didn't really matter to him.

Strictly speaking, the Fragrance of Enlightenment did not belong to him anyway. It were a gift from nature!

He just lightly snapped his fingers a few times, and the wine-jar monsters in the river exploded one by one, dissipating in the water.

Now that he had unlocked the fourth level of the Secret Reservoir in the Colorful Doll, his fifth-realm foundational already encompassed four elements: metal, wood, water, and fire. The quality of his foundational qi increased dramatically.

His foundational qi contained such explosive power that if even just a little bit of it overflowed and seeped out of him, it would be enough to kill small ghastly creatures like the wine-jar monsters.

Chu Liang walked up and down the riverbank to ensure that he hadn't missed any wine-jar monsters. Satisfied he had gotten all of them, he finally returned to Mount Shu to sleep.

I'll surely have a good dream tonight.

...

Xuan Yinzi has been suffering from severe insomnia lately.

As an Eminent One at the seventh and a half realm, he naturally did not need sleep to recover from mental fatigue. Nonetheless, he was stuck in this sealed underground cave, so going into hibernation could conserve his strength and slow down the loss of his qi and blood. Therefore, aside

from making Spirit-Slaying Jars, Xuan Yinzi would spend most of his time asleep to save his qi and blood.

However, he recently noticed that his mental state was losing stability, making it increasingly difficult for him to go into hibernation. It was all because of the Spirit-Slaying Jars... They were truly messing with his mental state.

If this method doesn't work, then none of you should return. If none come back, I will naturally lose hope.

Yet, every time Xuan Yinzi was about to give up hope, a Spirit-Slaying Jar would suddenly return. It would replenish his qi and blood a little, filling him with enthusiasm to make more jars. Then there would be another period when none of the jars returned.

After several days like that, Xuan Yinzi would feel disheartened. Sometimes, he truly felt that this method was not working and didn't want to waste his blood essence on making more Spirit-Slaying Jars. That was when another jar would float back into the cave.

Initially, Xuan Yinzi would be overjoyed at this small return, but now he only felt anguish.

This monster, who had once been capable of shaking up the whole world, felt rather aggrieved.

Either it works, or it doesn't. What does it mean if it keeps stringing me along like this?

Xuan Yinzi made up his mind.

I will never make another Spirit-Slaying Jar again! I'll think of another way tomorrow!

Yet, right then, another full Spirit-Slaying Jar appeared at the cave's entrance...

Xuan Yinzi's weathered face tensed up.

I guess... I'll make them for just a few more days?

Chapter 492: Yang Shenlong

The sky was devoid of stars, and the moonlight was hidden.

On a desolate mountain in the Southern Regions, there stood a dilapidated ornate building, marked with traces of the Great Dao of Years. On this dark, windy night, the mountain winds blew with a faint wail.

Crack.

Someone's foot stepped on a fallen twig, making a crisp crack. Several people appeared in front of the ornate building, gazing at it for a moment before entering it.

There were five people in total. The most conspicuous of them was a burly man, sturdy like an iron tower. His thin shirt wasn't enough to cover up his chiseled muscles that seemed to have been carved by a knife or a hatchet. His face looked equally strong and rugged like a rock.

The person at the front of the group was an old man in plain clothes. He had wrinkled skin and a weathered face.

The old man's hands were resting on the shoulders of a child. This child seemed simple-minded and robust, but his face had a similarly dull complexion.

Behind them stood a short, stocky middle-aged man and a youth who was tall and slender like bamboo.

The group pushed open the building's entrance doors, revealing a large messy hall with cobwebs and dust everywhere.

"Is anyone here?" the leader of the group, the old man, called out.

After a moment, a man responded from deep within the hall, "Well, who do we have here? Which route have you come from, friends?"

A man and a woman walked out from the back of the hall. The man was tall and had a youthful appearance, but the malevolent qi he exuded gave him a menacing air. The woman was young and beautiful. She clung closely to the man, with her soft and supple body. She watched the group with a gaze that was as alluring as she looked.

"Hohoh, pardon the intrusion," the old man said as he saw the pair approach. "I heard you take in children here?"

"Yes."

The young man who was shrouded in malevolent qi glanced at the child. When the child fearlessly met his gaze, the young man furrowed his eyebrows slightly.

The old man pushed the child forward. "Take a look at this eight-year-old child. How much can you give me for him?"

The young man looked down, observing the child carefully. He then let out a cold laugh and looked back up at the old man.

"You say this child is eight?"

"That's right," the old man answered with a chuckle. "His birthday just passed recently. His family couldn't afford to keep him, so they gave him a red egg and sent him off." [1]

"My friend, stop pretending," the young man said loudly. "We only take in humans, not demons."

"I told you it wouldn't work," the short, stocky middle-aged man at the back commented. "Even if he's really a child, human traffickers wouldn't take a dim-witted child like him."

The child turned around to retort, "Better than having a mouth that stinks like your momma's ass."

"The Slave of Mount Tai, attack!" the old man shouted, reaching out to grab the alluring young woman.

Before the old man shouted, the Slave of Mount Tai, the burly man, had already made a move. His large hands spread open like a net, about to capture the young man.

"You dare cause trouble here?!" the young man snarled.

With a whoosh, he broke free and slid several zhang away.

His lower body had transformed into the thick tail of a black-scaled python. Extending upward from its tail, the python split into two upper bodies. One belonged to the young man, and the other belonged to the young woman. The two of them actually shared the same body!

The python twisted about, revealing the true form of the young man and woman—a giant two-headed black python.

"Raaaar!"

It opened its mouth and spat out a cloud of blood fog that contained an extremely toxic venom capable of dissolving flesh.

Nevertheless, the group of five was not afraid in the slightest and surrounded the pair.

The Slave of Mount Tai grabbed the python's tail and roared as he swung it up into the air! The short, stocky middle-aged man and the tall, slender youth rushed forward, each grabbing one of the python's heads. The three of them held the two-headed python up in midair.

The old man turned his hand over and conjured a stone sword that seemed to have been made from cliff rock. Its thick, wide blade did not have a sharp edge. Yet, it sliced the two-headed giant python in half with just one slash like a legendary weapon!

"Aaaaahhhhhh!!!" both python heads screamed. "We are all demons. Why are you slaughtering your own kind?!"

Before it was even done talking, it was obvious the two-headed python would soon be dead.

...

Thud, thud.

The two severed bodies fell to the ground.

The group of five wiped the dust and blood off their hands, then they moved further into the hall. Soon after, they arrived at the rear of the hall, where a deep cave lay ahead.

The old man continued to lead the way as they ventured into the pitch-black cave. The cave walls were sticky and slippery, clearly the work of a giant python.

Moments later, they approached the end of the cave. The old man dropped down to the bottom and found another cave, dimly illuminated by a small candle flame. More than a dozen children lay in a deep sleep there.

The old man swept his gaze over them and then said, "There are children missing from around a dozen or so families. Those missing children should all be here."

"Luckily, they are all unharmed," the Slave of Mount Tai remarked quietly in his deep voice.

Just as the group was about to move forward to wake the children, the old man shouted, "Be careful!"

Right then, a boy dressed in a scarlet robe suddenly opened his eyes, revealing vertical pupils that gleamed with ferocity!

Whoosh.

He opened his mouth and spewed out strange sinister flames, knocking down the tall, slender youth. The boy made a twisting motion and transformed into a slithering Fire Python with wings!

"Protect the children!" the old man yelled.

The Fire Python went on a rampage, spewing a torrent of raging flames! The small cave was instantly filled with scorching flames of qi!

The group of five raised their hands simultaneously, and a dense stone wall rose from the ground, shielding the children and preventing the flames from passing through.

The Fire Python's cultivation level was quite high, so its flames were extremely powerful. If even just a spark from those flames landed on a person, it could instantly engulf them, incinerating their body and soul!

After spewing the flames, the Fire Python had no intention of fighting further. It moved upward in a twisting motion. Rumbling reverberated through the cave as the Fire Python drilled through the ceiling, creating a large hole at an amazingly fast speed!

The Fire Python disappeared from the cave in the blink of an eye.

The group of five had been focused on protecting the children, so they had no time to attack it. By the time they wanted to pursue, it was already gone.

Whoosh.

After breaking free, the Fire Python and soared into the sky, intending to escape into the distance. However, a white-robed figure suddenly appeared in its path.

It was a tall young man dressed in white robes, standing gracefully in the wind. He had sleek sword-like eyebrows and long, beautiful hair. His eyes glowed with divine light as he calmly looked at the Fire Python with a piercing gaze.

The moon could not be seen in the night sky, but this young man had an illuminating presence, making him shine just like a bright moon!

The Fire Python had no idea why, but the sight of this young man made its heart race in fear, as if it was about to suffer a great calamity. Nevertheless, it was not going to sit around and wait for death.

It opened its mouth and spewed another blast of sinister raging flames!

Boom!

This ball of fire was even fiercer than the one in the cave!

Yet, the young man just casually raised his hand, spreading it open and gently pressing down on the fireball. The blazing fireball immediately transformed into a tiny spark under his palm and dissipated in the wind.

Following that, the Fire Python came under the young man's palm too and fell, shrinking in size until it turned into a worm-like creature. It scurried around on the young man's palm only to find that there was an invisible barrier preventing it from escaping.

The rest of the group emerged from the cave and caught up to the young man.

The old man stepped forward and said respectfully, "Young Master, in the end, we still needed you to take action."

"Are the children unharmed?" the young asked.

"They're fine," the old man replied. "They should all be here. We can interrogate this serpent demon when we return."

"Just who are you people?!" the serpent demon, the Fire Python on the young man's palm, raged, writhing back and forth. "You are all greater demons with cultivation power. Why are you willing to serve this human's slaves?"

"Hohoh," the old man laughed. "You probably don't know our young master's identity."

"What is his identity? Is it worth betraying your own kind?" the serpent demon snarled.

The young man glanced at the serpent demon, his fingers closing in on it.

Just before he clenched his hand into a fist, he said, "My name is Yang Shenlong."

...

"Three days after Yang Shenlong emerged from closed-door cultivation, he destroyed a demon hideout in the Southern Regions, rescuing more than a dozen children who had been kidnapped!"

"He's truly incredible. He's handsome and cool, as well as chivalrous and righteous. He even has extraordinary cultivation power. Isn't he the heroic husband I've always dreamed of?"

"Before going into closed-door cultivation, his cultivation level was already the best among the younger generation. Now that he has emerged from closed-door cultivation with a breakthrough, I'm afraid no one can be a match for him."

"Most geniuses would not be a match for any one of his Wuyue Mountain Slaves, not to mention him who commands the Wuyue Mountain Slaves. He was the one who had subdued those five greater demons by himself! They're even serving him willingly!"

"The top spot at this year's Assembly of Immortal Sects will probably belong to the Penglai Supreme Sect once again."

"Of course! Penglai's representatives won first place for three assemblies in a row. They only got third place in the last assembly, but there's no doubt they'll be determined to claim first place at the upcoming assembly. With a peerless genius like Yang Shenlong, their win is practically set. There are very few who would be able to challenge them."

"As for past strong contenders like the Celestial King Sect, the only notable disciple they have in the current generation is Feng Chaoyang; the others are unremarkable. There might be some notable geniuses among the enigmatic younger generation of the Endless Sword Sect, but no one knows about them. So, it seems that there isn't really anyone among the other sects who can compare to Yang Shenlong."

"Actually... I think Mount Shu's got a pretty good chance."

"Don't be ridiculous. Mount Shu's goal this year is just to not fall out of the top ten."

"But Red Cotton Peak is holding a promotional event again. The things you can buy there are cheap and useful."

"That's true. Then I'll support Mount Shu too."

With the release of the new issue of The Seven Stars Gazette, Yang Shenlong's name returned to the public eye. He had been in closed-door cultivation for nearly a year. The world of immortality

cultivators still regarded him as the strongest of the younger generation, but there had been little news about him.

However, after emerging from closed-door cultivation recently, he destroyed a demon hideout in one fell swoop. It was rumored that this hideout was connected to the demons of the Far West and that Yang Shenglong was investigating leads related to it.

As soon as this news broke, it occupied the headlines of The Chronicles of the Nine Provinces, highlighting Yang Shenlong's prominence.

In reality, this matter couldn't compare to Chu Liang's thwarting of the Celestial Charm Sect's conspiracy in the capital of Yu. However, that incident had been caused, in part, by the imperial court's negligence.

The imperial court had organized the Grand Capture Ceremony to boost public morale, but if news of such a major incident were to get out, the public would end up having the opposite reaction. Unrest and chaos would spread across the nine provinces, and that was likely one of the things that the Celestial Charm Sect had aimed for with this incident.

Therefore, after various consultations, the Celestial Pivot Pavilion did not publish news of Chu Liang's great merit in The Seven Stars Gazette.

Only certain citizens of the capital of Yu would remember just how perilous that day had been. And of course, the "Skillful Hands and Benevolent Whip" banner in Chu Liang's home would serve as a memory of his great service to them.

As for Chu Liang himself, he didn't care much about this kind of fame. He was more interested in another piece of news.

Princess Jingyang Rejected for Marriage Again. Mount Shu Sect Disciple Bestowed the Title of Imperial Younger Brother.

Chapter 493: Tools Used In Combination

At first glance, the news made him chuckle. It seemed that Princess Jingyang wasn't facing rejection for the first time. Why was it so difficult for her to get married?

The phrase "Mount Shu Sect Disciple Bestowed the Title of Imperial Younger Brother" undoubtedly referred to him. But what on earth was his connection to the headline "Princess Jingyang Rejected for Marriage Again"?

As he read further, a realization struck him like a bolt of lightning.

The sixth princess of the imperial family had the title Jingyang. She was the very princess the emperor had intended to marry off to him!

So, it was because of me?

The article recounted that last year, the emperor had sought to marry Princess Jingyang to Zhang Chen of the Ascending Dragon Academy. However, Zhang Chen had turned down the proposal, claiming that romantic affairs would interfere with his studies, and it was even considered a noble tale at the time.

But after several such instances, the situation took on a humorous twist. Attempts to marry off Princess Jingyang had been made multiple times, only to meet with rejection each time. What had once been a noble tale was now turning into a laughingstock. There was a real possibility that she would be labeled as someone unable to find a husband.

Chu Liang couldn't help but frown.

If this matter hadn't been made public, it might not have been an issue. However, now that everyone was aware, he would have been the reason why the sixth princess became the laughing stock among the citizens of the Yu Dynasty. Wouldn't she end up resenting him for it?

The problem was that only a handful of people had been present in the main hall that day. How on earth did this news manage to leak out?

As he read further, the article elaborated on Chu Liang's reason for refusal. At that time, the emperor had been "adamant about bestowing the marriage," while Chu Liang was described as "hesitant and inarticulate." It was his esteemed teacher, both beautiful and wise, who intervened, declaring, "My disciple's heart already belongs to another and cannot marry someone else."

Moreover, within the court, the emperor, moved by Di Nufeng's remarkable virtue, wished to honor her with the title of Imperial Teacher. However, she gracefully declined. Left with no other choice,

the emperor bestowed upon Chu Liang the title of Imperial Younger Brother as a gesture of respect for his esteemed teacher.

"..."

The first part was rooted in truth, but the latter half was pure nonsense... What the heck?

Did the emperor address you as Second Aunt out of respect?

However, this did help Chu Liang identify the informant. It had to be a certain unnamed peak master from Silver Sword Peak at Mount Shu.

Given his esteemed teacher's reputation, how could the people of the Celestial Pivot Pavilion possibly have praised her like this unless a blade had been held to their throats? Just a few days ago, his teacher had snuck away, returning with a beaming smile; so this was what she had been up to.

However, in reality, Chu Liang had misunderstood his teacher.

It wasn't Di Nufeng who had disclosed the marriage refusal to the people of the Celestial Pivot Pavilion; rather, they had obtained the information through other channels. When Di Nufeng visited the Celestial Pivot Pavilion, she hoped that if they reported on the incident involving the Celestial Charm Sect, they could frame her in a more flattering light.

When she discovered that this significant incident wouldn't be covered, she felt somewhat reluctant to leave without doing anything. Just then, she spotted her name in another article they were drafting. And so, she seized the opportunity to add a few more words, crafting a portrayal of her glorious image.

As for Chu Liang being bestowed the title of Imperial Younger Brother, it caused quite a stir. After all, he had recently sworn brotherhood with Xu Bashan, which had already shocked many. Now, he had also become the emperor's younger brother!

What kind of charm did this Mount Shu disciple have that attracted so many influential figures to swear brotherhood with him? Could it be that he was destined to bring good fortune to his brothers?

The most immediate benefit of this event was the further expansion of Red Cotton Peak's business. When Red Cotton Peak first began its development, merchants from the sects of the Divine Nine and the Terrestrial Ten had also started establishing shops there. The only factions that had yet to join were those associated with the imperial court.

However, now that even the imperial court had opened shops at Red Cotton Peak, the sects associated with the imperial court no longer had any concerns with setting up shops here.

As a result, sects like Ascending Dragon Academy and Monastery Tower eagerly set up their operations in this thriving marketplace.

The current prosperity of Red Cotton Peak had far surpassed Chu Liang's initial expectations.

At the end of Uncommon Tales of the Martial World, there was another piece of news: Mount Shu's Red Cotton Peak was starting a major sale, where all goods purchased with Mount Shu sword coins were heavily discounted.

With Chu Liang's interactions with Zhang Xiaohan becoming more frequent, she had also become much better at drafting advertisement posts. Since this was a new venture for the Celestial Pivot Pavilion, there were few merchants willing to bid for ad placements in the news. Consequently, the cost of the advertisement was much lower than the potential profit the advertisement could bring about.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Chu Liang reaped significant benefits. The successful development of Red Cotton Peak was inextricably linked to the extensive promotion provided by The Seven Stars Gazette.

At the end of "The Chronicles of the Nine Provinces," the Celestial Pivot Pavilion issued a warning.

Historically, the regions most affected by demon activity were the Western and Northern Regions as these two regions were the nearest to the Far West, where demons thrived. In contrast, the Eastern and Southern Regions experienced only occasional strange incidents, which were typically minor disturbances.

However, recently, there had been a noticeable uptick in sinister incidents in the Eastern and Southern Regions, with many cases showing signs of organized activity. For instance, the child disappearance case that Yang Shenlong was investigating involved malevolent entities with connections that ran disturbingly deep.

As a result, the Celestial Pivot Pavilion urged the people of the Eastern and Southern Regions to remain vigilant.

In cities, where the City Supervisory Division maintained order, strange incidents remained relatively rare. Most troubles caused by malevolent entities occurred in remote mountainous areas. While ordinary citizens were often powerless to defend themselves, they could significantly reduce their risk by simply avoiding these dangerous locations.

...

After reading The Seven Stars Gazette and spending some time cultivating on his own, Chu Liang received a flying-crane message from Wen Yulong.

I'm done upgrading the Demon-Binding Rope.

Although Chu Liang had waited several days for this news, he was not overjoyed. Instead, he remained calm and collected as he made his way to the Hall of Weapons.

Through his many experiences, he had learned to temper his expectations regarding Wen Yulong's creations, choosing to remain cautious until he could see the final masterpiece.

"Senior Brother Chu," Wen Yulong greeted him, "This time, the improvements were made exactly according to your requests."

"Really?" Chu Liang asked skeptically. "You didn't incorporate any of your other ideas?"

"Not at all," Wen Yulong said as he took out the bundle of the Demon-Binding Rope, which was now black and gold in color. "I simply followed your instructions, combining the poison threads with the Demon-Binding Rope to add a bit of toxicity. This would strengthen the binding power of the rope, making it exceedingly difficult for anyone below the seventh realm to escape once they were bound."

Hearing this, Chu Liang's expression finally brightened with joy.

It was rare for Wen Yulong not to add his own clever tweaks.

He picked up the Demon-Binding Rope, feeling its weight. Sure enough, the enchanted formation inscriptions hadn't changed much. The effect was the same as before. It was just stronger.

"Huh?" Just then, he spotted a purple orb embedded in the back of the Demon-Binding Rope and asked with curiosity, "What's this?"

"This is a Lightning Orb," Wen Yulong explained. "It discharges electricity once the rope coils around its target. While its power isn't overwhelming, I found that the electricity helps the poison spread more quickly and intensifies its effects, making the toxicity a dozen times stronger."

He chuckled as he added, "It's just a minor enhancement—not really an extra idea."

Wait a minute...

Chu Liang still felt that something was off.

The spider demon venom was already quite strong. If its potency was increased by dozens of times, what would the effects be? It could even lead to instant death!

"How strong is the toxicity now?" he asked urgently.

"I don't know," Wen Yulong admitted, shaking his head.

"You don't know?"

This response took Chu Liang by surprise.

"The ones I tested it on were all wild animals and low-level demonic beasts. They died shortly after being bound, so I don't know the potency of the venom," Wen Yulong replied. "But it's definitely strong..."

"They died immediately after they were bound?" Chu Liang asked.

"It took a few moments, roughly... I attempted to detoxify them, but there wasn't enough time for the antidote to take effect," Wen Yulong admitted candidly. "Next time you slay monsters and vanquish evil entities, you can test it on various levels of evil entities. That should help you determine its power limit."

"But..." Chu Liang hesitated, unsure if this was a blessing or a curse. "While having strong toxicity is certainly advantageous, this is primarily a movement-restricting enchanted tool. If the target dies after being bound, what if it's someone I don't want to kill?"

"I thought about that too. Don't you have a Poison-Expulsion Whip?" Wen Yulong suggested. "After using the Demon-Binding Rope to subdue someone or an evil entity, if you don't want them to die from the poison, just use the Poison-Expulsion Whip. Its detoxifying power is strong and takes effect quickly. A single lash should clear the toxins from their body. It's a perfect tool to use in combination."

As he spoke, a clever smile spread across his face.

The meaning behind his smile seemed to say, "I've even devised a combo technique for your enchanted tools. It's very considerate of me, right?"

"..." Chu Liang couldn't help but visualize the scenario unfolding in his mind.

He imagined himself shouting, "Where do you think you're going, evil spirit?"

Simultaneously, he would hurl the Demon-Binding Rope with precision, ensnaring the entity in an awkward position. Then, without missing a beat, he would whip out the Poison-Expulsion Whip, lashing it to prevent an immediate death.

How absurdly twisted would that be?

Chapter 494: Granny Meng

"After you finish checking the accounts today, come with me to Red Cotton Peak. We'll browse the shops and get a sense of the prices. When you return, don't neglect your cultivation; you must practice for at least four hours every day.

"Once you've absorbed enough spiritual qi into your soul and no longer need sleep, you can increase your cultivation time to six to eight hours a day. For cultivators, cultivation energy is the foundation of our existence. Also, take your studies seriously at the Hall of Conservation every morning. Senior Brother Yuan has high expectations for you. It's quite rare that he thinks so highly of someone..."

On Silver Sword Peak, Chu Liang was already planning out Little Chu Yi's entire day early in the morning.

Although the schedule was quite packed and complicated, Chu Yi still kept a serious expression, listening respectfully.

If the former dynasty still existed and he became the emperor, he would have been a benevolent ruler.

Unfortunately, rivals in the same field could not coexist. As the Imperial Younger Brother of the current dynasty, Chu Liang naturally couldn't encourage him to rebel against the Yu Dynasty and restore the Qian Dynasty. All he could do was guide him in a different direction.

"You're already six years old; time waits for no one. You must hurry with both cultivation and learning; you can't fall behind at the starting line. Your recent performance has been good, but you must be careful not to be arrogant and impatient. You must not be complacent with your performance. If I see you slacking off, I will definitely scold you."

Chu Liang treated everyone with a gentle smile, but he was a bit stricter with Little Chu Yi.

There wasn't much choice; Silver Sword Peak didn't have many reliable people, and he was the only one truly capable of managing the child.

"Mm." Chu Yi maintained a serious expression and replied solemnly, "I will definitely follow Big Brother Chu Liang's teachings."

"Good." Chu Liang nodded in satisfaction. "Then let's start today's tasks."

"Yes."

After a round of instructions, little Chu Yi set off to begin his busy day.

Chu Liang returned to his small cabin. As his divine sense sank into the White Pagoda, he took out a girl the size of a palm.

It was Tuntun.

She needed some time outside every day.

The little creature was fast asleep, using her translucent golden wings to cover herself.

When Chu Liang brought her out suddenly, she felt a bit dazed.

"Ding ding ding! Let's see what we're having today!" Chu Liang announced as he placed a large bowl in front of Tuntun. "River Snail Rice Noodles!"

"Wow—" Tuntun's eyes snapped open. She stretched out her chubby little arms, waving them in excitement.

She had now completely gotten used to all sorts of junk food; although they lacked spiritual nature, they tasted good. No matter what, she enjoyed the food.

As Chu Liang watched her eat happily, behaving in a clumsy and adorable manner, he couldn't help but grin.

"Tuntun is simply amazing; she eats and sleeps so well! Where else can we find such a perfect child?"

"Look, we also have some fried stinky tofu.

"And for dessert, let's have some durian.

"You finished so quickly; that's impressive!

"Oh, the way you sip that soup—how delightful."

No matter how strong Little Chu Yi's mindset was at such a young age, if he were to witness this scene, he would probably burst into tears on the spot.

While Chu Liang was feeding Tuntun, the jade talisman in his robes began to vibrate. He took it out and saw that it was the Messaging Jade Talisman given to him by the Ghost-Face Chamber.

Only the founding members of the Ghost-Face Chamber—himself, Monk Pushan, and Luo Yao—possessed this Messaging Jade Talisman.

Newly recruited members no longer received the Ghost-Face Talisman; it was now Chu Liang's responsibility, as the new chamber master, to relay messages to them.

As he was unsure of the situation, he decided not to gather too many people for now. Instead, he tidied up and set off for their usual meeting place.

It had been some time since he last received news from the diabolical sect, and during this period, Chu Liang has become so much stronger. Now, he felt more confident in facing Ghost Face.

...

At their usual meeting spot on the outskirts of the Southern Regions, Chu Liang found Ghost Face already seated cross-legged on a large rock, with Luo Yao silently sitting off to the side.

Monk Pushan had yet to arrive, so the area was eerily quiet.

Upon seeing Chu Liang, Ghost Face gave a slight nod and said, "We have something important to do today."

Chu Liang nodded in response and quietly sat down.

The group remained in silence.

After a while, another figure descended from the horizon. Even before he landed, his voice rang out, "I'm late, I'm late, I'm late! I was supposed to leave as soon as I got the message, but I ran into some

trouble on the way. Can you guess what it was? No, you definitely can't guess. I bumped into a hunting Southern Skyhawk, and it mistook me for a bird! Heh. I had to fight it off before I could continue, so that's why I'm late. Did I hold everyone up? It's a pity I don't have any wine; otherwise, I'd punish myself with three cups. If that's not okay, I'll do three somersaults instead. Otherwise, I'd really lack sincerity..."

He kept rambling until he finally arrived in front of them.

Ghost Face's chest visibly rose and fell, looking as if he would lash out at any time. Chu Liang's eardrums throbbed; it had been a long time since he last saw Monk Pushan, and he found it a bit hard to adjust.

It was Luo Yao who coldly interjected, "You can just shut up for a moment."

"Wuwuwu," Monk Pushan mumbled in agreement, nodding obediently.

Ghost Face exhaled slowly before speaking at a measured pace, "The elders from your chambers are all here; the others are of no concern. This mission is highly confidential; the fewer who know about it, the better."

The three of them listened intently.

"Our sect elder of the Dark King Sect, Granny Meng, has stolen an important treasure from the sect. This time, we need to capture Granny Meng," Ghost Face announced. "This mission is crucial; the Four Halls of Darkness have all taken action, each responsible for a specific area. Since we have a large number of members in the White-Bone Hall, the hall master has ordered us to search the mountains and seas. We will set out tomorrow."

Granny Meng?

None of them, including Chu Liang, had ever heard that name.

However, fearing they might expose themselves as undercover agents, no one dared to speak up.

Ghost Face continued, "You may not have heard of Granny Meng; she is an old hand at the sect. Back then, it was the previous sect leader Xuan...never mind, let's not mention that name. She was

the widow of the previous sect leader. She is considered as an elder by the current sect leader, but who would have thought she would do such a thing? Now, the sect leader has promised great merit to whoever finds her. That merit will be enough to elevate someone straight to the top!"

The three knew little about the former sect leader of the Dark King Sect.

What they did know was that he had likely been a powerful figure in his time, serving as the esteemed teacher to the current sect leader.

Eventually, the current sect leader seized control of the Great Dao from the former sect leader, and there was no knowing as to whether the former sect leader survived.

Referring to Granny Meng as a "widow" was like cursing the former sect leader.

Regardless, internal conflicts in the diabolical sect was always a pleasing sight to see for the members of the righteous sects.

However, the current sect leader of the Dark King Sect was clearly more powerful. Since he took over, the sect's power had grown quickly, but their rapid expansion came to an abrupt halt after the disastrous attack on Mount Shu.

As for the unfortunate former sect leader, no one cared whether he was alive or dead. Occasionally, some righteous Daoists would reminisce about the weak Dark King Sect that existed under the former leader's command.

"Go back and prepare; we will gather here at noon tomorrow, and then I will take you to the area we are responsible for searching," Ghost Face said finally.

"Yes," the three replied.

Afterward, they each returned home. On the way, the three discussed what had happened. They knew very little about the situation or who Granny Meng was, and they had no idea what valuable item she had stolen that triggered such a strong reaction from the entire Dark King Sect.

However, by evening, the long-sealed Soul Subjugator Token vibrated again, bringing new information to everyone.

[Eastern-Route Guider]: "Granny Meng has stolen treasures and fled; our sect is searching everywhere. You must have received the news as well. This time, the Four Halls of Darkness have excluded us from this operation, so any information you have must be reported to me."

[Eastern-Route Guider]: "The Marquess' injuries have healed, and he will personally take action in this mission; we will definitely capture Granny Meng!"

Chapter 495: Top-Secret Operation

The Violet Gold Marquess had made his move!

Chu Liang and the other two immediately reported this news to their respective sects.

At that time, they had used various methods to obtain the Soul Subjugator Token, with their ultimate target as undercover agents being the Violet Gold Marquess.

They had waited a long time for this Guardian of the Dark King Sect to recover and emerge into the open.

He was finally going to show up.

[Fifty-Ninth]: "The Marquess is taking action personally? That's fantastic! We've been waiting day and night for this moment. The Marquess has no idea what we've endured during this time..."

[Sixtieth]: "Noted."

[Fifty-Eighth]: "Congratulations to the Marquess on emerging from closed-door cultivation. Do you happen to know what valuable item Granny Meng stole?"

[Eastern-Route Guider]: "I can't tell you much, but I can say it's a valuable item related to the Jiuli Hidden Realm, which is extremely important to our sect. Therefore, whoever captures Granny Meng will be greatly rewarded. The Marquess aims to regain his footing before the sect leader, so failure is not an option this time."

Jiuli Hidden Realm?

Seeing these words, Chu Liang immediately recalled the incident outside Kaoshan City.

At that time, an official from Kaoshan City had discovered the Jiuli Hidden Realm in the mountains. The imperial court wanted to bring him to the capital of Yu immediately, but he was ambushed along the way by a group of diabolical cultivators and a group of demons. If the group dispatched from the diabolical sect hadn't been the Ghost-Face Chamber, to which Chu Liang and the others belonged, the ambush would have succeeded.

Later on, the official was successfully escorted to the capital of Yu. What happened afterward remained unclear to Chu Liang. He only knew that the imperial court had taken over the Jiuli Hidden Realm. The enchanted tools for the demon soldiers inside were better suited for military use and held little value for the immortal sects, so no one contested it. In the end, Zhang Chen, representing Ascending Dragon Academy, expressed his gratitude to those who helped, and that was the end of it.

Could it be that something shady was happening behind the scenes?

[Fifty-Ninth]: "The Jiuli Hidden Realm? No wonder White-Bone Hall suddenly sent us to intercept that official who found it. So, our Dark King Sect discovered the hidden realm first?"

[Eastern-Route Guider]: "Don't ask questions you shouldn't. It's a complicated situation. Just remember to report any information right away. If you make valuable contributions, the Marquess will reward you generously."

With that, there were no more messages from the Eastern-Route Guider.

Chu Liang reported this information to Venerable Wen Yuan, who immediately sent a message to the Imperial Supervisory Bureau, inquiring about matters related to the Jiuli Hidden Realm.

Only after receiving a reply from the Imperial Supervisory Commissioner did they learn that there was indeed a valuable item within the hidden realm. The Dark King Sect had likely mobilized such great forces because of that item.

In the Jiuli Hidden Realm, there were not only enchanted tools from the Jiuli era, as found in other hidden realms, but also a legendary treasure of heaven and earth—the Breath of the Yellow Springs.

According to legend, when the primordial chaos first split open, a spring containing a blend of yin and yang qi emerged at the center of the heavens and earth,, capable of reversing life and death. However, as the heavens and earth took form, this spring gradually dried up.

Although the spring water had evaporated, if one could find the spring's location and condense its essence using Heaven-Reaching Enchanted Powers, the resulting qi would still possess miraculous effects. This was known as the Breath of the Yellow Springs.

In ancient times, ninth-realm Eminent Ones, who existed long enough, would have the chance to condense the Breath of the Yellow Springs.

The Jiuli Hidden Realm was initially discovered by White-Bone Hall of the Dark King Sect. They had been secretly extracting the Breath of the Yellow Springs. However, when an official from Kaoshan City stumbled upon the hidden realm, White-Bone Hall promptly sent agents to hunt him down.

By the time the imperial forces took over, White-Bone Hall had already extracted the Breath of the Yellow Springs from the hidden realm, leaving behind only traces of residual qi. This greatly concerned the Imperial Supervisory Bureau, which has been investigating the matter ever since.

This was particularly concerning since the Dark King Sect possessed one of the top ten legendary artifacts listed in the Catalog of the Mortal World's Ten Thousand Treasures—the True Form of Ksitigarbha!

...

The reversal of yin and yang by the Breath of the Yellow Springs was far from omnipotent. If a complete corpse came into contact with it, the person would be resurrected. However, once the spiritual energy within the Breath of the Yellow Springs was depleted, they would immediately die again. Moreover, the higher the cultivation level of the resurrected individual, the shorter the duration they could remain alive.

In the hands of most, this item posed little threat. However, if it were to fall into the hands of the Dark King Sect's leader, it would become immensely terrifying.

The True Form of Ksitigarbha was like the corpse of the Evil Ksitigarbha in the living world. Even though it had been suppressed by countless seals, it could still display such great power. If it were to come into contact with the Breath of the Yellow Springs, the consequences would be terrifying.

It could potentially attain the combat power of the ninth realm!

No one fully understood the true extent of the Breath of the Yellow Springs' power. Regardless, even if it contained only enough spiritual energy to revive the True Form of Ksitigarbha for a brief moment, that would be more than enough time for it to wreak havoc and bring destruction to the world.

Such a terrifying power in the hands of the Dark King Sect's diabolical cultivators could spell disaster at any moment.

Upon receiving this news, the higher-ups of Mount Shu Sect, Buddhist Cloud Monastery, and the Valley of the Three Absolutes convened for an emergency discussion. They decided to prioritize finding Granny Meng over eliminating the Violet Gold Marquess.

First, they needed to confirm if the item she had stolen was indeed the Breath of the Yellow Springs. If it was, they absolutely could not allow the Dark King Sect to reclaim it.

As a result, the burden on the three undercover agents grew significantly heavier.

Chu Liang had never expected that the undercover mission that he started accidentally would lead to such remarkable achievements time and time again.

Previously, they had uncovered the Dark King Sect's plan to attack Mount Shu, but if they could find the Breath of the Yellow Springs this time, the merit and recognition would be even greater than before.

The three of them were naturally brimming with ambition and enthusiasm.

...

The next day at noon, the three undercover agents arrived at the usual spot right on time.

Ghost Face was already waiting. He looked at them solemnly and said, "This mission is for your ears only. You must not reveal it to anyone."

"Understood!" the three responded in unison.

"Granny Meng has a son who died years ago. She kept his corpse on Fengya Mountain in the Northern Regions. The sect leader suspects that she might head there after stealing the valuable item. Powerful men have been dispatched there to monitor the area. Our task, as members of White-Bone Hall, is to search outward from Fengya Mountain and track her down."

"This operation is top-secret, so be sure not to leave any traces," Ghost Face reminded them once more.

"Understood!" the three responded once more.

With that, Ghost Face rose and flew toward the Northern Regions. At the same time, the three quickly began sending messages to their sects using their enchanted items through their divine senses.

"Fengya Mountain in the Northern Regions."

"We can confirm the valuable item Granny Meng stole is the Breath of the Yellow Springs."

"Hurry to Fengya Mountain in the Northern Regions. The Dark King Sect's forces have already arrived."

Suddenly, Ghost Face turned back, startling the three who were secretly sending messages. They immediately stopped and looked at him.

"One more piece of top-secret information," he said. "The other three halls are unaware of this information. The person who carries the valuable item will emanate a dense aura of death, like a ghost. When you search for the item, be on the lookout for this. Keep it a secret from the other halls. We must ensure that Granny Meng falls into the hands of White-Bone Hall. Understood?"

"Understood!" the three echoed loudly.

As soon as Ghost Face turned and flew away again, the three resumed sending their messages.

"The one carrying the Breath of the Yellow Springs will emanate a dense aura of death, just like a ghost!"

Chapter 496: At Least Half

Dusk dimmed as heavy snow sealed off the mountain. Before nightfall, snowflakes began drifting down from the sky, but strangely, they were black.

"Heh, it's finally here." Ghost Face glanced up at the sky, a hint of excitement flickering in his eyes as the scars on his face glowed red.

"What is this?" Chu Liang asked.

"This is the sect leader's divine ability," Ghost Face explained. "Wherever the black snow falls, it serves as the sect leader's eyes and ears. If we encounter Granny Meng, there's no need to fight. As long as we identify her, the sect leader will arrive instantly."

The three undercover agents immediately realized that this black snow was the extension of the Dark King Sect leader's divine sense, granting him an all-seeing gaze over wherever it touched.

Naturally, this large-scale divine ability could only capture surface-level details. If Granny Meng had disguised herself, the sect leader would not have been able to identify her through the black snow alone. That was why he had to dispatch a large number of people to search the mountain.

Ghost Face's reminder was much appreciated.

The three kept in mind to avoid any overtly rebellious actions within the area covered by the black snow. Meanwhile, they used their divine sense to quietly relay this information back to their respective sects.

At this moment, they stood on a vast, snow-covered mountainside, appearing from a distance like tiny ink dots on a blank sheet of paper. Behind them, the towering peak of Fengya Mountain loomed.

Fengya Mountain looked like an ordinary peak that had been abruptly sliced in half. One side featured rugged, jagged slopes, while the other was a near-vertical cliff, covered in layers of frost, resembling a massive mirror rising from the snowy plain.

"It's actually a bit cold," Ghost Face muttered. "Let's start a fire."

This place lay at the northernmost edge of the Northern Regions, bordering the extreme north, where even cultivators could feel the biting chill. Though the cold could be easily dispelled with a quick circulation of foundational qi, the real discomfort came from the black snow. It exuded a yin qi that penetrated deep into the bones.

What Ghost Face planned to set ablaze was no simple fire. He pulled out six charred bone rods from his robe and set them on top of each other. Then, he gestured with his hand to activate a divine technique that ignited a vibrant azure-gold spiritual fire.

Whoosh—

As the fire crackled, a wave of warmth radiated outward, dispelling the lingering yin qi.

Just moments earlier, Chu Liang found himself on the verge of using his Divine Dragon Fire to start the fire. He quickly suppressed the urge. Sometimes, helping a big bro by lighting a fire wasn't the most fitting thing to do.[1]

"From the sect to Fengya Mountain, the sect leader has established multiple layers of blockades. Granny Meng might not even reach this place, so there's no need for us to be overly nervous," Ghost Face said with a chuckle.

"We returned alive from the battle at Mount Shu. What's there to be nervous about?" Chu Liang replied with a grin.

"Speaking of Mount Shu, it brings back memories of my lifelong grudge..." Ghost Face's expression darkened at the recollection. "I did see Di Nufeng during that battle. But when I saw how she was mercilessly taking down everyone around her, I honestly didn't dare to approach..."

"She is indeed quite terrifying," Monk Pushan said, nodding in agreement.

Chu Liang glanced at Monk Pushan, contemplating whether he should report what Monk Pushan had just said to the sect.

"Those bald donkeys at the Buddhist Cloud Monastery are also detestable!" Ghost Face cursed again. "They were the ones who blocked the True Form of Ksitigarbha. The Mount Shu Sect doesn't even possess a legendary artifact."

"Perhaps those in the Buddhist sect are just very loyal and righteous..." Monk Pushan said awkwardly.

"Loyal, my foot! They're just meddlesome!" Ghost Face snapped angrily. "Those bald donkeys will definitely have no descendants!"

"Which monk even has kids..." Monk Pushan muttered under his breath.

Chu Liang quickly interjected, "There were too many sects fighting at Mount Shu; it just goes to show that all sects in the Divine Nine and the Terrestrial Ten are up to no good."

"Right!" Ghost Face gnashed his teeth as he said angrily. "But the most detestable ones are still the Valley of the Three Absolutes. Those freaks are neither righteous nor diabolical, yet they hit the hardest! I was watching from the sidelines and nearly got caught and killed! Truly..."

"Eh?" Luo Yao, who had been quietly warming herself by the fire, suddenly looked up.

"We will make them pay for what happened at Mount Shu!" Chu Liang hastily interjected, concerned that Ghost Face's remarks might infuriate the other two undercover agents and provoke an instant revolt.

Chu Liang was not lying; they would indeed seek revenge for what happened at the Mount Shu Summit. However, who would ultimately be on the receiving end remained uncertain.

"Right!" Ghost Face nodded heavily. "Revenge is a must! My greatest wish is to force Di Nufeng to look at my face. Then I'll tell her, 'This is the face you burned back then. Too bad you didn't kill me!' Hahaha! And I'll take her out with one strike!"

Just imagining it caused the scars on Ghost Face's face to glow crimson once more, showing once again how much she hated Di Nufeng.

"I will do my best to help you achieve this wish!" Chu Liang said firmly, though in his heart, he added silently, Well, half of it.

...

As the night deepened, everyone became more vigilant.

If Granny Meng had truly made her way to the area near Fengya Mountain, she likely wouldn't dare to force her way through during the day due to the heavy blockade. It was far more likely that she would strike under the cover of darkness.

Those from diabolical sects often preferred to move in the shadows.

Suddenly, shouts echoed from the distant mountains, accompanied by the eerie roars of demonic beasts. The commotion persisted for a while before gradually quieting down.

"It seems a demonic beast has intruded upon the mountain," Chu Liang remarked.

However, just as the area fell silent, a series of heavy footsteps resonated from the ridge behind the mountain.

There was one on their side too!

"Roar—" In the blink of an eye, a muffled roar sounded.

A giant icefield bear demon appeared, standing more than three zhang tall. As it stood upright, it obscured the sky and the moon, displaying such fierce anger as though it were infuriated by the invaders in its territory.

This was the season when the icefield demonic beasts would enter hibernation together, so the unexpected appearance of this massive bear caught everyone off guard.

"Finish it quickly," Ghost Face ordered.

It was somewhat problematic to launch an attack in front of Ghost Face. When they were in front of Ghost Face, Chu Liang and the others could not use their strongest divine abilities.

Luo Yao waved her hand and a curved saber appeared in her hand. She was the only one in their group who had no need to disguise her techniques.

As she raised the saber, a surge of yin qi enveloped her, and a black phantom emerged behind her, propelling her to the top of the giant bear's head. With a powerful swing, the curved saber came crashing down.

Swoosh—

The saber nearly severed the giant bear's neck. Fortunately for the beast, its hide was thick and remarkably tough, resulting in only a deep gash from which blood sprayed onto the snow.

"Roar!" The pain drove the giant bear to roar even louder, nearly sending it into a frenzy. It spun around, attempting to claw at Luo Yao.

But her figure moved like a drifting leaf, and in an instant, she had soared dozens of zhang away.

Next, Chu Liang leaped high into the air and came crashing down, delivering a heavy punch to the top of the giant bear's head.

Though he had various evil techniques ready for disguise, there was no need for them now. He chose to confront the beast head-on with his raw physical strength.

Boom—

With a single powerful punch, the giant bear was pinned to the spot, causing the entire battlefield to freeze in that moment.

When Chu Liang flipped and landed, everyone saw that the giant bear's legs had been driven several chi into the snowy ground. No wonder it lay motionless in death; Half of its entire body was stuck in the ice.

They used such a variety of divine abilities that if they were still Soul Subjugators serving the Violet Gold Marquess, they would have been immediately suspected. This was because the Soul Subjugators had a cultivation legacy centered around divine abilities, and even with slight differences, all of them were related to the Dao of Soul.

However, in White-Bone Hall, the diabolical cultivators had been recruited after joining various other sects, so it wasn't unusual for them to possess their own techniques. As long as they weren't using techniques that only proper disciples of the righteous sects could learn, Ghost Face would likely never suspect them.

After they had killed the giant bear, they heard roars echoing from afar, as if the demonic beasts in the surrounding peaks had all become active.

"What's going on? At this time of year, most of the demonic beasts in the Northern Regions' icefield should be hibernating. They shouldn't be this active," Ghost Face muttered, sounding very concerned. "If the noise catches the Night Saber Sect's attention, it could mean more trouble for us."

He was concerned because Fengya Mountain was very near the Night Saber Sect in the Northern Regions. The icefield to the west bordered the Northern Sea while the Night Saber Sect was located at the edge of the sea.

Compared to the open and inclusive Taotie City, sects like the Greater-Yin Cult and the Night Saber Sect were more representative of the distinct style of the immortal sects in the Northern Regions. They were aloof, ruthless, and fierce.

On most days, they remained aloof and indifferent to worldly affairs, keeping a relatively low profile. But once provoked, their actions would instill fear in the hearts of many.

Especially the Night Saber Sect, which ranked at the bottom of the Terrestrial Ten and was known for its ambiguous stance between good and evil. In its earlier years, it even took on assassination jobs to make a living.

In other immortal sects, there might be naïve and innocent disciples whom the diabolical cultivators could easily bully with their rich martial world experience. However, every disciple of the Night Saber Sect was a hardened killer, capable of licking the blood off their own sabers. They were forces even the Dark King Sect approached with caution.

"If the noise from the demonic beasts gets too loud, the Night Saber Sect might actually come to kill the demonic beasts and disrupt our operation, " Chu Liang said in agreement. "Should we retreat if that happens?"

"Of course not," Ghost Face replied. "This plan cannot fail! The sect leader will not allow us to fail! Even if men from the Night Saber Sect show up, we'll have to force them away! We might have no choice but to fight then..."

His expression grew stern as he warned, "If you do end up fighting the Night Saber Sect, be sure to watch out for their Night Saber's Three Forms..."

Chapter 497: The Night Saber's Three Forms

The unusually active demonic beasts continued rampaging for a while more before they got suppressed. There were many powerful figures among the diabolical cultivators of White-Bone Hall, so it was not a problem at all for them to deal with these demonic beasts.

However, the unexpected commotion had been quite loud, and the diabolical cultivators were worried it might have attracted the attention of the Night Saber Sect. Only Chu Liang and his two righteous companions knew that there was no need to worry about that at all.

After all, the Mount Shu Sect, the Buddhist Cloud Monastery, the Valley of the Three Absolutes, and the Imperial Supervisory Bureau were already present... With the members of so many major forces already watching this place, one more Night Saber Sect wouldn't make much of a difference.

As Chu Liang sat cross-legged to regulate his breathing, he sank his divine sense into the White Pagoda.

After he slayed that giant bear, a new golden phantom appeared in the pagoda. He had some free time now, so it was the perfect moment to reward himself amid this world of ice and snow.

Boom.

He pressed the Refine button, and a red light flashed.

Chu Liang had done this many times, so he was very familiar with the process. Nevertheless, he still got excited every time.

The item that fell into his hands was a large and thick piece of clothing shrouded in white light.

[White Bear Cloak: When worn in a snowy area, this item can hide the wearer and their qi completely within the snow, without leaving any gaps or weak points in the concealment. Note: This cloak is only effective in snow.]

So, it's a cloak used for concealment.

Chu Liang stroked the white fur covering the thick cloak a few times before putting it away. The condition of the cloak being effective only in the snow was rather restrictive. Nevertheless, if it could truly conceal the wearer perfectly in the snow, that meant this was an amazing item.

A person could use typical stealth or camouflage techniques to blend into their surroundings, but such techniques rarely concealed their qi as well. If a cultivator were to investigate the area carefully, they would always notice something was amiss.

This cloak's effect seemed to be that once this white garment covered a person, they would vanish into the snow. However, Chu Liang couldn't test the cloak out now, so he couldn't be certain of how good its effect was.

While he was pondering this, a commotion erupted outside again, and it was even more intense than before.

Chu Liang swiftly opened his eyes. He got up and asked, "What's going on?"

Monk Pushan looked around and replied with a frown, "It's a night parade of a hundred ghosts!"[1]

Boom!

A massive wave of yin qi surged over from afar, sweeping over the mountain peaks outside the range of Fengya Mountain. Ghostly wails rang out incessantly from within the dark wave of yin qi, and numerous ghastly creatures swarmed out from it.

There weren't just a hundred ghosts; it was thousands upon thousands... There were countless ghosts!

"Granny Meng!" Ghost Face's expression turned grim. "It must be her!"

The members of the Dark King Sect didn't know where the corpse of Granny Meng's son was hidden, but they knew she had kept it on Fengya Mountain. So, they surrounded the area, waiting for her to walk into their trap. They had thought she might try to sneak up the mountain, but they had not expected she would be so audacious and do the opposite!

Thinking about it, they realized that the large number of icefield demonic beasts they encountered earlier had likely come out of hibernation early because of Granny Meng. It seemed she planned to disrupt the defenses here and then take the opportunity to sneak up Fengya Mountain.

As this thought crossed their minds, a massive cloud of black fog extended toward Chu Liang's group. At the edges of the fog, sinister ghosts stretched out their limbs as they screamed and wailed, sending chills to the soul.

"How did she summon so many ghosts in such a short time?!" Monk Pushan exclaimed.

"She didn't need to do anything special to summon them. If that valuable item she's carrying isn't sealed, it will naturally attract a large number of ghosts," Ghost Face explained. "They're just some ghastly creatures. Each of you go block off a section of the area. Do not let them pass!"

"Understood!"

Under Ghost Face's command, the three undercover agents flew off in different directions to guard various sections of the mountain.

Although there was a terrifyingly huge number of these ghastly creatures, none of them had a high level of cultivation. Most of them were lonely wandering ghosts. The strongest among them were Chimei Wangliang, which were not particularly strong in combat. There were hardly any vengeful spirits among them, so they were relatively easy to handle.

Chu Liang arrived at the western mountain pass, looking at the wave of ghastly creatures with some excitement. He was about to reap another big harvest!

However, just as he was about to start wiping out the ghastly creatures, a shadowy figure descended from afar.

...

"I was wondering why this place was swarming with evil entities. Turns out it's you diabolical cultivators causing trouble again."

The shadowy figure turned out to be a very thin youngster, who had his hair tied up[2]. He had a pair of dark eyes that gleamed frighteningly bright in the night under the moonlight. Dressed in black, he stood out against the snowy backdrop.

Chu Liang found the person rather familiar. He quickly recalled seeing a young hero named Guo Zhanlei from the Night Saber Sect during the Mount Shu Summit. The youngster standing before Chu Liang bore a striking resemblance to Guo Zhanlei. He was likely his twin brother, Guo Zhanfeng.

Why did I have to run into him? Chu Liang thought. Of all the diabolical cultivators you could go after, you chose me, a righteous cultivator that's undercover as a diabolical cultivator...

Chu Liang's train of thought paused there. He remembered that of the four diabolical cultivators on this mountain, three were undercover agents from righteous sects. That meant Guo Zhanfeng had not had a high chance of encountering a real diabolical cultivator.

Haaa, Chu Liang sighed inwardly.

However, the black snow falling from the sky indicated that the Dark King Sect's leader could be watching this place. Chu Liang couldn't openly reveal his identity, so he adopted the tone of a real diabolical cultivator when he spoke.

He asked, "Who are you, thief, to come here and obstruct the Dark King Sect's business? Do you know that our sect leader is present?!"

Chu Liang said that in the hope that Guo Zhanfeng would recognize the danger and retreat or report to his sect elders instead of acting recklessly.

Yet, no one could have expected what came next.

Guo Zhanfeng narrowed his eyes. "Are you trying to scare me?"

Why are you getting angry?

I'm warning you of the danger you're in...

"I'm just advising you to leave this place quickly!" Chu Liang replied helplessly, flinging out his hand and gesturing for Guo Zhanfeng to go.

"I'm Guo Zhanfeng. You can go ask around," the youth stared at Chu Liang. "I ain't no scaredy cat!"

Without any hesitation, he jumped toward Chu Liang!

Why does he have to start fighting at the drop of a hat...

Chu Liang had no choice but to brace himself and defend prudently. Compared to the black fog of ghosts, Guo Zhanfeng was clearly more dangerous.

He was lunging toward Chu Liang without a saber in his hand, but the warning that Ghost Face had given earlier rang in Chu Liang's mind.

"The Night Saber's Three Forms are the three saber forms that the members of the Night Saber Sect use the most. The first form is the Hidden Saber!

"That is the first saber form their members learn when they join the Night Saber Sect. It appears as if they have no saber in hand, but they can draw a long saber at any time, catching their enemy off guard. Even if they are stark naked, they can still instantly pull out a long saber! It is nearly impossible to guard against!"

Chu Liang kept those words in mind and didn't step forward to engage Guo Zhanfeng. However, he couldn't summon his Dustless Sword without giving away his identity, so he had to dodge by leaping backward.

As Guo Zhanfeng closed in on Chu Liang, he raised his right hand.

Shiing.

Just as Chu Liang had expected, the piercing glint of a saber appeared from nowhere. When Guo Zhanfeng lowered his right hand, it was already holding a terrifying sharp black-bladed saber!

Fortunately, Chu Liang was prepared. He turned to the side, barely avoiding getting slashed!

The typical process for summoning a weapon from a storage enchanted tool required the summoner to raise their hand and turn it over. Yet, the Night Saber Sect's Hidden Saber form seemed to involve hiding the blade in the void, allowing it to be drawn in an instant.

If Chu Liang hadn't been on guard, he might have been struck by that attack!

Nevertheless, now that the saber had been drawn, it was no longer as threatening. Chu Liang flipped around and delivered a whipping kick that hit the side of the saber. Then he struck forth with his palm, forcing Guo Zhanfeng to retreat.

Boom!

Guo Zhanfeng's fist collided against Chu Liang's palm, and the impact pushed the two of them backward more than ten zhang.

The immense force behind Chu Liang's palm strike shocked Guo Zhanfeng. Was this diabolical cultivator actually a martial artist or a physical cultivator? How could a casual palm strike carry the same level of power as an attack from a demonic beast?

Bewildered, Guo Zhanfeng turned his hand over and put his saber away into his storage enchanted tool.

Then he said, "You seem to have a high cultivation level. If you dare, stay here. I'll go back to my sect and bring my fellow disciples here to fight you."

"I'd be happy to," Chu Liang replied calmly.

Guo Zhanfeng turned away, seemingly about to leave. Nonetheless, Chu Liang kept his gaze fixed on Guo Zhanfeng's back.

Ghost Face's words continued to ring in Chu Liang's mind.

"The second form of the Night Saber's Three Forms is the Sheathed Saber. The disciples of the Night Saber Sect are extremely cunning. They often sheathe their sabers mid-battle, making you think they're retreating. But just when you let down your guard, they unleash a thunderous strike on you!"

...

Right when Guo Zhanfeng seemed to be leaving, the ground beneath Chu Liang's feet shook and rumbled. Then a gust of black wind burst out of it!

It was lucky he had remained on high alert. Chu Liang managed to see the gaping mouth of a ferocious beast just in time!

He threw out another palm strike, knocking the black wind away.

Thud, thud.

The black beast tumbled a few times before swiftly getting back onto its feet. That's when Chu Liang was able to see that the beast was a demonic hound with a glossy coat of black fur and eyes that had flickering black flames. It was clearly no ordinary beast.

While Chu Liang was occupied by the hound's attack, Guo Zhanfeng flew toward Chu Liang in a twisting motion and instantly crossed a distance of more than ten zhang. With that great momentum, he sent a powerful saberlight toward Chu Liang with a whoosh!

It turned out that the essence of the Night Saber's Three Forms was pretty much the same and could be summed up in three words. They were all... shameless sneak attacks!

Chapter 498: I Will Definitely Make Him Regret It!

Guo Zhanfeng's attack was swift fast and fierce. Right after the hound's surprise attack, he instantly drew his saber, slicing through the moonlight!

In this moment of crisis, Chu Liang almost instinctively used Dimension Compression to evade the attack. Thankfully, his rationality prevailed, and he held back against his impulse to use righteous immortal arts.

Unable to instantly create distance between them, Chu Liang had no choice but to defend by fighting back.

Boom.

He had used the Green Leaf multiple times during the Mount Shu Summit, so there was a risk he might get recognized if he used it here. Ultimately, he could only summon the Giant Elephant Shield that he had obtained in Python Belly City.

This was the advantage of having a plethora of enchanted tools. Many of the enchanted tools might remain unused in storage most of the time, but simply having them in his storage enchanted tool meant he could take them out at any time to boost his combat power.

A thick shield suddenly appeared between Chu Liang and Guo Zhanfeng. A clang rang out as the shield blocked Guo Zhanfeng's mighty saber strike that was filled with murderous intent. A deep dent then appeared on the surface of the Giant Elephant Shield, showing how powerful the strike had been.

The disciples of the Night Saber Sect were known for being exceptionally skilled at saber techniques, but their mastery of cunning schemes was even more difficult to deal with.

After Guo Zhanfeng struck the shield with his saber, he used the recoil to launch into the air in a twisting motion. He stepped onto the top edge of the shield and looked down at Chu Liang, raising his saber high again!

Seeing the cold gleam in Guo Zhanfeng's eyes, Chu Liang knew things were taking a bad turn. Nevertheless, instead of panicking, he focused his attention on Guo Zhanfeng's left hand.

Ghost Face's explanation from earlier continued to ring in Chu Liang's mind. "The third form of the Night Saber's Three Forms is the Flying Saber. Everyone knows the Night Saber Sect's saber techniques are powerful, but more of our brothers have fallen to their Flying Sabers. Despite being in the middle of a melee, they throw saber blades like they're shooting arrows! Quick as lightning!"

Just as Chu Liang had expected, Guo Zhanfeng feigned a slash with the saber in his right hand while his left hand moved at lightning speed, throwing out a black blade that was nearly invisible in the dark night. Chu Liang, fully on guard, swung out his right hand and caught the blade between his fingers in the nick of time.

His golden right hand was as hard as metal and stone. Guo Zhanfeng had thrown his blade with great force, but it was not enough. The blade shook twice between Chu Liang's fingers and stayed stuck there.

The saber blade was as thin as a cicada's wing and totally black, almost impossible to see in the night. Its length and width were roughly the same as a finger's, but it was coated with a potent poison. If a person were to be struck with this, it was unlikely they would survive.

This saber blade was called Shadow Gnat. It was a weapon exclusive to the Night Saber Sect.

Few disciples of the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten knew these details because they rarely crossed paths with the disciples of the Night Saber Sect. On the other hand, the diabolical cultivators of the Dark King Sect knew a lot about the Night Saber Sect, as many of their skilled members had been killed with the Shadow Gnat.

The members of the Northern Regions' Night Saber Sect and the Dark King Sect had spent many years killing one another and built up a deep-seated hatred. That was why Guo Zhanfeng was so relentless when he encountered Chu Liang.

However, Chu Liang couldn't use his full range of divine abilities in this situation, making it extremely difficult for him to deal with Guo Zhanfeng. Just as he was thinking about how he would escape, the black fog and the tide of yin entities within it came to his aid.

Initially, the black fog had been nearby, and Chu Liang was there to fend it off. Then as Chu Liang and Guo Zhanfeng fought for a while, the black mist continued rushing over.

The countless ghastly creatures within the fog lacked rationality. It did not matter to them how powerful Chu Liang and Guo Zhanfeng were; they just charged into the two youths, submerging them in the black fog.

In an instant, the two youths were robbed of the moonlight. All they could see were the noisy ghastly creatures passing through.

Nonetheless, Guo Zhanfeng was not afraid of these ghosts.

With a sweep of his long saber, he cleared a large area in an instant. Just a few beams of saberlight were enough to dispel the black fog, and it was gone in the blink of an eye. Yet, when his field of vision was clear again, the diabolical cultivator was gone as well.

"Strange..." Guo Zhanfeng muttered.

He flew up to search for the diabolical cultivator, but all he saw was the vast land covered in white snow.

"Baixue," he called out.

The black-furred demonic hound rushed over.

"Where is he?" Guo Zhanfeng asked.

"Awoo..."

Baixue, the demonic hound, whined softly as it circled him three times, but ultimately, it did not have an answer for him.

"He escaped already...?"

Guo Zhanfeng frowned and scanned the area again before turning to leave, leaving behind a vacant, messy patch of snow.

After a while, Guo Zhanfeng went back down to that patch of snow.

It turned out that he hadn't actually left earlier. It had been a test to see if the diabolical cultivator was hiding somewhere nearby.

Guo Zhanfeng did another scan of the area, confirming there truly was no one there. Then he finally left for real.

...

Several hundred li south of the icefield, there was a calm body of water, shimmering under the night sky. A pavilion was floating in the center of the water.

The hall on the first floor of the pavilion was completely covered in a vivid red. There was a scarlet-robed woman sitting in the hall, gently combing her hair in front of a mirror. The scene was beautiful yet also quite eerie.

There was a second person in the hall—a young woman with skin as fair as snow. She stood still, with a respectful expression displayed on her face.

These two women belonged to the Dark King Sect's Scarlet-Robe Hall. The first woman was the hall master, and the second was her youngest disciple and the lowest-ranked among the four great enchantresses, Yi Qiushui.

However, Enchantress Yi's rank had risen by one recently because her senior sister, Enchantress Liu, had disappeared. It was rumored that she had eloped with a formation specialist and taken the Blue Dragon's Hidden Realm with her.

"Esteemed Teacher, are you just going to let Granny Meng go?" Yi Qiushui asked puzzledly. "Aren't you afraid the sect leader will punish you?"

"There are people from the White-Bone Hall going after her. Granny Meng may not even make it to Fengya Mountain," the hall master replied slowly while combing her hair. "Granny Meng treated me well back in the day. This is the only way I can help her."

"Oh, so it's because you have an amicable relationship with Granny Meng, Esteemed Teacher, " Yi Qiushui remarked.

In the Dark King Sect, the younger disciples did not know much about Granny Meng. They only knew her as the old woman who had been by the sect leader's side for years and that she was an expert in alchemy. Whenever the Four Halls of Darkness needed things like pills or medicine, they

would often seek her help to make them. She would agree to their requests, but they always had to pay a large fee.

"She wasn't like this back then," the hall master said softly, sounding as if her mind was somewhere far away. "Before the current sect leader took over, Granny Meng held a high status in the sect... because of her relationship with the previous sect leader. Everyone in the sect knew she was the previous sect leader's lover and that they even had a son. However, she did not want their son to get involved with diabolical sects, so she raised him elsewhere.

"Sixty years ago, I was probably around your age. At that time, I made a grave mistake..."

The hall master paused, recalling something.

After a while, she continued, "That mistake violated the sect's rules and should have resulted in my execution. But Granny Meng pleaded for leniency on my behalf, and I was spared."

Yi Qiushui's eyes lit up. She asked, "Is it... related to that esteemed senior you mentioned previously—the one who sought the Divine Ruins' scroll?"

Her eyes shone with curiosity.

The hall master reprimanded her. "Don't ask about things you shouldn't."

Yi Qiushui lowered her head silently. "Okay..."

As the youngest disciple of the Scarlet-Robe Hall's master, Yi Qiushui had grown up by her teacher's side. Thus, she didn't treat this enigmatic hall master of the Scarlet-Robe Hall with the same level of reverence her fellow diabolical disciples did.

All these years, Yi Qiushui had known that her teacher was always thinking about someone. When her teacher sent her to retrieve the Divine Ruins' scroll, it had been for that person. Unfortunately, an imposter who went by the ridiculous name of Dugu Qiubai had tricked her and snatched the scroll away.

Thinking of that, Yi Qiushui gritted her teeth in anger.

That Dugu Qiubai or whatever had better not cross paths with me a second time, or else... I will definitely make him regret it!

Chapter 499: He is the One

"Achoo—" Chu Liang sneezed, lifted the White Bear Cloak, and stood up.

This treasure was indeed powerful, allowing him to merge seamlessly with the snow. When he was testing it, he was worried that Guo Zhanfeng's spirit dog might sniff him out, but the cloak even concealed his scent.

Guo Zhanfeng had clung to him like a leech. While he couldn't reveal his righteous divine techniques and could only fight with his physical strength, it became all the more challenging to rid himself of this relentless presence.

When the tide of yin entities swept over them, he took the chance to hide himself under the White Bear Cloak.

As he draped himself in this layer of white cloth, it felt as though the world outside had nothing to do with him.

He kept himself hidden for another hour, just in case Guo Zhanfeng decided to come back. It wasn't until he was confident it was safe that he finally revealed himself.

However, in doing so, he had failed his task of intercepting the tide of yin entities. He hurried back to the earlier gathering point, only to discover that Ghost Face and his two companions were nowhere in sight.

Using the enchanted messaging tool, he quickly contacted the Mount Shu Sect to inquire about the current situation. The response arrived almost immediately. It turned out that the black fog and tide of yin entities had surged in with such intensity that many diabolical cultivators failed to block it. The master of the White-Bone Hall commanded all to retreat to the surroundings of Fengya Mountain to strengthen their defense line.

If Granny Meng was carrying the Breath of the Yellow Springs, she would surely be emanating a dense aura of death, which meant that she would likely hide herself near the dark tide of yin entities as she approached Fengya Mountain.

And so, the members of the diabolical sect were determined to block this tide.

The leader of the Dark King Sect was likely waiting in the shadows on Fengya Mountain. Upon finding Granny Meng, he would probably seize the opportunity to strike without delay.

The righteous sects and the powerful cultivators of the Imperial Supervisory Bureau were also watching closely. As soon as the Breath of the Yellow Springs came into view, they would strike like a flash of lightning.

At this point in time, all eyes were locked onto Fengya Mountain.

The black snow that had settled on the surrounding peaks began to cluster toward that direction. They appeared dense and resembled an extraordinary phenomenon when seen from a distance.

Due to the delay caused by Guo Zhanfeng, Chu Liang had already fallen far behind.

Upon learning this, Chu Liang immediately flew towards Fengya Mountain. Just as he flew out of the mountain's range, a voice suddenly rang in his ear.

"Oh? It's you?"

The voice sounded very familiar. Instantly, he remembered the last time he had heard it.

"Mr. Whale-Riding Immortal?"

As soon as he heard the voice, he began to trace its source, arriving at the northern ridge of a glacier, where he indeed spotted two familiar figures.

A middle-aged man with a conical hat and a ruggedly handsome, weathered face was accompanied by a little girl who appeared somewhat dim-witted.

Upon seeing Chu Liang, the little girl's eyes lit up immediately. "Berry...berry..."

Even Tuntun was able to utter many words just a few days after birth, not to mention Chu Yi, who was already Chu Liang's most trusted accountant.

As Chu Liang looked at the child, he couldn't help but make a mental comparison.

It seems like this Mr. Whale-Riding Immortal is not the best caretaker here. After all this time, she still has trouble speaking in full sentences,

Chu Liang thought.

"Esteemed senior, it's been a long time!" He stepped forward and greeted him with a bow of respect.

"Hehe, since we last met at the Mount Shu Summit, you've gained quite the reputation worldwide," the Whale-Riding Immortal said with a hearty laugh as he stared at Chu Liang.

The northern wind roared, billowing his robe, and making him appear even more heroic.

"It's entirely thanks to your help. I have always appreciated it," Chu Liang remarked.

As Chu Liang looked at the middle-aged man in front of him, he could not shake off a nagging question that he felt too embarrassed to ask.

The burning question was: Is he really Senior Sister Jiang's father?

If he is... then I have to make a good impression.

"Well then, it's time for you to return the favor," the Whale-Riding Immortal suddenly said.

"Huh?" Chu Liang glanced up and asked, "Esteemed Senior, is there something you need me to do?"

"Not quite, just... I just need to borrow your face," the Whale-Riding Immortal said with a grin.

"Esteemed Senior, you're planning to go to Fengya Mountain?" Chu Liang immediately guessed what he was trying to do.

"Fengya Mountain is currently packed with diabolical sect members, and with the black snow everywhere, I can't sneak in easily," the Whale-Riding Immortal said. "I have to borrow your identity."

"But I..." Chu Liang hesitated, as he had the task of being an undercover agent.

"You can inform the Mount Shu people about this; they'll agree," the Whale-Riding Immortal replied, looking resolutely toward Fengya Mountain. "To be honest, I am determined to seize the Breath of the Yellow Springs."

As he spoke, he gave the little girl a gentle pat on her head.

Chu Liang didn't ask how he knew about the Breath of the Yellow Springs and simply said, "Senior, what do you want me to do?"

Chu Liang could tell that the Whale-Riding Immortal was waiting here with the clear intention of ambushing a lone diabolical cultivator.

It just so happened that he encountered Chu Liang, which was why he decided to explain politely. With the cultivation level of the Whale-Riding Immortal, even if Chu Liang objected to his request, it would not change anything.

"Just watch the child for me here; I'll handle the rest," the Whale-Riding Immortal said. "Leave everything else to me."

After saying this, he turned, and in a flash of light, transformed into a figure cloaked in a black robe. He appeared exactly the same as Chu Liang with just a few strands of hair falling by the face.

"Esteemed Senior, this..."

At first glance, Chu Liang thought it was an illusion technique. He doubted this would not be enough to fool the diabolical sect's detection.

"This isn't just an ordinary illusion; it's the immortal art known as Spirit Fox Illusory Transformation," the Whale-Riding Immortal chuckled. "Did you really think the woman from the

Celestial Charm Sect disguised herself as you and fooled the Imperial Supervisory Bureau with something simple?"

He knows about this too? Chu Liang was slightly surprised. Mr. Whale-Riding Immortal clearly had access to a vast array of information.

As for the Spirit Fox Illusory Transformation, he had only heard of it in legends. It was said to stem from the Fox Clan's divine ability to transform, which was how it got its name.

The best thing about this immortal art was how exceptionally hard it was to perceive the transformed camouflage as fake. This was a secret technique that was incredibly hard to master, with only a select few in the world capable of using it.

Given the circumstances, he had no choice but to take on the responsibility of watching the child while relaying the information.

The Whale-Riding Immortal, now disguised as Chu Liang, swiftly vanished into the vast, dark expanse of snow.

...

At the same time, the teacher-disciple duo of Scarlet-Robe Hall arrived at Fengya Mountain.

The slopes of Fengya Mountain were crowded with shadowy figures, diabolical sect members coming and going. Against the backdrop of the snow-covered peaks, their black robes were starkly visible. Meanwhile, the vivid attire of the two from the Scarlet-Robe Hall attracted even more attention.

The master of Scarlet-Robe Hall donned a crimson mask that concealed her face. At the same time, no one dared to look right at her face. Her red robe fluttered in the wind as she arrived at a mountaintop.

"Esteemed Teacher, if Granny Meng is caught by the sect leader later..." Yi Qiushui was worried. If her teacher helped Granny Meng in front of the sect leader, it could lead to serious trouble.

"I've already helped her once; that repays my debt," the Scarlet-Robe Hall's master said calmly. "You don't need to worry about anything else."

Only then did Yi Qiushui let out a sigh of relief.

As she glanced around, she suddenly saw a somewhat familiar figure.

She frowned, puzzled for a moment, then widened her eyes—it was him!

"Stop!" Yi Qiushui shouted, immediately flying forward to catch up. "You there, stop!"

The one she called out to was none other than the Whale-Riding Immortal, who had transformed into Chu Liang. Chu Liang had mentioned a bit about the Bone Palace Hall and Ghost-Face Chamber affairs, but he had no idea of any connection between Chu Liang and the Scarlet-Robe Hall.

In order to avoid exposing his disguise, the Whale-Riding Immortal had to stop and ask in a low, serious voice, "What is it?"

"Heh." Seeing him act as though he didn't recognize her, Yi Qiushui laughed angrily. "I didn't expect you to be a disciple of our sect. Even so, you had the audacity to trick me."

Chu Liang did what? The Whale-Riding Immortal blinked. Chu Liang appears so serious and proper. I never knew he liked to trick young girls.

Just as he was about to unleash a divine ability against Yi Qiushui, he suddenly heard a familiar voice behind her say, "What's happening?"

As Yi Qiushui called out to a Dark King Sect disciple, the master of Scarlet-Robe Hall had no desire to intervene. She never intended to ask any questions.

However, when she looked at the person, her heart unexpectedly skipped a beat, which was why she flew forward and asked the question.

"Esteemed Teacher!" Yi Qiushui pointed at the Whale-Riding Immortal, her voice filled with anger. "He's the one who goes by Dugu Qiubai. He pretended to be that senior you know and deceived me out of... that precious item. This time, he must be punished!"

With so many people nearby, she dared not mention the Divine Ruins' scroll.

The Whale-Riding Immortal looked at the master of Scarlet-Robe Hall, his gaze momentarily wavering before he hastily looked away. It was already too late.

With her gaze fixed firmly on his, the master of Scarlet-Robe Hall remained still, her shoulders quivering slightly. After what felt like an eternity, she said, "He is..."

"That's right!" Yi Qiushui said. "He is that imposter!"

"No..." The Scarlet-Robe Hall's master shook her head. "He is the one."

Chapter 500: So I Am The Other Dog?

"No matter how much a person's appearance and body change, their eyes, temperament, and aura will never change[1]"

Daoist Yan once said this to Chu Liang. Back then, Jiang Tiankuo had also taken on a completely different appearance, yet Daoist Yan was able to recognize him at a glance.

On Fengya Mountain, where diabolical cultivators swarmed and the air was heavy with diabolical qi, the Scarlet-Robe Hall's master did exactly as Daoist Yan had done.

She flew forward and met the Whale-Riding Immortal's gaze with unwavering intensity.

Time raced on like a flickering flame, and decades disappeared in the blink of an eye. The surroundings and people had changed entirely, yet as she stared into the light in those eyes, it felt as if she had returned to the past, catching glimpses of memories long gone.

Back then, her father was an elder of the Dark King Sect, so she joined the diabolical sect at a young age, quickly becoming a gifted disciple of her generation. During a treasure hunt in a hidden realm, she was injured by accident, and coincidentally, a disciple of Mount Shu entered afterward and saved her.

Due to her injuries, she did not reveal her background.

She kept her identity hidden, planning to find an opportunity to kill this disciple of the Mount Shu Sect. However, after just a day of interaction, she sensed an extraordinary charm in him. So she first decided to wait until she had obtained the valuable item.

Then, she decided to wait until they had left this place.

Then, she decided to wait until she had recovered...

Then, she became more and more hesitant to kill this Mount Shu disciple.

When the two stepped out of the hidden realm, the diabolical cultivators from the Dark King Sect, who had come in search of her, surrounded them and launched an attack.

He wrapped one arm around her waist while wielding his sword in his right hand.

In that moment, sword lights filled the sky, cascading down like countless shooting stars.

The light she had seen in his eyes back then felt just like the one she was seeing now.

Even after all this time and the countless changes in their lives, he remained exactly the same.

He was the one she had been searching for all these years.

As she stepped forward, the master of Scarlet-Robe Hall took off her mask, revealing a cold yet breathtaking face, with eyes that shimmered gently like rippling water.

She wanted to say something, but the words never escaped her lips.

However, Yi Qiushui, standing behind her, was filled with surprise. For all the years she had been with her esteemed teacher, the master had always worn a mask in public. Even though she often dressed up and applied makeup in the attic, she never allowed anyone to see her true appearance outside.

Yet, at this moment, she had chosen to take off her mask.

Could it be that all these decades of dressing up were just for this one person?

So this person was not a fraud...

However, amidst the swirling black snow in the sky, the Whale-Riding Immortal appeared less emotional than the master of Scarlet-Robe Hall.

He nodded respectfully and said, "This subordinate pays my respects to the master of Scarlet-Robe Hall. The situation is tense, and with the sect leader overseeing everything, I dare not be negligent. I will leave now, but once I secure the Breath of the Yellow Springs, we can discuss things further."

"Ah..." The Scarlet-Robe Hall's master snapped back to reality at those words. Her hair flew wildly, and her red robe billowed in the wind. After a brief pause, she finally said, "Then I'll allow you to leave first, but I have something to ask you... Be sure to come back."

The two shared a glance, one that appeared to encompass over a dozen years. The meaning behind that gaze felt as deep as the ocean itself.

After that moment of connection, the Whale-Riding Immortal turned away and strode off, his figure slowly fading into the expansive shadows of the snowy mountain, becoming an unnoticeable part of the surroundings.

After a long while, the master of Scarlet-Robe Hall stood motionless in the air, as if time had stopped around her.

Yi Qiushui flew forward and gently called out, "Esteemed teacher..."

She was not dumb. Even as a bystander, she could tell what had happened. That person probably couldn't reveal his true identity, and her esteemed teacher couldn't express her true feelings to him.

After decades of searching, when they finally came face to face, her heart was flooded with emotions, yet she couldn't find the words to express them. Clearly, her teacher was entangled in a chaos of feelings.

Times had changed everything, yet what could one do about it?

...

"You really haven't changed a bit," Chu Liang said, watching the little girl nibbling on a fruit with a helpless smile.

Before the Whale-Riding Immortal left, he had already told him the girl's name: Jiang Guo[2]... quite a straightforward name indeed.

Fortunately, as the owner of the largest berry garden in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten, Chu Liang always carried plenty of stock with him.

On one hand, these berries, while not rich in spiritual energy, could still supplement vital energy. If one were trapped while adventuring, a few berries would be enough to maintain energy for a long duration. Otherwise, regardless of how high one's cultivation level, there was always the risk of energy depletion over time. By then, one would be at a loss.

On the other hand, these berries were perfect for gifting whenever he crossed paths with notable figures in the world of immortality cultivation. He could share a few for them to taste, effectively promoting his products. If they liked what they tried, there was a chance they would make a big order.

When he was at the headquarters of the Imperial Supervisory Bureau, he managed to secure a long-term sales agreement.

Although Red Cotton Peak was thriving, Chu Liang had never abandoned his berry business. After all, this was the starting product that laid the groundwork for his success. It had not been easy managing this brand, and the profits it generated were still significant.

In such a short while, little Jiang Guo had already eaten over ten berries and showed no sign of stopping. Chu Liang had not expected them to be this addictive.

Unbeknownst to Chu Liang, Jiang Guo had been purified by the enchanted formation on the Holy Mountain, which helped suppress the deathly qi within her. She no longer felt a compulsion to attack living beings. However, deep down, she still craved blood and qi, hoping to absorb them to boost her strength.

As spirit plants and energy-rich pills were quite valuable, they couldn't be given to her as common food. The Golden Vein Berry, however, held a trace of qi, which satisfied her cravings. Moreover, it was delicious, so it became her favorite.

Previously, the Whale-Riding Immortal had stolen a large number of berry seedlings from Mount Shu, but he only managed to cultivate a small batch on the Holy Mountain in the Northern Regions. Consequently, their daily supply was limited, and the little girl couldn't eat as much as she desired.

Now that she had finally run into Chu Liang, the berry mogul, she naturally indulged herself in a lavish spread.

In the sky, sparks of light and gusts of black wind would pass by one after another. Occasionally, a divine sense would sweep over Chu Liang, but upon sensing that he was a member of the Dark King Sect, no one paid him any more attention.

The members from different halls, who were stationed in front to intercept Granny Meng, also came to Fengya Mountain in succession. It appeared that all the attempts to intercept Granny Feng had failed.

This wasn't unexpected, as Granny Meng was a seventh-realm Eminent One and had been part of the Dark King Sect for many years. Given her familiarity with the sect's affairs, it was far too challenging to capture her with these forces.

At that moment, a jolt vibrated through his chest.

He took it out and saw it was the Soul Subjugator Token. Having previously informed the Violet Gold Marquess of their location at Fengya Mountain, it was likely that support from that side had now arrived.

Indeed, it was just as he suspected.

[Eastern-Route Guider]: "Where are all of you located?"

[Fifty-Eighth]: "We're all at Fengya Mountain. The sect leader has decided to intercept Granny Meng here."

Though Chu Liang was not present on Fengya Mountain, he had to give this answer because the Whale-Riding Immortal was currently using his identity, while he himself was now just an outsider playing caretaker.

[Eastern-Route Guider]: "I will first scout the outskirts of Fengya Mountain. I cannot approach too recklessly, as it might alert the Four Halls of Darkness. The Marquess wishes to locate Granny Meng before she enters Fengya Mountain. Keep me updated on any changes."

[Fifty-Ninth]: "The first wave of yin entities is swarming into Fengya Mountain right now. We're doing our best to fend them off. Granny Meng might be hiding among them or watching from the periphery. It's great that the Marquess is here! With the Marquess here, we feel more confident. With the Marquess here, life will surely be easier..."

[Sixtieth]: "Noted."

[Fifty-Eighth]: "We've been stationed around Fengya Mountain, so we don't have much information about Granny Meng's whereabouts. Sir, if you want to know more, you can try asking the other hall members. They are currently rushing here from the front and should have a better idea of her current location."

[Guiders Eastern-Route Guider]: "I understand the situation now. Be careful in everything you do. I will see if I can capture a member from another hall on the outskirts to ask for more information."

With those final words, the Guiders Eastern-Route Guider exited the Soul Subjugator Token.

Let the dogs eat each other. Chu Liang muttered inwardly as he put the Soul Subjugator Token away.

He sent the Eastern-Route Guider to collect intel from the other hall members with the aim of sowing discord. Naturally, the members from the other hall would never provide the information easily, which meant the Eastern-Route Guider would have to resort to using specific tactics.

If the tension escalated between the Violet Gold Marquess and the Four Halls of Darkness, the easier it would be for him and his companions to hide in the chaos. Obviously, he hoped that the Dark King Sect would become even more chaotic.

While he was lost in thought, a sudden whoosh caught his attention as a beam of light descended onto the top of a nearby hill.

It was an elderly man with white hair and dressed in a black robe. He shot a sharp glance at Chu Liang, and his divine sense swept through the area, locking onto him instantly.

Chu Liang naturally detected the elderly man's presence. He displayed a strong cultivation level and approached in a threatening manner, prompting Chu Liang to be on guard.

Without saying a word, the man abruptly raised his hand and unleashed a black light from his sleeve!

Chu Liang instantly recognized the technique; it was the Soul-Piercing Nail, a divine skill he knew well!

When he first ventured into the martial world, he had fallen victim to this precise technique. At that time, it was the Soul Subjugator of the Dark King Sect who had used this technique to subdue him and Song Qingyi. This was a secret technique used by the Soul Subjugators serving the Violet Gold Marquess.

However, the Golden Core Realm Soul Subjugator from that day was significantly weaker than the black-robed man before him. With a casual gesture, the man conjured howling shadows like black lightning, suggesting he was at least a sixth-realm cultivator!

Wait a minute...

As soon as he recognized the origin of the divine skill, Chu Liang instantly remembered what the Eastern-Route Guider had said earlier.

It was the conversation he remembered having with the Eastern-Route Guider. It was he himself who had sown discord, urging the Eastern-Route Guider to capture another member from the Four Halls of Darkness at the outskirts to interrogate...

Ah. So I am the other dog, huh?