

## M. Slaying 691

### Chapter 691: Save Someone

It turned out that the power of the Xuan Yuan Eyes not only allowed the user to see a thousand li away but could also send someone thousands of li away with a glance.

After Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai got engulfed by the golden light, they found themselves in the depths of a sea. They quickly realized this was the power of the Xuan Yuan Eyes.

Seeing the strange seawater around them, they doubted they were still in the territory of the West Sea.

"The Circle of Immortal Friends Token doesn't work here. This must be a hidden realm," Chu Liang said.

He didn't know why Ji Lingjue had appeared in Baili Tong's sword hut, but this confirmed that the upgraded sword of the Sword Emperor had been tampered with. Regardless of what had been done, there was no doubt that it would lead to something bad. After all, the Celestial Charm Sect's intentions were always sinister.

Even if Chu Liang couldn't return in time, he wished to pass on the information through the Circle of Immortal Friends Token. Unfortunately, they were in a hidden realm, so the token's connection was severed.

Chu Liang could escape if he used Shattering the Void to return to the Blue Dragon hidden realm, but that meant Jiang Yuebai would be left alone in the hidden realm.

Even if Chu Liang managed to survive, what was the point if Jiang Yuebai didn't? Sometimes, people might look like they were alive, but on the inside, they were already dead. Without Jiang Yuebai, that's what Chu Liang would be like.

Before Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai had fully figured out their situation, a massive shadow suddenly loomed over them. A black flying fish that was as large as a ship darted toward them at high speed. It opened its jaws wide, wanting to snap up Chu Liang and go.

Whoosh!

Chu Liang reacted swiftly. He had immediately sensed the oncoming danger and evaded using Dimension Compression. Simultaneously, Jiang Yuebai's swordlight struck where Chu Liang had just been standing.

If Chu Liang hadn't moved or if Jiang Yuebai's strike had been just a tiny bit faster, her sword would have cut into Chu Liang instead.

At that moment, Jiang Yuebai's sword qi surged forward. It sliced through the black flying fish, using the demonic creature's own momentum to cleave it in two.

Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai hadn't even exchanged glances, yet they had achieved a perfect level of coordination.

The blood of the flying fish spilled into the sea, drawing the attention of countless demonic creatures in the vicinity. Chu Liang could sense their auras closing in on them.

He said hurriedly, "There are too many demonic creatures here, and it's hard to replenish our spiritual qi. Let's move."

As they pressed on in search of a way out, they heard a faint voice coming from inside a tightly closed mountain of coral. When they cut it open to see who was inside, they were surprised to find it was Du Wuhen.

"Heh," Chu Liang laughed. "Why, isn't this Young Hero Du? It hasn't been long since we last met. How did you end up like this?"

Du Wuhen didn't even have the energy to respond. He just unconsciously reached out for help.

Looking at Du Wuhen's dark and pitiful face, Chu Liang pondered for a moment. There wasn't any deep-seated hatred between them, and it didn't feel right to just leave him to die.

So, Chu Liang raised the Demon-Slaying Sword and then swung it down.

Whoosh!

Unexpectedly, as the stream of sword qi rushed toward the mountain of coral, the coral shook violently. A demonic beast's furious roar erupted from the coral, and countless twisted coral branches shot out to attack him!

This coral thicket was also a vicious beast!

So, it's a demonic beast, yet it dares to bare its fangs at the Demon-Slaying Sword?

Chu Liang raised an eyebrow, and the sword in his right hand instantly transformed into thousands of sword shadows, shooting forward simultaneously.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

In an instant, the seacurrents turned turbulent as thousands of beams of sword qi crisscrossed. The Demon-Slaying Sword reduced the massive coral mountain to fine powder—pink dust that drifted away with the currents. Then a golden imprint merged with Chu Liang.

Feeling satisfied, Chu Liang put his sword away.

He let out a cold snort and said, "Sea beasts are demonic beasts too. How dare it be so aggressive with my Demon-Slaying Sword around?"

Jiang Yuebai softly reminded him, "Do you remember what you were supposed to do just then?"

"Save someone," Chu Liang replied.

"And where's that someone?" Jiang Yuebai asked.

"Ah."

Chu Liang hurriedly searched for Du Wuhen.

He found Du Wuhen covered in blood, slowly sinking into the pink dust. Du Wuhen looked like he was at death's door...

"Well, this is awkward..." Chu Liang scratched his head, feeling a bit embarrassed. "Here I was, trying to do a good deed, and I accidentally turned into a murderer."

...

In Sword-Hanging City, the sound of drums and gongs filled the air.

A grand procession of people dressed in white marched forward, escorting a large sword case in the center. The case was so huge that it resembled a coffin. Without any prior knowledge, it was likely people might mistake this procession for a funeral procession.

The procession came to a halt in front of the royal palace.

The person leading the procession announced loudly, "The ancient sword Shadow Bearer has arrived!"

The palace doors creaked open, and the Sword Emperor of the West Sea walked out.

The Sword Emperor had the face of an honest and sincere man and the unassuming demeanor of an old farmer. He had the air of a reserved man who kept his brilliance subdued.

With his hands clasped behind his back, the Sword Emperor strolled out and gazed at the sword case as if he were looking at a brand-new hoe.

"I knew Master Baili would not disappoint me," said the Sword Emperor. "Where is he?"

"Master Baili..." The leader of the procession hesitated to answer the question. "Your Majesty, please examine the sword."

There was a flicker in the Sword Emperor's eyes. With a wave of his sleeve, the sword case opened, and the sword flew to his palm with a streak of rainbow light.

The Shadow Bearer's nearly transparent blade now bore faint blood-red patterns.

"This is Master Baili's qi..." The Sword Emperor of the West Sea trembled, as if struck by lightning. "He..."

The group in white knelt and cried out in unison, "Master Baili sacrificed himself to strengthen the spirit within the sword!"

"No wonder Shadow Bearer now possesses such immense spiritual qi that it could rank within the top fifty of the Catalog of the Mortal World's Ten Thousand Treasures," the Sword Emperor of the West Sea remarked quietly in a heavy tone. "This is all thanks to Master Baili's sacrifice."

He swung his sword fiercely toward the heavens.

Swoosh.

The vast clouds in the sky scattered instantly, revealing a clear, bright sky split by a deep, dark rift. It was as if a sword had cleaved through the heavens!

"I will not fail Master Baili's sword!"

The Sword Emperor's voice reverberated across the land like rolling thunder.

As if responding to this sword strike, a sharp cry like that of a dragon suddenly ripped through the distant skies. A beam of swordlight streaked across the sky, arriving at the palace in a flash.

If an eminent sword cultivator at the pinnacle of the seventh realm were to wield a legendary sword ranked at the top of the Catalog of the Mortal World's Ten Thousand Treasures and execute the Sword Manipulation Technique with full force... what would it look like?

Such a sight was rare, but Daoist Yan was about to demonstrate it to the world.

Like sunlight piercing through the night sky, the colors of dawn quietly painting the horizon... a colossal dragon of sword qi tore through the sky!

Just by coming to a halt, the sword qi produced a resounding boom!

"I, Daoist Yan of the Mount Shu Sect, am here to honor the promise for a duel over the control of the Great Dao of the Cloud of Determination!"

Yan Zi, dressed in Daoist robes, stood gracefully on her flying sword in midair, with her flowy sleeves fluttering in the wind. Her face, like sculpted pristine white jade, radiated a divine brilliance.

Compared to the unassuming Sword Emperor, Yan Zi was undoubtedly closer to the world's ideal image of a Sword-Wielding Immortal. Distant and cold like snow, she stood alone, separate from the rest of the world.

"Chen Erniu of the West Sea, please enlighten me!"

The Sword Emperor laughed heartily as he leaped one of the platforms atop the pillars. Seeing that, Daoist Yan descended onto the platform opposite him. Howling winds blew through the space between them.

The battle for the Great Dao of the Cloud of Determination was about to begin.

...

On the rooftop of a distant pavilion, Di Nufeng was sitting in a relaxed posture, yet her face showed she was tense with worry.

"Yan Zi, you absolutely must win."

At that moment, a man spoke from behind her. "Yan Zi is more than capable of winning."

"Eh?"

Hearing the man's voice, Di Nufeng's first reaction wasn't to process what he said but to throw a punch at him.

Boom!

This punch was so powerful that even a celestial beast wouldn't be able to withstand it. Fortunately, the person on the receiving end was the Whale-Riding Immortal.

He caught Di Nufeng's fist with one hand easily. However, his arm was quickly engulfed in Di Nufeng's violet-gold divine fire. The arm was charred black, clearly beyond saving.

Yet, the Whale-Riding Immortal just calmly ripped off the scorched arm and casually tossed it aside. He shrugged his shoulder, and a new arm grew out of it.

"Jiang Tiankuo?" Di Nufeng said, eyeing the Whale-Riding Immortal with the unfriendly gaze a person would reserve for their romantic rival.

The Whale-Riding Immortal sat down beside her cheerfully. "It's been so many years since we last met, but you're still as hot-headed as ever."

"How was I supposed to know it was you... If I had known, I'd have aimed to kill."

"Woah, woah, why?" The Whale-Riding Immortal grimaced. "We're comrades who used to fight alongside each other in battle. What's with the animosity?"

Di Nufeng replied, "You left Yan Zi all alone on Mount Shu. Now, you insist on dragging my disciple's wife to the Divine Ruins, which basically means you'll be dragging my disciple there too..."

Then she pondered aloud, "Wouldn't everything be fine if I just kill you here?"

"Do you remember the advice I gave you back then? Don't use your brain," the Whale-Riding Immortal said with a laugh. "It's terrifying when you do."

After laughing for a bit, he added, "I'm here because of an important matter."

"What is it?" Di Nufeng gave him a sidelong glance. "Missing your mommy?"

"..." The Whale-Riding Immortal knew Di Nufeng well and had already expected this response, so he didn't get angry. He just got straight to the point. "There's a place I need you to go. I can't trust anyone else to handle it. Get there quickly and rescue two people."

Di Nufeng rolled her eyes. "Why don't you go yourself? I need to stay here and keep an eye on Yan Zi."

"Yan Zi will win for sure. Trust me," the Whale-Riding Immortal replied. Then his tone turned serious. "But those two people—I need you to rescue them. I won't feel at ease unless it's you. I have to stay here for other matters."

Seeing his serious expression, Di Nufeng asked, "Who are they?"

"Your disciple and his wife."

Boom!

That day, before the duel between Daoist Yan and the Sword Emperor of the West Sea began, a fiery beam of light shot toward the southeast.

Chapter 692: Happy Place

"You're awake?"

When Du Wuhen woke up, he felt as though he had just returned from walking through the gates of the netherworld. He felt extremely weak, and he was covered in wounds.

Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai stood beside him, one person on each side. They wore relieved and happy expressions that seemed to say, Thank goodness he's alive. Now we don't have to deal with the guilt and stress of having to dispose of a body.

Meanwhile, Du Wuhen thought, It really is them.

In his near-death state, he had thought that they might have just been hallucinations.

"Ah..." Du Wuhen said, "You saved me."



"Since we know each other, how could we just stand by and watch you die?" Chu Liang replied with a carefree smile.

"But why..." Du Wuhen examined his own body and noticed that the injuries from the demonic creature's attack were minor. On the other hand, the severe injuries that had almost taken his life were sword-inflicted. "Why are all my wounds from swords?"

"That coral demon's swordsmanship was remarkable," Chu Liang answered resolutely.

"It has hands?" Du Wuhen asked, perplexed.

"Many of them," Chu Liang replied seriously with a straight face.

"It cultivates the Great Dao of the Severing the Void?" Du Wuhen asked in astonishment.

"It's as powerful as me," Chu Liang stated, glancing at Jiang Yuebai.

Jiang Yuebai hesitated briefly but eventually nodded. "Mm."

Seeing as even Jiang Yuebai said so, Du Wuhen stopped probing further about that.

Instead, he asked, "How did you two end up in the Sea of Demons? A place like this—"

Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai were both taken aback. "This is the Sea of Demons?"

Chu Liang thought, No wonder this place is so strange. Turns out it's the legendary gathering ground of demonic entities.

"Indeed, this place is extremely dangerous," Du Wuhen said with the air of a seasoned veteran. "You can only rely on your physical strength here. The effects of divine skills are greatly reduced. There are demons everywhere. There are countless evil entities, each one bloodthirsty and vicious—wait, what's with that look in your eyes?"

He noticed that with every word he spoke, Chu Liang's pupils seemed to dilate further, until his eyes were practically glowing.

Du Wuhen wondered inwardly, Could what I said have triggered a peculiar obsession of his?

It wasn't Chu Liang's fault for being excited.

I have to rely on my physical strength... There are many demons, and they are all bad... Doesn't that mean I can go on a wild demon-slaying spree to rack up rewards?

How is this the notorious Sea of Demons? It's my happy place!

Noticing Du Wuhen's flabbergasted expression, Chu Liang reined in his excitement and asked, "So, do you know how to get out of here?"

Du Wuhen explained, "The Sea of Demons is easy to enter but hard to leave. To find out where the exit is, we'd have to find the strongest aquatic monster here, Wuzhiqi[1]."

"Alright." Chu Liang stood up abruptly. "Let's go find Wuzhiqi then."

"This matter requires careful cons—"

Du Wuhen was about to caution Chu Liang not to be hasty, but Chu Liang had already drawn his Demon-Slaying Sword and was charging toward a massive shadow in the distance.

"Haha! Are you Wuzhiqi?" Chu Liang shouted.

Without waiting for the demonic creature to respond, Chu Liang shot forward like an arrow launched from a bow. He activated the Mystical Winged Divine Dragon Transcendent Form and wielded the Demon-Slaying Sword.

Boom!

He pierced through the sea beast with one swift strike.

With his immense physical strength and the Demon-Slaying Sword's powerful suppression of demonic creatures, Chu Liang was like a god of slaughter to these sea beasts.

"But..." Du Wuhen said hesitantly, "Wuzhiqi is supposed to be a monkey..."

"Hmm, let's see." Chu Liang turned his head, scanning the waters around him. "That thing over there seems to be a monkey that looks like a shark."

Boom!

Before the sea beast could even attempt to devour him, Chu Liang had already charged across, swiftly narrowing the wide distance between them and delivering a thunderous strike.

"That giant seahorse also looks a bit like a monkey. Let me ask it..."

"AHAHAHAHAHA!!!"

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

In no time, Chu Liang dashed east and west, slaughtering every sea beast within the range of his divine sense until the entire area was cleared out.

As Du Wuhen watched Chu Liang, he trembled in shock. Recalling his own pitiful attempts to dodge and flee from these sea beasts, he couldn't help but feel rather disillusioned.

What exactly did Chu Liang go through these past years?

In truth, the gap in cultivation level between him and Chu Liang wasn't as large as it seemed. However, in this special sea domain, cultivators that largely relied on their divine skills for offense would become drastically weaker. That was precisely why Daoist Xuan Lu had sent Du Wuhen there for tempering.

Meanwhile, Chu Liang had the advantage of superior physical strength and the Demon-Slaying Sword. With such great advantages stacked together, Chu Liang's barrage of attacks undoubtedly made him look incredibly powerful.

In just a short time, Chu Liang had wiped out every demonic creature in the area.

Even Jiang Yuebai couldn't bear to watch anymore and spoke up. "There are no more demonic beasts nearby. Take a break."

"Hehe, that's not a problem," Chu Liang said.

He pulled out a giant shrimp head and popped it onto his head, wearing it like a helmet. The range of his divine sense expanded instantly.

Chu Liang let out a fearsome laugh. "Little critters, where do you think you're going?"

...

In Sword-Hanging City, the apex duel for the Great Dao of the Cloud of Determination between the Sword Emperor of the West Sea and Daoist Yan finally began.

Although they both specialized in the Great Dao of the Cloud of Determination, the qi they cultivated was distinctly different. The Sword Emperor's sword qi was vast and majestic like the ocean—sometimes roaring with tempestuous waves, other times deeply calm. Daoist Yan's sword qi, on the other hand, resembled the wind and clouds—sometimes drifting leisurely, other times howling ferociously.

It was their first round of attacks, and they were already stirring up a massive violent storm.

Boom!

The Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword collided against the Shadow Bearer. Both Daoist Yan and the Sword Emperor chose to start off the battle with long-range attacks, striking with waves of sword qi.

The sheer scale of their sword qi was terrifying. Both of them had the power to cover the entirety of Sword-Hanging City with their sword qi. If left unchecked, either of them could annihilate the entire city with a single strike.

After just one clash, the excess sword qi that flowed down left all the spectators gasping for air. Thankfully, the Sword-Hanging Kingdom had made preparations for this. Over a hundred swordsmen worked together to forge a defensive barrier, dispersing the overflow of sword qi from the first round of attacks.

Nevertheless, this was only the first round. If they continued to fight like this, the outcome of the duel might remain uncertain, but Sword-Hanging City would surely be destroyed.

Thus, the Sword Emperor was the first to leap high into the sky.

Daoist Yan followed suit.

She certainly wasn't a despicable person, so she would never use the citizens of the Sword-Hanging Kingdom to restrain the Sword Emperor. Moreover, achieving victory that way would not lead to a complete Great Dao.

Rumbling reverberated through the clouds in the sky, and countless streams of Dao essence flowed down.

The Sword Emperor had arranged for so many citizens to witness this battle precisely for this reason. With the abundant Dao essence flowing down, many citizens of the Sword-Hanging Kingdom would benefit from watching the duel.

After ascending into the sky, Daoist Yan took the initiative to start the next round of attacks. She unleashed the Heaven-Raising Sword with a loud boom!

The sheer scale of this attack was terrifying, but the Sword Emperor remained calm like clouds drifting in the breeze.

With a flick of his sleeve, the ancient sword Shadow Bearer turned into 3.47 million narrow beams of swordlight and scattered across the sky. They shot toward Daoist Yan from all directions as if she were their convergence point!

This was the West Sea's Decisive Slash!

Each beam of swordlight carried fierce sword qi, converging into a vast and mighty ocean that was nearly infinite! This was a true ocean of sword qi!

The island where the Sword-Hanging Kingdom was located was dwarfed by the sheer scale of the attack. The Sword Emperor's sword qi extended over to the expanse of the West Sea, covering an enormous area. Those below could see nothing but the vast ocean of sword qi overhead.

With no constraints high up in the sky, Daoist Yan and the Sword Emperor unleashed their most powerful attacks!

Swoosh!

Daoist Yan's Heaven-Raising Sword tore through the ocean of sword qi, heading straight for the Sword Emperor of the West Sea. Meanwhile, the ocean of sword qi closed in on Daoist Yan from all directions, leaving her no room to avoid it.

A burst of white light erupted in the sky. The swordlight was so bright that it would be hard for anyone to keep their eyes open. Nonetheless, it wasn't just because it was blinding. The light seemed to pierce their eyes, so much so that it would feel like just one more glance would make them explode.

Ruuumbllee!

When the ocean of sword qi surged to a peak, the continuous explosions merged into a chaotic cacophony of rumbling.

Moments later, the sky returned to a state of total calm. What remained after the ocean of sword qi passed by was a totally clear sky that was such a deep blue it looked as if it had been dyed that way.

Someone on the ground suddenly cried out in surprise, "That is... such a massive sword."

More and more people realized that Daoist Yan had vanished, leaving only the enormous Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword floating there.

"It's the Flying Sword Transformation! She's fused herself with her sword!"

An astute observer identified the divine art that Daoist Yan was using, likening it to the Form of the Heavens and the Earth and the immortal art Celestial Beast Transformation. However, the Flying Sword Transformation involved the cultivator fusing with the sword. This was far more dangerous and challenging to execute than the similar arts. Any severe damage to the sword could result in the cultivator's demise before the sword even broke.

Nevertheless, it was using this method that Daoist Yan managed to cleave through the ocean of sword qi and survive the encirclement of 3.47 million narrow beams of swordlight.

Meanwhile, the Sword Emperor appeared far more composed. He gently opened his mouth and exhaled a wisp of pure qi.

Just moments ago, right before the Heaven-Raising Sword struck him, he had opened his mouth and swallowed Daoist Yan's sword qi at one go.

That was the power of a Dao Master. It was extremely difficult to harm using the Great Dao he had control over.

Both Daoist Yan and the Sword Emperor appeared to have emerged unscathed from the second round of attacks. However, Daoist Yan had been forced to use an extreme measure, while the Sword Emperor remained calm and unruffled. It was clear he held the upper hand.

The spectators felt that it was only natural seeing as he was the Dao Master of the Cloud of Determination.

Yet, in a pavilion in the distance, a youth with jade-like skin and a silver scale on his head slowly smiled.

"It's time."

Chapter 693: Flying a Kite

Chu Liang, please stop killing, I'm scared. Du Wuhen pleaded inwardly as he followed Chu Liang.

The corpses of sea beasts were scattered everywhere around them.

He felt as though he was in a dream, and he almost forgot how he had managed to survive before this.

Du Wuhen couldn't help but wonder, Is this really supposed to be a place of trials? Did these things almost kill me?

After slaughtering for some time, Chu Liang realized that even with the Crimson Devil Helmet on, he couldn't find any more sea beasts.

These creatures had their own ways of gathering information. Upon realizing that a god of slaughter had entered their territory, they fled the moment Chu Liang came close.

"Haaaaaaa..." Chu Liang returned to the two of them with a disappointed expression and said, "It looks like that's the end of it. I can't catch any more of these demonic beasts in the sea."

"I can help," Jiang Yuebai said.

As she spoke, she gently pricked her finger, letting several drops of blood infused with the aura of a Transcendent Spirit fall into the sea. Her blood, now even more potent due to her high cultivation level, had grown even more tempting.

Du Wuhen was dumbfounded. You can do that? You're really spoiling him.

Soon, the waters trembled with ripples of agitation, and the sea beasts began to draw near. Their fear had been overtaken by greed.

"Hehe," Chu Liang chuckled happily, swinging his Demon-Slaying Sword as he charged forward.

Swoosh!

No matter what demonic beast it was, all met the same fate—killed in one strike.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

As he continued his slaughter, the sea beasts suddenly cleared a path, as though a far more terrifying presence had arrived.



With his sharp senses, Chu Liang immediately stopped.

In the next moment, a ball of golden light fell from the sky, accompanied by an ear-piercing roar.  
“RAAAAAAAR!”

Boom!

Chu Liang instantly activated Dimension Compression, narrowly dodging the golden light that crashed down from above.

He turned to see a massive golden-furred ape. Its fiery coat of hair shimmered like golden flames, and its eyes burned with ferocity. Clad in ancient armor, it exuded an imposing aura.

That was definitely Wuzhiqi.

Chu Liang recognized the beast at once. This was the mighty creature that all the sea beasts feared.

Wuzhiqi was drawn to battle, often seeking to provoke stronger opponents. It only allowed those it deemed worthy to leave.

"That said, I'm a little puzzled," Chu Liang mused. "Why is the boss of the Sea of Demons a primate?"

"Maybe because it's an aquatic primate?" Du Wuhen replied, feeling a bit speechless. "But is that really the point? The important point is you've drawn it out. If you can defeat it, you'll be able to leave. If not—"

"Then I'll rip you apart..." Wuzhiqi snarled, speaking in human language with a menacing grin.

"Then let's give it a try," Chu Liang said, gripping the Demon-Slaying Sword tightly. He spread his wings and collided head-on with the golden light.

Boom!

With a single blow, Chu Liang was thrown over two hundred zhang, crashing into a massive seabed boulder and embedding himself within it.

Wuzhiqi stood still, golden blood dripping from its arm.

This aquatic primate... must have the physique of a seventh-realm demonic beast, Chu Liang thought as he flew out of the boulder.

His limbs still felt numb. The force of the collision just now had far exceeded the power typically displayed by a sixth-realm demonic beast.

If a demonic beast in the Sea of Demons reached the seventh realm, they would have left this place, which meant that Wuzhiqi was likely at the peak of the sixth realm. However, due to the years of training in this seawater, its physical strength had grown incredibly powerful. Without the Demon-Slaying Sword, it would have been nearly impossible to even break its defenses.

Seeing this, Jiang Yuebai asked, "Do you need help?"

"Not for now."

Even as Chu Liang faced such a powerful opponent, he showed no fear. With a flash of brilliance, he transformed into his Three-Headed and Six-Armed Form.

In one hand, he wielded the Demon-Slaying Sword; in another, the Dustless Sword; and in a third, the Crimson Executioner. A fourth hand gripped the Demon-Binding Rope, and a fifth held the Bewildering Beads.

The last hand remained empty, gesturing provocatively as Chu Liang shouted, "Come at me!"

As expected, Wuzhiqi charged forward again, a golden light streaking toward him with a deafening roar.

Once again, Chu Liang was sent flying several hundred zhang away, which was hardly surprising. However, another Chu Liang emerged from the hole on the boulder. It turned out that the one struck away had been merely a clone, created using External Manifestation.

The real Chu Liang, still in his Three-Headed and Six-Armed Form, emerged from the hole on the boulder. Seizing the moment right after Wu Zhiqi's strike, he used every enchanted tool in his storage, hurling them all at Wuzhiqi.

The Demon-Binding Rope trapped Wuzhiqi, the Bewildering Beads blinded it, and the three swords danced in a whirlwind of strikes. Within moments, Wuzhiqi was wounded once again. This time, the wound nearly reached Wuzhiqi's bones.

Unfortunately, only the Demon-Slaying Sword could break through its defenses, but one strike was not enough to kill it. As Wuzhiqi regained its senses, it lashed out with a ferocious kick.

Boom!

In a straightforward and brutal strike, Chu Liang was once again sent flying.

This time, the wound cut dangerously deep into Wuzhiqi's flesh, enraging the beast. It roared furiously and charged after Chu Liang, intent on delivering a fatal blow.

As the golden light streaked toward him, and just as Jiang Yuebai was preparing to intervene, a crack of thunder suddenly resounded.

Rumble!

A divine thunderbolt descended from the sky. Though Wuzhiqi was not injured, it was momentarily immobilized once again.

Seizing the opportunity, Chu Liang sprang up and delivered another strike with the Demon-Slaying Sword.

This time, he had learned his lesson. He struck swiftly and retreated immediately, leaving no chance for a counterattack.

"Aaaarghhh!" Wuzhiqi roared in frustration.

Its fury mounted with each successive blow as the wounds grew deeper, driving it to give chase with relentless rage.

However, just as it drew near, Chu Liang once again used the Bewildering Beads, blinding Wuzhiqi momentarily. Then, he followed up with another strike of the Demon-Slaying Sword before he immediately turned and fled.

Swoosh!

Wuzhiqi's golden blood had already dyed a vast expanse of the water, yet it couldn't even lay a finger on Chu Liang's hair.

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh!" It pounded its chest in frustration, then finally gritted its teeth and bellowed, "I give up! I give up!"

Chu Liang's kite-flying strategy[1] rendered Wuzhiqi completely helpless. He had too many methods to control Wuzhiqi's movements, and the Demon-Slaying Sword could easily break through its defenses. These factors severely undermined Wuzhiqi's greatest strengths—its incredible speed and formidable durability.

Although Wuzhiqi was strong, each time it struck Chu Liang, a portion of the impact was absorbed by the Jiuli Soul Armor, with a significant amount of the force rebounding back onto Wuzhiqi itself.

With every advantage countered, winning was practically impossible.

Hearing Wuzhiqi's surrender, Chu Liang exhaled in relief. The kite-flying strategy was like dancing on a blade's edge—any mistake could lead to a devastating blow. If the opponent admitted defeat, it was the best possible outcome.

He said, "Let's consider it a draw this time. If there's another chance, I'll challenge you again. For now, let us leave."

"Fine!" Wuzhiqi agreed with a nod, raising its arm as golden light flashed.

Swoosh!

The surging waves above suddenly parted, revealing a rift that opened a path forward.

Chu Liang asked, "Is this your hidden realm?"

"Of course not," Wuzhiqi replied. "I am merely the gatekeeper here."

"Then..." Chu Liang, intrigued by the answer, asked, "Who is the owner of this hidden realm?"

Wuzhiqi shook its head without answering.

Seeing that Wuzhiqi refused to respond, Chu Liang didn't press further. He called Jiang Yuebai and Du Wuhen, and the three of them prepared to leave together.

Du Wuhen hesitated for a moment. Daoist Xuan Lu had sent him here to train, intending for him to join Penglai once his cultivation improved.

He couldn't help but think, If I left like this, would it...

But then, another thought crossed his mind.

To hell with Daoist Xuan Lu. He never even treated me like a person. I'm leaving no matter what! And I'm leaving first!

With this thought, he ascended into the air angrily and headed toward the rift to leave.

At that moment, a sudden change occurred.

A figure suddenly materialized in the space above. He was a sickly-looking middle-aged man with an otherwise unremarkable appearance, yet he exuded an unmistakably threatening aura. He had

concealed himself so well that Du Wuhen only noticed him when he was practically within arm's reach.

Swoosh.

Du Wuhen had no time to react and could only make a slight dodge as the man casually swung his hand.

With his hand shaped like a saber, the man's strike nearly severed Du Wuhen's head from his neck. Although he managed to dodge, half of his shoulder was cleaved away from the rest of his body.

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!" Du Wuhen screamed in agony as he plummeted to the ground.

The middle-aged man turned his lifeless gaze toward Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai, a searing hatred igniting in his eyes.

"My wife is suffering in the Celestial Northern Prison, and yet here you are being a sweet couple," he muttered. "You should both die together as a couple..."

Chapter 694: Hide

Yang Bujue left this world peacefully.

...

At first, Chu Liang didn't recognize the man, having never seen Yang Bujue in person. However, the moment the man spoke, Chu Liang immediately realized his identity and thought, The couple from the Celestial Charm Sect!

Back then, Xiao Wuyan attempted to frame Chu Liang for the poisoning case in the capital of Yu, but Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai worked together to expose the Celestial Charm Sect's plot. Following that incident, Xiao Wuyan was captured by the Imperial Supervisory Commissioner and imprisoned in the Celestial Northern Prison.

The only difference between the Celestial Northern Prison, the place guarded by two powerful cultivators at the Heavenly Origin Realm, and death was that death offered freedom from suffering.

When Yang Bujue saw Chu Liang, a surge of hatred erupted from deep within him.

The knifehand strike directed at Du Wuhen was swift and ruthless, driven by the fury of his seething resentment.

As for why it was Du Wuhen... he simply happened to be the one walking in front! Yang Bujue couldn't risk letting him escape and alert the others!

Fortunately, Du Wuhen withstood the first strike, buying Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai a fleeting moment to react.

Immediately, Chu Liang shouted, "Split up and run!"

Although this happened suddenly, his mind remained clear.

These members of the Celestial Charm Sect were clearly after him, which meant that they were more likely to pursue him first. By splitting up, if they chose to chase him, it would give Jiang Yuebai the opportunity to escape first.

Even if he got caught, he could still escape using the hidden realm of the Blue Dragon.

In a split second, he made this decision. Only after ensuring Jiang Yuebai had turned to leave did he hesitate momentarily before making his escape. At that moment, he unleashed the fastest divine skill he had, invoking the Blue Dragon's ability to become wind.

However, the Wind Transformation was hindered by the resistance underwater, whereas Yang Bujue instantly used an underwater escape technique. Transforming into a streak of white light, he closed the distance and reached Chu Liang's back within a single breath.

Chu Liang immediately sensed the deadly threat behind him. He didn't dare to leave his back exposed so he spread his wings and spun around with lightning speed. As the Dragon God Mark flared brightly, a divine thunderbolt ripped through the sky, crashing down with overwhelming force.

Boom!

But Yang Bujue's figure appeared translucent, and the divine thunder passed right through him without causing a shred of harm.

Meanwhile, Yang Bujue's hand shot toward Chu Liang. Chu Liang swiftly raised his left wing to block, but Yang Bujue's translucent knifehand strike phased through the scaled wing, making a sharp swishing sound as it passed through.

Just as it passed between the wing, his hand solidified, instantly piercing through the wing in a heartbeat.

Dragon blood splattered. Chu Liang promptly dispelled his transcendent form. Since the power of the form significantly diminished after his wing was injured, he decided to fight without the wings entirely.

In this critical moment, he chose not to enter the Blue Dragon's Hidden Realm because Jiang Yuebai hadn't escaped far enough. He was worried that if Yang Bujue couldn't catch him, he might turn back and still manage to catch Jiang Yuebai.

The second reason was that Yang Bujue didn't appear as powerful as Ji Lingjue, who was an extremely powerful seventh-realm cultivator. It gave Chu Liang confidence that he might be able to hold him off, even if just for a moment.

Chu Liang soon realized that he was very wrong. The weakest attacker at the seventh realm was still a seventh-realm cultivator. Similarly, the strongest defender at the sixth realm was still just a sixth-realm cultivator.

The moment Chu Liang deactivated the Mystical Winged Divine Dragon Transcendent Form, he swiftly activated his Three-Headed and Six-Armed Form once more, unleashing a barrage of divine skills at Yang Bujue.

However, Yang Bujue once again turned translucent, lunged forward, and grabbed hold of Chu Liang. He merged into Chu Liang's before solidifying in an instant.

Swish!

In an instant, Chu Liang was brutally torn apart, his limbs severed and scattered in all directions. Blood sprayed through the depths of the sea, painting the water red.



But Yang Bujue didn't stop there. He immediately scanned his surroundings.

Sure enough, the shattered remains of Chu Liang's body flickered briefly before revealing themselves as fragmented puppet limbs.

It turned out that in that critical moment, Chu Liang had used a puppet clone as well as Sacrificial Substitute. The speed he had activated these skills was as fast as someone with a Transcendent Spirit constitution. With this maneuver, he narrowly evaded Yang Bujue's fatal strike.

Afterward, he concealed himself behind a coral thicket and cautiously crept away using Spirit Cat's Tiny Steps, desperately hoping to evade Yang Bujue's pursuit.

Yang Bujue extended his divine sense to every corner, meticulously scouring the area, but he couldn't detect even the faintest trace of Chu Liang's presence.

His expression darkened, and he muttered coldly, "Hiding? Let's see if I can force you to hide in the heavens!"

With that, his figure blurred, merging seamlessly into the void. Oscillating between reality and illusion, he extended his search across the Sea of Demons. He scanned every trace of life energy, yet he still couldn't locate Chu Liang.

This was a classic case of overreliance on established patterns of thinking, believing that divine sense and divine skills were superior to the naked eye. In truth, if Yang Bujue had simply taken a few steps forward, he would have spotted Chu Liang sneaking away behind the coral thicket, moving as cautiously as an old granny crossing the street.

Although Yang Bujue hadn't located Chu Liang, he did notice something.

He noticed a meteor streaking down, crashing onto the surface of the sea.

...

Boom!

The duel between the Sword Emperor and Daoist Yan had reached this most intense moment. Daoist Yan had fused with her sword and launched a near-suicidal attack against the Sword Emperor.

The Sword Emperor, on the other hand, remained relatively calm.

The Shadow Bearer, which had been enhanced, was still weaker than the Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword, but the gap was not significant. With the advantage of being a realm higher than Daoist Yan, he still held the upper hand.

The massive Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword transformed into endless beams of white light that rained down. Even so, these beams of white light could not do anything to the sea of sword qi that the Sword Emperor controlled.

When the citizens of the Sword-Hanging Kingdom below saw how Daoist Yan had been constantly attacking the Sword Emperor, they were worried. However, all of them had some understanding of the Dao of the Sword, so they quickly figured out what was really happening.

Daoist Yan had to attack aggressively because her momentum was short-lived. If she failed to achieve a decisive victory within a short time, she would be forced out of her current state. At that point, with her sword energy depleted, defeat was inevitable.

The Sword Emperor, on the other hand, held a significant advantage. All he had to do was maintain his defense, and victory would be his.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

After three consecutive failed strikes, the Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword suddenly flared with light before being knocked back by a single strike from the Sword Emperor. It vibrated violently, emitting a continuous buzzing sound.

"Did Daoist Yan run out of strength?" the citizens of the Sword-Hanging Kingdom wondered, their faces lighting up with joy as they eagerly watched the fight unfold.

However, in an inconspicuous corner, the Whale-Riding Immortal, who appeared battered, shook his head and muttered, "Yan Zi, stop holding back."

He seemed almost prophetic, and as his words left his mouth, the situation in the sky suddenly changed dramatically.

Aside from the white glow in the sword qi of the Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword, there was this red glow that resembled.

Within the sword qi of the Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword, a vivid crimson glow resembling surging flames suddenly emerged alongside its white radiance, instantly amplifying its momentum!

Daoist Yan did not become weaker. Instead, she became several times stronger.

Most people were filled with confusion. What is happening?

Nevertheless, soon after that, someone shouted loudly, "Demonic qi! She's using demonic qi! She's a demon!"

The crowd erupted in an uproar.

More and more people started sensing that intense demonic qi.

A thought crossed many people's minds. Is Daoist Yan of the Mount Shu Sect a greater demon of this era?

This revelation was shocking, but they soon realized the more precise term to describe her would be "half-demon."

Few knew that throughout the years, Daoist Yan had been suppressing the demonic qi within her.

The world knew that on the rare occasions she took action, her fighting achievements were nothing short of extraordinary. What they didn't know was that each time she accomplished such feats, she had done so without drawing upon the inner demonic qi within her. In fact, she had to use a significant portion of her spiritual energy to keep that demonic qi suppressed.

Only by doing so could she prevent even the slightest leak of demonic qi.

For the past several decades, it could be said that Daoist Yan had been fighting with only sixty to seventy percent of her full strength. Yet, even with this limitation, she had claimed the top spot in the Mount Shu Summit, secured the championship at the Assembly of Immortal Sects, and established herself as a formidable contender for the title of the strongest peak master in the Mount Shu Sect.

If she had managed to surpass figures like Di Nufeng and the Whale-Riding Immortal to claim the top spot, how could she possibly be an ordinary person?

At this moment, in the competition for control of the Great Dao, she finally stopped suppressing her demonic qi. Drawing upon her full foundational qi, her sword qi surged to several times its previous strength, and her demonic qi flowed instinctively.

Swish!!

The Sword Emperor's ocean of sword qi was split apart by a single strike. The Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword, carrying the force to rend heaven and earth, crashed forward. The Great Dao of the Cloud of Determination was now teetering on the edge of collapse, with fragments of Heavenly Law bursting like bubbles in the sky.

Daoist Yan was incredibly powerful!

Daoist Yan unleashing such immense power was completely beyond the Sword Emperor's expectations. After all, no one had known that the peak master of the Mount Shu Sect was a half-demon.

So, this was her hidden trump card! No wonder she had the confidence to fight for the control of the Great Dao.

But in all honesty, Daoist Yan had never regarded it as a trump card. If possible, she would never want to use demonic qi in a fight. The Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword had been trembling earlier because she was unable to suppress the demonic qi within her any longer.

As the Sword Emperor moved to counter the strike, he gathered all his focus. With the razor-sharp intuition of a seasoned sword cultivator, he understood that the decisive moment of the battle had arrived.

Whoosh!

He raised the ancient sword Shadow Bearer channeling the entirety of his Great Dao into its blade. With a thunderous roar, he unleashed its full power in a single, earth-shattering strike!

The potential Dao Master or the current Dao Master of the Cloud of Determination Great Dao—who would be the Dao Master of this Great Dao?

But at that very moment, Shadow Bearer trembled violently. Suddenly, it spun around and pointed at the Sword Emperor's chest.

"Hmm?"

Chapter 695: Rebellious

Chu Liang carried Di Nufeng's Tracking Talisman. The barrier of the hidden realm obscured the talisman's exact direction, but the moment the barrier to the Sea of Demons opened, Di Nufeng sensed it and sped in this direction.

Thus, shortly after Yang Bujue arrived, Di Nufeng followed.

Although both were at the seventh realm, Yang Bujue had arrived quietly, whereas Di Nufeng's arrival was anything but silent. A blazing meteor shot down from the sky, instantly evaporating the surface seawater, boiling the mid-layer into waves, and sending the deep-sea fish and beasts fleeing in panic. It was as if a natural disaster had descended.

Yang Bujue, with a wicked grin, was still searching for Chu Liang when he first noticed Di Nufeng's arrival. He immediately realized the situation had taken a turn for the worse.

Many of the most powerful members of the Celestial Charm Sect had fallen at the hands of Di Nufeng, and everyone knew all too well just how vicious she could be.

As for how to deal with Di Nufeng, the Celestial Master had once given the best advice. "Run as fast as you can!"

Therefore, the moment that blazing meteor entered the sea, Yang Bujue had already fled far away, desperately hoping to leave before Di Nufeng noticed his presence.

Unfortunately, he had no idea that Chu Liang had not gone far at all.

Amid the deafening roar, Chu Liang sprang out from behind a coral thicket, a smug grin plastered across his face as he called out, "Esteemed teacher, I'm fine! He's over there!"

To Di Nufeng, it didn't matter who "he" was. All she had to know was that "he" was an enemy.

Like an arrow guided to its mark, the blazing meteor veered sharply and hurtled in the direction that Yang Bujue was fleeing. Though Yang Bujue was a master of stealth techniques, his speed was no match for Di Nufeng while she was in her Divine Phoenix Transcendent Form.

In a split-second decision, he turned translucent, melding into the seawater and seemingly vanishing into thin air.

Bam!

As Di Nufeng landed, the remaining sea beasts had long disappeared, leaving the entire area devoid of life, stretching out endlessly in all directions.

"He ran away so fast..." she muttered unhappily.

"Esteemed teacher, he probably hasn't gone far," Chu Liang said as he hurried over with a fawning expression. "This man is skilled in stealth techniques. He's most likely hiding nearby and not daring to move too quickly."

He understood this all too well as he had been in the same situation just moments ago.

If one moved at a high speed, it would be very difficult to control and conceal one's energy.

For instance, plants withered and died wherever Di Nufeng passed because of the overflow of qi from her divine fire. This qi was much more powerful than even the divine techniques of other seventh-realm cultivators. If she wanted to control this qi, she would have to move slower.

"Hiding?" Di Nufeng muttered as she raised an eyebrow. "Let's see if I can force you to hide in the heavens!"

When Chu Liang heard this, he felt a sense of déjà vu. This very moment felt very similar to something from an earlier moment.

With that, Di Nufeng opened her mouth, preparing to release a sea of divine fire that would evaporate the entire sea.

This was her usual approach: If I can't find you in the sea, I'll just destroy the whole thing! Why overthink it?

"Esteemed teacher, please don't!" Chu Liang quickly stepped in to stop her.

It wasn't that he feared for himself, but rather he worried that all the sea beasts in the Sea of Demons would suffer. He had just found this delightful little paradise, and it would be a shame if his esteemed teacher destroyed it.

However, divine sense wasn't Di Nufeng's forte, so it was a little difficult for her to locate Yang Bujue.

And so, Chu Liang quickly took out the Crimson Devil Helmet. He popped it on his head and became this shrimp-headed man[1]. His enhanced divine sense swept over a vast area, significantly improving its penetrative power.

As his divine sense rolled out like a carpet, he immediately detected something unusual.

"There!" Chu Liang said, pointing in a direction.

By now, Yang Bujue had moved several hundred meters away.

"Hm?" Di Nufeng's brows shot up, and in a flash, she propelled herself forward.

"You and I have nothing against each other. There are no grudges between us. Why must you insist on taking my life?" Yang Bujue wailed as he revealed himself in the seawater.

"Esteemed teacher, don't listen to him!" Chu Liang exclaimed. "He just said he has a grudge against me for taking his wife away from him."

"Something like that happened?" Di Nufeng's eyes suddenly lit up as she turned to look at Chu Liang, a proud expression that seemed to convey "That's what you like to do too? As expected of my disciple!"

"Not me! It was the Imperial Supervisory Commissioner who captured his wife," Chu Liang quickly clarified.

Hearing this, Di Nufeng was even more intrigued.

"That old man with thick brows and big eyes is into this sort of thing too?" she asked.

"Esteemed teacher, let's focus on the task at hand," Chu Liang said helplessly.

While they were bantering, Yang Bujue had quietly slipped away.

"Do you think you can escape after offending someone from Silver Sword Peak?" Di Nufeng cackled evilly, leaping forward with a thunderous motion.

As her fist struck the ground, Yang Bujue only had time to shout, "You can't kill me! I'm a descendant of Hallowed Yang!"

"And I am your mama!"

Boom!

On that day, the volcanoes beneath the Sea of Demons erupted, causing countless sea beasts to perish or be severely injured.



...

"Ahh..."

In the Sword-Hanging Kingdom, an eerie quiet settled over the streets as the citizens looked upward with their mouths agape in disbelief and their hands covering their faces.

The fight for the Great Dao seemed to have ended in a way that was hard to accept.

Just moments ago, Daoist Yan unleashed an explosive surge of demonic qi, transforming into a sword. Crimson and white clouds of qi swirled in the sky, rushing toward the Sword Emperor.

Meanwhile, the Sword Emperor summoned his sea of sword qi, channeling all his cultivation power as he prepared for a full-force clash.

But at that moment, the ancient sword Shadow Bearer in his hand suddenly started trembling. Then, a spectral figure with the head of a dragon, dressed in white, materialized above the blade, flashing a sinister grin.

The Sword Emperor's expression shifted drastically.

Something's wrong!

The ancient sword Shadow Bearer had only gained its current power after gaining a sword spirit.

Previously, he thought that Baili Tong had sacrificed himself to become the sword spirit since the energy that he felt in the sword was of Baili Tong.

But now, the spirit within the sword had suddenly become someone else's.

This was clearly the soul of a Jimeng Clansman. It was definitely not Baili Tong's!

For a legendary sword, it was crucial to have the right swordmaster and sword spirit. Usually, if a sword turned against its master, the master could just seal it away and the sword spirit would never

be able to harm its master. But in a situation like this, with lightning and fire raging all around, any conflict or lack of coordination between the swordmaster and the sword spirit could be fatal for the swordmaster!

Rumble, rumble, rumble!

Daoist Yan's overwhelming sword qi crashed down like a world-ending catastrophe. When Daoist Yan sensed something weird going on with the Sword Emperor, she wanted to retract her attack. However, such a heavy force could not simply be withdrawn on a whim. Moreover, demonic qi raged within her. It made her stronger, but it influenced her thoughts.

Her mind was overwhelmed with voices screaming, Kill him, and the Great Dao will be yours!

She managed to hold back briefly, but she still unleashed at least ninety percent of her power upon the Sword Emperor.

With the rebellious flying sword turning against him, the Sword Emperor hastily flipped his palm to form a shield. Yet, how could he withstand this strike that had shattered countless fragments of Dao essence?

Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom!

The citizens of the Sword-Hanging Kingdom below had no idea what had happened as it all happened too quickly. They only saw the Sword Emperor suddenly falter in midair as Daoist Yan's overwhelming sword qi surged toward and struck him.

Thunder rolled across the heavens as the boundless sword qi engulfed his body.

Even an actual deity would have been reduced to dust.

When the clouds dispersed, the Sword Emperor was nowhere to be seen. Only Daoist Yan remained, standing suspended in the air with a somewhat dazed expression.

The shattered Dao essence in the sky gathered into her body like vapor. Feeling this transformation, Daoist Yan's brows furrowed even more deeply.

She seemed to have won, but it didn't bring her any joy.

In the pavilion, Ji Lingjue, whose skin was as fair as jade, smiled faintly and was about to leave when he saw a weathered man wearing a conical hat at the doorway.

The man smiled as he looked at Ji Lingjue and said, "Leaving after causing such trouble? Won't the wrath of the Sword-Hanging Kingdom's people now be directed at the Mount Shu Sect?"

He paused for a moment and continued, "Or is this how you planned it all along?"

As the man slowly lifted his head and revealed his face, Ji Lingjue's gaze sharpened and his expression became increasingly grave. "It really is you... Jiang Tiankuo!"

#### Chapter 696: A Conversation

"Is this what it means to attain the Heavenly Origin?"

Daoist Yan hovered in mid-air as she felt this wave of Dao essence surging into her body, gradually giving her the complete Rules of the Heavens and the Earth. Previously, her understanding of the Great Dao of the Cloud of Determination might have been around ninety-nine percent. All she needed was that missing piece to elevate everything else and reach a more profound level.

She was now in control of a portion of the countless Great Daos of the universe. Her spiritual energy had not increased significantly. After all, the greatest gap between the seventh and eighth realms wasn't in cultivation energy or level.

It had more to do with one's understanding of the fundamentals of life itself.

With a slow curl of her fingers, she could sense the Great Dao of the Cloud of Determination moving at her will. Yet, she didn't linger on the sensation for long and instead raised her hand.

She summoned Shadow Bearer into her palm, and with a flash of light, she forced the sword spirit to project itself on the sword.

It was a dragon-headed soul, clearly a Jimeng Clansman.

"Your soul contains fragments of Baili Tong's soul, which is why the sword exuded Baili Tong's qi," Daoist Yan said after she had observed thoughtfully. "Who fused you into this sword?"

"Master!" the Jimeng Clansman suddenly shouted. "Wasn't it you who made me the sword spirit of Shadow Bearer?"

All of this unfolded under the watchful eyes of the Sword-Hanging Kingdom's citizens. Those who had been unclear about what had happened suddenly came to a realization. Could it be that Daoist Yan had executed some schemes, which then caused the Sword Emperor to lose control at the most critical moment?

In an instant, countless fiery gazes shot upward, like thousands of piercing arrows.

But Daoist Yan remained calm and unaffected. Even when she was at the seventh realm, she didn't care about others' opinions, and now that she had reached a higher level, it didn't matter even more.

She spoke coldly to the Jimeng Clansman, "If you won't tell the truth, I'll make sure you can never be reborn."

"Master!" Ji Meng still looked aggrieved and shouted, "Haven't we won? Why are you—"

Before he could finish, a deafening explosion rang out from the pavilion below.

Boom!

A beam of golden light burst through the wall, attempting to flee into the distance. But another golden light followed closely behind, overtaking the first and blocking its path.

Both of them were using the Golden Path.

Ji Lingjue had once used this technique to escape from the Great Hall of the Whale Gang's headquarters, leaving all the righteous heroes helpless as they watched him slip away.

However, this move didn't work against the Whale-Riding Immortal, who not only knew the same divine technique but executed it with greater skill than Ji Lingjue himself.

Bang!

The two beams of golden light collided, sending Ji Lingjue flying back and crashing heavily onto the ground.

Sensing danger, the citizens of the Sword-Hanging Kingdom scattered in all directions like startled animals.

The Whale-Riding Immortal appeared, staring at Ji Lingjue from above with a smile. "If you explain in detail how you approached Baili Tong and plotted against the Sword Emperor, I might consider sparing your life for now."

Dust scattered from the pit where Ji Lingjue had crashed into the ground. He struggled as he pushed himself up, his eyes locking onto the Whale-Riding Immortal. For the first time, he truly sensed that his life was in danger.

This man is far too powerful.

The Whale-Riding Immortal was the Dao Master of the Great Dao known as Water Mirror, a manifestation of yang water within the Great Dao of Water. Unlike the Great Dao of the Bottomless Sea, which was about devouring and vastness, the Great Dao of Water Mirror was about nurturing and growth.

He possessed the ability to replicate any divine ability or spell he had witnessed. With the exceptional spiritual affinity of his Transcendent Spirit, he could almost perfectly recreate any technique. Furthermore, his cultivation was at the eighth realm, so he could use those techniques even more effectively than their original users.

In the face of such an opponent, the only way anyone could win was if their cultivation level far exceeded his, and they could rely on sheer power to overwhelm and defeat him. Otherwise, it was a hopeless fight. In fact, any hope of escaping was futile.

"Very well..." Ji Lingjue said, seeming like he had given up.

He let out a soft chuckle before announcing, "With the secret method of reforging a sword spirit, I managed to get close to Baili Tong. I lied to him that he could create a legendary sword of this era and be known for the rest of history if he sacrificed himself to the sword. He believed me. But when

he thought the sword was about to be forged and was prepared to sacrifice himself in the furnace, I cast someone else into the furnace to become the sword spirit. And the reason I did all this was because—"

He suddenly raised his head and looked at Yan Zi as he continued saying, "I was acting under the orders of Daoist Yan of the Mount Shu Sect!"

Daoist Yan paid him no attention. Ever since the Whale-Riding Immortal appeared, she hadn't looked anywhere else. From beginning to end, her gaze remained fixed on the weathered man, her eyes reflecting a mix of complex emotions.

Upon hearing Ji Lingjue's words, the Whale-Riding Immortal merely shook his head lightly. With a flip of his right hand, tens of thousands of divine radiances gathered, ready to obliterate Ji Lingjue in an instant.

But Ji Lingjue was no ordinary foe. He suddenly stood up with a sly smirk and asked, "Can you really replicate all divine abilities and techniques with the Great Dao of the Water Mirror? But surely, there are some that even you cannot learn, aren't there?"

As he spoke, his eyes lit up with fierce golden light, resembling two suns that had been concealed within him, now flaring outward!

The divine glow in the Whale-Riding Immortal's palm solidified into a Heaven-Raising Sword, descending with a mighty roar!

Still, the Whale-Riding Immortal was a moment too late. Two explosive sounds echoed as Ji Lingjue's eyes erupted, and he became enveloped entirely in that golden light before he vanished completely from the scene.

Boom!!

The golden light slowly dissipated. The Whale-Riding Immortal's attack had hit nothing but an empty space and he had to withdraw.

As he felt the weight of a gaze from above, his confident expression wavered, turning to one of awkwardness.

"Hehe," he chuckled suddenly, looking up to meet Daoist Yan's gaze with an embarrassed smile. "What a ruthless brat! He blew up his pair of Xuan Yuan Eyes just to escape."

Daoist Yan remained silent, simply staring at him without a word.

The Whale-Riding Immortal looked up at the sky and forced another laugh. "The sky sure is blue today, huh..."

Daoist Yan continued to watch him in silence.

"It's been a long time..." the Whale-Riding Immortal said. He lowered his head, scratching it awkwardly, seemingly at a loss for words.

At that moment, a streak of fiery light sped toward them from the distant sky.

"Yan Zi!" Di Nufeng's voice echoed from afar. "You won, Yan Zi! That's amazing!"

"Ah Feng!" The Whale-Riding Immortal's eyes lit up instantly. "My best friend, you've finally returned!"

"Yan Zi, I didn't even bother checking on my disciple or his wife because I was too worried about your safety. After saving them, I rushed straight here. Yan Zi, do you know how worried I was? Yan Zi, how could I live without you? Come here and give me a kiss to celebrate your ascension to the next realm..."

With Di Nufeng's arrival, the atmosphere no longer felt heavy. As she approached, she waved her arms and tried to hug Daoist Yan.

Feeling helpless, Daoist Yan could only push her back with one hand and try to keep her away. At this moment, she looked over at the Whale-Riding Immortal again and no longer appeared as serious as before; her expression had softened.

"This isn't the place for conversation. Let's leave here first," the Whale-Riding Immortal said at just the right moment.

The three departed together, leaving behind the grief-stricken citizens of the Sword-Hanging Kingdom. It was naturally hard for the citizens of the Sword-Hanging Kingdom to accept that the Sword Emperor had died, and they would likely need some time to process everything that had happened.

By the time Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai arrived, they were met with a strange scene.

The three top talents from a previous generation of Mount Shu Sect disciples were seated in a room inside the pavilion.

Di Nufeng was enthusiastically trying to pounce on Daoist Yan, but Daoist Yan was blocking her attempts while keeping her gaze fixed on the Whale-Riding Immortal. Meanwhile, the Whale-Riding Immortal kept talking nonstop to Di Nufeng. The three of them were like parts of a never-ending cycle; each action fed into the next, creating a continuous loop of interaction.

When the two young people entered, this strange atmosphere was finally broken.

Jiang Yuebai's eyes flushed red as she rushed to Daoist Yan. "Esteemed teacher..."

Though Daoist Yan was Jiang Yuebai's teacher, she had raised Jiang Yuebai since young. She was like a mother to Jiang Yuebai.

Both had always given off a cold and aloof demeanor, but after years of separation, they couldn't help but be overwhelmed by a wave of emotions. Finally, Daoist Yan turned her gaze away from the Whale-Riding Immortal and focused on Jiang Yuebai, tightly holding her hand.

"Congratulations, Senior Aunt Yan," Chu Liang said from the side.

Daoist Yan shot him a quick glance, her expression turning sharp. "I've heard from your esteemed teacher about you and Yuebai. If you ever fail her in the slightest, I won't spare you."

"Senior Aunt Yan, rest assured that I would never do something like that," Chu Liang quickly replied.



Daoist Yan added, "If you ever leave without a word, abandoning your sect and loved ones, you will deserve nothing less than death."

"..."

When Chu Liang heard this, he couldn't help but feel that something was off.

He thought to himself, Your scolding is clearly a message for someone else. I was wondering why she suddenly started scolding me.

He could only reply in a deferential tone, "Senior Aunt, I wouldn't dare."

At this moment, the Whale-Riding Immortal cleared his throat and commented, "Yuebai may be my daughter, but you shouldn't scare Chu Liang so much. In life, there are bound to be circumstances beyond one's control and things we have no choice but to do..."

Pretending not to hear the Whale-Riding Immortal, Daoist Yan focused on Chu Liang and said, "It's a good thing that you and Yuebai have reunited. But if, in the future, you return to Mount Shu and avoid her, I'll take it upon myself to punish you."

"..." Chu Liang froze for a moment, nodding repeatedly as he answered, "I would never dare to do such a thing."

"It's not about whether you dare," the Whale-Riding Immortal replied. "If you have struggles or difficulties that you can't say, just explain in the future. Don't let personal feelings get in the way of what's important."

"If you fall in love with someone else and don't tell Yuebai, I will make sure you can never be a man again," Daoist Yan threatened again.

This was a threat from an eighth-realm Eminent One.

Chu Liang felt a cold shiver run through him and quickly vowed, "May the heavens and the earth bear witness to my love! Such a thing will never happen!"

"Don't speak as if things are set in stone. You are young and things are unpredictable. You are still going through changes," the Whale-Riding Immortal advised. "Just be decisive and don't overthink things. Be honest and straightforward, and it will be fine."

After all, anyone with normal intelligence in the room could tell that Daoist Yan and the Whale-Riding Immortal were indirectly speaking to each other.

One was venting years of pent-up resentment, and the other was providing an explanation that had been long overdue. Although Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai were the ones involved, they did not interfere and simply allowed the two people to speak.

After this round of "advice," the room fell silent again.

After a moment, Di Nufeng suddenly laughed and said, "Hey, Yan Zi, didn't you spend years searching for Jiang Tiankuo? Why aren't you talking now that you've found him? Jiang Tiankuo, come on, say something first!"

"Huh? What's with that expression? Why are you two looking at me like that?"

#### Chapter 697: Screams

In a place with clear mountains and beautiful waters, the air was filled with spiritual energy, and the fragrance of exotic flowers and herbs lingered. Amidst the flower and grass clusters stood a thatched cottage, looking like a paradise isolated from the world.

Yet, a heart-wrenching scream pierced the tranquil air.

"Here," said a burly man dressed in black as he approached, holding a jade plate.

On the disc, traces of milky white liquid swirled, with two golden eyeballs floating inside, still dripping with fresh blood.

It was quite an unsettling sight.

"Did you not knock him unconscious before taking them?" asked a delicate-looking woman as she took the jade plate from him.

Though she looked somewhat older, her skin remained fair and her eyes appeared gentle. With every step, her movements were so smooth and graceful, it felt like she was boneless.

"Forgot."

The burly man's skin was the color of aged bronze. He had a cold expression as he stared straight at the woman, appearing a little dull.

"Oh, how foolish," she chided softly, a look of pity in her eyes. "That must have hurt terribly. It's no wonder he screamed so loudly."

"In that case, I'll kill him, and he won't feel any more pain."

"Go ahead, but give him a quick and painless death," the woman instructed.

The burly man obeyed and left.

At this moment, someone else in the room laughed heartily. "Ever since that Xie guy started following you, it seems like his brain's been getting slower and slower."

"Well, if you sacrificed yourself everyday, your divine soul would become murky," the woman replied. "I can restore his lifespan and cultivation, but I can't replace the fragments of the soul he's lost. Haaaaa... I need to find a way to treat him."

"Lady Yishuo, your skill in medicine is second to none so I am sure you can do it," the person responded.

The person lying on the white bed appeared to be a handsome, noble youth. However, there was a silver scale on his forehead, and his eyes were two terrifying, blood-filled holes.

He was none other than Ji Lingjue, who had narrowly escaped from the Whale-Riding Immortal in the Sword-Hanging Kingdom. He had sacrificed his Xuan Yuan Eyes, which had been a crucial source of his power for many years, to survive. After escaping, he immediately sought out a healer for his injuries.

"And you..." the woman referred to as Lady Yishuo said softly, "you know his mind isn't that sharp, so stop mocking him all the time. What if he hears you, and it hurts his feelings?"

"Oh, Lady Yishuo, you are both beautiful and kind," Ji Lingjue remarked with a faint smile.

Apart from the Celestial Master, the highest-ranking figure in the Celestial Charm Sect was undoubtedly Lady Yishuo. The reason was simple. In their line of work, injuries were inevitable, so they naturally treated healers with great respect. After all, no one would gamble with their own life.

"You should be more careful next time. To replace your Xuan Yuan Eyes this time, we had to capture a member of the Ji Family again. They are your kin. How can you bear it?" the woman asked as she worked on the eyeballs on the jade plate.

"I don't care," Ji Lingjue scoffed. "I'd be happy if the whole Ji Family were wiped out."

"If they're all gone, where will you find another pair of eyes next time?" Lady Yishuo replied. "The heavens show mercy to all life. You can't just kill without reason."

With a look of compassion that seemed to encompass all of life, Lady Yishuo gently placed her hand on Ji Lingjue's shoulder and said softly, "Bear with it."

A rush of strong spiritual power coursed through him, restoring his cultivation and vitality, and instantly healing his severe injuries.

This was the use of the Longevity of Heaven and Earth!

In the great battle at Mount Shu battle, the Whale-Riding Immortal had used this same divine technique to help Chu Liang, though his focus had been on replenishing foundational qi. Lady Yishuo, however, prioritized lifespan in her healing.

Despite transferring such an immense amount of life source, she showed no signs of discomfort.

Once Ji Lingjue's injuries were stabilized, Lady Yishuo drew a tiny gleaming saber and said, "This might hurt a bit..."

Slash.

With a single slash of her blade, even Ji Lingjue, the ruthless man who had killed his own parents, let out a howl of pain. "Ahhhhhh!"

...

There were screams ripping through the air elsewhere too.

In a valley eight hundred li east of Mount Shu, agonized screams echoed through the valley.

At first, several sword beams descended into the valley, a sight that the nearby villagers had become used to. Since the rise of Red Cotton Peak of Mount Shu, the sight of flying swords passing through the area had become increasingly common. The cultivators were either guests of Red Cotton Peak or couriers for the Four Extremities Hall.

The sword beams that landed revealed the robes of Red Cotton Peak, marking them as a group escorting valuable items. The one leading the group was an honored ally at the sixth realm, a clear indication of the immense value of the item.

At the beginning of Red Cotton Peak's delivery service, there were frequent hijackings. Though buyers were rigorously screened and Four Extremities Hall kept the routes confidential, no secrets remained entirely safe. With enough dedication and patience, intercepting a delivery team was possible.

However, the Red Cotton Peak, backed by a powerful force and immense resources, quickly hired more individuals of higher cultivation to handle the delivery of valuable items. In addition, any outlaws daring to provoke the Mount Shu Sect faced the most forceful retaliation.

At that time, Little Chu Yi implemented a dual strategy. One approach leveraged Mount Shu Sect's influence to relentlessly hunt down and eliminate any bandits who dared to challenge Red Cotton Peak's authority.

The other approach was carried out covertly and remained unknown to many high-ranking members of Red Cotton Peak. It involved the use of criminals. Bounties that exceeded the cost of the treasure would be offered to kill not only the bandits but also their sects and families. This was widely known among the criminals in the world of immortality cultivation.

Before long, everyone in the martial world knew of Red Cotton Peak's ruthlessness. Unlike the Mount Shu Sect, which was known for upholding righteousness and justice, Red Cotton Peak followed the Silver Sword Peak's philosophy. Much like Di Nufeng, they acted without hesitation or concern for the cost or consequences, only asking where their target was.

The stronger the cultivator, the harder it was to conceal their identity. And so, Mount Shu Sect always had a way to track them down, and soon, no one dared covet Red Cotton Peak's treasures.

Thus, the honored allies of the Four Extremities Hall were able to relax when they were resting. Three of them sat in the same spot, regulating their qi circulation, while the other two stood watch, keeping an eye on the front and rear. Even the two using their divine senses to scan the surroundings were casually chatting and laughing.

Just as they assumed all was calm, a shadowy figure darted past.

嗖——Whoosh!

"Hm?"

Even the two cultivators using their divine senses couldn't fully detect the shadow. They exchanged glances, realizing something was off.

Just as they were about to alert their companions, who were regulating their qi circulation, the shadow suddenly reappeared.

噗——Splat!

One of the cultivators had his chest pierced, revealing a ferocious cyan dragon claw. As the claw retracted, the violent and menacing face of a young man could be seen through the gaping wound.

"You—" another cultivator shouted, recoiling in shock and retreating mid-air. "We're with—"

"Hehe..." The attacker cackled wickedly. "You're from Red Cotton Peak, right? You're exactly who I'm looking for."

At this moment, the escorts, including the powerful sixth-realm cultivator meditating in the rear, noticed something amiss. They sprang to their feet, swords in hand.

Upon seeing the young man's face, the leader hesitated in shock. "You're..."

"You recognize me, don't you?" The youth's gaze was sinister and defiant. "Put down what you're transporting, and I'll let you live."

The sixth-realm cultivator hesitated for a moment, then firmly replied, "Alright."

The other cultivators seemed to disagree. "But—"

The leader spoke solemnly, "Do you know who he is? I saw him six years ago at the Assembly of Immortal Sects. He's Qi Lin'er of Penglai!"

"That monster..."

"What?"

At the mention of this name, the cultivators gasped and no longer objected to the leader's decision. The Red Cotton Peak had given clear instructions: if faced with an unstoppable foe, abandoning the cargo was the prudent choice. Someone else from the Mount Shu Sect would retrieve it later.

However, just as the leader placed the treasure box on the ground and prepared to leave, Qi Lin'er raised his brow sharply.

"What are you trying to do?!" the sixth-realm cultivator questioned, sensing something wrong with Qi Lin'er's flow of qi.

He raised his sword, unleashing countless beams of swordlight that formed a protective barrier around his group.

At that moment, Qi Lin'er's figure flickered, charging through the barrier of swordlight. The beams struck his body with metallic clangs, but his scales rendered them ineffective.

Half of his body was covered in azure scales, giving him the appearance of a half-dragon, half-human monster. Even half of his face was shielded by the tough scales, and his golden eyes burned fiercely.

"You really thought you could leave?" Qi Lin'er said with a sneer. "How naive..."

Slash, slash, slash!

As his dragon claws slashed through the air, blood splattered. With his terrifyingly indestructible physique, none of the cultivators could last a single exchange.

In mere moments, all of them were dead.

"Hah."

After slaughtering the group, Qi Lin'er didn't even glance at the treasure on the ground. Instead, he casually raised his foot and stomped down.

Smash.

The treasure box crumpled beneath his foot.

Then, he cast his gaze toward Mount Shu and a cold smirk tugged at his lips. "Let's see if you'll come this time."

Chapter 698: The Heavenly Palace of the Sword Domain

The reunion of the Mount Shu Sect's once most talented trio of disciples ended on a sour note.

Chu Liang had initially planned to organize a meal for everyone to reminisce about the good old days. He thought that since everyone had been fellow disciples, there shouldn't be any grudges that couldn't be resolved with a good talk.

However, before they could even order food, Daoist Yan was already furrowing her brows.



The Whale-Riding Immortal added, "I'll leave first. It'd be troublesome if I'm seen. Ah Feng, Yan Zi... we'll meet again someday."

With a flicker, he vanished on the spot. Daoist Yan stared at the direction where he had disappeared, her eyes reflecting a sense of emptiness.

There were those who found it hard to speak calmly when the person they longed for stood before them. Yet, once the person left, they realized the true weight of their longing.

Not long after, a cheerful voice came from outside the door. "Congratulations to the Mount Shu Sect for gaining another Master of the Heavenly Origin."

"Come in," Daoist Yan replied.

The visitor was a thin, short old man with a goatee. He exuded a peaceful aura and looked no different from the grandfathers who spent their days fishing by the village pond.

If anything stood out, it was his warm smile. It felt like a spring breeze and made him seem unusually friendly.

"It is truly an honor to have the esteemed headmaster personally visit and congratulate me," Daoist Yan said as she stood up.

Although she spoke with courtesy, her face clearly showed displeasure, which confused the old man slightly.

After a pause, he chuckled. "Having another master of the Heavenly Origin in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten is a major event for all the immortal sects. I assumed everyone would visit Mount Shu to offer their congratulations, so I decided to be strategic and get here first to make an impression."

From Daoist Yan's response, both Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai quickly deduced the visitor's identity.

This was Gongyang Qi, the headmaster of Ascending Dragon Academy.

He was a prominent master of the Heavenly Origin in the Yu Dynasty and the current leader of Confucianism. As the head of one of the three schools of thought, his position was naturally significant. Even the Imperial Supervisory Commissioner had to show him the proper respect.

“Headmaster, you’re too polite. I should be the one visiting and paying my respects to you and the other esteemed seniors,” Daoist Yan said politely. Still, she looked very annoyed.

She was targeting the old man though. Unlike Di Nufeng, Daoist Yan had always maintained basic politeness and decorum despite her aloofness. Since Gongyang Qi had come to congratulate her, she wouldn’t greet him with a cold face.

But the Whale-Riding Immortal had just left so suddenly. After years of waiting, all she got was this brief meeting, making it hard for her to put on a pleasant expression.

“I haven’t prepared a grand gift, only a small token. I hope you like it,” Gongyang Qi said as he handed her a scroll.

Daoist Yan accepted the scroll with both hands and carefully unfurled it, revealing a calligraphy piece with the words “Maintain the Righteous Sword Heart” written in an elegant, flowing style.

Though the calligraphy contained only a few words, it radiated an aura of integrity and righteousness, evoking a sense of awe and respect.

Gazing at the scroll, Daoist Yan instantly understood the old man’s intent.

The headmaster of Ascending Dragon Academy rarely gave away his calligraphy. Even when a leader of the sect in the Divine Nine or Terrestrial Ten assumed office, it was unlikely that he would offer such a gift.

Today, her success in competing for the Great Dao had also exposed her demonic lineage. Gongyang Qi’s four words were clearly a reminder for her to uphold righteousness and protect her sword heart from being tainted. More importantly, it symbolized his recognition of her.

Since Gongyang Qi had given this calligraphy, the Confucian cultivators would no longer disturb Daoist Yan. If even the Confucian cultivators, who valued righteousness above all else, had no objections, members of other sects of immortality cultivation would likely remain silent even if they had other thoughts.

The descendant of a demon competing for control of the Great Dao was bound to attract public criticism. Therefore, the calligraphy given by Gongyang Qi acted as a shield in her defense. It was, in truth, the real gift.

Daoist Yan gazed at Gongyang Qi, bowed respectfully as a junior, and said earnestly, "Thank you."

...

As Chu Liang escorted Jiang Yuebai away, they once again spotted the Whale-Riding Immortal.

The weathered man was seated at a spot overlooking the waves outside Sword-Hanging City, staring at the waves crashing against the coral rocks, lost in thought. No one knew what he was thinking.

Jiang Yuebai walked up to him and suddenly asked, "You knew from the start, didn't you?"

The Whale-Riding Immortal turned to her. "What?"

"You knew, didn't you?" Jiang Yuebai asked. "You must have realized something was wrong that day, but you stayed quiet. When they were tampering with the sword in the hut..."

She paused and then continued, "You had already informed Senior Aunt Feng to rescue us. You must have known what they were doing. You allowed it to happen so that my teacher could become the next Dao Master, didn't you?"

So that's what happened?

Chu Liang stood there, his eyes widening in surprise as he watched his future father-in-law. He hadn't expected this unexpected turn of events.

If that was the case, Daoist Yan owed the Whale-Riding Immortal a great deal for her success this time. However, even as Senior Aunt Yan had been scolding him earlier, he hadn't said a thing.

“Not exactly...” the Whale-Riding Immortal responded, his expression showing a slight awkwardness.

Just then, another voice interrupted, “Well, well. I was wondering why you were so eager to help me. It turns out you’ve been feeling guilty all along.”

Immediately, a pale blue specter emerged from the Whale-Riding Immortal’s sleeve. The soul, condensed to near-corporeal form, appeared as a kind-faced elderly farmer.

It was none other than the Sword Emperor of the West Sea.

Upon seeing the figure, both Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai were mildly taken aback.

Chu Liang couldn’t help but wonder, Didn’t he dissipate into nothingness before our eyes? How is his soul still here, fully intact?

The Whale-Riding Immortal chuckled awkwardly and shrugged. “The ones who plotted against you were from the Celestial Charm Sect. I could’ve just left you to your fate. But I even prepared an enchanted tool to nurture your soul. Isn’t that good enough?”

Watching this, Chu Liang asked, "Are you two old acquaintances?"

“We crossed paths back when I traveled the West Sea,” the Sword Emperor of the West Sea said.

Despite his current state as a soul, he straightened his robe in the void as he spoke to the younger generation.

"I’ve beaten him up before," the Whale-Riding Immortal said succinctly.

“Ahem, let’s just say we got to know each other through a fight,” the Sword Emperor of the West Sea added, trying to smooth things over.

Chu Liang finally understood: Those three probably beat up almost everyone in their generation. Esteemed Teacher struck with her powerful fists, Jiang Tiankuo filled in the gaps, and Senior Aunt Yan held the rear—all three dedicated to educating their peers through sheer force.

"Anyway, I did suspect the Celestial Charm Sect's schemes beforehand, but I didn't know their full plan," the Whale-Riding Immortal said frankly. "As for your fight with Yan Zi for control of Great Dao, if she lost, she'd definitely die. If you lost, you'd still have a chance to survive. That's why I acted the way I did. If you think I was wrong, feel free to reprimand me."

While the loser of a fight for control of the Great Dao might not necessarily die, Daoist Yan's strong sense of honor would have led her to fight with everything she had, leaving no way out for herself. This was why both the Whale-Riding Immortal and Di Nufeng had been so concerned for her.

"Can you put that bottle down first..." the Sword Emperor of the West Sea said helplessly.

While the Whale-Riding Immortal was speaking, he was holding a white jade purification bottle, but he was holding it in such a manner that it felt as though it could drop and shatter at any moment.

The white jade purification bottle was a precious artifact used to hold souls, and it was very important to the Sword Emperor. Even an eighth-realm soul would weaken and dissipate if left outside for too long.

For example, Old Fei, Chu Liang's companion, could only sustain his vitality through spirit plants or by entering prolonged dormancy.

With this jade bottle, the Sword Emperor of the West Sea could preserve his soul in an intact state, making it a highly important artifact.

So, when the Whale-Riding Immortal was holding such a critical item while talking, the Sword Emperor naturally didn't dare oppose him.

"The Celestial Charm Sect might have targeted me because they were working with the West Sea Diabolical Forces," the Sword Emperor of the West Sea said in a serious manner. "Of course, I won't direct my anger towards Daoist Yan. The fact is, you saved me, and I owe you a favor. There are no grudges. I see that clearly."

"It's good that you are able to think that way," the Whale-Riding Immortal nodded.

As if he'd dare think otherwise... Chu Liang thought to himself.

Then the Whale-Riding Immortal added, "In that case, I can accompany you to the Heavenly Palace of the Sword Domain."

...

"The Heavenly Palace of the Sword Domain?"

Both Jiang Yuebai and Chu Liang exchanged confused looks, having never heard of such a place before.

But the Sword Emperor of the West Sea's soul quivered as he exclaimed, "You've found the location of the Heavenly Palace of the Sword Domain?"

"Maybe," replied the Whale-Riding Immortal with a faint smile.

After a brief explanation, Chu Liang finally understood what kind of place it was.

There were three Daos of the Sword in this world and each with its own origins.

The Great Dao of Severing the Void had been started by Hallowed Li, and it was the first hallowed cultivation path in the mortal world. The Great Dao of Tai'a had come into existence when the ancient sword cultivator was observing the heavens, earth, and rivers. None had ever attained the ninth realm with this Great Dao, but this Great Dao contained immense power.

Meanwhile, the Great Dao of the Cloud of Determination had originated from a mysterious location within the Divine Ruins.

It was said that, while training in the Divine Ruins, an ancient sword cultivator accidentally stumbled upon a palace in the clouds. Misty clouds surrounded the palace, with countless flying swords forming a forest, and at the center stood a Heaven-Raising Sword. He tried to take the sword but couldn't find a way and ultimately left in disappointment.

Yet, just by meditating upon the sword, he comprehended the Great Dao of the Cloud of Determination, becoming the first mortal to master this Dao and attained the Heavenly Origin.

The Whale-Riding Immortal explained, "Back then, Ah Feng, Yan Zi, and I went out to train together. In an ancient sword cultivator's tomb, we found the Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword and some records about the Heavenly Palace of the Sword Domain."

Chu Liang quickly realized the Whale-Riding Immortal's intentions. "Esteemed senior, are you planning to retrieve that legendary sword?"

He had considered this possibility before.

If the Divine Ruins Monastery had been able to wipe out the Jiang Family, which had a master of the Heavenly Origin, in a single night, they had likely possessed power beyond the eighth realm.

But if they possessed the power of the ninth realm, they could dominate an entire region, and all living beings in the world would know of them.

Thus, they most likely wielded an eighth-and-a-half realm power through a legendary artifact or something stronger than the eighth-and-a-half realm but definitely not at the ninth realm.

If the Whale-Riding Immortal planned to advance toward the Divine Ruins Monastery directly, he would likely fail. The safest approach would be to obtain a legendary artifact, though that was nearly impossible.

The legendary artifacts of this world were owned by the immortal sects, and no one in their right mind would lend their sect's treasure for a life-or-death venture.

As for stealing a legendary artifact? That was even harder.

If he could obtain a legendary artifact without an owner, that would be the best scenario. Nevertheless, it still remained a question as to whether this scenario could ever actualize.

"I guess it's fine if I tell you..." the Whale-Riding Immortal said, glancing at him., "After all, the key to opening the Heavenly Palace of the Sword Domain might just be with you."

Chapter 699: A Grudge that Cannot Be Forgiven

"With me?"

Chu Liang found the situation had become even stranger.

I don't even know which way the Heavenly Palace's door opened, so how could I have the key?

"Yan Zi disagreed with us going to the Heavenly Palace of the Sword Domain for a simple reason," the Whale-Riding Immortal said. "Throughout history, many have sought the Heavenly Palace, but only two have ever returned. Regardless of whether they were at the seventh or eighth realm, anyone could perish inside. To enter the Heavenly Palace, you need guidance, and the 'key' to that guidance is likely the Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword, which contains the essence of the Great Dao of the Cloud of Determination.

"When we found the sword back then, Yan Zi insisted on keeping it for herself. She had guessed it was the key and was worried we'd use it to take risks."

At this point, the Whale-Riding Immortal smiled again. "She has always been like that. She would rather risk her own life than to have people around her take risks. Now that she has reached the eighth realm, I am guessing that she will consider entering the Heavenly Palace herself if the Mount Shu Sect faces another crisis."

"Guessing?" Chu Liang asked, catching onto that word.

"At the time, the only clues about the key to the Heavenly Palace were two lines of poetry," the Whale-Riding Immortal explained.

He recited the poem.

"The heavens' divine light, a prism's art,  
Splits into nine hues, a celestial start.

Above the clouds, the celestial door gleams,

Unfolding in sequence, like ethereal dreams."<sup>[1]</sup>

Chu Liang blinked in realization. "It's talking about the Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword?"



"Exactly," said the Whale-Riding Immortal. "But the Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword was a sword forged in the later generations. I suspect that the key to entering the Heavenly Palace of the Sword Domain is simply any sword containing the Dao essence of the Cloud of Determination."

"The Dustless Sword?" Chu Liang was struck with another realization. "So my teacher had a replica of that sword forged back then as preparation for this day?"

"I think so," the Whale-Riding Immortal replied. "Otherwise, with Ah Feng's personality, if she really wanted to get you a handy flying sword, she would have chosen to steal or rob from someone instead of forging a replica."

Chu Liang nodded in agreement.

With a level ten understanding of Di Nufeng, this line of thought was undoubtedly the one Di Nufeng was most accustomed to.

After pondering for a while, Chu Liang found himself puzzled again. "This riddle is simple, but even if you gave my teacher a hundred years, she might not have figured it out. How did she come up with the idea of forging a replica?"

"That, I'm not certain of either. Perhaps some great figure guided her from behind the scenes," the Whale-Riding Immortal replied, nodding in agreement with Chu Liang's reasoning.

The two quickly reached a shared understanding of Di Nufeng's personality and intellect.

"But..." Chu Liang uttered, hesitating briefly, "the Heavenly Palace of the Sword Domain is incredibly dangerous..."

"Don't worry, I won't bring Yuebai in," the Whale-Riding Immortal said, as though reading his thoughts.

Chu Liang responded with an awkward smile.

Jiang Yuebai furrowed her brows slightly.

Seeing that, the Whale-Riding Immortal quickly added, "In a place as dangerous as that, I'd actually have more freedom to act if you weren't there."

"But if the two of us go in together, we'll be able to take care of each other," Jiang Yuebai said quietly.

"Don't I already have a companion?" The Whale-Riding Immortal pointed to the Sword Emperor. "Whether I bring you or him, the result is the same."

"Huh?" the Sword Emperor uttered, stunned frozen. He felt as if he were the joke in a father-and-child comedy act.

However, he couldn't deny that he was eager to enter the Heavenly Palace of the Sword Domain.

Now, even though his physical body was destroyed and he had lost control of the Great Dao of the Cloud of Determination, his combat strength remained formidable. However, in his soul state, he was an irresistible target for powerful cultivators, especially those from the Dark King Sect.

The leader of the Dark King Sect would stop at nothing to capture a seventh-and-a-half-realm battle soul like his, as refining it could create an extraordinarily powerful servant.

This was precisely why he avoided appearing before the citizens of the Sword-Hanging Kingdom.

It was extremely difficult to rebuild a corporeal body equivalent to that of an eighth-realm cultivator. Without an extraordinary opportunity, the Sword Emperor's cultivation path was destined to end here. His only hope of finding such an opportunity lay in a place like the Heavenly Palace of the Sword Domain.

After some thought, he said, "I can accompany you to the Heavenly Palace of the Sword Domain, but I have one condition."

"Speak," replied the Whale-Riding Immortal.

"I want the Mount Shu Sect to help protect the Sword-Hanging Kingdom," the Sword Emperor said earnestly. "For years, I've worked tirelessly to suppress the West Sea Diabolical Forces. Now that they believe I'm dead, they might seize the chance to retaliate. Without a strong cultivator guarding the kingdom, I will always be worried."

"No problem. That can be solved easily," Chu Liang replied. "I can't order Senior Uncle Yan around, but I can arrange for my teacher to be stationed permanently in the Sword-Hanging Kingdom."

"Hmm..." the Sword Emperor hesitated for a moment before saying, "Then I'd feel even more worried."

...

In truth, there was no need to overthink this, as they would soon learn of the outcome.

Though Daoist Yan had successfully taken control of the Great Dao of the Cloud of Determination, she was well aware of the hidden schemes involved. She had no intention of ignoring the plight of the Sword-Hanging Kingdom's citizens.

After leaving the Sword-Hanging Kingdom, her first destination wasn't Mount Shu but a barren, isolated island in the West Sea.

She paused briefly, then raised the Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword high and brought it down in a swift, decisive strike.

Swish!

A torrent of overwhelming sword qi surged downward like an inverted heavenly river, crashing onto the island with unrelenting force! The massive landmass split apart instantly, exposing the iron walls and bronze barriers concealed beneath its surface.

Hidden beneath the island was a fortress-like structure that encircled its base. Within its iron walls, a maze of buildings was intricately arranged, resembling the cells of a beehive.

Countless diabolical sect cultivators resided within the fortress, but a single devastating strike wiped out one-third of their number. Those fortunate enough to not be in the center of the underground fortress clung desperately to the iron walls, their bodies trembling as they gazed at Daoist Yan in the sky.

The weakness, pity, and helplessness they felt were written plainly in their eyes.

The West Sea Diabolical Forces no longer dared to operate openly as they had once did. Each faction of the West Sea Diabolical Forces had its hidden headquarters, and discovery meant inevitable extermination. Recently, the Mount Shu Sect had received intelligence pinpointing the location of the Cascading Veil Sect, the second-largest faction after Evil Dragon Mountain.

At this time, Daoist Yan had arrived here. With one powerful strike, she nearly wiped out every member of this diabolical faction.

"Deliver this message to Immortal Yuan Lu. The Sword-Hanging Kingdom was once protected by the Sword Emperor, and from now on, it will be under my protection," Daoist Yan declared coldly, her voice commanding and divine. "If he dares harm so much as a blade of grass in the Sword-Hanging Kingdom, I will annihilate the entire West Sea Diabolical Forces. If he doesn't believe me, he's welcome to test it."

"Such bold words!" a thunderous voice boomed in response.

Dark clouds roiled on the distant horizon, and atop them stood a middle-aged man with his hands clasped behind his back.

It was Immortal Yuan Lu, the sect leader of Evil Dragon Mountain and the current leader of the West Sea Diabolical Forces.

"If you have something to say, say it to me directly. There's no need for messengers," Yuan Lu said with a sneer. "Just because you are now the master of a Great Dao doesn't make you invincible. You're far too inexperienced—"

Before he could finish, Daoist Yan raised her sword and slashed.

Boom!

The sword light descended from above, tearing through the vast expanse of black clouds and surging downward. With a single, devastating sweep, the strike obliterated the island where the Cascading Veil Sect had made their home. For a fleeting moment, it was as if heaven and earth had collapsed, leaving only the brilliance of the sky behind.

In that moment, several hundreds of diabolical cultivators were wiped out right in front of Immortal Yuan Lu, and the entire island was shattered into dust, scattered across the West Sea.

Standing high in the skies, Immortal Yuan Lu's face turned pale as the sword light streaked past him. The moment the sword light swept past him, he froze completely, unable to move an inch.

It was then that he realized that while Daoist Yan was a newly ascended master of the Heavenly Origin, her strike was as powerful as that of the Sword Emperor. In fact, her strike might even be more powerful.

"If you don't even dare to show your true form before me, stop spouting such grandiose claims. If you truly have the courage, come avenge these diabolical cultivators now. If not, behave yourself from now on. Should you show your face even once, their fate will be the fate of the entire West Sea Diabolical Forces," Daoist Yan declared.

Daoist Yan's gaze was sharper than the Heavenly Cloud Ancient Sword itself. Her tone was devoid of emotion, but her words were deliberate and cutting. "Remember. What. I. Said."

As the sea wind howled across the heavens, Immortal Yuan Lu felt an icy chill sweep through his entire body.

A bizarre thought suddenly crossed his mind: Was it a grave mistake to conspire with the Celestial Charm Sect and kill the Sword Emperor of the West Sea? This eighth-realm Daoist Yan was far more terrifying than ten Sword Emperors of the West Sea combined.

...

When Chu Liang returned to Mount Shu, he saw that Heaven-Reaching Peak was glowing with brilliance, teeming with exotic beasts. Countless leaders from various immortal sects had arrived to congratulate Daoist Yan on her success in gaining control of a Great Dao.

For any immortal sect, the addition of a master of the Heavenly Origin was a significant event that reverberated across the sects.

The Sword Emperor, bound to the Sword-Hanging Kingdom of the West Sea, had always maintained a neutral relationship with the rest of the immortal cultivation world. By comparison, the Mount Shu Sect held far better and more established relations.

Before he could scan the crowd for familiar faces, a piece of infuriating news reached him—teams from the Four Extremities Hall of Red Cotton Peak had been intercepted and slaughtered. Six teams, comprising over thirty cultivators, had been ambushed during their missions, and none had survived.

Since the establishment of Four Extremities Hall, casualties had occurred occasionally but never on such a devastating scale.

BAM!

Upon hearing the news, Chu Liang slammed his palm against the table before him, his face tightening with tension.

Lin Bei, Shang Ziliang, along with Lackey A and Lackey B, held their breaths, not daring to make a sound. Chu Liang, known for his calm demeanor and ever-cheerful smile, had never shown such fury before.

After swiftly addressing the compensation for the victims' families, Chu Liang growled through gritted teeth, "Investigate this immediately! If we can't even guarantee our brothers' safety, then Red Cotton Peak has no place in this world!"

"This is a grudge that cannot be forgiven!" he declared.

Chapter 700: Origins

In the midst of the sea stood a mountain of the immortals, shrouded in ethereal white clouds.

This mountain hidden within the mist was the Mirage Mountain, and it served as the core of the Penglai Supreme Sect. Only those who had reached the seventh realm could officially join the sect and earn the right to establish a residence there. Those below the seventh realm, including disciples training under their esteemed teachers, were considered mere dependents.

Establishing a residence on Mirage Mountain was the ultimate dream for countless young people in Penglai.

On an ordinary day, under gentle winds and sunny skies, a new pavilion quietly appeared in the northwest corner of Mirage Mountain. Compared to the splendid palaces at the mountain's front, this one seemed exceptionally modest.

Clad in black robes, Daoist Xuan Lu approached the pavilion and gently said at the door, "Congratulations, Junior Nephew Yang, on becoming the first of your generation to step into the Dao Attainment Realm."

The pavilion door creaked open, and out came a man with a demeanor as refined as jade and an expression of cool indifference.

He was Yang Shenlong, dressed in a blue Daoist robe and radiating the aura of a powerful cultivator. Compared to his teenage years, he now exuded an air of tempered wisdom and maturity.

In response to Daoist Xuan Lu's congratulations, Yang Shenlong showed no courtesy. He simply stepped aside to let him in and closed the door.

Yang Shenlong then got straight to the point and asked, "Senior Uncle Xuan Lu, was it you who ordered Qi Lin'er to ambush the members of Mount Shu's Red Cotton Peak?"

"Hmm?" Daoist Xuan Lu had just taken his seat when the question reached his ears. He chuckled softly and said, "So, Junior Nephew Yang summoned me here for an interrogation?"

"Senior Uncle Xuan Lu, are you aware that such an action was highly inappropriate?" Yang Shenlong responded, settling into the seat across from him.

"What do you mean by that, Junior Nephew Yang?"

Yang Shenlong's frown deepened. "The Penglai Supreme Sect is a righteous sect. How could you stoop to such a vile act? Ordinary disciples of Penglai would never aid you in this. You took advantage of Qi Lin'er's old grudge against the Mount Shu Sect. But if this provokes a conflict between our two sects, how do you plan to handle the consequences?"

"You're overstating things, Junior Nephew Yang," Daoist Xuan Lu said, waving his hand dismissively. "Qi Lin'er is on the verge of entering the Dao Attainment Realm. I merely helped him rid himself of inner demons."

Yet, Yang Shenlong's unwavering gaze bore down on him, its intensity exerting palpable pressure.

Qi Lin'er had grown up near the Azure Dragon and was not well-acquainted with the disciples of the Penglai Supreme Sect. Shortly after his return to Mirage Mountain following the Assembly of Immortal Sects, he became the target of widespread complaints and condemnation among his peers. Even under Daoist Cangsheng's protection, he still became the one disliked by both people and beasts alike.

Daoist Cangsheng eventually entrusted Qi Lin'er to the more cunning Daoist Xuan Lu. After much contemplation, Daoist Xuan Lu devised a plan. Using Qi Lin'er's grudge against Chu Liang, he tricked Qi Lin'er into going to the Sea of Demons. He had instructed Qi Lin'er to only seek revenge against the people of the Mount Shu Sect after he had successfully fought his way out of the sea.

However, just a few days ago, Qi Lin'er returned, and Daoist Xuan Lu once again had to deal with this problematic disciple.

This time, he assigned Qi Lin'er a secret mission.

However, it had been kept highly confidential, so Daoist Xuan Lu had no idea how Yang Shenlong had come to know about it.

"To my knowledge, Senior Uncle Xuan Lu sent him to target the people of Red Cotton Peak to assist Taotie City," Yang Shenlong said. "You brought back the Celestial Cosmic Ring, which was indeed a great achievement. However, the massive debt owed to Taotie City remained unresolved, and that's why you came up with this plan, didn't you?"

"Junior Nephew Yang, you are quite smart..." remarked Daoist Xuan Lu. When Daoist Xuan Lu heard the correct deductions from Yang Shenlong, he stopped pretending and said candidly, "This plan kills three birds with one stone—it appeases Qi Lin'er, satisfies Taotie City, and stunts the growth of the Mount Shu Sect to some extent. Why wouldn't I go through with it?"

"Senior Uncle, are you so confident that the Mount Shu Sect won't figure out who did it?" Yang Shenlong said in a grave tone. "If Mount Shu retaliates and Qi Lin'er gets hurt, the consequences will be far beyond what you can bear."



Leaning forward slightly, Yang Shenlong added seriously, "You don't know his origins."

Hearing this, Daoist Xuan Lu couldn't help but feel a pang of unease. Although Daoist Cangsheng had entrusted him with overseeing Qi Lin'er, he had never disclosed the boy's true origins. Qi Lin'er's unpleasant temperament made him a challenge to handle, and even Daoist Xuan Lu found him downright annoying. Sending him out to stir up trouble was far preferable to letting him wreak havoc on Mirage Mountain.

Now, seeing Yang Shenlong's solemn demeanor, it seemed likely that Qi Lin'er's origins were even more significant than he had imagined.

...

Chu Liang first went to Chu Yi's small cabin to ask about the matter.

For the past six years, Chu Yi had been secretly managing Red Cotton Peak, overseeing the establishment and coordination of the Four Extremities Hall. When Chu Liang returned, he decided not to take back primary management duties, as everything had been running smoothly. After all, he was quite busy, and if Chu Yi could handle some tasks for him, that would be ideal.

Chu Yi's cabin was similarly simple, furnished with only a bed, a table and chairs, a screen, and a few scrolls of calligraphy and paintings hanging on the walls.

As Chu Liang glanced at one of the paintings, he suddenly found it somewhat familiar. It depicted noblewomen from the previous dynasty on an outing in the eastern suburbs, with brushwork so vivid it almost seemed to bring the scene to life.

Chu Yi stepped out from behind the screen and greeted Chu Liang with a smile. "Senior Brother."

When he noticed Chu Liang staring at the painting, he said, "I recently became interested in calligraphy and painting and acquired a few masterpieces done by famous individuals."

"That's good. It's about time that we have a cultured individual on our Silver Sword Peak," Chu Liang remarked, returning the smile. "You've already heard about what happened to the Four Extremities Hall, haven't you?"

"Yes, I know about it." Chu Yi nodded solemnly. "But if they have such precise knowledge of the transport routes, it couldn't have come from the buyer. It seems much more likely that there's a mole within the Four Extremities Hall. For now, we have six suspects who might be traitors, and I've already detained them. Once we interrogate them, we'll know who's responsible."

"I have a Mind-Reflecting Candle. We can use it to get a straight answer."

Chu Yi had always been reliable in handling matters. The way he approached this issue was precisely how Chu Liang would have handled it himself.

The two of them made their way to Red Cotton Peak, where the Four Extremities Hall had prepared six rooms. Each suspect, all high-ranking members of the hall, occupied a separate room. Only someone of their position could have leaked such critical transport routes. Since they hadn't been proven guilty, they were treated fairly well.

Years ago, Chu Liang had found a portion of a Mind-Reflecting Candle. Over the years, it had remained unused, as it was ineffective against those with high cultivation levels, and Chu Liang had no need for it with those of lower cultivation. But now, the perfect opportunity had finally arisen for him to put it to use.

He handed the Mind-Reflecting Candle to Chu Yi, and together they interrogated the suspects one by one. As expected, they quickly identified a traitor among the six.

The traitor was a middle-aged rogue cultivator who had once been active in the southeastern regions, known for his vast network of connections. When Chu Yi established the Four Extremities Hall, this man saw its potential and eagerly joined. He was one of the founding members of the Four Extremities Hall, which was why he had risen to such a high rank today.

"I... I never wanted to harm Red Cotton Peak, it's just..." The traitor, seeing the Mind-Reflecting Candle burning, realized that lying was futile and quickly confessed. "He told me that Penglai would be supporting Taotie City in waging war against Mount Shu's Red Cotton Peak. If we keep relying on Red Cotton Peak, we'll be doomed. By helping Penglai pass along information now, we can secure future favors from the Penglai Supreme Sect."

"Penglai..." Chu Liang muttered, his gaze darkening. He asked, "Do you know who did this?"

"Young Hero Chu, it was the child who participated in the same Assembly of Immortal Sects as you. He's now about seventeen or eighteen years old, but his cultivation level is very high..." the man answered without hesitation. "I think his name is... Qi Lin'er."