

## **Myriad 117**

### Chapter 117: Silent Observer (1)

The night passed peacefully.

Due to the attack, the students were rather dispirited. All of them went to bed early. After a short cultivation session, Su Yu went to sleep as well.

The next day.

Su Yu woke up early and washed up. When he reached the dining hall of the guest house for his breakfast, he could sense that the atmosphere was off.

Xia Bing and Zhao Li were present. There were also some strangers around them. Those were probably the people from Tianshui. The group was conversing at the corner of the room with solemn expressions.

Su Yu walked over toward Xia Bing when he saw the man beckoning at him.

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"Su Yu, you won't be joining the other students today." Xia Bing went straight to the point, "A few Tianshui students will travel with you. These sirs will personally escort your group to the capital."

Apart from Xia Bing and Zhao Li, there were three strangers around the table. An old man, a middle-aged woman, and a younger man around 30 years old.

Xia Bing continued speaking, "You already know Sir Zhao. This is Sir Hu..."

He started introducing.

The old man beside Zhao Li was Hu Youhui, a Cloudbreach expert and an intermediate researcher in the Great Xia Cultural Research Academy. He was Zhao Li's partner who had left for Tianshui during the previous attack.

The middle-aged woman was Sun Xia, a junior researcher from the Nine Heavens Cultural Research Academy and a Cloudbreach expert.

The younger man was Li Yunfeng, a deputy commander of Tianshui's city guards and a seventh-stage Skysoar expert.

Excluding Xia Bing, these four would be in charge of escorting Su Yu's group to the capital. Four experts. Three were in the Cloudbreach Realm and one was a seventh-stage Skysoar cultivator.

Tianshui had a lot more city guards than Nanyuan. Nanyuan only had a 1000-man unit of city guards while Tianshui actually had a 10000-man unit. Their deputies were seventh-stage Skysoar cultivators while their 10000-man commander would either be a ninth-stage Skysoar or a Cloudbreach cultivator. Tianshui was a much bigger city than Nanyuan. It also had a lot more experts.

Su Yu was surprised. They were only students. Even though an attack had happened the day before, there was no need for so many experts to escort them, right? Furthermore, they weren't even doing it for all the students. Only a few students were selected.

Seeing Su Yu's doubt, Zhao Li sighed and said, "Su Yu, don't spread this. I'll tell you the truth. Something major happened yesterday. Do you know Beifeng City?"

"Senior Zhao!" Li Yunfeng objected with a frown.

Zhao Li ignored him and gestured at Su Yu to sit down before continuing, "When the Nanyuan convoy was being attacked yesterday, the Beifeng convoy was also attacked at the same time. Of their escorts, one Cloudbreach and three Skysoar cultivators were killed. Additionally, dozens of their students were killed as well.

"Of course, the cult was not doing very well either. Xue'e of the Blood Fire Sect had led a large number of cult members in the attack. They did not expect that there were some hidden experts escorting the

convoy as well. Apart from Xue'e who had escaped with serious injuries, all the cult members were killed."

The cult had suffered an even bigger loss in their attack against the Beifeng convoy. This year, all the convoys had received secret escorts instead of only a convoy or two like the past years. The group of cult members that had attacked the Beifeng convoy was very strong. There were two Cloudbreach and eight Skysoar cultivators.

Out of that group, only Xue'e, a Cloudbreach cultivator, had managed to escape with heavy injuries. After that attack, the cult's presence in Great Xia had been greatly weakened. They would probably stay hidden for an extended period of time after such heavy losses.

Including the casualties of both sides, two Cloudbreach and more than ten Skysoar cultivators had perished in that battle. It had been many years since something that major had happened within Great Xia. Xia Longwu's previous fight with the intruding divines had been kept a secret. That wasn't the case for the battle yesterday.

Zhao Li said, "Don't worry too much. The Martial Dragon Guards has been fully deployed. They are out in full force to suppress the Myriad Race Cult." "The cult has provoked us again and again. This time, rivers of blood will flow from them. The Martial Dragon Guards will not let this slide."

Zhao Li was actually gnashing his teeth in anger. The Myriad Race Cult had been too arrogant recently. Even after several failed attacks in Great Xia, they still had the courage to launch another attack. They had basically gone crazy. Fortunately, the capital had been on guard against them.

All the security measures were actually put in place as a precaution against the divine skywing race. Instead, Xue'e and his group were the ones who had landed right into the trap.

Beifeng was rather unlucky as well. Their Cloudbreach expert had been negligent initially since he did not expect someone to have the guts to attack them. Thus, he was killed by the opening salvo of the ambush. Otherwise, a Cloudbreach expert would not die so easily.

Since Zhao Li had already spilled the beans, Li Yunfeng had no choice but to stop protesting.

To the side, Sun Xia said, "As a precaution, we will be in charge of escorting you high-tier students to the capital separately. The students of the other cities will also join us on the way."

They were not only in charge of escorting Su Yu and the Tianshui students. They also needed to escort some other students. Excluding the guest students, Su Yu was the sole high-tier student of Nanyuan.

Su Yu didn't know the Tianshui students, but based on Tianshui's size, there were probably around six or seven of them.

As for Beifeng, the second strongest city in Great Xia, they probably had around 10 or more high-tier students. Su Yu didn't know if any of their high-tier students had been killed in the attack yesterday. He did not have any objections about the new plan. He had no say in it anyway.

After thinking about it, he said, "Sirs, how about the other students?"

Xia Bing answered, "Don't worry. We will link up with the Martial Dragon Guards and city guards of the other cities and escort them together. In fact, without you high-tier students around, things are much safer for them. Also, after such heavy losses, the cult probably wouldn't try anything else."

So many of their Skysoar experts had perished. One Cloudbreach expert had also died while the other Cloudbreach expert had suffered heavy injuries. It was unlikely that the cult would be able to gather such a strong lineup again anytime soon.

With the Martial Dragon Guards out and about, unless the cult had gone completely crazy, they would definitely stay in hiding.

Xia Bing said, "Go back and pack your stuff. We will gather up in half an hour. When the Tianshui students arrive, you guys can set off."

"Alright."

Su Yu said nothing else and took his leave. After having a simple meal, he went back upstairs to pack his stuff.

After Su Yu left, Hu Youhui looked at Zhao Li with his brow raised and said, "Old Zhao, from your attitude, are you thinking of accepting him as your student?"

Zhao Li smiled and calmly said, "I am considering it. It has been many years since I last accepted a student. I'm planning to accept one to take care of me in my old age."

"High-high student..." Hu Youhui muttered to himself before saying, "He's from Hong Tan's faction. Would you dare to accept him?"

"Why not?" Zhao Li indifferently said, "Hong Tan is living such a good life. Why can't I accept a student? This student hasn't even joined their faction for real. And even if he has already joined, nobody can say anything if I can really snatch him to my side."

Zhao Li was calm and composed as he said, "Not even the principal had said anything. Why do you care?"

Hu Youhui smiled and said, "I'm not talking about principal. I'm talking about the others..."

"The character faction?"

Zhao Li raised his brow. "They are free to continue fighting among themselves. Would they dare to come at me?"

Although Zhao Li wasn't a Mountainsea expert, he was still quite confident. "Do they really think that I'm a pushover? Sure, us of the weaponsmith faction aren't too strong. There are also not a lot of us around. But they are free to try to provoke us.

"If they push it too far, I'll rally all the weaponsmiths in Great Xia and cut their supply of cultural weapons. I can't be bothered to get involved in their internal conflict, but if they dare to trouble me when I'm only accepting a student...they will come to learn that us weaponsmiths are not pushovers."

Hu Youhui shut his mouth. Beside him, Sun Xia smiled and said, "Senior Zhao, although Su Yu is a high-high student, his willpower is still too weak. I checked his exam results. A large portion of his score came from his physical cultivation. If he relied only on his willpower cultivation, he probably wouldn't be able to get a high-high evaluation. You should be aware of that as well."

Zhao Li did not mind, "Something like willpower can be easily grown by letting him study some willpower texts."

Sun Xia smiled and shut her mouth as well. She was from the Nine Heavens Cultural Research Academy, so she didn't have a lot of entanglement with those from the Great Xia Cultural Research Academy. She was only slightly curious as to why an important member of the weaponsmith faction like Zhao Li would suddenly decide to accept a student.

Su Yu might be an outstanding high-high student, but excluding his physical cultivation and his bonus marks from his merit points, he was really not that special of a cultural research student. Of course, his score for the Mark of Culture test was quite high as well.

But Sun Xia had heard that something was wrong with the Mark of Culture during the test. Assistant Huang had not supplied it with enough willpower. He had even been fined a large number of merit points after the test. Thus, a lot of people believed that the result of that test was unreliable. And Assistant Huang's punishment was the best proof of that.

Their suspicion was understandable. Su Yu's willpower was indeed weak. His willpower wasn't even 30 percent full yet. That was quite far away from the Mental Tempering Stage. Zhao Li might be an intermediate researcher, but he was also a weaponsmith.

Although he couldn't forge earth-grade cultural weapons, he had still forged a pseudo earth-grade cultural weapon before. He also had the potential to be the second cultural researcher in Great Xia capable of forging earth-grade cultural weapons.

And the moment he gained the ability to forge earth-grade cultural weapons, he would be promoted into a senior researcher even without reaching the Mountainsea Realm. In fact, Zhao Li had the highest position and fame within this group.

Hu Youhui and the others obviously disagreed with Zhao Li's view, but since that was his own wish, none of them could be bothered to get involved in his decision.

## Chapter 118: Silent Observer (2)

Half an hour later.

In front of the guest house.

A large bus was parked by the road. Su Yu had already taken his leave from Chen Hao. Before leaving, he told that fellow to cultivate hard in the capital and promised to visit when he had the time. There was no need for him to say his farewells to anyone else.

Under the guidance of a city guard, Su Yu climbed onto the bus with his saber and luggage. The bus was already occupied. Apart from the four experts and one driver, there were six youngsters on the bus.

Without Su Yu, Nanyuan wouldn't have even one high-tier student. Meanwhile, Tianshui had six of them. The gap between the two cities was obvious.

The students only shot Su Yu a glance when he entered the bus. Nobody bothered greeting him and nobody was talking either. These were all geniuses. Each of them was a prideful person. They did not care about a genius from Nanyuan, not even if that genius was a high-high student. None of them believed that he was better than them.

"Everyone is here. We can set off."

With Li Yunfeng's order, the bus started moving. It was very quiet on the bus. There were two main reasons for that. Firstly, the students weren't familiar with each other. Secondly, with the experts present, they were somewhat nervous and did not dare to speak freely.

After all, these were three Cloudbreach and one Skysoar experts. It would be disastrous if the students left a bad impression on them. Since they weren't saying anything, Su Yu naturally didn't bother taking the initiative to greet them either.

After a while, one of the students, a handsome and gentle-looking young man suddenly turned to face Su Yu and softly said, "Su Yu from Nanyuan?"

Su Yu nodded. The gentle and handsome young man said, "Let's get to know each other. I'm Hu Zongji from Tianshui, fresh Mental Tempering Stage, and one Divine Character. I'm a high-middle student."

"Su Yu, not in the Mental Tempering Stage yet."

Su Yu gave a simple introduction. There was no need for him to further introduce himself. He might create some unnecessary trouble if he insisted on introducing himself as a high-high student.

But Hu Zongji smiled and said, "I heard you got a high-high evaluation?"

"Yeah."

That attracted the gazes of the other students. Su Yu's expression was unchanged. He did not say anything else.

Hu Zongji continued, "I heard that the Mark of Culture used for your test was damaged? The Nanyuan proctors have all been punished. Is that true?"

"I guess. I didn't ask anyone about it."

Hu Zongji smiled and said, "What a pity. If I've known that, I would have taken my exam at Nanyuan as well. Maybe I can get a high-high evaluation there."

Su Yu smiled and gave a perfunctory reply, "Yeah, that's true. The exam was quite easy. Even that Wu Lan fellow from the capital also got a high-high evaluation."

Hu Zongji's expression shifted at the mention of Wu Lan. But he quickly smiled again and said, "Wu Lan is a genius from the Wu Family of the capital. It is normal for her to get the high-high evaluation."

Su Yu acted like he didn't understand the meaning behind Hu Zongji's words and nonchalantly said, "Yeah."

Hu Zongji raised his brow and said, "I heard you have been accepted in advance by a teaching assistant in the Great Xia Cultural Research Academy?"

"Yeah. But I don't know the details about that. I did hear about it from someone else though."

Su Yu was speaking the truth. Bai Feng had not confirmed anything about accepting him as a student before leaving Nanyuan. Of course, he had mentioned it in passing, but nothing was confirmed. Eventually, news of that started spreading.

Hu Zongji was somewhat unhappy to see Su Yu replying perfunctorily. But his unhappiness vanished quickly as he said, "Su Yu, we will be fellow schoolmates at the academy. Only by helping each other would we be able to stand tall in the academy. I heard that the capital fellows are rather discriminatory toward outsiders like us.

"Su Yu, are you interested in joining our Tianshui Club?"

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"Tianshui Club?" Su Yu asked in surprise, "I'm from Nanyuan, a small city. I don't know all that. Can you tell me more about this?"

"It's basically a hometown club," Hu Zongji explained. "Each year, there will be some of us joining the Great Xia Cultural Research Academy. Since those capital fellows are discriminatory toward us, we can only stick together. As for Nanyuan...cough, cough. There is no Nanyuan Club in the academy.

"But Nanyuan is near Tianshui and you're the only high-high student of Nanyuan in so many years. You can consider joining us. Don't worry. Although there is an issue with your exam, you're still a high-tier student. But your cultivation at the ninth-stage Source Opening Realm is not bad. With my recommendation, you will be accepted."

A beautiful young woman nearby said, "Hu Zongji, did you ask the club before inviting Su Yu? What if they reject him? You will only end up offending both sides."

Hu Zongji smiled and said, "That won't happen. My elder brother is the vice president now. With a word from him, this won't be an issue."

"True.?" The beautiful young woman nodded. She looked at Su Yu and smiled, "Hello. I'm also a preparatory student of the Great Xia Cultural Research Academy. My name is Tong Wei. You can consider Hu Zongji's invitation. It will only benefit you."

Su Yu smiled and said, "Thank you. But I still know too little about the academy. Thank you for the advice. Maybe I should wait until I'm in the academy before deciding. I don't want to bring any trouble to Student Hu."

Hu Zongji dismissively said, "What's there to think about? This is for your own good."

Su Yu had the same smile as he said, "I know. Thank you, Student Hu. But it's better to wait. I will ask Teacher Bai Feng's opinion before doing anything. I will feel guilty if I end up bringing some trouble your way by accepting your invitation."

Su Yu was polite yet firm. Since he still knew nothing about the academy, he wouldn't join a club so easily.

Hu Zongji was clearly unhappy about it, but he still forced himself to smile as he said, "Forget it. When the time comes, don't regret this. Without my recommendation, you won't be able to join."

Su Yu merely smiled silently. It didn't matter. He never intended to join their club in the first place. He didn't know if Hu Zongji was inviting out of kindness or some ulterior motives, but there was no need for him to harp on the topic.

The experts who were seated at the front ignored the students. Their eyes were shut as they rested. Li Yunfeng was the exception. He was constantly alert as he kept scanning their surroundings through the windows.

He couldn't be bothered to join in the conversation. Those were merely a bunch of wimpy brats that were trying to one-up each other. That wasn't even worthy of his attention. He was treating their interactions as a source of entertainment to pass the time.

Joining the Tianshui Club wasn't necessarily bad for Su Yu, but it wasn't anything good either. As an outsider, he would be charged a membership fee for joining. Of course, he would also receive some benefits and help after joining. And Hu Zongji would be rewarded for introducing a high-tier student to the club.

In the future, if Su Yu made some contributions to the club, Hu Zongji would also receive some benefits as the person who had referred him in. Although Hu Zongji had not mentioned all that to Su Yu, that was all common knowledge. Strictly speaking, he wasn't really trying to trick Su Yu.

Li Yunfeng did not care about the little politics these brats were playing. He couldn't be bothered to explain anything to Su Yu since it was up to him whether he wanted to join or not. Furthermore, Hu Zongji was Hu Youhui's grandnephew. That kid was the reason Hu Youhui had abandoned his post previously.

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With Su Yu's refusal, silence returned to the bus.

The other four students had not said a single word since Su Yu got on the bus.

After an indeterminate amount of time, Li Yunfeng announced, "We will be reaching Yue City in about one hour. We will grab lunch there and pick up a few of their students before moving through two other cities for the students there. After that, we can start heading straight to the capital."

They were in charge of escorting the high-tier students of five cities to the capital. Other teams would be in charge of the high-tier students of the other cities. If everything went smoothly, they would reach the capital by the next evening.

The next day, on the 30th of July.

"Yue City..."

Hu Zongji was suddenly feeling talkative again. He said, "Big Brother Li, how many high-tier students does Yue City have?"

"Three." Li Yunfeng answered, "Two Great Xia War Academy students and one Great Xia Cultural Research Academy student."

When Hu Zongji heard that, he said in a regretful tone, "There's only one cultural research student from Yue? Why has it fallen to Nanyuan's level?"

Yue was a strong city. In the past years, they would always produce several high-tier cultural research students each year. This year, Tianshui had three high-tier cultural research students and three high-tier war students.

Li Yunfeng said, "It's already good that they even have one. The difficulty of this year's exam was actually higher. It's not like you don't know that the capital has been reducing the quota."

"Was the difficulty increased?" Hu Zongji shook his head, "I didn't feel anything. I mean, even Nanyuan managed to produce a high-tier student this year..."

Su Yu merely shot him a glance without saying anything. The way that fellow kept making snide remarks about Nanyuan was really annoying. But Su Yu decided to stay silent. He would not lower himself to argue with that person.

When that fellow was speaking to Li Yunfeng, his gaze had been constantly moving toward Researcher Hu. At times, Researcher Hu would open his eyes to look at that fellow as well. Su Yu could see that they both shared a surname and were probably related.

Therefore, there was no need for him to create trouble for himself during this trip. However, he wouldn't forget this either.

"Nanyuan..." Su Yu muttered to himself.

Hu, since you look down on Nanyuan, just wait. After a while when I learn more about the rules of the academy and get myself a teacher as my backer, we'll see what happens. Why do you have to keep making snide remarks about Nanyuan? Did we steal anything from your family or something?

Su Yu was actually a petty person. Just look at Zhou Chong from back home. He had talked bad about Su Yu, but Su Yu couldn't be bothered to dirty his own hands. Instead, Chen Hao had suddenly decided that Zhou Chong was a good sparring partner and gave that fellow a few beatings. Were those beatings really a result of Chen Hao's own desires?

In the bus, Su Yu remained silent, acting like he couldn't understand the meaning behind Hu Zongji's words.

It was unknown if Hu Zongji was doing it intentionally, but he shifted the topic and asked, "Big Brother Li, did any high-tier students from Beifeng perish during the attack?"

"No. The cult members were killed shortly after the attack. The high-tier students had been remaining deep in the convoy. There are some deaths among the regular students settled around the high-tier students though."

"Oh, that's good to hear. Those dead students are probably middle and low-tier students..."

He had barely finished his words when Hu Youhui opened his eyes and gazed at him sternly.

Hu Zongji stiffened. At that moment, Zhao Li opened his eyes and said, "Shut up if you don't know what to say. If you keep disturbing my peace, I'll throw you off the bus. You can walk to the capital."

Then, Zhao Li shut his eyes again. This time, Hu Zongji shut his mouth for real.

Su Yu was happy to see that. Served him right!

That fellow talked too much. From what he just witnessed, that fellow was probably not intentionally making those snide remarks toward Nanyuan earlier. He could very well be a fool who spoke without thinking.

In fact, if those from Beifeng heard his earlier words, a lot of them would find it offensive.

"Looks like there are stupid students in the cultural research academy as well..."

Su Yu muttered to himself. Then again, that was understandable. These people who came from powerful families had not experienced the cruelty of society. They would probably learn after suffering some setbacks.

The Hu Family was probably quite powerful in Tianshui. It was obvious since one of them was an intermediate researcher who was also a Cloudbreach expert. And that might not be the only powerhouse they had in the family. There was a reason for Hu Zongji's arrogance.

In fact, with his background, he could already be considered polite for not being arrogant enough to directly pick fights. Su Yu comforted himself that he shouldn't bother himself with what an idiot had to say. And if he really wanted to do something about it, he would wait until he learned more about the academy.

For example, he could do something like secretly tell the Beifeng students that a certain Tianshui student had claimed that their dead students deserved it...Just imagine what would happen. Tsk tsk.

"I'll see."

Su Yu decided to keep observing before committing to anything. This was his first time away from Nanyuan. He still knew too little. He had to prioritize learning the rules of survival outside Nanyuan. He had no intention of losing his life without even knowing what happened.

Chapter 119: No Mercy (1)

Great Xia Cultural Research Academy.

At the eve of the new students' arrival, the academy was bustling with activity. Students could be seen rushing all over the place while the instructors were all busy with their respective tasks.

As the Foreign Student Faculty had been opened this year, things were even busier than the former years. But underneath the bustling environment, a storm was brewing.

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Heart Cultivating Pavilion.

An argument was happening in the massive building.

Wan Tiansheng had just finished speaking when someone objected intensely, "I object! Wan Tiansheng, what are you trying to do?"

An elder angrily rebuked, "Are you betraying humanity?"

"Not only are you opening the Foreign Student Faculty, you're also opening the secret grottos to them? Why don't you take them to the Knowledge Seeking Realm while you're at it?"

Wan Tiansheng replied, "That is not off the table."

"You!" The elder with white hair roared, "You are betraying humanity!"

"I never said that." Wan Tiansheng calmly replied, "Like I said, by knowing ourselves and our enemies, we will never be defeated. Without offering something solid, the various races will not share anything important with us either. Without paying a sufficient price, how would they be willing to throw in their lot with us?"

"You only want to reap rewards instead of paying the price. How will that even work?"

With a calm tone, Wan Tiansheng said, "Just by making some secret grottos available for them, I'm a traitor? Even if we do end up nurturing a few experts for them, so what?"

"Wan Tiansheng, the plan sounds good in your head," said someone coldly. "But you need to know that we can never trust anyone not of our race. You want to nurture some experts and bring them to positions of power in their respective races before using them to gain more support for humanity. I can only say that you're underestimating how easily people can change their heart."

"At that time, those people will be influential and powerful. Will they still care about the favor they owe us?"

Wan Tiansheng replied, "Even if only one of them remembers the favor, we will be able to gain the support of an entire race. Why not give it a try?"

"Hmph," a different elder snorted. "Why don't you think about it? Every foreign expert you nurture means one less human expert. If one day those experts you nurture end up using their strength to kill our fellow humans, who will take responsibility for that?"

Wan Tiansheng asked in astonishment, "Do you think those foreigners can't nurture their own experts without us? And are you saying that we can nurture any human into an expert just by throwing resources at them?"

"That is a flawed argument!"

"Wan Tiansheng, what are you harboring in that treacherous heart of yours?"

"..."

The elders shouted at Wan Tiansheng one after another.

Finally, Wan Tiansheng sighed and said, "Everyone, calm down. Don't start shouting before I can even finish my words. What's the point of calling me a traitor and all sorts of names before hearing me out?"

He shook his head and continued, "I'll put it this way. By paying a certain level of price, we will receive something in return. On the Allheaven Battlefield, these races would be able to provide us with information. Additionally, we can also gain control over some sects in the Myriad Race Cult. That would be much better than trying to infiltrate them with our spies.

"We need to be willing to pay if we really want to get something good. This is the first year. If the first batch of foreign students can receive proper support and some experts emerge among them, the other minor races will start joining as well.

"They will come to see that by following the human race, they can live a good life. This will only benefit all of us.

"But if they see that we can't even give the first batch any benefits. I'll be frank. The various races are looking at us. The minor races are still hesitating. Will they still be willing to join us?"

Wan Tiansheng shook his head, "They won't. They would have to risk the ire of the strong races to join us without any benefits. Who would be willing to do so?"

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"The minor races will continue hesitating. During moments of crisis, they might even turn on us. But this is a risk that we can erase by paying only a low price."

An elder said, "Even so, you can't be unfair to our own students! Those resources did not appear out of thin air. Since you're willing to provide them to the foreign students, you should go further and provide them to our own students as well. Make more secret grottos available to our own students!"

Wan Tiansheng nonchalantly said, "Sure. Why not? But each activation of a secret grotto requires a lot of resources. The foreign students will be paying for the activation themselves. If you are willing to pay, I will have no problem with it."

"Deal!"

The elders hurriedly agreed. They had long wanted to activate more high-level secret grottos. They were finally able to make Wan Tiansheng agree to it.

In the crowd, there was a middle-aged woman who had been staying silent. Suddenly, she lazily said, "High-level secret grottos? Our faction will need 10 of the slots. Also, we won't be paying anything."

The elder furiously bellowed, "Wu Yuehua, what is the meaning of this?"

The woman lazily said, "What else can I mean? Am I not clear enough? You'll pay and my people will enter. It's that simple. Are you deaf? Can't you understand me?"

The elder had a gloomy expression as he said, "If you pay as well, we'll allow your people to enter."

The woman shrugged, "I don't have any money, resources, or merit points. I'm broke. You can ask this Wan guy if you don't believe me."

"Then forget about it."

The elder refused. She wanted to send her people in without paying? Dream on.

Wu Yuehua nonchalantly said, "Sure, we won't go. But those secret grottos do not belong to you. Those were inheritances left behind by generation after generation of cultural researchers. Some were left by my teacher. Some were left by my martial uncle. Some were left by my martial ancestor. Some were left by the fifth and fourth principals..."

"If my people can't enter, nobody can enter. Whoever dares to enter without my people...hehe, I'll blow the grottos apart."

She glanced at Wan Tiansheng who was enjoying the show and sneered, "You guys are rich and powerful. We have nothing. Since we have nothing to lose, what are we afraid of? Over the years, you guys have been suppressing our factions. And now you want me to work with you? Dream on!"

"Do you think nobody can do anything to you guys?" Wu Yuehua slammed her palm into the table and said, "I hereby declare that if my people can't enter, nobody can enter! Foreign races? Factions? Future of the academy? I could care less about all that!

"Don't push me. If you anger me, I'll make sure none of us can get anything! I already have a plan in mind! The character, pill and talisman masters can all leave the academy. Great Zhou and Great Ming have been giving us attractive offers to jump ship!

"Since you guys insist on suppressing us, we will simply leave. Wan Tiansheng, Zhou Mingren, since both of you enjoy working together so much, the two of you can stay together.

"We retreated once 50 years ago. But if you want to do the same again...do you really think I'm a fool like Liu Wenyan who would willingly concede for the sake of righteousness and the future of the academy?

"I'm warning you. If you dare to throw us aside, neither of us will get anything! I will gather the other factions in Great Xia and jump ship to Great Ming. We will start our own faculty there. Let's see who will be the one laughing at the end!

"Let's go!"

She then left. At the same time, about five elders from the group of over thirty stood up and left as well.

Before leaving, one of them said, "It's not right to push it too far. Hong Tan isn't even back yet. Don't be too indecisive and try to please only the stronger side. Do you think nobody knows what you're thinking? Sure, doing that, you are able to keep the academy stable. But that's not the case for us. If you can't guarantee fairness, then you won't get our help with your grand ambitions."

"Bastard!" shouted the elder who had argued with Wu Yuehua before. "Where are your manners?"

"Hehe..." Outside, Wu Yuehua's sneer rang out. "Zhou Mingren, don't throw the weight of your age around. If it wasn't for the fact that those idiots had willingly left 50 years ago, would there be a spot for you here? What are you thinking? Do you want to eliminate all of us and have your faction dominate the academy?"

"Keep running your mouth and I'll personally take this Heart Cultivating Pavilion apart today. Before the day ends, we'll all jump ship to a different prefecture. Let's see how long you can stay cocky after that."

"..."

Zhou Mingren had an ugly expression, but he did shut his mouth. Footsteps could be heard walking away from the room.

By the time Wu Yuehua's group left, the elder furiously said, "Principal, this is all because of your indulgence!"

Wan Tiansheng innocently said, "Old Zhou, how is that related to me? I can't afford to offend any of you. What can I do if the two of you can't get along well?"

Wan Tiansheng sighed, "Like I said, we can't push them too hard. But you guys insisted...If we're opening the secret grottos, we need to give them some slots. Otherwise, things will be hard for me.

"If they really leave, the Great Xia Cultural Research Academy will instantly be weakened by 30 percent. And when the prefect leaves seclusion, I'm afraid I'll be in trouble. You guys won't get off scot free either."

The elder coldly said, "That Wu Yuehua is being unreasonable! I said that they can pay for their part and we can all enter together. Did I stop them? They were the ones insisting on eating for free! Should we be indulging them?"

The elder was unreconciled. "Did we not earn our resources through hard work?"

Wan Tiansheng coughed and helplessly said, "It's very hard for me to remark on that. Back then, many geniuses of their faction were expelled. Some of them are still alive today. They have no income and can hardly stay afloat. Wu Yuehua and the others have been helping these people out..."

"That's their choice!"

Wan Tiansheng interrupted the outburst, "True, but we did deprive them of all their resources back then. Many of them were laced with debt. Wu Yuehua had spent between fifty to sixty thousand merit points for Liu Wenyan alone. She had also been helping the others with their debt. All in all, she had paid over a hundred thousand merit points for those people.

"Old Zhou, if we really go too far, both of us will suffer as well. Just let it go."

The elder gloomily said, "It's not like we were the ones who had forced them to take all those debts. Also, they had taken a lot of important items with them when leaving the academy. Wan Tiansheng, tell me. Did we force them to do that? If they hadn't taken those things with them, would they be laced with so much debt?"

"Have we tried snatching those things back all these years? Their strength has been stagnant. So many of them were stuck at the Mental Tempering Stage. Some chose to take those items to the grave instead of returning them to the academy before dying. Is that right?"

The elder was furious. "Who's the more selfish one here? Just because Wu Yuehua had spent all her wealth paying their debt, she's demanding to take our resources for free? If she dares to leave, let her leave. Do you think I don't dare to leave as well? Great Ming, Great Zhou, and Great Shang have been waiting for us to jump ship!"

Wan Tiansheng sighed, "You're right. Both of you have your own troubles. But over these years, you guys still have some income. The academy, the Knowledge Seeking Realm, and the prefectural government have been allocating a lot of funds to your faction. It's different for them. It won't do for me to be too impartial as a principal.

"How about this, Old Zhou? We'll let Wu Yuehua get what she wants this time. If there is a next time, we'll kick them out."

Old Zhou hesitated for a while before leaving with a cold snort. Many elders left with him. Only about a dozen elders were left.

Chapter 120: No Mercy (2)

Wan Tiansheng smiled nonchalantly. One of the remaining elders smiled and said, "Old Wan, you're pushing it too far. Don't keep turning them against each other. If their conflict escalates into true enmity, it won't be good for us either."

"It's fine." Wan Tiansheng laughed, "Wu Yuehua can talk the talk, but can she walk the walk? Even if she wants to leave, Hong Tan and the others won't agree. As for Old Zhou, after getting so many benefits, it's time for him to pay something back."

"That old fellow is still thinking about those items even after all these years. What's the point?"

"If he has the time to think about those items, he might as well use his time to recreate those things. Why is he holding onto the grudge for 50 years?"

Wan Tiansheng shook his head and continued, "This is good for us. If they aren't at each other's throats, it will be much harder for us to carry out our plan. Since they are busy dealing with each other, none will have the time or energy to interfere with our affairs."

Someone else laughed and said, "Old Wan, just know your limits. Don't anger them too much lest they really leave. At that time, it will be too late for regret."

"Don't worry."

Wan Tiansheng was indifferent. "It's not like you don't know this. Half of the so-called envoys of the various prefectures talking to them are actually our agents. The offers given by our agents are absolutely crazy. Since they were too embarrassed to confirm the offers with the various prefects, they all took the words of our agents as the truth. But when they do try to jump ship, hehe, they will find that the real offer is not even one tenth of what they have been offered. I wonder if they will instantly turn on those prefectures then."

At that, the elders laughed.

One of them cursed, "That's too scummy."

Wan Tiansheng was truly too treacherous. He was afraid that those fellows would really run off so he had been sending fake envoys to issue those people fake offers. Since the various prefectures were really trying to steal the people of Great Xia behind the scenes, they would be too embarrassed to say anything about it publicly even if they did notice the fake envoys.

And if Wu Yuehua and the others did end up jumping ship, the plan would be spoiled the moment they started talking about payments. Wan Tiansheng had intentionally offered a price that the various prefectures couldn't afford. They would only end up turning against each other.

Earlier, both Wu Yuehua and Old Zhou had been very confident that the various prefectures were waiting for them with high offers. These people and Principal Wan merely listened silently and laughed inwardly. None of them dared to speak the truth.

If the truth was exposed, Wan Tiansheng would probably be beaten to death before he could leave the building. That was too treacherous.

After joking around, someone seriously said, "Old Wan, your reputation in the academy has been very bad recently. The Foreign Student Faculty has brought the academy many troubles..."

"I wouldn't call those troubles." Wan Tiansheng calmly said, "I call those opportunities. An opportunity for reform. The academy is too bloated while the existing students are no longer capable of forging ahead. They spend all their time in internal struggles. I want to unite them. The Foreign Student Faculty will be a good target for them. We can't allow the internal conflicts to continue unchecked. There needs to be a limit to that.

"We can also use the foreign students to clear some deadweights from the academy. At the same time, we can trigger the students' competitiveness and bring them back to the right path.

"Those who deserve to leave will leave and those who deserve to stay will stay. We will slim down our bloated structure and gather more resources. And those minor races will be the contributors of these additional resources.

"Rather than let them fight among themselves, we might as well make them fight the outsiders. It is too wasteful to have Wu Yuehua and Old Zhou compete against each other. With the foreigners here, they

will shift their attention to those foreigners and there will be less internal conflicts among ourselves. We can use the foreign students to temper our students. This is a good plan."

One of the elders said hesitatingly, "How about the foreign races?"

"No worries."

Wan Tiansheng said, "Competition is a form of tempering. If they don't compete, how can they grow into experts? With the stiff competition, only the strong would be left. For the foreign races, losing some garbage students for a group of elites would be totally worth it.

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"Do you think they will care about losing some garbage students if they stand to gain some elites?"

"No."

"Then it will be fine!" Wan Tiansheng was all smiles as he said, "I have it all planned out. The Myriad God House of the divines and the Allheaven Purgatory of the devils will be our next targets. We will compete against them and we will win.

"When conflict between the human students and the foreign students is starting to reach the point of no return, we will shift their attention once again and unite everyone against the divines and the devils.

"And if we win, the foreign students will discover that the divines and the devils aren't that scary after all."

Wan Tiansheng narrowed his eyes and said, "Since the divines and the devils can actually be defeated, why would they need to be afraid of them? Those minor races will lose their fear toward the divines and the devils. Will they still listen to the two races?"

"At that point, the academy will grow strong, our students will grow strong, our internal strife will stop, the minor races will gain the confidence to stand against the divines and the devils, and we will get the additional resources we have been trying to get. Everything will be great."

An elder said, "That's only if everything moves smoothly. I'm afraid that it won't go according to your plan."

Wan Tiansheng nodded, "There is a possibility of the plan failing. The Myriad God House and Allheaven Purgatory are also no pushovers. A single failure will ruin all the work we have done before and instead further showcase how strong the divines and devils are to the various races."

Someone worriedly said, "At that time, you will be in great trouble."

"I'll be fine." Wan Tiansheng was indifferent. "At that time, Xia Longwu will leave seclusion and lead the Martial Dragon Guards and the Devil Subduing Army to the Allheaven Battlefield. There, he will kill some divines and devils before stepping into the Invincible Realm."

"I will be removed from my position as a principal. Everything will start anew. All the failures from before will be my fault. Great Xia will still be Great Xia while I can move on with my life at a different place. It's not like they will actually kill me."

"Therefore, this is a good opportunity for us. We can reform and throw out the old ways that don't work anymore without that big of a price. Everyone, this is a very rare opportunity. How can we give up on it?"

The crowd sighed. He might sound relaxed, but if the worst case scenario really happened, he would ruin the reputation he had spent a lifetime building. He would become the disgrace of Great Xia.

He would be called a traitor, a turncoat, trash, and all sorts of humiliating names. He would be the most despised person in Great Xia while his sacrifice would only highlight the greatness of Xia Longwu alone.

Wan Tiansheng did not care about their thoughts. He continued speaking, "Of course, we still need to focus on nurturing these students. We can't ruin this batch of students as well."

His face turned solemn as he said, "In the past, we have been competing among ourselves. Victory or defeat doesn't matter that much. Now, we are competing against outsiders. The price of defeat is death.

"I guess this would be good for the students. They can witness how cruel the world actually is. There are things that they can't experience from internal conflicts."

Wan Tiansheng took a deep breath before continuing, "Train them well. I want all the senior researchers to start teaching the students this year. As for the students, I don't need all of them to be geniuses, but plant a few freaks among them to provoke all the other students. These freaks are there as props and they should be self-aware enough to play their part well.

"If you really can't find any good students..." Wan Tiansheng clenched his teeth and said, "You guys will put on a disguise and pretend to be freak students. Do you understand me?"

"..."

The elders were speechless. Old Wan must have gone crazy. He was telling them to pretend to be students? They were all Mountainsea experts! He was expecting them to pretend to be students?

One of them sighed, "Old Wan, this isn't proper, right? Don't pressure the student too much. If they break from the pressure, it will be hard for us to answer for our actions."

"Afraid of pressure? Then are they still qualified to be freaks? Are they still qualified to be geniuses? If they are afraid of pressure, just go back home.

"This is exactly what I want. I need them to experience true cruelty. When they reach the Skysoar Realm in six months, you will be ahead of them at the seventh-stage Skysoar Realm. When they reach the Cloudbreach Realm, you will be ahead of them at the Mountainsea Realm. Keep suppressing them. Let them know that there is always someone better out there.

"That kid from Great Zhou is getting too arrogant. He keeps thinking that he is the best in the world. I believe that it is only a matter of time before his confidence ruins him. Just because he has some talent, he looks down on the world. In truth, he's nothing special!

"We'll go with this plan. I don't care how you do it. Just pick a few of you to enter a seclusion before you start pretending to be students. If it's too embarrassing to look for others to act as your teachers, just pick some of your colleagues present. Then, all you need to do is appear once in a while and step all over those students."

Wan Tiansheng flashed a treacherous grin as he said, "Go all out. Don't be afraid that you will destroy their confidence. Every now and then, provoke and step on those so-called geniuses and freaks. If some of them break from the pressure, so be it. We will leave our resources to the true geniuses."

An elder sighed, "If they found out about this, we would be too embarrassed to show our faces anymore."

"What are you afraid of? Don't worry. If nobody here leaks this, how would they know?"

"We're doing this for the students' well-being. Or to be precise, we're doing this for the good of humanity. In fact, if this plan works, I'll suggest to the Knowledge Seeking Realm and War Shrine to spread this method to the entire Human Realm."

The more Wan Tiansheng spoke, the more excited he was. "After growing into true experts, not only would these people not blame us, but they would gladly join in as well. They would happily subject the new students to the same humiliation they had gone through. With that, this practice would be passed down generation after generation."

Someone laughed and said, "Old Wan, I keep having the feeling that you are creating a lot of trouble for yourself in the future. You are showing no mercy to these students."

The elder was right. The foreign students, the two greatest academies of the divines and devils, and the fake students played by these elders were all there to push the students into desperation one step at a time.

A student who managed to grow into an expert through such a torture would definitely want to take revenge on the culprit.

Wan Tiansheng did not mind. He concluded, "We have reached an agreement, then. Also, I heard there are a lot of geniuses among the new students this year. Each of them is more arrogant than the other. I want you to smash their confidence apart."

"Old Wan, your juniors are among them..."

"Don't mind them. Show no mercy. If you dare to step on even the juniors of the principal, nobody would be able to criticize your actions.

"Right, Old Zheng's grandson is among the students as well. He would be a good target as well. Show them that you are brave enough to offend the juniors of two principals.

"Show them how fearless you are. Teach the juniors of the Xia Family and the Hu Family a good lesson as well."

Wan Tiansheng smiled happily as he continued, "Also, Fatty Xia's juniors are here as well. Step on them as much as you can. It's even better if you can make them leave the academy. That damn fatty actually told me that he couldn't afford the school fees this year and demanded that I accept his juniors for free. Be sure to step on them."

Laughter resounded in the room. That Marquis Xia was truly too stingy.

"Hopefully this storm will be enough to create a few good seeds among the new students..."

Wan Tiansheng lamented, "Fifty years ago, the academy has indeed grown stronger after expelling those fellows. But as a result, we have also placed a limitation on our people. We no longer dare to take risks and experiment. As a result, we nurtured a bunch of cultivators that were formed from the same mold. Their future was ruined. That was my fault. Sure, we did produce some Mountainsea experts, but we have not produced a single Supreme expert. It has been fifty years!"

For the past fifty years, the Great Xia Cultural Research Academy had not produced a single Supreme expert. Although that wasn't a long time for cultivators, they would still be able to produce one every few decades in the past. But they had not been able to produce any since fifty years ago.

Wan Tiansheng knew that it was too late to revert some of the changes. All the newer students were incredibly obedient. They were basically robots with a stiff mindset. Without a reform, the academy might be able to continue prospering. But they would no longer become a pillar in humanity's struggle against the myriad races.

They were terribly lacking in terms of the production of high-end experts. For Wan Tiansheng, that was scarier than the destruction of the academy. Even more terrifying was the fact that the incident fifty years ago did not involve only Great Xia. Its aftereffects had actually spread through the entire Human Realm.

That was a very scary thought. He had not been able to sleep well at night. He was afraid that if he didn't reform now, it would be too late.