

Overlord 171

Chapter 171: Really Strong Senior

Xiang Shaoyun hastily turned and asked, "Who are you, senior?"

Since this person was able to approach while escaping all his senses, it could only prove that this person was far stronger than him. Fortunately, the newcomer did not seem to intend him any harm. Otherwise, Xiang Shaoyun could have been killed before even knowing what happened.

Xiang Shaoyun looked everywhere, including the sky, yet he found nobody. Right this moment, he felt someone lightly patting his shoulder. He quickly turned. Someone had appeared behind him without him realizing it.

"You are?" Xiang Shaoyun asked the stranger.

The stranger was a man looking about 30 years old. He had a stout appearance, his body tall and sturdy, and he was currently dressed in a set of plain clothes. His entire person emanated a certain sort of grace, and hanging on his back was a crude saber that looked like an extension of his body. In fact, him standing there gave a feeling that he himself was a large saber stabbed into the ground.

Even odder was the fact that despite looking young, he had the eyes of an old person who had experienced a long, long life. The hair at his temples had also turned white, and he gave off a contrasting feeling where he felt both young and old at the same time.

"Who I am is not important. What's important is whether you think what you are doing here is right," said the man nonchalantly.

Xiang Shaoyun pondered for a bit before saying, "You are right. I might be letting them off too easily. However...I also believe that at least some of them will decide to mend their ways and quit the life of crime."

The man looked at Xiang Shaoyun in astonishment. He smiled and said, "You are still young yet are capable of reaching such a conclusion. Not bad, but you are still too naive. As the saying goes, one's essential nature is hard to change. One's nature will determine the kind of person one will be."

"I understand what you're saying, senior. But I still don't understand who you are. You aren't here just to tell me that, right?" Xiang Shaoyun asked calmly. Since this person was not showing any

intention to harm him, this person was not an enemy. But his actual intention was still unknown as of now.

"Are you not scared of me?" asked the man.

"Why should I be scared?" Xiang Shaoyun asked.

The man smiled and said, "Hehe, splendid. This calmness is a good quality. Although your cultivation level is still quite low, you are quite decent as a whole." He paused then continued, "Come with me."

He then lifted Xiang Shaoyun and flew away. The only thing Xiang Shaoyun heard was a whoosh before he was high in the air.

A King? No, an Emperor! he inwardly cried out in alarm.

An Emperor was an existence beyond a King, and among humans, they definitely resided in the upper part of the pyramid. They were extraordinarily powerful and were often important individuals of powerful organizations, their whereabouts often unknown.

Xiang Shaoyun had no idea how he had suddenly attracted the attention of an Emperor Realm cultivator. But he was lucky that the person bore no ill intent toward him. Otherwise, he had no chance of surviving.

In the blink of an eye, Xiang Shaoyun was brought to the peak of the tallest mountain behind the Redwolf Bandit stronghold. The wind was quite strong, causing his clothes to whip about madly.

"What may I assist you with, senior?" Xiang Shaoyun asked.

"Swing your saber at me with your full strength," the man said. Inwardly, he mused to himself, This child has an extraordinary calmness and is completely fearless even when facing an Emperor.

"Wouldn't that be rude?" Xiang Shaoyun found the request completely random and senseless.

"Cut the crap. Just do what you're told," said the man impatiently.

"Fine, get ready," said Xiang Shaoyun. He did not know what the man was getting at, but he had no excuse to say no anyway.

Without hiding anything, Xiang Shaoyun directly took out the Overlord Skyslaying Saber. He did not care whether the man would assume that he had an astral cosmos sea or a storage item, as it was pointless to hide it.

The man had been paying close attention to Xiang Shaoyun. When he saw the Overlord Skyslaying Saber appearing in Xiang Shaoyun's hand, he was slightly astonished: This kid has a storage item. He did not consider that Xiang Shaoyun had an astral cosmos sea. After all, the kid was only a Transformation Realm cultivator. How could a person in that realm have one?

Too bad for him he was wrong. After taking the saber out, Xiang Shaoyun did not attack immediately. Rather, he stood there and completely relaxed himself. He stared at the man with all his focus, waiting for the best timing to attack.

Hu! Hu!

The wind grew stronger and stronger. Abruptly, Xiang Shaoyun moved. The saber in his hands trailed through the air, moving at an extremely fast speed with lightning energy wrapped around it.

It was a stunning attack capable of killing even late-stage Transformation Realm experts. But it was unable to harm the man whatsoever. The man merely raised his brow before grabbing at the saber. Instantly, the lightning-powered saber energy was grasped tightly in his hand.

Xiang Shaoyun had long expected that the man would remain completely fine. Thus, he wasn't surprised. Instead, he smiled calmly and said, "Senior, your extraordinary strength commands respect from this kid."

The man did not say anything. He molded the saber energy into a clump before forming it into a purple saber. He then wielded the saber and lightly tossed it toward a certain direction.

Rumble!

The purple saber flew away before creating a loud explosion that instantly turned a large number of trees into powder. A large cut over 100 meters long was left on the ground, looking more like a canyon than a cut. Xiang Shaoyun was alarmed at what he saw, An Emperor is indeed an Emperor, capable of casually causing such destructiveness.

"What do you think?" the man asked.

"Um...very strong," Xiang Shaoyun said.

"Just that?" The man appeared unhappy.

"Um...senior, you are really strong," Xiang Shaoyun repeated himself.

The man frowned, "Don't you have anything you want to ask of me after seeing that?"

"What should I ask?" Xiang Shaoyun was confused.

The man said, "The saber intent you had comprehended is just a tiny part of what I know. Don't you want to learn even more complicated saber intents?"

"Of course I want to!" Xiang Shaoyun said.

"If you want to, shouldn't you do something about it?" the man said.

"Yes, you are right. I will work hard in my cultivation and continue comprehending the saber to a deeper level," vowed Xiang Shaoyun.

The man was so infuriated he felt like fainting. He glared at Xiang Shaoyun and shouted, "Have you not considered looking for a master to teach you the saber?"

"Of course I have. But it is not easy to find a master," Xiang Shaoyun said.

"Ahhh, I see. So you are just toying with me all this while. You think I'm not good enough to be your master, is that it?" The man finally understood that Xiang Shaoyun was only feigning ignorance. That realization greatly angered him.

Chapter 172: Saber Emperor Du Xuanhao

There were 10 particular Emperor Realm cultivators in the Cloud Margin City that were no regular Emperors. Even in the entirety of the Soaring Dragon Province, they were among the top Emperors.

The Western Desert was the name of this vast region formed of numerous provinces. This region had a population of trillions of people. Numerous organizations filled the region, and in such a vast region, there were naturally a lot of powerful geniuses as well. The Soaring Dragon Province was merely a small province within the region, yet it already had a population of over 10 billion people.

One could say that the Cloud Margin City was doing very well for them to have 10 Emperors considered powerful even among the entirety of the province. The man speaking to Xiang Shaoyun was none other than the Saber Emperor, Du Xuanhao, who was ranked in the top three among the Emperors.

The Saber Emperor Du Xuanhao was a legend. Since he had started cultivating, he had slaughtered a path to Emperorship with his saber and had obtained a certain amount of reputation in the Soaring Dragon Province as a whole. If it wasn't because he had cultivated for slightly less time than the other top 10 Emperors, he would be ranked even higher.

As for why Du Xuanhao was here, he was here for Xiang Shaoyun. Xiang Shaoyun had managed to comprehend the saber intent at the Green Bamboo Academy, which was a saber intent he had left. He once planned to accept whoever was capable of comprehending that saber intent as his disciple. After waiting for many years, someone had finally comprehended the saber intent.

However, he did not show himself and take Xiang Shaoyun as his disciple immediately. Instead, he observed Xiang Shaoyun's nature in the dark before finally making his choice. In other words, ever since Xiang Shaoyun had comprehended the saber intent, Du Xuanhao had been secretly observing everything Xiang Shaoyun did.

Xiang Shaoyun was completely unaware of it all. The only thing he knew was that not even an Emperor was worthy of being his master.

"You must be kidding, senior. How would this kid dare toy around with you?" Xiang Shaoyun replied deferentially. He paused slightly before speaking again, emanating a unique sort of grace

this time, "Although this kid has a low cultivation level, not many people are actually capable of being my master."

What he said was right. With his heaven-defying physique, even the strongest of the strongest within the Nine God Provinces would want to take him as a disciple. Although an Emperor was strong, they were still nothing in his eyes.

He was no longer the same Xiang Shaoyun who would act shamelessly just so he could be accepted into the Martial Hall Palace. He already had his cultivation foundation built and had a direction to strive for. Thus, he would be able to continue his cultivation even if he was all alone. After all, he still had an unimaginable number of battle techniques in his head. More importantly, his comprehension ability far surpassed an average person's. He would be able to comprehend the intricacies of cultivation even without guidance. Because of that, he did not have any intention to get a master for now.

When Du Xuanhao heard Xiang Shaoyun's words, he roared with laughter and said, "What a boastful kid. Do you think you can look down on everyone just because you are somewhat talented? Do you think this Emperor is just an ordinary King?"

A supreme power then erupted from Du Xuanhao's body before it pressed down on Xiang Shaoyun. Xiang Shaoyun was left unharmed, but he could clearly see that the rocks and pebbles around him had all been reduced to powder from the pressure. That was a terrifying presence, one that an ordinary King would not be able to release.

Xiang Shaoyun took in the pressure with complete calm. Not a trace of panic could be seen on his face. Rather, he waited until Du Xuanhao withdrew the pressure before unhurriedly saying, "I know senior is at least an Emperor, but still, that is not enough to be my master."

If someone else heard those words, they would most likely think that Xiang Shaoyun had gone crazy. Even an Emperor was not worthy of being his master? That was a tad bit too boastful, wasn't it? Even Du Xuanhao started to wonder if Xiang Shaoyun was actually mentally challenged.

"Tell me then, kid. What type of person is worthy of being your master?" Du Xuanhao asked with a frown.

He started wondering if Xiang Shaoyun was not as simple as he looked. Inwardly, he started questioning himself, Knowingly rejecting an Emperor like me as a master...is he the disciple of some major organization? Then again, even the kids of a tier-4 or tier-5 organization will still kneel down when meeting me.

"At the very least, one has to be a top Sovereign to be my master," Xiang Shaoyun answered seriously.

King Realm, Emperor Realm, Sovereign Realm, each realm was much more powerful than the realm before. The so-called Sovereign Realm was a realm after the Emperor Realm.

Even Du Xuanhao was visibly alarmed when he heard that. He sighed and said, "A person like that would be a supreme existence in tier-6 organizations. Do you think people like them would accept a mere second-stage Transformation Realm cultivator like you as a disciple? At your age, you need to at least be a King to catch their attention."

"I believe if they are not blind, they will come to the same conclusion as you, senior," Xiang Shaoyun replied confidently.

"Haha, I'm getting curious now. Where do you get all that confidence?" Du Xuanhao roared with laughter.

When Xiang Shaoyun saw Du Xuanhao's burning gaze, he quickly asked, "Senior, you aren't thinking of forcing me to be your disciple, right?"

Du Xuanhao immediately felt like a shameless person forcing a young man to be his disciple when he heard that. He quickly blurted, "Countless people are waiting to be my disciple. Since you are not interested, it's your loss. Just don't regret it in the future."

Right after saying that, he vanished.

"Hey, senior, you're not dumping me here, right? Come on! At least take me down the mountain!" Xiang Shaoyun cried out. Unfortunately, Du Xuanhao was nowhere to be seen.

Emperor my ass. Such an irresponsible person, Xiang Shaoyun grumbled inwardly. He stood on the mountain peak, not in any hurry to return to the stronghold. Instead, he lay down on a clean patch of grass and stared at the sky, thinking about his next step.

Apart from growing strong without stop, he really had no other options. But when he thought of the enemy he had to face in the future, he did not think that his strength alone would be enough.

I need to start building my own army. I need all sorts of people, and no matter the type of person they are, so long as they are useful, I will have a use for them. It is too tiring fighting alone. It's not like I stand a lot of chance fighting alone anyway, Xiang Shaoyun reached a decision.

After making up his mind, he got back up and headed to the Redwolf Bandits stronghold. The bandits there were already dispersing, and the stronghold was much more desolate compared to before.

After sending everyone on their way, Mo Mo went looking for Xiang Shaoyun. When she couldn't find him, she became extremely dispirited. Her initial plan was to live on with a decent backer. Unfortunately, that new backer did not seem to care about her at all. Thus, she was overjoyed when Xiang Shaoyun returned.

"Well done. You may stay by my side in the future. If you do well, I won't let you down," Xiang Shaoyun said.

"Thank you, y-young master!" Mo Mo said happily.

"Um. Pack up and come with me to Cloud Margin City," Xiang Shaoyun said with a nod.

Chapter 173: Arriving at Cloud Margin City

Cloud Margin City was only a small and remote city within the Soaring Dragon Province. But compared to towns, the city was already fairly large. The city occupied an expansive area and was filled with numerous ancient constructions. Wide streets and roads trailed all over the city, and a large crowd could be seen on the streets at all times. The streets were large enough to allow a large number of people to speed around on their mounts without feeling like they were squeezing at all.

The first feeling one would have upon entering the city was that there were a lot of people here, the city was large, and shops were everywhere. Xiang Shaoyun had just arrived with Mo Mo after a long journey.

They were each mounted on an ordinary red wolf and did not stand out among the crowd. After all, Xiang Shaoyun was using the human skin mask and currently had the appearance of a young adult. With his new look, when the two walked together, they resembled a pair of lovers.

"The Cloud Margin City is so big," Mo Mo exclaimed in admiration. This was not her first time here, yet she still couldn't help but be awed by the city.

On the other hand, Xiang Shaoyun was completely nonchalant as he said, "Just a tiny city. You will know how big the world is when you see a truly large city."

"You must have been to even larger cities, young master," Mo Mo said curiously. After spending some time with Xiang Shaoyun, she found that he was like a deep pond that she couldn't read at all.

At times, he would behave like a rash young master. At other times, he would behave like he had an ancient soul within his young body, behaving with the dignity of a sovereign above all others. Sometimes, he would be a cheerful and honest regular young man.

The many sides of him enveloped her in a thick mist that caused Mo Mo to be unable to judge what kind of person he was, which caused her to be completely devoted to him, not emotionally, but through her loyalty. She had a feeling that by following this young man, a beautiful future would await her.

"Yes, compared to the places I've been to, this city is too small." Xiang Shaoyun nodded.

They found a restaurant that also acted as a tavern and settled down before Mo Mo was sent out to look for the most famous blacksmith store in the city. Xiang Shaoyun wasn't looking to forge a weapon, but he was looking for a place to sell his goldsteel stones for some spirit crystals.

Firstly, he needed to empty some space in his astral cosmos sea. Secondly, by accumulating more spirit crystals, things would be easier if he needed to buy something in the future. The spirit crystals he had gotten from the Wu Clan had nearly been finished by now. Although he had gotten a lot from the Redwolf Bandits, that number was still nothing in his eyes.

Soon, Mo Mo returned and told him that there were three famed blacksmith stores in Cloud Margin City. The first store was naturally the Cloud Margin Forging Pavilion run by the Cloud Margin Pavilion, and it had a top tier-4 blacksmith. The other two stores were quite decent as well, but they were somewhat lacking in comparison.

Xiang Shaoyun then took several hundred catties of ordinary goldsteel stones from his astral cosmos sea before heading toward the Cloud Margin Forging Pavilion with Mo Mo. Mo Mo was astonished when she saw the large number of materials Xiang Shaoyun had taken out. Inwardly, she

felt doubtful, Has the young master been carrying these materials all along? Perhaps he has a legendary storage item on him?

At that thought, she became even more curious about Xiang Shaoyun's identity.

The Cloud Margin Forging Pavilion was located in the central area of the city, which was also the city's most flourishing area. Every single day, countless cultivators would come to trade in all sorts of weapons. The business there was extremely good. After arriving, Xiang Shaoyun and Mo Mo headed straight to the materials trading section.

"Guests, are you here to purchase or sell materials?" asked a middle-aged man politely.

Xiang Shaoyun went straight to the point and took out a goldsteel stone. "I'm here to sell this."

When Xiang Shaoyun removed the cloth covering the stone, the middle-aged man smiled and said, "What a large goldsteel stone."

"Offer your price," Xiang Shaoyun said.

"We need to weigh it first," answered the middle-aged man. After weighing the goldsteel stone, the middle-aged man said, "We can offer you 3,000 low-grade spirit crystals for this."

Xiang Shaoyun frowned. "That price is too low."

The piece of goldsteel stone he had taken out was enough to forge more than 10 king-grade weapons. Thus, Xiang Shaoyun was not satisfied with the price offered.

"Goldsteel stones are rare but not impossible to find. I am already offering you a fair price," said the middle-aged man.

"You guys can have the goldsteel stone for 500 mid-grade spirit crystals. Otherwise, I will take the stone back," Xiang Shaoyun said.

"Brother, that is too expensive." The middle-aged man was still trying to haggle.

Xiang Shaoyun did not bother saying anything else and directly left with the goldsteel stone. Suddenly, an old voice rang out, "Deal. We're buying it for 500 mid-grade spirit crystals."

"Master," the middle-aged man turned around and greeted respectfully.

The healthy looking old man who had just appeared was none other than the master of the Cloud Margin Forging Pavilion, and he was also a high-level elder in the Cloud Margin Pavilion. His name was Tao Ran, the King Realm blacksmith of Cloud Margin City. He rarely came here, and he was coincidentally here just to look around today.

"You know your stuff, lord," said Xiang Shaoyun respectfully.

"Don't bother buttering up to me. The quality of your goldsteel stone is worth that price," said Tao Ran. After saying that, he ignored Xiang Shaoyun and walked away.

Xiang Shaoyun hastily called out, "Lord, please don't leave first. What price would you offer for a top-quality goldsteel stone?"

Tao Ran immediately stopped walking and turned around before hastily asking, "You have a top-quality goldsteel stone on you?"

"Maybe, if the price is acceptable, of course," Xiang Shaoyun tossed out bait.

"Sure, if you really have some, I will buy all that you have. I will even offer 10 percent more than the market price," said Tao Ran in excitement.

"If it's only 10 percent more, I might as well sell it in an auction," said Xiang Shaoyun, dissatisfied with the offer.

"You need to know that although a top-quality goldsteel stone is an excellent material, not many people here can afford to buy it," said Tao Ran. He was somewhat unhappy with Xiang Shaoyun's greed. He was an elder of Cloud Margin Pavilion. This young man was merely a second-stage Transformation Realm kid, and he dared to haggle around unendingly?

"Sure, but there is still a possibility that someone will buy it, right?" Xiang Shaoyun said.

"Fine, you make a good case. How about this, I'll offer an additional 10 percent on top of that. Moreover, you will enjoy a 10 percent discount when you buy weapons here in the future," said Tao Ran.

A top-quality goldsteel stone was in fact an emperor-grade material. It was extremely rare, and Tao Ran did not wish to miss out on it. He also started wondering if this kid had stumbled upon some mine. Otherwise, how would he have a top-quality goldsteel stone on him?

Xiang Shaoyun did not take out the top-quality goldsteel stone directly. Instead, he left with the 500 mid-grade spirit crystals. But of course, a tail had appeared behind him.

Chapter 174: Building a Spy Network

After Xiang Shaoyun and Mo Mo left the Cloud Margin Forging Pavilion, they started strolling around the city. Since Xiang Shaoyun no longer had to worry about someone recognizing him, he could have as much fun as he liked without worrying about his pursuers.

"Mo Mo, I need you to build a spy network for me. Will you be able to do that?" Xiang Shaoyun asked as they walked. Mo Mo blanked out.

She then answered honestly, "I don't have any relevant experience, so I'm not sure if I will end up disappointing you, young master."

"You are still too weak. I will give you a year to grow and reach the King Realm. Then, use Cloud Margin City as your base and build a spy network that can penetrate any place. As for the support you will need for the task, I will provide everything," Xiang Shaoyun said.

Xiang Shaoyun felt that the task would be too demanding for Mo Mo with her current strength. She was still too weak. It wouldn't be easy for her to build a spy network with her current cultivation level.

But after hearing Xiang Shaoyun's words, Mo Mo became excited, and she said, "If the young master trusts me, I will definitely be able to do it!"

"Um. We'll first buy a residence at Cloud Margin City. You can get started once you learn more about the city," Xiang Shaoyun said.

Thus, they started looking for a residence for sale. Suddenly, Xiang Shaoyun had a feeling that someone was tailing him.

Is it someone from the Cloud Margin Forging Pavilion? Xiang Shaoyun wondered. At that thought, he brought Mo Mo and dove into the crowd as he tried to break free of the surveillance.

Mo Mo noticed Xiang Shaoyun was suddenly behaving differently, and she asked nervously, "Young master, what happened?"

"Someone might be tailing us. We'll talk back at the restaurant," Xiang Shaoyun whispered.

But when the person tailing them noticed that he had been discovered, he decided to increase his speed and move directly into the open. When Xiang Shaoyun noticed that he couldn't shake away his follower, he turned around and stood still, waiting for his tail to arrive.

Not long after, an ordinary looking man approached him and laughed dryly, "Greetings. I am Wen Hong."

"Do you need anything?" Xiang Shaoyun frowned.

"I come from a blacksmithing clan, the Wen Clan. I wonder if you have heard of us before?" Wen Hong introduced himself.

Xiang Shaoyun and Mo Mo exchanged glances as they both knew that this blacksmith clan was the organization second only to the Cloud Margin Forging Pavilion in terms of blacksmithing in the city.

"And why are you tailing us?" Xiang Shaoyun asked.

"I accidentally overheard that you are selling top-quality goldsteel stone, so I am here to discuss it with you. Will it be possible for you to sell it to our Wen Clan instead? As for the price, do not worry. We are offering 10 percent more than what the Cloud Margin Pavilion is offering," Wen Hong said, going straight to the point.

"Can you speak on behalf of your clan, though?" Xiang Shaoyun asked with a faint smile.

If someone was willing to offer him a better price, he would not mind considering it.

"Um, I am not sure about that, that was why I had decided to tail you first. After figuring out where you stay, I could then return and inform my clan about this," Wen Hong gave his reasoning for tailing Xiang Shaoyun.

"Sure. I'll be waiting for you at the Cloud Margin Restaurant," Xiang Shaoyun said.

"You are a straightforward person. I will return and inform my clan first. I'll come look for you after that," Wen Hong said joyfully. Just as he was about to leave, he recalled something and said, "How many top-quality goldsteel stones do you have in your possession? Knowing that would make it easier for me to negotiate with my clan."

Xiang Shaoyun raised a finger and said, "At least 100 catties."

"That's good to hear. Please wait for my reply," said Wen Hong in excitement before he vanished amid the crowd on the street.

"Use whatever methods you have and gather some general information about the Wen Clan. I will be waiting for you at the restaurant," Xiang Shaoyun said.

This would be Mo Mo's first test. If she couldn't even complete this task, it would be pointless to have her build the spy network.

"Yes, master," Mo Mo answered and started thinking about her next step.

As for Xiang Shaoyun, he returned to the restaurant and ordered some food and liquor and started drinking alone. Since he had a lot of materials with him, he needed to clear some of them from his astral cosmos sea. If the Wen Clan was willing to offer a suitable price, he was willing to sell them all he had.

It is not hard to clear the goldsteel stones, but my main goal is to find a unique land where fire congregates so that I can refine the white tiger bone into my saber. Since those blacksmiths require

all sorts of high-level flames to refine equipment, they might know something about a place like that, Xiang Shaoyun thought.

About an hour later, Mo Mo returned and told Xiang Shaoyun what she had discovered. The Wen Clan was a renowned clan within Cloud Margin City. They had King Realm cultivators and King Realm blacksmiths. In recent years, they had declined, resulting in a lack of new talents. Because of that, they no longer enjoyed the reputation they once had. One had to admit that Mo Mo did very well to be able to gather all that information in such a short span of time.

"Well done. You can start recruiting people for the spy network," Xiang Shaoyun praised.

"Thank you for the praise, young master. I will do well!" Mo Mo promised confidently. She was already slowly adapting to her new role and was filled with expectation for the future. As they waited, Wen Hong did not appear, but someone else he knew had appeared in the restaurant instead.

A young man and young woman had appeared in the restaurant. The young man looked decently handsome, but the air of arrogance surrounding him was rather annoying to look at. As for the young woman, she was akin to a tender flower that attracted all gazes the moment she stepped inside the restaurant.

"Qinyin, let's sit there," said the young man when he saw that there were still empty seats beside Xiang Shaoyun.

That's right. The person Xiang Shaoyun saw was none other than the number one beauty of Martial Hall Palace, Gong Qinyin. Her appearance in Cloud Margin City was quite surprising for Xiang Shaoyun.

Gong Qinyin seemed to have an unsightly expression on her face as she nodded and followed the young man over. After the two sat down, Xiang Shaoyun heard Gong Qinyin say, "Wen Jinnuo, is the information you found accurate?"

"Of course. It hasn't been easy to get that information at all. Some of my fellow apprentices in the pavilion have also noticed the same. If they decide to make a move, you stand no chance," Wen Jinnuo said.

When Wen Jinnuo looked at Gong Qinyin, the lust and desire in his eyes couldn't be hidden.

"How will I know without trying?" Gong Qinyin said resolutely.

"Haha, stop trying to force yourself. You have spent the past two years cultivating in a tiny town. Your speed has been too slow. All the fellow apprentices in the pavilion are in the Transformation Realm. Competing against them is the same as knocking an egg against a rock," said Wen Jinnuo. He added, "If you can agree to be my partner, perhaps I can give your Gong Clan some help and snatch it for you."

Chapter 175: Parting on Bad Terms

"Do you think threatening someone with something like this is how a gentleman should act?" Gong Qinyin asked resentfully.

"Heh, that's not a threat. It is merely an expression of my love to you." Wen Jinnuo smiled and said confidently, "In any case, your Gong Clan is intending to form a connection with our Wen Clan through marriage, right?"

"If that is the cost, I would rather give up on that thing. I will never compromise," Gong Qinyin spat before standing up to leave.

"Leave and your name will be erased from the Cloud Margin Pavilion's list. Do you want to give it a try?" Wen Jinnuo sneered.

"You are pushing it too far!" Gong Qinyin said furiously.

"Just be my woman already, Qinyin. Do you think that I'm actually not worthy of you? I am stronger than you, and my clan is stronger than yours. Become my woman, and we shall work together to become a powerful pair that everyone will be envious of. Won't that be a beautiful future?" Wen Jinnuo said longingly.

Gong Qinyin's expression kept shifting until she eventually said, "You are worthy of me, but I am not worthy of you."

She then left without saying anything else.

Wen Jinnuo blocked her path and said with a low voice, "Are you giving up on the millennium earthcore fire? That is not a flame you can easily find. Without it, I'm afraid the old man of your clan will depart the mortal world very soon."

Millennium earthcore fire! Although Wen Jinnuo was speaking in a low voice that was hardly audible to anyone else, Xiang Shaoyun was able to hear everything clearly with his gift of instincts.

A unique flame was exactly what he was looking for at the moment. He needed it to refine the Overlord Skyslaying Saber and smelt the heavenly eye stone to extract the heavenly eye liquid from within. When he heard about the millennium earthcore fire, he couldn't keep calm anymore.

The millennium earthcore fire was a unique flame that would only form after 1,000 years of existence. From the amount of time it required to form, one could imagine how powerful the flame was.

It was at this moment that Wen Hong arrived with some other people for Xiang Shaoyun. He came in a group of three, and even the Wen Clan leader was part of the group. When Wen Jinnuo, who was speaking with Gong Qinyin, saw them, he quickly stood up in excitement and greeted them deferentially. "Greetings, father and the two elders."

"What are you doing here instead of cultivating in the pavilion?" questioned the clan leader unhappily.

"Father, I've just returned from a training trip and met Qinyin by coincidence. We are having a meal here," said Wen Jinnuo.

The clan leader glanced at Gong Qinyin. The latter quickly stepped forward and saluted him, "Gong Qinyin of Gong Clan pays the Wen Clan leader her respects."

"Haha, so it is a niece from the Gong Clan? It has been quite a while since I last saw you. Look at you all grown up and beautiful now. You have grown very well!" said the clan leader with a smile. He paused for a bit and continued, "Alright, continue. We have business to attend."

"Clan leader, there he is," said Wen Hong as he pointed at Xiang Shaoyun.

The Wen Clan group then walked toward Xiang Shaoyun's table. Wen Jinnuo and Gong Qinyin were naturally not qualified to go with them. When they looked over, they were astonished to find that the clan leader actually had business with the people who were previously seated near them.

"Mister, this is our clan leader. He will be personally handling the negotiation. May we move to a private room now?" Wen Hong said in a friendly manner.

Both Xiang Shaoyun and Mo Mo stood up and greeted the Wen Clan people. Xiang Shaoyun was able to sense that the clan leader was a King Realm cultivator, one that was likely to be far stronger than a regular King Realm cultivator.

"Let's book a private room in this restaurant to continue the talk," said the clan leader. When he saw that Xiang Shaoyun and Mo Mo were both only Transformation Realm cultivators, he started to think less of them.

"There is no need for that. Just offer a price. If it is a price we find agreeable, we can stay in touch and complete the transaction," said Xiang Shaoyun in a straightforward manner. He had no interest in wasting too much time on this. In any case, he could see from the clan leader's eyes that he was looking down on them.

"This—" Wen Hong wanted to say something, but the clan leader interrupted him, "That is fine. If you really have some top-quality goldsteel stones with you, we are willing to pay 500 low-grade spirit crystals for each catty of top-quality goldsteel stone. We will buy everything you have."

Xiang Shaoyun's face fell. He said, "Looks like the clan leader is not sincere in wanting to buy the stone after all. Fine, I won't be selling it then."

Top-quality goldsteel stone was a true emperor-grade material. On the market, each catty would be worth at least 1,000 spirit crystals. But this person was only offering half the market price. Where was his sincerity?

Xiang Shaoyun was no idiot. He knew better than anyone else here the real value of the top-quality goldsteel stone. Since this person was looking down on him that much, there was no point for him to be courteous. Wen Hong had not expected his clan leader to offer such a low price either. It was not what the clan leader had promised when they were on their way here.

"Haha, you should be honored that this clan leader is even bothering to talk to you. The price I offer is a good price. If you refuse, well, you would need to be on the lookout for yourself after this," said

the clan leader with a sneer. He then added, "Crime rate in Cloud Margin City has been increasing as of late. A missing person every now and then is a common occurrence."

After saying that, he directly turned and left, placing Wen Hong in an awkward position. After a slight hesitation, he left as well.

Wen Jinnuo and Gong Qinyin remained, with Wen Jinnuo looking at Xiang Shaoyun with a toying expression. He said, "I don't know who you are, but I advise you to do as told. Otherwise, you won't be able to leave Cloud Margin City alive."

"Haha, if I had known that the Wen Clan is such a clan, I wouldn't have bothered wasting my breath talking with you people," Xiang Shaoyun sneered as well. He then spoke to Gong Qinyin, "Miss, it is better to keep your distance from a person who looks decent but is in fact immoral like this. Otherwise, you will have your life ruined by him."

Wen Jinnuo pointed at Xiang Shaoyun and furiously berated, "Are you courting death?"

If they weren't currently in the restaurant, he would have attacked directly. This fellow dared to sow dissent right in front of his face?

"Hah, try touching me if you have the guts," Xiang Shaoyun provoked.

"Big words. If you have the guts, don't leave the restaurant. Or else, you won't live to see the sun tomorrow," declared Wen Jinnuo. He then pulled Gong Qinyin and left, but Gong Qinyin broke off from his hold and said, "Don't touch me!"

"You will pay for this, whore!" Wen Jinnuo scolded. He then shot Xiang Shaoyun a final glare before leaving.

"Young master, what should we do? The Wen Clan is a local tyrant," asked Mo Mo anxiously.

"Don't worry. Everything will be fine," replied Xiang Shaoyun in an uncaring manner.

"If you don't mind, I will be able to help you leave the city," offered Gong Qinyin kindly.

Just for the words Xiang Shaoyun had said earlier, she felt responsible to help the two before her. For some reason, she kept feeling that the man before her was familiar, but she couldn't recall where she had seen him before.

Chapter 176: You Better Not

In Cloud Margin City, the Gong Clan was a rather well-known clan as well. They had their own King Realm cultivator, and regular organizations would not wish to provoke them for nothing.

Unfortunately, the patriarch of the Gong Clan had encountered trouble recently. As a result, he might lose his life at any moment. If something happened to him, the Gong Clan would be greatly affected. That was why Gong Qinyin had rushed back to the city from the Martial Hall Palace. Otherwise, she would rather stay at the Martial Hall Palace than return here. As for the reason for that, only she and her clan knew.

From Gong Qinyin's tone of voice, Xiang Shaoyun could guess that she was likely a local of Cloud Margin City. But he did not find that surprising. Everyone had their own secrets.

"Hehe, thank you for your good intentions, miss. But you are in trouble yourself. You will only make things worse for yourself if you help us," Xiang Shaoyun said. Looking at Gong Qinyin, who looked even more beautiful than before, he couldn't help but recall a certain enchanting sight he had seen once, a sight that caused his blood to boil.

For reasons unknown to Gong Qinyin herself, Xiang Shaoyun's gaze felt especially penetrating, causing her a slight amount of discomfort. She said, "They won't dare to push it that much."

"If you are really willing to help us, we can have a chat about it," Xiang Shaoyun said.

Those words put Gong Qinyin on guard as she replied, "Looks like you don't need my help after all. I'll be leaving."

Gong Qinyin kept having a feeling that the man before her was harboring evil designs. Just as she was about to leave, Xiang Shaoyun whispered, "Senior Sister Gong, it's me, Xiang Shaoyun!"

Gong Qinyin instantly stopped in her steps. With an astonished expression, she stared at Xiang Shaoyun, trying to find some clues from his face.

"Don't bother. I'm wearing a mask," Xiang Shaoyun said. He then gestured at Gong Qinyin before walking back to his room.

Mo Mo followed closely behind him as she thought, The young master is indeed someone with a background.

After a slight hesitation, Gong Qinyin went with them as well. He is indeed still alive! Gong Qinyin thought to herself, a slight trace of joy surfacing at the realization.

After the Golden River Valley battle, Xiang Shaoyun had gone missing. Everyone assumed that he had been killed by the gold serpentine crocodiles. Surprisingly, he was alive and had even arrived at Cloud Margin City.

She still remembered how back then she would be extremely fierce whenever she met Xiang Shaoyun. But now, she felt no anger toward him. Instead, she was glad he was alive. Not even she herself had noticed the change in her attitude toward him.

Gong Qinyin followed Xiang Shaoyun back to his room. As for Mo Mo, she tactfully stayed outside the room and did not follow them inside. In the room, Xiang Shaoyun took his human skin mask off and smiled at Gong Qinyin. "Senior Sister Gong, it has been a while."

"It really is you!" Gong Qinyin cried out in excitement.

"Senior Sister Gong, you can't keep trying to kill me anymore, ok? I still remember your promise that so long as I can defeat the Gateflag Academy people, the grudge between us will be erased," Xiang Shaoyun quickly said, afraid that she would suddenly do something drastic.

Gong Qinyin burst out in laughter when she saw how nervous Xiang Shaoyun was. Her smile was as enchanting as a blooming flower, causing Xiang Shaoyun to blank out slightly staring at her.

"Senior sister, you are so beautiful!" Xiang Shaoyun praised her with heartfelt sincerity.

Xiang Shaoyun had seen a lot of beauties, but Gong Qinyin's natural smile was still a sight that warmed the heart and delighted the eyes.

Gong Qinyin glared at Xiang Shaoyun and said, "Don't think I will spare you just because you are a smooth talker. The grudge between us won't be settled so easily."

Whenever she thought of how Xiang Shaoyun had once seen her naked, she would blush uncontrollably.

"Cough, cough, fine, if that is not enough to settle the grudge, the only thing I have left to offer is my body." Xiang Shaoyun shrugged.

"Ohh look at how pitiful you look. Do you think I actually desire you?" Gong Qinyin grumbled.

"Yeah, you better not," Xiang Shaoyun said.

"Bastard, are you saying I'm not worthy of you?" Gong Qinyin said furiously.

Xiang Shaoyun replied gloomily, "Those are your own words. You can't blame me for that!"

"Talking to you is a waste of time," Gong Qinyin snorted coldly.

"Alright senior sister, let's talk about something else. I need to know if you really have information on the millennium earthcore fire," Xiang Shaoyun asked.

Gong Qinyin looked at Xiang Shaoyun and asked, "You overheard everything we said earlier?"

Xiang Shaoyun nodded. "Yes. Otherwise, I wouldn't have risked revealing my identity to you."

If he hadn't overheard them, he would have assumed that Gong Qinyin was on Wen Jinnuo's side and wouldn't have dared to reveal his identity to her.

"You're interested in the millennium earthcore fire as well?" Gong Qinyin asked.

"Yes, I need it to refine some stuff," Xiang Shaoyun replied seriously.

Gong Qinyin sighed, "Our Gong Clan needs it urgently as well, but it is located at a dangerous location. Furthermore, the information about that location has long been spread, and a large number of people are eying it as well. I doubt we stand any chance at getting it."

"How will we know without trying?" Xiang Shaoyun replied.

"Fine, I'll tell you the location." Gong Qinyin hesitated slightly but still decided to tell Xiang Shaoyun what she knew.

After all, it was not really a secret anymore. It did not matter if Xiang Shaoyun knew about it as well. It turned out that the millennium earthcore fire was located at an uninhabited area not far from Cloud Margin City. One could reach the place in about two or three days of journey.

It was initially a dormant volcano that had for some reason erupted suddenly and turned into a flaming mountain. Before long, it was discovered that a millennium earthcore fire had appeared there.

With that discovery, the Cloud Margin Pavilion decreed that only those below the King Realm would be allowed to fight over the millennium earthcore fire. Entry would be prohibited for all above that cultivation realm.

There was a reason for that decision. They were creating an opportunity for their disciples to fight over the fire and see if there was a lucky disciple who could obtain the fire and quickly rise into the King Realm through the struggles.

Not long ago, a large number of cultivators below the King Realm went there trying to subdue the fire. However, a large majority of them had died. Gong Qinyin had learned all that from Wen Jinnuo.

"Currently, the Flame Mountain has turned into a tempering location just for Cloud Margin Pavilion disciples. It won't be easy for others to enter that place," Gong Qinyin said with a dispirited expression.

"Haha, doesn't that make things better? Without Kings, it will be much easier for us to obtain the fire," Xiang Shaoyun said.

"Yeah, keep smiling. Although your combat power is rather impressive, how can you compare with the disciples of Cloud Margin Pavilion?" Gong Qinyin said. She paused for a bit and shifted the topic, "Also, you have your issue with the Wen Clan. Aren't you worried at all?"

"What is there to worry about? If I walk out now just like this, they won't even recognize me. And I don't even need to do that to deal with them," Xiang Shaoyun said confidently.

Chapter 177: Arrangement

"Do you have a backer or something? But I don't recall hearing about a Xiang Clan in the Cloud Margin City before," Gong Qinyin asked doubtfully.

"No such thing. I don't have any backers in the Cloud Margin City," Xiang Shaoyun said. He paused for a bit then said, "Are things looking bad for your Gong Clan currently?"

"What do you know about that?" Gong Qinyin frowned.

"I know nothing except for the fact that your Gong Clan is currently weaker than the Wen Clan. Is that right?" asked Xiang Shaoyun.

"Yes," Gong Qinyin gave an honest answer.

"If I can help your Gong Clan build some sort of relationship with a Cloud Margin Pavilion elder, would things be better?" Xiang Shaoyun probed.

Gong Qinyin was surprised. "Is that possible?"

Although the Gong Clan wasn't exactly a weak clan in Cloud Margin City, they never had any sort of deep relationship with the Cloud Margin Pavilion elders. Only their patriarch had some sort of personal friendship with some of them. If Xiang Shaoyun was able to help their clan establish a relationship with the elders, it would only benefit the Gong Clan.

"I won't lie to you. You see..." Xiang Shaoyun proceeded to tell Gong Qinyin his plan.

Gong Qinyin was overjoyed after hearing the entirety of the plan. "If we can really do that, the Wen Clan will hit a dead end with us, while the Gong Clan will benefit greatly from it."

"Um. Just follow my plan and things won't go wrong. After dealing with the Wen Clan, we can focus on the earthcore fire," Xiang Shaoyun said.

"Alright. I'll do it right away. Wait for me," Gong Qinyin said in excitement and started leaving. As she arrived at the exit, she suddenly turned and said, "Thank you, Xiang Shaoyun."

After leaving those words, she left. Xiang Shaoyun rubbed his nose and sniffed at the lingering fragrance in the air as he thought to himself, This girl is not as fierce as I thought after all.

Prior to this, he had an impression that Gong Qinyin was a fierce tigress. But after their latest interaction, his opinion of her had improved considerably.

...

The Wen Clan was located at the eastern part of the city. Once a prestigious clan, they still maintained their glory from before. Their main estate was extremely expansive and luxurious.

After the clan leader, Wen Dongyou, returned to the estate, he immediately sent some people to monitor Xiang Shaoyun and Mo Mo at all times. Orders had been given to immediately kidnap Xiang Shaoyun the moment he left the restaurant.

Although Wen Hong did not agree with what Wen Dongyou did, he couldn't say anything since the latter was the clan leader. At this time, Wen Jinnuo went to see his father and said, "Father, why don't you let me deal with that fellow?"

"Stop messing around. This is important for us. We can't mess it up," Wen Dongyou said seriously.

"Father, I'm already an adult. It is about time I shoulder some of your burdens. You can send someone to assist me if you are worried. How hard can dealing with two outsiders be?" Wen Jinnuo persuaded.

Wen Dongyou gave it a thought and relented. "Fine. I will let you deal with this. Don't mess it up. Or else, I won't spare you."

"Thank you, father. I won't disappoint you!" Wen Jinnuo was overjoyed. He added, "Father, what do you think about Qinyin? I am thinking of taking her as my wife."

Wen Dongyou thought about it and said, "Are you playing around or are you serious with her?"

Wen Jinnuo hesitated for a bit and said, "If she is obedient, I will take her as my wife. If she refuses to be obedient, I will only play with her for a bit."

"Ok, noted," Wen Dongyou said.

When Wen Jinnuo saw that his father was not giving a clear answer, he grew somewhat dispirited and left.

...

The Gong Clan was based in the south of the city and was a clan that had only risen to prominence in the past 100 years. Their patriarch was an old King Realm cultivator who had gone on to train a couple of new King Realm cultivators. This caused the Gong Clan to rise to prominence in Cloud Margin City.

Unfortunately, the patriarch was currently in a bad condition, putting the Gong Clan into panic. Being someone from such a clan, Gong Qinyin had a background far stronger than the likes of Martial Hall Palace. Why would she join the Martial Hall Palace, then?

The reason for that was simple. She was not the daughter of the main wife and was only the daughter of a concubine. Coupled with the absence of her mother since young, she felt extremely lonely staying in her own clan, and she wasn't particularly well-liked in the clan either.

If it wasn't for the fact that the patriarch had noticed her cultivation talent, she would have been used as a tool for political marriage long ago. As for her appearance at the Martial Hall Palace, that was her own decision so as to leave the politics of the clan and to try to accomplish something by relying on herself.

Although the Gong Clan wasn't an extremely powerful clan, there was still a lot of politics in the clan, and it only exacerbated with their patriarch's current condition. Gong Qinyin did not have a favorable impression of her own clan, but due to the love the patriarch had shown her and the sense

of responsibility she felt due to the blood coursing in her veins, she had to do her part in helping the clan as well.

After returning to the clan estate, she went straight to her father, Gong Lianda. Gong Lianda was a strict and dignified middle-aged man. He was a third-stage King Realm cultivator, and one of the contenders to be the next patriarch.

"Why are you looking for me?" Gong Lianda asked indifferently.

The Gong Clan had always been a clan that valued males over females. Because of that prejudice, despite Gong Qinyin's talent, Gong Lianda still couldn't avoid feeling indifferent about her.

Gong Qinyin was already used to it. Using the same indifferent expression, she answered, "I have a way to establish a connection between you and the Cloud Margin Forging Pavilion's elder."

"Are you sure you're not kidding me?" Gong Lianda questioned doubtfully.

Gong Qinyin went straight to the point and told her father what Xiang Shaoyun told her to say.

"Your friend actually has some emperor-grade materials on hand? What a lucky fellow. No wonder he was able to attract the attention of a Cloud Margin Pavilion elder," said Gong Lianda with an astonished expression. He asked, "Are you sure he is willing to let us negotiate on behalf of him?"

Gong Qinyin nodded, "Our Gong Clan will only be negotiating on behalf of him, but he will still be the one keeping all the profit. He also intends to get the elder to help him with his conflict with the Wen Clan."

"He is trying to pit our Gong Clan against the Wen Clan!" Gong Lianda frowned.

"Well, it is your decision. Are you going to agree or not?" Gong Qinyin asked indifferently.

Gong Lianda paced around the room before finally making up his mind. "If we can establish a friendship with a Cloud Margin Pavilion elder, we will be able to put the Wen Clan in their place and might even be able to get some help for the patriarch. It is worth trying."

"So you agree?" Gong Qinyin asked.

"Although our Gong Clan is currently in a bad situation, it is during times like these that we need to do something. It will prove that we are still not a clan to be easily provoked," said Gong Lianda as he narrowed his eyes. He then added, "We should not delay. Let's go see your friend immediately. We will be escorting him to the Cloud Margin Forging Pavilion."

Thus, the two left for the Cloud Margin Restaurant with a group of people.

Chapter 178: Conflict

The Cloud Margin Restaurant was one of the businesses of the Cloud Margin Pavilion, and since even Cloud Margin City's governor was an elder of the Cloud Margin Pavilion, nobody was stupid enough to create trouble in the restaurant. Thus, Xiang Shaoyun and Mo Mo would be safe so long as they remained in the restaurant.

When Gong Qinyin and Gong Lianda appeared at the restaurant, Xiang Shaoyun came out of his room to greet them. He did not meet them with his real appearance. Rather, he had the human skin mask on. Hiding his identity would only save him from more trouble down the line.

"Greetings, Lord Lianda," Xiang Shaoyun greeted Gong Lianda respectfully.

Gong Lianda scanned both Xiang Shaoyun and Mo Mo, and when he saw their cultivation level, he started taking them lightly just like Wen Dongyou before. In a sense, it was a sin for a mere Transformation Realm cultivator to possess emperor-grade materials.

"Forget the pleasantries. Now, show me if you really have the top-quality goldsteel stone," said Gong Lianda.

"No problem." Xiang Shaoyun agreed and took out a several-catty-heavy top-quality goldsteel stone.

Gong Lianda studied the stone seriously for a bit as his eyes slowly started glowing. "This is really a top-quality goldsteel stone!"

"Consider this a gift from me for the occasion of our first meeting. Please accept it," offered Xiang Shaoyun tactfully.

Gong Lianda was instantly overjoyed. Although the Gong Clan was not a blacksmithing clan, obtaining an emperor-grade material was still a great harvest for them. After all, this stone was worth at least a few thousand low-grade spirit crystals, and it could even be used to forge emperor-grade weapons. It was an extremely rare material that he couldn't say no to.

"How can I accept such a valuable gift?" Gong Lianda said, but his actions did not match his words at all as he had already stowed the stone away. After accepting the gift, Gong Lianda's impression of Xiang Shaoyun became much more favorable.

"Let's not waste any more time, we should get going to the Cloud Margin Forging Pavilion," Xiang Shaoyun suggested.

"Alright. Let's go. Let's see if the Wen Clan dares to stop us," said Gong Lianda with his chest puffed out.

Thus, the group walked out of the restaurant. But right after they left, the people from the Wen Clan appeared and blocked their way.

"Audacious, you dare block the path of this King?" Gong Lianda berated.

"Ah, so it's Uncle Gong. I am Wen Jinnuo. Wen Dongyou is my father," Wen Jinnuo stepped forth and introduced himself. He went straight to the point, "Uncle Gong, the two behind you are the people the Wen Clan is hunting. Please do not get involved in this."

Wen Jinnuo had not expected that Xiang Shaoyun would get help from the Gong Clan so quickly. He was certain Gong Qinyin played a role in that, and his resentment deepened at that realization.

Slut, when I'm done with this, I will definitely make you lie down before me, Wen Jinnuo said inwardly.

"They are the distant relatives of the Gong Clan. How can we let you take them as you wish? You better move aside, or you will have to bear the consequences," Gong Lianda said loudly.

He had brought a large group of people with him. Thus, he did not fear the Wen Clan. This was a bet he had to make. So long as he could establish a friendship with the elder of the Cloud Margin Forging Pavilion, everything would be better.

"Are you sure? Is the Wen Clan nothing for the Gong Clan now?" Wen Jinnuo questioned as he was starting to feel displeased.

"I do respect the Wen Clan, but that does not mean I will let you take my distant relative," Gong Lianda answered. He added, "Move aside or don't blame me for what happens next."

A middle-aged man stepped up beside Wen Jinnuo and said, "Gong Lianda, you are still not the patriarch of the Gong Clan. You should be careful of what you say."

This person was a King Realm elder of the Wen Clan. Although his strength was not comparable to Gong Lianda's, he wasn't much weaker than him either. More importantly, the overall strength of the Wen Clan was above the Gong Clan, and that coupled with the Gong Clan patriarch's current bad condition served as a booster to the Wen Clan's confidence.

"Looks like you are very confident we will not retaliate. Fine, do you want to fight right here?" Gong Lianda said unyieldingly.

"Your Gong Clan will pay the price for this! Go, seize the two from them!" Wen Jinnuo was getting impatient and gave the command to attack.

"Those who come at us will be killed without mercy!" Gong Lianda shouted with a murderous expression.

"Let's see what you are made of, Gong Lianda," shouted the Wen Clan elder before he charged Gong Lianda with his sword in hand. His goal was clear—to restrain Gong Lianda. So long as he accomplished that, the other Gong Clan people here would not pose a threat.

"You are courting death!" Gong Lianda shouted and charged forth as well.

Right this moment, a King Realm cultivator suddenly appeared from a different direction and sneak attacked Gong Lianda. It was the Wen Clan's other King Realm cultivator. He had been hiding near them all along, waiting for a perfect chance to make a move.

Gong Lianda reacted decently: he quickly swung his weapon to block the two attacks that had suddenly arrived. He was able to temporarily protect himself, but as a result, he got himself surrounded by the two Kings.

The group that came with Gong Lianda also started fighting the Wen Clan people, creating a scene right in front of the restaurant that caused the pedestrians to scatter. Of course, some of the braver ones stayed nearby to watch everything unfold.

Xiang Shaoyun did not expect things to go this way at all. He thought that the Wen Clan would retreat for now instead of creating a scene right in the city. Unfortunately, things had escalated way out of his expectations.

But since the situation had already developed this way, there was no point fretting over it. He should just focus on getting over this hurdle first. In any case, he still had some plans in place. At this time, two people managed to break through the Gong Clan's defensive line and charged straight toward Xiang Shaoyun.

"Young master, be careful!" Mo Mo had been standing guard beside Xiang Shaoyun all along. When she saw the attackers, she quickly stood before him and counterattacked.

She was an early eighth-stage Transformation Realm cultivator, and so long as she did not meet those at the peak Transformation Realm or beyond, she feared nobody. She quickly beat back the two Wen Clan members then joined the Gong Clan people in their battle against the Wen Clan people.

However, the Wen Clan's overall strength was stronger than the Gong Clan's. In the midst of the battle, a Transformation Realm expert with a strength similar to Mo Mo's suddenly broke through the Gong Clan's defensive line and charged straight toward Gong Qinyin.

Gong Qinyin's cultivation speed had always been fast, but she was after all still an eighth-stage Astral Realm cultivator. Even so, for people her age, it was an outstanding cultivation level. But against an eighth-stage Transformation Realm expert, she was completely helpless. Just as she was about to be captured, Xiang Shaoyun noiselessly appeared before her, and his fist shot forth like a rumbling lightning bolt.

Lightning Bolt Fist!

Lightning energy surged out violently, turning his entire arm purple, giving him an incredibly imposing look. Then, the eighth-stage Transformation Realm cultivator's attack meant for Gong Qinyin connected with Xiang Shaoyun's fist.

Bang!

"AHHHH!"

First, a rumbling explosion had rung out. Then, a miserable wail had filled the air. Someone had been injured in that exchange.

Chapter 179: Tao Ran's Arrival

Xiang Shaoyun was not the one injured in the exchange. It was the eighth-stage Transformation Realm cultivator. That person's cultivation level might be higher, but Xiang Shaoyun's combat power was no weaker than his. More importantly, Xiang Shaoyun's innate purple lightning was terrifyingly destructive. An ordinary person would not be able to withstand it.

Xiang Shaoyun did not want a prolonged battle. That was why he used the innate purple lightning right from the start. After crippling his opponent's arm, he took the chance and followed up with a punch to his opponent's stomach.

Bang!

The eighth-stage Transformation Realm cultivator was fully wrapped in a layer of energy barrier, but Xiang Shaoyun's punch was too powerful. His energy barrier was instantly shattered, and he was sent flying while coughing blood. If that person was even slightly weaker, that punch of Xiang Shaoyun's would have been enough to take his life.

Wen Jinnuo had been standing behind waiting for an opportunity to capture Xiang Shaoyun during the chaos, but when he saw how vicious Xiang Shaoyun was, he shivered, "How is that kid so strong?"

He had heard from his father that Xiang Shaoyun was merely a second-stage Transformation Realm cultivator, a similar level of cultivation to him. But the combat prowess Xiang Shaoyun displayed just now was definitely not at the level of a second-stage Transformation Realm cultivator.

With what he just witnessed, he would believe it even if someone told him Xiang Shaoyun was actually a peak Transformation Realm cultivator. Standing right behind Xiang Shaoyun, Gong Qinyin was able to feel clearly just how powerful he was. Inwardly, she cried out in astonishment, He has already reached the Transformation Realm!

Xiang Shaoyun had been able to battle Transformation Realm cultivators ever since he was at the Astral Realm. Now that he was a Transformation Realm cultivator himself, his combat power became even more impressive. Gong Qinyin was in great shock over what she saw.

One ought to know that before this, Xiang Shaoyun used to run from her to avoid being beaten up. But he had grown rapidly and eventually surpassed her, to the point she now felt she would never catch up to him. The realization caused her to feel disheartened. All along, she had been confident in her talent in cultivation. But now, she realized that she had merely been a frog in a well.

I want to get strong as well! Gong Qinyin vowed to herself before she raised her sword and joined the battle.

The battle did not last long as the city enforcers arrived soon after.

"Everyone, stop now or die!" a loud voice rang out in the air.

A group of people mounted on tigers appeared. The leader of the group was a middle-aged man with a clear kingly aura around him. This was an enforcement squad of Cloud Margin City, led by the commander of the squad who was also a Skysoar Realm cultivator.

Their appearance caused the Gong Clan and Wen Clan to quickly break off from the fight. Even Gong Lianda and the two Kings from the Wen Clan did not dare to fight in their presence and returned to their respective groups as well.

"Creating trouble in the city is prohibited. All of you have the nerves to start a battle here? Are you challenging the city hall and the Cloud Margin Pavilion?" the middle-aged man berated as he glared at the two groups. He could see that the two groups were decently sized clans in the city, but even so, he showed no mercy when berating them.

"Lord, I am an outer disciple of the pavilion, Wen Jinnuo. They have stolen something belonging to the Wen Clan. We are only here to take back what's ours. But for some reason, the Gong Clan stepped out to prevent us from doing that. Please uphold justice, lord," Wen Jinnuo was no fool and immediately thought of an excuse to shift the blame.

"Bullshit. You people are the ones trying to rob something belonging to my distant relative. And now, you are trying to take the moral high ground?" Gong Lianda shouted furiously.

"He has on him the forging material we had lost. Otherwise, why would we have bothered making such a scene? Lord, please uphold justice for us!" Wen Jinnuo lied calmly.

"At such a young age, you are already a massive liar. Wen Dongyou sure has an excellent son," Gong Lianda sneered.

"Enough. This commander will investigate the truth of this. Now, I need your leaders to come with me to the city hall. As for the others, leave right now!" the middle-aged man interrupted their argument.

It was at this moment that a new group of people arrived in haste. Everyone looked over and saw that the newcomers were the people from the Cloud Margin Forging Pavilion, and even their elder, Tao Ran, had arrived as well.

"Greetings, Elder Tao." Even the commander had to get off his mount to salute Tao Ran. Everyone else did the same.

Tao Ran was a top blacksmith of the Cloud Margin Pavilion. Thus, he had a high status in the pavilion, and even their pavilion master had to show him a certain degree of respect. After all, a true tier-4 blacksmith had a great rallying power. With his ability to forge king-grade weapons repeatedly, he could befriend many King Realm experts. Nobody could afford to overlook someone like that.

When Tao Ran arrived, he did not even bother giving anyone else a glance. He went straight toward Xiang Shaoyun and said, "Kid, do you really have more than 100 catties of top-quality goldsteel stone?"

That's right. Tao Ran's appearance had been part of Xiang Shaoyun's plan all along. After sending Gong Qinyin to ask for the Gong Clan's help, he also had her send someone to inform the Cloud Margin Forging Pavilion about him having more than 100 catties of top-quality goldsteel stone.

As for the timing of their appearances, everything had been in accordance to his plan. Xiang Shaoyun replied seriously, "Yes I do. Unfortunately, someone is trying to rob it from me."

"Who dares?" Tao Ran roared and scanned the crowd. That roar of his nearly caused Wen Jinnuo's heart to pop out in fear. He had never expected that even this elder would be implicated in this conflict. Now, it would be hard for him to back off.

"He claimed that the top-quality goldsteel stone was stolen from his Wen Clan and nearly killed me here on the streets," said Xiang Shaoyun while pointing at Wen Jinnuo. He paused for a bit and continued, "In truth, after our previous transaction at the pavilion, someone called Wen Hong tailed me and requested that I trade with their clan instead. He even offered a higher price than you! But since I had already agreed to conduct the trade with you, I naturally rejected their offer. I did not expect them to be so shameless as to try robbing it from me instead. If it wasn't for my relative's help, the top-quality goldsteel stone would have been lost."

"Bullshit! You are clearly the thief!" Wen Jinnuo had no choice but to continue lying to cover up for what he said earlier.

"Elder Tao, I am Gong Lianda from the Gong Clan. I can guarantee with my own life that this distant relative of mine has definitely not stolen the goldsteel stone from anyone. Look, he is only a Transformation Realm cultivator. How can he even steal from the Wen Clan? Isn't that suicide?" Gong Lianda took the chance to show himself in front of Tao Ran.

"I am not blind. I am naturally aware of who's telling the truth here." Tao Ran frowned. He then glared at Wen Jinnuo and said, "I have long heard from the disciples that your Wen Clan has been stealing our business right in front of our pavilion. I never planned to do anything about it, but you guys are pushing it more and more! I guess your Wen Clan is getting tired of life in Cloud Margin City. Since that is the case, I hereby declare that from today onward, anyone caught buying weapons from the Wen Clan will be considered an enemy of the Cloud Margin Forging Pavilion!"

Chapter 180: Earthcore Fire Search Preparation

Wen Jinnuo felt a chill all over his body when he heard Tao Ran's words. The other Wen Clan members were feeling extremely terrible as well. Offending a high-level elder of the Cloud Margin Pavilion was almost a guarantee that life would be hard for them in the future. As for Gong Lianda, he heaved a sigh of relief and felt completely relaxed. Inwardly, he was overjoyed. Finally, it's time to reap the harvest of my bet!

This time, he had brought a group of people to fight the Wen Clan. If it did not achieve his desired effect, his position in the clan would henceforth suffer suppression. At the same time, he would also be a target of Wen Clan's revenge. Thus, it was obvious how pressured he had been.

Now, everything was fine, as he had placed his bet correctly. In fact, this feat was so significant that his chance at being the next in line to inherit the patriarch position had grown even larger. He kept looking at his daughter lovingly, not forgetting that his daughter was the main reason for this feat.

Tao Ran did not do anything else to the Wen Clan. Those words he uttered alone was punishment enough. Instead, he left with Xiang Shaoyun to take a look at the top-quality goldsteel stone. As for Gong Lianda and Gong Qinyin, they naturally followed.

The people from the city hall did not dare to stop the Gong Clan people. Instead, they went to mess with the Wen Clan, demanding compensation for the damages they had caused during the fight. The Wen Clan did not dare to voice any objections and immediately headed back so they could start thinking of a way to deal with the Cloud Margin Forging Pavilion.

Xiang Shaoyun returned to the restaurant with Tao Ran and took out a 150-catty-heavy goldsteel stone before showing it to Tao Ran. Tao Ran was a tier-4 blacksmith who had the potential to become a tier-5 blacksmith in the future. Thus, he was a person who longed greatly for all sorts of emperor-grade materials.

Now that a top-quality goldsteel stone was before him, he was flooded with joy, feeling like he had gained a precious treasure.

Tao Ran lightly knocked the goldsteel stone and exclaimed in excitement, "It really is a top-quality goldsteel stone! This quality...is truly excellent!"

A top-quality goldsteel stone this size was enough for him to forge a few emperor weapons. Thus, this purchase was extremely important for him. He was glad that he had decided to make the trip himself. If this stone had been snatched by the Wen Clan, he would most certainly feel extremely distressed.

"Lord, let us trade according to the market price instead. Without you, I might have lost my life there," Xiang Shaoyun offered tactfully.

Everything he had done up until now, such as gifting Gong Lianda a small piece of top-quality goldsteel stone and the discount he was currently giving Tao Ran, was for the sake of buying Tao Ran's favor at a cheap price. Although that little discount he gave was nothing for Tao Ran, the display of gratefulness had still won Xiang Shaoyun a favorable impression in Tao Ran's heart.

"I already promised to pay you 10 percent above the market price. I will not go back on my words," Tao Ran insisted. In truth, he had promised 20 percent above the market price. Now that the 20 percent had become 10 percent, one could say that he was already getting a discount.

But Xiang Shaoyun was also right. If Tao Ran had not arrived when he had, Xiang Shaoyun would have ended up dead in the Wen Clan's hands. Thus, Tao Ran considered them even. Of course, he was completely unaware that his actions were all completely under Xiang Shaoyun's manipulation.

Xiang Shaoyun did not care about the 10 percent. He only cared about dealing with his problem. Selling this piece of 150-catty, top-quality goldsteel stone at the price of 100 low-grade spirit crystals per catty, he would earn a total of 165,000 low-grade spirit crystals. After converting them all to 16,500 mid-grade spirit crystals, he kept them all away.

This was a massive income, one that anyone would be envious of. After all, a lot of people had no chance of earning such a large income. Only a King Realm blacksmith like Tao Ran would be able to afford such a sum easily.

From this incident, Xiang Shaoyun had profited in terms of wealth. On the other hand, Gong Lianda had gotten an opportunity to officially form a connection with Tao Ran. As for how well he could preserve the connection, that would have to rely on himself.

That no longer had anything to do with Xiang Shaoyun.

Toward the end, everyone except Gong Qinyin left. She had a whole new respect for Xiang Shaoyun. A young man who was a year younger than her was already capable of scheming against those big shots undetected. He was truly too smart.

She would have never dared to even dream of doing something like that. Apart from his smart mind, Xiang Shaoyun also possessed astonishing combat prowess. If the Cloud Margin Pavilion knew the extent of his talent, a large number of elders would immediately start fighting to take him as a disciple.

She was also finally convinced that Elder Zhen Peng was sincere in becoming Xiang Shaoyun's follower. In fact, even she was starting to have the urge to become Xiang Shaoyun's follower.

"What are you thinking about?" Xiang Shaoyun walked over and interrupted her thoughts.

"Nothing. Since everything is solved, shouldn't we leave for the earthcore fire?" Gong Qinyin asked.

"No, we can't rush. We must make all the necessary preparations before leaving. Otherwise, we will only be wasting our time," Xiang Shaoyun said.

"What preparations do we need to make?" Gong Qinyin asked in confusion.

"Things to subdue the earthcore fire," Xiang Shaoyun said seriously. He then added, "Also, we need to increase your strength."

"Increase my strength?" Gong Qinyin blanked out.

Xiang Shaoyun did not waste his breath and took out a tiny bottle of earth star spring liquid and gave it to her, "Senior sister, you are not weak, but we will definitely encounter Cloud Margin Pavilion disciples during the trip. Your current strength is insufficient to deal with them. Consider this earth star spring liquid my repayment to you."

Gong Qinyin did not argue and accepted the bottle. "What a surprise. Turns out you are quite rich, huh? I won't be holding back, then."

Xiang Shaoyun rubbed his nose and said, "Don't worry about it. We are friends, right?" He paused for a bit and added, "Try to grow stronger while I make some preparations. When you come out of your seclusion, we will start our search for the earthcore fire."

Gong Qinyin nodded and left. After she left, Xiang Shaoyun brought Mo Mo away from the restaurant and headed toward the business district. Now, he no longer needed to worry that the Wen Clan would come looking for him.

He needed to first purchase some healing materials and fire protection materials. However, they were not his topmost priority. What he required most was an item of utmost cold. Only then would he be able to even approach the earthcore fire.

He entered the city's largest herb store and asked the shopkeeper, "Shopkeeper, do you have any millennium icecold jade or something with similar properties here?"

"You are probably going to look for the earthcore fire as well, right? Too bad it's already sold out," said the shopkeeper with a helpless smile.

Xiang Shaoyun was disappointed to hear that. Without an item of utmost cold, how was he supposed to subdue the earthcore fire?

Just as he was about to leave, the shopkeeper said, "Maybe you can try your luck at the auction hall. You might be surprised at what you find there."