

Overlord 221

Chapter 221: Lightning Alliance

Xiang Shaoyun was now staying in the Cloud Margin Pavilion. He currently resided within an elder estate owned exclusively by Long Hui, and he became a follower whose membership wasn't officially recorded in the Cloud Margin Pavilion.

In truth, a follower was essentially a servant. In the Cloud Margin Pavilion, such people had almost no status. Fortunately, Xiang Shaoyun was a servant of a high-level elder, which separated him from ordinary servants.

There were only several dozen followers residing in Long Hui's estate; most were Transformation Realm cultivators and a few were Astral Realm cultivators. The reason all of them had willingly become Long Hui's followers was in hope of receiving the slightest bit of guidance in cultivation during Long Hui's free time. Just that would be enough for them to benefit greatly.

After all, all these followers weren't exactly people with incredibly outstanding talent. They were either disqualified disciples of Cloud Margin Pavilion or people Long Hui had subdued outside the pavilion. Otherwise, they wouldn't have willingly stayed as followers.

Apart from the followers, Long Hui had two disciples as well. One was a newly advanced King. He wasn't too young, and his name was Qin Yu. The other disciple, Zhuo Yi, was about 20 years old and was a seventh-stage Transformation Realm cultivator. He was one of the most talented personal disciples in the pavilion.

Qin Yu was the eldest disciple of Long Hui and had been promoted to a common elder after becoming a King. Thus, he could move into his own personal elder estate. However, he seemed to hold Long Hui in high esteem and still remained with him even after his promotion.

After all, the estate of a high-level elder like Long Hui was very large. It could easily house hundreds of people. As for Zhuo Yi, he still wasn't qualified to move out. Therefore, he naturally still resided within the estate.

Xiang Shaoyun's appearance did not attract much attention in the residence. Most people were only astonished at his young age. Long Hui told them that Xiang Shaoyun was a distant relative who would be staying temporarily. Nominally, Xiang Shaoyun was a follower. However, he did not need to perform any tasks, and he was even given an exclusive residence within the estate.

Just like that, Xiang Shaoyun started his peaceful life within the estate.

The Cloud Margin Pavilion was worthy of being the strongest organization in the Cloud Margin City. Their inner pavilion was completely enveloped by a massive formation that gathered spiritual energy from its surroundings, resulting in an extreme abundance of spiritual energy in the air. It was a very good place to cultivate.

In the residence, Xiang Shaoyun silently stabilized his foundations as he contemplated on his next step.

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Meanwhile, Wen Jinrui and Wang Jiaohua had just arrived at a relatively small estate. Only the freakishly talented disciples of the Cloud Margin Pavilion could own these estates. As for this particular estate, it belonged to none other than a genius of Cloud Margin Pavilion, the person known as the Lightning Kid.

The Lightning Kid was the Young Lightning King's little cousin from the same clan. He similarly cultivated the overbearing power of lightning, and with his Lightning Spear, he almost had no opponent.

If it wasn't for the genius that had appeared from the Chen Clan, he would definitely be the brightest genius of his generation in Cloud Margin City. Wen Jinrui and Wang Jiaohua were here because they were both members of the Lightning Alliance, a faction formed by the Lightning Kid.

In each generation of Cloud Margin Pavilion disciples, geniuses with absolute confidence in themselves would appear. During the rise of these people, they would not forget to suppress other geniuses and subdue them one by one so as to grow their prestige. Subduing others would be greatly beneficial for one's future. Whether it was for one's status or for one's future power struggle in the pavilion, these subdued geniuses would be a great help.

In the current young generation of Cloud Margin Pavilion, there were three main factions. The strongest faction was none other than the Lightning Alliance. More than half of the inner disciples were part of this alliance.

Second to it was the Red House, which was a faction catering mostly to females. Li Yaxuan was in it, and of course, they still had males in their ranks. Chen Zilong, a genius strong enough to not fear the Lightning Alliance was one such male.

As for the third faction, it was a faction of those not willing to join the other two factions. It was known as the Free Society, symbolizing their pursuit of cultivation without restriction. It was the weakest of the three main factions.

Wen Jinrui and Wang Jiaohua waited for a good while, yet their alliance leader was nowhere to be seen. Rather, a young man came out and berated, "Both of you are an utter embarrassment to the Lightning Alliance!"

"Sorry, Guardian Qiu. We have been incompetent," Wen Jinrui said.

Wang Jiaohua's arrogance was also nowhere to be seen. She apologized alongside Wen Jinrui, "It's our bad. But the other party is really too arrogant. He shows no respect whatsoever for our Lightning Alliance."

"Hmph. Do you think I am not aware of the real story? Your cousin was the one who started all that!" the guardian said with a cold snort. He paused slightly and continued, "This is supposed to be your private affair, but since Gong Qinyin of the Red House has interfered, it is now an affair between the two factions. I will help you out with this, but you need to pay me enough contribution points."

"Don't worry, Guardian Qiu. We already have the contribution points ready," said Wen Jinrui. He then lowered his voice and continued, "Guardian Qiu, a new batch of king-grade weapons have been released by my clan. Some of them are of an element that is very suited for your use. In any case, we are not doing anything with those weapons. Do you want me to get one for you?"

The guardian raised his brow before a pleased smile formed on his face. "Um, that's very thoughtful of you. I will get some men to figure out the identity of that person before deciding what to do next."

"Thank you for the trouble, guardian," Wen Jinrui thanked cheerily.

Although losing a king weapon caused his heart to ache, it was worth it since he was able to make Guardian Qiu move against Xiang Shaoyun. One ought to know that this Guardian Qiu was one of the four greatest guardians of the Lightning Alliance and was one of the strongest experts of their faction. He was a personal disciple of an elder, and his full name was Qiu Chonglei with a cultivation level of eighth-stage Transformation Realm.

More importantly, only those capable of punching above their weight were qualified to become guardians of the Lightning Alliance. Thus, each of these guardians were people who common sense didn't apply for.

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Xiang Shaoyun was unaware of all that. After staying at Long Hui's estate for a night, Zi Changhe arrived, and with him, a middle-aged man. The man was none other than Zi Changhe's master, Liu Xinji.

Liu Xinji looked to be about 40 years old—a King in his robust years. He had a medium build and a short hair that gave him a clean and strict look. He was once a vice palace master of the Martial Hall Palace. But after his breakthrough, he left for the Cloud Margin Pavilion instead of staying to help.

Xiang Shaoyun once heard from Zi Changhe that Liu Xinji originally came from Cloud Margin City. When he was young, he was sent to the Martial Hall Palace for an unknown reason. And after becoming a King, it was only natural that he returned.

The third-stage King Realm cultivator stared straight at Xiang Shaoyun and asked, "So you are the young genius Xiang Shaoyun Changhe has spoken of?"

Chapter 222: Conversation With Zi Changhe

Zi Changhe started making the introductions, "Shaoyun, this is my master, Liu Xinji."

Xiang Shaoyun saluted Liu Xinji. "Greetings, Lord Liu."

Zi Changhe once wanted to accept Xiang Shaoyun as a disciple on behalf of his master. But he subsequently realized that Xiang Shaoyun had no such plans at all. Moreover, he had realized Xiang Shaoyun's extraordinary origin. Since then, he never mentioned the matter of taking Xiang Shaoyun as his master's disciple.

Liu Xinji had heard Zi Changhe speak of Xiang Shaoyun before, and now that he saw how talented Xiang Shaoyun was with his cultivation level of seventh-stage Transformation Realm, he thought gleefully, This talent of his is already comparable to the geniuses within the pavilion. He will definitely bring me glory if I can make him my disciple.

None of his excitement was shown on his face as he said indifferently, "Xiang Shaoyun? How did you end up here with Elder Long Hui?"

Xiang Shaoyun shrugged and said, "That was something unexpected for me as well. We are distant relatives, which is why he decided to bring me here."

Liu Xinji's heart thumped when he heard that, realizing that his plan might not come to fruition after all.

"I see. So Elder Long must have accepted you as his disciple then?" Liu Xinji asked.

Xiang Shaoyun answered, "He said that I am not qualified for that. The only thing I can be is his follower."

What? A seventh-stage Transformation Realm cultivator is not qualified to be his disciple? What bullshit is that? Even Zhuo Yi is only at the seventh-stage! Liu Xinji cursed inwardly before he looked at Xiang Shaoyun and offered, "How about this. Become my disciple. In any case, you and Changhe have been self-proclaimed apprentice brothers for a while. Our fate is already joined together. I believe Elder Long will not mind."

He had not personally come to see Xiang Shaoyun just for the sake of Zi Changhe. Rather, he had heard that, the day before, Xiang Shaoyun had beaten Wen Jinrui and Wang Jiaohua to the point they did not even dare to fight back. He also heard that the Zither Empress's disciple, Gong Qinyin, was also somewhat related to this Xiang Shaoyun. That was why he had decided to come meet this young man.

Whatever the reason, he was saying the truth when he offered to accept Xiang Shaoyun as his disciple. Xiang Shaoyun could sense his sincerity, but he had no intention of agreeing. He had no need of a master. After all, he was one who had rejected even the Saber Emperor Du Xuanhao. How would he agree to be the disciple of a King?

Nevertheless, Xiang Shaoyun still showed a grateful look as he replied, "Thank you for the offer, Lord Liu. But I think it is better if I let Elder Long decide on this."

"Sure. I'll go talk to Elder Long right away. I doubt he will mind," said Liu Xinji before leaving to find Long Hui.

Xiang Shaoyun was thus left alone with Zi Changhe.

"Nice one, kid. If you were still alive, why didn't you return to the Martial Hall Palace? Everyone was so worried over you!" rebuked Zi Changhe.

Xiang Shaoyun smiled helplessly. "It's not like I have any choices." He paused for a bit and added, "Is Elder Zhen Peng doing well?"

"He's doing well. Right now, he is focusing on cultivation and trying to grow even stronger. But he will frequently think about you. If you have the chance, try to pay him a visit," said Zi Changhe.

Xiang Shaoyun nodded. "When I have the time, I'll visit him."

"You are already at the Cloud Margin Pavilion, and with your talent, you will have great accomplishments here. But you have attracted huge trouble so soon after you arrived. That trouble is quite thorny to deal with," said Zi Changhe.

"You're talking about what happened yesterday?" Xiang Shaoyun asked.

"Yes. You probably don't know this. Although the Cloud Margin Pavilion is a massive academy of a city, there is an entire world within the pavilion acting as a stage for the battles between the young disciples. They would compete against each other to secure status and resources in the pavilion, and the two you had beaten yesterday were members of the Lightning Alliance, the strongest faction of the pavilion's younger generation," said Zi Changhe solemnly.

He proceeded to explain the power structure of the younger generation in the Cloud Margin Pavilion. It did not take Xiang Shaoyun long to understand that Zi Changhe was worried that the Lightning Alliance would come looking for trouble.

One noteworthy information he gained was that the older generation was prohibited from interfering in the competition between the members of the younger generation. The entire thing was akin to a selection process where the fittest advanced while the weak was eliminated.

"I'll face whatever they throw at me when the time comes. I have nothing to fear," said Xiang Shaoyun calmly.

Zi Changhe warned, "You still don't understand how powerful the Lightning Alliance is. Their leader, the Lightning Kid, is Young Lightning King's cousin. He is already a ninth-stage Transformation Realm cultivator, and it is also rumored that he is already strong enough to battle Kings and is nearly undefeated among his generation. Under him are two vice alliance leaders and four guardians, each of them possessing extraordinary combat prowess as well. Not even the Transformation Realm experts of the older generation are necessarily a match for them. Any one of them will be enough to cause you great trouble!"

"Senior brother, don't talk about those boring topics and ruin the mood of our reunion. Look, why don't you tell me about the good cultivation spots in the pavilion instead?" Xiang Shaoyun shifted the topic.

When Zi Changhe saw how little Xiang Shaoyun cared, he stopped harping on the topic and started telling Xiang Shaoyun more about the Cloud Margin Pavilion instead. He himself hadn't been here for long. Thus, he only knew the more widely available information. But what he knew was enough for the current Xiang Shaoyun.

In the Cloud Margin Pavilion, the best cultivation spot was a place called Cloud Pavilion. The Cloud Pavilion was built on the tallest peak in the area, and it was 49 stories high. It almost reached the sky and was the building nearest to the stars in the Cloud Margin Pavilion.

There, an Emperor had erected a large-scale formation capable of drawing in astral energy from the stars, allowing those cultivating inside to grow quickly. It was a dream cultivation spot for many disciples.

However, there were restrictions in place for entering the pavilion. One required contribution points that were similar in concept to Martial Hall Palace's point system. With contribution points, one would be able to buy time within the pavilion.

A large number of contribution points were required to cultivate there, and many disciples could only afford to cultivate a few days in the pavilion after accumulating points for more than half a year. Even if it was only a few days, one should never look down on it. The short few days benefited the disciples greatly.

One reason for that was because, in addition to faster cultivation speed, the pavilion also contained the comprehension of Kings. It was rumored that those capable of reaching the 49th floor would even be able to take a lesson from an Emperor, which was something many disciples longed for.

Of course, apart from the Cloud Pavilion, on the 15th day of each month, lessons would be conducted by King Realm elders at the pavilion's training grounds. Other avenues of cultivation also included accepting missions from the Mission Pavilion to temper oneself and training in Limit Rooms.

All these were cultivation resources not available anywhere else but in the Cloud Margin Pavilion.

Xiang Shaoyun's interest was piqued when he heard about the Cloud Pavilion and the Limit Rooms. As for the others, he did not care much for them.

Contribution points are needed for the Cloud Pavilion, whereas anyone can enter the Limit Rooms. But I'm afraid I'll attract too much attention challenging the Limit Rooms, Xiang Shaoyun pondered.

"Just stay here and cultivate obediently for a few years. With your talent, becoming a King is no problem at all," encouraged Zi Changhe.

Before Xiang Shaoyun could reply, someone radiating aggression arrived and interrupted their talk.

Chapter 223: Do You Want to Increase Your Cultivation Speed?

Both Xiang Shaoyun and Zi Changhe looked at the newcomer. The newcomer was a young man about 20 years old. He had a square face, short hair, thick eyebrows, and big eyes. Something about him made him look like a competent person. His entire body radiated an overbearing aura, making it clear he was not at all a pushover. He was Zhuo Yi, the younger disciple of Long Hui and his pride and joy. In fact, Long Hui almost viewed him as a son and treated him much better than Qin Yu.

Zhuo Yi looked at Xiang Shaoyun with a contemptuous gaze and asked, "You're Xiang Shaoyun?"

Xiang Shaoyun saluted Zhuo Yi before answering, "Yes, Senior Brother Zhuo."

He now assumed the identity of Long Hui's follower. Although Long Hui had declared him as a distant relative, he still needed to act in accordance to his station as a follower.

"You are the one who had beaten up Wen Jinrui and Wang Jiaohua?" asked Zhuo Yi with an unfriendly tone.

Xiang Shaoyun frowned and answered, "Yes, Senior Brother Zhuo."

Zhuo Yi then looked Xiang Shaoyun up and down before saying with a commanding tone, "Come with me."

At this time, Zi Changhe signaled Xiang Shaoyun with his eyes, hinting that Xiang Shaoyun shouldn't go with Zhuo Yi.

Xiang Shaoyun met Zhuo Yi's gaze and asked, "Do you need anything, Senior Brother Zhuo?"

Zhuo Yi berated him. "If I tell you to come, you come. Why so many questions?"

When Long Hui brought Xiang Shaoyun back the day before, he wasn't around. However, he had heard from others that Xiang Shaoyun was his master's follower. As far as he was concerned, his master's follower was the same as his own follower. Thus, he viewed Xiang Shaoyun as an insignificant nobody unworthy of his attention.

But when he subsequently heard about Xiang Shaoyun defeating Wen Jinrui and Wang Jiaohua, he felt threatened by the talent showcased by a person so young. He was afraid that his master would eventually accept Xiang Shaoyun as a disciple, affecting his own status. But that wasn't the main reason he was here today. He was here because of his identity as a member of the Lightning Alliance.

Right this moment, a loud and clear voice rang out, "Who are you telling to follow you?"

The newcomer was Long Hui, with Liu Xinji beside him.

"Master, Elder Liu!" Zhuo Yi quickly greeted Long Hui and Liu Xinji before answering, "Your disciple wishes to take Xiang Shaoyun out with me."

Long Hui snorted coldly and berated, "Hmph. Are you thinking of handing him over to your Lightning Alliance?"

Zhuo Yi could hear that something was wrong in his master's tone. With an awkward expression, he said, "Master, he had beaten my brothers from the Lightning Alliance—"

"That's because they deserved the beating. Leave the Lightning Alliance right this moment. You are no longer allowed to mingle with them. Put your focus on cultivation instead. Try to reach the Skysoar Realm as soon as possible," Long Hui reprimanded Zhuo Yi, causing Zhuo Yi's expression to turn unsightly.

Zhuo Yi had never been scolded like that by his master before. Inwardly, he cursed, Xiang Shaoyun, I'll remember this. The Lightning Alliance will not spare you!

He blamed everything on Xiang Shaoyun, thinking that his master would never treat him that way if it wasn't for Xiang Shaoyun.

And thus, Zhuo Yi left gloomily.

Long Hui quickly and anxiously looked at Xiang Shaoyun and asked, "Y—Shaoyun, are you fine?"

"I'm fine, Elder Long," replied Xiang Shaoyun.

When Liu Xinji saw the care Long Hui was showing Xiang Shaoyun, a bitter smile formed on his face, and he said, "Looks like Elder Long will not be willing to part with your cherished junior. Oh well, I'll excuse myself."

Liu Xinji had gone looking for Long Hui to discuss accepting Xiang Shaoyun as his disciple. However, he had been directly refused. He could see that Long Hui himself was most likely going to accept Xiang Shaoyun as his own disciple. Thus, it would be unlikely that he would succeed. There was no helping it since Long Hui's status was above him.

After exchanging a few more words with Long Hui, Liu Xinji left. As for Zi Changhe, he stayed to continue catching up with Xiang Shaoyun. Only about half a day later did Zi Changhe leave.

Xiang Shaoyun then called Long Hui over and asked about the Lightning Alliance and for the more discreet information about the Cloud Margin Pavilion. The information would let him have a clear view of the situation within the Cloud Margin Pavilion. He had also asked about Gong Qinyin's master, the Zither Empress.

It turned out the Zither Empress was an expert who had made her name a long time ago. In the Cloud Margin Pavilion, she had a supreme status. She was one of the 10 greatest Emperors of Cloud Margin City and an accomplished zither player. Her style of fighting was to utilize the tune of her zither to attack in ways people couldn't block.

After figuring out more about the Zither Empress, Xiang Shaoyun couldn't help but to lament the good luck Gong Qinyin had. Xiang Shaoyun was in no rush to start cultivating. Rather, he made use of Long Hui's influence and got Xia Liuhui and Wang Zhenchuan to come over. He had decided that it was time he helped the two grow even faster.

"Tsk, tsk, boss, you sure are capable. You can actually get the two of us into the inner pavilion?" Xia Liuhui said with flatter.

His face was still wrapped up due to his wounds. Thus, he looked rather comedic with his badly swollen face. Wang Zhenchuan remained silent, but from his expression, it was clear he was no less grateful than Xia Liuhui.

Xiang Shaoyun did not want to linger on the same topic, so he went straight down to business. "You two are growing a tad bit too slowly. Do you want to increase your cultivation speed?"

Excitement covered their faces when they heard those words.

"B-boss, y-you can help us with that?" Xia Liuhui was almost drooling as he spoke.

He knew that with his boss's capability, it was very unlikely for his boss to say empty words.

Xiang Shaoyun looked at Xia Liuhui like he was looking at an idiot and said, "Yes or no. Give me a straight answer!"

"Yes!" Xia Liuhui and Wang Zhenchuan answered at the same time.

Xiang Shaoyun nodded and said, "I will teach you some high-level cultivation methods. But remember, never ever leak them, even to those closest to you. If you can promise that, I will teach you."

Xia Liuhui and Wang Zhenchuan both swore to keep the cultivation methods to themselves. It was only then that Xiang Shaoyun started teaching them some of the high-level cultivation methods he had memorized in the past.

With the high-level cultivation methods, their cultivation speed would increase. Furthermore, they would be able to reach an even higher height in the future. Xiang Shaoyun never hoped that the two would grow strong and be helpful to him. He sincerely wished that the two could live a better life.

The two were extremely grateful after they were taught the cultivation methods.

Xiang Shaoyun also taught them a tier-4 battle technique and told them to only start training it upon reaching the Transformation Realm. They would not be able to unleash the power of the battle technique and might even suffer a backlash if they trained it before the Transformation Realm.

Just like that, the two obtained a cultivation method and a battle technique that many disciples would dream to have. One could say that they were lucky to have known Xiang Shaoyun. After sending the two away, Xiang Shaoyun called Lu Xiaoqing over. This time, he did not call Gong Qinyin. There were some words that would be more appropriately spoken to Lu Xiaoqing alone.

When Lu Xiaoqing saw Xiang Shaoyun again, she handed him a cloak and said, "Shaoyun, this is a cloak I have knitted personally. Try and see if it fits!"

The gift was presented to Xiang Shaoyun before he could speak, hitting a certain tender spot in his heart.

Since young, apart from his father, he had almost never received sincere care from anyone else. Lu Xiaoqing was a cultivator, yet she had personally knitted a cloak for him. It filled his heart with warmth.

Chapter 224: Foolish Girl

Xiang Shaoyun slowly reached out and accepted the cloak. His eyes turned gentle as he said, "Thank you, Xiaoqing."

When Lu Xiaoqing sensed the change in Xiang Shaoyun's gaze, she blushed and said, "You don't have to be so courteous with me."

Lu Xiaoqing's heart was filled with dedication toward Xiang Shaoyun. One could say that she would be willing to do whatever he asked with no hesitation. Xiang Shaoyun took a deep breath and unfolded the cloak before draping it over his shoulder. With the cloak on, a little bit of grace was added to his heroic bearing.

"Ahh, it fits nicely. I was worried that it wouldn't fit," said Lu Xiaoqing as she patted her chest in relief.

She then stepped forward and helped Xiang Shaoyun tie up the band of the cloak hanging on his neck. Looking at her innocent face at such close distance and smelling the fragrance coming from her, Xiang Shaoyun couldn't help wrapping his arms around her waist, and he pulled her into his embrace.

The hug instantly melted Lu Xiaoqing, who stayed in the embrace with a dazzled mind. Xiang Shaoyun was in a complicated state of mind. He had been avoiding any romantic feelings all this while. However, he couldn't bear to hurt the kind and innocent woman before him over and over again.

As of this moment, it was like there was nobody except them in the entire world. They silently hugged each other with not a single distracting thought in their minds.

After an unknown amount of time, Xiang Shaoyun gently pushed Lu Xiaoqing away and looked straight into her bashful eyes and said, "Xiaoqing, I won't be able to give you any promises right now. I am an unlucky person. In the future, I will have to face a massive calamity. Therefore, I am not the best person for you. I hope you can think this through."

A resolute glint appeared in Lu Xiaoqing's eyes as she said, "I have already made up my mind. I am only going to be with you. Alive or dead, I don't want to part with you anymore."

"Foolish girl," Xiang Shaoyun said as he rubbed Lu Xiaoqing's nose intimately.

That action filled Lu Xiaoqing with a feeling of happiness. Her entire heart was crammed full with sweetness. She suddenly tiptoed and planted a kiss on Xiang Shaoyun's face before quickly lowering her head bashfully, no longer daring to look him in his eyes.

Xiang Shaoyun stroked Lu Xiaoqing's hair gently for a bit before saying solemnly, "Xiaoqing, do you still remember what I told you in the past? So long as your cultivation level can keep up with me, it is possible for us to be together. But you are still currently too weak in terms of cultivation."

Lu Xiaoqing pouted and said, "I am already a Transformation Realm cultivator!"

She had been working very hard, but she found that the gap between her and Xiang Shaoyun was still so large.

"I know you are already a Transformation Realm cultivator. But that is far from enough. If you want to become my woman, you need to be at least at the Emperor Realm," said Xiang Shaoyun seriously.

Lu Xiaoqing's eyes turned slightly red when she heard that. The Emperor Realm was an extremely mighty realm. With her four-star physique, was that even reachable for her?

"Fine." Lu Xiaoqing thought it was just an excuse Xiang Shaoyun was using to reject her, and tears started dripping down her face. She then turned to leave as she did not feel like staying here any extra moment anymore. Right as she was about to leave, a strong hand grabbed her arm.

"What are you doing, Xiaoqing? I am only telling you all that so you can prepare yourself mentally for it. I am going to teach you a high-level cultivation method that will help you grow faster. I am not trying to make you leave," Xiang Shaoyun explained.

Lu Xiaoqing turned and looked at him before asking, "Really?"

"Why should I even lie? Foolish girl!" said Xiang Shaoyun as he helped wipe her tears. And thus, Lu Xiaoqing's nearly broken heart was fully healed.

Xiang Shaoyun did as he said. He taught Lu Xiaoqing a cultivation method and a battle technique. He also shared some of his experiences during cultivation so as to help her grow even faster. Lu Xiaoqing was an intelligent person. It did not take her long to memorize everything he told her. Inwardly, she vowed solemnly, I must double my effort and not be a burden to Shaoyun!

Although Xiang Shaoyun was now interacting much more intimately with Lu Xiaoqing than before, just as he had said, he wouldn't be able to give her any promises right now. Thus, he still maintained a certain amount of distance from her.

As for Lu Xiaoqing, she felt that she was still not worthy of Xiang Shaoyun, and was already happy with how he was treating her. They stayed together in gentle tenderness for a day before Lu Xiaoqing finally left reluctantly.

Although Xiang Shaoyun could make Long Hui allow Lu Xiaoqing to stay here long term, he felt like it wouldn't be beneficial to her. It would be better for her to rely on her own hard work and grow one step at a time.

After Lu Xiaoqing left, Xiang Shaoyun headed toward Gong Qinyin's residence with Long Hui's elder token. Gong Qinyin had an extraordinary status in the pavilion and had her own estate, like the top 10 personal disciples. These estates were slightly inferior to the elder estates, but they were much better than the inner disciple estates.

Holding an elder token, Xiang Shaoyun was able to move around freely in the inner pavilion. He would be fine as long as he stayed away from the restricted zones. But right after he left Long Hui's estate, he noticed someone tailing him.

Is it someone with a death wish from the Lightning Alliance? Xiang Shaoyun thought to himself.

For struggles between the younger generation, everything could be done so long as nobody went too far. That was why someone was so daringly tailing Xiang Shaoyun. This particular tail was Long Hui's disciple, Zhuo Yi. Apart from him, two other youngsters were with him as well. All three of them had similar cultivation levels. After Xiang Shaoyun came out of Long Hui's estate, Zhuo Yi immediately stopped him in his path.

"Senior Brother Zhuo, what can I help you with? Seems like you have been tailing me for a bit," said Xiang Shaoyun in an unruffled manner.

"Come with me right this moment," said Zhuo Yi with an unsightly expression.

"What if I refuse?" asked Xiang Shaoyun.

"Hah...the choice is not up to you at all. Take him with us. If he dares to resist, don't show any mercy," said Zhuo Yi with a vicious glint in his eyes.

At his command, the two youngsters behind him charged Xiang Shaoyun.

They both had cultivation levels above sixth-stage Transformation Realm. They approached Xiang Shaoyun from two directions, confident that Xiang Shaoyun would not be able to escape them. They then reached for Xiang Shaoyun's shoulder.

Xiang Shaoyun did not do anything and glanced at the two before saying, "Let go or suffer the consequences."

"Kid, you are still acting all tough even now? You want us to teach you a lesson right here?" berated the person on the left.

The person on the right sneered, "Why don't we break his arms first?"

Zhuo Yi did not say anything. Clearly, he had tacitly agreed.

"I repeat, let go or suffer the consequences," said Xiang Shaoyun.

"Haha, what a joke. Suffer!" said the person on the right. He signaled the other person, and they started exerting strength with their grips, trying to snap Xiang Shaoyun's arms.

"AHHHH!"

"AHHHH!"

Chapter 225: Requesting to Meet Gong Qinyin

The miserable wails did not come from Xiang Shaoyun. Rather, they came from the two youngsters whose hands were on his shoulder. Xiang Shaoyun did not even have to lift his hand. He only released a tiny bit of his flame power. The two youngsters weren't even able to do anything before their hands caught on fire. They waved their burning hands miserably.

"I told you, but you wouldn't listen. Happy now?" Xiang Shaoyun shrugged.

He had only utilized a tiny bit of Yun Flame's power. If he had used more, he could have instantly burned the two to crisp. He had no intention to kill anyone in the Cloud Margin Pavilion. Doing so would only attract more attention, and attention was the last thing he needed.

Zhuo Yi was flabbergasted to see his companions being injured so easily. But he was even more furious as he pointed at Xiang Shaoyun and bellowed, "I was trying to play nice, but since you refused to play along, let me tell you that you are only my master's follower. Be obedient and you might still have a chance to survive this. Otherwise, you're dead for sure!"

"Hehe, I am your master's relative," Xiang Shaoyun said as he flashed a wide smile.

Inwardly, he was filled with contempt, What an idiot. Even your master is but a puppet of mine. Who are you to act tough in front of me?

Zhuo Yi was so infuriated he nearly spat blood.

"Hmph. Relative my ass. I don't know what you did to flatter my master so much, but I won't let you succeed. Come with me!" Zhuo Yi said before he suddenly moved.

The moment he moved, he used his full power, and a dragon claw formed and grabbed at Xiang Shaoyun's shoulder. He attacked with his maximum speed, not giving Xiang Shaoyun a chance to react. However, every single detail of the attack was crystal clear before Xiang Shaoyun's eyes. He avoided the grip without any effort at all.

But Zhuo Yi wasn't a pushover either. After missing his first attack, he was able to quickly readjust and clawed at Xiang Shaoyun's face instead. If that attack had landed, Xiang Shaoyun's face would have been ruined.

Xiang Shaoyun frowned and said, "You're asking for it!"

Finally deciding to counterattack, Xiang Shaoyun gripped Zhuo Yi's arm and gave it a twist.

Crack!

"AHHHH!"

Zhuo Yi's arm was snapped, causing him to wail like a pig being slaughtered. He broke out in cold sweat.

"This is a lesson I am teaching you on your master's behalf. If your Lightning Alliance insists on looking for trouble, I don't mind completely destroying your alliance as well," declared Xiang Shaoyun overbearingly.

But Zhuo Yi was still unyielding as he said, "Kill me if you dare! The honor of the Lightning Alliance can not be trampled on!"

"You have been terribly brainwashed." Xiang Shaoyun rolled his eyes. He kicked Zhuo Yi away and resumed his journey to Gong Qinyin's place, completely ignoring the three.

With a face filled with resentment, Zhuo Yi glared at Xiang Shaoyun's departing back and thought to himself, Bastard, you will regret your actions!

Xiang Shaoyun walked along a trail in a forested area in a relaxed manner, looking as if the little episode earlier had not ruined his mood. But in truth, he disliked such pointless struggles.

Can't I just cultivate in peace for a bit? Xiang Shaoyun sighed to himself.

Soon, he arrived at Gong Qinyin's estate. The estate was shrouded in elegance and tranquility, and melodic zither tunes could be heard coming from within.

The tune was extremely graceful and moving, painting a picture of various oriole singing away. The melody flowed like the clearest of spring water, soaking every listener in a comfortable and refreshing feeling. The tune suddenly changed, giving off a faint trace of melancholy, causing one to be sucked in and to start feeling melancholic as well. The feeling was similar to what one would feel when missing a loved one, a sensation of unrequited love.

Even when the zither stopped playing, the tune still lingered in the air, trapping one in the melancholic atmosphere for a long, long time.

Xiang Shaoyun was someone who knew music as well. He had not cultivated when he was growing up, but he was an expert in all sorts of entertainment. He could hear that the player of the tune wasn't very good yet, but had an innate talent to completely draw the audience into her atmosphere. With a natural talent like that, she would have terrifying accomplishments in the art of controlling others through music given enough time to grow.

"Is it Gong Qinyin playing the zither?" Xiang Shaoyun guessed.

When he approached the estate, an old woman appeared before him noiselessly and said, "Halt!"

Xiang Shaoyun bowed and said, "Lord, please inform Lady Gong Qinyin that Xiang Shaoyun is here to pay her a visit."

The old woman glanced at Xiang Shaoyun and said, "Those with no business here are to leave immediately!"

Xiang Shaoyun did not bother saying much and took out Elder Long Hui's elder token.

He thought that the token would earn him some respect, but unfortunately, the old woman completely ignored it and said, "Final warning. Those with no business here are to leave immediately!"

Xiang Shaoyun could sense that the aura released by the old woman was even more terrifying than the aura Long Hui released. Realizing that, he knew that he might have to return empty-handed after all.

But he was not one to give up easily. After taking a few steps backward, he shouted, "Gong Qinyin, come out and meet me!"

"You are courting death!" the old woman berated with a sharp glint in her eyes.

Just as she was about to attack, Gong Qinyin's voice rang out, "Granny Mei, please don't trouble him. He is here on my invitation."

The old woman then stopped and gave Xiang Shaoyun a deep glance before vanishing into thin air.

Gong Qinyin then appeared at the gate and asked anxiously, "Did Granny Mei hurt you?"

Xiang Shaoyun patted his chest and said, "I'm fine. She did not hurt me."

But inwardly, he was thinking, If you were even half a second slower, I would have suffered for sure!

"Um. I had not expected you to come directly. Otherwise, I would have told Granny Mei in advance to allow you passage," said Gong Qinyin apologetically.

Xiang Shaoyun smiled. "Don't worry. Look, I'm completely fine." He paused for a bit and continued, "You sure have a high status in the Cloud Margin Pavilion. You even have a King Realm expert serving as your guard!"

Gong Qinyin answered, "That is all thanks to master."

She did not linger on the topic and directly invited Xiang Shaoyun into the estate.

Xiang Shaoyun thought there would only be Gong Qinyin. Thus, he was surprised to see another person there. That person was also an old acquaintance of his. She was none other than Li Yaxuan, the beautiful woman he once met at the Flame Mountain.

She was currently dressed in a set of green muslin outfit that perfectly accentuated her alluring figure. Her delicate face emanated a bewitching charm no young man could resist. When Xiang Shaoyun was looking at Li Yaxuan, she was also sizing him up. A toying expression surfaced in her eyes.

Chapter 226: Witness This Young Master's Grace

Since Xiang Shaoyun had a different face when he had met Li Yaxuan previously, she did not recognize him. But she did know about Xiang Shaoyun's accomplishments, and she was here precisely because of him. As a vice house leader of the Red House, one could say that she was one of its most prestigious members.

"Senior Sister Li, he is the Xiang Shaoyun we were talking about earlier." Gong Qinyin did not expose Xiang Shaoyun's identity and introduced him to Li Yaxuan as if he was a complete stranger.

Li Yaxuan stood up and smiled gracefully. "You are indeed a young hero. No wonder Junior Sister Gong favors you. I am Li Yaxuan, pleasure to meet you."

As she spoke, she did not forget to toss Xiang Shaoyun a seductive gaze. Any other man would lose their mind at this point. But Xiang Shaoyun had seen too many beautiful women. Thus, he had much more resistance to seduction.

With an unchanging face, he replied, "I am Xiang Shaoyun. Pleased to meet you, Senior Sister Li."

Xiang Shaoyun conducted himself in a refined manner, naturally emanating a grace only the nobility would have. Both Li Yaxuan and Gong Qinyin were women with extremely high standards, but even their hearts thumped when they witnessed Xiang Shaoyun's demeanour.

"Come on, sit down and talk over tea," invited Gong Qinyin, as she was the host.

The three sat down while Gong Qinyin started preparing tea with the tea set she had on the stone table.

The art of tea preparation and zither playing were both closely related to a person's state of mind. Great emphasis was placed on staying tranquil and even-tempered. When combined with graceful smooth movements that resemble nature itself, it would produce great tea and tune. Because of that, the art of tea was one of the things Gong Qinyin was learning.

Soon, an aromatic tea fragrance filled the air.

Li Yaxuan couldn't help but praise, "Great skills, Junior Sister Gong."

"You are too kind, Senior Sister Li. Please, have a drink," said Gong Qinyin with a smile as she poured Li Yaxuan and Xiang Shaoyun a cup of tea each.

Li Yaxuan directly downed the cup of tea, while Xiang Shaoyun took the time to gently sniff the tea's fragrance and to slowly sway the teacup before sipping on it.

When Gong Qinyin noticed what he was doing, she couldn't resist asking, "Shaoyun, you know the art of tea as well?"

Only those who knew tea would know the correct way of tea tasting. Xiang Shaoyun's action made it clear what he knew.

Xiang Shaoyun placed the cup down and smiled. "I know a bit."

He wasn't trying to be humble at all when he admitted it. In fact, he felt somewhat proud.

His answer made Gong Qinyin curious as she said, "Would you mind giving me a pointer or two?"

Li Yaxuan looked at Xiang Shaoyun with a toying gaze, seemingly waiting to hear his wisdom.

After taking another sip of the tea, Xiang Shaoyun said, "The water and tea leaves used, one's grasp over the tea set, the temperature of the water, how long to boil the water, and the amount of tea leaves used...these are all the basics in the art of tea, and you already have a good mastery over them all. Unfortunately, you placed too much emphasis on the form of the tea, losing a tiny bit of soul that could have been in it."

"What do you mean by having a form without a soul?" Gong Qinyin asked in astonishment.

"It has the similar concept as playing the zither. The thickness of the tea originates from one's heart. There is no need to do everything in a textbook-correct manner. Follow your heart, pour your heart into it, and both your tea and zither tune will be able to leave a rich aftertaste in all who have tasted them," explained Xiang Shaoyun solemnly.

Those words completely stunned Gong Qinyin. Li Yaxuan had no idea what they were talking about, so she decided to not interrupt. But now, her gaze when looking at Xiang Shaoyun had turned into one of curiosity.

After a while, Gong Qinyin recovered from her reverie. She was filled with excitement as she said, "Shaoyun, what you said is almost identical to what my master said! I did not expect that you actually know so much! You must be great in the art of tea and zither as well, then?"

"Haha, I am only a critic and can't do any of that," said Xiang Shaoyun, finally acting humble for once.

In the past when he had too much free time on his hands, he did learn a bit of the two. But he was still a kid back then, and with the short attention span of a kid, he moved on after mastering a bit of the essence of the two arts.

After all, for him, they were only entertainments and would never be things he specialized in. But Gong Qinyin did not buy any of his words. She pressed on, "I don't believe that. Why don't you make us a pot of tea as well? Or maybe play us a tune with the zither."

She wished more and more that Xiang Shaoyun would have similar interests. That way, they would simply be a match made in heaven.

What is wrong with me? Have I really fallen for him? Gong Qinyin couldn't help but ask herself.

In truth, she had been having those thoughts for a while now. She had merely been suppressing them. But now, it seemed she wouldn't be able to keep suppressing her feelings any longer.

Xiang Shaoyun wanted to refuse, but Li Yaxuan interjected and egged him on, "Yes, that's a great idea. I am curious as to what this junior brother is capable of. Come, expand your senior sister's horizons."

Looking at the two great beauties before him, Xiang Shaoyun had the urge to show off.

"Fine, today, you shall witness this young master's grace!" said Xiang Shaoyun in a narcissistic manner.

He then exchanged seats with Gong Qinyin. Using the clean water stored beside the seat, he washed his hands thoroughly. An approving look covered Gong Qinyin's eyes when she saw what he did.

Cleaning one's hands was the basic requirement for those dabbling in the art of tea. One must ensure one's hands were clean, as it was a sign of respect toward the tea and the drinker.

A calm smile hovered on Xiang Shaoyun's face as his mood seemed to have instantly turned cheerful. Recalling his free and leisurely life of the past filled him with melancholy. Thinking of it, he started moving. The long-gone feelings returned to him as his stiff motion slowly turned smooth, giving off a feeling of absolute harmony to those looking at him.

Gong Qinyin was completely infatuated with what she was looking at. Inwardly, she cried out, Sooo handsome!

As for Li Yaxuan, although she did not know tea well, her attention was drawn in by Xiang Shaoyun's harmonious actions and the smile hanging on his face. She had never thought that just someone making tea would be such a pleasurable sight to behold. It was most likely completely due to the person who was making the tea.

Why is he giving me such a familiar feeling? I feel like I have seen him somewhere before! Li Yaxuan started asking herself. After a while, Xiang Shaoyun finished making the tea. At that instant, the courtyard was filled with its fragrance, giving one an extremely refreshing feeling.

Xiang Shaoyun served them a cup of tea each and said in a gentlemanly manner, "Both of you, please have a drink."

Gong Qinyin raised the cup impatiently and started tasting the tea.

Even Li Yaxuan drank slowly this time.

The moment they tasted the tea, they felt an indescribable flavor fill every fiber of their beings. They felt completely relaxed, as if all their worries were instantly flushed from their minds. Completely immersed in the comfortable sensation, they felt as free as unfettered clouds.

Chapter 227: I Will Play You a Song

When Xiang Shaoyun saw the two women's pleasurable expressions, a smile he rarely showed formed on his face.

It was a special kind of smile—a smile usually only silkpants would have.

He once lived a life of drowning in beauties. Now that there were two beauties before him, he had an illusion he had returned to the past.

Li Yaxuan was the first to recover. She smiled and said, "Excellent tea, Junior Brother Xiang. I can't really explain it, but it feels better than Junior Sister Gong's tea." She looked at Gong Qinyin and said, "Junior Sister Gong, don't blame your senior sister for being direct."

Gong Qinyin also finally recovered from her reverie when she heard those words. She opened her eyes and said, "Senior Sister Li, I am not a narrow-minded person like that." She then looked straight at Xiang Shaoyun and asked, "Is that the feeling of having both form and soul present? For

some reason, I can feel joy rushing out of my heart uncontrollably. My master said that when tasting tea, one is mainly tasting the state of mind. Shaoyun, you have actually accomplished something only my master could. It's amazing!"

The admiration in Gong Qinyin's eyes was too much; even Xiang Shaoyun started blushing.

"Don't stare at me like that. I'm shy," said Xiang Shaoyun bashfully.

The two women burst out in laughter like two blooming flowers when they heard him. The two were incredibly beautiful, and when they smiled, they seemed to overshadow even the world around them.

"Junior Brother Xiang is a funny person," said Li Yaxuan in between her giggles. She rarely saw a young man as bold as Xiang Shaoyun. Even among the Cloud Margin Pavilion members, very few young men dared to speak like that to her.

Gong Qinyin said, "Shaoyun, you are definitely good at tea making. Now, it's time you play us a song. I've only been playing zither for a year. I still have a lot to learn."

Xiang Shaoyun replied, "Can I say no?"

"No!" Gong Qinyin and Li Yaxuan said at the same time.

"But I'm afraid the two of you will become my fans after listening to my song," said Xiang Shaoyun shamelessly while rubbing his chin.

The two women were completely amused by his words.

"If you are really that good, I don't mind. What, do you think it is embarrassing to have fans as beautiful as us?" Li Yaxuan teased.

"Haha, no, that will certainly be glorious. Ok, let me play you a song then," said Xiang Shaoyun with a hearty laugh. He then walked toward the table with a zither on it. Xiang Shaoyun sat down but did not immediately start playing the zither. Rather, he lightly picked at the strings, causing a melodic tune to ring in the air.

"This is a zither of common quality, but I guess it would suffice," said Xiang Shaoyun.

Gong Qinyin argued, "This is a zither my master gave me. How is it only a common zither?"

Xiang Shaoyun smiled and did not answer. He sank into focus and relaxed his entire body as his hands slowly rested on the zither. A mask of concentration covered his face as his fingers started plucking on the strings.

A melodious tune started fluttering about in the air. Xiang Shaoyun opened with a common ballad that was light and cheerful. Li Yaxuan was slightly disappointed when she heard what he was playing.

On the other hand, Gong Qinyin was paying full attention to each of Xiang Shaoyun's motions. She could see the absolute grace he was radiating with each motion. He looked like a grandmaster of the zither.

Even so, that was not good enough to win Gong Qinyin's admiration. At most, she would only feel that Xiang Shaoyun was a better zither player than her, which was still far from the level of accomplishing the dao through the zither.

Just as the two women were feeling slightly bored, the tune suddenly changed. Impassioned tunes started resounding throughout the courtyard. A scene appeared in the heads of the two women. They saw a tiny beast in a forest. It was being attacked and bullied by numerous powerful beasts. Again and again, the little beast resisted and fought back. They also saw the scene of a battlefield, witnessing the sight of someone being stabbed in the back by a comrade, sensing the sorrow of betrayal...

Both women were completely dazed. They had never expected that a song could penetrate their hearts like that. They could clearly sense what the song was trying to portray, that this was a dog-eat-dog world. They could also clearly sense the pain of betrayal, sinking them into a bottomless abyss of sorrow.

At a certain hidden corner of the estate, Granny Mei was also fully focused on the song. An incredibly sharp glint appeared in her eyes as she listened on.

Inwardly, she cried out in alarm, Inserting intent in the zither, filling the song with the sorrow of betrayal. This is someone with a vengeful heart. Nevertheless, his dao of zither has reached an extremely high level. If he pours his astral energy into his tune, he would be able to harm others with just his tune. This kid is a rare talent!

From the initial anger, the melody transformed into an entirely different feeling. It started turning encouraging, as if the one who was bullied had transformed into a completely new person now treading a path of unyielding growth.

The mood of the melody had completely infected the two women and the hidden old lady, pulling them out from the sorrowful sensation and filling their hearts with a resolute fighting spirit.

It was clear that they were completely immersed in the melody and were able to clearly feel every emotion the song portrayed. Even Xiang Shaoyun himself was completely engrossed in his own melody.

He found himself thinking a lot as scenes from his past flipped through his mind one after another, revealing the true emotions he had kept hidden in his heart for a long time. Completely engrossed in the song, he unknowingly triggered a certain power within him.

Strands of astral energy started flowing out of his fingertips into the zither, filling each tune he played with a wondrous power to control the emotion of others. It was a power capable of trapping a person in music forever. Fortunately, Xiang Shaoyun had never cultivated mind control techniques or killing zither techniques. Otherwise, both Gong Qinyin and Li Yaxuan would be seriously harmed.

Xiang Shaoyun was completely engrossed in the world of zither, to the point he no longer heard what he was playing himself. He didn't even know to stop. At a certain estate within one of Cloud Margin Pavilion's restricted zones, a person was standing silently on a roof, gazing toward the direction of Gong Qinyin's estate.

"Is that Qinyin? No, that's not her. She has yet to reach this human zither unity stage where one can control the zither through intent. If this playing is combined with a killing technique, even Skysoar Realm cultivators can be killed before they know what was going on. Unfortunately, this player still lacks the skill of self control when playing the zither," muttered the person with a slight sigh.

They then vanished from the roof before reappearing within Gong Qinyin's courtyard.

Chapter 228: You Better Not Attack for Real

The moment this person appeared, all the energy in the area seemed to immediately come under her control. Instantly, Xiang Shaoyun, who had become one with the zither, and the three listeners who had completely sunk into his music were all awakened from their state of reverie.

It interrupted Xiang Shaoyun's flow, causing a series of disorderly tunes to resound in the air. With the stop of his playing, the power he had awakened when playing the zither nearly went out of control. Fortunately, the power wasn't too strong yet. Otherwise, he would have suffered internal injuries.

After Gong Qinyin and Li Yaxuan recovered, they quickly stood up and saluted the newcomer. "Greetings, master (Zither Empress)."

The newcomer was none other than Gong Qinyin's master, the Zither Empress. Granny Mei, who was observing in secret, also came out to salute the newcomer before she went back into hiding. Xiang Shaoyun stared at the newcomer in astonishment. He was shocked to learn that this person was the Zither Empress, a person at the very top of the Cloud Margin Pavilion.

After all, the person standing before him was a beauty who did not look much older than Li Yaxuan. It was very hard to imagine that she was an Emperor Realm cultivator, one so high above many others. The Zither Empress's real name was Hua Cheng, a very poetic name.

She was an exceptionally talented woman who was good in the four arts, which consisted of zither, Go, calligraphy, and painting. She had an extraordinary temperament, and standing there, she looked like a woman of unmatched beauty out of a painting. Her beautiful face and graceful figure was akin to a ripe honey peach that gave one an urge to give her a bite. She also had a scholarly aura about her, one that not many people could compare with. Just by standing there, the entire atmosphere of the area turned tranquil and comfortable.

She had countless pursuers. Often, Emperors of other towns would come from far away just to see her. However, she was fiercely devoted to the Saber Emperor Du Xuanhao and had rejected all her admirers.

The love story of these two Emperor Realm cultivators was one that captured the imagination of all Cloud Margin City residents. Xiang Shaoyun did not stand up to offer his greeting. Rather, he sat there staring at her. It wasn't that he had been charmed by her beauty. It was because she was simply too graceful.

Just by looking at her, one would feel calm and comfortable. She seemed to be innately amiable and approachable, and anyone who laid eyes on her would not be able to resist approaching her. Hua Cheng was not angered by Xiang Shaoyun's rude staring. She was very clear on how fatally charming she was to the opposite gender, much less a little kid like this.

She said, "You are decent at the zither. Who is your master?"

She rarely paid attention to the younger generation of the Cloud Margin Pavilion, but she could still guess that Xiang Shaoyun had just joined the Cloud Margin Pavilion not long ago. After all, she knew everyone who could play the zither in the pavilion, and this young man was obviously not one of them.

Xiang Shaoyun finally recovered from his reverie as well. He stood up and saluted Hua Cheng before saying, "Greetings, Zither Empress. I have no master. I have merely played the zither for fun during my free time."

Hua Cheng stared at Xiang Shaoyun in astonishment. She then smiled and said, "That's right. Playing the zither should be something fun. I have been too stubborn about it."

Hua Cheng was incredibly attractive, to the point she completely overshadowed Gong Qinyin and Li Yaxuan. It was not that the two weren't as beautiful as her, but that she was much stronger than them and thus possessed a grace far beyond them. If one day they reached the same cultivation level as her, neither of them would be inferior to the other in terms of charm.

Xiang Shaoyun met Hua Cheng's gaze and said, "Music is capable of influencing one's mood, improving one's temperament, and sharing one's emotions. Unfortunately, not many people truly understand music. Big sister, since you are called the Zither Empress, you are definitely a master at the dao of zither. I wonder if you would mind playing this young one a song?"

Gong Qinyin and Li Yaxuan were completely stunned. Even Hua Cheng was staring at Xiang Shaoyun in astonishment. She was obviously shocked by the "big sister" Xiang Shaoyun used to address her.

But she was no ordinary person. She immediately recovered and smiled. "You are quite the gutsy one, aren't you? You dare to call me big sister? Are you not afraid that I will kill you right where you stand?"

As she spoke, her aura transformed and became sharp and suffocating.

It frightened Gong Qinyin, and she quickly pleaded for leniency on behalf of Xiang Shaoyun, "Master, please spa—"

Before she could finish her sentence, Hua Cheng sealed her, and she could no longer speak. Xiang Shaoyun could sense the terrifying aura around him, but he showed no fear. With a smile, he said, "For others, you are a mighty Empress. For me, you are an amiable and beautiful big sister. If you really think that a nobody like me has offended you, feel free to kill me right now."

Xiang Shaoyun showed no fear, as if he did not care about his life at all.

But in truth, he was extremely nervous as he prayed, You better not attack for real.

Hua Cheng stared at Xiang Shaoyun for a bit before the aura vanished. A gentle smile hung on her face as she said, "Hehe, you have excellent willpower and decent aptitude. More importantly, you are well versed with the zither. But that is not enough to have me as your big sister. Why don't you do the same as Qinyin and be my disciple? I will guide you on how to enter the dao through the zither."

Both Gong Qinyin and Li Yaxuan had different reactions to her words.

Gong Qinyin was overjoyed, hoping that Xiang Shaoyun would agree immediately. As for Li Yaxuan, she was completely shocked, and envy filled her eyes. She was very clear on just how illustrious the Zither Empress was. Before this, Gong Qinyin was the only person she had personally offered to accept as a disciple. Now, a second person had appeared. It was inconceivable.

But Xiang Shaoyun's reply shocked her even more. He actually shook his head and said, "Thank you for the offer, big sister. Although I know a bit about the zither, I have never treated it as a tool to kill."

"Shaoyun, how can you say that? The tune of a zither is capable of expressing one's emotions, able to make people experience joy and sorrow. Even after entering the dao through the zither, so long as you maintain the just in your heart, you won't defile the elegance of the zither. Just say yes! This is a rare chance!" Gong Qinyin quickly persuaded him.

Back then, the only reason she had attracted Hua Cheng's attention was because her name meant "zither's melody". Her master was of the opinion that fate had brought them together and had thus

decided to accept her as a disciple. That was how Gong Qinyin came to enjoy the status she now had.

But of course, she was also talented enough in the dao of zither to be worthy of her master's teachings. Xiang Shaoyun was completely different from her. His accomplishments in the dao of zither was sufficiently high, and he was much more proficient than her in playing the zither. Perhaps he was even more talented than her. If he could obtain the teachings of her master, he would have a bright future.

Chapter 229: Let Us Be Brother and Sister

Xiang Shaoyun noticed that he was currently the focus of the three beauties, but he still had a calm smile on his face as he said, "Thank you for the favor you show me, big sister. However, the dao of zither is not my dao."

"Oh, but all dao lead to the same destination. With your outstanding talent in the dao of zither, relying on this dao will make it easier for you to gain martial prowess as well. Moreover, the zither is graceful and refined. Won't you look much more carefree practicing the dao of zither rather than the likes of sabers and spears?" Hua Cheng said after a slight astonishment.

She couldn't even imagine that a Transformation Realm young man would actually reject her offer. Even a King would wish to be her disciple. She even wondered if this kid was actually a nutcase or if he truly was someone who did not think much of Emperor Realm cultivators.

A solemn look covered Xiang Shaoyun's face as he declared, "The dao I pursue is the dao of saber."

"You are a saber user as well?" Hua Cheng asked curiously.

Her relationship with the Saber Emperor was common knowledge. He was a supreme expert in the saber. And when she heard that Xiang Shaoyun practiced the saber as well, her interest was piqued.

"If big sister is willing to play me a song, I won't mind demonstrating how my dao of saber is even better than my dao of zither," said Xiang Shaoyun, full of confidence.

Xiang Shaoyun was a person who had met numerous experts since young. Thus, his calmness before experts such as this Zither Empress was something not many people could compare with. That was how he had been able to speak so calmly with Hua Cheng.

Hua Cheng did not say anything. She merely gripped at the empty air. Immediately, the zither not far away flew toward her. She required no warm-ups before playing the zither. She propped it up with one hand while her other hand rested gently on the zither, as if she was stroking the face of her lover.

A battle song started resounding in the courtyard. The melody sounded like it was played by gods and demons. The moment it started playing, the courtyard seemed to have turned into a battlefield. Countless armored soldiers charged each other, and severed limbs and blood filled the battlefield. It was an extremely shocking scene.

Xiang Shaoyun felt like he himself had appeared on the battlefield with countless armored soldiers rushing toward him. Initially, he was still aware that he was currently in an illusion. But soon, he was completely drawn in.

He could clearly feel the pain from the wounds inflicted on him. He could also clearly sense the fierce murderous intent of the soldiers. If he did not strike back, he would die.

Kill!

He erupted with his own murderous intent while his Overlord Skyslaying Saber appeared in his hand. He then started wildly attacking with his Berserk Lightning Blade. The soldiers weren't particularly strong and were quickly killed off. But there were just too many of them. Wave after wave arrived, as if there was an unending amount.

Xiang Shaoyun was forced to unleash his full power. He utilized his human saber unity and attacked with saber intent, unleashing a breathtaking slash that instantly severed numerous heads from their bodies. He was unstoppable!

"Come! Let this young master send you to the afterlife!" shouted Xiang Shaoyun, whose eyes had turned bloodshot from all the killing.

Not only was he using his saber technique, he was also using Yun Flame's power. The torrential 1,000 years old flame poured out and burned everything, turning the battlefield into a sea of flame.

Just as Xiang Shaoyun was happily slaying his opponents, the melody suddenly stopped. The soldiers and the battlefield vanished like they had never appeared in the first place.

Xiang Shaoyun froze.

Staring at the Overlord Skyslaying Saber in his hand and sensing the power of flame around him, he cried out inwardly, Shit, I fell for it!

After taking a deep breath, he withdrew all his power and raised his head to look at the elegant woman sullenly. He had completely fallen under the control of her melody. If she had wanted to kill him, she could have done it easily.

Xiang Shaoyun hated this feeling of being controlled the most. He increasingly felt that he was too weak.

"Not bad at all. You have actually comprehended saber intent. No wonder you care so little for the dao of zither," said Hua Cheng with an approving look. She added, "You even have the millennium earthcore fire on you. I suppose that is the new flame that had appeared at the Flame Mountain not too long ago? Kid, you are blessed with both talent and luck!"

"Since you already know everything about me, just do whatever you want with me," said Xiang Shaoyun with a shrug. As far as he was concerned, all his secrets had been exposed. The only thing he could do was accept what was coming to him.

The millennium earthcore fire was something that had caught the attention of the Cloud Margin Pavilion. If they decided to take it from him, he would be completely helpless. He even started regretting his act of showing off his zither skills. If it wasn't for that, he wouldn't have attracted this woman's attention.

With a faint smile on her face, Hua Cheng looked at Xiang Shaoyun and asked calmly, "What is your name?"

"Xiang Shaoyun," came the reply.

"Alright. I will address you as Little Brother Shaoyun in the future. You can call me Big Sister Hua Cheng as well. We shall treat each other as brother and sister!" said Hua Cheng sincerely while winking her large eyes.

The mouths of Gong Qinyin and Li Yaxuan were wide agape when they heard that. They stared at Hua Cheng in disbelief, wondering if they were hearing things. An Emperor Realm cultivator was

actually telling a Transformation Realm kid to be her little brother? What was going on with the world?

Xiang Shaoyun was naturally happy to oblige as he flashed a happy smile and said, "Big sister, those are your own words. I have always wanted a beautiful big sister like you. I've never expected that my wish would actually be fulfilled. This is great!"

A crafty smile surfaced on Hua Cheng's face as she said, "Since you have acknowledged me as your big sister, you will have to listen to me in the future. Otherwise, you will suffer for your disobedience."

"Oh? But shouldn't an elder sister be pampering her little brother?" Xiang Shaoyun asked.

"Hmph. I have no intention to pamper you into a spoiled child. In the future, focus on cultivating the saber. If there is anything you don't understand, feel free to come ask your big sister. Although I don't cultivate the saber, I still know enough to guide you," said Hua Cheng, now looking like a regular nagging elder sister.

"Don't worry, big sister. I won't embarrass you," declared Xiang Shaoyun as he slapped his chest. He then rubbed his hands and said, "Big sister, after getting such a handsome, heroic, smart, and insanely talented little brother, shouldn't you be giving him a gift? It will be an embarrassment for a person of your stature if you don't, right?"

His words caused Hua Cheng to giggle as she said, "I am suddenly regretting my decision. You are too narcissistic, little brother. Will you be the ruin of the reputation I have painstakingly built?"

But after saying that, a jade plate appeared in her hand, and she tossed it over to him.

"You can have this star congregation jade. Never ever use it to create trouble in the pavilion. Or else, I won't spare you!" said Hua Cheng. She added, "I will tell Granny Mei to prepare an estate for you. In the future, you can stay there and focus on your cultivation. I will introduce a remarkable saber master to be your master later. Don't disappoint me, ok?"

Chapter 230: Join the Red House

The star congregation jade Hua Cheng had given him was of a quality the jade plate Xiang Shaoyun had gotten at the Martial Hall Palace couldn't compare with. It was carved into a command token with a symbol of a zither on it. Strands of energy constantly swirled around the plate, making it look

incomparably precious. Anyone who got their hands on one of these plates would never want to part with it.

This was most certainly a proper star congregation jade that could increase a person's speed of astral energy absorption by a few times. A star congregation jade of this quality was comparable to king medicines. Even King Realm cultivators would be envious of a person with this jade.

Hua Cheng had so casually gifted Xiang Shaoyun such a big gift. Her sincerity in accepting Xiang Shaoyun as her little brother could be clearly seen. Of course, the feeling she had toward Xiang Shaoyun was not the romantic sort. Rather, she simply had a good opinion of him.

The source of that good opinion was Xiang Shaoyun's fearlessness when facing her, his talent in the dao of zither, and his comprehension of saber intent. All that combined caused her to sincerely admire his talent, and she found it amusing to have a little brother like him.

"Thank you, big sister. Your little brother will not disappoint you," said Xiang Shaoyun with a solemn nod.

Hua Cheng then looked at Gong Qinyin and said, "Qinyin, if there is anything you don't understand in the dao of zither, feel free to reach out to Little Brother Shaoyun. Although he knows nothing of the way to achieve martial mastery through the zither, his accomplishments in the art of zither is far beyond yours."

"Yes master. I will definitely seek guidance from Xia—Martial Uncle Xiang!" said Gong Qinyin. She didn't even know how she was supposed to address Xiang Shaoyun now. Even "martial uncle" was something she had to force herself to say. She was definitely unwilling to call him that.

Hua Cheng laughed and said, "The two of you already know each other before this so you can address him as you did before. There is no need to make the hierarchy overly complicated."

"Thank you, master!" Gong Qinyin heaved a breath of relief and thanked her master.

Hua Cheng then looked at Li Yaxuan and said, "You are Guardian Li's granddaughter? Not bad, but you still need to work harder."

She then gave Xiang Shaoyun one final look before vanishing from the courtyard.

The moment the Zither Empress left, Li Yaxuan heaved a breath of relief. "Has the Zither Empress finally left?"

It was obvious how nervous this vice house leader of Red House was before the Zither Empress.

"Senior Sister Li, my master is a very friendly person," said Gong Qinyin.

Li Yaxuan looked at Gong Qinyin and asked, "Is that so? But why do I remember you being just as nervous earlier?"

Gong Qinyin replied awkwardly, "N-no, that's not true at all! I was only worried that my master would beat him up!"

In truth, although Hua Cheng had accepted her as a disciple, Gong Qinyin didn't really get to see her a lot. Most of the time, Granny Mei was the one guiding her in cultivation. Therefore, she was very nervous each time she saw her master.

Xiang Shaoyun smiled as he played with the star congregation jade and said, "Although big sister is an Emperor Realm cultivator, she is a friendly and kind person. The two of you fear her because you think too much."

"You think everyone is as fearless as you? If it was any other Emperor, you would have been slapped into mincemeat by now," said Li Yaxuan as she rolled her eyes.

Beside her, Gong Qinyin also nodded repeatedly. "Yes, Shaoyun, just watch your mouth and actions in the future."

Xiang Shaoyun smiled and did not say anything. He hung the star congregation jade on himself and started walking around.

"With this thing, my cultivation will be much faster!" Xiang Shaoyun muttered in satisfaction.

When the two women looked at the star congregation jade, envy could be seen in their eyes.

With the same envious look in her eyes, Li Yaxuan said, "Xiang Shaoyun, the Zither Empress sure treats you well. Not even Junior Sister Gong is treated as well as you!"

Gong Qinyin did not mind it too much. "Shaoyun is a much more outstanding cultivator than me. It is only natural that my master is showing him favor. In any case, I am already happy with what I have."

"Haha, you don't need to be envious. In the future, I will be able to easily give you a couple of these jades as well," Xiang Shaoyun declared with a hearty laugh.

"You think a top-quality star congregation jade like this is the same as some common vegetables?" Li Yaxuan grumbled.

"Oh, this is still not a top-quality star congregation jade. Great quality, yes. But not top quality yet," said Xiang Shaoyun.

Li Yaxuan rolled her eyes, thinking that Xiang Shaoyun was bluffing too much. If even this star congregation jade was not top quality, wouldn't the star congregation jade of the King Realm elders all be trashy jades?

She was naturally unaware of how much higher Xiang Shaoyun's standards were. But Xiang Shaoyun wasn't really bothered to explain himself to her. He was here to have a talk about something with Gong Qinyin, but with Li Yaxuan around, it wouldn't be convenient to talk about it. Thus, he excused himself not long after.

"Why are you in a rush to leave? Master already said that she's going to give you your own estate. It will take some time. Just stay for a little longer," persuaded Gong Qinyin.

"That's right. We still have more things to talk to you about. Take a seat," Li Yaxuan said.

"Oh? What do you want to talk about?" Xiang Shaoyun asked.

"Have the people from the Lightning Alliance been creating trouble for you?" Li Yaxuan asked.

Xiang Shaoyun nodded. "Yes."

Li Yaxuan was astonished to see how calm Xiang Shaoyun was. "Are you not pressured or even afraid at all? Even though you have the favor of the Zither Empress, she will not interfere in the affairs of the younger generation. So don't dream that the Lightning Alliance will hold back against you."

"So what?" Xiang Shaoyun asked.

"Are you not aware that the Lightning Alliance will not stop the moment they set their eyes on someone? Only by joining the Red House will you be able make the Lightning Alliance to think twice about trying anything. Moreover, the Red House will never allow outsiders to bully our people," Li Yaxuan said. She added, "Qinyin is an honorary vice house leader of the Red House as well."

Li Yaxuan was certain that Xiang Shaoyun definitely had feelings for Gong Qinyin. Thus, it was unlikely for him to reject her invitation.

Gong Qinyin also persuaded, "Yes, Shaoyun. Join the Red House! With your strength, you will definitely be able to dazzle everyone with your brilliance!"

"Hehe, thank you for that, but my only wish is to stay free and unfettered. I am not interested in joining any factions," Xiang Shaoyun tactfully declined.

Li Yaxuan further persuaded, "That is understandable, but at times, people don't really have much choice in what they need to do. It will always be harder to fight alone. You should understand that."

"Yes, I understand. But some troubles are actually much easier to solve than imagined," said Xiang Shaoyun confidently.

The current him no longer cared about Transformation Realm cultivators. Only those at the King Realm and beyond could make him feel pressured. Would he be afraid of a mere Lightning Alliance? Of course not!

"Oh, right. You are the Overlord Xiang who doesn't even fear Huo Linfei and his group. Now that you already have the millennium earthcore fire and have grown so much, it is understandable that you are not afraid of the Lightning Alliance. But be careful. Huo Linfei is only a vice alliance leader

of the Lightning Alliance. The leader, Lightning Kid, is the strongest among the younger generation in the Cloud Margin Pavilion," said Li Yaxuan, exposing Xiang Shaoyun's second identity.