

Overlord 51

Chapter 51: You Dare Bully This Young Master's Underling?

Private battles between outer disciples were prohibited. Thus, the bullying of Xia Liuhui had naturally occurred in the arena. The one currently beating up Xia Liuhui was none other than Gou Zai, Wu Mingliang's henchman.

Before this, Gou Zai was only at the peak of seventh-stage Basic Realm while Xia Liuhui had reached eighth-stage Basic Realm a month ago. Gou Zai was not supposed to be able to do anything to Xia Liuhui. But for some reason, Gou Zai was now at the ninth stage of Basic Realm. Although Xia Liuhui had also improved, he was still no match for the current Gou Zai.

"Haha, you little scoundrel, do you still dare claim that Xiang Shaoyun is your boss? I'll be sure to beat you up so badly not even your boss can recognize you anymore!" Gou Zai howled with laughter as he rained punches on Xia Liuhui.

Gou Zai was using the tier-2 battle technique, Rippling Punch. This was one of Wu Clan's battle techniques. Xia Liuhui only knew the Rushing Qi Fist, and the strength amplification of this technique was incomparable to the Rippling Punch. Thus, Gou Zai completely suppressed him. His face was already badly bruised and covered with blood. Even so, he still clenched his teeth tightly and refused to surrender.

"Keep it up! Kill me if you have the guts! When my boss returns, he won't spare you!" Xia Liuhui yelled unyieldingly. Right after he yelled those words, Gou Zai punched his stomach before sending him rolling on the ground with a kick. He looked extremely sorry. Even the disciples around the arena were crying out in alarm at the sight of his sorry state. They all believed that Xia Liuhui should just surrender to end the suffering.

"Your boss is nothing! If he dares to show his face, I will beat him up to the point he pisses his pants and cries for his mother!" Gou Zai spoke pridefully like a slave who had tasted glory for the very first time.

Just as Gou Zai was about to continue beating Xia Liuhui, a loud voice rang out, "What big words, you damned dog! I'm standing right here. Come, show me how you're going to make me piss my pants and cry for my mother."

Right after that voice rang out, a slender and tall figure landed on the arena. After a month of tempering, Xiang Shaoyun no longer had the scholarly aura around him. He now had the robust figure of a martial cultivator, and his height had grown considerably as well. He now looked like a

remarkable and heroic youth. Many girls were smitten when they laid their eyes on Xiang Shaoyun's current appearance.

"It's Xiang Shaoyun! He has actually shown himself! Do you notice? He looks even more handsome now!"

"Yeah!"

"He looks more manly now. He must have grown stronger. If only he would spare me even one glance..."

"Tough luck for Gou Zai. Xiang Shaoyun is a person who had defeated Wu Mingliang a month ago. With his five-star physique, it won't be long before he surpasses even Senior Brother Leng Han."

"I heard Wu Mingliang had returned two days ago. He had even reached first-stage Astral Realm. I'm afraid things will get difficult for Xiang Shaoyun this time."

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Gou Zai had never expected that Xiang Shaoyun would suddenly appear. He was so frightened he staggered backward and nearly fell on the ground. It was evident how terrified he was of Xiang Shaoyun. The pain he had suffered under the brick was still fresh in his memories.

"B-boss, you're finally here!" Xia Liuhui was so happy he nearly cried when he saw Xiang Shaoyun. If this lasted any longer, he would've most likely surrendered.

"Um, everything is fine now. Here, take this healing pill and heal yourself by the side," Xiang Shaoyun said as he handed Xia Liuhui a healing pill before helping him down the arena.

Xia Liuhui was extremely touched by the gesture. He thought to himself, It was a right choice to follow this boss!

After helping Xia Liuhui off the arena, Xiang Shaoyun turned around and started taking wide strides toward Gou Zai.

"W-what are you trying to do? This is a fight between me and Xia Liuhui! Are you trying to interfere in a match between disciples? You will be punished for that!" Gou Zai stuttered in fear.

He was brave enough to scold Xiang Shaoyun earlier because he had never expected Xiang Shaoyun to appear. Now that Xiang Shaoyun was right before him, he no longer had the same courage.

Xiang Shaoyun continued striding forward, as if he hadn't heard any of those words. Gou Zai glanced at the martial officer only to find that the martial officer was ignoring him.

"Young Master Wu, save me!" Gou Zai finally broke down and started crying for help. It was at this exact moment that Xiang Shaoyun suddenly started running.

Gale Winds Kick!

With his leg raised, Xiang Shaoyun flew toward Gou Zai and sent a kick toward his back.

"Stop!" Wu Mingliang's voice rang out. Alas, he was too late. Xiang Shaoyun was too fast, and Gou Zai was unable to escape the kick. As for Wu Mingliang, he couldn't provide any help in time either.

Bang!

The kick landed and sent Gou Zai flying like a bird toward Wu Mingliang.

"Arrrghhh!"

Wu Mingliang couldn't dodge in time, and Gou Zai directly hit him. Coincidentally, Gou Zai crashed head-first into Wu Mingliang, his lips connecting with Wu Mingliang's face before they both crashed into the ground. That made for quite a comical sight. All the disciples who saw this were stupefied.

"Ahhh, it hurts badly!" Gou Zai groaned, still lying on top of Wu Mingliang.

"Get off me!" Wu Mingliang howled and pushed Gou Zai away. He then darted to his feet and drew his sword. He pointed it at Xiang Shaoyun. "Xiang Shaoyun, I'm killing you today!"

After saying that, he sent a slash Xiang Shaoyun's way. A sword energy about one meter in length formed of astral energy streaked across the air toward Xiang Shaoyun. The sharp aura emanating from the slash caused all the surrounding disciples to pale.

That was an astral energy release! That was something capable of increasing the offensive power of an attack, a feat only someone at the Astral Realm or beyond could accomplish. Everyone assumed Xiang Shaoyun was out of luck this time. Even though Xiang Shaoyun had once defeated Wu Mingliang, no Basic Realm cultivators had any hope of defeating an Astral Realm cultivator.

"You are challenging me with just this bit of astral energy? How naive!" Xiang Shaoyun mocked. His figure flickered as he dodged the attack. Almost instantaneously, he reappeared beside Wu Mingliang, sending over a palm.

Pa!

Xiang Shaoyun was too fast for Wu Mingliang. Thus, the slap landed right on his face, causing a crisp and resounding sound to ring in the air.

"You dare bully this young master's underling? None of you can escape today!" Xiang Shaoyun made a tyrannical declaration even as he continued to attack Wu Mingliang.

Cloud Splitting Palm!

Xiang Shaoyun attacked with both his palms this time. All his attacks hit Wu Mingliang without mercy. Wu Mingliang couldn't even resist. As for Wu Mingliang's henchmen, they initially rushed forward to help. But when they saw that Wu Mingliang was completely helpless, they all fled in fear.

Gou Zai was still somewhat loyal as he was the only one to charge forward, yelling, "Young Master Wu, I'll save you!"

"Oh? Sure, I'll allow you that!" Xiang Shaoyun answered as he caught Gou Zai's incoming fist and redirected the henchman's charge towards Wu Mingliang's direction.

Once again, Gou Zai crashed into Wu Mingliang, his lips landing on Wu Mingliang's face. When Wu Mingliang felt the moist warmth on his face, he was so angered he coughed a mouthful of blood. In fact, he nearly fainted from anger.

Chapter 52: Let Me First Break Your Legs!

"Woah, look at them go!" Xiang Shaoyun teased.

The outer court disciples around them finally couldn't hold it in anymore and burst out in laughter. In fact, they had been holding their laughter since Gou Zi and Wu Mingliang's first clash.

"Get away from me!" Wu Mingliang felt an unprecedented sense of shame as he pushed Gou Zai away furiously.

"Calm down, seventh brother," a sonorous voice rang out from a certain corner of the arena.

When Wu Mingliang heard that voice, he immediately suppressed the fury in his heart. A few people could be seen walking toward them. The one leading the group somewhat resembled Wu Mingliang. This was Wu Mingliang's sixth brother, Wu Mingguang.

Wu Mingguang was two years older than Wu Mingliang and was far stronger. He had reached third-stage Astral Realm and was among the top 50 inner court disciples.

"Sixth brother, take him down! He has been pushing it too far!" Wu Mingliang asked for his brother's help.

"Don't worry. Your sixth brother will seek justice for you," Wu Mingguang promised before turning his eyes to the martial officer. "Martial officer, since you have decided to watch on as everything happened, I only hope you can continue doing the same and keep on pretending to see nothing."

The martial officer replied, "Audacious! Are you ordering me around?"

"Interpret it however you wish," Wu Mingguang replied coldly.

"Even if you are a personal disciple, you don't have the authority to order me around!" the martial officer barked gloomily.

"Is that so? How about now?" Wu Mingguang said as a command medallion appeared in his hand. It was an elder's medallion, and the holder of once such medallion was to be accorded the treatment of an elder. Not even overseers could disobey the holder of the elder's medallion.

The martial officer's pupils shrank while his face became ashen. "I advise you to not do anything stupid. Xiang Shaoyun has already gotten the attention of the palace's higher-ups."

Wu Mingguang acted like he had heard none of that and proceeded to berate Xiang Shaoyun, "Kneel down and apologize to my brother immediately! Beg for his forgiveness until he is willing to forgive you. Or else, I will make sure you suffer a fate worse than death!"

Wu Mingguang spoke ferociously, his body emanating a faint bloody aura that caused others to not dare look straight at him. The aura he was releasing made it clear he was someone who had taken life before. Meanwhile, many outer court disciples started distancing themselves from the arena, afraid that they would be misunderstood as Xiang Shaoyun's accomplice. No matter what, they couldn't afford to offend any inner court disciples.

Xiang Shaoyun merely dug his ear and sneered, "What's that smell? Have you been farting? Look at how everyone is running from the smell!"

"Boss, not even fart stinks that bad! That's the smell of a pile of shit!" Xia Liuhui said.

"Haha, yes, indeed. You're a smart one, kid. I'll be sure to reward you later," Xiang Shaoyun laughed heartily.

"Impudent!" Wu Mingguang bellowed with an ashen expression as he readied himself to attack Xia Liuhui and Xiang Shaoyun.

But right this moment, someone beside him said, "Sixth young master, what's the point of getting angry over a bug like this? Let me deal with him. I'll cripple all his limbs before handing him to you."

The speaker was a young man with dark skin. He was holding two heavy hammers, and with one look, it was clear he was a martial cultivator specializing in strength. This youth was Tie Gang, a late-phase, second-stage Astral Realm cultivator. He was one of Wu Mingguang's main underlings.

"Good. Do what you want. I will deal with the consequences!" Wu Mingguang said.

Tie Gang nodded and directly attacked with his hammer. The hammer slammed down with the force of a collapsing mountain. A regular person would be hard-pressed to stop this attack. Of course, Xiang Shaoyun wasn't stupid enough to meet this attack with brute force. He avoided it instead.

Bang!

The hammer missed and landed on the ground, creating a half-meter-deep crater on the ground. Right after the first hammer landed, the second hammer was already swinging toward Xiang Shaoyun.

By dual-wielding hammers, Tie Gang could chain his attacks and avoid the fate of being defeated by sheer speed. He could also sow chaos within his opponent's defense. It had been quite effective against his other opponents, but it was not the case for Xiang Shaoyun.

Xiang Shaoyun had a combat prowess comparable to a third-stage Astral Realm cultivator. Therefore, he was much more powerful than Tie Gang. Apart from that, he also had an advantage in speed.

Overlord's Nine Nether Steps!

Xiang Shaoyun's body danced around like a phantom, and he dodged the second attack before appearing behind Tie Gang. Without holding back, he slammed his palm into the back of Tie Gang's head.

Bang!

The slap slammed Tie Gang's face into the ground.

"Breaking all my limbs? Let me first break your legs!" A ruthless glint surfaced in Xiang Shaoyun's eyes as he leaped, aiming his knees straight at Tie Gang's legs.

"Stop!" Wu Mingguang howled. He rushed forward and stabbed his spear at Xiang Shaoyun. With a golden flash, the spear arrived before Xiang Shaoyun. If Xiang Shaoyun continued his attack, the spear would hit him.

Sensing the threat posed by the spear, Xiang Shaoyun shifted his position and dodged the spear. But the moment he landed, he slammed one of his feet into the ground and shot straight toward Tie Gang again. When he arrived, he grabbed Tie Gang's arm and gave it a twist.

Crack!

"AHHH!"

First, a crisp crack rang out. Then, a miserable wail akin to a pig being slaughtered filled the air. Just like that, Xiang Shaoyun had snapped Tie Gang's thick arm. The various disciples in the surroundings were shaken by what they saw. An inner court disciple was defeated just like that. Moreover, his defeat was such a bitter one. It was hard to believe!

They were even more shaken by Xiang Shaoyun's strength. A month ago, at the Evaluation Stele, he was only a third-stage Basic Realm cultivator. Only a short time had passed since then, but Xiang Shaoyun was already an Astral Realm expert. From the looks of it, he was far stronger than a brand new Astral Realm cultivator too.

T-this Xiang Shaoyun is growing so quickly! He is indeed worthy of being a freak capable of surviving the Hall of Limits! the martial officer lamented inwardly.

"Trying to bully me with your strength? I have never been afraid of that!" Xiang Shaoyun said right to Wu Mingguang's face, one foot still stepping on Tie Gang. The current Xiang Shaoyun was overflowing with the aura of a tyrant, looking like an overlord!

"Good. Excellent. I will teach you a lesson today," Wu Mingguang declared, gnashing his teeth.

"All who have spoken that way to me have instead been taught a lesson themselves. If you want to be the next in line to receive my lesson, be my guest," Xiang Shaoyun replied unyieldingly.

While Wu Mingguang and Xiang Shaoyun were declaring war against each other, a different group rushed over.

Li Hong'er, who was part of the newcomers, pointed at Xiang Shaoyun and shouted, "Big brother, that is the scoundrel who bullied me! You must avenge me!"

Chapter 53: This Young Master Is Never Afraid of Anyone

Li Hong'er had already changed into a new set of clothing, but her hair was still all damp. It was clear how much of a rush for revenge she was in. Also, her elder brother, Li Tianba, had come with her. He was one of the inner court's top 10 disciples and was a tyrant among tyrants in the palace. He had just turned 20 and was already a sixth-stage Astral Realm cultivator.

Being one of the top 10 in the inner court represented a great status, as that was a ranking including the personal disciples. One could say that the top-10 inner court ranking was no different than being in the top 10 of the entire Martial Hall Palace.

The “Ba” character in Li Tianba's name meant overlord, and he had an appearance that matched his name. He was sturdily built and had a ferocious look. On his back hung a massive axe, and heavy armor protected his body. He looked no different than a general from a battlefield, and his person also constantly emanated a majestic presence. Mounted on an armored lizard, he stared straight at Xiang Shaoyun as a thick killing intent filled the arena.

"You are very brave. You even have the gall to bully the sister of me, Li Tianba? Today, not even the king of gods will be able to protect you!" Li Tianba pointed at Xiang Shaoyun and bellowed. He said to the people beside him, "Take him. I will cripple him before throwing him out of the Martial Hall Palace."

All the disciples in the area were alarmed when they heard those words. Although most of these outer court disciples had never heard Li Tianba's name, from how this person was behaving, it was obvious he wasn't someone who should be provoked. When they looked at Xiang Shaoyun again, different emotions could be seen from their eyes, such as sympathy and joy..

Just a short while ago, Xiang Shaoyun had appeared out of nowhere and created an uproar with his five-star physique. He then proceeded to defeat Wu Mingliang, completely suppressing all the disciples of his generation. But now, he had offended so many people at the same time. Naturally, some people were glad to see him suffer.

"Tianba, stop messing around. He is nineteenth elder's junior brother!" the martial officer said. He could no longer keep on watching.

"Hmph! Not even the Purple Lightning Marquis can protect him today!" Li Tianba declared. His father was the thirteenth elder, ranking even above the Purple Lightning Marquis.

"Senior Brother Li, allow this junior brother to help you with this. I was just about to arrest him myself!" Wu Mingguang said from the side.

"Junior Brother Wu, it's you? Wait, is this the kid you said you were going to take care of for your little brother?" Li Tianba asked.

"That's right. This is the second time he has injured my little brother. Today, I will teach him a proper lesson," Wu Mingguang said. He looked at Li Hong'er and asked, "Junior Sister Li, has he offended you as well?"

"Yes. I want him to suffer a fate worse than death today!" Li Hong'er said while gnashing her teeth.

"Sure, I will take him down for Junior Sister Li. You are free to do whatever you want to him after I get him," Wu Mingguang said before sending a vicious gaze Xiang Shaoyun's way. He approached Xiang Shaoyun, one step at a time.

"B-boss, w-we...should quickly retreat!" Xia Liuhui said while anxiously tugging Xiang Shaoyun's sleeve.

"Retreat? Why? This young master is never afraid of anyone!" Xiang Shaoyun said arrogantly, but inwardly, he further added, A hero will never stay and suffer for nothing! It's better to retreat for now!

Everyone thought Xiang Shaoyun was going to stay unyielding all the way, but they found that the fellow had actually started fleeing. The contrast between his words and his actions stunned everyone.

"Holy shit! Boss, wait for me!" Xia Liuhui finally reacted and quickly ran after his boss, ignoring his aching body.

Wu Mingguang sneered, "Hmph. If you can escape me today, I will write my name in reverse from now on!" He then waved at the people behind him before running after Xiang Shaoyun and Xia Liuhui.

Naturally, Li Tianba's group would not allow Xiang Shaoyun to escape, and thus they joined the pursuit as well.

"Out of the way! Out of the way!" Li Tianba sped forward with his mount and yelled at Wu Mingguang's group.

Wu Mingguang's group quickly scattered while Li Tianba rushed to the forefront on his mount. Soon, he overtook Xia Liuhui and was not far from Xiang Shaoyun. A nasty smile appeared on his face. "Hah, torturing a coward like you is my favorite thing to do!"

After saying that, he sent a blood-red palm flying straight at Xiang Shaoyun's back. For a sixth-stage Astral Realm expert, sending astral energy attacks to a target several meters away was nothing difficult. But right as the blood-red palm was about to land, a figure appeared and blocked it.

"Who's there? You dare ruin my hunt?" Li Tianba bellowed. He had barely spoken those words when that figure dashed toward him and slapped his face.

Pa!

The slap sent Li Tianba flying off his armored lizard.

"You dare raise your voice against this elder? Not even Li Xuemeng has the guts to raise his voice against me!" said the newcomer with a sonorous voice. The newcomer was none other than the Purple Lightning Marquis, Zi Changhe.

Ever since Zi Changhe found out that the Wu Clan had set their eyes on Xiang Shaoyun, he no longer let Xiang Shaoyun cultivate alone. He had been paying close attention to Xiang Shaoyun. He wouldn't be able to escape blame if he allowed something bad to happen to his junior brother. Because of that, he immediately rushed over the moment he found out that Xiang Shaoyun had created a ruckus yet again. Fortunately, he arrived in time. Otherwise, Xiang Shaoyun would have most likely suffered today.

"Z-Zi Changhe! Y-you dare hit me!" Li Tianba stumbled back to his feet and glared at Zi Changhe.

It was no secret that Zi Changhe and his father did not have a friendly relationship. That was also why he had dared to call out Zi Changhe directly by his name.

"You have shown this elder disrespect. So what if I hit you?" Zi Changhe berated. Then, he stared at the group behind Li Tianba and said, "Who gave you permission to use reckless force in the outer court? Just because you are inner court disciples, you can kill as you wish?"

As Zi Changhe questioned them, an imposing aura surged from him, shaking Wu Mingguang and the others so much that they even started stepping backward with anxious looks in their eyes. As the youngest elder of the Martial Hall Palace, Zi Changhe had an extraordinary strength. Disciples like them would not be able to endure his wrath.

"Zi Changhe, Xiang Shaoyun bullied me and pushed me into the lake! I will not let this matter rest! Even if you're an elder, you can't just blindly protect him!" Li Hong'er yelled, showing no fear whatsoever.

"Oh? He was actually able to push you into the lake?" Zi Changhe exclaimed in astonishment.

Xiang Shaoyun was only a first-stage Astral Realm cultivator while Li Hong'er was already at the third stage. With a gap of two stages, Xiang Shaoyun was actually able to suppress her. That was quite a surprise.

"That's right. If you don't give me an answer, I will not let this rest. Even if I have to escalate this to the palace master, I'll do it!" Li Hong'er said.

"Heh, even if you want to let it rest, I won't agree. A month ago, you whipped my face for no reason whatsoever. And earlier at the lake, you attacked me for no reason again. I was merely defending myself. Your words alone are not enough to determine who's at fault here," Xiang Shaoyun smiled and said.

"Who do you think you are? If I want to hit you, you should just take it!" Li Hong'er barked.

"Who do you think you are to be acting so impudently?" Xiang Shaoyun countered.

"I am the daughter of the thirteenth elder!" Li Hong'er declared with pride.

Chapter 54: Abuse of Authority

One had to admit that Li Hong'er was a spicy one. Not many people were as bold as her.

"Hehe, so the daughter of thirteenth elder is allowed to do as she wishes in the Martial Hall Palace?" Xiang Shaoyun sneered.

Many disciples found themselves in agreement with Xiang Shaoyun when they heard those words. They were all disciples who had passed an exam to join the palace. They did not have any sort of backer, and if something similar happened to them, would they have to bend over and take it?

Xia Liuhui chimed in, "Looks like us new disciples have no human rights! Our life and death is only a matter of a single word for some people."

Without fail, these words ignited the resentment in all the outer court disciples.

"Looks like the so-called rules of the Martial Hall Palace are only there for show. There is no guarantee that regular disciples like us will be safe."

"That's right. If I somehow find myself on the receiving end of her anger, can I do anything other than accepting my fate?"

"If the Enforcement Hall does not give us an explanation today, we are better off withdrawing from the palace!"

"I have never known that the Martial Hall Palace is such a corrupted place. It's filled with people who abuse their authority to bully others! Hah, today, my eyes have been opened!"

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"Who do you think you are? If you want to leave the Martial Hall Palace, get going then. Stop babbling on and on!" said Li Hong'er, triggered by their words.

"Oh? You really think the Martial Hall Palace belongs to your family?" Xiang Shaoyun did not miss the chance to fan the flames.

With this, even more outer court disciples criticized Li Hong'er.

"Who are you, then? You have merely been relying on your father, who is an elder!"

"Your father is only an elder, not the palace master!"

"Yeah! We have all joined after passing the exam. Do you expect us to leave just because you say so?"

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So many people were scolding Li Hong'er she nearly cried.

Zi Changhe did not wish to see a further escalation, so he said, "Alright, you may all leave. I will report this to the Council of Elders. We will handle this appropriately. Nobody can disregard the rules of the Martial Hall Palace!"

"Yes, nobody can disregard the rules of Martial Hall Palace, and the same applies to you, Zi Changhe," a forceful voice rang out from not far away.

Three figures were quickly heading their way, and the one leading was the thirteenth elder, Li Xuemeng.

"Father!" Li Tianba and Li Hong'er called out in excitement.

Li Xuemeng glanced at his children and found that a palm mark was on his son's face and that his daughter's eyes were all red. He immediately glared at Zi Changhe. "Zi Changhe, do you not know shame? You actually bullied the children?"

"You are not one to decide if I know shame. Your children were the ones being too arrogant, trying to kill my junior brother in front of so many people. Do you take me for nothing?" Zi Changhe replied as he looked straight into Li Xuemeng's eyes.

"Father, he is the one who bullied me first! He even pushed me into the lake!" Li Hong'er accused.

"Hear that? Even if he is your junior brother, he still can't bully my daughter! Today, you must give me an explanation!" Li Xuemeng said.

"Sure, sure, let's call for a meeting of the Council of Elders and let them both explain themselves before the council. The council will decide who's the one at fault." Zi Changhe refused to yield.

"Do you think everyone is so free that you can call for the council anytime you want?" Li Xuemeng said. He then continued, "Zi Changhe, out of respect for your position as an elder, I am willing to let this rest so long as that kid apologizes to my daughter. Otherwise, don't even dream of ending this!"

"So be it! Do you think I'm afraid of you?" Zi Changhe stood his ground.

"Good. Very good," Li Xuemeng said with a sinister look in his eyes before looking at his children. "Come with me. Stop embarrassing yourselves here."

Li Tianba and Li Hong'er had never expected that their father would leave just like that. They had no choice but to leave despite their unwillingness. Naturally, Wu Mingliang and Wu Mingguang left as well. With Zi Changhe here, they would never be able to do anything to Xiang Shaoyun. They would have to keep waiting for a different opportunity.

When all those people left, Zi Changhe berated Xiang Shaoyun, "I thought I told you to practice the Lightning Spear Technique until you reached 70 percent mastery within two days? What are you doing running around creating troubles?"

"I'm not the one looking for trouble. They are the ones who provoked me. I was merely defending myself." Xiang Shaoyun shrugged.

"Hmph. I don't care. Get your ass back there and resume your cultivation. Only when you are strong enough will others be unable to bully you!" Zi Changhe barked coldly.

"Yes, senior brother is right. But I still need my leisure time, right? I don't believe they will dare to openly do anything to me here in the Martial Hall Palace," Xiang Shaoyun said.

"Many avenues are available for an elder wanting to make life difficult for an Astral Realm disciple like you," Zi Changhe said. He continued, "Just reach the fifth stage as soon as possible. I can then bring you to see my master in Cloud Margin City. That is the kind of place you should be staying at."

After saying that, he turned and left.

Cloud Margin City? I can't stay there if it's a large city, Xiang Shaoyun sighed inwardly.

"Boss, we're screwed! After offending the thirteenth elder, we will have a hard time in the Martial Hall Palace," Xia Liuhui said anxiously.

"What are you afraid of? My senior brother is here!" Xiang Shaoyun said.

"B-but he's only protecting you," Xia Liuhui spoke after a slight hesitation.

"He is protecting me while I am protecting you. See, it's almost the same!" Xiang Shaoyun said. Then, he handed Xia Liuhui a bottle and said, "Here, take the Earth Star Spring water and raise your strength first. When you become an inner court disciple, you can't be bullied so easily anymore."

Xia Liuhui trembled when he saw the bottle and said, "T-this...is this really the Earth Star Spring water? Boss, are you really giving it to me?"

Before Xiang Shaoyun left for the Hundred Beast Mountain Range, he once promised to share the Earth Star Spring if he managed to get some. The Earth Star Spring was sufficient to drive any disciple crazy. This was a spiritual liquid that couldn't be bought even if one had the money. Thus, Xia Liuhui found it hard to believe that Xiang Shaoyun was sharing the spring water with him just like that.

"Why are you hesitating so much? It's not like this is some valuable treasure," Xiang Shaoyun said as he stuffed the bottle into Xia Liuhui's hand.

Holding the bottle, Xia Liuhui was so touched he started tearing. "Boss, you will forever be my boss! I will stay by your side forever, and even in death, I won't abandon you!"

"You are being too serious," Xiang Shaoyun said indifferently before asking, "Have you seen Lu Xiaoqing?"

Before Xia Liuhui could reply, a different voice rang out, "Shaoyun, I know where she is."

When Xiang Shaoyun looked to the side, he saw Mei Lianhua gazing at him tenderly. He ignored her and repeated his question to Xia Liuhui, "Do you know where she is?"

"Y-yes. She has been accepted as a personal disciple by the eleventh elder," Xia Liuhui replied after a short daze.

"I see," Xiang Shaoyun muttered. He then said, "Let's go. I'll treat you to a feast!"

Mei Lianhua quickly stepped forth and said, "Shaoyun, can we talk?"

Chapter 55: A Little Bit Worse Than Me

"I don't think there is anything to say between us," Xiang Shaoyun said indifferently.

Mei Lianhua shivered when she heard that. Her face dimmed as she said, "It was too dangerous back then. I-I was left with no other option."

"Well, there is no need to explain yourself. It's not like we know each other that well anyway," Xiang Shaoyun said and proceeded to leave with Xia Liuhui. That left Xia Liuhui completely confused, having no idea what the two were talking about.

Teardrops trailed down Mei Lianhua's cheeks, her face a curtain of regret. Inwardly, she vowed, "Since you are treating me this way, don't blame me for what's going to happen!"

Xiang Shaoyun was not aware that the love Mei Lianhua had for him had now transformed into hatred. Although he despised what Mei Lianhua and Mo Buhui had done, he still understood why they had done so. Nobody would want to suffer for the sake of others.

However, they were unaware that due to the betrayal Xiang Shaoyun had experienced, he hated such betrayals of trust the most. That was why Xiang Shaoyun had not bothered to give Mei Lianhua a chance to explain herself.

When Xiang Shaoyun and Xia Liuhui arrived at the restaurant, they became the center of attention. After the ruckus earlier, everyone now knew who Xiang Shaoyun was. He was the owner of a five-star physique and had created a big ruckus. It was almost impossible to not know him in the Martial Hall Palace.

Xiang Shaoyun paid no attention to all of them. In fact, he was thinking to himself that he was still far too weak. Otherwise, he wouldn't have needed his senior brother to save him today. While Xiang Shaoyun was deep in thought, a certain person took a seat at his table.

"S-senior brother, have you taken the wrong seat?" Xia Liuhui asked.

That roused Xiang Shaoyun from his thoughts. When he raised his head, he laughed and said, "Haha, my martial nephew is here. I was just about to go look for you."

"Is that so? I thought you had completely forgotten about me," said the newcomer nonchalantly. Naturally, the person Xiang Shaoyun would call martial nephew was Wang Zhenchuan, the person wanting to become Zi Changhe's disciple.

"No way! I never forgot about you!" Xiang Shaoyun quickly said. He grew more and more passionate as he said, "Martial nephew, your martial uncle will first treat you to a feast. I'll bring you to see your master later!"

"No thanks, I've eaten. I'll just wait for you here," Wang Zhenchuan replied before shutting his mouth and eyes, sitting there silently.

"Senior brother, don't be shy! Join in!" Xia Liuhui extended Wang Zhenchuan an invitation as well.

Unfortunately, Wang Zhenchuan behaved as if he had heard nothing. He sat there silently, not giving any sort of response whatsoever. The ignored invitation placed Xia Liuhui in an awkward spot.

"Don't mind him. We'll feast!" Xiang Shaoyun did not mind as he understood the kind of person Wang Zhenchuan was, so he started eating. Shortly after, they were done eating. The tactful Xia Liuhui decided to take his leave first. As for Xiang Shaoyun, he proceeded to bring Wang Zhenchuan to Zi Changhe's residence.

On their way there, Xiang Shaoyun spoke to Wang Zhenchuan, "You ought to have known about what happened to me, right? If you come under my senior brother, it means that you will stand against the thirteenth elder as well. You will have a hard time in the future. Think over this properly."

"I know," Wang Zhenchuan said expressionlessly.

By this point, not even Xiang Shaoyun knew what to say anymore. But then again, he had great respect toward this unwavering attitude of Wang Zhenchuan's. Before long, they arrived at Zi Changhe's residence. Like it was his own home, Xiang Shaoyun pushed the door open and entered.

On the other hand, Wang Zhenchuan stood outside and did not dare enter. Instead, he said, "I will await the elder's summon here."

"Summon my ass. Come with me," Xiang Shaoyun said before dragging Wang Zhenchuan into the courtyard.

"Senior brother, look, I found you a disciple with an outstanding aptitude. Come, take a look!" Xiang Shaoyun started shouting the moment he entered the courtyard.

"What nonsense are you on to this time?" Zi Changhe's voice rang out.

"No, no nonsense. You will know after you take a look!" Xiang Shaoyun replied.

Zi Changhe walked out from the building. He first glanced at Xiang Shaoyun before focusing his gaze on Wang Zhenchuan.

"Inner court disciple Wang Zhenchuan pays his respect to Elder Zi." Wang Zhenchuan saluted Zi Changhe respectfully.

"Forget the pleasantries," Zi Changhe replied. Then, he said coldly, "I have no intention of accepting any disciples for now. You may leave."

If he really wanted to accept a disciple, he would have done so long ago. Why would he have waited until now? At present, his sole focus was on cultivation, hoping that he could one day leave this place and head to an even bigger world outside.

As for Xiang Shaoyun, he was an exception that was too talented for even Zi Changhe to give up on. When Wang Zhenchuan heard how resolute Zi Changhe sounded, his face dimmed.

"Senior brother, I can see that he has a unique frame that grants him an excellent aptitude in terms of martial cultivation. In fact, he is only a little bit worse than me. How can you miss an unpolished gem like this?" Xiang Shaoyun spoke on behalf of Wang Zhenchuan.

Zi Changhe ignored Xiang Shaoyun and asked Wang Zhenchuan, "If memory serves me right, you have a three-star physique, right?"

Wang Zhenchuan nodded, "Yes."

"Three stars is extraordinary. You have the potential to enter the Transformation Realm. But...it will be hard to go beyond that." Zi Changhe sighed.

Wang Zhenchuan withdrew his gaze and bowed as he said, "This disciple understands."

Then, he turned to leave. He understood that Zi Changhe was rejecting him.

"Hold on," Xiang Shaoyun called out loudly.

Then, he looked at Zi Changhe and said, "Senior brother, I have already decided that he will be my martial nephew. What will it take to make you accept him as your disciple?"

Zi Changhe frowned and said, "Stop messing around!"

"Senior brother, you think a third-star physique owner will not reach far in the future? You are wrong. The awakened stars are merely a representative of one's innate potential, but they are not an accurate representation of one's future. In fact, there are a lot of godlike experts who have only awakened a small number of stars yet have still reached a level beyond many others through perseverance and hard work," Xiang Shaoyun said solemnly.

Both Zi Changhe and Wang Zhenchuan were shaken when they heard those words. In their understanding, the number of stars represented everything. But Xiang Shaoyun's words seemed to have opened up a brand new world before their eyes.

"Perhaps you are right. Both perseverance and hard work are important. But nobody can deny that the number of stars represents a person's potential!" Zi Changhe said. He then said to Wang Zhenchuan, "You are currently a primary-phase, third-stage Astral Realm cultivator, a decent level

among the inner disciples. I trust you must have worked hard. Fine, I will give you a chance. If you can reach fourth-stage Astral Realm in two months, I will accept you as my disciple."

The higher the level of a cultivator, the more energy the cultivator would require to advance to the next level. Thus, the speed of advancement would only slow down as one grew stronger. It wouldn't be easy for a primary-phase, third-stage Astral Realm cultivator to reach fourth-stage Astral Realm in only two months.

Even so, Wang Zhenchuan did not appear discouraged at all. Instead, he said joyfully, "Many thanks, Elder Zi, for the opportunity. I will not disappoint you!"

Chapter 56: Entering the Third Limit Room

Finally, Xiang Shaoyun and Wang Zhenchuan left Zi Changhe's residence.

"Thank you!" Wang Zhenchuan thanked Xiang Shaoyun.

Xiang Shaoyun waved his hand. "Don't worry about it. It's not like I did much anyway. My senior brother is too stubborn."

"I find Elder Zi's request reasonable. It is only natural that one wishes for a remarkable disciple," Wang Zhenchuan said. A surge of battle intent rose within him as he continued, "Rising one stage in two months is indeed rather difficult, but I believe I will be able to do it!"

"Um. It's good that you have confidence. I'll be waiting for you to become my martial nephew," Xiang Shaoyun said. He admired Wang Zhenchuan's tenacity.

"Before your cultivation level surpasses mine, I will not acknowledge you as my martial uncle!" Wang Zhenchuan responded seriously.

"Haha, that's no problem at all," Xiang Shaoyun laughed heartily before handing Wang Zhenchuan a jade bottle. "Consider this a gift from your martial uncle on the occasion of our first meeting. With this thing, it will be very easy to meet my senior brother's requirement."

Astonished, Wang Zhenchuan took the bottle and opened it. He looked inside and saw a drop of a pulsing, sparkling, and translucent liquid. At the same time, a seemingly irresistible fragrance rushed out of the bottle.

"This...is a spiritual liquid?" Wang Zhenchuan cried out in alarm.

"Yes. Earth Star Spring. Work hard to become my martial nephew," Xiang Shaoyun said as he patted Wang Zhenchuan's shoulder before leaving.

"E-Earth Star Spring!" Wang Zhenchuan was completely stupefied.

A liquid like this would be very rare even within the Martial Hall Palace, yet currently he had a drop of it right in his hands. With this drop, breaking through to the next stage wouldn't even be a problem anymore.

Staring at Xiang Shaoyun's carefree back, Wang Zhenchuan grasped the bottle tightly and yelled, "Martial uncle!"

Xiang Shaoyun returned to his residence, fed Little White some food he had bought from the restaurant, then headed straight to the Hall of Limits. Although Zi Changhe had given him two days to get his mastery of the Lightning Spear Technique to 70 percent, he was in no rush. His current priority was to first further increase his strength.

And within the entirety of Martial Hall Palace, the Hall of Limits was his most suitable cultivation venue. If others were to find out about this, they would have cursed that he was a freak. Everyone wanted to surpass their limits and become stronger. Alas, limits weren't something that could be easily surpassed.

Xiang Shaoyun arrived at the Hall of Limits once again, and the overseer smiled when he saw him. "Kid, it has only been a short while since we last met, and you've already gone ahead to create such a big ruckus? You're really quite something!"

"The tree may want to be still, but the wind might not allow it. It's not like I have any other choices." Xiang Shaoyun shrugged.

"The taller tree will usually be the one to be blown down by the wind. Keep that in mind," said the overseer.

"Yes, I will remember that," Xiang Shaoyun said. He then asked, "So as a first-stage Astral Realm cultivator, which room should I challenge?"

"The third room will do," the overseer answered. After a short pause, he reminded, "Be careful, and don't get yourself eaten."

"Third room? Doesn't that mean that there are only two rooms for the Basic Realm?" Xiang Shaoyun muttered curiously as he headed toward the third room. This time, he thoroughly braced himself before entering. He did not want to suffer the moment he stepped into the room like he had in the previous two rooms.

Xiang Shaoyun stepped into the room, and unlike the previous two rooms, he was not immediately assaulted by a sense of pressure. Rather, from the different corners of the room, 10 demonic beasts were eyeing him aggressively.

All 10 of them were peak tier-1 Intermediate Demon scarlet wolves. Each of them was as bulky as a cow, their coat as red as blood. Their eyes were filled with blood-thirst, and one look into their eyes was enough to plant fear into one's heart.

Ten tier-1 Intermediate Demons were about equal in strength to ten first-stage Astral Realm cultivators. Even a second-stage Astral Realm cultivator would have to flee at the mere sight of these beasts.

After all, demonic beasts were much more ferocious than humans. Generally, a defeat under a demonic beast was the same as death.

"No wonder the overseer reminded me to be careful. So this is a room of beasts?" Xiang Shaoyun licked his lips.

"Howl!"

When one of the scarlet wolves howled, the other wolves started moving. They were already seeing Xiang Shaoyun as food and were currently planning to tear Xiang Shaoyun apart. Nine wolves charged at the same time, making for quite a terrifying sight.

Xiang Shaoyun yelled at them, "When I first entered the Hundred Beast Mountain Range, wolves like you guys were the ones who had caused me to piss my pants in fear. Today, I shall relish in my revenge!"

Instead of retreating, Xiang Shaoyun advanced to meet the wolves. He charged barehanded and sent a punch at the fastest wolf.

Rushing Qi Fist, full power!

Not a single bit of astral energy could be seen around the punch, yet for some reason, the punch carried with it a tyrannical momentum.

Bang!

Before the wolf could reach Xiang Shaoyun, the punch struck it. The wolf's nose exploded into a mist of blood, and the wolf flew through the air, wailing miserably. At this time, two other wolves arrived, attacking Xiang Shaoyun from two different angles. They clawed at Xiang Shaoyun with their claws, and from how sharp their claws looked, it was certain they would draw blood if they struck.

At the same time, the other wolves were also coming from several other directions. One could say that Xiang Shaoyun presently had no way of escaping.

"Since all paths have been blocked, I will open a path through slaughter," Xiang Shaoyun vowed. His body flickered, and his leg whipped forward.

Gale Winds Kick!

The Gale Winds Kick specialized in speed, and each kick was akin to the wind—fast and elusive. This was the perfect technique to deal with these wolves, and Xiang Shaoyun's kicks instantly sent two approaching wolves flying.

Xiang Shaoyun was no ordinary first-stage Astral Realm cultivator. Rather, he had the combat prowess of a third-stage Astral Realm cultivator. His attacks, once they landed, were enough to cause these wolves to never stand again.

Xiang Shaoyun was already experienced in killing demonic beasts after his trip to the Hundred Beast Mountain Range. Thus, after the initial clash, his battle intent lit up as he started charging the wolves. His legs whipped out every now and then. Each kick was extremely heavy, and before the wolves could approach him, they were sent flying.

"Howl! Howl!"

Before long, the nine wolves could no longer stand. Three of them were already dead, and the rest were greatly weakened. One wolf had opened up a wound on Xiang Shaoyun's back, but the injury wasn't too serious.

The final wolf howled at Xiang Shaoyun before it finally attacked.

This wolf was a tier-2 Intermediate Demon, and it was clearly smarter than the rest of the wolves. Each of its attacks was sent from a tricky angle with just the right amount of force and the most appropriate timing.

The wolf nearly sent Xiang Shaoyun crashing into the ground, and a new wound appeared on his shoulder. The sharp pain gnawed at his mind.

"You must be the king of these wolves, right? Too bad, you're still too weak," Xiang Shaoyun said and attacked.

The wolf howled and rushed forward to meet Xiang Shaoyun. Its jaws were opened wide and aimed straight at Xiang Shaoyun's head. Just as they were about to clash, Xiang Shaoyun abruptly shifted his body and avoided a frontal clash. As he crossed the wolf, he sent his palm behind him.

Cloud Splitting Palm!

The palm descended with a tyrannical might, a momentum capable of crushing rocks, a power the wolf would be hard-pressed to stop.

Chapter 57: Fourth Limit, Broken!

A group made up of one tier-2 Intermediate Demon and nine peak tier-1 Intermediate Demons was something no ordinary first-stage Astral Realm cultivator could deal with. Even a tier-2 Astral

Realm cultivator would be helpless. But this was nothing for Xiang Shaoyun. In less than an hour, he defeated all 10 wolves, and the record of the third limit room was broken.

When Xiang Shaoyun stepped out of the limit room, the overseer came up to him and said, "You failed, huh? But you've still done well to withdraw in one piece. And you are so close to lasting one hour inside too. Just work harder next time. You only need to stay inside for an hour, and it will count as completion."

"What? Just staying an hour before withdrawing counts as a completion?" Xiang Shaoyun asked in astonishment.

"Yes, truth be told, many people have died challenging the third room. It is very lucky of you to come out alive. Don't feel discouraged over your failure. Come again when you're stronger. I believe you will succeed!" the overseer consoled Xiang Shaoyun.

"Hold on, even defeating all the wolves does not count as completion?" Xiang Shaoyun asked doubtfully.

"Of course no—" the overseer replied out of habit, but then, halfway through his sentence, he realized what Xiang Shaoyun had actually said. His voice went an octave higher as he exclaimed, "Wait, what? You defeated all the scarlet wolves?"

"You can check inside. If this doesn't count for completion, it sure will be depressing." Xiang Shaoyun shrugged helplessly.

The overseer had already charged into the room before Xiang Shaoyun finished his sentence. When he saw the wolves strewn everywhere on the ground, his heart thumped wildly.

"So does this count? If it does, I wish to challenge the next room," Xiang Shaoyun asked.

"Yes! Of course! Absolutely!" the overseer affirmed three times in a row. He then added, "There will be no justice if even this does not count for completion."

If it wasn't for the fact that he could clearly see that Xiang Shaoyun was only a first-stage Astral Realm cultivator, he would have started suspecting that Xiang Shaoyun was hiding his strength all along.

"Nice! I'll go challenge the next room, then. This room is kind of boring," Xiang Shaoyun said. Then, he went on to the fourth limit room.

Staring at Xiang Shaoyun's back, the overseer couldn't resist cursing inwardly, This kid is a freak! After a slight pause, he decided, No, this is too important. I must notify the palace master. Not only is this kid exceptionally talented, he has astonishing potential as well. In fact, it is likely that he is much scarier than Qinyin!

Thus, he ran outside and called, "Man!"

The moment he called, a figure appeared out of nowhere and answered, "Here!"

"Take my command medallion and immediately notify the palace master to come," the overseer commanded. The figure accepted the medallion before vanishing right where he stood.

Meanwhile, Xiang Shaoyun had arrived at the fourth limit room. He pushed the door open and entered with no hesitation. The fourth room was different from the third room. Here, there were no demonic beasts. Rather, within the room was an illusionary realm.

Within the illusionary realm, numerous hellish devils and other terrifying monsters would appear. The illusion was extremely lifelike and served primarily to assault the challengers of the room with an intense fear.

When Xiang Shaoyun stepped inside, what he saw greatly frightened him. "What the f*ck! Why are there so many scary monsters? Are they real?"

Wuuu—

Terrifying sounds rang in the air again and again, making one's hair stand on end in fear. Xiang Shaoyun also felt his hair standing up from the creepy scene he was seeing. By reflex, he drew his Golden Wolf Sword and started slashing at the monsters.

"Get away from me!" Xiang Shaoyun slashed madly.

However, the monsters were completely unaffected. Even after being slashed, they still pounced Xiang Shaoyun and bit him.

"AHHH!"

The monsters looked incredibly real. Even their bites felt real: Xiang Shaoyun bled from them, and the pain caused him to start shouting. He continued waving his sword around madly and even utilized his astral energy in an attempt to destroy all the monsters.

Unfortunately, his attacks had no effect on them whatsoever. Even after the monsters were sliced into pieces, the pieces simply joined together to form a brand new monster. These monsters were simply unkillable. In the blink of an eye, Xiang Shaoyun was completely submerged in a sea of monsters.

"Ahhhh!"

Xiang Shaoyun was feeling not only physical pain from being bitten but a pain so extreme it reached his soul. The intense pain almost caused him to lose consciousness then and there. His only sensation was that his physical body had been completely eaten by these monsters, and it was now his soul's turn to be eaten. Death had never felt so near.

"Am I going to die here?" Xiang Shaoyun questioned with the final strain of consciousness he had. Suddenly, the images of the numerous betrayals he had suffered in the past replayed in his mind, and a deep sadness surfaced in his heart, one that caused a surge of willpower to burst out of him. He yelled, "How can I die like this before reclaiming what was taken from me? F*ck off, all of you!"

He bit his tongue, causing it to bleed, helping him regain some of his consciousness. Immediately, he circulated his Heaven Conquering Overlord Manual and chanted, "To live is to worry, to worry is to suffer. Without birth, there is no death. Without darkness, there is no light. Without high, there is no low. Life comes from nothingness. Nothingness can give birth to something, and something can return to nothingness. One's mindset frames how one views the world..."

That was a Buddhist mantra, one that helped calm the mind. After repeating the mantra an unknown number of times, Xiang Shaoyun seemed to have entered a unique state of mind.

He had the sensation that he was now beyond the mundane world and could look at the mortal world and all its worries as a mere observer, seeing through the world's appearances while all

human emotion departed him. This gave him a taste of what it was like to be beyond human, beyond the mundane.

Without him realizing it, the monsters in his soul all retreated, and the pain in his physical body also vanished. The world fell into silence. Abruptly, he opened his eyes. The monsters were all still there, baring their claws and fangs at him.

"Break!" Xiang Shaoyun muttered indifferently as two rays of light shot out from his eyes. The two rays penetrated all the monsters, destroying the illusions around him.

It was also at this moment that Xiang Shaoyun understood that this was a room that tested only one's willpower. One's strength and cultivation level played no role here. Those without a strong enough willpower would be stuck here, and even if they did not die, they would end up mad. In comparison, this room was much more terrifying than the third room.

"Fourth limit room, completed. One star congregation jade will be given as a reward," an emotionless voice suddenly rang out.

Xiang Shaoyun focused and saw that a shiny, green jade pendant had appeared on the platform before him. That was his reward for completing this room's challenge.

"I did not receive anything like this from the first three rooms, but they are giving me something like this for the fourth room? Nice!" Xiang Shaoyun muttered gleefully before picking the jade up. He weighed the jade in his hand and muttered in disappointment, "What bullshit star congregation jade is this? At most, it only qualifies as a star jade of inferior quality."

Chapter 58: You Sure You Want to Challenge Another Room?

The star congregation jade was a wondrous jade capable of gathering astral energy, and it was helpful in increasing the speed at which a cultivator could gather astral energy. It was in a sense a tool to help grow one's strength, and each such jade was exceedingly expensive. In fact, this jade was even more expensive than an ordinary spirit medicine.

Xiang Shaoyun had at first expected to receive a real star congregation jade, but he had instead received a star jade of inferior quality. The so-called star jade was simply a jade capable of gathering a tiny amount of astral energy, and it had a much weaker effect compared to a real star congregation jade.

"Kid, you are calling the star congregation jade an inferior star jade?" a disgruntled voice rang out from outside the room. The voice had come so suddenly Xiang Shaoyun was given a fright.

An old man was standing outside the door. He had average looks at best. However, he also radiated a certain majesty, one that inspired awe in all who looked at him. The overseer was standing beside the old man. From how deferential he was behaving, it was obvious this old man was no ordinary person. The old man was the present master of Martial Hall Palace, Yang Gaochuan. He was one of the strongest experts in the Martial Hall Palace.

"You are?" Xiang Shaoyun asked as he had never met Yang Gaochuan before.

"This is our revered palace master!" introduced the overseer.

"Ahh, so it's the revered palace master. Pleased to meet you, palace master!" Xiang Shaoyun remained calm and saluted the palace master.

When Yang Gaochuan saw how composed Xiang Shaoyun was, a slight trace of astonishment flickered in his eyes. Evidently, Xiang Shaoyun's reaction had surprised him. The astonishment did not linger in his eyes as he proceeded to say, "You're Xiang Shaoyun? I have long heard of your name. This is the first time I'm seeing you, and you indeed do not disappoint. You have actually broken two limits in a row?"

"The palace master is too kind with his praise," Xiang Shaoyun said humbly, something rarely seen.

"But why did you claim that the star congregation jade is an inferior product? Have you seen a true star congregation jade before?" Yang Gaochuan asked.

"Haha, how is that possible? I merely felt that this star congregation jade feels different than what is recorded in the books. Just look at the color and luster. It's obvious enough. Even if this jade can gather astral energy, the amount gathered will be rather limited," Xiang Shaoyun explained with a hearty laugh. In truth, he had seen real star congregation jades before. He was just too embarrassed to admit it.

"You've got good eyes. This star congregation jade is not a true high-quality star congregation jade, but it is good enough for an Astral Realm cultivator. It can increase your cultivation speed by at least 30 percent!" Yang Gaochuan said.

"Hehe, true. It's still better than nothing." Xiang Shaoyun smiled and stowed the star congregation jade.

"Looks like you have quite the big appetite, kid. Since you have successfully broken two limits in a row, I can give you an additional reward," Yang Gaochuan said.

"For real? Can I get anything I want, such as weapons, battle techniques, or even spirit medicines?" Xiang Shaoyun asked joyfully.

"Yes. I can even warn the thirteenth elder on your behalf if you want," Yang Gaochuan promised.

"No, I don't need that. It's not like he would dare pull anything if I stay here anyway," Xiang Shaoyun said. He then continued, "If possible, can the palace master reward me with some tier-3 or tier-4 weapons, battle techniques, and spirit medicines? I suppose those are already the best the Martial Hall Palace can provide."

After Xiang Shaoyun said that, the overseer's face darkened as he cursed inwardly, This kid sure has a big mouth. What does he mean by those are already the best?

"Haha, that is quite a big request." Yang Gaochuan chortled and said, "Since you have broken two limits in a row, I will only reward you with two items. You can take your pick between a tier-3 weapon, a battle technique, and a low-grade spirit medicine."

When Xiang Shaoyun heard that, he replied gloomily, "I'll break another limit then."

"If you can break the next limit, I will double your rewards," Yang Gaochuan promised.

"Deal! I'll be going ahead then," Xiang Shaoyun said and headed straight toward the fifth room.

After Xiang Shaoyun left, the overseer said, "But the next limit can only be broken by those at the third stage of Astral Realm or higher!"

"I don't think this kid will have any problem breaking that limit either," Yang Gaochuan said, stunning the overseer.

After an hour, Xiang Shaoyun came out from the fifth limit room. His body was covered in wounds, looking to be in quite a sorry state. Fortunately, his vitals were still well protected.

"H-he broke the fifth limit too!" the overseer yelled. He had been staring at the jade plate in front of the fifth room all this while. The jade plate had dimmed, signifying that the challenger had succeeded.

"Phew. That room sure is dangerous. Traps are everywhere, and any mistake would have been the death of me. I was even forced to use my weapon!" Xiang Shaoyun grumbled. He still felt some lingering fear when he recalled the numerous traps in the fifth room.

Even with his combat prowess, which was the equivalent to a third-stage Astral Realm cultivator's, he still nearly failed the challenge. Fortunately, he had his gift of instincts and Overlord's Nine Nether Steps. Otherwise, even if he had survived, he would've been seriously injured.

However, his gain from this room had been great. He had utilized the Lightning Spear Technique to deal with many of the traps, greatly increasing his mastery over the technique. After all, actual combat would always be the best way for one to grow. Apart from that, he could also sense that he was not far from second-stage Astral Realm now.

"Splendid. Nicely done," Yang Gaochuan said, his eyes brightly lit. Then, he sighed before saying, "Looks like there will be a surprise to this time's Battle of Towns. Too bad we only have half a year before then. We will be a bit hard-pressed for time."

Astonished, the overseer said, "Battle of Towns? Palace master, you are thinking of—"

Before he could finish his sentence, Yang Gaochuan interrupted him with a wave of a hand. Yang Gaochuan said to Xiang Shaoyun, "Tell me. What do you want for your reward?"

"Oh, that can wait. My question is, will the reward be doubled again if I break the next limit?" Xiang Shaoyun asked.

Once again, Yang Gaochuan and the overseer were stunned.

"You sure you want to challenge another room?" Yang Gaochuan asked after he recovered from his shock.

"If the reward will be doubled, I will consider doing it," Xiang Shaoyun replied.

"Consider it properly. Even a fourth-stage or fifth-stage Astral Realm cultivator might not survive the next room," Yang Gaochuan warned.

"How will we know without trying?" Xiang Shaoyun did not seem to mind.

"Sure. If you can survive even half an hour in the sixth room, I will count that as completion and will double your reward again," Yang Gaochuan said.

Generally speaking, each limit room corresponded to a different level of strength. For instance, the first room corresponded to the seventh-stage Basic Realm, the second room corresponded to anyone in the Basic Realm, the third room corresponded to those who had recently entered the Astral Realm, and so on. As for the sixth room, it corresponded to those between the fourth and fifth stage of the Astral Realm.

Surviving for an hour in any of the rooms would count as a completion. This time, Yang Gaochuan had made an exception and allowed Xiang Shaoyun to stay for only half an hour. In a sense, he was halving the limit challenge for him. But of course, Xiang Shaoyun had still created a brand new record to reach the sixth room when he was a mere first-stage Astral Realm cultivator.

Chapter 59: Second-Stage Astral Realm

Looking at Xiang Shaoyun heading toward the sixth room, the overseer asked anxiously, "Palace master, will...this be fine?"

"Nothing bad will happen. Since he has the courage to try it, it can only mean that he has yet to reach his limits. I am quite looking forward to the surprise he is about to give me," Yang Gaochuan said. After a slight pause, he muttered, "Right, there is an elder guarding the sixth room too. I need to remind him to take it easy and don't mess the kid up too badly."

"It's too late for that. The kid has already gone inside," the overseer said.

"Shit! When one gets old like me, one will be slower to react. Oh well, let's go see what happens," Yang Gaochuan said, slapping his forehead.

As for the overseer, he wiped the sweat off his forehead and muttered, "Good luck, kid."

Meanwhile, Xiang Shaoyun was already within the sixth limit room. This room had a very serene ambiance. There was even an old man seated on a praying mat. At present, the old man had yet to do anything to him.

"Greetings, senior," Xiang Shaoyun bowed and greeted the old man. Although he couldn't sense the old man's strength, he was sure the old man was certainly seated here in meditative cultivation all year long. That much was obvious from the layer of dust on him.

The old man's eyes remained shut, yet an ancient voice rang out, "Only first-stage Astral Realm. Too weak. Leave."

Xiang Shaoyun blanked out. He had never imagined that the old man would tell him to leave.

"Senior, I am here to challenge the limit," Xiang Shaoyun clarified.

"I repeat, leave," said the old man with a tone that allowed no argument.

"Umm...can you let me stay here for half an hour instead? Just half an hour will do!" Xiang Shaoyun negotiated. He only needed half an hour to complete the challenge. If he could just wait here, that would be much better.

"Leave!" The old man's voice turned aggressive.

"Come on, senior. Please don't be so heartless. Alright, I'll buy you a pot of wine or two," Xiang Shaoyun flattered.

"Scram!"

Xiang Shaoyun was not done with his flattering when the old man suddenly bellowed. The voice reverberated throughout the room, causing Xiang Shaoyun's ears to pulse. His blood went berserk.

Heaven Conquering Overlord Manual!

Xiang Shaoyun quickly circulated his cultivation manual and forced his blood to calm. When he looked at the old man again, with a pale face, he said, "Senior, you don't have to be so fierce even if you're chasing me away, right?"

"Scram! Scram!"

The old man repeated the word two times with more force. The sound waves roiled out like a storm, sending Xiang Shaoyun crashing into the wall. From the crash, he coughed up a mouthful of blood. It would seem he had sustained quite a heavy injury. The old man had injured him just with sound waves alone. What kind of strength was that?

"He is at least a late-stage Transformation Realm expert, or even stronger!" Xiang Shaoyun lay weakly on the ground and muttered to himself. At present, he could only feel that his flow of blood was in complete disorder. Even his organs had suffered differing extents of damage.

Xiang Shaoyun stood up and circulated his cultivation manual to stabilize his injuries. He grumbled, "What a bully!"

"You can still stand? No wonder you can reach this room. I've decided to give you a chance to challenge this room," the old man said, finally opening his ancient eyes.

"This is not fair. You first injured me before allowing me to challenge the room. That's the same as cheating!" Xiang Shaoyun protested.

"It doesn't matter. I will consider that as part of the challenge. It will only benefit you in your assessment," the old man replied indifferently. He then said, "Now, let us begin. How long can you resist the suppression of my presence?"

Right after saying that, an immense pressure swept out of the old man and pressed down on Xiang Shaoyun. Presence was something incorporeal, something that couldn't be touched or seen, yet it existed.

Those with weak presence were normally timid. And those with powerful presence could threaten the universe.

To start utilizing the power of presence, one must first reach the Transformation Realm. After all, that was a power for the strong, a force capable of causing the enemy to cower by mere presence. And presence was precisely the limit being challenged in the sixth room.

Only those capable of resisting the old man's presence suppression could pass the challenge. This old man was no regular Transformation Realm expert. He was a person with an extraordinary power of presence. The only thing Xiang Shaoyun felt was a suffocating sensation before an incorporeal pressure crushed down upon him.

After coughing up another mouthful of blood, Xiang Shaoyun was sent flying again. This time, the old man was no longer holding back. He continued his suppression, not even giving Xiang Shaoyun a chance to stand up.

Xiang Shaoyun felt like a mountain was pressing down on him. Even his bones started making cracking sounds, as if they were on the verge of breaking apart. If this continued, he could very well be crushed to death.

Xiang Shaoyun had challenged multiple limit rooms, but he had never felt so powerless. Crushed to the ground, he couldn't even fight back. The very thought of his helplessness vexed him greatly.

Damn it! Have I fallen so low to the point I can't even raise my head anymore? No, I, Xiang Shaoyun, am a giant among men, one who will keep on fighting in the face of all adversaries! Nobody can hope to break me! Not even a Transformation Realm expert! Xiang Shaoyun roared inwardly as he started circulating his Heaven Conquering Overlord Manual again. His nine stars pulsed repeatedly as he squeezed out all the power available to him. Even the astral cosmos sea in the middle of his nine stars started shining resplendently.

Like a volcanic eruption, the power within Xiang Shaoyun's body surged.

Completion-phase, first-stage Astral Realm versus Transformation Realm's presence.

No, that was still far from enough. He was still completely no match.

"If the first stage is not enough, I'll try the second stage! Go!" Xiang Shaoyun yelled as his nine stars erupted with power. All his energy converged together while his 365 acupoints shone brightly within him, creating a scene akin to the Milky Way. Power was being pumped through his meridians without stop, forcefully enlarging his nine stars, and with it, he started growing in strength.

Hmm? He's breaking through right here? How brave! the old man's face twitched as he thought to himself.

Bang!

Second-stage Astral Realm!

After reaching the completion phase earlier, Xiang Shaoyun did not stop. As if he had gone mad, he unleashed all the energy he had been suppressing all this while and charged straight into the second-stage Astral Realm before stopping. It was also at this moment that he felt the pressure on him weakening. Both his hands pushed on the ground as he tried standing back up again.

"Even after a breakthrough, you are still a mere second-stage. You won't be able to do much. Just stay down," said the old man as he increased the pressure on Xiang Shaoyun.

Once again, Xiang Shaoyun was pressed down into the ground. The pressure on him was extremely terrifying, and not even someone at the fourth or fifth stage of the Astral Realm would be able to endure it.

Xiang Shaoyun was only a brand new second-stage Astral Realm cultivator. Even if he was strong enough to fight those above his level, he could at most fight a fourth-stage cultivator. If he tried his best, he might even be able to face a fifth-stage cultivator. But to be victorious against his current opponent, it would be harder than reaching the heavens.

Too weak. Still too weak! Will I never be able to straighten my back? One must never abandon one's spine, but facing absolute strength, the so-called spine is so weak! Xiang Shaoyun thought in indignation.

While he was on the brink of giving up, he suddenly thought of something. Wait, if this room is testing how one can resist the pressure from the presence, so long as I comprehend the power of presence, won't I be immune to it? Yes, that must be it! This room not only tests one's willpower and strength, but it also tests one's comprehension power!

At this thought, Xiang Shaoyun focused his mind on figuring out how to comprehend the power of presence.

Chapter 60: Born to Be King

The intensity of one's presence was in a sense a symbol of one's strength. It was also a sort of mental power. If one was not sufficiently strong, yet had had the chance to occupy a ruling position for an extended period of time, one would still have a sort of presence—the presence of a king.

That was similar to Xiang Shaoyun's past. As a tiny Basic Realm cultivator, he had large and powerful forces at his disposal, and that had accorded him the presence of a sovereign. At present, Xiang Shaoyun had sunk into his state of visualization. Scenes from his past flashed by in his mind, reminding him of all the top experts he had met before. All of them were far stronger than him, yet they still had to obey him.

The so-called presence can be the presence of inspiration, or the presence of a king, or even a presence of a weakling. It is incorporeal yet omnipresent, something originating from the mind, transmitted through one's being... Slowly but surely, Xiang Shaoyun comprehended the power of presence through his gift of visualization.

Do I, Xiang Shaoyun, have the presence of the weak, or the presence of the strong? Or the presence of the fearless? No, I once reigned above many others. With a wave of my hand, I graced my subjects with my presence, akin to a god. I was born to be a king. That is the mandate of heaven, for me to become an overlord! I am with the presence of a king! Who can suppress me? An unprecedentedly tyrannical light shone in Xiang Shaoyun's eyes. At the same time, an august presence rose from within him. His mental power seemed to have broken through a certain limit, greatly raising his spirits.

As his presence rose, Xiang Shaoyun slowly got back on his feet. He stood with his back perfectly straight, completely ignoring the old man's suppression.

"I am the king. How then, can you suppress me? Scram!" Eyes glowing with an odd radiance, Xiang Shaoyun looked straight into the old man's eyes. It was almost as if two beams of light were being shot straight into the old man's eyes.

When the old man felt Xiang Shaoyun's oppressive gaze, his body shivered, and the pressure subjecting Xiang Shaoyun slowly dispersed. He could vaguely see an outline of purple qi drifting behind Xiang Shaoyun, which gave Xiang Shaoyun a presence of utmost majesty.

"H-how is this possible?" the old man cried out in alarm. He had never encountered any Astral Realm cultivator who could actually withstand his presence. At most, they would be able to survive, unlike Xiang Shaoyun who had instead beaten his presence into retreat.

More importantly, he could clearly sense the presence of a king on Xiang Shaoyun. It gave him the urge to kneel down and instantly offer his obeisance to Xiang Shaoyun. This was the same type of pressure a person would feel when facing someone who had been in a ruling position for a long time, a pressure that made him flustered like a nervous peasant meeting his king.

"Bring it on, old fart! What do you take me for? I am born to be a king, and I am destined to reign above all others, to awe the nine heavens and the ten worlds with my presence. Those who dare disobey shall all die!" Xiang Shaoyun declared, completely revealing his tyrannical side, the presence of a natural-born king in full display. An incorporeal might twirled around him, making all who faced him feel like kneeling before him.

"Impudent! You dare to scold me?" The old man was furious.

"So what if I scold you? Once upon a time, a person like you was not even qualified to be my attendant. What are you good for? I am only at the second stage of the Astral Realm, yet I am already able to break your so-called presence. What do you have that you can be proud of? By the time I reach the Transformation Realm, I can kill you with just one finger. Before a member of the younger generation like me, what can you be proud of? Do you know what's more pathetic? Even at such an old age, you are not even at the King Realm yet; stuck at a level that is neither here nor there, you don't even have the courage to take that one step forward. How pathetic!" Xiang Shaoyun took a step forward and berated the old man.

The kingly presence innately ingrained in him gave him an immeasurable pride, as if he was the son of a god, his presence too imposing for anyone to resist. The old man was so pressured he took a step backward, his body trembling without stop.

"W-what do you know?" the old man replied in a flustered manner. He could not understand why he was suddenly flustered, but he felt as if Xiang Shaoyun had dug out his deepest secret. It completely shattered his confidence, but he also felt too helpless to even get in tune with his anger anymore.

"A king is destined to soar through the heavens and earth, to rise above the nine skies, to overlook all living beings, to have a heart large enough to contain the world, to establish a connection with the natural world, to allow one's mind to freely roam the world, to traverse the nine skies and ignite one's fate star, to conquer stars, gods, worlds, and everything..." Xiang Shaoyun started speaking, each of his words shocking beyond belief. He shook the very depth of the old man's heart.

The old man stared at Xiang Shaoyun, yet he seemed to have entered a certain state of comprehension. Hit by a sense of enlightenment, he started muttering to himself, "To soar through

the heavens and earth, to rise above the nine skies, to overlook all living beings, to have a heart large enough to contain the world..."

"A king should be equipped with the aura of kings. What are you waiting for? Focus your essence energy, sense the natural world, and step into the King Realm!" Xiang Shaoyun took a step forward and increased his voice. At the same time, his presence grew even stronger, and his words stabbed into the old man's mind.

Bang!

The final barrier in the old man's mind was thus completely shattered by Xiang Shaoyun.

Abruptly, the old man had a sensation that he was having an out-of-body experience as an incorporeal mental power rushed out of the limit room straight to the sky above. His stars started pulsing madly, absorbing the spiritual energy around him without stop. An energy storm formed as a result, and the storm eventually formed a connection with the nine skies above, tearing the space apart to finally reach a certain hidden star.

This was an indication that one's mental power had been sent to the nine heavens, igniting the star, and starting the process of breaking through into the King Realm. Outside the limit room, Yang Gaochuan was the first to sense the change. His body shivered as he said, "What is going on? The spiritual energy is congregating here. So rich...and pure...h-has Old Peng broken through?"

The overseer beside Yang Gaochuan also trembled. A shocked expression appeared on his face. "Palace master, are you saying Old Peng is finally going to take that step?"

Yang Gaochuan did not reply. Rather, he rushed away and said to the overseer, "Come with me. We can't allow Old Peng to be disturbed!"

At the same time, many people at different corners of the Martial Hall Palace had sensed the oddity. Numerous elders and overseers started rushing toward the Hall of Limits. The first to arrive was the vice palace master, Qing Xiuhe. When he saw Yang Gaochuan there, he quickly saluted the palace master and asked, "Palace master, what's going on here?"

"I'm not sure myself, but for now, place the Hall of Limits in lockdown. Any intruder will be punished!" Yang Gaochuan said loudly. Every single person in the Martial Hall Palace heard that command, and it halted the steps of the others who were still on the way to the Hall of Limits.

"Everyone, return to your stations and await your orders." Qing Xiuhe immediately acted on the command. Since both the palace master and the vice palace master had given their orders, the elders and overseers all understood that something major must have happened at the Hall of Limits.