

## Protect OCL VL3 41

### Chapter 41: The Rising Storm! Open and Secret Struggles\_1

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Over the past few days, Lu Xianghui had heard that many outstanding senior brothers and sisters from the academy desired to join Aunt Li Yao's retinue. However, no one had yet succeeded.

Yet unexpectedly, Aunt Li Yao invited him on her own initiative.

With a thudding heart, Lu Xianghui thoroughly considered his feelings and suppressed his desires then respectfully bowed and said, "Aunt Li Yao, your affection for me is etched in my heart. However, a follower should provide significant assistance to you to make the recruitment worthwhile.

I fear that my limited knowledge and mediocre bloodline will not be capable enough for such an enormous responsibility. Only a Sky Pride can truly befit the role of a follower."

He was aware that if he were to be successful in becoming a follower of Aunt Li Yao, his life's trajectory would profoundly change. Moreover, his entire clan would rise along with him, even chickens and dogs would ascend to heaven.

However, Lu Xianghui did not wish to become a burden to Wang Liyao, nor did he want to accept charity without merit.

Wang Liyao gently shook her head and said, "I have been raised by my father since my childhood, thereby learning that Sky Prides are easy to find, but sincerity is hard to come by. You are diligent, pragmatic, and can stay true to your heart, making you a rare talent. I am not inviting you to be a follower for convenience but because I really need your assistance."

In fact, concerning such a critical matter, Wang Liyao had done her homework. All the information about Lu Xianghui, from the low-ranking Prominent Family of the Langright Guard, the Dragon Spring Lu Family, was on her desk.

As the saying goes, the kind of family raises the kind of children. Although the Dragon Spring Lu family was weaker, they were a traditional prominent family, ethical, tenacious, and diligent in

nature. The civilians under their jurisdiction were all living peacefully and happily and might as well be considered living in an arcadia.

Lu Xianghui, facing such a sincere invitation, carefully weighed his words and said, "Since Aunt Li Yao has thus entrusted me, I will no longer refuse. From now on, I will follow my lady's command, death will not deter me."

With that said, the binding relationship as a follower was established. All that is needed is to report to the Academic Palace for registration and documentation.

The academy did not prohibit such practices. After all, the Sky Prides or Little Sky Prides might gather some followers, a tradition that has existed since ancient times. Especially the Great Heavenly Prides who would be prominent figures in the future, who wouldn't have a group of followers?

"Senior Brother Lu, please sit." Wang Liyao invited him to sit again, her demeanor was much more cordial. The relationship between the follower and the liege is profoundly interconnected, they share both honor and disgrace, forming a very intimate bond.

"Yes, Miss." Lu Xianghui sat in a dignified manner, with a solemn expression on his face. He understood that Miss Li Yao was about to assign him "work".

"Both of us are disciples of the Academy, therefore, the interests of the Academy should be a priority," Wang Liyao sipped on her spiritual tea, "However, we are ultimately from prominent families, we cannot neglect our responsibilities to our clans."

Lu Xianghui nodded in acknowledgement, "The lady is right, the family has made many sacrifices and lived frugally to nurture me, even going so far as to hinder the future prospects of many of my younger brothers and sisters." His eyes held a guilty look when he spoke about this.

This is the tragedy of many lower-level prominent families. When resources are limited, they can't possibly cater to everyone, inevitably there will be sacrifices.

The Langright Guard, where the Dragon Spring Lu Family resides, due to a long history of pioneering ventures, has a strictly structured social hierarchy, with the clans of prominent families suppressing each other, making structural reforms extremely difficult.

To exaggerate slightly, while the Ping'an Wang Family could potentially strive outside their domain, the Dragon Spring Lu Family, being surrounded by mastered territories, they couldn't even rough it out or go out hunting fierce beasts.

"Family stability is a prerequisite to tackling external factors." Wang Liyao brought out a jade family medallion, "Our Changning Wang Clan is a major producer of grain seeds, just take this jade medallion to the Changning Wang Clan, and they will make arrangements for you. Although I can't promise much, causing your Lu Fa

Family's income to increase twofold shouldn't be a problem."

Double in income?

Lu Xianghui felt like his heartbeat was going to jump out of his chest. The family was so tight because most of the income was used to cover enormous expenses, and the surplus was not much.

If they could receive an additional twofold income while keeping costs constant, then the Lu family's life would no longer have to be so meager. The younger generation of the family would also have the opportunity for better development.

"In addition, our Wang family has a few shares in the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm. This firm also has branches in Langright Guard, and reliable children from your home may go there to learn things." Wang Liyao casually assigned, "The remuneration from Keep Achieving Commercial Firm is quite good, and the prospects for development are also promising."

The Keep Achieving Commercial Firm!

This newly emerging firm has recently become a hot topic in the Academic Palace. Mainly because of the firm's generous practices, they have contracted all the Spirit Bird Flying Carriages in the Academic Palace, pioneering a new commercial field.

Many flying carriage drivers from the academy have seen their income skyrocket, and a typically overlooked profession has become hot. Even Lu Xianghui had started considering whether he should learn to drive a flying carriage early on to secure a good career in the future.

However, he never thought that the popular Keep Achieving Commercial Firm was connected with the Wang family. Just a word from Miss Li Yao, and he could be arranged to work there.

For a moment, Lu Xianghui was somewhat dazed. Indeed, the gap between people's different societal levels was huge. With just some casual arrangements, Miss Li Yao had managed to change the fate of the Lu family.

"Miss, then, what should I do?" Awash with gratitude, Lu Xianghui had an even stronger desire to repay Wang Liyao.

"Cultivate, strive to reach the Spirit Platform Realm as soon as possible. Prior to that, improve your bloodline first." Wang Liyao calmly instructed, "You inherently have Lower Grade A Peak Level ability. Normally, with a couple of drops of Stone Marrow, or a Grade Four Blood Refining Pill, you can easily reach Middle Grade in the Qi Refinement Realm, which will trigger your bloodline."

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A few drops of Stone Marrow? A Grade Four Blood Refining Pill?

Lu Xianghui found his mouth dry at these offers, both of which were worth thousands of Qian Gold. His total expenditure for a year was hardly five or six hundred Qian Gold. Even if he didn't eat, drink, or cultivate, it would take him eight or nine years to accumulate enough.

Out of this meager income, two hundred Qian Gold came from his family stipend. For his family to squeeze out even that much had pushed them to their utmost limit...

Before he could respond, Wang Liyao had already swept her hand over her Storage Ring, and a few bottles of Dan medicine materialized in front of him. "Here's a Blood Refining Pill, it will help you breakthrough to Middle-grade, Fourth Rank. No need for any eloquence, Senior Brother Lu, I'll keep your account, you can pay me back when you make progress in your cultivation."

"Yes, Miss." Lu Xianghui inhaled deeply, restoring his usual impassive countenance. "I will make you proud."

After Lu Xianghui left.

Wang Liyao took out a package her father had sent. Apart from some cultivation materials, there was also a letter. The general message was, since the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm had established itself, everything was going smoothly in their family. She need not worry too much, just focus on cultivating under Master Tianhe's guidance.

Wang Liyao understood her father's concern. He was worried that if she got too involved in these affairs at such a young age, it might lead to objections from the higher ranks in the Academic Palace. Even her master, Tianhe the Enlightened One, might not be able to help her suppress the Qian Family.

The Qian Family of Longzuo was an old and distinguished Fifth-grade Purple Abode Family. Their connections ran deep and were intricately entwined. They would not be easily swayed by any external influence.

The contest with the Qian family would not be resolved overnight; they would each use the means within their grasp.

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At the same time.

In the County Town of Longzuo.

In this commercially well-developed town, shops were abundant.

In one unassuming shop that sold a variety of goods, a seemingly ordinary woman with a turban hat entered.

With the shop assistant's help, she went to the back yard. After several turns, she arrived outside a private room in the inner courtyard. She removed her hat; it was Cao Lina, the leading lady of the Qian family.

"Lina seeks an audience with Grand Aunt Nine," she whispered.

"Come in." A soft, delicate voice answered from within.

Cao Lina walked inside, where a strikingly beautiful young woman with the demeanor of an immortal stood. Seeing Lina she said, "It seems that the Yuwen Clan has rejected your Qian family."

Her voice was airy and ethereal, like the gentle whisper of a fairy in your ear.

Upon seeing her, Cao Lina showed admiration in her eyes. She bowed with respect, gritting her teeth in anger. "Grand Aunt, we didn't expect the Firefox Old Ancestor, the newcomer of the Yuwen Clan, to be deeply connected to the Wang family. He surprisingly expelled our Qian family Elder from their grounds."

This "Grand Aunt Nine," Cao Youqing, was a prodigy of the direct line of the eminent Cao family in Liaoyuan. From a young age, she had been arranged by her family's old ancestor to enter the Lingyun Sacred Land. She was currently about a hundred years old and had already reached the seventh level of the Heavenly Human Realm.

She enjoyed a remarkable reputation as an accomplished fairy prodigy within the Sacred Land. Within her family clan, many younger members held her in high esteem.

Cao Lina had grown up hearing stories about Grand Aunt Nine and had always dreamt of following in her footsteps in the Sacred Land. But her family needed her marriage to the Qian Family of Longzuo to expand their influence. As a young woman, she was powerless to control her own destiny. Despite her resistance, she had been unable to find a solution.

"No bother. If the Yuwen Clan refuses to cooperate, then we shall teach them a lesson," said Cao Youqing lightheartedly. "After all, the Qian Family of Longzuo holds immense commercial influence. If they were to use all their might to suppress the Yuwen Clan, they should be able to accomplish such a task."

"Grand Aunt, the Qian family Elder is a coward," Cao Lina said angrily. "They claim that the path of commerce holds peace as paramount and that a small setback shouldn't discourage them. The Elder Council unanimously decided to reconcile and renew our relationship with the Wang family. The representative they sent was even the eldest son of the old dastard—Qian Xuehan.

If he succeeds, won't it be a slap in the face for Xuerui? Surely, it will cause his status within the family to plummet."

Cao Youqing nodded indifferently, "The Qian family, with its business-oriented origins, values profit over honor. To make such a decision is not out of the ordinary."

"Grand Aunt, what about Xuerui?" Cao Lina asked in deep concern. "We originally planned for him to make a significant contribution to the family, aiming to be included in the family's list of

candidates for the second Purple Abode Seed, and to receive the full support of family resources. But now... If the Qian Family reconciles with the Wang Family, wouldn't Xuerui be cast aside?"

"Grand Aunt, if we can't control the speak of the Qian Family that would still be a minor issue. I fear it may hinder your grand plans with the Young Master."

"Oh? It seems you're quite astute." The corner of Cao Youqing's mouth lifted in a smirk. "Why don't you tell me, what grand plans do the Young Master and I have?"

"Well..." Cao Lina hesitated briefly before plucking up the courage to speak. "In fact, I happened to hear some whispers. That matter would probably come to pass in around two hundred years. If you are secretly scheming and wanting Xuerui to gradually seize control of speaking rights in the Qian Family, this must be for that matter..."

The implications of this matter were massive, and even in this room devoid of bystanders, Cao Lina dared not speak too explicitly.

"Well," Cao Youqing said indifferently. "In fact, that particular lifespan isn't much of a secret. Many sharp-witted families have more or less sensed the undercurrents. However, all these old families are sly foxes, pretending ignorance right now. Firstly, they are unsure of the situation and secondly, waiting for a better price."

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"So, Aunt and our Cao Family, involving so early in this..." Cao Li Na shared her concerns, "Wouldn't this pose a danger to the family?"

"No worry." Cao Youqing answered confidently, "I originated from the sacred land, which has nothing to do with our family. Moreover, our old ancestor has already made arrangements."

"Besides, the prince of our family is an extraordinarily talented individual. If he is willing to lend his support, how could we not have a high chance of winning?" Cao Youqing's eyes flashed with infatuation and fervor, "We just need to carry out the plan step by step. Whether you and Xuerui can control the Qian family is but a minor detail in our grand scheme."

Li Na, I proposed this plan for both you and your son's sake."

"Don't disappoint me!"

Cao Li Na was startled. She suddenly understood, the chessboard played by her grand aunt and her cohorts was far too grand. Losing the Qian Family's support would merely be their loss and nothing more, met with mere disappointment at best.

But specifically for herself and her son, their future control over Qian Family was everything. She refused to be a mere pawn in an arranged marriage, destined to be sidelined after the true heir, Qian Xuehan, takes over.

She also refused to let her son become merely one of the many elders of the Qian family in the future.

"Aunt, I understand." Cao Li Na's eyes flashed with a ruthless light, "As long as you and the prince are willing to lend strong support to Xuerui, I, as a mother, will pave his way!"

Cao Youqing looked at Cao Li Na with admiration: "You truly live up to the name of Cao's female descendant, you have the same spirit as our old ancestor. Entering the game early indeed involves great risk, but it also means greater rewards. Hopefully, under Xuerui's control, Qian Family will be able to step forward more. As for support, won't I be there to be just to you and Xuerui?"

"Thank you for your guidance, aunt." Cao Li Na was delighted, she bowed and left, her heart burning with ambition.

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The scene switched back to Longzuo County Town.

Danfang of Tian Yuan.

This was the most renowned alchemist shop in Longzuo County, rumored to have a deep and unfathomable background.

A lot of major events had recently taken place in Longzuo County, one of which was Master Danding being hired as a tribute to the Tian Yuan Danfang, naturally sparking a whirlwind of controversy and discussion.



The reason Master Danding himself gave for this was that he needed to instruct his newly accepted disciple and was leveraging the environment of Tian Yuan Danfang.

Moreover.

The hot topic currently in Longzuo County was the Spirit Bird Flying Carriage from the branch of Keep Achieving Commercial Firm. An ordinary person could simply spend a small amount of Qian Gold to enjoy the high-status privilege of using the flying carriage that was originally only available to the core of the Academic Palace and the children of prominent families.

But most people didn't know that Keep Achieving Commercial Firm and Qian's Commercial Firm have already started competing clandestinely.

Within the Tian Yuan Danfang.

Handsome Wang Shouye and the prosperous-looking Qian Xuefu were staring each other down.

"Shouye, I never thought..." Qian Xuefu said with a sigh, "I thought that we wouldn't fall out because of family business competition and friction. But who knew, we would still end up turning hostile to each other. Destiny is unpredictable, it toys with people."

"Uh..." Wang Shouye looked innocent, "When did we become enemies? Senior brother..."

"Don't call me senior brother!" Qian Xuefu said aggrieved: "If you still consider me your senior brother, you would know how much I admire Sister Gu, and yet you still went to have tea and chatted with her about philosophy and current affairs."

"Senior brother, I've been wronged," exclaimed Wang Shouye, "We were merely discussing family business. And I already have a wife."

Qian Xuefu perked up instantly; grabbing Wang Shouye, he said: "Brothers will be brothers. Why should we have a falling out over small matters? By the way, what did you and Sister Gu talk about?"

"Business!" Wang Shouye shook his head, "But, Sister Gu seems to be quite interested in my fourth brother."

"What?" Qian Xuefu reeled back in shock.

Chapter 42: Peaceful Epoch & Artifact Spirit\_1

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Wuwen Nianjing, who had been standing on the side observing everything, broke into laughter upon seeing Qian Xuefu's comical expression. She taunted, "Master Shouzhe is indeed good looking with outstanding charm, no wonder Sister Gu keeps him in her heart. Senior Brother, I believe you're already out of luck, you might as well give up right now~"

Last time Master Danding was recruiting disciples. Although Wuwen Nianjing's performance on various fronts was good, she still didn't make the cut.

Privileged by the power of her Wuwen prominent family, as time went, Master Danding discreetly took her as a named disciple. As for Dongfang Yuxi, he was completely out of chances with no luck of becoming a named disciple himself.

Already unhappy, Qian Xuefu felt even more desolate upon hearing her words. He looked gloomily at Wuwen Nianjing and said, "Nianjing ...~ If it really doesn't work, how about the two of us make do and spend the rest of our lives together?"

Wuwen Nianjing gave him a look and said, "If you're half as good looking as Shou Ye, I could consider thinking about it."

Qian Xuefu rolled his eyes.

If he were half as good looking as Shou Ye, why would he ever need her?

Immediately, he pulled Wang Shouye over, "Come on, teach your Senior Brother some lessons on how to be more handsome."

Saying this, he almost dragged Wang Shouye to the inner courtyard.

Once they were in the courtyard, Qian Xuefu took him into a side hall.

Still feeling puzzled, Wang Shouye was surprised to find a person already sitting in the hall.

It was a young man exuding a noble aura.

The young man was wearing a white jade crown with auspicious cloud patterns and a set of black-gold spirit-silk cloud brocade clothes, hanging a spirit jade pendant from his waist. He was an epitome of an elegant, young nobleman.

He seemed to have a slightly round figure and face, much like Qian Xuefu.

As soon as they entered, the slightly plump young man immediately rose.

"Let me give you an introduction." Qian Xuefu unusually serious for once, "This is my fourteenth brother, Qian Xuehan. Fourteenth brother, this is Wang Shouye of the Changning Wang family that I told you about."

"After hearing much about you from my younger brother, it is indeed a pleasure to meet you, Brother Shouye. You truly are an extraordinary individual, poised to rise above the ninth heaven," Qian Xuehan politely greeted Wang Shouye with a bow.

"I dare not accept such high praise. It's nice to meet you, Fourteenth Master," Wang Shouye, also having received a strict upbringing, returned the greeting respectfully.

"Shouye, my fourteenth brother is the current eldest son of the direct line of our Qian family. We're keeping his visit today a secret." Qian Xuefu whispered to Wang Shouye before adding, "You guys chat, I'll excuse myself."

With that said, he turned and left, presumably to keep guard outside the door.

Wang Shouye immediately felt that something was amiss.

Why would the firstborn of the direct line of the Qian family, an individual of high status, need to stealthily come to him? What could possibly be the matter?

Before Wang Shouye could react, Qian Xuehan, as the firstborn of the prominent family, flung himself at him, crying and pleading, "Shouye, save me..."

Wang Shouye was utterly stunned.

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Changning Wang family, Ping'an Town.

Over the past few days, due to their confrontation with the Qian family and their continual expansion of aerial cold chain transportation, the Wang family experienced a wave of unprecedented development.

But because of this rapid growth, their already strained manpower was being stretched even thinner. Desperate for workers everywhere, the family had no choice but to lean on the young boys and girls who had just graduated from the Clan School to shoulder the heavy responsibilities and contribute more towards the development of the Wang family.

However, the internal life of the Wang family remained largely undisturbed amidst all the chaos. Particularly for the youngest members of the family, their lives went on in an orderly fashion.

Behind the main hall of the Wang family residence, there was a newly constructed building that had been erected within the past few years.

This site was established primarily as a mission hall, Scripture Pavilion, and a treasure store among other facilities. The Wang family disciples would usually gather here to receive tasks, calculate their Contribution Points, or exchange and obtain various cultivation resources.

At the entrance of the Mission Hall stood Wang Zongyao, accompanied by eleven-year-old Wang Ping, who was next in line to take on the duties of the head of the household.

At the center of the hall, an Energy Supply Array was set up, and in the middle of the array hung a crystal ball the size of a human head.

As Wang Zongyao walked in, the crystal ball began emitting a soft glow and a sweet voice sounded out: "Dingdong! Welcome Young Master Wang Zongyao and the budding heir, Wang Ping."

"Dingdong! Family Head has ordered that the development of young heir Wang Ping be made top priority, with benefits equivalent to those of the direct line."

As she spoke, the crystal ball projected a dazzling light, and next to it appeared an image of a two-dimensional girl.

She looked like a character from an Earth fantasy work, with cute cat ears, long graceful legs and a figure with exaggerated proportions in all aspects.

Every time Wang Zongyao saw the Artifact Spirit's form, he would wince. He couldn't help but wonder how his Fourth Uncle had come up with such an unique and peculiar aesthetic.

Because of this matter, there was a lot of commotion in my Fourth Uncle's courtyard. This was because my Fourth Aunt had always believed that Fourth Uncle had been keeping some deep secrets in the past.

"Artifact Spirit, I am here to claim the supply of the past two months, and apply for early access to all resources of the next year," Wang Zongyao said, lower his head, "The reason is that the practice of 'Smelting Heaven Scripture' and the study of artifact refining require me to seclude myself in Qinglian Fire Valley for a long period."

"Ding Dong~ Young Master Zongyao's application is logical, and your request is approved," the sweet voice of the Artifact Spirit sounded, "I hope Young Master Zongyao will work hard to become a master refiner as early as possible, and become a pillar for our Wang family."

The voice was soothing, but the constant "Ding Dong" sound gave Wang Zongyao a headache.

He hurriedly let Wang Ping apply for resources, and then took the list of resources and hastily left. If he stayed any longer, he felt as though he would hear the "Ding Dong" noise even in his dreams.

However, before he could leave the Task Hall with Wang Ping, he ran into Wang Shouye who was approaching.

Overwhelmed with joy, he rushed up to greet him: "Uncle Seven, when did you come back?"

"Zongyao." Wang Shouye patted his shoulder with a smile, "I heard about what happened. You and Wang Ping must learn well. Whether our family can make progress and prosper in artifact refining depends on you two."

The Wang family is just getting started in secondary industries such as alchemy and artifact refining, and is not proficient in them.

But if a family wants to truly become a top-notch family, even if it is not necessary to be proficient in everything, it is still necessary to have a little involvement in all aspects. Like those Grade Five Purple Abode Prominent Families, each has its own Danfang, refining workshops, and other heritages. Only in this way, can we not be easily suppressed by other forces."

"Uncle Seven, I have to learn from you," Wang Zongyao said reverently, "You have made a lot of contributions to our family in the path of alchemy."

"The development of the family is not an overnight thing. As long as you study hard, there will come a day when you can contribute to the family." Wang Shouye encouraged, "I have some tasks to handle right now, I will go to Fourth Brother's place later to discuss some matters. In the evening, come to join your Fourth Brother and me for a meal."

"Yes, Uncle Seven."

Truth be told, Wang Zongyao was somewhat afraid to meet Wang Shouzhe - there was too much psychological pressure. But he dared not disobey Uncle Seven's words, so he had to agree.

After bidding farewell.

Wang Shouye handled some miscellaneous matters first, then went to the courtyard of Wang Shouzhe to meet him.

Wang Shouzhe's courtyard was still as lively as ever, full of life.

The brothers sat opposite each other at the stone table, drinking tea.

A couple of young children were running wildly in the courtyard, only to be captured one by one by Liu Ruolan, who was forcing them to learn, either writing or starting their enlightenment.

The sun was just right, and the greenery was in full bloom.

The children's laughter and playfulness floated in the breeze, accompanied by Liu Ruolan's firm and gentle scolding. It was like a melodious music, filled with a relaxing and pleasant taste.

"Fourth Brother, when you first became the Family Head, I remember I was only ten that year," said Wang Shouye who was already in his thirties and drinking spiritual tea. He couldn't help but sigh, "In the blink of an eye, our Wang family has undergone earth-shaking changes. Li Yao has already entered the Academic Palace, and Liyue and Zongrui have arrived."

"These kids are just like leeks, one batch after another," Wang Shouzhe shook his head helplessly, "When will my courtyard finally quiet down?"

He said so, but deep inside he felt a warm sense of family.

The reason why he was working so hard to develop the Wang family was that he wanted the children of the family to have a better space to grow, rather than having to push and pull for a little Pei Yuan Dan.

After some conversation.

Wang Shouye finally brought up the main topic: "Fourth Brother, the main reason why I came back this time lies in Qian Xuehan. Here's what happened..."

After a conversation.

Wang Shouzhe, holding his spiritual tea, fell into deep thought.

After a while, he furrowed his brows and said, "The Qian family is a family of merchants. It is not uncommon for them to prioritize profits above integrity. The conflict between us and the Qian family is merely a battle of interests, not a matter of life and death."

"So Fourth Brother's intention is..." Wang Shouye said, "Are we going to reconcile with the Qian family?"

"There was never any hatred between us, so what's there to reconcile?" Wang Shouzhe said, laughing lightly, "Moreover, the Qian family is a Fifth Grade Prominent Family. What virtue or ability does our Wang family have to engage in an all-out war with them? Even just the fat meat we have now is enough for our Wang family to digest for a long time."

"However, I have underestimated Qian Xuehan. According to previous intelligence, Qian Xuehan, as the legitimate child of the Qian family, is very mediocre in all aspects."

Wang Shouye nodded and said, "From his words, we can tell that he is very cautious. We can also tell that his stepmother, Cao Lina, is the real culprit behind this enmity."

"Who is right and who is wrong is still to be verified. At least, it can be seen from this incident that Qian Xuehan is not simple, and we need to be more careful," said Wang Shouzhe, nodding his head, "I will write a letter tonight, and you will take it to County Town tomorrow."

"Yes, Fourth Brother." Wang Shouye had also rushed back on a flying carriage as soon as possible to see the family on the pretext of visiting relatives, because he knew that what Qian Xuehan said was of great importance.

Since his Fourth Brother had made a decision, he no longer needed to be tense.

His task, Wang Shouye, was to concentrate on alchemy. When it came to the major affairs of the family, his Fourth Brother was far better at steering the ship than he was.

At this moment.

Liu Ruolan had already settled in the two children. Her capable and virtuous hands had cooked a few dishes, and she arrived looking like a wise elder sister, saying, "Uncle Seven, it's rare for you to come back. Later on, accompany your Fourth Brother for a few drinks. You two brothers can have a good chat."

The color immediately drained from Wang Shouye's face. Damn it~ Fourth Sister-in-law was too fast. The reinforcements he had been expecting had not yet arrived.

Chapter 43 Save me, Xue An! Save me, Shou Zhe! \_1

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Several days later.

Changning Guard, surrounding areas of the Guard City.

Here, numerous matured farms and villas were located.

Most of the prominent families in Changning Guard would own some farms and villas inside and outside the Guard City. These properties could not only be used as business assets, but also served as steady investments to expand their family wealth.

Upon the urgent need for money by the family, these investment properties could be sold or mortgaged to overcome financial difficulties.

The world-renowned Qian family of Longzuo had an extremely substantial asset base.

Just in the area of Changning Guard alone, they owned a significant number of fixed assets. Among these, there lay a large estate known as "Jucui Manor".

This "Jucui Manor" was also the largest property the Qian Family owned in Changning Guard.

Jucui Manor spread over a vast area; not only was it one of the villas of the Qian family in Changning Guard, but it also functioned as a logistics warehouse. It was a colossal storehouse itself.

Back in the old days, Wang Shouzhe and Qian Xuean had jointly tricked the Qian family into selling a batch of grains that was transported out of Jucui Manor.

That sum of money had become the capital for Wang Shouzhe's rise to wealth, for which Wang Shouzhe was still reminiscing.

This demonstrated the considerable foundation of the Qian Family of Longzuo.

They had similar large storage warehouses in the entire Longzuo County and some other Guard Cities outside the county. Coupled with their vast land transport team, they had established an

incredibly extensive trade network. These were the real basis for the Qian family of Longzuo to be recognized as a dominant commercial family.

On this day.

Inside Jucui Manor, the workers were carrying on with their work as usual.

After inheriting the Qian family for so many years, they had developed a mature internal system. Everyone was busy, diligently playing their roles in order.

The two managers of the trading company were inspecting the warehouse as part of their daily routine.

Upon meeting when no one was around, the two managers started discussing privately.

"Old Zhang," Manager Liu sighed quietly, "It has indeed been one thing after another at our Changning branch recently. The employees were frightened and shocked after the arrival of the twenty-third young master. Soon after he left, the fourteenth young master came... Ah... When will these restless days come to an end?"

"If anyone has been unlucky, it's the Store Manager," said Manager Zhang regretfully. "Our Store Manager spent twenty years leading the branch to prosperity, and then he took charge of all the branches in the Southern Six Guards. However, the fourteenth young master used the Patriarch's Order to dismiss him as soon as he came, which is truly chilling.

Now that the fourteenth young master has left, the family has invited him back to clean up the mess... Ah... If the Store Manager was not born from a concubine... he wouldn't have to suffer such injustice..."

"Ahem!"

Before they could finish their words, a deliberately amplified coughing sound rang from behind them.

A plump figure appeared behind them without notice and warned them, "Old Zhang, Old Liu, it is currently a turbulent time, you both should be careful with your words."

This person was none other than Qian Xuean, who had just been urgently summoned back recently.

"Store Manager," the two managers were startled and hurriedly saluted, "We were just chattering randomly, speaking up for you."

"I'm no longer the Store Manager, merely back here temporarily in charge. Don't chatter unnecessarily, just do your job properly," said Qian Xuean solemnly. "The fourteenth young master will be here soon. When the time comes, he will clean up this mess. Don't leave him with a bad impression."

"Yes."

The two managers bowed and accepted the order.

Although they were angry inwardly, they were after all, small fry, unable to influence any changes in the situation.

Time soon flew by amidst their busy work.

At noon.

A crane's call suddenly echoed in the sky.

The people in Jucui Manor looked up to see a flying carriage being pulled by a Zhu Topecrane spiraling down from the sky.

The sky was clear, the sun was bright.

The huge Zhu Topecrane flapped its wings to fly, gracefully displaying its magnificent form. The carriage of the flying carriage also refracted streaks of light in the sunlight, which was absolutely gorgeous and majestic.

On a closer look, it could be seen that this flying carriage was different from the ones at the Academic Palace; the Spirit Wood carriage of this flying carriage was marked with the distinctive logo of the Qian Trading Company.

The curtains hanging from the carriage were colored a luxurious black and gold, markedly contrasting from the style of the Academic Palace.

Clearly, this flying carriage belonged to the Qian Family of Purple Abode.

It must be known that a flying carriage is an extremely luxurious mode of transportation. Besides the expensive cost of purchasing one, the annual maintenance cost was also unaffordable for common prominent families.

Moreover, in Longzuo County, only the Academic Palace of Purple Abode was capable of breeding and raising Level Four Zhu Topecranes.

Therefore, some of the top prominent families of Longzuo County would buy Spirit Bird Flying Carriages from the Academic Palace for personal use. Firstly, it was because they genuinely had such needs; secondly, it was also to display their strength.

The Qian Family of Longzuo owned two Spirit Bird Flying Carriages.

However, normally, legitimate sons did not have the privilege to ride the Spirit Bird Flying Carriages. Only the Family Head and the Old Ancestor of the family had such qualification. Alternatively, some elders could also use it during critical times.

This time, Qian Xuehan took the Spirit Bird Flying Carriage to the south. This must have been arranged by the Family Head, Qian Qinhong, and there must have been some intent behind it.

Very soon, the Spirit Bird Flying Carriage directly landed on the plaza inside "Jucui Manor".

Qian Xuehan and a few others stepped off the carriage one after another. Besides the servants following him, an impressive looking Elder standing behind Qian Xuehan was rather eye-catching.

Seeing this, Qian Xuehan, who had come to greet him, felt a jolt in his heart.

With just one glance, he recognized that this was Elder Qian Jingde, one of the elders of the Qian Family.

Chapter 43 Save me, Xue An! Save me, Shou Zhe! \_2

There was a time when Qian Jingde was also a direct descendant of the main line, but as is always the case with noble families, the essential line usually only extends from the eldest son. Any subsequent offspring from the direct line then becomes the branch family.

However, Qian Jingde was indeed born as the eldest son, his relationship with the present direct line is rather close, and his position is relatively higher than that of any elder who springs from the branch families.

In addition, it is heard that there is an outstanding young Alchemist from the 'Xue' generation in Elder Qian Jingde's line. However, Qian Xue'an, constantly being abroad, has very less interaction with Qian Xuefu.

A Spirit Bird Flying Carriage, the eldest heir, and the accompanying Elder Qian Jingde; this is a rare high standing arrangement. Generally, only old Grade Six Prominent Families could receive this kind of treatment. From this, it is quite evident that the intention of Qian Family's Elder Council in reconciling with the Wang family is indeed quite fervent.

Many thoughts fluttered in Qian Xue'an's mind in an instant, but he did not miss a beat in his actions.

As Qian Xuehan and others stepped off the carriage, he had already led his men to greet them, "Qian Xue'an pays his respects to the Fourteenth Master, and salutes Elder Jingde."

Qian Xuehan quickly stepped forward to support Qian Xue'an, speaking modestly, "Brother Xue'an, you and I are brethren of the same generation. You need not be so formal."

They may be of the same generation, but there was a vast gap in social standing between one who was the eldest direct-line son and the other who was a son of the branch family; as distinct as heaven and earth.

If it was not for Qian Xue'an's exceptional management of the Changning branch, creating a lot of wealth for the Qian family, and his exceptional performance caught the eyes of the Family Head and even the Old Ancestor. He gained the family's attention with his abilities.

Being a son of the branch family, let alone Qian Xuehan, who was the eldest of the main line, even those of the direct lineage like Qian Xuefu would not spare him a glance.

Even Elder Qian Jingde showed a look of admiration towards Qian Xue'an.

As a member of the Elder Council, he had a profound impression of Qian Xue'an. Qian Jingde voted in favor of promoting Qian Xue'an to administer the Southern Six Guards branch. After all, for a common son of the branch line to achieve such merits was indeed not easy, explicitly showing his exceptional abilities.

After that, the two sides naturally exchanged pleasantries as per custom.

Until the night.

Qian Xuehan called Qian Xue'an to his study under the guise of discussing account books.

Qian Xue'an had guessed this would happen when he was urgently summoned, and he was thoroughly prepared. As soon as he entered, he was ready to respond to Qian Xuehan's queries.

But before he could react, Qian Xuehan pounced on him, hugging Qian Xue'an tightly and started to sob, "Brother Xue'an, save me--"

Qian Xue'an stood stiff, instantly paralyzed.

His normally stoic face crumbled in that moment, leaving only shock in his eyes and heart.

...

A few days later.

On this day, with clear skies and no clouds, due to an honorable guest's arrival, Changning and Dingpu's two major ferry terminals were closed for half a day. Usually bustling, the ferry terminal became extraordinarily quiet, only the personnel of the Wang family were allowed within the scope of the ferry terminal.

Qian Xuehan's visit to the Changning Wang clan was not casually undertaken, he didn't simply fly towards Ping'an Town. He meticulously followed protocol, delivered his polite letter, and took the formal route.

Similarly, the Changning Wang Clan also meticulously followed protocol. The family's Elder Wang Xiaohan personally steered the ferry to welcome Qian Xuehan.

The Family Head, Wang Shouzhe, would receive Qian Xuehan in the main hall of the residence.

If Wang Shouzhe's eldest son, Wang Zong'an, was in the main residence, Wang Zong'an would welcome Qian Xuehan at Dingpu Ferry Terminal. However, as Zong'an was currently studying at Purple Abode, the fifth child of the 'Shou' generation, Wang Shou Yong, stood in his place.

The particulars of the process had been mutually agreed upon through document exchange before, and both sides had no objections.

In theory, the Qian family was a Fifth Grade Aristocratic Family, while the Changning Wang family was only 7th-rank Aristocratic Family. For an ordinary 7th-rank noble family, the family head would personally welcome them, showing reverence and maintaining the honor of the Fifth Grade Aristocratic Family.

But who exactly is Wang Shouzhe? The power of the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm that he built with his own hands had already delivered a hefty blow to the Qian family, proving his qualification to be an opponent of the Qian family, so how could he demean himself before the Qian family?

Moreover, this time the Qian family showed intentions for a negotiation, and naturally it needed to lower its attitude. Even if the Qian family's patriarch, Qian Qinong, came in person, Wang Shouzhe would at most come out of the main residence to welcome him.

Somehow this reception procedure became known, which led to the majority of minor Changning families and even civilians being quite excited and feeling somewhat honored.

The Changning Wang family was truly domineering, not only daring to confront the Fifth Grade Aristocratic Family head on but also displaying an attitude of equal standings. This oddly made them feel a sense of satisfaction.

After the ferry had gotten the people, it quickly left the Changning Ferry Terminal and headed towards Dingpu Ferry Terminal.

The river was wide and endless. Even when it was sunny, the waves were incessant and the current was quite urgent on the water surface.

The elder who was in charge of the reception, Wang Xiaohan, explained to Qian Xuehan, "Fourteenth Master, the upper reaches of Peace River are connected to the Great Wilderness Marsh. Every time the water rises, some Spirit Fish and beasts in the Great Wilderness Marsh follow the current and enter the Peace River basin.

Therefore, on this part of the river, we occasionally encounter Level Three aquatic fierce beasts."

"Look at the faintly discernible mountain gorges over there, that is the 'Broken Dragon Gorge'. This narrow, tightened gorge directly causes the river section of Peace River in Ping'an Town downstream to have a fast and dangerous water flow.

Before the wasteland was developed, the area around Ping'an Town would often be flooded." Wang Xiaohan continued with his explanation, "When our ancestor Zhou Xuan developed the wasteland, the first thing he did was to wipe out the aquatic beasts on the side of the river and intensively construct river embankments and dredge the river."

Chapter 43 Save me, Xue An! Save me, Shou Zhe! \_3

"A decade or so ago, our family, under the decision of the Family Head, made use of cement mixed with soil to strengthen the riverside embankments, greatly improved the water supply, and constructed large-scale terraced fields along the riverbank, which allowed Ping'an Town to become an increasingly significant granary."

Speaking of all these achievements, Wang Xiaohan was quite proud.

The Wang family's management of the area around Ping'an Town was a result of generations' tireless efforts, without considering the cost. Without such persistent hard work, the Ping'an Town of today would not exist.

"It's because of families like the Wangs, who possess a pioneering spirit and are willing to strive tirelessly from generation to generation, that our Longzuo County has been able to continually expand and our human race's habitats have been progressively enlarging," Qian Xuehan, looking at



the massive and spectacular terraced fields in the distance, said with a face full of emotion and admiration, "Noble dignities like Old Ancestor Zhou Xuan of your family, and Master Shouzhe, are both outstanding and wise leaders who are truly admirable."

Qian Xuehan was very humble and modest, and always placed himself in the position of a junior. However, in reality, he was only about ten years younger than Qian Xuean and around the same age as Wang Shouzhe.

For higher-ranked families, the marriages and childbearing of the direct male descendants tend to be later. After all, born in such a family, as long as there's no major problem with their qualifications, a cultivation base in the Spiritual Platform Realm is the least they should attain; while many direct descendants and some from the direct lineage aim to reach the Heavenly Human Realm.

For instance, Qian Xuehan's father, Qian Qinhong, focused on cultivation in his youth; and got married and had children only after he formally took over the family when he was sixty years old.

Now, just past a hundred, Qian Qinhong has already entered the Heavenly Human Realm, and appears no more than middle-aged. This is also due to him intentionally portraying himself as older to appear mature and stable. If he chose to appear younger, he wouldn't look much different from the "young talents" in the Academic Palace.

"Indeed, Master Shouzhe is extraordinary," Qian Jingde, an elder from the Qian family, highly praised Wang Shouzhe, "I once met him at the Tian Yuan Danfang in Longzuo County; he is indeed extraordinary with great energy. His future achievements are limitless~"

His prospective family member, Qian Xuefu, and Wang Shouye from the Wang family are close friends. For various reasons, he understands Wang Shouzhe relatively well and is one of the elders more inclined towards the Wang family.

This is also why the Qian family and Elder Council sent him on this mission.

Talking and admiring the view, the ferry had unknowingly sailed halfway to the center of the Peace River.

Both sides were covered in vast water with no shore in sight, and one can only vaguely see the remnant of the Six Flat Mountain looming in the distance.

Looking afar, the mountain range seemed misty, like it had been sketched out in somber ink, appearing to blend into the sky on the horizon.

Suddenly.

An abrupt dark color emerged in the fierce current surging downstream.

It was a small, black, narrow awning-boat. Riding the river's current downstream at a fast speed, it darted towards the ferry like an arrow.

There were two people on the narrow boat.

One was a boatman wearing a grass raincoat and a bamboo hat.

The other was a charmingly demure woman.

She was standing at the front of the narrow boat, her face covered by a veil, hiding her real appearance.

The river breezes blew briskly, but her long, ethereal dress was untouched by the wind, with her ribbons and pleats hanging naturally as if she were stationary in a quiet room, devoid of any movement.

The swirling current of the river could not hide her transcendental beauty.

"Everyone, be careful!"

In a split second, Qian Jingde, an elder whose cultivation strength had reached the mid-stage of the Heavenly Human Realm, felt his heart shudder, suddenly filled with a strong sense of danger.

His face changed drastically: "Something's not right."

As his voice fell, the boatman on the narrow boat moved first.

He shook his body, and his grass raincoat suddenly burst into pieces and flew off.

At the same time, his body swelled rapidly and in the blink of an eye, transformed into a "Diamond Giant" over a yard tall.

The "Diamond Giant," despite its size, moved with the agility of a sparrow.

In the blowing river wind, he stepped onto the river as if stepping onto solid ground. In the blink of an eye, he was already in front of the ferry.

The next moment.

He sprang into the air like a bird and landed a punch on the ferry.

The wind was furious, and the energy released was shocking.

In this instant, he was like a War God incarnate, imposing and unrivaled.

"Immovable Diamond War decided?!"

Qian Jingde's gaze suddenly turned solemn.

Using the Cultivation Technique, a rush of purple Mysterious Energy was condensed in his body.

Without any hesitation, he rose into the air. Amid the boiling purple aura surrounding him, he appeared as formidable as a radiant sun, striking fear into people's hearts.

The technique he practiced was the Qian family's treasured technique - the "Purple Urgent Zhenyang Verses," known to be an elusive and profound technique.

According to legend, upon perfecting the "Purple Urgent Zhenyang Verses," the Mysterious Energy accumulated would be as solid as a mountain. The first ancestor of the Qian family, with the help of the "Purple Urgent Zhenyang Verses," once battled three Top Grade Masters of the Purple Abode Realm by himself, managing to hold them off for two hours before being defeated.

Of course, the legend might be overstated, but the Qian family still stands today, thanks to this "Purple Urgent Zhenyang Verses."

Its combat strength is noteworthy among top-grade techniques.

Qian Jingde's surging purple Mysterious Energy condensed into a palm seal and he shot it out reflexively.

"Boom!"

The punch and palm collided, generating a terrifying shockwave that spread in all directions. It shook the ferry unceasingly, and the water surface nearby exploded with waves.

The energy also blew off the "boatman's" hat, revealing the "boatman's" true face.

It was an baldheaded monk with fierce eyebrows.

"It's you... the 'Evil King Kong,' the traitor of Banruo Temple?!" Qian Jingde, the elder's face, changed abruptly, "You have the audacity to attack us, the Qian family, in public!"

Chapter 44 Wang Longyan VS Cao Youqing\_1

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In the entire Great Qian Land, apart from the Academy System, there were also other sect heritages. However, these sects were not as powerful as Lingyun Holy Ground, nor could they stand on equal footing with the Great Qian Land.

As a result, most of them kept a low profile and did not recruit students as extensively as the Academic Palace did.

Over time, the heritages of these sects in the Great Qian Land gradually declined.

Banruo Temple was one such heritage among many, which had remained in a semi-hidden state for thousands of years.

The "Evil King Kong" was a renegade from Banruo Temple who had once caused a great uproar and was still on the official wanted list of the Great Qian Land. Unexpectedly, he had shown up here.

"I'm merely taking money to eliminate disasters for others," the Evil King Kong sneered, "anyway, you will all die soon. Who would know I did it?"

He disregarded Qian Jingde and punched again.

Qian Jingde had no choice but to step up again to block the Evil King Kong.

Although the ferry was large, it could not withstand the wild assault of a Heavenly Human Realm Cultivator.

Everyone knew, however, that the truly dangerous one was the beautiful lady standing aloof at the prow of the ferry, who had yet to make her move.

The focus converged on her.

Her eyes beneath the veil were as cold as ice, showing neither joy nor anger.

Strong cultivators like Wang Xiaohan and Qian Xuehan were like ants in her eyes. She thought it was a waste of time to look at them more than once.

Suddenly, she moved.

With a simple flicker, she arrived in the air above the ferry and lightly pointed her finger.

"Clang!"

A sword was drawn from its sheath, transforming into a streak of lightning and slashing towards Qian Xuehan. The terrifying aura instantly enveloped the entire ferry.

Qian Xuehan was drenched in sweat, his face pale.

He did not dodge, nor could he dodge.

However, he seemed to have already anticipated this scene, and quickly shouted, "Master Shouzhe, save me!"

As soon as his voice fell.

"Buzz!"

A melodious sword chime rang out in the air, and a flash of purple lightning quickly arrived, blocking the sword with its spirit.

In an instant.

Ringling sound pierced the ear, and the lightning shone brightly.

The two sword auras shattered almost at the same time.

The scattered sword energy cut out sword marks on the ferry, splintering wood flew everywhere, and some of the lower-cultivated family heads from the Wang and Qian families were kept busy defending with their swords.

Within the shattered sword energy, a lady in white glided in, hovering right in front of Qian Xuehan.

Under the sunlight, her ebony hair fluttered in the wind, her white robe glistening with frostiness. Like a celestial being at the pinnacle of a snow peak, she exuded an otherworldly and transcendent aura.

With a gentle turn of her wrist, the Purple Lightning Sword energy obediently returned to her hand.

Yes, this icy lady was Wang Longyan, the ancestor of the Wang family.

She fixed a cold gaze on her opponent, a trace of solemnity faintly visible in her brows.

"Hu." Qian Xuehan, having narrowly escaped death, wiped sweat off his face and thanked her, "Xuehan deeply thanks Elder Longyan for the rescue."

"So, you are Wang Longyan." The eyes of the woman in the long skirt in the sky flashed, "What qualifies a discarded student of the Academic Palace to stand in my way?"

This woman in the long skirt was naturally Cao Youqing.

Following the secret conversation with Cao Lina, they had decided to assassinate Qian Xuehan. Today, since she was here, she would not let Qian Xuehan return alive.

Having said that, before Wang Longyan could respond, she formed her sword technique again.

The Brilliant Sword's glow surged again, transforming into dozens of sword shadows, looming toward Wang Longyan and the rest.

As a disciple of Lingyun Academy, she was naturally proud. This early-stage Heavenly Human, rural Elder, was nothing more than tiny ants in her eyes.

Unexpectedly.

The mysterious energy around Wang Longyan began to spin violently. Half was like ice, half was filled with Yin Sha(Deadly Cold). In the blink of an eye, it formed an Icy Yin whirlwind. The Medium Grade Magical Weapon, the Purple Lightning Sword, began to vibrate violently, transforming into a huge sword's glow.

The sword slashed, chilling the heart and soul. It seemed as though the solid space itself was sliced open.

All of Cao Youqing's sword shadows shattered wherever the sword passed, dissolving into the bubbles.

Mysterious Ice? Yin Sha?

Cao Youqing's eyes changed color, she exclaimed in surprise and suspicion, "How is it possible, you can cultivate both Mysterious Ice and Yin Sha together? And merge it into Icy Yin force. No! Why is your sword intent so strong ... Could it be, your bloodline ... are you also a Sky Pride?!"

As a Holy Land Sky Pride, how high and mighty was she usually?

How could she pay attention to anyone other than the few great Heavenly Prouds from her same generation? Never could she have expected to encounter another Sky Pride in this tiny Changning fort!

"Hmph!"

Wang Longyan did not answer, she gripped the Purple Lightning Sword with her wrist and directly advanced.

Amidst the commotion of the swords and the flashing lightning, snowflakes carrying the aura of Yin Sha floated in the entire sky.

In her hands, the Mysterious Ice Sword technique seemed to have undergone some metamorphosis, becoming more eerie and dangerous.

Wrapped within the Mysterious Ice's cold piercing effect was Yin Sha's poison.

"Wang Longyan, even if you have the Sky Pride bloodline, you are only at the early stage of the Heavenly Human Realm." After the initial shock, Cao Youqing quickly composed herself and began battling defensively, "With your skills, I fear..."

"Clang!"

After Cao Youqing withstood a few moves, she was forcibly repelled.

It was not until then that she revealed an incredulous look of horror in her eyes, "It's...not possible! You can't be this strong! Could it be, you've reached the Daoist Body?"



Although she did not exert her full strength due to hiding her identity, the fact that Wang Longyan was able to push her back suggested that she was no ordinary Sky Pride!

#### Chapter 44 Wang Longyan VS Cao Youqing\_2

Rationality and experience told her that Wang Longyan, whom she had always underestimated, might not be a Heavenly Arrogance Bloodline, but the terrifying Great Heavenly Pride Bloodline.

Just like those terrifying monsters in the Sacred Land, they were all of the Great Heavenly Pride Level!

The strength and terror of the Great Heavenly Pride is probably not very clear to ordinary people. Only a Heavenly Arrogance like her from the Sacred Land could feel the gap and the sense of powerlessness.

Being able to achieve a Four-level Spiritual Body in the Heavenly Human Realm is already a rarity; these are considered the Heavenly Prides. The Heavenly Prides have a good chance of achieving the Purple Abode, at which point the bloodline will evolve again, reaching the Fifth Level of the Dao Body! With the Fifth Level Dao Body, one can touch the threshold of the Heaven Dao Divine Ability.

But what is a Great Heavenly Pride?

They awaken their Fifth Level of Bloodline to achieve the Dao Body in the Heavenly Human Realm, and can already touch some of the edges of the Heaven Dao Divine Abilities. Even if just a little implication of the Heaven Dao Divine Ability is integrated into their techniques, the power of their techniques can be greatly increased.

"Damn it! How could encounter a Great Heavenly Pride in such a remote place?"

Cao Youqing kept retreating, soon she was several miles away from the ferry. Frustration filled her heart, and she was already thinking of retreating.

It wasn't that she was afraid of Wang Longyan and could not defeat him.

It was just that dealing with a Great Heavenly Pride, even at the early stage of the Heavenly Human Realm, is not an easy task. To suppress that Wang Longyan, she would have to give it her all, and it wouldn't be over in a short amount of time.

And once she goes all out...

At the same time Cao Youqing was fighting and retreating, her mind was a whirl of thoughts.

Wang Shouzhe walked out of the cabin, his face serious: "Brother Xuehan, unexpected as it is, there are indeed people who are so audacious and crazy, daring to kill you on Wang's territory."

Previously, Wang Shouzhe thought that Qian Xuehan was just being paranoid due to living in perpetual oppression. In line with his usual caution, Wang Shouzhe decided to cooperate with Qian Xuehan and try a bait tactics.

"Master Shouzhe." Qian Xuehan suddenly pounced over, crying hysterically, "You must redress this injustice for me~~~ My stepmother has no humanity, she actually did such a mad act, if it weren't for Master Shouzhe's righteous assistance, I would probably be dead~~ sob~~~"

A junior?

Wang Shouzhe's mouth twitched twice, Qian Xuehan's brazen invincibility was truly unique.

The two of them were comparable in age, and Qian Xuehan was even a year older than him. But he didn't hesitate to take the lower stance and call himself a junior.

The other "Xue" generation of the Qian family will probably be so angry that they'll vomit blood, right?

However, Wang Shouzhe's mood was also not good, he underestimated the madness and stupidity of certain women. The power struggle between brothers had actually escalated to using such high-end force for assassination.

Even further, they actually attempted to drag the Wang family into it as well.

Imagine, if Qian Xuehan really died on Wang's territory, how could the Wang family explain it, no matter how many excuses they came up with?

Even if there were some rational people who understood that the Wang family would not do such a thing that harmed others without benefiting themselves.

However, unfortunately, there are always more irrational people in this world.

Once this incident happened, regardless, any potential cooperation between the Qian family and the Wang family was impossible. Moreover, the most likely scenario from now on would be that the Qian family and Wang family will be in a hostile relationship, difficult to truly reconcile.

After all, if your own legitimate eldest son dies at your house, what else is there to say?

In the final analysis, it was because the Wang family was relatively united and he got along well with his stepmother Gongsun Hui, they were affectionate and harmonious. It was due to this that he almost forgot that not all stepmothers are like Gongsun Hui, and he underestimated the ruthlessness and madness of certain people.

"For this matter, even if Brother Xuehan doesn't say it, Wong family will also not let it go."

Wang Shouzhe's face was stern, he touched a item from his Storage Ring, took out a treasure.

Under the vibration of the Mysterious Energy, the treasure burst into the sky, exploding a large mushroom cloud in a sharp whistle.

Even in broad daylight, it was thunderous and brightly lit.

"Skyrocket!" Qian Xuehan was taken aback, "I didn't expect the Wang family and Changning City Defense Office to be on such good terms that you even have the 'Skyrocket'."

In fact, this Skyrocket was obtained by Wang Shouzhe from the former City Lord. At that time, Xiahou Dehong was afraid of Wang Shouzhe's trouble-making ability, and in case he caused a major incident before he left office, he gave him a Skyrocket.

However, this Skyrocket of Wang Shouzhe had never been of much use. With the current strength of the Wang family, the importance of the Skyrocket had become smaller. Therefore, taking this opportunity, it might as well be used up.

As soon as the Skyrocket exploded!

Evil King Kong was the first to panic.

He is a well-known convict on the Da-Qian Law Enforcement List and fears the Da-Qiang Government Office the most.

The reason why he dared to take action this time was also because the task was extremely simple. He didn't even need to kill, he just needed to keep the Qian family elder occupied.

And how powerful was his teammate? She is a Heavenly Pride of the seventh layer of the Heavenly Human Realm! Fighting him, Evil King Kong, is as easy as an adult hitting a child.

In the original estimation, it would only take a few dozen moments to complete the mission, and then it would be like a dragon returning to the great sea.

But to his surprise, he didn't have a problem but his Heavenly Pride teammate did.

Run, run, run!

Evil King Kong feigned a punch, then activated his movement technique, enveloped in a golden light, he began to flee.

He had managed to live to this day while being on Da Qian's Wanted List, wouldn't it show that he is no ordinary person?

"Elder Qian, you must capture Evil King Kong." Wang Shouzhe said loudly, "Just hold him for fifteen minutes."

Chapter 44 Wang Longyan VS Cao Youqing\_3

"Hahaha! If it were anywhere else, it wouldn't be easy to ensnare him." Elder Qian Jingde burst into hearty laughter, "But above the Peace River, expect water attribute Profound Martial cultivators, no one can escape easily."

Immediately afterward, he once again urged the Purple Urgent Zhenyang Verses, pursuing vigorously with a strong purple aura swirling around him, firmly entangling the Evil King Kong. Despite the continuous roars of the Evil King Kong, it was unable to shake off Elder Qian's entanglement for a while.

Naturally, the one who felt even more anxious was Cao Youqing.

She was not a notorious fugitive like the Evil King Kong. Once her real identity was exposed, she feared it may cause an enormous upheaval.

Unfortunately, Wang Longyan was extremely powerful, and she couldn't both conceal her identity and escape the entanglement. With several attempts of involvement and hesitation, time kept flowing away.

Suddenly!

In the distant sky, several powerful auras suddenly rose.

These auras, whether solid as mountains or violent as fire, all exuded a domineering power. Even from such a distance, they could still make an ordinary Profound Martial cultivator shiver with fear.

Clearly, the powerful beings of the Tianren Realm were flying here.

Aside from the Wang's, the Celestial, Changning also had three cultivators of the Tiaren realm. They were City Lord Wei Wenxun, elder of the Xu Family Xu Beichen, and Old Ancestor of the Celestial Lei Family, Lei Yuanzhou.

Of them, Elder Lei of the Lei Family was the oldest and his cultivation base was the most profound. He had recently broken through to the fourth level of the Tianren Realm and entered the mid-stage.

Moreover, with the Lei Family free from the restraint of the Huangfu Clan and the additional support from the Wang's, their current development was quite good. They were actively nurturing potential clansmen, trying to cultivate a second, and a third Tianren Realm cultivator.

Among the several rapidly approaching auras, one was exceptionally potent. That was indeed Lei Yuanzhou, the old ancestor of the Lei Family.

Seeing this, Cao Youqing's heart sank, and her eyes concealed by the veil suddenly revealed a ruthless look.

That damned Wang Longyan was so desperately clinging to her. Did she think that she, Cao Youqing, would be soft-hearted? Even with the Great Heavenly Pride Bloodline, she's merely in the early stage of Tianren realm. If it wasn't for her need to hide her identity, why would she suffer?

The enemy's reinforcements were about to arrive, she could no longer care about anything else.

If she didn't take this seriously, she was afraid she would indeed be left here today!

Immediately, her gaze became stern and her aura suddenly changed.

"ZiziZi~~"

In an instant, as if some seal was undone, strands of purple lightning burst out of her body, even the color of her mysterious energy underwent a subtle change.

For a moment, she seemed to be bathed in electric light, turning purple. Her flowing long skirt fluttered without wind, emitting a terrifying yet powerful energy.

The entire sky seemed dyed purple in that instant.

"Wang Longyan, you've forced my hand!"

Cao Youqing's eyes were frosty, and as her longsword slashed through the air, a wave of sword intent suddenly emerged.

"Boom~~!"

The loud rumbling of thunder sounded out suddenly.

Between heaven and earth, an intense streak of lightning flashed past.

The sky alternated between light and dark as layers of dark clouds gathered. The exploding thunderous breath spread wildly, its terrifying power permeated the sky. Even before approaching, it frightened people so much they were shaking.

Wherever its might reached, even the turbulent flow of Peace River violently shook, suddenly stirring up layers of waves.

"This is... Purple Xiao's Heavenly Thunder Sword! The Lingyun Holy Ground, Purple Xiao Lineage's unique skill!" Qian Xuehan was so shocked he almost jumped up, his expression turning even more bitter, "It's over. This woman is most likely the Sky Pride of the Cao Family in the Sacred Land, Cao Youqing. The Cao Family, you really are ruthless!"

Lingyun Holy Ground, Purple Xiao Lineage?

Wang Shouzhe's eyes narrowed slightly.

The Wang's today is not the insignificant Rank 9 clan of the past. Over the years, he has spared no effort in gathering various pieces of information and is naturally not completely ignorant about the Lingyun Holy Ground.

The Purple Xiao, a Master of the Lingyun Holy Ground, is indeed an aged Purple Abode Realm cultivator. It is said that he has reached the Advanced Stage of the Purple Abode Realm long ago. It is rumored that he closed himself off ages ago, claiming he would not emerge until he achieved divine skills.

However, the Wang's intel was limited to this and was relatively rough. In regards to the Sky Pride of the Holy Land, like Cao Youqing, the Wang's were still in the dark.

After all, the Lingyun Holy Ground is far away, and with Wang's current strength and status, it would be difficult to have any intersection with the Lingyun Holy Ground.

Unexpectedly, the Wang's had such a quick "intersection" with the Lingyun Holy Ground, and also a quite negative one at that.

Seeing this electric light, the expression of Elder Longyan also changed.

She had early predicted that this woman was hiding her strength, but never envisioned that she had hid it so deep!

This hint of sword intent was harmonious and complete, vague yet unmistakably containing a trace of the Power of Heavenly Dao Laws, possessing a power that responded to the heaven and earth. This was something that no ordinary late-stage cultivator in the Tianren realm could achieve. Only extraordinary beings like the Son of Heaven were capable!

Without time to think further, she initiated a thought, and immediately layers of ice crystal-colored scales appeared on her body. In an instant, they condensed into a lightweight-looking armor with a profound aura.

This scale armor was naturally the medium-grade magical treasure, the Mysterious Ice Lijiao Armor, which Master Binglan had given her!

At the same time, she rotated her fair wrist, and as the Purple Thunder Sword slashed through the air, an equally dominant and frosty sword intent instantly emerged.

In an instant, it seemed as though shadows invaded the world. The eerie Evil Qi, accompanied by the strong mysterious ice aura, erupted like a violent storm.

#### Chapter 44 Wang Longyan VS Cao Youqing\_4

The temperature between heaven and earth suddenly dropped, as if it had instantly transitioned from late summer to deep winter.

Caught in the spread of electricity, countless snowflakes fall one after another.

Within a mere moment, a layer of frost formed on the ferry that Wang Shouzhe and the others were aboard. Even the churning river surface showed traces of fragmented ice, as if it could freeze solid at any moment.

As the saying goes, it happened faster than one can say.

Almost at the very moment of Wang Longyan's sword strike, the domineering Thunder Sword Intent had already arrived.



The two Sword Intents collided in mid-air.

"Bang~~!"

Both Sword Intents shattered, and the shattered Sword Intent instantly transformed into shock waves that swept out.

Longyan's face turned white, and she was blasted backward by the overpowering Sword Intent of Sky Thunder. She flew several hundred feet before finally coming to a halt.

Under the shockwave, her internal Mysterious Energy roiled and a thread of blood uncontrollably seeped from the corner of her mouth.

"How can this be?! She actually blocked it?"

Cao Youqing was in shock.

She clearly understood the power of her sword strike. Under it, an average Tianren Realm cultivator might become crippled if not killed outright. Even if the opponent was a Great Heavenly Proud, they were still only in the early Tianren Realm. How could they only receive a minor injury after being subjected to her strike?

Cao Youqing didn't know that the Purple Thunder Sword in Longyan's hands, as well as the Ice Icy Armor on her body, were all Medium Grade Magical Weapons.

Among them, the quality of the Purple Thunder Sword was very close to a top-grade Magical Weapon, providing a powerful boost to its attack power.

The Ice Icy Armor was made from scales shed by a Level Six Jiaolong during its evolution. Everyone knew how strong the scales of a dragon were by nature, especially after being processed. This Medium Grade Magical Weapon's defensive power might not rival those of top-grade Magical Weapons, but it could be considered at the pinnacle of Medium Grade Magical Weapons.

Having the two of them added together, along with Longyan's comprehension of the Frost-Killing Sword Intent and the boosting from her five-fold Bloodline, she could barely resist Cao Youqing's Purple Xiao Sky Thunder Sword.

Thinking it carefully, it was hardly easy.

Nevertheless, this was far beyond Cao Youqing's expectation.

During the moment Cao Youqing was stunned, on the ferry, Wang Shouzhe seized the opportunity to quickly heal Longyan.

Longyan's injuries were not serious to begin with, and now, she almost fully recovered in an instant.

After catching her breath, she immediately charged at Cao Youqing again, her Purple Thunder Sword in hand, swinging another strike.

The Sword Intent filled the sky and a dense Frost-Killing Air swept across the river surface again.

Cao Youqing was becoming more and more intimidated as she fought. She never expected that this Wang Longyan would prove to be such an adversary. Even with her full strength, she still couldn't get away from her entanglement.

Defeating her in a short time would be as difficult as reaching for the sky.

Meanwhile.

Several Tianren Realm Cultivators from Guard City of Changning were rushing to the scene at a fast speed, and they began to fall from the sky.

Among them, the leading Realm Cultivator roared imperiously before even touching the ground: "Which scourge dares to create trouble here in Changning Guard City?"

His voice was as loud as thunder and echoed throughout the sky.

Cao Youqing almost spit out a mouthful of old blood.

What a humiliating situation! As a Sky Pride from the Sacred Land, she was insulted as a "scourge" by an uncouth individual from a remote place!

However, temper aside, she knew all too well that now, regardless of her capabilities, she could no longer turn the tables.

With several Tianren Realm cultivators arriving plus the unbearably tenacious Wang Longyan, if she didn't escape now, she risked being buried in the Peace River!

Run!

She made a decisive move, repelled Wang Longyan with a strike, and promptly bit on her tongue to spit out a mouthful of Essence Blood onto her Magical Artifact Long Sword.

The next moment.

"Rumble~!!"

Amid a thunderous sound, she transformed into a bolt of lightning and whistled out, darting right between the three arriving Tianren Realm powerhouses and heading towards the horizon.

Her speed was akin to lightning, giving no one a chance to react.

Chapter 45 Is This the Big Boss? He Speaks So Well! \_1

...

"The Purple Xiao Sky Lightning Escape Skill?"

The three Heavenly Human Realm cultivators, who had already arrived above Peace River, included the City Lord Wei Wenxun, who recognized this escape skill almost immediately.

He had a sinking feeling in his heart.

The Purple Xiao Sky Lightning Escape was a unique skill of the Purple Xiao lineage of the Lingyun Holy Ground. How did someone from Lingyun appear in Changning Weicheng, and why were they running so frantically?

Before he could react, Wang Shouzhe, who was on the ferry, loudly said, "I am grateful for the support of City Lord, Old Ancestor Yuanzhou, and Old Ancestor Beichen. Esteemed Old Ancestors, have you seen the bald monk who is confronting Elder Qian? This man is none other than the infamous wanted criminal-especially 'Evil King Kong'.

Could I request the Esteemed Old Ancestors to cooperate in capturing him and sharing the spoils?"

Evil King Kong?

Lei Yuanzhou and Xu Beichen were both intrigued.

Heavenly Human Realm Old Ancestors often spend years in seclusion and usually do not meddle in affairs, so both of them had not heard of this "Evil King Kong". However, as a mid-stage Heavenly Human Realm wanted criminal, he was undoubtedly valuable.

Generally speaking, a Heavenly Human Realm early stage wanted criminal would have a bounty of about two to three hundred thousand Qian Gold. The bounty for a mid-stage one would be at least four to five hundred thousand.

In addition to the spoils of war, everyone would get a share. That was indeed a huge sum of money.

Even City Lord Wei Wenxun was extremely tempted.

The City Lord is human, too, always in need of money for his cultivation and for supporting his family.

With the addition of three Heavenly Human Realm cultivators, how could Evil King Kong have any hope of escape under a four vs one scenario? After a fierce group fight, his limbs were broken, his Qi Sea was sealed, and he was captured alive.

However, Evil King Kong was relatively poorer than other mid-stage realm cultivators of the Heavenly Human Realm and had only a pair of low-grade Magical Treasure gloves and a middle-grade Storage Ring. The total value of all spoils of war was only about 430,000 Qian Gold.

"Thank you all for your assistance, including Master Shouzhe," Elder Qian Jingde landed back on the ferry's deck, giving his thanks to Wei Wenxun and others repeatedly, "This man was targeting my Qian Family, we won't take the spoils of war, and will leave it all to your four families."

Qian Jingde knew well to be people-pleasing. When calculating the spoils, he included the Wang Family.

Indeed, this was only right. Without the involvement of the Wang family this time, based on the strength of him, Qian Xuehan, and the followers of the Qian family, they might not have escaped today.

Moreover, the impressive strength displayed by Wang Longyan this time was enough to astonish Qian Jingde. This greatly elevated his opinion of the Wang family.

As long as enough time was given to the Wang Family, their potential for development was substantial.

Lei Yuanzhou suggested, "In this battle, we merely added to the grandeur, while the main credit goes to the Wang family. In my opinion, the Wang family should take fifty percent. City Lord should take twenty percent, and our Lei and Xu families should each take fifteen percent. Is that acceptable?"

"That sounds good," said Elder Beichen, indicating his agreement, "Let's settle it this way."

A fifteen percent share was not small either, approximately equivalent to around 100,000 Qian Gold. And this was virtually a windfall. If they had such good luck every day, the Xu family of Changning would amass great wealth in no time at all.

In a few words, the Old Ancestors resolved the distribution of the spoils of war.

Wang Shouzhe was quite impressed internally on seeing this.

The Lei and Xu families could be considered reliable allies. They acted within limits and were not greedy. They could be trusted at critical moments, which made them worth long-term cooperation.

The only regret from today's events was the failure to capture Cao Youqing.

All the more unfortunate because his wife Liu Ruolan had just entered seclusion. Otherwise, that "Sacred Land Sky Pride" might not have escaped so easily.

Anyway, even if he had run away, for the present, priority should be given to dealing with the aftermath to avoid leaving any problems behind.

His mind was spinning rapidly, and he already had a plan in mind.

Wang Shouzhe's gaze fell on City Lord Wei Wenxun. He bowed with a smile and said, "City Lord, as you are in an official position, you definitely have access to more information than us rural folk. Have you recognized the identity of the one who escaped?"

Wei Wenxun gave Wang Shouzhe a deep gaze.

He had inexplicably earned tens of thousands of Qian Gold from the spoils of war, which was almost equivalent to his salary for five or six years. He should have been very happy about it. But for some reason, he couldn't bring himself to muster a smile.

The situation was very clear.

Wang Shouzhe had fired a "skyrocket" precisely to drag him into this.

Given his duty as a City Lord, he was obligated to assist upon detection of a skyrocket. Otherwise, he would be derelict in his duty. Wang Shouzhe had exploited this rule to drag him into a vortex he didn't want to get involved in.

"Master Shouzhe..." Wei Wenxun said with a sense of grievance, "I, as the City Lord, doesn't seem to have crossed paths with or offended the Wang Family, have I?"

Speaking of it, his heart was quite bitter.

After he newly ascended to the Heavenly Human Realm, he was appointed by the Prefecture Mansion as the Defender of Changning. At the beginning, he also held high aspirations, wanting to achieve something. But as the new official's initial enthusiasm wore off, he began to feel the constraints and pressure imposed by local noble families.

In the Changning Weicheng area, large and small noble families all looked up to the Wang family, including the other two Heavenly Human prominent families- the Lei and Xu families who were all united around the Wang family.

Even the officials under the City Guard Mansion had various connections with the three Heavenly Human Realm prominent families.

Wei Wenxun was the city defender in name, but in reality, when he spoke or did something, he had no weight at all.

Chapter 45 Is This the Big Boss? He Speaks So Well! \_2

To put it crudely, in the entire Changning Guard Region, even a fart from him, Wang Shouzhe, was louder than a roar from Wei Wenxun.

Just like the Changning Ferry Terminal, Wang Shouzhe took jurisdiction under the pretense of government inaction. He only symbolically gave a bit of "lease fees," there were many such instances.

Of course, as the City Lord, he also reaped many benefits. And regardless of whether he wanted to or not, he indeed earned a lot of merits.

Over time, Wei Wenxun became resigned.

Whatever the Wang family wanted to do, they did. After enduring another ten or so years, once he had gained enough experience, he would be transferred elsewhere.

However, he never imagined that one day he would find himself embroiled in the internal struggles of the Grade Five Prominent Families, as well as the big whirlpool with the Lingyun Holy Ground involved.

He was dragged into all of this by Wang Shouzhe himself.

Being the City Lord, was he really the scapegoat?

"City Lord, you must not say such things," Wang Shouzhe joked with a bow, "Our Wang family has always held the City Lord in high regard. However, this matter is of great significance, and we beg for your impartial judgement."

"Impartial judgement?" Wei Wenxun's eyelids twitched, and an ominous feeling shot up in his heart, "What do you mean by impartiality, Master Shouzhe?"

"Naturally, it means to go through the formalities, and hand over the case to the Governor's Mansion of Longzuo County. We must not conceal anything or frame anyone.

If we need to issue a wanted notice, then we should issue it, if we need to interrogate someone, then we should interrogate them." Wang Shouzhe said with a "righteous" look on his face, "we must capture the fugitive as soon as possible."

Wei Wenxun almost fainted from shock.

The one who had escaped was a Sky Pride from the Purple Xiao branch of the Lingyun Holy Ground. Was he supposed to issue a wanted order for the Holy Land's Sky Pride? He was just a small City Lord, how could he offend such a big figure?

Why was he, an innocent person, dragged into your quarrels between immortals?

On the other hand, Qian Xuehan, who was very astute, immediately grasped Wang Shouzhe's intentions.

He immediately rushed over, draped himself over Wei Wenxun, crying bitterly, "City Lord, save me! I am Qian Xuehan, the heir of the Purple Abode's Qian family, I want to report a crime, I want to file a case!"

Wei Wenxun was startled by his yell, and his scalp went numb.

However, he also knew that he wouldn't be able to escape this.



Given his position and stance, the best course of action was to do everything by the book. As Wang Shouzhe said, he wouldn't cover anything up or slander anyone.

Anyway, he was just an innocent City Lord who got involved. This was too big of a matter for him to decide on. Let the Prefectural Governor worry about it~

However, Master Shouzhe, could you be any more cunning?

...

As Wang Shouzhe and his people were dividing the spoils of war and discussing how to go through the legal process and preparing summon notices to arrest Cao Youqing.

Several hundred miles away from the incident spot, in a part of the East Sea Area.

A purple ray of thunder streaked across the sky like a meteor and plummeted into the rough sea.

"Zzz~"

Between the flickering electric spark, a group of nearby swimming fishes were electrocuted and floated to the surface belly-up.

After a good while, a figure, battered and exhausted, emerged from the water surface.

This figure was naturally Cao Youqing.

Her veil had long since fallen off, revealing a stunning face with delicate features under it.

However, at this moment, her face was deathly pale and her eyes were ablaze with rage, a mix of fury and reluctance: "Damned Wang Longyan! Damned Qian Xuehan! I will absolutely not reconcile with you!"

By now, how could she not realize that she had fallen for a trap set by them?

Not to mention that her original plans now lay in ruins, she herself was almost implicated in it.

Compared to this humiliation, the fact that she lost an "Evil King Kong" wasn't so grievous. That was just a subordinate she picked up while she was on the Holy Land's mission, why would she be bothered about it?

Who was she, Cao Youqing?

She was the "Immortal Child Youqing" of the Holy Land, a Sky Pride destined to become the Master of Purple Xiao. Countless young elites were more than willing to lie at her feet and become bootlickers. How could she endure such humiliation and failure?

"Wang Longyan, Wang Shouzhe! I will remember you!" Cao Youqing furiously slapped the sea, causing waves to crash. "This debt, I will repay with interest."

"Pfft!"

Just as her words fell, she felt a sweetness in her throat and a gush of accumulated blood spurted out.

Due to insufficient cultivation level, she forcefully used "Purple Xiao Thunder Escape" which caused significant backlash. Both her internal organs and meridians were seriously injured. This reckless use of Mysterious Energy only added salt to the wound.

It took a while before all the accumulated blood was vomited out and she felt a bit better.

Cao Youqing wiped off the blood from the corner of her mouth with an ugly expression.

The injury was more severe than she had anticipated. Even though she had holy healing medicine with her, she couldn't recover completely in a short amount of time. If she wasn't careful, she might even cause permanent damage and leave behind hidden dangers.

Out of desperation, she had to find a nameless little island in the sea to isolate herself and heal.

She made a mental note of this debt.

She would confront Wang Longyan and Wang Shouzhe once she had recovered from her injuries.

...

A few days later.

At the Dingpu Ferry Terminal, Wang Shouzhe, accompanied by Elder Longyan and other important family members, sent off Qian Xuehan and Elder Qian Jingde, who were visiting on behalf of the Wang Family.

Chapter 45 Is This the Big Boss? He Speaks So Well! \_3

After several days of negotiations, the Qian Family and the Wang Family's In-laws Alliance finally reached a series of preliminary agreements, under the premise of mutual understanding.

The first item of the agreement was that the Qian Family obtained the right to sell the main products of the Wang Family's In-laws Alliance in Longzuo County, only taking one and a half percent of the profit. For sales outside of Longzuo County, the Qian Family had no connection.

The second item of the agreement was that the Qian Family invested five million Qian Gold to acquire a twenty percent stake in the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm. Furthermore, they lent ten million Qian Gold to the firm interest-free, to be repaid in five years' time. This capital was solely for the purpose of business expansion investments.

The Qian Family left satisfied.

Wang Shouzhe, on his side, was also quite pleased with the final outcome.

As the Spirit Bird Flying Carriage gradually became the first-choice mode of transport for prominent families, the existing thirty carriages began to seem inadequate.

Increment in Spirit Bird Flying Carriages was imperative.

Wang Shouzhe's goal for the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm was to increase the number of Spirit Bird Flying Carriages to one hundred within five years, of which at least twenty should be self-owned.

The cooling system composed of Spirit Bird Flying Carriages, the high-end express delivery system, and the luxury transport system have increasingly become a major development trend. More and more prosperous families understood the potential within.

During this period, among the prominent families in Longzuo County, there were ambitious ones trying to get a piece of the action. As mentioned in a letter that Li Yao sent earlier, the Purple Abode Prominent Family tried to exploit their relationship with the Primordial Water Master to snatch the thirty Spirit Bird Flying Carriages from Lord Changning Wang Clan.

Of course, thanks to Li Yao, their plot inevitably failed.

However, this also served as a wake-up call for Wang Shouzhe.

The Changning Wang Clan only took advantage of the favor from the Purple Abode Academic Palace and seized the opportunity to occupy the market first. If they rested on their laurels, one day they might be surpassed.

Among those trying to find a breakthrough from the Purple Abode Academic Palace, the Qian Family was certainly one of them.

If the path from the Academic Palace did not work, they would then turn to cooperate with the Wang Family. Otherwise, they would hardly pay any attention to the Wang Family.

Of course, if most people were in the Qian Family's position, they would behave the same way. There was nothing to criticize about that.

What Wang Shouzhe needed to do was to consolidate his current advantage and prevent other families from surpassing the Wang family. Therefore, owning the Flying Carriages was necessary and the number had to be substantial.

With this collaboration with the Qian Family, they showed enough sincerity. Even though a portion of the shares were diluted, there was sufficient capital available to increase the number of Spirit Bird Flying Carriages, greatly accelerating the growth of the Keep Achieving Commercial Firm.

For Wang Shouzhe, it was far better for everyone to make money together than to monopolize the profits.

Shared interests would firmly unite the allies. Especially now, what the Wang family lacked the most was stable development time.

For the family, it took time for the family's Sky Prides to mature. During this period, what the family needed the most was stability.

For the sake of the family, the Old Ancestor Longyan had completely given up his brilliant future and the chance to become a Celestial being lineage. This kind of experience was something he didn't want the younger generation of the clan to go through.

Therefore, stability was essential.

The development of the family could not rely solely on temporary impetuosity. Wang Shouzhe needed to consider all aspects.

Among prominent families, there are no eternal enemies as long as there isn't deep-rooted hatred from a blood feud.

Taking this opportunity to tentatively tie the Qian Family to the Wang Family's chariot would benefit the Wang family without causing harm.

Of course.

What both parties have agreed upon so far is just preliminary intentions.

The specific details had to be further discussed by both parties and a formal agreement could be signed under the witness of the Academic Palace and the Prefectural Governor's office.

Only in this way, from national legal systems and reputation perspectives, could the performance level of the agreement by the Longzuo Qian Family, Wang Family, and other families be stipulated.

As such.

The Keep Achieving Commercial Firm's shareholders led by Wang Shouzhe once again arrived in the county town and stayed in the "high-end hotel" —— Purple Abode Palace —— operated by the Longzuo Wang Family, for final negotiations with the Qian Family and the drafting of agreement details.

Everything went smoothly.

Until a few days later, the Commandery Prince of Longzuo County, Wu Dianshan, sent an invitation to Wang Shouzhe. He expressed that he missed his young friend Wang Shouzhe and requested him to visit his residence for a discussion and instruction on how to use the Luya Rod.

As soon as he received this invitation, Wang Shouzhe knew that the instruction on the Luya Rod was false. It was probably concerning the matter of Cao Youqing.

He was not surprised by this.

Although Da Qian had laws, it couldn't escape from personal relationships and worldly wisdom. Not to mention that Commandery Prince Wu Dianshan was such a high-ranking person, Wang Shouzhe owed his favor and couldn't avoid this issue.

Immediately, Wang Shouzhe ordered people to prepare a carriage full of Changning County's local specialties, and according to the agreement, went to the prince's residence to visit Commandery Prince Wu Dianshan.

Zhenzuo Wang Residence.

This residence has a history of nearly a thousand years. Since its construction, it has undergone countless renovations and repairs, but still stands firm.

Compared with many Purple Abode Prominent Families, the architectural style of the Prince's residence does not seem lavish, yet it is very impressive, covering a vast area with pavilions, courtyards, hills, and lakes. The furnishing in the residence was of high taste. At a cursory glance, there wouldn't appear to be anything special.

Upon closer inspection, almost everything was Spirit Wood furniture, even the wind chimes hanging in the corridor were made of Spirit Materials.

Impressiveness is seen in the details.

After all, Commandery Prince Wu Dianshan was born into the Royal Family. The profound imperial background he represented was incomparable to ordinary Purple Abode Prominent Families.

Chapter 45 Is This the Big Boss? He Speaks So Well! \_4

As soon as Wang Shouzhe's carriage arrived at the entrance of the Wang mansion, he was warmly welcomed by the butler. He was escorted directly to the back courtyard, a place only accessible to those close to the family, passing through the main hall of the front yard.

A lavish spread of fruits and dishes had been prepared in the rear garden in anticipation of the guests' arrival. Wu Dianshan enthusiastically ushered Wang Shouzhe to his seat and introduced him to another guest.

This guest was a middle-aged man dressed in simple attire, who emanated an aura of stern authority. His impressive stature and steady demeanor gave him an imposing presence. A mere glance from him seemed to bore into one's very soul.

Without needing the introduction from Wu Dianshan, Commandery Prince, Wang Shouzhe, with his astute mind, had already guessed who this man in simple garments was.

As expected, Wu Dianshan stated, "My young friend Shouzhe, allow me to introduce the Prefectural Governor of our Longzuo County, the Sea Stabilizing Needle - Taishi Ankang."

Wu Dianshan's demeanor was warm and affable, as though he held a certain closeness to Wang Shouzhe.

Before Wang Shouzhe could say anything, Taishi Ankang modestly greeted Wu Dianshan, "Commandery Prince, you flatter me. Longzuo County is your hereditary fiefdom. I am just the steward, hardly deserving the title 'Sea Stabilizing Needle.'"

"Not at all, my friend. Under this vast sky, we all receive the grace and protection of His Majesty. I'm just helping to shoulder some of His responsibilities," Wu Dianshan replied modestly.

Despite the superficial pleasantries, this exchange between them revealed the governing structure of the Great Qian Land.

Nominally, Longzuo County belonged to the Commandery Prince, but in terms of real power, the Prefectural Governor appointed by the Emperor held the utmost power. However, the Prefectural Governor couldn't act arbitrarily and needed to be supervised and limited by the Commandery Prince, Wu Dianshan.

With the addition of the independent Academic Palace, a delicate balance was maintained among the three parties.

However, this did not concern Wang Shouzhe much.

Neither the Prefectural Governor nor the Commandery Prince was someone he could afford to offend. Similarly, in his current status, he was far from being on an equal footing with them.

Once the conversation ended, Wang Shouzhe stepped forward and paid his respects to the Prefectural Governor, Taishi Ankang, "The family head of the 7th-rank Aristocratic Family, the Changning Wang clan, Wang Shouzhe greets the Prefectural Governor."

"No need for formalities, Master Shouzhe," Taishi Ankang gently helped him up and smiled, "I have heard much about you. People speak of your talent, beauty, and limitless future prospects. Having met you today, I realize these rumors are too modest. Master Shouzhe, you're not just "talented and handsome," you are a celestial being. Among the youth, you stand unmatched.

I regret that we did not meet earlier~"

Is this how a big wig talks? His praise is sweet!

Wang Shouzhe felt cold sweat trickling down his back. The Prefectural Governor indeed lived up to his name. He could spout nonsense so smoothly and unblinkingly.

If it wasn't for his two lifetimes of experience, he might have been easily swayed by him.

"The Prefectural Governor is too kind~ Your aura is majestic and profound, like a magnificent mountain. Meeting you feels like basking in the light and caressing the breeze. It brings forth



boundless admiration in me..." Wang Shouzhe replied with an earnest expression on his face, and couldn't help but compare the governor to his deceased father...

Prefectural Governor Taishi Ankang felt a twitching sensation at the corner of his mouth.

Now he understood why Wang Shouzhe could successfully manage the Changning Wang clan in such a short time with this thick skin of his. He had met his match.

"Alright, alright!" Seeing that Wang Shouzhe was about to delve into another stream of fulsome praise, Taishi Ankang forestalled him sternly, "Returning to a serious note, Shouzhe, do you know who Cao Youqing is?"

"Yes."

Upon noticing the change, Wang Shouzhe dropped his "earnest" demeanor and returned to his original expression and a serious tone.

"She is suspected of public murder. She committed atrocities with flagrant disregard for the law and was savage and brutal. I saw it with my own eyes. If she is arrested and you need me to testify against her, I won't hesitate."

Chapter 46 This Apprentice! Not Easy to Raise

...

Taishi Ankang's face darkened.

That Wang Shouzhe was indeed not so easy to fool.

However, given his status, there were some things he couldn't say. He could only hopelessly look at Commandery Prince Wu Dianshan for help.

"Why need to feign ignorance, young Shouzhe?" Wu Dianshan reluctantly advised, "Cao Youqing is a prodigy of the Sacred Land... a heir of the Purple Xiao lineage."

"Commandery Prince, are you saying that a prodigy of the Sacred Land can collude with wanted fugitives and murder at will?" Wang Shouzhe looked shocked, "Where then is the authority of

Daqian Law? If a wonderkind of the Sacred Land can arbitrarily be above Daqian Law, what are we territorial families worth? Shouzhe might as well take my household and seek shelter in the Sacred Land."

"Nonsense, stop your tall tales and distraction." Wu Dianshan admonished sternly, "I've already told you the truth. The matter of Cao Youqing is extremely complex and it's not suitable to issue a public warrant yet. Young Shouzhe, you are intelligent, so it's better not to get too involved in this matter."

"Your Highness has been kind to Shouzhe, and I will naturally comply with your wishes." Wang Shouzhe bowed and said seriously, "However, that Cao Youqing failed to steal and lost her property instead. She might not be willing to let it go."

"It doesn't matter. I and the Prefectural Governor will jointly put pressure on the people behind her." Wu Dianshan was also slightly annoyed at the thought of Cao Youqing's deeds, "No matter what, Longzuo County is nominally my fief. I won't tolerate their stirring up trouble here secretly."

"With Your Highness's words, Shouzhe can rest assured." Wang Shouzhe nodded, "As long as the Qian family has no objections, Shouzhe naturally will not object either."

"Although the Qian family has objections, they can only swallow them." Wu Dianshan frowned, "Ultimately, this matter was caused by the internal strife between the direct lines in the Qian family. That young lad Qian Qinhong can't even control his inner courtyard. He truly lacks virtue and prestige."

After a pause, Wu Dianshan turned to the Prefectural Governor Taishi Ankang and said, "Governor, I've already persuaded our friend Shouzhe on your behalf. However, the Wang family have suffered a loss after all this time, it is only appropriate that you show some goodwill."

Taishi Ankang felt a certain sense of desolation in his heart.

If it were an ordinary 7th-rank Aristocratic Family, he wouldn't have to worry about their thoughts at all.

But now, the Changning Wang Clan, even though they were only a 7th-rank family on the surface, their foundation and background were unfathomable.

Especially Wang Liyao, the direct heir of the Wang family, was an enlightened prodigy and was accepted as the beloved disciple of Tianhe, the Enlightened One from the Academic Palace. If she takes this matter seriously and draws the attention of Tianhe, then this matter won't be easy to resolve.

After all, this matter had far-reaching implications. Even he, as Prefectural Governor, must be extra careful in his actions.

"It is right to offer a gesture of goodwill." Taishi Ankang nodded and looked at Wang Shouzhe with benevolence. "Why don't you tell me, Master Shouzhe, what assistance do you need from me?"

As expected of a governor, crafty and cunning. He managed to return the ball to his court.

"Lord Governor, you rule over Longzuo County on behalf of the Emperor, dealing with countless issues daily, and working tirelessly. How dare Shouzhe put forward any requests?" Wang Shouzhe, being no easy prey, retorted firmly, "We, the Wang family are a 7th-rank Aristocratic Family, bestowed by Daqian and charged with the duty of ruling the land.

However, due to our efforts of appeasing refugees, we have a large population under our jurisdiction, with insufficient land and people living in unease. Shouzhe has been thinking it over, and the only solution seems to be expanding into the outer territories, developing the land. However, the Wang family resources are meager and we would very much appreciate the support of the Governor..."

Prefectural Governor Taishi Ankang's eyelids twitched.

This Wang Shouzhe was not simple. He actually brought up the Wang family's past acts of aiding refugees and requested the government to support the Wang family's land cultivation.

It's not unusual for a prominent family to cultivate land. Given Wang family's status, it would be easy for them to apply for an expansion order. However, land cultivation is usually funded and carried out by the families. The government would typically award land grants, establish cities, build towns, and undertake some logistical work afterward.

How could this allow the government to pay for land cultivation?

The Wang family, poor?

Taishi Ankang felt almost driven to violence.

Where are the Wangs poor? It's clearly stated in the information collected by the government that the Wang family has quite a substantial fortune. Surely not many Rank Six Aristocratic Families are wealthier than the Wang family, right?

Nevertheless, in this case, the government is indeed at fault, and compensation and appeasement are necessary.

Suppressing the urge to lash out, Taishi Ankang still spoke with warmth, "It's only right, it's only right. Master Shouzhe has done well in providing for the refugees, setting a good example for our prominent families. How could the prefecture mansion not show its appreciation? I will issue an expansion order to the Wang family immediately, and also allocate 500,000 Qian Gold as development funds.

I hope the Wang family will put it to good use and contribute more to the country."

500,000 Qian Gold was no small amount.

Wang Shouzhe wisely accepted the offer immediately and expressed his gratitude, "Shouzhe thanks the governor for his understanding and support. Rest assured, the Wang family will work harder to develop more living space for Da Qian."

The situation with the government and the Qian family are different. The Qian family's investment was willing and generous since the funds were coming from taxes and allocations from above. Every fund movement is to be registered and reported upwards, it's not the final say of the prefectural governor. Allocating 500,000 Qian Gold already shows great sincerity.

After an agreement was reached, both parties were content.

Wang Shouzhe would no longer spread the news regarding Cao Youqing's matters. As for the subsequent matters and negotiations with the Cao family, Qian family, and Lingyun Sacred Land... all of that would now be the prefectural governor, Taishi Ankang's responsibility.

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The wine and dishes had already been prepared early. Seeing the two men finish their discussion, Commandery Prince Wu Dianshan had a good wine and food sent up and invited the two men to sit down and enjoy the feast.

Wang Shouzhe and Taishi Ankang naturally wouldn't refuse his invitation. Ultimately, they enjoyed a banquet that lasted more than an hour before departing, both hosts and guests having a great time.

...

Meanwhile, at the same time.

Longzuo Qian Family.

As the saying goes, "Entering a marquis's household is like plunging into the deep sea". Although the Qian Family was not a marquis's family, as a fifth-grade purple abode foundation family, it had already lasted for over a thousand years, and in terms of strength and foundation, it was much stronger than the ancient Huaxia marquis's houses.

The main residence of the Qian Family was, naturally, much more vast and profound than that of the "deep-sea" marquis' mansion. The entire place was very extensive, with more than ten thousand house slaves and over a thousand heads of households.

Such a family, of course, had a complete management system.

In the West Garden of the main residence, the area received less sunlight due to the design of the buildings, trees and weeds growing wildly, the courtyard looked eerie due to years of neglect.

This was not because the Qian Family couldn't afford to repair, but because the West Garden was traditionally used by the Qian Family to punish and exile women who had committed offences within the family, similar to the "cold palace" in the ancient Huaxia imperial household.

Once exiled to the West Garden, one could not leave without permission, and was essentially abandoned by the family. This represented the family's extremely strict punishment.

Why were only women exiled? Naturally, it was because if a male member of the family committed a serious offense, they would usually be exiled to the family's mine to undertake some extremely laborious work as punishment.

At this time.

This seldom used West Garden was finally opened. A beautifully dressed woman was escorted in by a group of robust maidens and pushed to the ground.

This beautiful woman was none other than Cao Li Na, the current First lady of the Qian family.

Even after being thrown into the yard, Cao Li Na did not come back to her senses.

She couldn't believe what was happening and stared at Qian Qinhong, yelling angrily, "Qian Qinhong, where do you get the nerve to lock me in this broken place? I, Cao Li Na, am the legitimate daughter of the Cao Family of Liaoyuan. Aren't you afraid of being held accountable by my maternal family?"

Outside the courtyard, Qian Qinhong stood with his hands behind his back, his face gloomy, "Cao Li Na, although it was the Old Ancestor's idea to put you under house arrest. But as the Family Head, I also think that you should stay here and reflect on your actions.

As for your maternal family coming to hold us accountable...hmp~ We, the Qian Family, have yet to hold the distant Cao Family accountable. What kind of family tradition does the Cao Family have that they could cultivate such a malicious person like you!"

"Malicious? On what grounds do you call me malicious?" Cao Li Na's face turned cold, and she gritted her teeth and shouted angrily, "I, the legitimate daughter of the Cao Family, married you, an old widower, and gave birth to a son who does not even have the right to inherit the family. Why should Qian Xuehan, that bastard who lost his mother, can inherit the direct line?

Even if he can't be the Family Head, his son and grandson will remain in the line of succession? My son Xue Rui has skills and bloodline not any inferior to him, so why is he only a Elder?!"

"The principle of inheriting the eldest son and not the youngest has been followed by all prominent families in Da Qian, and is also clearly stated in the laws of Da Qian. You, you, you..."

Qian Qinhong pointed at Cao Li Na with trembling fingers, almost too furious to speak.

After a while, he finally caught his breath and admonished with a cold face, "Do you know why the Old Ancestor established such rules? If a family wants to be passed down for thousands, tens of thousands of years, the most important things are unity and stability!

It is precisely because there is this insurmountable strict tradition and laws that the families have been able to pass down and flourish. Otherwise, there would be constant fights among brothers within the family, which would lead to internal conflicts and chaos, isn't it?"

"Cao Li Na, I think you've been poisoned by that wretch Cao Youqing!" Qian Qinhong was furious, "That wretch is a Sky Pride from the Sacred Land, instead of preparing to explore territories for humanity and resist foreign enemies, he dares to be involved in the storm of change.

His foolish self-destructive behavior is one thing, but he even dares to use you to manipulate our Qian Family, attempting to drag us into the vortex as well! Does he really think that our Qian Family is easy to bully?"

The Qian Family, which is a powerful fifth-grade family, has many skillful members. After a series of investigations and inferences, they have already made a pretty good guess about Cao Youqing's plans.

With the current uncertain situation, which prominent family dares to side casually? A slight mistake could lead to annihilation.

Hearing his words, Cao Li Na paled, as if she only realized the seriousness of the matter at this moment, "Then, then what about my son Rui? I did all this, it has nothing to do with him! Husband, Rui is your own son, you..."

"Hmph~ You have the audacity to mention him?" Qian Qinhong interrupted her, pointed at her, and cursed, "If not for you constantly instigating him behind the scenes, would he have formed such forbidden thoughts in the first place? Even though he wasn't directly involved in this case of brother-murder and power-snatching, he was still indirectly implicated by you.

The Old Ancestor has already decreed that he be exiled to the mine to serve as a small principal, and he is not allowed to set foot in the Qian Family for thirty years!"

"Ah! Then, then doesn't that mean Rui is..."

Cao Li Na slumped onto the ground, her face as pale as a sheet.

She understood that "not allowed to set foot in the Qian Family for thirty years" was just a nice way to put it, at its core, Xue Rui was exiled. Even if he returned after thirty years, he could only remain a marginal figure, and it would no longer be possible for him to be used by the family.

If only she had known... If only she had known this would happen, she wouldn't have...

Seeing her in such a state, Qian Qinhong, despite being her husband of many years, felt a bit sorry. But when he thought about the stupid things she had done, his heart hardened again.

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"Ignorant woman, attempting to shake the foundation of the family, ends up harming both her child and herself~ Spend the rest of your life in this West Garden reflecting on your actions~"

With that, he waved his sleeve, turned around, and left the West Garden.

The large doors of the West Garden slowly closed behind him. The distraught silhouette of Cao Li Na was also shut out, and no longer visible.

This time, not only was Qian Xuerui implicated, he, Qian Qinhong, was not spared either.

A few days ago, the Old Ancestor had personally given him an order, entrusting him to complete the transition of family leadership within five years. The reason was that he, as the Family Head, couldn't even manage his own household, and was disgraced.

As for the next family head, it naturally would be the first successor listed in the ancestral laws - Qian Xuehan!

And Qian Qinhong, stepping down from the position of the Family Head, would subsequently enter the family's Elder Council and become a distinguished elder of the Qian Family.

...



This internal upheaval of the Qian Family, although they tried their best to pare, in an attempt to prevent the news from leaking, how could the major prominent families of Longzuo County simply turn a blind eye?

The internal relationships of these ancient prominent families were deeply intertwined and incredibly complex. Such a significant piece of news could not possibly be kept a secret.

Not long after, the incident was widely discussed within Longzuo County Town, becoming fodder for people's casual chats after meals.

Upon learning about these changes, Wang Shouzhe was filled with emotions.

Such a succession method for prominent families, although not necessarily the best solution, was still one that had stood the test of time, proving effective and conducive to family stability.

Besides, as an old tradition, the patriarchal inheritance system was deeply rooted in people's hearts and widely accepted. Aside from the imperial household, all prominent families follow this system.

Wang Shouzhe had neither the intention nor the power to change this.

However, in this incident, the greatest beneficiary was probably Qian Xuehan.

In Wang Shouzhe's view, although Qian Xuehan appeared gentle and humble on the surface, often embracing others and shedding tears, behind this pretense, he estimated that Qian was not as simple as he appeared.

What changes would occur to the Qian Family under his control were still uncertain.

...

At the same time.

Daqian Capital.

The Great Qian Land was established more than seven thousand years ago. With a broad territory and a booming economy, the national capital, as the country's political center, was certainly not simple.

A large area of land north of the Anqing Mountains and west of the Longqing Bay belonged to the scope of Daqian Capital. In terms of land area alone, it even surpassed Longzuo County, which was still in the stage of development.

In the heart of this national capital, seated a city named "Return to the Dragon City".

The city occupied a vast area, making it the largest city in the Great Qian Land, and the only city in the country without walls. This was because since the establishment of the country, the size of the city had been expanding year by year, and this hadn't stopped even now.

The entire capital was constructed with Return to Dragon City as the core, supported by thirty-six guard cities.

Legend has it that at the beginning of the country's establishment, the Founding Emperor Ziwei Xuandu and the Master of Lingyun Holy Ground, the Emperor of Lingyun at the time, jointly set up a grand formation, with Return to Dragon City and the thirty-six guard cities as the Formation Eyes.

This formation was said to bless the Great Qian Land with favorable weather, ensuring its continued success for generations.

Of course, this was only a legend. Throughout the more than seven thousand years since the founding of the country, no one had seen the activation of this grand formation, so naturally, no one knew of its authenticity.

But one thing was beyond dispute, that was the Return to Dragon City, as the Imperial City, was the rightful center of power of the Great Qian Land.

For as many years as the founding of the Great Qian Land, Return to Dragon City has stood here.

Over these years, the flow of history has been like the waters of rivers and streams, flowing little by little. Countless talented and dazzling figures have risen here, and like meteors, fallen here, leaving behind many vivid and deep marks in the city.

It was like a monument, its mere existence was enough to be strikingly profound, enough to shock one's heart.

Who knew that within a corner of this mighty city, some toddler who was learning to walk could perhaps become an eminent hero who could direct kingdoms and issue stern commands in the future?

East of Return of the Dragon City.

Near the city's edge, there was a large restaurant reputed as a "heavenly palace in the clouds," known as the "White Cloud Tower."

The White Cloud Tower was known for three exceptional aspects, "Outstanding Taste," "Remarkable Music," and "Superb Dance". It gathered the tastiest food, the most moving music, and the most graceful dances throughout the Great Qian Land.

With these "three aspects," the White Cloud Tower has stood in Great Qian Land for thousands of years, and no other restaurant has ever managed to surpass it.

Of course, this was also inseparable from its profound background.

At the moment.

The setting sun was on the horizon, twilight was spreading, but the White Cloud Tower was still brightly lit.

Under the cover of night, the entire White Cloud Tower was like an endless day decorated by lights, where jade-inlaid railings and embroidered grounds covered the whole place. Even the legendary "The Blessed Land of Lang Huan" and the Immortal Family's jade palaces were no more exquisite than this.

Inside the building, instead of a traditional tower structure, it featured a more complex open layout.

The building was hollow, with a huge cloud platform at the bottom, surrounded by elegant seats. Among these seats, some were hung with gauze curtains, some were embedded in various parts of the building like pavilions, arranged as

intermingled as a starry sky. The coiling staircases connected each pavilion as if tracing the orbit of stars, looping and complicated.

Between the pavilions and elegant seats, there were specially designed sky gardens. In these gardens, various spirit plants and flowers were planted, with spiritual butterflies fluttering and spirit birds jumping around, creating a place filled with the fragrance of flowers and the chirping of birds.

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The Fluorescent Stone Spirit Lamp, carved in the shape of a celestial crane with its wings outstretched, emitted a hazy light, stars glimmering like threads from high above, and descended, making everything seem as if it were enveloped in a radiant haze, becoming blurred yet extravagant.

Inside the entire building, the brightest spot was actually a massive cloud platform at the bottom.

The cloud platform was entirely sculpted from Spirit Stone, with an exquisite formation set upon it. A beam of light projected from the top of the pavilion enveloped the entire cloud platform.

Looking down from the pavilion above, everything on the cloud platform was in clear view.

On the cloud platform, there were graceful dancers swaying, their skirts fluttering, their white dresses stirring, set against the white clouds rising from the platform, they resembled immortals descending from the celestial realms.

"The 'Seven Beauties of Langhan Pavilion' truly live up to their reputation. The dance of the Floating Cloud Fairy is truly unparalleled~"

In one of the elegant seats upstairs, a few elegantly dressed, talented young men were sipping their drinks while admiring the pleasing performance, their mouths expressing words of admiration.

The Langhan Pavilion was created by Lady Langhan, all the women brought up within were skilled in music and dance, and their character and talents were each exceptional. Their innate talents and

abilities were equally outstanding, and they have long been pursued by prominent families in the capital.

The Seven Beauties of Langhan Pavilion were the most outstanding among them.

These seven women were not only beautiful, each with their own strengths, but they also possessed the strength of the Heavenly Human Realm. They were extremely sought after within the capital, with countless sons of prominent families spending thousands of gold just to catch a glimpse of them.

If it weren't for the prestige of the White Cloud Tower, they might not have been able to invite the Floating Cloud Fairy.

Meanwhile, at a large elegant seat upstairs, several young men and women were participating in a special event recently launched by White Cloud Tower — "The Youth Big Stomach King Competition for those under fifty".

A group of young people excitedly formed a circle, cheering on the candidates they supported.

The competition had clearly been underway for some time. At this moment, the long table used for the competition was already piled high with empty plates. Three participants were already unable to continue, rushing to the corner to vomit. Only two people remained at the long table, still competing.

These two were a man and a woman.

The man had a robust figure, sturdy and strong as if he were a primal war elephant that had emerged from the wilderness. It was clear at a glance that he was the kind of individual who possessed a powerful bloodline and practiced profound body refining technique.

As for the woman, she wasn't as noticeable. She was fair-skinned and beautiful, with a slightly round face and charming baby fat on her cheeks. Her large eyes blinked innocently, appearing naive and pure.

This woman was none other than the Wang Family's Miss "Lici" — Wang Licui.

She was the only female participant in this Big Stomach King competition.

Ever since arriving at the National Capital with her master, Master Yunyang, she had been hanging out at the White Cloud Tower. After a few years, she had made herself a little famous.

Though, the fame was mostly due to her big appetite. But her reputation was limited to just that.

At the National Capital, there were numerous unusual and extraordinary individuals. Apart from her exceptional eating ability, Wang Licui didn't seem to have anything else that stood out.

Gambling is one of the root "inferior natures" of humanity.

Wherever there are people, "gambling" is always involved, no matter the place.

For such Big Stomach King competitions, there is no shortage of gamblers participating, and the one in charge was a shopkeeper of the White Cloud Tower.

"The final showdown is coming, I bet three thousand Qian Gold on the Big Savannah Elephant winning." A sophisticated son of a prominent family casually tossed out a stack of Qian Gold, "Don't underestimate the Big Savannah Elephant just because he's only over forty and just a cultivator in the Spirit Platform Realm.

He is the Young Clan Leader from the borderland barbaric tribe—the War Elephant Tribe. His Ancient War Elephant Bloodline has already reached the Peak of the Second Level, and he has cultivated the 'War Elephant Body Refining Verses' to the extent of a 'Bailian Stomach'. Not only can he eat an entire savage bull in one go, he can even digest ores and iron sand."

"I've also heard about him, I heard that he has been included in the head of household list by the Third-Class Aristocratic Gongye Clan and has become the personal follower of the Gongye Clan's direct line. It's said that, the Gongye Clan intends to cultivate him into a Sky Pride!"

For a moment, chatter arose among the children of the prominent families, with some showing looks of envy.

Even in the Great Qian Land teemed with ancient prominent families, the Gongye Clan was one of the most elite prominent families. Capturing the favor of the Gongye Clan's mainline son, the Big Savannah Elephant was obviously on the fast track to success, his future prospects were limitless.

Many people began to follow suit, betting on the Big Savannah Elephant winning.

However, Wang Licui also had considerable fame, with quite a few supporters. Especially among the ladies from prominent families, they all pulled out their gold tickets and bet on Wang Licui winning: "Miss Lici is a distinguished guest in the Heng Commandery Prince's house and is said to be favored by the Heng Commandery Prince. Her appetite is unfathomable, we bet on Miss Lici winning."

"Although Miss Lici can eat quite a lot, she's still far behind the Big Savannah Elephant. The 'War Elephant Body Refining Verses' isn't for show."

Under the cacophony of voices, the majority still chose the Big Savannah Elephant, with those who bet on Wang Licui winning only making up one-tenth. As public opinion became increasingly one-sided, more and more people bet on the Big Savannah Elephant.

At the same time.

At the open terrace VIP room at the top floor of White Cloud Tower.

A man dressed in luxurious clothes, exuding an extraordinary noble air, saw this scene and couldn't help but frown: "Yunyang, is it really okay for you to scheme like this?"

Sitting next to him was an old man in simple clothes and an air of asceticism.

Upon hearing this, the old man stroked his beard and sighed, saying solemnly: "Commandery Prince Heng, this is a classic case of 'not knowing the cost of life's necessities without running the household', is it easy for me to nurture my disciple?"

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Heng Commandery Prince became perplexed. It seemed having Yang Licui as a disciple was not as easy as it seemed. Unable to shake off his frustration, he changed the subject: "Yunyang, how much do you think a chicken is worth?"

"That depends on where it is and how big the chicken is," replied Master Yunyang. "If it's in an ordinary farmhouse, it could be as little as sixty or seventy shillings, or as much as a couple of Copper Coins. But in your place, the White Cloud Tower, the price skyrockets to over a hundred times. A simple dish called 'Eight Treasures Braised Chick Phoenix' costs up to several tens of gold coins."

Having said this, Master Yunyang paused for a moment, then took a sneak peek at the Commandery Prince: "But if we're in the Nine Extremities, where there's nothing growing and you haven't eaten or drunk anything for three months, that chicken would be priceless. Prince, gratitude is essential in life."

Gratitude my foot!

The face of the Heng Commandery Prince twitched; he was about to lose his temper regardless of his dignity, and sullenly responded, "Even so, you secretly hid many chickens when we conducted the Sacred Land tasks together."

"It's my business that I have many chickens. Did you or did you not eat my chickens?" Master Yunyang retorted, rolling his eyes.

"I did!"

Heng Commandery Prince resigned himself.

If he had known that Yunyang would use that to blackmail him for hundreds of years, he would have refused that chicken even if it cost him his life.

"Look, I even gave you such a precious chicken to eat." Master Yunyang said while stroking his beard, "Now I'm merely staying a little while in your tavern with my disciple, is it really that big of a deal, really?"

A little while?



He had been staying for five years straight, was that what he called a little while?

The heart of the Heng Commandery Prince was bleeding out, feeling utterly desolated.

If he wasn't aware of Yunyang's cultivation that had already reached the peak of the Purple Abode Realm, thus making him unbeatable, he would have cursed him out already.

While the two top dogs were whispering to each other in the loft, the final round of the "Under 50 Years Old Big Stomach King Competition" below was also in full swing.

As plate after plate of roasted Spirit Meat disappeared into the mouths of Wang Licui and the Big Savannah Elephant, the cheers around them were becoming louder and louder, nearly overturning the entire pavilion.

Were it not for the Soundproof Array Method installed in the pavilions of the White Cloud Tower, that would seal off all sounds within once activated, and was inaudible to cultivators below the Purple Abode Realm, other guests would probably be disturbed and come to scold them.

The grilling plates were quickly piling up into a mountain.

Gradually, the Big Savannah Elephant started to falter, his face turning pale as beads of sweat trickled down his forehead.

His digestive ability was indeed strong, and he could even digest jade stones and iron sand. But no matter how good his digestion was, he needed time to digest!

Each plate of roasted Spirit Meat weighed tens of jin, and every additional plate he consumed made his stomach feel like it was convulsing, as if he was enduring torture.

In contrast, Miss Licui ate leisurely and elegantly, but her speed of devouring the roasted meat was no slower than that of the Big Savannah Elephant.

Most importantly, she was devouring the meat with relish, clearly savoring the delicacies.

The capital city is so much fun, there are so many delicious foods~~ The more Wang Licui ate, the happier she felt, life was really wonderful.

Seeing this, the noblemen of the prominent families who had bet on the Big Savannah Elephant winning started to grow uneasy. They shouted, "Big Savannah Elephant, you're not going to lose to a woman, are you?"

"I wagered four thousand Qian Gold coins on you!"

"I gambled all the pocket money I've been saving up for thirty years on you! If you lose, I'll skin you alive!"

With these "encouragements," the Big Savannah Elephant struggled to continue for the duration of an incense stick, and managed to gobble down five more large plates of roast meat before he finally couldn't keep up, and ran to the corner to vomit.

A wave of boos immediately erupted from the crowd.

"Eh? You're done?"

Wang Licui seemed unsatisfied as she licked her lips.

She looked at the Big Savannah Elephant, then at the shopkeeper who was hosting the competition, suppressed her desire for a while, but eventually couldn't help asking the shopkeeper timidly, pointing at the ten plates of roasted Spirit Meat that had just been served: "Shopkeeper, um... can I eat the rest?"

As her words fell, the whole place fell into awkward silence.

Everyone looked at Wang Licui with strange expressions as if they had seen a ghost.

In view of this bizarre scene, even the two top dogs peering into the situation from the loft in the White Cloud Tower were taken aback.

Especially Heng Commandery Prince, his expression was indeed complicated. Over the past five years, he had always been living in such astonishment, no matter how many times it happened, he found it hard to accept!

After a good few moments, he finally regained his composure and sighed, "The devouring bloodline of Licui is truly extraordinary. Yunyang, you're really lucky."

"Yeah, not bad~" Master Yunyang said, looking very pleased, "She has great bloodline potential, but she requires intense nourishment. The earlier her bloodline is enhanced the stronger she will be. But most of the food she devours is transformed into spiritual essence and a slight increase in bloodline power. It's challenging, very challenging."

The devouring type of bloodline was a pretty rare one. Still, there are many recorded cases in the annals of the Sacred Land and the Academic Palace.

Although Heng Commandery Prince was amazed, he merely thought Wang Licui had some kind of rare devouring bloodline.

Only Master Yunyang knew that Li Yao's bloodline was not an ordinary devouring one, but the Gluttonous Bloodline mentioned in some very ancient documents.

This bloodline held enormous potential; as long as it could be cultivated, it would become invincible at later stages. The problem was, it's quite strenuous to raise during the early stages because it required constant devouring of Heaven and Earth Treasure and food to build a foundation.

#### Chapter 47: The Commandery Prince's Family Also Has No Surplus Grain\_2

"Indeed, disciples with devouring bloodlines are hard to bring up, but they can become quite formidable once managed." The Heng Commandery Prince nodded his agreement before immediately changing his tone, "But what does this have to do with me? No matter how formidable your disciple becomes, he is still your disciple."

After much deliberation, he decided to put aside his pride: "Master Yunyang, we've long settled our 'favor' ordeal from the chicken incident back then. If you really can't afford to raise Lici, why not send him to the Sacred Land instead..."

"Sacred Land?" Master Yunyang's expression changed slightly, "No way. I like it here at Longzuo Academy. I don't want Lici to pick up any bad habits at the Sacred Land."

"Master Yunyang, how many years has it been, and you're still not over that incident?" The Heng Commandery Prince frowned slightly, "Sister Xiqing has been dead for so long, and Brother Lang Ya..."

"Shut up! My not going to Sacred Land has nothing to do with that." A trace of darkness flashed across Master Yunyang's face before he coldly scoffed, "Junior Brother Wu Hanheng, you don't understand. Being here at Longzuo Academy, I'll be second only to one and above the rest. Why should I go to the Sacred Land and endure that exasperating guy?"

"Moreover, once old man Tianhe passes away, I will be the new dean. The entire Longzuo's Purple Abode Academy will be under my sole control."

"Junior Brother Wu Hanheng, in life, one must always have a long-term perspective. You're accommodating my disciples and me now, but once I take over Longzuo's Purple Abode Academy, won't there be a return?"

For a moment, the Heng Commandery Prince was torn between laughter and tears: "Master Yunyang, your foresight is truly remarkable." ...Can you at least wait until you've reached the Divine Power Territory before calling yourself an Enlightened One?

"Precisely... If it wasn't for my foresight, you wouldn't have had chicken that year. Maybe you would have starved to death." Master Yunyang's saintly demeanor coupled with his worldly-wise chatter, made for an unusual combination, "This is called long-term investment. Understand?"

"I understand!" The Heng Commandery Prince nodded earnestly, "But on my side, we have a saying, 'cut losses promptly'. Master Yunyang, I may wear the title of 'Commandery Prince', but in essence, it's just an empty shell~ The Prince's family has no surplus~"

"Master Yunyang, I'm different from a single man like you." The Heng Commandery Prince seemed to be weighed down by a heavy burden, saying depressively, "I have a queen, dozens of concubines, hundreds of courtesans, and countless princes and princesses to support. My progeny is so numerous that even I can't keep track. These are all heavy responsibilities and burdens."

"Honestly, sometimes I envy Master Yunyang's... freedom, lack of commitments, a crane in the clouds."

Just like that, Master Yunyang was struck by lightning.

This... Wu Hanheng... He's... he's overstepped.

Yes, eviction is one thing, but was there a need for such heavy artillery?

...

An hour later.

At the entrance of the White Cloud Tower, Master Yunyang and his young disciple Wang Licui were looking up at the slowly rising barrier, wordless.

The night wind blew listlessly, making two figures seem particularly desolate.

After a long while, Master Yunyang finally sighed softly, "Ah~ Uncle Heng is also having a hard time. After all these years, if it wasn't for the Wang Family's flourishing business and the wealth gifted down from their forefathers, they would have been all eaten up countless times by now. Licui, remember to reciprocate Uncle Heng's kindness in the future, understand?"

"Don't worry, master, I get it."

Wang Licui diligently nodded, then stored the large bag of Heaven and Earth Treasures that the Heng Commandery Prince gave her before he left into her storage ring. She then turned to her master and asked expectantly, "Master, where do we go now?"

"No rush, let me check my options first. My wide network of friends is finally coming in handy at this crucial time."

Master Yunyang then pulled out his notebook and started browsing through it. He first marked off Wu Hanheng's name with an "X".

Then, he began to ponder.

...

As time flies, several months rolled by in a flash.

Great Qian Changlong Calendar, year 3167, January 19.

Early spring again.

The snow of winter was yet to melt, but the quarrel between the Qian and Wang families had gradually settled down, rarely mentioned in the whispers of locals.

After the completion of all the detailed negotiations in the agreement, the two families officially signed a contract, jointly witnessed by the Purple Abode Academy and Prefectural Governor's Office, at the end of last year.

With Qian Family's thousand-year-old foundation, they surely couldn't be compared to the relatively new Wang family in terms of wealth, talent pool, business experience, or networking.

With the addition of the Qian family, Keep Achieving Commercial Firm rapidly expanded its operations.

The Zi Zhufeng Topecranes that had yet to be sold at the Purple Abode Academy were all purchased in one go by Keep Achieving Commercial Firm, all thanks to the influence of Wang Liyao. Or else, the Academy might not have decided to sell them all.

The orders for the flying carriages were taken up by the largest refining workshop in Longzuo County, the Tiangong Workshop Longzuo Branch. They worked overtime for three months straight before they could complete and deliver all the orders.

Now, several months later, the number of Spirit Bird Flying Carriages seen daily flying in the sky above Longzuo County has surged to sixty-seven.

According to Qian Xuehan's report, they have dispatched elders from the Qian family to other counties to either buy or rent Spirit Bird Flying Carriages, aiming to increase the number of carriages to one hundred and twenty within the year.

It's clear that when it comes to commercial acumen, the Wang family can't hold a candle to the Qian family.

#### Chapter 47: The Commandery Prince's Family Also Has No Surplus Grain\_3

But the strength of the Wang family lies more in Wang Shouzhe's unique philosophy and distinctive thinking.

Early spring.

The cold wind was still biting cold.

Over the vast Eastern Sea, the howling wind carried an even more bone-chilling cold.

Among the surging waves, five large merchant ships formed a word-shaped arrangement, battling the stormy seas while steadily moving forward.

The high sails were full of sea winds, all fluffed up.

The massive merchant ships were like five moving fortresses, remaining unwavering despite the raging waves, moving slowly yet unyieldingly towards their destination.

At the top of the mast, the flag of the Chen Clan of Donggang was rolling in the wind.

On the high lookout tower at the bow of the leading flagship, a sailor in uniform was gazing intently into the distance through a tubular "thousand-mile eye".

Suddenly.

The coastline near Donggang appeared faintly in the field of view of the Thousand-mile Eye.

The lookout immediately whistled in excitement, signaling the helmsman with a flag.

Soon, this good news spread throughout the fleet like willow catkins scattered in the spring.

This fleet had set off from Donggang last winter, halted at several major ports of the Hundred Islands Guard, made a round at the Ice Sha Floating Island, and till now, it's been nearly two months.

Initially, they expected that they could finish the voyage and return to Donggang before the year-end, but a rare winter storm came to the Eastern Sea, blocking the sea route, forcing this Donggang merchant fleet to stay over for New Year in the Hundred Islands Guard.

Fortunately, the commander-in-chief of this fleet was Chen Fanghua, a young core elder of the Chen Clan, and also Chen Xiuwu, the young clan leader of the Donggang Chen Clan, served as the captain and deputy commander of the flagship.

With the presence of these two people, and their intermittent morale-boosting efforts, the merchant fleet held its ground amidst the crisis without any collective agitation or even mutiny among the sailors.

Soon, the news reached Elder Chen Fanghua of the Chen Clan, and Young Clan Leader Chen Xiuwu. They both came to the bow of the flagship, surrounded by a group of family generals.

When he received Wang Shouzhe years ago, Chen Fanghua was just a young core member of the direct line in the family. Now, at forty-six or forty-seven, he had grown into an imposing middle-aged man.

He was lucky back then, to catch the tide of family development. Because of his outstanding abilities and consistent significant contributions to the family, he was gaining more and more attention from the old ancestor of the Chen Clan.

Just last year, with the abundant resource support from the family and a Heavenly Spirit Pill bestowed by the old ancestor, he successfully broke the bottleneck of the Qi Refinement Realm and stepped into the Spirit Platform Realm, becoming the eighth Spirit Platform Realm cultivator in the Donggang Chen Clan, and entered the ranks of the elders.

Such is the alteration of time.

The young talent of yesteryears have now grown up to become the main pillars of the family. Even Young Clan Leader Chen Xiuwu needs to follow him to learn and hone his skills.



Staring at the long-separated coastline of Donggang, even someone as calm as Chen Fanghua exhaled deeply in relief.

Young Clan Leader Chen Xiuwu, lagging half a step behind him, was also somewhat excited, "Third Uncle, we've returned safe and sound after all. Taking advantage of the New Year festivities, after paying a visit to Mother, I can go to Ping'an Town to see my uncle and aunt, to pay New Year respects."

After months of exposure to wind and sun, his handsome and heroic face was slightly sunburned, but it made him seem even more mature and steady.

Along the way, the fleet faced dangers and difficulties several times, but he always performed very well, with responsibility and commitment, coped with the crises together with everyone, refused to fly back to the Chen clan in a flying carriage ahead of others, hence winning the respect from the Chen family, family generals, shipbuilders, and sailors.

"Xiuwu, you performed well this time. Your cultivation base has already broken through to the ninth level of the Qi Refinement Realm. In three or four years, you'll be able to attempt breaking through to the Spirit Platform Realm. Master Shouzhe is sure to praise you when he sees you." Chen Fanghua comforted his nephew, feeling a myriad of emotions.

The family's strength is truly important. Think about Chen Fangjie and Wang Shouzhe when they were young. At that age and with that level of cultivation, they were already considered young talents of the Longzuo commandery.

But now, Xiuwu is only twenty years old, but he has already stepped into the ninth level of Qi Refinement Realm!

However, even so, his rank among the young generation of the In-laws Alliance isn't high. There are many excellent individuals among the young generation of Liu Family of Shanyin, Gongsun Clan of Shanyang, Lu Clan of Yingxiu, etc.

Of course, the most impressive ones have to be those few young people from the Wang family. Especially Xiuwu's cousin Wang Liyao, who is said to have already entered the Spirit Platform Realm and have been accepted into the Academic Palace. She is truly a prodigy.

"I wonder if cousin Liyao and cousin Zong'an came back from the Academic Palace for the New Year," Chen Xiuwu said with a sigh, "I heard that the Purple Abode Academic Palace is teeming with talents and brimming with experts. I am not too worried about cousin Liyao, but cousin Zong'an is too soft-hearted. I hope he isn't bullied in the Academic Palace."

"You need not worry about that. I heard that your Aunt Luo Jing and Aunt Luo Qiu are doing well in the Academic Palace, they are both direct disciples of the master." Chen Fanghua also proudly said, "With them there, who would dare to bully Young Master Zong'an? Besides, our In-laws Alliance isn't so easily bullied."

"That's true. Once Old Ancestor Ruhong achieves the Tianren realm, we Chen Clan will be a 7th-rank Aristocratic Family." Chen Xiuwu said excitedly, "By then, in our Longzuo County, with the exception of the city lord, we will have four Tianren Realm Cultivators."

At the mention of Old Ancestor Ruhong's imminent promotion to the Tianren realm, a smile appeared on Chen Fanghua's serious and dignified face.

The gap in status between a 7th-rank Aristocratic Family and an 8th-grade Prominent Family is quite large, mainly because of the existence of the Tianren realm old ancestor.

That represents a leap of class.

Once Ruhong Old Ancestor successfully advances this time, the Chen Clan of Donggang had finally accumulated and launched, breaking away from the sequence of the lower Aristocratic Family, taking a place in Longzuo County, and even qualified to have a name within the scope of Left County.

Suddenly ~

Chen Fanghua's face changed slightly: "Those ships... huh, they are Jiaolong's Gang's ships. Why are they appearing in our Donggang?"

Chapter 48 Crisis! Anger Gang Attacks\_1

...

"Jiaolong Gang?"

Chen Xiuwu's face also changed, his expression becoming extremely grave.

All along, the Jiaolong Gang has been the overlord of several counties along the Peace River, monopolizing the entire river shipping trade. They have signed specific agreements with all the families of varying sizes along the river.

The trade goods of each family, they don't care if you use the land route. However, if you want to use the waterway, you can only do so within your county. If you want to transport goods to other counties through the Peace River route, you must pass through the Jiaolong Gang.

The reason why the Jiaolong Gang is so domineering is also related to their backing. It is said, just said, that there is a royal prince supporting the Jiaolong Gang. Moreover, the leader of the Jiaolong Gang is also a renowned cultivator of the Purple Abode Realm.

Generally speaking, the strength of the Jiaolong Gang is not inferior to a fifth-grade Purple Abode clan.

But, the Jiaolong Gang also has significant limitations, which is that their business can only be restricted to the Peace River, with the Eastern Sea's estuary as the boundary.

Logically speaking,

in accordance with the agreement between the Jiaolong Gang and each family, Chen Clan's fleet of Donggang was helping the In-laws Alliance to transport goods did not breach the agreement. After all, the river fleet of the Chen Clan, at most, would dock at the Changning port in Changning, and then sell throughout the county by the Qian Family's land trade association.

The business of the In-laws Alliance was doing such a thriving business, of which numerous bestselling items of considerable value were included. The domineering Jiaolong Gang had long coveted this piece of fat meat.

Several attempts to negotiate with the In-laws Alliance were met with resistance and opposition. Because of this, the Jiaolong Gang had long harbored resentment, and had had several clashes with the river fleets of the Chen Clan in the Peace River.

However, both sides had their reservations and thus, for the time being, it only stayed at the stage of finding faults and verbal disputes.

But this time, those several river ships of the Jiaolong Gang even sailed to the outskirts of Donggang, intending to enter Donggang. This has obviously violated the agreement with various local families.

After all, Donggang's location is exactly at the estuary of the Eastern Sea.

No wonder then,

that Chen Xiuwu and Chen Fanghua's expressions became so grim.

...

Meanwhile,

The three river ships flying the angry Jiaolong flags were not Jiaolong Gang's transportation ships. Instead, they were battle-class ships specifically designed for quick strikes and patrols etc.

On the ships, members of the Jiaolong Gang were wearing red and black uniforms. Underneath, they wore close-fitted body armor made of specially tanned Spirit Fish skin, with short blades or small spears hanging from their waists, and holding ranged weapons such as crossbows in their hands.

All of them had bright eyes and long breaths, obviously they were elite gang members who specialized in ship and water combat. The weakest among them also had a cultivation base of the third level of the Qi Refinement Realm, and most of them were at the fourth or fifth levels.

Among them, there were even elites at the sixth or seventh levels, and team leaders at the eighth or ninth levels.

On each of the Anger Gang warships, there was a commander belonging to the Spirit Platform Realm to keep things in order.

Given this, a single Anger Gang warship equipped for combat could suppress an ordinary Rank Nine prominent family. If three of them set off together, even a Grade Eight prominent family would not dare to confront them.

Moreover, the Anger Gang warships are skilled in water warfare and all the gang members are proficient swimmers. Ordinary merchant ships dare not oppose them.

The leading Anger Gang warship, at the bow of the ship, stood a middle-aged man. He was wearing a set of soft armor made from the hide of a high-level fierce beast. His bald head gleamed, and there was a deep scar running from his left eye to the corner of his mouth, looking ferocious and scary.

The two commanders of the Spirit Platform Realm behind him both held their breath and dared not breath heavily.

This bald scarred man was none other than one of the well-known Heavenly Human Realm experts in the Jiaolong Gang – "One-Eyed Jiao" Zhao Wuqing.

Zhao Wuqing originally came from an ordinary Eighth Grade Prominent Family in a certain county. He had achieved much in his studies and martial arts since he was a child. His family regarded him as a Celestial-type and had high hopes for his future, with a distantly related cousin who was his childhood sweetheart by his side.

Theoretically, Zhao Wuqing's life should have been happy and fulfilling.

But unfortunately, unpredictable things happen.

For some unknown reason, he suddenly fell ill with a strange disease. His entire body's channels were blocked and congested, which led to his inability to circulate mysterious energy to refine his blood, and strengthen his body.

His cultivation base dropped day by day. Because he couldn't refine his blood, he accumulated energy, and his body kept getting fatter and more bloated. From a young handsome man, he gradually turned into a fat man who panted even after a few steps.

His family took him to doctors everywhere but to no avail, and gradually gave up on him.

His childhood sweetheart, a distantly related cousin, also gradually distanced herself from him and climbed up to a straight lineage son of a 7th Rank family.

Desperate and heartbroken, Zhao Wuqing ran away from home, and after a series of hardships, unexpectedly met the leader of the Jiaolong Gang—River-overturning Dragon, Long Wuji.

Speaking of which, Long Wuji could be considered a knowledgeable genius of his generation.

He recognized that Zhao Wuqing's "illness" should be a side effect caused by awakening some special bloodline constitution. So he found a profound method of body refining and personally helped him clear his channels and lay a foundation for a long period of time.

Zhao Wuqing soon got rid of the "illness", and his cultivation base began to skyrocket. At the same time, he abandoned his original name and renamed himself Zhao Wuqing to set a clear boundary with his past.

From then on, Zhao Wuqing tightly followed Long Wuji and gradually grew into a formidable member of the Jiaolong Gang. Just because he was very cruel and ruthless, he was always Long Wuji's most loyal dog.

Therefore, even within the Jiaolong Gang, many gang members feared him rather than respected him.

Chapter 48 Crisis! Attack of Anger Gang\_2

...

At the confluence of the sea and river water, the Anger Jiaolong warship faced the wind and waves, cleaving through the water.

At the same time Chen Fanghua's trade fleet noticed the Anger Jiaolong warship, Zhao Wu Qing's party also discovered Chen Fanghua's fleet.

"Great Commander."

"Judging from the flag and lineup of that trade fleet," said a man named Lu Jinyi, whose eyes resembled those of a hawk, "it seems to be the Hundred Islands Trading Team, recently expanded by the Chen Clan."

"Hundred Islands Trading Team?" Zhao Wu Qing slightly narrowed his eyes, "Looks like Chen Clan's business is growing, just their trade fleet for one direction in the Hundred Islands Guard has as much as five large merchant ships."

"Indeed, as the Chen Clan grows stronger and stronger, it has already overwhelmed the two 9th-rank aristocratic families, the Li and Jiang families in Donggang," Lu Jinyi said, "They now occupy 90% of the trade share in Donggang, and over 30% of cargo transportation within the realm of the Hundred Islands Guard."

Lu Jinyi is the commander of the Jiaolong Gang's branch Jiaolong Business Bank stationed at Changning Guard, and he's well versed with affairs big and small within Changning Guard. Yes, the "Jiaolong Business Bank" is indeed the officially registered business name of the Jiaolong Gang with the government office.

This is similar to Earth's "organizations," which usually changed their names to companies, a clever shift in designation.

"Thirty percent, huh." Zhao Wu Qing snickered, the greed in his eyes evident, "The Chen Clan of Donggang, not even a 7th-rank Aristocratic Family. Taking advantage of their alliance with the In-Laws Alliance of Changning Guard and the name of the Dan Tai Clan of the Eastern Sea, they are awfully greedy and domineering."

No wonder the Jiang and Li families of Donggang willingly transferred their share of Donggang Port to our Jiaolong Gang."

"Lu Jinyi, give the order to intercept this trade fleet."

Lu Jinyi's complexion changed, he hurriedly replied: "Great Commander, I heard that the deputy commander of this trading fleet is Chen Xiuwu, the direct line successor of the Chen Clan. This kid is also the nephew of Wang Shouzhe from the Wang Family of Changning."

Although Wang Shouzhe is not a Tianren realm cultivator, his position in Changning Guard is extremely prestigious. Even other Tianren realm cultivators from major families are willing to accept orders from him.

It is because of him that the various major families in Changning Guard are closely united.

But the reason why "closely" is used is naturally because not every family will submit to the Wang family. Some small families have suffered suppression and losses due to the rise of the Wang family's in-law alliance.

For example, the Jiang and Li families from Donggang are indignant but dare not speak out. But once they get a chance, they ally with the Jiaolong Gang, a major power.

"Wang Shouzhe?" Zhao Wu Qing sneered, coldly mocking, "Previously, he refused to concede anything during our negotiations with the Jiaolong Gang several times. An insignificant family head, relying on his support in the Purple Abode Academic Palace, foolishly believing himself to be the local overlord."

"First, capture this trade fleet and capture the young clan leader of the Chen Clan alive." Zhao Wu Qing's scarred, one-eyed face twisted with a cruel smile, "Then, let's have a talk with Wang Shouzhe about our Jiaolong Gang's decision to station in Donggang. We have been too polite to Wang Shouzhe before.

An insignificant local tyrant, giving him some respect, he actually took our Jiaolong Gang for granted."

Even though Lu Jinyi felt this was inappropriate and felt that the Great Commander was underestimating Wang Shouzhe, he was well aware of Zhao Wu Qing's temper. Being defiant to him would lead to severe consequences.

Immediately, he gave the order: "The Great Commander orders, the entire Angry Jiaolong warships to march forward, our target is the Chen Clan trade fleet."

The signalman waved the flag.

Three Angry Jiaolong warships were dispatched simultaneously, forming a 八 character shape and, like a pack of wolves, rushed towards the five merchant ships.

.....



"Has Jiaolong Gang gone mad? They dare to attack our merchant ship just outside of Donggang?" Chen Fanghua's face darkened, "Quick, send for help to Donggang."

Merchant ships were also armed. Besides Chen Fanghua who is in the Spiritual Platform Realm, there were also a dozen or so Qi Refinement Realm house heads or clansmen, in addition to six to seven hundred regular ship crew members.

They could easily handle disorganised small-scale pirates, independent cultivators, or Level Three or Four fierce beasts. But to face the Anger Jiaolong warships of the Jiaolong Gang that were built for battle, they were not in the running.

With Chen Fanghua's command.

"Bang! Bang! Bang!"

Strings of fireworks were released into the sky. Even under the bright daylight, it lit up half of the sky in red.

At the same time.

Five gigantic merchant ships began to turn their hulls, gradually making their way towards Donggang Port. Due to their design, these colossal merchant ships had large hulls and waistlines that could carry more cargo but were quite clumsy in speed and direction changes.

...

"Do they think they can escape?" Zhao Wu Qing sneered coldly. "How foolish of them. Do they think the Jiaolong Gang is all bark and no bite?"

"Clang, clang, clang!"

On the ship bow of the Jiaolong Battleship, several large ship-mounted crossbows fired first, shooting thick crossbow bolts whistling through the air. These crossbows were made of spirit wood, and high-rank fierce beast tendons were used as bowstrings, so their power was way beyond the crossbows on Earth.

They were usually used in large-scale wars, or city defense, or to counter beast tides, all with astonishing effectiveness.

One shot had the power to pierce a Level Three fierce beast. Dozens of them together could even frighten a Level Five fierce beast away.

Moreover, they were quite effective in naval battles. After all, the ship's speed was slow, and the target was massive.

One of the bolts hit a deckhand on the deck, piercing him and the deck itself.

"Damn Jiaolong Gang!"

The young and vigorous Chen Xiuwu felt a surge of anger. "Fight back, fight back, use those Divine Might Cannons that my uncle sent for testing!"

Upon his command.

The head of the household moved. On one side of the trading flagship, the thick waterproof oilcloth was torn open, revealing several gigantic cannons made of fine iron. They were fixed on the hull, but their barrels could be adjusted through winches.

These Divine Might Cannons, painstakingly developed by the Wang family, were designed by Wang Shouzhe, based on his imagination and limited theoretical knowledge. Then, they were carefully crafted by a few low-level Artifact Refiners in the family, gradually forging the prototype Divine Might Cannons.

Their power was immense, but they were very cumbersome. Each one of them weighed several thousand jin, so even for a Spirit Platform Realm cultivator, moving them was not an easy task.

The reason why Wang Shouzhe constantly invested resources to explore the initial technology of the "Divine Might Cannon", other than its low technical threshold, was mainly because Ping'an Town was located on the periphery. Once a beast tide occurred, it would be the first to be hit.

He had never forgotten the hardship the Wang family endured while resisting the beast tide. Even without the rebellion, the loss to the Wang family would have been substantial.

Moreover, that was merely a beast tide led by a Level Five fierce beast. What if a Level Six or even Level Seven beast tide happened?

Undoubtedly, the Divine Might Cannon is one of the weapons with the lowest development threshold and the highest cost-effectiveness against the beast tide. Of course, if you want to use it to fight a Tianren Realm Cultivator, that's sheer daydreaming.

They are far more agile in the sky, even more so than fighter jets, considering the twists and turns they can make without any concern for consumption.

Just like the crossbows, the Divine Might Cannons were also very suitable for battleships. Wang Shouzhe held high expectations and ambitions for the expansion of the seas.

Those heads of households controlling the Divine Might Cannons had undergone initial training. Although they were clumsy due to nervousness, their advantage was their great strength. Even as Qi Refinement Cultivators, they were far stronger than ordinary people on Earth.

Soon, relying on the turn of the winch, they quickly adjusted the position. Following the previous instructions closely, they ignited and fired the cannons.

The huge iron balls roared out.

However, due to the rolling tide, it wasn't as simple as shooting on land. The first two Divine Might Cannons fired heavy iron balls into the water, splashing huge waves.

Even so, it gave the members of the Jiaolong Gang quite a fright. What was that thing with such a formidable power, much fiercer than a crossbow?

Fortunately, the third Divine Might Cannon was lucky. The iron ball followed a parabolic trajectory and smashed onto the deck. After causing the deck to splinter, it bounced forward, and two of the Qi Refinement Gang members were brutally crushed on its bouncing path, shattering into several pieces...

The iron ball, pulling along a string of flesh and shattered pieces, crushed the stern and fell into the sea.

In an instant!

The Jiaolong Battleship fell into silence. The gang members and the commander turned pale. What was that? It could actually crush people...

Chapter 49: Promotion! Ancestor Ruhong Reaches the Heavenly Human Realm

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However, looking at Chen Clan's merchant fleet, their morale was greatly boosted after their Divine Might Cannon hit an enemy ship.

"Good, my uncle's Divine Might Cannon really is powerful." Chen Xiuwu excitedly punched the air, shouting, "Shoot, keep hitting them hard for me. Whoever makes a new successful hit, this Young Clan Leader will reward with one hundred Qian Gold."

One hundred Qian Gold?

The household heads operating the Divine Might Cannons suddenly felt their blood boiling. They frantically increased their rapidity as if injected with steroids.

Each Divine Might Cannon employed three household heads for operation. With one successful hit, each head would receive at least thirty Qian Gold. For ordinary clan members, it may take a year's worth of sustenance to achieve this sum.

If the household heads joined the shipfight, they would receive a relatively high subsidization per day, but it would typically range around ten to eighty Copper Coins. Thirty Qian Gold was a considerable sum for any cultivators in the Vital Energy Refining Realm.

The fourth Divine Might Cannon still missed the huge Jiaolong Warship target. However, the fifth shell was exceptionally lucky and hit the bow and sides of one of the Jiaolong warships directly.

"Bang!"

Wood shards flew in all directions, and the solid iron ball perforated the ship, creating a hole as big as a water barrel. It stirred around inside the ship body, demolishing many compartments. The ship shook as soon as the sea wind rushed in, slowing its speed.

"One hundred Qian Gold, grateful for Young Clan Leader's reward!" The three household heads from the fifth group started howling with excitement.

Those who missed their shots in the other groups had expressions full of regret. Yet, their eyebrows showed a ferocious determination to score a hit in the next round.

There were a total of five Divine Might Cannons.

After hurling their initial round of shells, they paused and started loading for the second round.

This was merely Wang Clan's initial version of Divine Might Cannon with nothing but a sturdy cannon barrel. Everything else was still primitive. However, the Jiaolong Warship was unaware of this fact. After being hit twice, they seemed to be frightened by this mysterious weapon and significantly slowed down due to their natural fear and caution towards unfamiliar things.

That gave Chen's merchant fleet an opening.

The two fleets continued to chase each other across a certain distance in the waters outside Donggang.

A short while later, the five Divine Might cannons were fully loaded again. The previous real battle experience and the stimulation of Qian Gold had significantly increased the speed and efficiency of the household heads.

"Uncle said that the Divine Might Cannon would have a better effect if fired simultaneously." Chen Xiuwu had applied the advantage of being a Young Clan Leader, puffing up his abdomen full of Mysterious Energy and shouting, "All Divine Might Cannons take orders, aim at the Jiaolong Gang's flagship and focus on one single point.

Make the power of the Divine Might Cannons known, and don't waste my uncle's painstaking efforts."

Young Clan Leader Chen Xiuwu always mentioned his uncle fondly. Clearly, his idol was not his father Chen Fangjie, but his uncle Wang Shouzhe.

"Fire!"

As Chen Xiuwu gave the order, the sound of five Divine Might cannons firing simultaneously rang out. "Boom Boom Boom Boom Boom," the iron balls whistled towards the Jiaolong Battalion flagship.

I have to say, the cannonball's muzzle velocity of the Divine Might Cannon was far slower than that of modern Earth cannons, which are five to six times the speed of sound. But the term 'slow' is entirely relative.

With the speed approximately equal to the speed of sound, the Divine Might Cannon's shell could shoot nearly a hundred feet away in a blink of an eye. The distance between the two sides was only about forty feet, so the solid iron balls went off in front of the enemies in an instant.

Whether it was sheer luck or the stimulation of Qian Gold,

Of the five Divine Might Cannon shells fired, three astonishingly hit the enemy flagship. One of them bizarrely hit the main mast, causing the mast with its sails to crash onto the deck.

The other two, with remarkable ease, pierced through the ship's side; the shells entering the ship stirred up mayhem, and one of them broke a keel.

The entire Jiaolong flagship began to creak and wobble.

Being river ships, they valued speed, which meant their defensive capabilities were far inferior to Chen's ocean-going merchant ships.

Lu Jinyi's face turned pale, "Great Commander, we cannot go on like this. Maybe we should let Chen's merchant fleet go for now." he suggested.

"Run away?" Zhao Wuqing's scarred face twitched, "Our mission this time is to suppress the Chen Clan, showcase our Jiaolong Gang's strength, and ultimately force the Changning In-law Alliance, led by the Wang Clan, to bow to us, allowing us to indirectly intervene in maritime interests."

"And now, you're asking me to run away? What face would I have to meet my father-in-law?" A domineering aura rose from him, as if a whirlwind soared straight to the skies, "Chen's mysterious weapon is just a novelty, effective when dealing with ordinary people, but they seem to have forgotten, in this world, power rules after all."

With that, Zhao Wuqing leaped forward; within a few breaths, he appeared over the merchant ship, appearing as intimidating as a heavenly deity surveying mortal existence.

"Tianren Realm Cultivator!"

Both Chen Fanghua and Chen Xiuwu looked at each other, their faces pale and despondent. Their spirits of gaining the upper hand a moment ago now vanished.

"Get the crossbows ready! Covering shot~"

As one of the mainstays of the Chen Clan, Chen Fanghua had seen many ups and downs and roared out orders immediately. His commanding Spiritual Platform Realm voice cut through the sea wind and was heard by every other ship, like a bell tolling the dawn and dusk.

For the vast majority of sailors or household heads, Tianren realm cultivators are legendary existences, encountered only in tales. Numerous legends and wonders tell that Tianren realm cultivators are aloof and unbeatable forces.

Chapter 49: Promotion! Ancestor Ruhong Reaches the Heavenly Human Realm

In just a flash, the morale of Chen Clan's caravan was crushed to its extremes. Only a few in a panic were able to pull their crossbows and fire towards the sky. Dozens of arrows flew chaotically, appearing powerless.

"Humph! A bunch of ignorant rabble." Zhao Wu Qing practices a cultivation technique known as "Ancient Barbarian Ultra Gold Body Technique". It is a sophisticated body refining technique that his sworn father, Long Wuji, had acquired from who knows where.

It is said to be a refining instruction of a barbarian tribe, consuming heavenly and earthly treasures and food to convert into essence, and consuming essence to pursue the extreme body refinement. It is rumored that at the highest level of cultivation, the practitioner's body expands like a giant, appearing golden-bronze in color, impervious to sharp weapons, and immune to the five elements.

Clearly, Zhao Wu Qing has not yet perfected the Ancient Barbarian Ultra Gold Body Technique. Currently, his body has only slightly expanded, muscled knots building up like iron, appearing coated with a faint golden light.

A few sharp arrows barely grazed him. He was also too lazy to dodge. The arrows clinked like metal hitting stone and were deflected, leaving a faint white mark on his diamond-like muscles.

Subsequently,

Zhao Wu Qing plummeted like a meteor, crashing onto the flagship of the caravan. The shock wave spread in all directions, throwing the servants and household heads off their feet.

The thick ship's deck showed a series of cracks, the crisp sound of the ship breaking apart echoed continuously.

Zhao Wu Qing sneered at Chen Xiuwu, his single-eyed scar appearing even more horrifying.

Chen Xiuwu's legs gave away, and he almost couldn't stand steadily.

The gap between the two was too vast, as if a mortal had encountered a fierce tiger, with no chance to resist.

The Heavenly Human Realm!

It was unimaginable that the Jiaolong Gang would be so heartless and ruthless, directly deploying a Heavenly Human Realm Great Commander. Could it be, they were prepared to tear up the agreement and go to war without hesitation?

"Boy!"

Zhao Wu Qing took steps towards Chen Xiuwu, with each step, the thick deck creaked. Cracks spread continuously around him. He sneered, "Looking at your outfit and appearance, you must be the Young Clan Leader of the Chen Clan, right? You enjoyed firing that attack, didn't you?"



"Xiuwu, I'll hold him off, you should jump off the ship and leave." Chen Fanghua stood in front of him, his face becoming extremely serious.

Disciples of the Chen Clan should always have great swimming skills. Chen Xiuwu had undergone strict training since childhood. If he had a chance to escape into the sea, there was a fair chance he could get away by swimming.

Suddenly!

At this most critical moment, a fierce and heavy aura approached quickly. At the same time, a loud shout exploded in the sky, "Jiaolong Gang, you dare to tear up the agreement and attack our Chen Clan convoy."

That voice, that aura!

Chen Fanghua and his nephew were instantly overjoyed, "It's Old Ancestor Ruhong, he has already broken through to the Heavenly Human Realm."

In recent years, Old Ancestor Ruhong had been in closed-door cultivation, preparing to pave his way into the final step. However, this final step is always different for each individual. Some can break out after a few months, some require many years. There are even some who fail during the promotion to the Heavenly Human Realm...

Old Ancestor Ruhong naturally revealed such an aura because he had broken through to the Heavenly Human Realm before they returned. He needed to solidify his cultivation realm, remaining low-key without announcing publicly.

"Chen Ruhong!"

Zhao Wu Qing squinted his single eye, seemingly surprised, "In a short time, he has already become a celestial being... This foundation is much stronger than in the reports!"

Chen Ruhong is a legendary figure, naturally, the Jiaolong Gang has detailed reports on him. It was understood that when Chen Ruhong was young, his aptitude was average. After miraculously surviving a shipwreck, his cultivation skills surged, elevating the Chen Clan to a glorious pedestal.

However, they never thought; intelligence is always just intelligence.

It looks like Chen Ruhong has been hiding his bloodline talent.

"Not good, retreat!"

At the first moment, Zhao Wu Qing flew into the air towards the Jiaolong warship. Facing Chen Ruhong who had recently advanced but wasn't steady yet, Zhao Wuqing naturally wouldn't back down.

However, Chen Ruhong was a water-spirit cultivator and held considerable advantages in the vast sea. Zhao Wuqing secretly acknowledged that even if he could defeat Chen, it wouldn't be over in a short while.

Right now, all of Donggang was alerted. The Chen Clan's reinforcements were assembling non-stop at the port and were about to set sail for support. If he, Zhao Wuqing, was entangled, then the entire Jiaolong fleet was in intense danger.

Besides, despite Donggang being remote, it was still part of Lord Changning Wang's territory. If the encounter dragged on, the Wang Clan or other families might come to the rescue.

"Invade my Donggang, and you wish to escape?" Clan Leader Ruhong had been in power over the Chen Clan for more than sixty years; he could size up the situation almost immediately.

If Jiaolong Gang dared to initiate a move at this juncture, they must have a specific purpose. If he could capture Zhao Wuqing and seize the three Jiaolong battleships, he could strike at Jiaolong Gang's weak spot.

It would enable him to seize control of the subsequent developments.

With the Clan Leader's furious shout, his ice-blue spear swung, stirring up tidal waves and forming pillars of water that shot into the sky like dragons, all charging towards Zhao Wuqing.

Water Dragon Spear!

The Chen Clan's inherited water spirit artifact was particularly effective in naval battles. Although merely a spiritual artifact, it exuded immense power when wielded by the Elder in the Heavenly Human Realm.

"You, a newly advanced Heavenly Human, think you can detain me, Zhao Wuqing?" In a fit of anger, Zhao Wuqing sent out a punch, shattering all the water pillars.

"So, it is Great Commander Zhao before me." Clan Leader Ruhong said without fear but with delight, "Excellent, excellent, excellent. I heard that Great Commander Zhao is the son of the leader of Jiaolong Gang. Capturing you will be even more useful."

For Ruhong to bring him down single-handedly was naturally not feasible.

However, Chen Clan of Donggang wasn't alone. Among the prominent families within Changning's territory, their alliances were as tight as a drum. When they received news of Chen Fanghua and Chen Xiuwu's merchant fleet being attacked by Jiaolong Gang outside the port, Chen Clan immediately sent a Spirit Bird to Wang Clan and other allies for aid.

What Clan Leader Ruhong needed to do was to stall Zhao Wuqing. His chances wouldn't be high elsewhere, but on this sea... Clan Leader Ruhong thought that this was already his best battlefield.

"Good, good, good!" Chen Xiuwu saw his clan's Old Ancestor had advanced to the Heavenly Human Realm and successfully summoned aid at a critical moment. He immediately seized the opportunity to shout, "Boys of the Chen Clan, opportunity knocks at last. Fire the Divine Might Cannons for this Young Clan Leader, fire, fire, fire!"

Boom, boom, boom!

A series of Divine Might Cannons sounded.

Meanwhile, some fast ships had left the Donggang port and sailed out to rescue the merchant vessels. Due to the advantage of battling on home turf, there would continuously be reinforcements pouring in.

An intense battle arose outside of Donggang Port.

The two Heavenly Humans fought from the sky to the sea, and then from the sea back to the sky. It was overwhelming. Zhao Wuqing tried to escape several times, but every attempt was fearlessly blocked by Elder Ruhong.

The clash between the fleets was also particularly fierce and brutal. Nevertheless, the Chen Clan of Donggang, which wielded the Divine Might Cannons, seemed to hold the upper hand.

Time ticked away little by little.

Less than an hour later.

A crane's cry rose to the sky. A Spirit Bird Flying Carriage swooped down from the clouds, heading straight for the battlefield. The carriage bore the mark of the Changning Wang Clan. It was manifestly a carriage reserved for their use.

Lord Wang Shouzhe and his wife surveyed the battleground from the transparent window of the flying carriage.

"My lady, Jiaolong Gang has flagrantly torn the contract with the noble families," Wang Shouzhe said with a slight frown, "It appears a storm is brewing."

"A pack of rubbish," Liu Ruolan's voice was cold and filled with killing intent, "Just kill them."

"Hmm?" Wang Shouzhe turned his head and immediately inhaled sharply, my lady... no, has Ruoling surfaced again?

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One could see frosty hints of icy blue radiating from Liu Ruolan, no, from Ruoling's body.

This frostiness was not the result of Mysterious Energy hardening, but more like the convergence of a certain "intent". It was formless and weightless, yet it carried a palpable texture and atmosphere, fierce and overpowering.

Her clothes fluttered without wind, and her black hair also slightly fluttered. Her usually graceful and soft brows and eyes seemed to be tinted with frost, becoming sharp and severe.

The force broadcasted unintentionally made Wang Shouzhe, who was in the same flying carriage, feel tremendous pressure.

Over the years, Ruoling has been appearing more and more frequently without making a sound.

Unlike in the very beginning, when only thoroughly angering Liu Ruolan would trigger Ruoling hidden within her to erupt.

Wang Shouzhe was slightly worried about this. Over the years, he has been researching what's happening with Ruolan and Ruoling? He guessed that some changes might have occurred with the "Innate Dao Fetus Spirit Seed" brought by Liu Xuanfu.

Or more likely, the "Innate Dao Fetus Spirit Seed" itself has some hidden attributes not recorded in the books.

However, due to the lack of related knowledge and Ruoling's increasingly traceless conditions of her appearances, Wang Shouzhe's "research" progress was quite limited.

At present, it can only be determined that she and Ruolan's consciousness are not interconnected, and they are two independent entities.

It's just that after occasionally waking up, she doesn't have an outburst, she merely coexists with Ruolan for a short time.

The only advantage for Wang Shouzhe is that Ruoling doesn't have the intention to break the marriage relationship between "Liu Ruolan" and him. Without realising it, Ruoling accepted the fact that Wang Shouzhe was her husband.

This is the reason why Wang Shouzhe can be alive till now...

During his lightning-fast thinking, Liu Ruoling opened the flying carriage. She was brimming with killing intent, preparing to jump down from the flying carriage to commit murder.

"Madam, don't be impulsive." Wang Shouzhe hurriedly said in order to stop her, "The one who fought against Old Ancestor Ruhong is named Zhao Wuqing, he is the adopted son of Long Wuji, leader of the Jiaolong Gang."

"So what?" Liu Ruoling coldly glanced at Wang Shouzhe.

"Long Wuji, besides controlling a formidable power as a Overlord, he himself is a prominent figure in the Purple Abode Realm.

Once Zhao Wuqing is killed, I am afraid that we will have no way of reconciling with Jiaolong Gang." Wang Shouzhe swallowed his patience, and "gently" explained to Liu Ruoling, "Given the comprehensive strength of our Changning Wang Clan, we are currently not suitable for a full-scale war with the Jiaolong Gang."

"A measly Purple Abode practitioner... kill them, just kill them." Liu Ruoling said disdainfully in cold voice.

"Uh..."

Wang Shouzhe broke out in cold sweat. What does she mean by kill a measly Purple Abode practitioner? You, Liu Ruoling, are not even at the Heavenly Human Realm yet...

Because Liu Ruolan has been comparatively "lazy" in her cultivation, over the years, she has "only" reached the seventh level of the Spirit Platform Realm. She barely categorizes as being in the advanced stage of the Spirit Platform Realm.

This was all thanks to Liu Ruoling waking up a while ago, complaining that her cultivation base was too low and subsequently promoted to the advanced stage after a period of closed-door cultivation.

With her Great Heavenly Pride Bloodline and her own level of equipment and combat strength, she should barely manage to defeat an ordinary cultivator in the early stage of the Heavenly Human Realm. However, if she encounters a Heaven's Chosen level person at the early stage of the Heavenly Human Realm, she is likely to struggle.

After all, there's a huge world difference between the Heavenly Human Realm and the Spirit Platform Realm.

So what is a Purple Abode Realm cultivator?

Limited Sky Pride cultivators with slightly lesser bloodline are less likely to cultivate to the Purple Abode Realm. Therefore, the majority of Purple Abode Realm cultivators are born from the Sky Pride bloodline, or even from the Great Heavenly Pride Bloodline.

Why are the Sky Pride and Great Heavenly Pride able to easily surpass their level during the lower stages? Mainly because in the low realm, the strong and the weak are mixed, and most people's bloodlines are not that great.

The higher they go, the advantage of having a strong bloodline will gradually diminish. After all, every cultivator who can cultivate to the Purple Abode Realm has a powerful bloodline. And when they reach the Divine Power Territory, isn't everyone born from a Great Heavenly Pride bloodline?

However, even though Wang Shouzhe was secretly complaining, he couldn't really "rebuke" Ruoling outright.

After all, Ruoling is his wife, Wang Shouzhe decides to continue to treat her gently in order to maintain family stability. He persuades: "Madam, don't underestimate this. According to my investigations, this Long Wuji has a quite mysterious background and also has a powerful support behind him.

Our Wang Clan's In-law Alliance may not know if we can win or not even if we wage a full-scale war, and even if we win, we would suffer heavy losses."

"Please consider the overall situation." Wang Shouzhe pleaded persuasively and patiently, "At present, the most beneficial result for us is to capture Zhao Wuqing and his followers alive, and take the initiative into our hands. Madam, please show some understanding to your husband~~"

He warmly called her "madam" in a soft and delicate tone.

Even the strong-willed Liu Ruoling couldn't help but soften under such tender affection. She side-eyed Wang Shouzhe: "Very well. For the sake of my husband, I will let him live a little longer"

Having said that, she jumped down, walking on air like a War Goddess, seeming to float but with great speed she soared towards the battlefield.

"Madam, catch your weapons..."

Wang Shouzhe hastily took out a spirit sword, a set of spirit armor, and a Feiyu Spirit Treasure from his Storage Ring, and threw them all from a distance to Liu Ruoling.

Earlier, because Ruolan thought she stayed at home all the time to take care of the family and had no use for the "Autumn Water Sword", Yuan Water Spirit Armor, and Feiyu Spirit Treasure, she gave all three to her daughter, Wang Liyao.

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With that said, Ruoling currently has no readily available equipment on her.

Previously, it was thought that as a Great Heavenly Proud, her quick advancement into the Heavenly Human Realm meant that there was no point in specifically providing her with a full set of gear. It would be better to wait until she promotes and seize any opportunity to get her a Middle or Top Grade Magical Weapon.

But now, with the urgency of the situation, the equipment disgarded by Old Ancestor Longyan has to be brought out for her temporary use.

In fact, this "Cold Frost Sword" and "Frost Spirit Armor" were gifts from Luo Qiu and Luo Jing to Old Ancestor Longyan, being high-quality Top Grade Spirit Artifacts.

These treasures were won from winding trials of the Divine Martial Dynasty by their own strength, and were given to Old Ancestor Longyan in gratitude for her guardianship of their clan, specifically choosing mysterious ice attribute equipment to make a set.

Now, since Old Ancestor Longyan has advanced into the Heavenly Human Realm and acquired the better "Purple Thunder Sword" and "Mysterious Ice Jiaolong Armor", these two Top Grade Spirit Artifacts were deemed obsolete. Together with the discarded Feiyu Spirit Treasure, they were temporarily stored with Wang Shouzhe.

If not, Wang Shouzhe wouldn't have been able to immediately provide a set of gear.



Even though this set of equipment doesn't align perfectly with Ruoling's bloodline attributes, and it hasn't been broken in, it may not be easy to use.

But having something is always better than having nothing.

"Hum!"

The three pieces of gear rushed off.

Liu Ruoling extended her hand gracefully, and the three pieces of gear fell into it.

In an instant, a mysterious ice-colored armor like an ice crystal enveloped her whole body, with the white, frosty Feiyu Spirit Treasure spreading out behind her with a "rustling" sound.

With a graceful pull, the ice-blue longsword in her hand also bloomed with a brilliant glow.

Even if the attributes are not a perfect match, the two Top Grade Spirit Artifacts, together with the Feiyu Spirit Treasure, are enough to boost her overall imposing demeanor significantly.

With a flick of her wrist, a sword light swept towards Zhao Wu Qing like a piercing sunbeam.

In an instant, sword light like water swept across the sky.

A bitter coldness radiated from the sword light, blending with the mellow water glow, shrouding the entire harbor in a layer of hazy frost mist.

Under the concealment of this frost mist, not only did Liu Ruoling's figure become blurry, but the Sword Intent that was born out of the watery sword light also became elusive, as if a flower viewed through the mist was difficult to detect.

The sound of surging waves was filled with cheer, as if celebrating this sword.

"What?"

Zhao Wu Qing, entangled by Old Ancestor Ruhong, was already extremely annoyed. He didn't expect the Chen Clan to have reinforcements coming.

However, when he looked from a distance and saw that it was a Spirit Platform Realm Cultivator, his heart settled down.

Just a Spirit Platform Realm, even if her momentum or sword force is slightly stronger, at most she's just a Heavenly Proud. Does he, an accomplished realm cultivator, fear a mere Spirit Platform Realm?

Zhao Wu Qing roared and wildly urged the "Ancient Barbarian Ultra Gold Body Technique" as he saw the sword light about to reach him.

His body abruptly expanded again, and even the gold color on his body became deeper. His overall momentum also became more powerful and unassailable.

The next moment, the sword light that had swept across the sky had already arrived at an extraordinary speed and directly pierced his chest.

"Boom~!"

A powerful force exploded in his chest. His whole body trembled, and he was flung several yards back before he could barely stabilize himself.

Under the "Ancient Barbarian Ultra Gold Body Technique's" strong defensive power, his chest wasn't pierced through, but a sword intent carrying a bone-chilling coldness pierced through his golden body and entered his body.

This sword intent was not very powerful, but it was extremely difficult to deal with. He was unable to get rid of it for a while, causing a dull pain in his chest and a sharp pain in his viscera.

"Impossible!" Zhao Wu Qing spat out a mouthful of fresh blood, his face turned pale, and he exclaimed, "How can a mere Spirit Platform Realm be so strong?"

However, the current situation didn't allow him to continue being shocked.

With the support of the reinforcements, Old Ancestor Ruhong was overjoyed, "With Ruolan here to support, I can rest assured. Let's work together to capture this insufferable brute."

Saying this, Old Ancestor Ruhong intensified his offensive. He spurred his Water Dragon Spear to generate waves after waves, all of which surged towards Zhao Wu Qing.

At the same time, Ruoling also accepted Old Ancestor Ruhong's proposition. The Feiyu Spirit Treasure quivered slightly, and she transformed into a rainbow-like sword light, joining the battle and suppressing Zhao Wu Qing.

Meanwhile,

Aboard the flagship of the merchant fleet, Chen Xiuwu, who had a hint of young Wang Shouzhe's charisma, was exhilarated at the sight of this scene: "Brothers, my uncle and aunt have come to give us support. Those who want to make a name for themselves - seize this opportunity! Attack!"

For a moment, the Chen Clan's morale was high like a rainbow.

On the other hand, the Jiaolong Gang was morally defeated. Many who feared for their lives began to abandon ship and flee for their lives.

This is the disparity between a gang and a clan. When things are going their way, members of a gang are high-spirited and fierce. But once the situation takes a turn for the worse, their morale quickly falls, and few are willing to fight to the death or make sacrifices.

The people of a clan are different. They have families to fall back upon, and are blood-related to each other. Even the head of the household is passed down over generations, and the relationship between the subordinates and the master family is one of shared honour and disgrace.

When life is at stake, this blood-related bond can often exert a strong cohesion that instead ignites their stronger fighting spirit.

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Meanwhile,

The head of Chen Clan, Chen Fangjie, leading his elite tribesmen and household heads, rushed to the port to launch an attack by ship. Accompanying them were several Spirit Platform Realm Elders and Wang Luoyi, the mother of Chen Xiuwu.

As the Saying goes, an army's defeat is like a mountain collapsing.

With the continuous joining of reinforcements to the port, the morale of the Jiaolong Gang members dwindled rapidly, with many fleeing and even surrendering. Within a short time, all three Jiaolong battleships were seized.

Chen Clan's vessels began hunting down those who were fleeing by jumping into the sea. The fishing spears sank into the water, one by one skewering the fleeing soldiers like kebabs.

These were all military achievements, easy to achieve with little risk. Naturally, it drove the Chen Clan folks, their household heads, and even the boatmen and sailors, to flock to achieve them.

Wang Shouzhe's flying carriage continued to fly in the sky, observing everything on the battlefield.

At this point, the battle was coming to an end. The Chen Clan had won a total victory.

Only the battleground where Zhao Wuqing was, was still at a stalemate. Relying on the combined efforts of Old Ancestor Ruhong and Ruoling, they could naturally beat Zhao Wuqing. However, there's a difference between defeating someone and capturing them alive.

Even though Zhao Wuqing had received a brutal beating and looked extremely wretched, in his refusal to surrender, the battle could only drag into a deadlock.

At this critical juncture, Wang Shouzhe joined the battle.

In the three-against-one situation, Zhao Wuqing, no matter how unwilling, could only obediently surrender.

Subsequently, it was time to clear up the battlefield.

After Wang Shouzhe personally arranged for Ruoling to rest at Chen Clan's residence, he rushed to attend a meeting with Old Ancestor Ruhong. Even though they won the battle, they were left with a pile of troublesome issues.

Though the name Jiaolong Gang might sound like a third-tier gang, it was, in fact, an overlord of the region.

When Wang Shouzhe arrived at the main hall of the Chen Clan's residence, it was already crowded with people. Those present included Old Ancestor Lei Yuanzhou from Lei Family, Old Ancestor Beichen from Xu Clan, Old Ancestor Ruhong from Chen Clan, as well as members of In-Laws Alliance such as Liu Family of Shanyin, Gongsun Clan of Shanyang, Lu Family of Yingxiu, Xu Clan of Jinsha, etc.

"Shouzhe is here."

The main hall, which was initially somewhat messy, with some arguing and quarreling, suddenly quieted down as soon as Wang Shouzhe entered. The Old Ancestors of all the families stood up one after another to greet Wang Shouzhe.

"Shouzhe pays his respects to all the Old Ancestors," In terms of seniority, Wang Shouzhe was after all a junior. Moreover, he was a man who valued courtesy and affection. So, he naturally wouldn't lose half a point of the required etiquette and respect.

After the greetings and small talk, Wang Shouzhe took his place at the main seat.

This was rightfully his place.

Wang Family was the leader of the In-Laws Alliance, and it was because of the Wang Family and Wang Shouzhe that the Alliance had become so strong. Not to mention the Old Ancestors were his seniors, even if Old Ancestor Longyan was present here, Wang Shouzhe would have taken the main seat during an official meeting.

And Wang Shouzhe's final decisions were often the ultimate decisions of the In-Laws Alliance.

This position was not something that fell from the sky, but was earned by Wang Shouzhe with his capabilities.

As soon as he sat down,

Lei Yuanzhou of the Lei Family said, "Shouzhe, it was unwise of Chen Clan to rashly start a war with Jiaolong Gang. Jiaolong Gang is different from Qian's Commerce, the latter mainly established its business and was more cautious. However, once Jiaolong Gang starts a war with our In-Laws Alliance, they will be reckless."

"Elder Yuanzhou," Ruhong, the Old Ancestor's face was slightly displeased, "I have already explained previously that it wasn't Chen Clan who wanted to start a war with Jiaolong Gang, but they were the ones who first broke the agreement and made their move. They have brought the fight to us, should Chen Clan just let them hit us?"

Ruhong, the Old Ancestor, had already ascended to the Heavenly Human Realm, naturally having the qualifications to be equal with Lei Yuanzhou. At present, Donggang's Chen Clan, although still nominally an Eighth Grade Prominent Family, its promotion to the 7th Rank was just a matter of completing the government procedures.

Of course, as a newly promoted family, Chen Clan currently only has a seventh-grade Heavenly Human, it's overall strength is still somewhat weaker than that of the Lei Family. However, this is after all just a matter of development time, the sea-controlling Donggang Chen Clan has immeasurable potential for future development.

"Elder Ruhong," Lei Yuanzhou's face cooled slightly, "As the saying goes, patience will yield ultimate peace. If you really suffer any losses, Master Shouzhe will naturally stand up for you. But now, having killed so many of Jiaolong Gang's men, with Long Wuji's temperament, would he leave things as they stand?"

Just as Ruhong, the Old Ancestor was about to retort, Wang Shouzhe coughed twice and said, "Elders, please calm down for a moment, listen to what I have to say first."

As soon as he said this,

Both Lei Yuanzhou and Chen Ruhong suppressed their anger, and stopped arguing.

Taking a pause, Wang Shouzhe finally said, with a slightly serious face, "Jiaolong Gang, due to their long-term dominance over Peace River, overlaps with some of our In-Laws Alliance's sphere of influence. Therefore, I have always made no effort to collect information about Jiaolong Gang."

"To be honest, this sudden action by the Jiaolong Gang was somewhat unexpected, but on second thought, it was within reason. Long Wuji has long coveted the benefits of our In-Laws Alliance, but he's not a fool. If he really has evil intentions, wouldn't he strike when our In-Laws Alliance is still weak, rather than wait until we've become even stronger?"

"Based on this, we can deduce that as long as Jiaolong Gang harbors intentions to strike, even if they back down today, tomorrow they can still find new excuses to justify their actions. Therefore, I would like to advise all the elders here, stop harboring illusions."

As these words came out,

There was silence in the main hall.

Although Wang Shouzhe's words were not pleasant to hear, they revealed a fact.

"In that case, today's discussion should focus on how to deal with the ambition of Jiaolong Gang, how to overcome the current predicament," Wang Shouzhe spoke with a calm demeanor, "What do the elders think of this?"

Within a glance, Wang Shouzhe had unconsciously exhibited a demeanor of someone in control of the situation. His composure and self-confidence seemed to inject a shot of calmness into the hearts of the elders.

With Shouzhe here, they can definitely pull through.