

Spirit Realm #Chapter 101 — 110

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Chapter 101: Soul Link

Within the valley, smoke flooded the sky as the burning flames raging on sealed all of the ways in. Liang Zhong and the generals of Dark Asura Hall could only anxiously wait and watch outside as they had no way to charge into the valley.

Although Tu Ze, Zhuo Qian, and the rest felt uneasy about Qin Lie, they also had no way to charge into the flames, so they could only anxiously wait and watch the valley.

As the flames continued to incessantly burn at the edges of the valley, the fire further in had already become less fierce due to the destruction of the formation and the frigid air which spewed out of the cold spring.

Roiling heavenly lightning repeatedly descended, obeying Qin Lie as it struck him like a waterfall.

Thunderbolts coiled around his body like dragons, constantly rumbling as every bone in his body crackled. Every vein, strip of muscle, piece of flesh, and drop of blood had already reached the limit of soreness and pain.

Clap after clap of thunder echoed in his ears and resonated non-stop within his mind.

The heavenly thunder and lightning, like a hammer forging a blade, tempered and grinded away at his body, cleansing his muscles, bones, blood, flesh, and soul as it helped him truly form the Heavenly Thunder Sacred Body.

On the other side, Xie Jingxuan sat atop the Profound Nether Beast, wearing the finely wrought Blackscale Armor. Her graceful body turned stiff as the imprint of the main soul of the Soul Devouring Beast emerged within the pupil of her left eye...

The imprint within her left eye, along with the enormous savage mask which covered her face, caused her to suddenly seem extremely evil at this moment.

“Get out!”

Her chilly voice seemed to be somewhat anxious and angry as wisp after wisp of black colored smoke quietly flew out from within her body like fine black lines and slowly moved towards her body, trying to entangle her so that she would be completely be controlled by them.

The lower half of her right arm, which was snow white as jade, was entangled by the fine black lines. It was as if an insidious evil design had appeared on her arm.

The Soul Devouring Beast's soul imprint within her left pupil began to become less blurry, clearly up bit by bit as it continued to take over more of her consciousness.

"Qin Lie!" suddenly shouted Xie Jingxuan. A cold light flickered within her bright and clear right eye as it fixated itself on Qin Lie's body. "Come over right now! Quick, come beside me! The Soul Devouring Beast's main soul has invaded my body through my spirit artifact. Get over here now and use heavenly lightning to attack me, don't hold back!"

Qin Lie was still wondering why the main soul of the Soul Devouring Beast had suddenly disappeared when he heard her words. Naturally, he immediately understood.

At this time, the sky filled with lightning still constantly descended as before, submerging itself within his body, still raging throughout his body to temper his bones, muscles, veins, blood and flesh.

The pain had directly reached the depths of his soul, but he was able to endure it and had yet to lose his sense of reason...

He did as told and walked towards Xie Jingxuan.

"Hurry! I-I can't hold it back much longer!" exclaimed Xie Jingxuan as the glow in her right eye began to dim and the imprint of the Soul Devouring Beast's soul in her left eye became ever clearer.

Enduring the wild strikes of the heavenly lightning within his body, Qin Lie grinded his teeth as he sped up his pace and finally reached Xie Jingxuan.

"You really want me to use the heavenly lightning to attack you?" asked Qin Lie, suddenly hesitating.

"If you want to let this Soul Devouring Beast charge out using my body, if you want to leave behind future trouble, then you don't have to do it," said Xie Jingxuan. Even her voice sounded exhausted. "Otherwise, you must use as much of your power as possible to try and exterminate its soul, to truly destroy it!"

"Let's first try some other methods," said Qin Lie, raising his head. Gathering his mind and consciousness, he prevented thunderbolts from descending onto Xie Jingxuan's body, immediately saying, "Give me your hand. Let me hold your hand."

"I can't move," replied Xie Jingxuan as she became increasingly weak.

Qin Lie furrowed a brow, no longer hesitant. He simultaneously stuck out two thunderbolt-covered hands, taking Xie Jingxuan off of the Profound Nether Beast. Afterwards, he immediately clenched her two delicate, white, jade hands.

“Bzzt bzzt bzzt!”

The violent electric current which enveloped his entire body, accompanied by the rumbling of heavenly thunder, followed his two hands and wildly surged towards Xie Jingxuan's arms.

Instantly, lightning began to crackle on Xie Jingxuan's two jade hands as the energy of heavenly lightning directly surged into her body like a river which had overflowed her banks.

Xie Jingxuan's body instantly began to uncontrollably shake as traces of lightning leaked out from within the Blackscale Armor.

“Zzzt zzzt zzzt!”

The black soul lines which had covered her whole body like a vine suddenly began to break apart as it was attacked by the thunderbolts.

Xie Jingxuan's arms and the skin on her neck once again became snow white.

Her eye which had been about to lose its light suddenly glowed with a radiance once more as she endured the thunderbolts ravaging her body. She controlled a portion of the energy of heavenly lightning and directed it straight into her mind.

“Boom!”

The moment the thunderbolt entered her mind, she suddenly calmed down, as if heavy shackles had just been blown apart.

Upon being struck by the surging thunderbolt, the soul of the Soul Devouring Beast which had entered the depths of her mind was no longer able to hide and suddenly began to wildly release an evil mind consciousness, crazily bombarding her soul.

An expression of blank helplessness surfaced within Xie Jingxuan's eyes.

As if she had taken a heavy blow, she began to unconsciously mutter, “Daddy, don't, don't leave me, I'm afraid, I'm afraid...”

At this time, the Soul Suppressing Orb between Qin Lie's brows suddenly began to shine with a radiance, directly shining into Xie Jingxuan's eyes. From within the Soul Suppressing Orb emerged a mysterious suction force...

A pitch black soul strand was sucked out from Xie Jingxuan's left eye, and the strand connected with the Soul Suppressing Orb between Qin Lie's brows.

Wisp after wisp, strand after strand, the Soul Devouring Beast's soul was directly pulled out from within Xie Jingxuan's mind.

The Soul Suppressing Orb's radiance suddenly greatly increased even further.

At the same time, a soul connection had seemingly been formed between Qin Lie and Xie Jingxuan.

As if he had entered Xie Jingxuan's mind, Qin Lie was able to witness a memory which had been deeply hidden within the depths of Xie Jingxuan's memories. It was a most profound scene...

It was a dark red sky devoid of the sun, moon, and stars. The depressing, silent atmosphere was enough to cause anyone to go crazy.

Not even a single piece of vegetation could be seen atop the crimson red ground. Looking in the distance, all that could be seen were bare mountains, and littered between the mountains were massive humanoid and beast-like bones. Many of the bones were covered with dust and were already in the process of decaying, as if the mountains had been left unattended for ten thousand years.

Many exotic, Ghost Bird-like spirit beasts circled in the desolate sky, their cries resounding like a doomsday bell.

Right in the middle of a group of pure white spirit beast bones was a beautiful young girl wearing battle armor and wielding a short knife. Her small body was faintly trembling as tears emerged within her crystal clear eyes. She couldn't contain her sobs as she begged, "Daddy, don't, don't leave me. I'm scared, I'm scared..."

"Jingxuan, no one can help you, you must live on by yourself." A robust, imposing male figure with his back facing the little girl, gradually walked away. The man never turned his head, only indifferently saying, "If you cannot even handle the first level of the Nether Battlefield, then just die here and never return."

Ignoring the bitter entreaties of the young girl, the man slowly walked away until he finally disappeared.

After the man disappeared, the girl wielding a short knife powerlessly crouched there, sobbing.

The sobs eventually attracted a ghastly looking spirit beast with strange thorns covering its body. Once this spirit beast appeared, it immediately opened its bloody maw and prepared to bite down, wanting to swallow the delicious looking immature body in front of it.

Her eyes still extremely red and crying, the little girl wielded her short knife and began to fight against the spirit beast with great difficulty.

In the end, she won.

Her body was covered in blood, some from the spirit beast, some from herself. She sat beside the corpse of the spirit beast for a very long time.

She was very hungry, hungry to the point of dizziness. However, her father hadn't left her anything to eat, nor had he left her any fire stones.

She looked at the spirit beast corpse beside her. Then, as she cried, she used her short knife to cut off a piece of meat from the spirit beast's body. Grinding her teeth, she forced herself to eat the piece of raw, bloody flesh...

The scene abruptly ended at this point.

Qin Lie returned to his senses and discovered that there were still black soul strands flying out from within Xie Jingxuan's eye, but the Soul Suppressing Orb had hidden itself again.

Xie Jingxuan's eyes were still closed, her hands still in Qin Lie's. She had seemingly gone into a coma.

The blazing flames encircling the valley were still as monstrous as before as the thunderbolts in the sky continued to descend on Qin Lie. The energy of thunder and lightning within his body was still in the process tempering his body's flesh and bones.

He temporarily didn't bother overthinking it as he slightly moved away from Xie Jingxuan and sat down.

Meditating, he began to circulate Heavenly Thunder Eradication, attracting over the energy of heavenly lightning and wildly circulating it within his muscles and veins to cleanse his body and use the energy of the lightning and thunder from the Ninth Heaven to form the Heavenly Thunder Sacred Body.

He became fully focused.

Time gradually passed.

After who knows how long, the thunder and lightning in the sky disappeared and the dark clouds dispersed, revealing the bright moon suspended in the sky.

The flames within the valley had already died down. Only the flames outside were still burning. Those originated from the crimson stone pillars which had fire inciting Spirit Gathering Boards within them.

Outside the valley, Liang Zhong and the generals from Dark Asura Hall were all solemn as they worried about the situation within the valley.

Tu Ze, Zhuo Qian, and the rest were also anxiously waiting as they hoped to learn about Qin Lie's condition. However, because the flames had yet to completely die out, they had no way to enter the valley.

They could only helplessly wait.

Another period of time passed. As the cold spring exuded frigid air, the temperature around Qin Lie and Xie Jingxuan decreased further.

Perhaps it was due to the coldness, but Xie Jingxuan was the first to wake. She opened her eyes, which were now as clear as a pristine lake, and looked at Qin Lie who was sitting in front of her.

Lightning had concentrated itself atop Qin Lie's body as the rumbling of thunder emanated out from his body non-stop. It seemed as if he were bitterly cultivating some secret art.

The Soul Devouring Beast had long since taken its last breath, and the flames within the valley had already stopped burning. Only the outer ring of flames had yet to extinguish.

As she pondered and observed Qin Lie, her memories slowly returned and her expression gradually became complex.

After a while, she stroked her shrunken scythe, and upon discovering that everything was normal, inwardly let out a breath of relief.

Afterwards, she then analyzed the circumstances of her body. She discovered all her aches and sores. Every muscle and vein was inflamed, as if they had been mangled and stretched.

She slightly narrowed her brows as she, like Qin Lie, also sat down. Taking out a medicine pill, she swallowed it and began to recuperate her body so that she could recover her combat power as soon as possible.

The moon hid itself as the sun rose, and the flames outside the valley had now completely died out.

Liang Zhong, Tu Ze, Na Nuo, Xiong Ba, and the rest all entered the charred valley, arriving beside the central point of the cold spring. Immediately, they saw Xie Jingxuan and Qin Lie.

Both of them had their eyes closed, and they sat face to face about ten or so meters apart, both seemingly using their mind to attune themselves.

As for the body of the Soul Devouring Beast, it was still beside the cold spring, completely lifeless. It had clearly died long ago as its soul fragments were no longer active within the valley.

Chapter 102: The First Natal Palace

Not even a trace of fire could be seen within the valley.

Liang Zhong, Tu Ze, Na Nuo, Xiong Ba and the rest all circled around Xie Jingxuan and Qin Lie, looking at the two with puzzled expressions.

As they had no clue what had happened, they didn't dare ascertain whether or not the Soul Devouring Beast had been killed and extinguished. Thus, they all looked on with heavy expressions.

"Ban Hong, check the Soul Devouring Beast's body and see if there are any abnormalities," commanded Liang Zhong.

Ban Hong and three generals of the Dark Asura Hall, who had recovered some of their mind and spirit energy after taking out their spirit artifacts, moved to the Soul Devouring Beast's side and cut open its skull as they began to carefully analyze it.

"Mister Liang, the Soul Devouring Beast has already died," loudly reported Ban Hong a long while later. "There aren't any fluctuations of life within its thunderbolt ravaged head. However, its main soul is gone as well, I don't know whether or not it was able to escape."

Liang Zhong silently nodded and then said, "Yesterday, Miss already said that the Soul Devouring Beast had given up breaking through. Thus, even if it escaped, it will be unable to bring about any devastating calamities."

Everyone all clearly let out a deep breath.

"It's good if it's like this, it's good if it's like this..." Na Nuo's tensed nerves also calmed down as she looked towards the Soul Devouring Beast's corpse. Then, she looked at Xie Jingxuan and Qin Lie's bodies, asking, "Those two should be fine right?"

"I'm fine," suddenly said Xie Jingxuan as she opened her eyes.

Circle after circle of dark light released from her Blackscale Armor. The scale armor which covered her shoulders, waist, and legs detached piece by piece from her body and flew into her ring.

After the Blackscale Armor disappeared, she, who was wearing black, skin tight clothing, became movingly graceful and beautiful.

She put away her hideous mask, exposing her delicate and slightly pale face which added another level of moving beauty and delicateness.

“The Soul Devouring Beast’s main soul should have been eradicated.” She looked towards Qin Lie, then uncertainly said, “Qin Lie seems like he is about to enter the Natal Opening Realm. He’s currently at the crucial period of developing his first Natal Palace. Once he has formed his Natal Palace in his dantian’s spirit sea, he will wake up.”

“Natal Opening Realm?”

Everyone’s eyes revealed surprise as their gazes all turned towards Qin Lie, and all of them were inwardly astonished.

“Tu Ze, Zhuo Qian, you two watch after him. Don’t let anyone disturb him at this time, and make sure you two also don’t converse too loudly.” After Xie Jingxuan said this, she suddenly stood up. “Ban Hong, retrieve the spirit materials from the Soul Devouring Beast’s body. Be a bit more careful when dealing with its three eyes and beast core. You must not damage them.”

“Don’t worry, milady.” Ban Hong’s face was full of happiness as he hurriedly collected the other generals of the Dark Asura Hall. Using their weapons, they began to dissect the Soul Devouring Beast with their weapons.

“Miss, did the Soul Devouring Beast’s main soul truly die? Its breakthrough didn’t succeed did it?” asked Liang Zhong in a whisper.

At this time, Liang Zhong and Xie Jingxuan were already a fair ways away from the masses as they began to quietly converse. Tu Ze, Na Nuo, and the rest couldn’t hear anything.

“I’m not certain,” replied Xie Jingxuan as a glimmer of uncertainty flashed through her eyes. “Once he wakes up, I will thoroughly question him. Whether or not the Soul Devouring Beast was truly extinguished, only he knows,” she continued as she looked towards Qin Lie.

“What happened?” asked Liang Zhong again.

“Nothing,” said Xie Jingxuan, narrowing her brows as her face showed a slight hint of annoyance.

Thus, Liang Zhong didn’t dare to continue asking about it.

Within Qin Lie’s world.

Spirit energy, like thick white clouds, wound around every outer corner of the boundless spirit sea within his dantian.

In the middle of the boundless spirit sea, bolt after bolt of blue lightning gathered and twined together. Accompanied by the rumbling of thunder, the lightning was currently forming an existence which depended on the spirit sea. But at the same time, it seemed like an independent small world — a Natal Palace!

The bolts of lightning, like intelligent snakes or twisting earthworms, surged into his dantian's spirit sea from outside, constantly moving towards the center of the gradually forming Natal Palace where they turned into sturdy walls, resulting in the true creation of a small space.

—A small domain was formed with spirit energy as the base and thunder and lightning energy as the core.

Gradually, the initially unstable little domain became increasingly sturdy as it slowly took shape within the spirit sea.

Qin Lie's mind consciousness, from the start, had also entered into his dantian's spirit sea and had been observing the formation of his Natal Palace as it slowly condensed and took shape.

He knew of the intrinsic differences between the Refinement Realm and Natal Opening Realm.

In order to break into the Natal Opening Realm from the Refinement Realm, one had to establish a Natal Palace within their dantian's spirit sea—a small domain.

The formation of the first Natal Palace meant that one had successfully opened their natal palace and entered the Natal Opening Realm.

Advancing along the stages of the Natal Opening Realm was like constructing a small domain within a boundless sea which would gather to become a small island, then a small continent...

—Forming into a independent small world that existed atop the sea.

A Natal Palace was as such, a small domain within the dantian's spirit sea. These Natal Palaces could contain powers which were different from spirit energy.

Whereas spirit energy was created from the gathering and refinement of nature's spirit energy and thus was a fundamental power of the world, natal energy could be transformed into various kinds of different powers through the usage of special spirit arts.

For example, it could be turned into powers such as blazing fire energy, frigid ice energy, sharp metal energy, and thick earth energy.

Although these kinds of powers were different from spirit energy, they were all able to be cultivated by martial practitioners through those special spirit arts. Only through turning spirit energy into these kinds of energies would martial practitioners truly become able to display the power of their spirit arts, thus greatly enhancing their combat power.

This special quality of spirit energy caused the spirit arts of martial practitioners to be extremely strange and their combative styles to be splendid yet mysterious, resulting in numerous unique sects...

Xiong Ba cultivated blazing fire energy, Yan Ziqian cultivated frigid ice energy, and Tu Ze cultivated nebula energy. These were all cultivated through special spirit arts which transformed spirit energy. Each art had different special qualities, and thus, the resulting powers and effects were all different.

In general, when Refinement Realm martial practitioners fought, they would use the special characteristics of their spirit art to transform spirit energy to create fire energy, ice energy, or nebula energy.

However, it was different for Natal Opening Realm martial practitioners.

This was because within their dantian's spirit sea, they had created Natal Palaces. These Natal Palaces had the ability to store other types of energy in addition to spirit energy.

Martial practitioners of this realm, during their daily cultivation, would be able to turn spirit energy into these specific energies and then store them within their Natal Palaces.

When fighting opponents, as soon as they activated their spirit art, the specific energy within their Natal Palace would immediately surge out without the need to transform any spirit energy.

—This made it possible for martial practitioners to greatly enhance their fighting strength.

Natal Palaces completely relied on the dantian's spirit sea to be formed, but could be considered to be an independant small domain. It was the intrinsic, qualitative difference between a Refinement Realm and Natal Opening Realm martial practitioner.

“Zzzt zzzt zzzt!”

Blue bolts of lightning condensed together, and the Natal Palace within the spirit sea of Qin Lie's dantian began to glow resplendently as it became increasingly sturdy and compact. It was finally completed.

A clap of thunder suddenly emanated from within Qin Lie's body.

Just as Tu Ze and Zhuo Qian let out cries of shock, Qin Lie finally opened his eyes. Lightning snaked through his pupils, causing his eyes to greatly attract their attention.

“You actually entered the Natal Opening Realm!” Just from glancing at his pupils while they walked over, the two knew that he had succeeded. The two of them smiled, truly happy for Qin Lie.

“Boom boom boom!”

The sound of thunder constantly resounded within Qin Lie’s ears, shaking his head till it was dizzy. Only after quite a while was he able to recover and finally see the others clearly.

“Big Brother Tu, Sister Zhuo, Kang Zhi...” said Qin Lie with a slight smile.

“How do you feel?” asked Zhuo Qian, her face full of concern. “Is there anywhere where you feel uncomfortable? Don’t respond right away, carefully feel it out and check if everything is okay...”

Qin Lie immediately closed his eyes again.

As he felt his body’s condition, he suddenly discovered that his muscles and veins had seemingly become radiant, as if they contained wisps of thin lightning. Lightning also fluctuated amidst his flesh and bones; a lightning aura even emanated out from within his five visceras and six organs...

“This—This is the initial stage of Heavenly Thunder Sacred Body!” Qin Lie felt great joy within the depths of his mind.

He once again circulated Heavenly Thunder Eradication.

As soon as his mind moved, a pure, wild strand of thunder and lightning energy quickly surged out from the Natal Palace within his dantian’s spirit sea.

This violent thunder and lightning energy didn’t circulate out through his dantian’s spirit sea and then connect to his muscles and veins, but instead directly entered his body’s acupoints. It was from within his body’s meridians that the energy then surged out into the radiant muscles and veins!

As soon as Qin Lie gathered his energy again, the thunder and lightning energy in his meridians returned back to the Natal Palace within his dantian’s spirit sea.

This kind of circulation of thunder and lightning energy and the circulation of spirit energy indeed walked two completely different paths.

"The thunder and lightning energy within my Natal Palace directly flows through my acupoints and isn't connected to my spirit sea when it circulates to my muscles and veins. Will this cause any problems?" asked Qin Lie as he reopened his eyes.

After his question, Tu Ze and Zhuo Qian looked at each other, both of them thinking as their brows locked up.

"I'm not too clear on this matter. The nebula energy within my Natal Palace flows along the same path as my spirit energy, going through my dantian's spirit sea as it circulates through my muscles and veins and penetrates through my entire body. My circumstances seem... to not be the same as yours," responded Tu Ze after thinking a while.

"I'm the same as Tu Ze," said Zhuo Qian with the same expression.

"My cultivation won't experience any setback will it?" asked Qin Lie as his expression changed.

"Different spirit arts have different characteristics. Not everyone's circulation of energy within their Natal Palace is the same." At this time, Xie Jingxuan's clear yet cold voice suddenly emanated over. She continued, "The early stage of the Natal Opening Realm requires the creation of three Natal Palaces. The middle stage requires six, and the late stage requires nine."

"A martial practitioner at the peak of the Natal Opening Realm will have a total of nine Natal Palaces within their dantian's spirit sea. With nine Natal Palaces present, the special energies cultivated by the martial practitioner through their spirit arts will become vigorous and can be used to casually launch fierce attacks..."

"Each Natal Palace allows for the storage of one type of energy besides spirit energy. If a martial practitioner only cultivates one unique spirit art, once he reaches the peak of the Natal Opening Realm and gains nine Natal Palaces, the energies stored within them will all be the same."

"If a martial practitioner cultivates two, or even three or four spirit arts, then the number of different energies amongst his Natal Palaces will be two, three, or four respectively. However, within each Natal Palace, only one kind of energy can be stored. Otherwise, they will conflict with each other and cause the martial practitioner to immediately suffer serious injury. Spontaneous explosion and death is also possible."

While she rode over atop the Profound Nether Beast, Xie Jingxuan gave an explanation.

"Based on logic, a martial practitioner can cultivate up to nine different spirit arts and have nine different energies as each Natal Palace can store one type. In accordance with the characteristics of the spirit arts, there are many different and rare ways for

energy to circulate in and out of Natal Palaces. For example, there are people whose eyes can directly connect to their Natal Palaces, people whose hearts can directly connect to their Natal Palaces, and even people whose souls can directly connect...”

She stopped in front of Qin Lie. Seated atop the Profound Nether Beast, she lowered her head to look at Qin Lie and said, “For you to circulate your Natal Palace’s energy through your meridians is perfectly normal.”

As she spoke, Na Nuo, Xiong Ba, Tu Ze, Zhuo Qian, and the rest of the Natal Opening Realm martial practitioners all intently listened. Afterwards, they all showed expressions of enlightenment.

“Thanks,” said Qin Lie with a smile after he listened to her explanation. His heart felt much lighter.

“Come with me, I have things I want to speak to you in private.” Xie Jingxuan scooted up along the Profound Nether Beast towards its head, and afterwards, she motioned for Qin Lie to get on.

Under everyone’s astounded gazes, Qin Lie’s expression became surprised. With that, he lightly chuckled and obediently hopped onto the back of the Profound Nether Beast.

Chapter 103: Ten Thousand Contribution Points!

“What connection does that Qin Lie have with her? It’s very strange, she seemed to think highly of him. Is there something... between them?”

Little fatty Kang Zhi narrowed his little eyes and had a rascally smile as he snickered. “Is she attracted to Qin Lie? Haha, Qin Lie might be a bit lacking compared to me but he looks pretty handsome. Maybe he is just right for that woman’s tastes?”

“Just a bit lacking compared to you?” Zhuo Qian laughed. “You mean in terms of physique? Mn, you are a bit more in this area. Tu Ze, Chu Peng, and Han Feng cannot compare to you. In our hearts, you are the heavy-weight.”

“Kang Zhi, you are the strongest in this area.” Chu Peng pinched the flesh at his waist and said laughingly, “You grew another size recently.”

Kang Zhi’s smile became awkward.

“It’s probably that Qin Lie helped her in killing the Soul Devouring Beast.” Zhuo Qian looked in the distance and said in a low voice, “The people of Internal Affairs have sharpened themselves through a bloody experiences and their hands are dripping in blood. The more beautiful the woman that holds a high position in the Department of Internal Affairs is, the stronger they are.”

Speaking more on this, Zhuo Qian paused and sighed. "I hope he doesn't interact anymore with the woman from Internal Affairs. These kinds of people usually have complex histories and easily goes to extreme lengths. If one interacts with them for a long time... Qin Lie could be affected. This is not of any benefit to him."

After she said this, everyone became silent and considered what she meant in her words.

The Profound Nether Beast slowly stopped.

Dressed in closely-fitting black tights, Xie Jingxuan came down from the Profound Nether Beast with a cold expression. She did not turn her head and said coldly, "You, come down."

Qin Lie jumped off.

Xie Jingxuan's brow creased as she looked down at him with cold eyes. "Is the Soul Devouring Beast alive or dead?"

Qin Lie did not instantly respond and used a wisp of his mind consciousness to examine the inside world of the Soul Suppressing Orb. Inside it, he could faintly discern the presence of the Soul Devouring Beast, but when he focused to search for it, it was nowhere to be found. He didn't know where exactly it was hiding.

He was certain that the Soul Suppressing Orb had absorbed its soul and temporarily sealed it inside the orb, so it could not come out and commit evil.

But why the Soul Suppressing Orb had done so, what its goal was, he did not know.

"It was destroyed by the thunder." After a moment of silence, he started to explain, "At that time, my thunder and lightning permeated your body and chased it out of your mind. The moment it left your eyes, I gathered all the thunder power and killed it instantaneously. Not one bit of the soul escaped."

Qin Lie's grandfather had sternly warned him to never leak the secret of the Soul Suppressing Orb, so he had to conceal it.

Xie Jingxuan's eyebrow jumped as she looked coldly at him. "Is that really the case?"

"Yes." Qin Lie's face was honest.

Xie Jingxuan was silent, and after a while, she suddenly said, "From my point of view, the Soul Devouring Beast was not forced out of my mind by the power of the lightning and thunder, but... sucked out by a strange force. My mind was not clear then, but at the very least, I know that the attractive force came from you, or maybe a certain object on your body..."

Her expression suddenly became cold. "Am I right?!"

A pressuring ripple of power was suddenly draped over Qin Lie's body like a cage or noose!

This power was hard to see with the naked eye, but it caused Qin Lie's body to suddenly become extremely heavy as though he were holding up a mountain. He wasn't even able to move.

Xie Jingxuan's eyes were icy, her beautiful face full of sternness. That terrifyingly sharp scythe appeared in her hand.

This very moment, her presence was intimidating and was a great shock to Qin Lie.

"You're mistaken." Sweat beaded on Qin Lie's forehead. His back trembled slightly, but his expression was firm as he shouted, "That's only your imagination!"

A faint purple flower that was composed of pure power suddenly formed on Qin Lie's body.

Looking from the outside, it was as though a strange purple flower had bloomed on his body, causing him to currently look extremely strange.

The purple demon flowers were like a terrifying lock that imprisoned Qin Lie's body and sealed his physical strength, so it was difficult for him to move.

"I do not believe that it was just my imagination." Xie Jingxuan had a cold expression. "Also, I felt you peeking at my memories! You went into the deeper levels of my memory!"

"That was caused by the soul of the Soul Devouring Beast." Qin Lie grit his teeth, his expression sorry. His knees gradually bent as though he was almost at the limit of what he could tolerate.

After the purple flowers bloomed, they gradually tightened and strangled him, suffocating him as well.

"So you really did enter the deep levels of my memory. What did you see?" Xie Jingxuan's eyes became even icier.

"I saw a helpless little girl, saw her being forcibly left behind by her father on the Nether Battlefield, saw her fighting alone against the Nether Realm's spirit beasts..." Qin Lie's expression was twisted, but when he recalled what he had seen, his voice became strangely calm as he said lightly, "I felt the terror she felt then, felt the panic and helplessness when she was abandoned by her father, experienced the sorrow she experienced then..."

As he spoke, the picture of the little girl crying set into his mind. A soreness came into his heart, and he even temporarily forgot the heavy pressure on his body.

Xie Jingxuan suddenly became silent.

The ice in her eyes gradually disappeared and turned into a very complex expression.

With furrowed brows, she looked at Qin Lie's face. It was terrifyingly twisted due to being strangled by the purple demon flowers, but when she saw that, while Qin Lie's tone was calm, his eyes clearly showed soreness and sympathy...

A certain soft part of her heart seemed to have been plucked, so she closed her eyes.

The pressure put on Qin Lie's body instantly retreated. The purple demon flowers also disappeared. Qin Lie instantly collapsed as he was rid of the heavy burden, his body soaked in sweat and dishevelled as he panted heavily to adjust.

"You did not collapse under my power and managed to keep standing. It seems that you have many secrets on your body. The strength of your body is stronger than the great majority of martial practitioners in the Natal Opening Realm that I have seen. The spirit art you cultivate must be unique in refining your body."

Xie Jingxuan closed her eyes again, her expression still cold but not harsh.

"No matter what you are concealing from me, you better have truly killed that Soul Devouring Beast. If that Soul Devouring Beast comes out again and does evil," she glanced at Qin Lie, "then I will not ask anything of you and will simply kill you to prevent further trouble."

Finishing, she mounted her Profound Nether Beast and left while saying with her back to Qin Lie, "Your mission this time has ended. I will communicate with Nebula Pavilion and they will award you ten thousand contribution points."

"Ten thousand contribution points!" Qin Lie's eyes lit up.

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"Mister Liang, why isn't there a soul crystal? That object is extremely rare, and it can only be from soul-type beasts like the Soul Devouring Beast. Without the soul crystal, this Soul Devouring Beast's value is greatly diminished."

Ban Hong and the other generals of Dark Asura Hall were dismembering the enormous body of the Soul Devouring Beast. They cut out and organized its bones, muscles, veins, eyes, and teeth. However, he just felt regret at not finding the soul crystal.

“If the Soul Devouring Beast was completely smelted by the Eight Extreme Trigram Fire Formation, the memories and impurities in the soul would be burned away which would form a pure soul crystal. Everyone knows that soul crystals can increase soul power, so we all know the value of the soul crystals. Due to this, we use the Eight Extreme Trigram Fire Formation when we try to kill Soul Devouring Beasts.”

Liang Zhong had a helpless expression as he stood beside the Soul Devouring Beast's body. “But events do not proceed as planned. This Soul Devouring Beast was killed by the thunderbolts. Thunderbolts are the bane of all evil souls and tormented spirits. The soul was killed instantaneously by thunder and lightning which left no trace behind. Naturally, it would be difficult for a soul crystal to form. “

He looked in the direction that Gao Yu left. “When that boy retreated at the time, I was also curious, but now I understand. That guy... he knew what Qin Lie would do and was afraid that the thunderbolt would kill the Demon God's shadow, so he disregarded our shouts and left prematurely.”

“Ah, it is such a pity not to have smelted out the soul crystal.” Ban Hong was extremely pained. There was only the soul crystal in his mind, and he could not accept Liang Zhong's words.

“It is already very fortunate to kill the Soul Devouring Beast. Not getting the soul crystal is only because our luck is not extremely exceptional.” Xie Jingxuan came back on the Profound Nether Beast. She had resumed her usual coldness and said, “The Soul Devouring Beast is dead, we have completed our mission. There is no need to stay here.”

“You guys prepare and meet up with us to leave this mountain valley later.” Liang Zhong understood her meaning and nodded as he said to Tu Ze, Xiong Ba, and the others. “We will open up the path ahead and you can just follow. We will protect you so you can safely leave this mountain valley surrounded by spirit beasts.”

“Understood!” Na Nuo, Xiong Ba, and Tu Ze confirmed in unison.

“There is a Mystical Cold Jade vein under the cold spring inside the valley. The vein goes down and should have a good amount of Profound Cold Jade.” Xie Jinxuan looked at Tu Ze and said, “We found the vein, and it now belongs to your Nebula Pavilion to harvest. The accomplishment will be put on Qin Lie's head. Tell your brother to award him with ten thousand Nebula Pavilion contribution points.”

“Ten thousand contribution points!”

Tu Ze, Zhuo Qian, Kang Zhi, and the people from Crimson Flame Association and Water Moon Sect all exclaimed in union with shocked gazes.

Ten thousand contribution points was a considerable amount of wealth in Nebula Pavilion. This many contribution points would be enough for Qin Lie to use all the cultivation rooms of Nebula Pavilion, borrow all kinds of high quality books from Scripture Tower, and even buy some pretty good spirit artifacts...

The previous year in the Arctic Mountain Range, he had heavily wounded the elder of Shattered Ice Manor, Wu De, with the help of the Demon Wolf King and inflicted heavy losses on Shattered Ice Manor. He had also rescued Tu Ze and the others before that and assisted them in killing many Shattered Ice Manor martial practitioners...

The contributions of those years put together was just three thousand.

Liu Yan had been able to buy a Common Grade Five Hexagonal Shield with two thousand contribution points, and those two thousand points were saved over several years...

Even the hall masters and elders of Nebula Pavilion could not obtain ten thousand contribution points easily. They needed at least one or two years.

The total duration of Qin Lie's trip was just a bit over a month, travel time included, yet he acquired ten thousand contribution points. How could the crowd possibly accept that?

Chapter 104: Battle Armor

With Xie Jingxuan and Liang Zhong clearing the road, the spirit beast horde outside the mountain valley were nothing to worry about.

As the scythe and the Azure Moon flew, pieces of flesh and blood splattered. One after another, spirit beasts were exterminated

Qin Lie, Tu Ze, and the members of Water Moon Sect and Crimson Flame Association followed closely. With ease, they arrived at the stone forest outside.

The spirit beast horde had only come over to cultivate because of the abundant spirit energy inside the Eight Extreme Trigram Fire Formation. When the Eight Extreme Trigram Fire Formation exploded and the Spirit Gathering Boards were destroyed, the spirit energy in the valley dropped to normal levels again, so the spirit beasts did not linger near the stone forest.

They scattered and roamed at the corners of the stone forest as they prepared to continue to do evil outside.

When they reached the edge of the stone forest, Qin Lie saw Ye Yangqiu, the elder of the Discipline Hall. He was leading a group of Discipline Hall martial practitioners as well as a pale Gao Yu.

There were also two elders from Crimson Flame Association and Water Moon Sect. They had come when they heard the news and were preparing to enter the stone forest to kill spirit beasts.

"Greetings Lady Xie." Ye Yangqiu and the elders from the two powers saw Xie Jingxuan ride out on the Profound Nether Beast. They all bowed slightly in greeting.

Xie Jingxuan, dressed in white, held a cold expression. "You are late and unable to help me. Fortunately, the Soul Devouring Beast was killed. You only need to clean up the remaining spirit beasts. Also, if those from Shattered Ice Manor ask, Yan Ziqian and his group were torn apart by the Soul Devouring Beast."

Finished speaking, she directed the Profound Nether Beast past the three elders and left the stone forest first.

Na Nuo, Xiong Ba, Tu Ze, and the others had strange expressions, but no one spoke and nodded to show their understanding.

Then, Ban Hong and the soldiers from Dark Asura Hall closely followed on their unicorns and left as well.

Liang Zhong was the only one that stayed. He said to everyone else, "We need to travel to the Arctic Mountain Range, so we will not linger here in the stone forest. The Soul Devouring Beast is dead, so the rest will not be difficult for you."

Ye Yangqiu nodded. "We have come to kill the spirit beasts gathered in the stone forest."

In this period of time, Ye Yangqiu had swept the surrounding cities with the two elders, Ge Hong of Crimson Flame Association and Luo Wei of Water Moon Sect. They were responsible for killing up to Rank Two spirit beasts around Icestone City, Crimson Flame City, and Water Moon Sect.

In the recent fortnight, they found that there was an absence of activity from Rank Two spirit beasts.

They received news amidst their confusion. The brass had told them that there were many spirit beasts gathered in the stone forest at the center of the three cities. They were ordered to lead people into the stone forest to aid Dark Asura Hall to accomplish this matter.

However, they were a step too late.

"Qin Lie, Gao Yu, you two come over." Liang Zhong rode the Profound Nether Beast and formed a distance from the group and moved behind a stone peak.

Qin Lie walked from Tu Ze's side, and Gao Yu walked out of the group of Discipline Hall members, both of them moving behind the stone peak as well.

"Gao Yu, are you alright?" Liang Zhong asked with a furrowed brow.

Gao Yu had previously left the mountain valley by himself. He had broken through without regard for the spirit beast herds, and everyone had been worried that he would be torn apart by the spirit beasts. It was unexpected that he was still alive and well.

"I'm fine." Gao Yu's face was ashen pale.

He did not say how he had managed to pass through the spirit beast herds. Instead, he looked at Qin Lie and thought for a moment before saying, "The thunder and lightning you attracted at that time was potentially fatal for me. I had to leave. Otherwise, my soul and the shadow in my ring... could have been scattered."

"Mn, I understand." Qin Lie nodded.

"I called you two over to give you two something. Mn, I had promised you two before." Liang Zhong smiled slightly. "The Demon God's shadow that Gao Yu summoned helped us slow the attacks of the Soul Devouring Beast. You left too early however. Otherwise, it would not have been so troublesome."

He looked at Qin Lie with a strange gaze. "I do not know what happened in the mountain valley, but I know you definitely helped Miss greatly. Otherwise, Miss would not have told Nebula Pavilion to give you ten thousand contribution points."

"Ten thousand contribution points?" Gao Yu's expression was shocked.

Qin Lie snickered. "Gao Yu, we won't have to worry about contribution points in the near future. Ten thousand contribution points is enough for us to do what we want in the Combat Room."

Gao Yu's expression turned cold. "I'll get at least two thousand contribution points this time. In the future, I have to be the one to pay the contribution points to use the combat room!"

"Up to you." Qin Lie smiled without care.

"These two sets of Beastskin Armor are for you two." The spatial ring on Liang Zhong's finger flashed, and two Dark Asura Hall general armor sets were revealed. He handed them to the two people as he said, "The Beastskin Armor of Dark Asura Hall is made with the skins of Rank Three and Four spirit beasts. The skins for these two came from the Rank Three spirit beast, the Metal Wing Golden Horn Lizard. Its skin is thick. It doesn't just stop many sharp weapons, but can defend against some spirit energy..."

He thought and then said, "Oh, I forgot to tell you. Battle armor is usually very heavy. These two sets of armor are relatively light if they are worn by Manifestation martial practitioners. It might be a challenge for you two but no worries. If it is heavy to wear now, you can wait until you have higher cultivation and then..."

Liang Zhong's words suddenly stopped. He looked in shock at the duo with a strange gaze.

Gao Yu and Qin Lie had taken the Beastskin Armor and put them on while he was still explaining. At this moment, the two had started to move in the stone forest.

Gao Yu's movements were slightly hindered, but Qin Lie was not affected at all. It was as though he was wearing normal clothing.

"It's very light, not as serious as you said. Not bad, very comfortable." Qin Lie jumped around for a while and then stopped to review it with a relaxed expression.

"Slightly heavy but still acceptable. There shouldn't be a problem wearing this," Gao Yu expressed.

Liang Zhong was shocked and then he grimaced. "Forgot that the two of you are unusual. It seems I underestimated your strength. Mn, good, it's good as long as you can wear it."

Pausing, he said, "I had originally thought to give each of you a piece of the soul crystal after smelting the Soul Devouring Beast to death with the Trigram Fire. I had not expected the Soul Devouring Beast to be killed with thunderbolts. Because of that, the soul crystal did not form." He sighed regretfully. "The soul crystal is the good stuff, a treasure that can nurture the soul and increase soul power. It is rare, ah, what a pity..."

"Soul crystal?" Qin Lie was confused.

"Yes, soul crystals can store power like spirit stones. However, spirit stones contain spirit energy while soul crystals contain soul energy! Soul crystals are extremely valuable. Only some soul-type beasts and dangerous things can form clean soul crystals after being smelted and forged by strong fire. This stuff is expensive everywhere and hard to find."

Liang Zhong's expression was serious. "Soul crystals become more attractive the stronger the martial practitioner is. Absorbing the soul energy inside the soul crystal allows high level martial practitioners to directly increase the power of their soul — their mind consciousness. The increase in mind power means that the soul grows. This can increase the power of the martial practitioner in all areas in future cultivation."

"Starting from the Netherpassage Realm, martial practitioners have to cultivate the power of the soul. An increase in the soul is crucial to progress in cultivation after that!"

Usually, the stronger the soul of the martial practitioner, the more room there is for improvement. After the Netherpassage Realm, the growth of the soul is the most important factor in determining the strength of the martial practitioner."

"Soul, mind consciousness..."

Qin Lie murmured quietly. After thinking for a while with his head down, he suddenly showed a strange smile.

"Qin Lie, get Li Mu of Li's Shop to get more Spirit Gathering Boards. Mn, remember to pay close attention on my behalf. After coming out of the Arctic Mountain Range, we will go to Li's Shop." Liang Zhong's smile became slightly fawning. "The Spirit Gathering Boards we purchased were all destroyed in the Eight Extreme Trigram Fire Formation. I want to use the Spirit Gathering Boards to create a cultivation room after returning to Dark Asura Hall so..."

"Don't worry, I'll definitely keep a close eye out." Qin Lie patted his chest in assurance.

"Mn, that's it. I'll leave first." Patting Qin Lie's shoulder, Liang Zhong said with a smile, "Kid, learn more from Li Mu. That guy... isn't simple." Finished speaking, Liang Zhong got on the Profound Nether Beast and went out of the stone forest.

"I'm going to stay in the stone forest and kill the remaining soul beasts with the Discipline Hall. You?" Gao Yu asked.

"I am going back to Icestone City first." Qin Lie grinned. "I've just broken through into the Natal Opening Realm and need to go back to the pavilion to stabilize my realm. I don't need to increase my experience by killing spirit beasts right now."

Gao Yu stilled and then nodded. "Congratulations, I'm going to get there soon. I can feel it... maybe when I return to the city, I will also be in the Natal Opening Realm." His tone was confident.

The two separated.

"Big Brother Tu, are you going to remain here or go back to Nebula Pavilion?" Qin Lie asked Tu Ze and the others after he returned.

"We're going to help Elder Ye kill spirit beasts, what? Are you leaving?" Tu Ze was shocked.

"I just had a breakthrough and need to stabilize my cultivation. I've also gotten a lot of contribution points so..." Qin Lie explained.

"Oh, you have a good life. That woman clearly likes you, she also pretty much gave you the Mystical Cold Jade vein. It would not be possible for you to not prosper. Those ten

thousand contribution points came really easily." Kang Zhi touched his chubby face and started to complain, "Pity that I have such a handsome face, but no one understands how to admire it, how, how..."

"Shove off!" Zhuo Qian could not bear to keep looking. She kicked him and frightened him into dodging.

"Qin Lie, do you... really have something with that woman from Dark Asura Hall?" Han Feng waggled his eyebrows. "Hehe, that woman is beautiful. If you get her, you definitely have a sure shot to get into Dark Asura Hall."

"You, shove off as well!" Zhuo Qian glared at him and then frowned. She said, "Qin Lie, let sis warn you. Do not provoke women like Xie Jingxuan. There is not a single simple woman that walks out of the Internal Affairs Department. That Ban Hong should be an enforcer. He calls Xie Jingxuan 'Miss,' so this woman is at least commander rank."

Taking a deep breath, Zhuo Qian said, "Commanders of Internal Affairs have hands drenched in blood. I don't know how many other beings and spirit beasts they have killed. These kinds of people... usually aren't normal. You should be careful. Do not interact too much with her to prevent yourself from getting into unnecessary trouble."

"I will remember it." Qin Lie nodded with a serious expression.

He decided to keep some distance from Xie Jingxuan.

Because when he underwent questioning, he knew that Xie Jingxuan had intentions of killing him and had almost done so.

Even though he did not know why that woman decided to let him go, he didn't want to experience it twice. So he decided to avoid interacting with her as much as possible.

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Chapter 105: Pains

Three months later, Icestone City.

Within a house filled with planted Heart Tranquility Grass, Qin Lie was seated on top of a round mat with closed eyes while adjusting his breath in cultivation.

This was Nebula Pavilion's unique cultivation room—the Meditation Room. Plants such as Heart Tranquility Grass, Mind Calming Balm Flower, and others were planted inside the room, causing a fresh and peaceful smell to circulate inside it.

There was even a formation meant to focus the mind and calm the heart drawn on top of the walls. Every arrangement inside the room was to help with cleansing the heart and clearing one's mind.

If a martial practitioner cultivated inside this room, as long as they paid a bit of caution and did not cultivate an evil or extreme spirit art, they normally would not incur a fiendish rebound and turn violent.

This place was very useful for cultivating various spirit arts, gaining an understanding of the realm, and deepening one's knowledge of the martial way.

One would need to spend five contribution points in order to cultivate for a day inside the Meditation Room, and it would only take four hundred and fifty points to cultivate for three months in there.

—As of now, that wasn't really much for Qin Lie anymore.

Since he returned from the stone forest, Qin Lie had rented a Meditation Room specifically to stabilize his new realm.

For the past three months he had been experiencing the greatness of the Natal Palace while focusing his mind and calming his heart to cultivate. Training hard, he focused on gathering more spirit energy to convert into thunder and lightning energy to, bit by bit, fill up his first palace.

The early stage of the Natal Opening Realm required him to form three Natal Palaces, and each one needed to be completely filled before he could qualify for the middle stage.

Currently, he had only just formed his first Natal Palace, and this palace hadn't even been filled yet.

Cultivation wasn't something that could be completed overnight. Every step of ascension required the accumulation of strength and insight; it required rigorous and repeated cultivation to increase one's strength bit by bit.

"Almost there." Qin Lie opened his eyes, muttered once, and walked out of the Meditation Room.

"Qin Lie, you came out pretty early today." Liu Yan walked over from the other side of the cultivation ground while greeting him with a smile. "The situation as of late is pretty good. The elites from Seven Fiends Valley, Dark Shadow Tower, and Dark Asura Hall all worked together. They have fought their way into the Arctic Mountain Range, and we are slowly gaining the advantage. If this continues, then it shouldn't take too long before we can make a new contract with the spirit beasts."

“That would be great. Many lives have been lost; the sooner we finish this the better.” Qin Lie nodded his head and then asked, “Gao Yu hasn’t come back yet? Is it the same with Tu Ze and the others?”

“After the spirit beasts inside the stone forest had been cleared out, Gao Yu and Tu Ze’s group had gone to the edges of the Arctic Mountain Range to group up with Elder Chu Yan, Wei Xing, and Du Haitian.” Liu Yan smiled and walked over, saying, “It seems that Gao Yu kid is close to breaking through to the Natal Opening Realm, and he has accumulated two thousand and five hundred contribution points. That guy’s pretty good.”

The duo talked while heading outside. Just when they had left the wide cultivation area, a Nebula Pavilion martial practitioner who was standing guard called out, “Qin Lie, is it? Elder Han wants you to meet him once you’ve finished. It seems that someone is looking for you and they sent you some stuff.”

“I’ll be off then.” Qin Lie bid goodbye with Liu Yan.

A while later, he arrived at Han Qingrui’s place, and the moment he went in, he found a few young men dressed in golden clothes sitting down.

There was the picture of a golden valley sewn on the chest pocket on their clothes. It took only one glance for Qin Lie to know that they came from Seven Fiends Valley’s Gold Fiend Valley.

“Qin Lie, do come and meet our friends from Seven Fiends Valley. They belong to Gold Fiend Valley and are about to participate in the battle at the Arctic Mountain Range. They dropped by Icestone City along the way to send you some stuff.” Han Qingrui’s face was slightly dark, as if he didn’t like these people too much. Once Qin Lie came over, he pointed at a person and said, “This is Li Zhongzheng, the junior apprentice of Gold Fiend Valley’s Valley Master. He is here on an errand for Ling Yushi.”

“You are Qin Lie? The kid who was once engaged to Sister Ling?” Li Zhongzheng looked at Qin Lie from head to toe before shaking his head with a cold expression. “I don’t understand why Sister Ling would fancy a small fry like you...”

Before Qin Lie could say anything, he placed a small bundle on top of the table. Then, he stood up with a full face of impatience.

“This is the item Sister Ling had requested me to pass on to you. She has just entered the middle stage of the Natal Opening Realm and thus cannot participate in the battle at the Arctic Mountain Range. That is why she asked me to give this to you.”

After glancing at Qin Lie coldly, Li Zhongzheng then frowned again. “Give up after you’ve taken this. Sister Ling’s talents are very exceptional, and her cultivation speed is also pretty quick. She is definitely not obtainable by someone like you. Yeah, you just

stay in Nebula Pavilion, live a good life, and stop dreaming about Sister Ling ever again. Otherwise, there will be deadly misfortune waiting for you in the future.”

Once he finished, he and the rest of the young men from Gold Fiend Valley walked straight out without taking another glance at Han Qingrui.

“To this day, Sister Ling still constantly bears that brat in her mind, not giving Big Brother Li any chance at all. If we didn’t happen to pass by Limestone City and she just happened to have a use for us, she wouldn’t have even paid any attention to Big Brother Li at all.” One of them whispered, “Dammit. So she really did all this just for this brat, some kind from a Limestone rank force. I can’t believe she still can’t forget about him to this day, what a stubborn woman...”

“Let’s go. I’m already frustrated that I have to come here for such a small fry, so you guys better shut up about it already,” Li Zhongzheng said with a snort.

The group of people gradually walked far away.

“Ignore them, they’re just a bunch of juniors who do not know the immensity of heaven and earth. Their fathers live in Seven Fiends Valley, which was why they were part of it the moment they were born. They are nothing without their fathers’ glory, and they would not have been able to reach their current cultivation level without relying on that either,” Han Qingrui consoled him.

Qin Lie nodded with a dark expression and replied, “Don’t worry Uncle Han. Such men aren’t enough to disrupt my heart and influence me.”

“Good, that’s good.” Han Qingrui smiled gladly. “Despite being at Seven Fiends Valley, that girl still misses you, and every month she sends a letter to you which clearly proves her love for you. You’re pretty good at this, aren’t you?”

Qin Lie opened the package and saw a letter inside. There were also many bottles, jars and tens of Common Rank Five or Six spirit stones...

He did not ask for privacy and read the entire letter aloud in front of Han Qingrui.

Ling Yushi had found him three kinds of prescriptions to temper his body. These bottles and jars contained the main spirit herbs and could help him temper his body. Besides that, there were also a few pills and medicine that can assist him in breaking through to the Natal Opening Realm and spirit stones to be used during cultivation... this was all prepared for his ascension to the next realm.

Prescriptions, spirit herbs, spirit pills, and spirit stones. They were all found by Ling Yushi through great effort, and a portion of them were sneakily saved up by her. All this attentive preparation was made solely for Qin Lie’s breakthrough.

It could be said that Ling Yushi had only the best intentions for him.

Unfortunately, Qin Lie had already broken through to the Natal Opening Realm, and after three months of harsh cultivation in the Meditation Room, his realm had already stabilized.

Qin Lie had borrowed the power of lightning to cultivate his newly formed Heavenly Thunder Sacred Body, so he definitely couldn't use any of the body tempering prescriptions she gave him—it could be said that she had done all this in vain.

Putting down the letter, Qin Lie thought for a moment before asking, "Uncle Han, where is the Ling Family staying in the city right now?"

"In the south." Han Qingrui answered with a smile, then followed up with a detailed explanation, clearly pointing out the Ling Family's exact location. Then he said, "Because of the spirit beast threat, all of the large vassal forces have moved into Icestone City, so the city is currently overcrowded. The condition over there must be pretty bad, it is possible that there are tens of people squeezing under the same house..."

"Can my contribution points buy anything inside the pavilion?" Qin Lie asked again.

"You can buy them as long as it does not exceed your contribution points. There is absolutely no problem at all." Han Qingrui affirmed.

Qin Lie nodded.

Leaving, the first place he went next was Scripture Tower. He picked a few scriptures specifically aimed at Refinement Realm martial practitioners, then went to the Spirit Material Room and bought some pills. With that, he had expended almost two thousand contribution points.

Carrying the scriptures, pills and, the package Ling Yushi had asked people to bring over, he exited Nebula Pavilion and went southward, where Ling Family was temporarily staying.

Two hours later.

He arrived at a shabby courtyard entrance, and under the gaze of an old Ling Family servant, he entered the courtyard.

The familiar faces of the Ling Family clansmen went in and out of the courtyard, and there were many houses where tens of people were squeezing under a single roof.

The old men, children, and wives were categorized as a single household unit, and they could only stay inside a single room. The courtyard inside was dirty and messy; the environment absolutely terrible...

"Qin Lie!" Ling Chengzhi exclaimed softly.

His face was thin and pallid, and he helplessly walked out of a house and said, "There's no helping it. The Ling Family has been arranged at this location, and naturally, it's not going to look too good for an entire town of people to live inside a single courtyard. Sigh, well it's good enough we can make it into the city; at least the safety of our lives can be guaranteed this way. If we continued to stay inside Ling Town, then it may be a different matter..."

Qin Lie knew that because the people of every large vassal force had entered the city, every room in Icestone City become incredibly valuable. The Ling Family was lucky they could find a courtyard to stay in; many people did not even have a place to sleep in and could only find a place on the streets or under the trees to survive.

"Uncle Ling, are Ling Feng and the others around?" Qin Lie nodded.

"They are. You came at the right time since they're all here. But in three days, they'll be departing from the city. They've been assigned duties by the pavilion and will be heading outside the city for combat." Ling Chengzhi gave a weak smile and said, "My big brother has gone out to ask people to work on some matters, so he's not here right now. About... last time, it is the Ling Family who have disappointed you. We wish for your forgiveness."

"I am here to look for Ling Feng and the others," Qin Lie said with a cold face.

"I know, I know." Ling Chengzhi's expression was awkward. He understood that Qin Lie hadn't gotten over the matter yet. Then, he yelled out, "Ling Feng! Ling Xing! Come over and see who's here!"

"Who is it?"

"Can it be that the First and Second Miss has come back?"

Ling Xing and Ling Xiao muttered before poking out their heads from a crowded room. Then, their expressions immediately brightened as they exclaimed, "It's Qin Lie!"

Ling Feng and Ling Ying walked out of their respective rooms and laughed brightly.

"I've been cultivating in seclusion when I came back from outside the city three months ago, so I didn't have time to visit you. Sorry."

Qin Lie gave a brief explanation, then brought out Ling Yushi's package and passed it to them. Next, he took out the scriptures and pills he bought with contribution points to Ling Feng, Ling Xing, and the crowd and said sincerely, "I hope that you guys can enter the Natal Opening Realm sooner with the help of these spirit materials."

Ling Xing, Ling Xiao, Ling Ying, and the others looked at the spirit pills, spirit herbs, and spirit stones inside the bag, plus the body tempering prescriptions and scriptures appropriate of their cultivation. Their expressions were excited, and there was even light shining out of their eyes.

—If they used this properly, it would definitely help them ascend to the next realm at a much earlier date!

These spirit pills, spirit herbs, spirit stones, prescriptions, and scriptures were definitely a dream come true for the currently distressed Ling Family clansmen.

"So many spirit pills, spirit stones, and cultivation scriptures; there's even prescriptions for body tempering..."

"Those kids had a deep relationship with Qin Lie, so they can be counted as having found the savior in their life. How enviable."

"Perhaps they can really enter the Natal Opening Realm before reaching twenty years old with these spirit materials and enter Nebula Pavilion to cultivate."

"Sigh, the treatment of Nebula Pavilion martial practitioners is different alright. This is one case of it. If we were the core members of Nebula Pavilion, why would we need to squeeze inside this place? We would have been training hard inside the pavilion's cultivation rooms a long time ago..."

"The Patriarch treated him like that, and yet Qin Lie did not forget us. Sigh, the Ling Family really has let him down."

"Sigh, it really is the Ling Family's fault. Him and his grandfather have helped us in the past, and yet, for the future of the two misses, the Patriarch had even dissolved their engagement."

Every clansmen in Ling Town was gathered inside this courtyard, and they all came out when they heard that Qin Lie had come.

When they saw Qin Lie bringing out the spirit materials, spirit pills, spirit stones and scriptures, they all wore shocked expressions and began whispering amongst themselves. Their gazes were filled with envy when they looked at Ling Xing's group.

Ling Chengzhi's old face suddenly blushed as he stood there, and with a cough, he awkwardly went back inside the house.

—He was too ashamed to continue staying there.

“Th-this is way too valuable. We can’t accept this.” While Ling Xing, Ling Ying, and the others were engulfed in excitement, Ling Feng was the only one who frowned and seriously said, “Qin Lie, you should keep this to yourself. We can slowly cultivate on our own.”

“Urk, in that case, Qin Lie, you should... you should keep these to yourself. T-this is way, way too valuable.” Ling Xiao endured the pain in his heart and looked away from the spirit pills and scriptures before saying that in a choppy voice.

“There’s really no need for pleasantries. Just take these with you; I have no use for them.” Qin Lie smiled coolly and continued, “Because I’ve already broken through to the Natal Opening Realm.”

Chapter 106: Terminator Profound Bomb

“Natal Opening Realm!” the Ling Family clansmen exclaimed in shock.

Ling Feng and the others had shocked expressions. They felt happy for Qin Lie. Then, after they looked at all the spirit pills, spirit stones, and scriptures, their intentions of refusing decreased.

“As expected, cultivating progresses much faster at Nebula Pavilion.” Ling Ying’s eyes were bright as she said, “Qin Lie, when you left Ling Town to go to Nebula Pavilion, you should have just been in the eighth level of the Refinement Realm. It has just been a year and you have reached the Natal Opening Realm. Does Nebula Pavilion really help out that much? Can they really help you progress faster?”

None of the people of Ling Town had reached the Natal Opening Realm before they were twenty, so none of them were admitted to Nebula Pavilion to cultivate.

Due to this, all the wondrous qualities of cultivating at Nebula Pavilion were things they heard from others.

Qin Lie’s return gave them the chance to ask, so they naturally would inquire.

Qin Lie thought and then seriously explained, “It is a bit faster to cultivate in Nebula Pavilion. There are special meditation, combat, and cultivation areas in the pavilion. There are also places such as the Scripture Tower and the Artifact Tower that aid in cultivation...”

Listening to his explanation, everyone’s eyes gradually lit up and felt a yearning towards cultivating at Nebula Pavilion.

“So you do not have to be courteous with me. Take these spirit materials and then focus on cultivating.” Qin Lie smiled. “Maybe after a year or two, you will enter Nebula Pavilion. Then we can reunite there. Mn, I borrowed these scriptures from Scripture Tower. Do not damage them. After a while, I will come and take away the old books and lend a few new ones for you.”

“Good!” Ling Feng shouted and said, “Then we won’t be courteous!”

“Thanks!” Ling Xin thanked gravely.

They were extremely grateful inside.

After chatting for a while, Qin Lie bade them farewell and walked out of the compound.

An hour after he left, the patriarch of the Ling Family, Ling Chengye, returned with a furrowed brow. He quickly learned from Ling Chengzhi that Qin Lie had come and knew that Qin Lie had given a large number of spirit pills and stones to Ling Feng and the others.

In the sparse room, the patriarch of the Ling Family sighed. “Ah, it is us who have failed him.”

“It has already passed.” Ling Chengzhi’s face was also helpless. He then asked, “Big Brother, what have you found out about the situation?”

“We need to go to the border of the Arctic Mountain Range and cooperate with the elders of the pavilion to stop the invasion of spirit beasts. That place... right now is lead by the Vice Pavilion Master, Li Yuntao and Du Haitian. I’m afraid that Du Haitian will take the opportunity to plot against our Ling Family.” The Ling Family Patriarch’s brow was tightly creased. “Right now, the battle between us and the spirit beasts of Arctic Mountain Range is in a very tense state. The Ling Family is a subordinate power of Nebula Pavilion who also has members that moved into Icestone City. At this time, people with battle capabilities have to take up responsibility. This cannot be refused.”

“Yushi and Xuanxuan are already Granny Jiu’s disciples. Does Du Haitian dare to act against us?” Ling Chengzhi said with a dark face.

“He knows how much we hate him. We have a disagreement that cannot be resolved unless one side dies. This cannot be solved, so he will do everything he can to destroy our Ling Family.” Killing intent roiled in the eyes of the Ling Family Patriarch. “Granny Jiu might be the Valley Master of Dark Fiend Valley, but Nebula Pavilion is not a subordinate force of Seven Fiends Valley. She does not have any power over Du Haitian. If she really acts against Du Haitian, Dark Asura Hall would question her. Temporarily... we have no way of borrowing her authority.”

“So we can only be careful,” Ling Chengzhi responded helplessly.

"Mn, I will do my best to be careful. I hope we can return safely." The Ling Family Patriarch nodded. "You and Ling Feng stay behind to take care of the overall situation. Only Ling Feng is calm among the young generation and can help you solve the internal conflicts. This boy's personality and composure is pretty good. In the future, if Yushi and Xuanxuan have married, I have a good opinion of Ling Feng as the next patriarch."

"If Yushi and Qin Lie's engagement was not prematurely ended, Qin Lie... is actually also a good choice," Ling Chengzhi said.

Once the words came out, the patriarch of the Ling Family sighed helplessly again. He shook his head and did not say anymore on the topic.

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"Uncle Li, are you really free now?"

On Commerce Street in front of Li's Shop, Qin Lie laughed and stepped in.

In the evening, there was only Li Mu inside Li's Shop, coiled on the rocking chair with his eyes lidded as he looked lazily outside.

In the yard behind him, that large wolfdog was resting with eyes closed under the tree.

"Not bad, you entered the Natal Opening Realm." Li Mu smiled slightly and then straightened as he examined Qin Lie with narrowed eyes. "How many Natal Palaces have you created?"

"Just one."

"Mn, then work hard on your cultivation and try to open three Natal Palaces as soon as possible. If you store thunder and lightning energy in the three Natal Palaces, there will be three times as much as what you have now. That will mean your offensive power will increase greatly." Li Mu nodded.

"Uncle Li, how do you know I am cultivating the power of thunder and lightning?" Qin Lie was shocked.

"Haha." Li Mu laughed and then took out a piece of yellow paper from a shelf behind him. He handed it to Qin Lie. "I recently purchased this, it might be useful for you. You can try it and this can be your first forging."

Qin Lie took the yellow paper. He looked down and found many spirit materials and amounts were written on the yellow paper: two Ground Crystals, four taels of Quicksand Gold, one Ink Cloud Stone, five taels of Profound Iron...

"What is this?" Qin Lie was confused.

“The inventory list for supplementary materials required for forging the ‘Terminator Profound Bomb.’” Li Mu became serious. “This is a one-use spirit artifact. It can produce a great explosion with a decent amount of power. The supplementary materials to make the ‘Terminator Profound Bomb’ are not hard to find, and Nebula Pavilion’s stores should have them. You only need to prepare a primary material that contains thunder and lightning power and you should have all of the materials needed.”

“What about the spirit diagrams?” Qin Lie asked.

“Keep reading,” Li Mu replied.

Qin Lie continued to read. Then, his expression changed to one of shock.

“With the basic Spirit Gathering, Spirit Storage, Strengthening, and Amplification spirit diagrams as the core, use the Amplification diagram to continuously increase thunder energy to activate the thunder and lightning power inside the main material. After amplifying the thunder energy, it will rush into the incomplete Spirit Storage diagram. The Spirit Storage diagram will not be able to contain it and will only be able to explode from the inside, resulting in the Terminator Profound Bomb forming great destructive power in an instant...”

His eyes flashed. “So there are times in spirit artifact forging that spirit diagrams do not have to be completed. The damaged and incomplete Spirit Storage diagram will explode immediately on activation because it cannot contain the increased thunder and lightning power... is this still a spirit artifact?”

“A one-use spirit artifact is still an artifact.” Li Mu smiled and nodded. “The important parts have been noted down on the paper, you can study it yourself. Think of it as a test. If you can really make it... this Terminator Profound Bomb can increase your combat capabilities. Mn, the power of this thing should not be average.”

Pausing, Li Mu’s expression became serious. “But you must be careful. Do not let this thing explode during the forging process. Otherwise, it can harm you and to a grave degree!”

“I will,” Qin Lie responded seriously.

“Mn, I put the spirit tablets I bought for you in your little room, you can organize it yourself. Oh, Pan Jueming of Armament Pavilion is interested in the Spirit Gathering Boards. You can make some when you have the time,” Li Mu said.

“Terminator Profound Bomb, Terminator Profound Bomb...”

Qin Lie’s head was down as he intently read the contents of the yellow paper. He noted down all of the basic materials and continuously studied the connection between the four spirit diagrams.

"I have not grasped the Strengthening spirit diagram yet. It seems that I need to learn it before I can make the Terminator Profound Bomb..."

He settled back at Li's Shop and used the spirit tablets to inscribe the Strengthening spirit diagram. With the experience of the Amplification, Spirit Gathering, and Spirit Storage diagrams, the rate at which he learned the Strengthening diagram was very quick.

A fortnight later, he successfully increased the Strengthening diagram and caused the simplest spirit tablet to become extremely hard.

After that, he still remained in Li's Shop.

He tried to construct the spirit diagrams for the Terminator Profound Bomb on spirit tablets, then tried to put the four diagrams together. He embedded them on a spirit tablet and tried to use thunder energy as the trigger to get the spirit diagram to crack.

"Poof!"

Another spirit tablet turned to ash. Qin Lie's brow was furrowed as he thought long and hard among the floor full of scrapped spirit tablets.

One more fortnight passed. He continuously failed in the process of making a steady compound spirit diagram. Usually, he was unable to trigger the explosion of the spirit diagram before the spirit tablet became scrap due to the conflict between spirit diagrams.

The tolerance of true spirit artifacts was even worse than spirit tablets. If he could not succeed on spirit tablets, the rate of failure if he inscribed directly on spirit artifacts could only be higher.

"I told you before, if you repeatedly fail, then stop for a while." Today, Li Mu shouted from outside, "Stop for a while and relax before trying again. If you continuously fail, then continue to stop and do not be stubborn. Do not charge single-mindedly on failures."

"Thanks, Uncle Li, I know." Qin Lie did not continue. He walked out to drink with Li Mu and reminisce about the past.

After resting for two days, he did not think any more about anything in the area of artifact forging. He calmed his mind and worked on his cultivation to fill his Natal Palace with thunder and lightning energy.

After his emotions were completely controlled, he once again constructed the compound spirit diagram and continued to experiment.

He continuously failed in the following three days.

Once again, he listened to Li Mu's words and took a break. Alternating once more, he resumed drinking with Li Mu and further cultivated his Natal Palace. After he calmed down, he attempted the diagram once more.

The cycle repeated.

The middle of the night fourteen days later.

"Boom!"

An explosion came from his little room that was thunderous and rattling, resulting in Li Mu being shocked awake.

"Boy, what are doing in the middle of the night?" Li Mu came over with drowsy eyes. He suddenly remembered and grinned. "What, you finally succeeded?"

"Uncle Li, I finally managed to construct the compound spirit diagram on the inside of the Terminator Profound Bomb!" Qin Lie's eyes were bloodshot, but his face was full of a shocking light as he said excitedly, "Just now, my thunder energy charged in, and after being amplified by the Amplification diagram inside the spirit tablet, it charged into the Spirit Storage diagram and caused the spirit tablet to explode!"

Li Mu entered the room and saw that Qin Lie's body was emanating smoke. Many of the spirit tablets in the room had turned to powder, and even the walls had cracked.

"Mn, if you can gather all the materials and find the main material that contains thunder and lightning power, after you master constructing the compound diagram on the inside of the Terminator Profound Bomb, you can make the true Terminator Profound Bomb." Li Mu's smile was carefree as he said, "If that explodes, my shop will probably be destroyed."

As the words came out, Qin Lie's eyes lit up. "It is that powerful?"

"You'll know after you succeed," Li Mu said with narrowed eyes and a smile.

"This is the beast core of a mutant Ice Soul Python and one of its eyes. It cultivated both ice and thunder, so the beast core and eye should also contain thunder and lightning power. Take a look... do you think I can use this as the primary material for the Terminator Profound Bomb?" Qin Lie had prepared before and took out the materials he had gotten from the stone forest. Now, he handed them to Li Mu for a look.

"Rank Two spirit beast..." Li Mu touched the Ice Soul Python's beast core and eye. After thinking for a while, he then answered, "There shouldn't be a problem. Hm, when you try to make the Terminator Profound Bomb, you might not succeed the first time. You

should split this beast core into many parts and try multiple times. When you have gotten a good grasp on it, you can add the rest into the Terminator Profound Bomb.”

“The beast cores of spirit beasts are very hard. This is also one from a Rank Two spirit beast. Splitting it might not be so easy...” Qin Lie commented.

“Give it to me, I have something that can help you split it into ten small pieces,” Li Mu responded with a smile.

“Then thanks, Uncle Li.”

“Mn.

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Chapter 107: Taking Over the Artifact Forging Hall

Deep in a mountain a few hundred miles away from Icestone City were seven valleys. The seven valleys were arranged somewhat in the shape of the Big Dipper, and it contained a kind of magic that called to the heaven and earth.

In a valley where Yin energy was slightly thicker, there was an icy cold pond. The pond water was crystal clear, and a dense fog floated above its surface.

At the moment, there was an attractive figure wearing thin clothes sitting in the middle of the pond.

As the spirit energy turned, the water around her gathered to form many droplets the size of an eyeball. Each and every one of the water droplets were crystal clear, and the spirit energy inside them was thick and pure.

Magically surrounding her, the droplets spun inside the crystal-like pond.

Amidst the milky-white fog, she concentrated on cultivating her spirit art and circulating her spirit energy. The more water droplets she gathered, the stronger the waves that emanated from her body.

Lu Li’s figure arrived quietly.

Wearing a jade green dress, an indifferent expression, and a pair of cold eyes, she stared at the pond for a moment before saying, “As a matter of fact, your cultivating talents are better than your sister’s.”

The fog dissipated, and without the bindings of spirit energy, the water droplets turned back to ice-cold water and melted into the pond.

Ling Yushi opened her eyes; her appearance tranquil and otherworldly as she smiled and said, "Good day, Senior Sister."

"This are the pills Master sent me to give you." Just as Lu Li put down a bottle, she immediately frowned and said, "Do not stash pills in secret any longer. I may not cover for you next time. I will tell Master. She has a bad temper..."

Sitting in the middle of the pond, Ling Yushi sighed quietly, "I'm sorry, Senior Sister. The pills Master sent over are simply too much for me; I can never finish them all. I just don't want to waste it."

"You don't want to waste them?" Lu Li kept a cold expression, "As Master's direct disciple, we can afford to be wasteful with our cultivation materials. Even if we did consume more of those pills, it will definitely not cause any discomfort to our bodies."

After a pause, she snorted and said, "Do you really think I don't know where your stashed pills went to?"

Ling Yushi lowered her head and did not argue.

"That Qin Lie brat cannot keep up with your pace at all. Under normal circumstances, it will take at least tens of years before he can break through to the Manifestation Realm and enter forces such as Seven Fiends Valley and Dark Asura Hall." Lu Li did not hold back at all as she coldly continued, "And this is assuming the best case scenario. If he gets into an accident or is injured during battle, he will take even longer to enter the Manifestation Realm. Moreover, the breakthrough from the Natal Opening Realm to the Manifestation Realm is not easy; some people will go their entire lives without crossing that line!"

"Are you going to wait for him forever?" Lu Li exclaimed softly.

What do you think I should do, Senior Sister?" Ling Yushi lifted her head looking completely natural; she was unaffected by her words.

"Forget him," Lu Li answered.

Ling Yushi smiled gently and shook her head softly. "What if I can't forget?"

"Then killing him is fine too!" Lu Li said with a cold expression, "With your talents and qualifications, your future will be limitless. Do not let a man disturb your mind! If I were you, I would kill him and spend all my energy on the ascension of my realm. I would set my goal to chase after Master's footsteps!"

"Never mind. Let's not dwell on this subject anymore." Ling Yushi was dumbfounded. In her eyes, Lu Li was a crazy woman; a cultivation madman who would sacrifice anything for the ascension of her realm. "Senior Sister, very soon you'll be representing this

valley in the Arctic Mountain Range. Please do me a favor and help me check out how the Ling Family is doing. Also, if it's possible, then help me take a look at Qin Lie as well. I want to know how he's doing..."

"You're utterly hopeless!" Lu Li exclaimed with a cold expression. That was the last of her words as she turned around and walked away.

Ling Yushi smiled lightly, and after Lu Li left, only then did she whisper in a soft voice, "That is because Senior Sister has never fallen in love with a man. That is why you cannot understand and why your heart can be as firm as steel..."

Nebula Pavilion.

Qin Lie was heading towards the Artifact Forging Hall, pondering how he could borrow Yao Tai's furnace so he could refine the Terminator Profound Bomb.

He had stayed in Li's Shop for over a month and successfully built the compound spirit diagrams needed for the Terminator Profound Bomb on top of a spirit tablet. Li Mu had split the Ice Soul Python's core into ten little pieces as real materials for his attempt.

—The attempt to truly create the Terminator Profound Bomb!

Now everything was set, and the only thing that was remaining was the actual forging process. That was why he needed to borrow the furnace in the Artifact Forging Hall.

He decided to communicate with Yao Tai.

He hadn't been here for a while. Not even taking step into the hall, he already heard Liu Ting's scoldings, "You can't do this, you can't do that. Then what can you actually do? Nebula Pavilion has fed you and given you so many spirit materials to forge artifacts, and yet you can't even fix my Mirror of Thousand Illusions. What else are you here for?"

"My little grandaunt, I've told you many times. The components of your Mirror of Thousand Illusions are conflicting with each other, and no matter how many times it's fixed, it will still break easily. This is a problem of structure, and I cannot repair it completely. What do you really want me to do?" Inside the hall, Yao Tai's voice was weak and feeble. "Besides, I've been sick due to overwork, and for a short time I will not be able to fix spirit artifacts for anyone. Even if you want this fixed, it will have to wait until after I recover."

"How are you tired? Repairing a mere spirit artifact is enough to tire you to the point of sickness? Then what about us? We just came back from the outskirts of the Arctic Mountain Range. We've all fought with spirit beasts and we're all risking our lives! Does it trouble you just to sit inside the pavilion and fix a spirit artifact?" Liu Ting yelled out in a cold voice.

Qin Lie shook his head and came in while covering his ears. He saw immediately Yao Tai sitting at his place with a dark complexion. Liu Ting, Wei Li, and a few other young people were gathered around him.

“Du Heng!” His glance swept over to the back, and suddenly Qin Lie gave a soft yell while his face darkened slightly.

“Qin Lie!” Du Heng’s gaze had also turned chilly as he stared at him wildly, like a tied up beast, looking as if he would rush over and fight him with his life.

Back at Ling Town, Qin Lie had blasted Du Heng, inflicting him with many serious injuries in front of numerous Nebula Pavilion martial practitioners. Du Heng saw it as a terrible humiliation and the sorest spot of his entire life.

To kill Qin Lie, Du Heng had spent great effort while cultivating for over a year, and now that he had stepped into the ninth level of Refinement, he had been looking for an opportunity to take revenge.

“Don’t be hasty, Du Heng.” Wei Xing’s son, Wei Li, quietly stopped him before looking sideways at Qin Lie. Coldly, he said, “He is a successful gigolo who managed to hook up with a woman from the Department of Internal Affairs in Dark Asura Hall. Not only did he manage to break through to the Natal Opening Realm, the woman even gave him ten thousand contribution points as pocket money. Tsk tsk, that’s his business though. We can’t possibly compare to him.”

“Yeah, he’s great when it comes to this aspect. Back at Ling Town, he also hooked up with their miss and even got an engagement. Heh, after his intentions were found out and they dissolved the engagement, he once again kissed up to Tu Ze and came to Nebula Pavilion. Not long after arriving at Nebula Pavilion, he again magically hooked up with that woman from Dark Asura Hall. This kind of skill, man... I am truly put to shame by it.”

“Qin Lie, don’t think that you are the only one who can enter Nebula Pavilion this early.” Du Heng’s face was dark. “I’ve scored an achievement at the Arctic Mountain Range, and I also can become a core member of Nebula Pavilion in advance. Our grudge... will be resolved in Nebula Pavilion in the future!”

“You scored an achievement?” Qin Lie smiled coolly. “That fake uncle of yours... your real father. How many people did he send to help you? How many credits did he fake in your name so you could finally slip into Nebula Pavilion?”

Ignoring Du Heng’s livid expression—it was as if he wanted to eat him alive—he then turned to look at Wei Li with lightning flashing in his eyes and said with a cold and stern expression, “A bunch of fools who rely on their dads to live like you all have the right to taunt me? Do you believe that you won’t live over a year in Nebula Pavilion if your dads aren’t around?”

While he was threatened, a consciousness formed by killing intent in Qin Lie's mind actually gushed out of his eyes.

When Wei Li met his eyes, Wei Li suddenly felt cold from the top to bottom, and his neck felt as if a sharp knife had cut through it. With a pale face Wei Li stepped continuously backpedaled, looking embarrassed to the extreme.

"You think trash like you has the right to ridicule anyone?" Qin Lie smiled coldly.

A small bit of surprise sprouted in his heart. He suddenly realized that his mind consciousness had quite the wondrous use, allowing him to suppress low level martial practitioners with his aura.

"Don't think you can do whatever you want in Nebula Pavilion just because you've broken through to the Natal Opening Realm!" Liu Ting scowled and let out a humph. "Once this matter at the Arctic Mountain Range is finished, my father will become the new Pavilion Master in Nebula Pavilion. Du Heng's... uncle, Elder Du Haitian, will become the new Vice Pavilion Master. When that happens, I look forward to see how long you and this useless artificer can stay in the pavilion."

"Let's go!" Liu Ting led the way and headed outside.

The embarrassed Wei Li and the few other young men also followed her out the door.

Du Heng was the only one who stayed behind. His expression was savage, and there was terrible enmity blinking in his eyes. He grit his teeth and said, "Qin Lie, you and all of the Ling Family will die!"

"Ling Family?" Qin Lie smiled coldly. "Ling Yushi and Ling Xuanxuan have already entered Seven Fiends Valley and you still want to harass Ling Family. Are you really looking to die?"

"You'll see!" Du Heng threw down those malicious words before exiting the Artifact Forging Hall.

Qin Lie frowned and could not help but worry on the inside for Ling Family's Ling Feng, Ling Ying, and the others. From Du Heng's tone, it seemed that Du Haitian had a plan to deal with the Ling Family.

Ling Feng, Ling Ying, Ling Xing and the others had fought together with him at Celestial Wolf Mountain, and before he left Ling Town, it was also Ling Feng and them who had come over to console him, to drink with him, helping him with his sorrows...

He might have an opinion against the Ling Family Patriarch and Ling Chengzhi, but he was very fond of Ling Feng and them. He didn't want any misfortune to befall them, so he was slightly worried.

"It's been a long time; they should have left the city a long time ago. I hope they're okay." Qin Lie thought to himself.

"You haven't come in a while." While he was pondering, Yao Tai said weakly, "I've been busy repairing spirit artifacts as of late, and this time, I guess I'm completely burned out. I most likely won't be able to do anything in a short while."

He looked at Qin Lie with slightly brightened eyes. "Congratulations on your breakthrough to the Natal Opening Realm. After today's matter, I've finally understood that the ascension of artifact forging is also related to a martial practitioner's realm. If my realm is high enough, then I wouldn't expend so much energy when repairing spirit artifacts. I wouldn't completely drain my spirit energy, nor would I be so completely exhausted..."

Lately, as the martial practitioners battled against the spirit beasts in the Arctic Mountain Range, many martial practitioners inside the pavilion had damaged their spirit artifacts, and they all came to Yao Tai to repair them.

The Pavilion Master, Tu Mo, had also instructed Yao Tai to do his best.

So every time his spirit energy recovered, he would immediately sink himself into the repairing of spirit artifacts. This continued for a few months, regardless of day and night, and finally, Yao Tai, whose cultivation realm was not high in the first place, could not handle it anymore and collapsed.

Qin Lie had been worrying about a way to ask Yao Tai about borrowing the Artifact Forging Hall's furnace. The moment he heard his words, he hurriedly said with sincerity, "You have worked too hard, Great Master. Why don't you go home and take a good few days of rest while I watch over the Artifact Forging Hall for you. I guarantee that there will be no problems at all. What do you think, master?"

"Alright. It's about time I take a temporary rest." Yao Tai nodded.

"Don't worry Great Master, I got this." Qin Lie beat his chest and promised him.

Chapter 108: Splurge

Yao Tai collapsed and had no choice but to rest. He was no longer able to fix any spirit artifacts.

Qin Lie wrote the news onto a notice and stuck it on the tripod in front of the Artifact Forging Hall's main entrance. Then he shut the hall's main door close.

Inside the hall, there were many spirit material cabinets, and inside them there were a wide assortment of materials. The supporting materials for the 'Terminator Profound Bomb' he was about to create could mostly be found in there.

But Qin Lie did not plan to use Yao Tai's spirit materials, nor did he plan to use his Fire Crystals. He was only going to borrow the furnace used to smelt artifacts.

He first went to the warehouse and used some of his contribution points to buy some of the spirit materials needed to create the Terminator Profound Bomb. Then, he took out the Fire Crystals he had gathered and moved them one at a time into the Artifact Forging Hall.

After a day's preparation, he had gathered all of the supporting materials needed to create the Terminator Profound Bomb and filled the bottom of the furnace with Fire Crystals.

Watching the furnace, his expression gradually turned serious. He felt a little uneasy, and he had no confidence at all.

After following Yao Tai for more than half a year, he was very clear on the process of forging an artifact. He also knew all the characteristics of the spirit materials by heart.

However, he had never actually forged an artifact with his own hands before; so he didn't really have any experience.

He stared at the furnace for a long time. After a while, because he did not plan to use the main ingredients immediately, he moved the split pieces of Ice Soul Python's beast core away.

Seeing that time was slowly passing by, he sucked in a deep breath and finally ceased his hesitation.

"Prepare the spirit materials. Melting. Fusing. Precipitating into artifact..."

Whispering silently, he lit up the Fire Crystals, and the tens of Fire Crystals burned up. Through their flames, the furnace burned until it was crimson red.

The ball shape vessel he had prepared a long time ago had been placed at the notch inside the furnace before the fire was lit. He then watched the flames and waited until the furnace was burned completely red. Only once that happened did he begin to slowly put in the spirit materials.

"Sssssssss!"

The second the spirit materials entered the furnace, a thick smoke immediately rose from inside it. A burning smell came quickly after.

"It's too early."

Qin Lie exclaimed once before hurriedly adding the Mystical Cold Jade to help the spirit materials cool down, to let the furnace's temperature lower for just a little.

He immediately put his full concentration into observing the furnace. He imagined the steps Yao Tai had taken to forge artifacts and tested them one after another.

"Oh no! I was one step too slow and wasted a Ground Crystal!"

"It's over, the temperature wasn't high enough and the spirit materials did not melt together immediately. They're conflicting with each other!"

"It's a failure!"

Inside the burning hot Artifact Forging Hall, Qin Lie was sweating all over and locking his brows deeply in a frown, carefully going through each and every step to smelt an artifact.

He had underestimated the difficulty of artifact forging. Without any experience, he repeatedly made mistakes and wasted many spirit materials for nothing. He didn't manage to fuse all of the spirit materials even once.

In just two short days, he had splurged all of the supporting materials he needed to create the Terminator Profound Bomb.

He had no choice but to go to the warehouse once more, and with the cost of one thousand and five hundred points, he bought five times the amount of spirit materials he had last time—he was prepared to continue failing.

He then restarted the great undertaking of artifact forging...

Ten days later, two thousand contribution points worth of spirit materials were completely exhausted, and his accumulation of experience in artifact forging had improved only just a little. The number of mistakes he made were also decreasing gradually.

But he still did not manage to create an end product.

Therefore he bought yet another two thousand contribution points worth of spirit materials.

He continued to work hard.

This time, the loss of spirit materials was clearly decreasing. The furnace burned crimson red, and the Fire Crystals kept the temperature hot. He was becoming more and more adept at adding spirit materials and also adding in just the right amounts.

He continued to research painstakingly, adding to his artifact forging experience little by little while rapidly expending his spirit materials.

Seven days later.

All of his clothing was drenched, and his red eyes stared at the furnace flickering along with the Fire Crystal's flame. His eyes too were flashing with a strange light...

"Ground Crystal!"

While watching the furnace, he carelessly but accurately grabbed a brown-yellow crystal, and just when the flames inside the furnace rushed upwards he immediately flung the crystal into the furnace.

An enclosed explosive sound rattled from inside the furnace.

He sharply gazed at the furnace and waited for at least ten more seconds. After realizing that there were no longer any exploding sounds coming from inside, a smile finally appeared on his face.

"That is yet another step forward!" He quietly became excited.

Another three days passed.

It was early morning today, and Qin Lie's eyes were bloodshot as he stared wide-eyed at the furnace.

The Fire Crystals beneath the furnace had died long ago, and the high temperature inside the furnace was also dissipating slowly. There were a lot less spirit materials around him, and these weren't enough to attempt another round of artifact forging.

"I sure hope it works. Otherwise, I'll have to immediately go and buy more spirit materials for the next bout of artifact forging."

Qin Lie silently tensed up and waited until the last spark died inside the furnace. He then slowly moved forward and looked down at the notch inside the furnace, examining the ball-shaped vessel.

Within the ball-shaped vessel, his eyes were met with a dark green round ball about the size of a walnut. The surface of the round, dark green ball was very rough, and it had a many rice-sized protrusions. On the surface, it had no beauty and not a bit of luster either. It looked like the most normal-looking iron ball you can find, not rare at all in any way.

However, Qin Lie's expression shook greatly as he yelled out, "It finally has a ball shape to it!"

He cheerfully took out the green round ball. It was slightly hot to touch, so it seemed that the heat hadn't completely dissipated yet.

Narrowing his eyes, he slipped in a wisp of mind consciousness into the ball and carefully sensed the spirit materials' compatibility...

"Uh, the spirit materials haven't merged very well, but... this counts as my first finished product." After a while Qin Lie cracked open a grin and began to giggle. He was very motivated. "Let's give it a few more tries. If I can forge it into a ball again, then I will add the Ice Soul Python's core inside with the main materials as the core and continue forging!"

Therefore, he once again went to the spirit material room.

"You still have four thousand and three hundred contribution points." A middle-aged man surnamed Han frowned in front of the spirit material room's door, saying, "Oh, Qin Lie, you've been spending your contribution points way too quickly. You've used over five thousand contribution points out of ten thousand. The spirit materials you're asking for this time will require you to pay another two thousand and three hundred contribution points, so you'll only have two thousand left..."

This person was Han Qingrui's subordinate. Because he knew that Han Qingrui had taken a liking to Qin Lie, he took the initiative to give him a reminder, in case Qin Lie wasn't clear on how much he was spending and wasted all of his contribution points without knowing.

"Only two thousand left..." Qin Lie smiled bitterly and said, "I got it. Please exchange them. Thank you for your warning."

He finally understood why they said an artificer was a profession that burned money.

Of the ten thousand contribution points he had earned, he had already expended more than half of them, but to this day, he still hadn't forged a finished product. If it wasn't for the fact that he had seen the light of hope recently, even he would have hesitated on whether or not he should continue investing contribution points into this project.

"Alright, the spirit materials you asked for are all here. Use them well." The man nodded his head helplessly.

After giving his thanks, Qin Lie left with five full bags of spirit materials, and he once again began busying himself inside the Artifact Forging Hall.

Seven days later.

A round ball laid at the center of his palm. The body of the ball was round and slightly bright. it was dark green in color. It was also only about the size of a walnut and was slightly cold to touch...

"The compatibility of spirit materials is okay now. There is also no conflict with the supporting materials when using the Ice Soul Python's beast core as the main material. From the looks of it, this counts as a true finished product. Now, it only needs a compound spirit diagram to be inscribed inside, and it will be counted as a success."

Qin Lie's face beamed with a smile. After a moment of thought, he decided to not inscribe the spirit diagram immediately, but to use the remaining spirit materials and make a few more end products.

With the experience of his first success, the artifact forging afterwards suddenly turned into a very smooth ride. He finished up the last of his spirit materials and successfully forged yet another five "artifacts."

"The last step will be to inscribe a spirit diagram in them. If this step succeeds, then the forging of the Terminator Profound Bomb can be successfully concluded." Qin Lie's expression was one of excitement "... Terminator Profound Bomb. It's quite the good name; I hope the power of its explosion will truly surprise me."

He decided to take a little break first. After he had restored his state of mind and calmed down his heart, then he would continue to finish with the final inscription of a spirit diagram.

This last step was too critical that he didn't dare to not treat it seriously. That was why he was going to face it in peak condition.

"You've worked for such a long time, and all you made are these little balls?" Yao Tai suddenly showed his face. He was standing behind one of the hall's pillars, staring with an odd expression at the Terminator Profound Bombs. "What kind of spirit artifact is this?"

Qin Lie was shocked on the inside as he laughed sheepishly. "I forged these just for fun."

Yao Tai nodded, walked over, and curiously looked at a Terminator Profound Bomb that still wasn't inscribed with a spirit diagram. He then said, "Let me have a closer look?"

Qin Lie gave him a smile and passed one over. "It's no big deal, I'm just giving it a try. I did not use any of the spirit materials or Fire Crystals here; all of the forging materials were bought using my own contribution points. I hope you don't mind, Great Master."

"You don't need to explain, I understand." Yao Tai accepted the round dark green ball and carefully played with it in his hand. He earnestly sensed the components inside it.

After a while, he nodded again. "This is forged pretty well. The materials' compatibility are still acceptable. The real time you've studied under me was at best more than half a year, and I have not instructed you in anyway either. Your talents can be counted as astounding for you to be able to reach where you are." He looked towards Qin Lie before frowning suddenly. He continued, "Unfortunately, this is unusable. Without a spirit diagram to become its soul, this is just a round ball. It can never become a real spirit artifact."

Naturally, Qin Lie understood, and after giving him a smile he replied, "I know."

As he stroked the round ball, Yao Tai suddenly turned quiet, and it was only until after a while later that he said, "Ten days ago I've already recovered, but I didn't want to continue fixing spirit artifacts for the people inside the pavilion, so I did not show up. I also found out about the matter of you borrowing the furnace to forge an artifact. Since you did not use my spirit materials, I am fine with it, and I also want to see how far you can go..."

He raised his head and said, "I admit that, in terms of your talent in artifact forging, you exceed all of my previous followers, and you are also a hard worker."

Qin Lie's expression was calm. "You flatter me, Great Master."

"Learning spirit diagrams is not as easy as it looks, and in truth, there isn't much that I can teach you because the spirit diagrams that I've mastered are all very low level..." Yao Tai said with a frown. After a moment's thought, he seemed to have come to a decision and said, "If you really want to learn, then work as my helper for another year. Once you have reached a full year, I will teach you the few basic spirit diagrams I've learned."

Qin Lie was shocked.

"What kind of spirit diagram did you want to inscribe in this round ball? I can help you," Yao Tai asked for his opinion.

"I-it's fine. I just made it for fun, for practice. There's really no need for master to worry about it." Qin Lie felt a bit flattered, but he quickly stopped him. "Since Great Master is here, I do not need to continue stand guard any longer. I'm really tired as of late so I'll be going back to rest."

Once he finished, he took the round ball away from Yao Tai's hands and left the hall with a smile.

"This bastard!" Once he hurriedly left, Yao Tai scolded with an angry face, "This is the first time I've truly wanted to take an apprentice, and I just have to run into an ungrateful one. I was even prepared to teach him how to inscribe spirit diagrams, and yet he still

ran away without even saying anything. Dammit, why do I have to run into such an idiot!"

Chapter 109: Bad News

"Someone's back!"

"An Elder has returned to the pavilion!"

"It's Elder Chu's men!"

During the afternoon, just when Qin Lie and Liu Yan had both exited the cultivation area, they immediately heard yells coming from the direction of Nebula Pavilion's southern door.

For the past year, as the war between the martial practitioners and spirit beasts escalated, more and more martial practitioners inside Nebula Pavilion had been sent out to battle.

Every time a team returned, the guards at the front door would shout loudly and welcome the triumphant returnees to give them a warm reception.

"Let's go and take a look." Liu Yan gave a light smile. "I've recently heard news that we are slowly gaining the advantage at the Arctic Mountain Range. Elder Chu Yan should've acquired quite the number of spirit beast spoils during this trip."

Qin Lie had rested for two days in preparation for the inscription of the compound spirit diagram for the "Terminator Profound Bomb" the day after tomorrow. Currently he was relaxing, so after hearing Liu Yan's words, he nodded and headed towards the door with him.

The warm welcomes and yells suddenly stopped.

When Qin Lie and Liu Yan's people were about halfway through, they could no longer hear any voices coming from the front door, and it was as if every man had suddenly turned into a mute.

"Something's wrong." Liu Yan frowned as his expression darkened.

"What's going on?" asked Qin Lie in surprise.

"Normally, only returnees who have suffered terrible losses would incur such a... heavy atmosphere." A bad feeling was already blooming in Liu Yan's heart. "It is likely that Elder Chu's situation isn't too good."

Qin Lie said nothing in response.

A few minutes later, both Qin Lie, Liu Yan, and a lot of other people who had heard the news arrived together at Nebula Pavilion's southern entrance.

It took only a single glance from faraway for Qin Lie to feel his expression change as he said in a low voice, "Brother Liu, you indeed guessed correctly."

At the front door, all of Chu Yan's subordinates wore dark complexions on their faces, and there was no light in their eyes as well. A lot of them were either missing an arm or a leg, and nearly every one of them had incurred severe injuries.

Chu Yan and Tu Ze, Zhuo Qian and the others were at the back of the line. They all wore gloomy expressions as if they had suffered some kind of terrible blow.

Especially Chu Peng. It seemed that he had cried his entire way back home, and even his eyes were swollen red.

His expression was terribly numb. He walked, puppet-like, with Tu Ze and Zhuo Qian, bowing his head while appearing to be completely lifeless.

At this moment, all of the gathered Nebula Pavilion martial practitioners and the guards at the front door had gone silent.

Everyone could see that the losses sustained during this expedition were absolutely terrible. It stopped their cheers, and they were unable to say even a single welcoming word.

The atmosphere at the door was absolutely oppressive.

"The number of people who came back did not even reach a tenth of their original number. Elder Chu's losses are absolutely terrifying." After watching for a while, a person sighed softly.

"Why haven't we seen Elder Chu Yan?" Some people said doubtfully.

The moment the words fell out, everyone could not help but consider a possibility: He can't have passed away, can he?

Soon, the crowd grew even more quiet. Their expressions were ugly, and a cold chill spawned from the bottom of their hearts.

"Pavilion Master! Pavilion Master!"

"Elder Han!"

Suddenly, the crowd cried out one after another.

The Pavilion Master of Nebula Pavilion, Tu Mo, and Han Qingrui emerged from the crowd. They all wore heavy expressions as they walked over and looked at Chu Yan's remaining forces. Tu Mo asked, "Where is Elder Chu Yan?"

"He was killed in action." Chu Yan's subordinate, Hall Master Wu Chong suddenly lifted his head with eyes filled with the color of blood. "Please uphold justice for Elder Chu, Pavilion Master!"

"Please uphold justice for Elder Chu, Pavilion Master!" Chu Peng suddenly knelt on the floor and kowtowed towards Tu Mo. He was completely red, and he bit down on his teeth so hard that there were crunching sounds. "It is Liu Yuntao and Du Haitian who have murdered my father! Please avenge my father, Pavilion Master!"

"What kind of bullshit are you spouting! What does your father's death have to do with my father?" Liu Ting, Wei Li, Du Heng, and a few others were also observing from the crowd, and it was this moment when she screamed out, pointed at Chu Peng, and scolded, "Our father and Elder Du have also contributed their efforts for the pavilion and fought desperately against the spirit beasts. On what basis are you slandering my father?"

"If it wasn't for your bastard father and Du Haitian coming up with such an evil scheme, my father would definitely not have died!" Chu Peng rose from the ground, and with a face filled with madness, rushed towards Liu Ting.

"Chu Peng, stop!" Tu Ze and Zhuo Qian quickly rushed forward and stopped him by grabbing his shoulder on each side.

"Enough!" Tu Mo yelled angrily before asking, "Wu Chong! What exactly happened?"

"To deal with the spirit beast horde, without telling anyone beforehand, Liu Yuntao and Du Haitian had arranged for us to become bait and attract the spirit beast horde into a valley. We were surrounded by three hundred Rank One spirit beasts, sixty Rank Two spirit beasts, and five Rank Three spirit beasts within the valley..."

Wu Chong kept his head lowered; the expression on his face was fierce and terrible. "As a result Elder Chu Yan was killed straight away, and almost all of us were eliminated as well. As for them, they had joined the people from Dark Asura Hall to prepare an ambush on the valley's cliffs and used rolling rocks, fire, and ice to blast the spirit beasts inside the valley. The spirit beast horde that we had baited was almost completely exterminated, but we and those people who were in the valley with us were had pretty much died off completely as well."

Abruptly, he lifted his head and looked towards Liu Ting, and after sucking in a deep breath, he harshly said, "Why didn't your father and Elder Du Haitian become the bait in the valley? If they had at least explained matters earlier, we would at least be mentally prepared beforehand and may not necessarily have suffered so many losses!"

Liu Ting was shaken by his aura as she took a step backwards and stammered, "There will always be sacrifices in battle. At least, at least my father and them had succeeded and eliminated so many spirit beasts. This is their victory; a huge victory!"

"Correct, it is a huge victory! Both your father and Du Haitian had said so, and even the people from Dark Asura Hall said the same." Wu Chong smiled tragically. "To use your own family as fodder and send all of us to our deaths in exchange for his huge victory. It truly is an impressive ploy! Not only did he impress the First Hall Master of Dark Asura Hall, even the people from Seven Fiends Valley and Dark Shadow Tower praised him for acquiring a great victory for such a small cost; they praised that his methods were amazing! But what about us? All of our people are dead, and Elder Chu was tore to pieces by the Blue-eyed Toad right before our very eyes!"

Wu Chong's expression was fierce and mournful. "They all died. One after another, they died before my eyes. Many of their corpses are incomplete because they were all torn apart and eaten by the spirit beasts! Even Elder Chu did not leave behind a full corpse!"

"Let go of me! LET GO OF ME!" Chu Peng howled madly as his eyes were glued onto Liu Ting, looking like he was ready to stake his life at any moment.

Tu Ze and Zhuo Qian had to use all of their strength to keep him down.

All the Nebula Pavilion martial practitioners gathered in front of the entrance wore a heavy expression and kept quiet without lending an opinion when they listened up to this point.

Liu Ting, Wei Li, Du Heng, and the others realized that the crowd around them was looking at them with unfriendly eyes, so they did not choose to stay behind and instead quietly slipped away.

"Tu Ze, please closely watch over Chu Peng for me. The rest of the injured will get themselves treated immediately." With a frown, Tu Mo quietly yelled out, "Wu Chong, come with me. I need to know more about this in detail."

Tu Mo nodded once towards Han Qingrui, and the duo headed together into the great hall he used to discuss matters. Wu Chong followed behind them.

When they saw Han Qingrui and him leaving first, the rest of the crowd also gradually went away. However, everyone's expressions were dark, and the matter had left a mark in their hearts.

"Chu Peng, you have my deepest condolences," consoled Qin Lie after he walked forward and let out a sigh.

Chu Peng had his head lowered. Like a trapped beast, his expression was ugly and terrible, and his emotions were also still in an incredibly unstable state.

Tu Ze and Zhuo Qian looked at Qin Lie. Their gazes were a little off, and they look like they wanted to say something but were hesitant about it.

"Is there anything you can't tell me?" Qin Lie frowned.

After giving the thought a moment, Tu Ze gritted his teeth and said, "Brother, you shouldn't have any good feelings about Ling Family, do you?"

"What do you mean?" Qin Lie asked uncertainly.

"You're going to find out really soon anyway, so I won't hide this from you. Those Ling Family clansmen... also had entered the valley with Elder Chu Yan as bait." With a dark expression Tu Ze added, "Almost all of them are dead."

Qin Lie paled.

"I'm sorry we couldn't help. We were with Elder Kang Hui and Ye Yangqiu, so we knew nothing about this matter," Tu Ze apologized.

"Liu Yuntao, Du Haitian, and Wei Xing had hid their cards too well. No one would have guessed that they could be this ruthless. By the time we heard of the news, it had already happened." Zhuo Qian sighed quietly and slapped Qin Lie's shoulders. "You too... should watch out."

"Has the Ling Family received the news?" Qin Lie's expression was livid, and his eyes were filled with murderous intent. "Those people from the Ling Family who went, are they really all dead?"

"The Ling Family should already know" Zhuo Qian answered.

Qin Lie nodded his head. Imbued with horrific killing intent, he went straight out of Nebula Pavilion.

"Ling Ying, Ling Xin, Ling Xiao..."

One by one their young faces flashed through his mind. Scene after scene where they had fought shoulder to shoulder were drawn out of the depths of his memories.

He could still remember the day before he left Ling Town. During his saddest moments, they had carried with them a jug of liquor and drank with him for the entire night, had accompanied him to scream and yell, and cried and laughed with him like a madman.

"Did you all leave just like that..."

He whispered to himself along the way; his expression chillingly dark to the extreme, and just like Chu Peng, he was on the verge of losing control.

When he arrived at the courtyard the Ling Family was occupying, before he even went in, he could already hear the entire house filled with mourning cries.

The families of Ling Xin, Ling Xiao, and the others were all weeping tearfully in the courtyard. Even Ling Chengzhi sat blankly under a wooden pole, looking like he had lost his soul as he muttered again and again, "Big brother. Oh, big brother. Big brother..."

Ling Feng, the only one who hadn't left the city, consoled repeatedly beside Ling Xin, Ling Xiao, and the others' parents with red eyes, "Auntie, Uncle, from today onwards I, Ling Feng shall become your son! I, Ling Feng, swear that as long as I have a breath left in this body, I will definitely avenge them in the future!"

An atmosphere of pain and sadness pervaded the courtyard. The Ling Family clansmen were either silent or crying and cursing aloud.

Qin Lie stood at the front entrance, watching the crying Ling Family clansmen, watching Ling Feng swearing and gritting his teeth, watching the soulless Ling Chengzhi...

He suddenly thought of the two sisters, Ling Yushi and Ling Xuanxuan.

If the two sisters learned that their father had died horribly, learned that their childhood friends that had grown up with them were all dead, could they accept it?

"Qin Lie!" Ling Chengzhi suddenly found him. With an ugly expression, he rushed over and grabbed his shoulders with both arms; then, with a slightly hysterical voice, he yelled out, "Can you send a message to Dark Fiend Valley through Nebula Pavilion and tell the truth behind my brother's death to them?!"

Qin Lie could feel Ling Chengzhi's strength on his shoulders, could taste the terrible grief inside his heart, but he could only shake his head indifferently.

"I have no way of sending a message to Dark Fiend Valley. You should understand that communication will only be convenient when the high level forces are sending a message to their vassals. The opposite will be filled with obstacles. Not to mention that Nebula Pavilion isn't even a vassal to Dark Fiend Valley, so even I do not have a way to contact them."

After a pause, he said again, "And what can they do even if they knew? Liu Yuntao and Du Haitian had plotted and killed many spirit beasts. Although they have sacrificed a lot of people, they were instead praised unanimously by Seven Fiends Valley, Dark Asura Hall, and Dark Shadow Tower. Setting them aside, not even Granny Jiu can say anything about this situation. Even if we did tell them, what can they change?"

The moment the words landed, Ling Chengzhi, Ling Feng, and the Ling Family clansmen all paled. It was as if their hopes for revenge had been extinguished by him in an instant.

Chapter 110: Loss of Power

Nebula Pavilion, Tu Mo's study.

"What have you called Zhuo Qian and I over for, Big Brother?" After Tu Ze entered, he saw Tu Mo reading a letter on his chair with a dark expression.

Elder Han Qingrui was also standing to the side with his eyebrows tightly knit. He did not look too good.

"Little Ze, you and Zhuo Qian can't stay at Nebula Pavilion much longer." Tu Mo put down the letter in his hands and raised his head. "Father has asked the both of us to enter Dark Asura Hall."

"Why?" Tu Ze couldn't quite accept it. "Big Brother, you have cultivated step by step in Nebula Pavilion and honed yourself slowly to the Manifestation Realm before you officially entered Dark Asura Hall. I'm only at the Natal Opening Realm. What's the point if I enter Dark Asura Hall with you now?"

"That's right." Zhuo Qian also agreed. "It is my father's intention that I stay at Nebula Pavilion until I reach the Manifestation Realm before returning to Dark Asura Hall."

Tu Mo sighed helplessly. "Uncle Han, please explain it to them."

Han Qingrui nodded his head. "The Pavilion Master had once promised that, between Vice Pavilion Master Kang Hui and Liu Yuntao, whoever can score an outstanding performance in battle will become the next Pavilion Master. Since Liu Yuntao and Du Haitian had devised that plan and killed many spirit beasts at the Arctic Mountain Range, it can be said that they have achieved an impressive feat and won the first Hall Master's appreciation. Even Seven Fiends Valley and Dark Shadow Tower had praised him greatly..."

The moment the matter was brought up, Tu Ze and Zhuo Qian's eyes immediately turned red as they yelled out, "You call that an outstanding performance?"

"Elder Chu Yan and his subordinates were sacrificed, but in exchange, we attained a huge victory. In the eyes of the higher-ups of Dark Asura Hall, Seven Fiends Valley, and Dark Shadow Tower, these sacrifices are completely worth it. Moreover, they also agree that Liu Yuntao's actions are ruthless and decisive. Thus, he is suitable for bigger responsibility. They believe he will become a competent new leader in Nebula Pavilion," Han Qingrui explained.

"How can this be?" Zhuo Qian's voice was weak.

“Big Brother, Father is a commander under the Second Hall Master, and we both know that the Second Hall Master and First Hall Master have never seen eye to eye, so can it be that Liu Yuntao had purposely got closer with the First Hall Master?” Tu Ze said.

“Correct.” Tu Mo nodded. “For the longest time Nebula Pavilion has been under the control of our Tu Family. Since father is working under the Second Hall Master, the Tu Family can be counted as the Second Hall Master’s power. Between Liu Yuntao and Kang Hui, no matter who the victor is in this war for the position of Pavilion Master, they will still belong under the Second Hall Master and thus still count as part of the Tu Family...”

He was silent for a while before he continued, “Liu Yuntao obviously did not want to be controlled by the Tu Family. While we were fighting against the spirit beasts, he contacted the First Hall Master at the Arctic Mountain Range and joined forces with him. The First Hall Master has performed extraordinarily well at the Arctic Mountain Range this time and is currently under the limelight, so the Second Hall Master has no choice but to avoid him for the moment.”

“Since Shattered Ice Manor is also on the First Hall Master’s side, in order to ease the endless infighting between Nebula Pavilion and Shattered Ice Manor, it can be said that they’ve acquiesce the intimacy between Liu Yuntao and the First Hall Master. The higher ups feel that if Liu Yuntao had taken over Nebula Pavilion and both sides were the First Hall Master’s men, then Shattered Ice Manor and Nebula Pavilion will no longer fight each other to their deaths.”

He looked at Tu Ze. “To put it plainly, the one Shattered Ice Manor hates is us, the Tu Family. If Nebula Pavilion no longer belonged to the Tu Family, then Shattered Ice Manor will no longer hold such a huge grudge any longer.”

At this point, both Tu Ze and Zhuo Qian had understood what he meant, and they felt slightly chilled in their hearts.

“What about Second Hall Master? Can it be that he...” Zhuo Qian exclaimed softly.

“We don’t have a choice. The First Hall Master had an outstanding performance at the Arctic Mountain Range, and it is rumored that they are about to renew their contract with the spirit beast king as of late.” Tu Mo shook his head. “There is nothing the Second Hall Master can do about this matter. Moreover, the higher ups do not wish to see Shattered Ice Manor and Nebula Pavilion to continue fighting each other and has thus acquiesce to the matter. Father also knew that Nebula Pavilion will soon no longer be under the Tu Family’s control, so...”

He passed the letter to Tu Ze. “You can take a look yourself.”

With a dark face, Tu Ze bowed his head and read the entire letter. Even after reading it, he continued to stay silent.

“So here’s the plan. When Liu Yuntao comes back, I will relinquish my position and the two of us shall go together to Dark Asura Hall.” Tu Mo waved his hands helplessly. “The two of you should make preparations for the time being.”

Once Liu Yuntao takes over Nebula Pavilion, the Tu Family will no longer have any influence inside Nebula Pavilion. Even if Tu Ze and Zhuo Qian stayed behind, they would not give them any quarter. In fact, Liu Yuntao might even scheme against them from the shadows.

That being the case, they might as well leave early and avoid being heavily shackled in the future.

“If we leave, then what will Uncle Han and Uncle Kang do?” Zhuo Qian lowered her head. “What will be the statement about Elder Chu Yan’s revenge?”

Han Qingrui shook his head with a bitter smile. “Miss Qian, I thank you for your concern. The Pavilion Master shall have other arrangements for me, so you do not have to worry. As for Chu Yan... Sigh, you don’t have to worry too much. Just make sure to keep Chu Peng under control and do not in any circumstances allow him to add any more trouble into the mix.”

“The First Hall Master’s in the limelight at the moment, and the ones who got close to him, like Liu Yuntao and Du Haitian, are also in power. We do not have the power to face them directly at the moment, so we have no choice but to avoid them,” Tu Mo said darkly.

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“Have you heard?” Vice Pavilion Master Liu has scored a great achievement at the Arctic Mountain Range, and he will be taking over the position of Pavilion Master at Nebula Pavilion.”

“To sacrifice Elder Chu Yan and almost everyone under him in exchange for such an achievement... How utterly despicable. I cannot believe that he can be this ruthless.”

“But he succeeded. It is said that Dark Asura Hall’s First Hall Master has given him great recognition, and it also seems that after they’ve made a contract with the spirit beast king, he will accompany him on a trip to Nebula Pavilion.”

“You have to admit that Vice Pavilion Master Liu is an able man. His methods are much greater than Pavilion Master Tu.”

“Sigh, Pavilion Master Tu is still the best. He is fair and just. If Liu Yuntao rose to his position, I wonder what will happen?”

“You haven’t seen Liu Ting’s expression as of late. She’s so pleased she’s about to make her way to the heavens. She doesn’t even look people in their eyes anymore.”

“Wei Li too, and that newcomer Du Heng. These people have been acting quite imposing as of late.”

“What can we do? Their fathers are in power right now.”

As of late, such buzz could be found at the Scripture Tower, the Artifact Tower, and every large cultivation room. Almost every Nebula Pavilion martial practitioner had heard the news and learned that when Liu Yuntao and his group returns to Nebula Pavilion, he will become a Pavilion Master immediately, whereas Tu Mo will be leaving to work under Dark Asura Hall.

Liu Yuntao, Du Haitian, and Wei Xing’s subordinates too were swaggering around as of late and wore quite the confident looks.

Liu Ting, Wei Li and, Du Heng were even worse. They would laugh out loud while walking on the streets, as if afraid that no one would know how happy and proud they were right now.

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Qin Lie had accompanied Ling Feng and Ling Chengzhi for two days at the Ling Family’s courtyard until they calmed down before he finally returned to Nebula Pavilion.

The moment he returned to Nebula Pavilion, he heard countless discussions and learned that Liu Yuntao would soon become the new Pavilion Master while Du Haitian would become the Vice Pavilion Master.

His expression was cold, and he walked all the way to the Artifact Forging Hall. Just as he walked inside, he immediately saw Liu Ting walking out with Wei Li and Du Heng.

The moment Liu Ting saw his return, her face turned cold as she scoffed. “Nebula Pavilion does not raise trash. This place will be closed from now on. What Artifact Forging Hall? It has no reason to exist at all!”

“Qin Lie, your good days are numbered.” Du Heng’s gaze was malicious. “In the past, the Tu Family protected you so you could live comfortably inside Nebula Pavilion... You better watch your back later.”

“Let us go.” Liu Ting left proudly, and the group followed right after.

Qin Lie walked into the Artifact Forging Hall.

Each one of the cupboards had been sealed off with tape, and artifact forging spirit materials of all kinds had been moved away. The only thing left was the center furnace—it wasn't moved away yet because it was too big.

Yao Tai looked forlorn beside his furnace.

“Great Master Yao...” Qin Lie cried softly.

“What Great Master...” Yao Tai shook his head with a bitter smile. “In a few days, I will be chased out of Nebula Pavilion. Sigh, I never thought that Liu Yuntao would come into power.”

“The stuff here?” Qin Lie asked.

“They’ve been all moved away.” Yao Tai explained, “They’re afraid of me stashing the spirit materials. They said that these all belonged to the pavilion and need to be moved away first.”

“Didn’t the Pavilion Master say anything?” Qin Lie frowned.

“We’ve already come to this point, and the Pavilion Master doesn’t want to conflict with Liu Yuntao, so he allowed Liu Ting and the others to do whatever they want.” Yao Tai smiled bitterly. “Sigh, if I had known about this earlier I would have made a new Mirror of Thousand Illusions for that little grandaunt back then. The pride of an artificer... is a pretty terrible thing sometimes.”

Qin Lie could not say anything.

“I’ll be leaving the day after tomorrow. I... won’t be able to teach you anything else in the future. Keep this booklet. It contains my views of all sorts of low level spirit materials. There’s nothing really valuable in there, just my tens of years of experience.” He passed over a rather thick scripture to Qin Lie and said, “The spirit diagrams I knew are too rough, so I won’t be teaching you about them. I hope you’ll be able to find a real famous teacher in the future. As for me, I’m not qualified to become your master...”

With a heavy heart, Qin Lie accepted his book of artifact forging experience and said sincerely, “Thank you Great Master Yao.”

Waving his hands, Yao Tai signaled for him to leave. He himself was staring at the furnace with a gaze full of emotions. “I’ll have a look at you for a few more days. I wonder how you’ll be treated in the future and whose hands will you fall into. In the past, I had come to Nebula Pavilion just for you. Sigh, tens of years have passed and I am still an unaccomplished artificer. In the end, I was even chased away...”

“Please keep an open mind, Great Master,” Qin Lie consoled.

"Sigh, I won't know how this furnace will be arranged when I leave. I really don't want to give away the things I have used for tens of years." Yao Tai sighed. "Even if I have to destroy it, I still do not want to see it misused by other people. Unfortunately... if Liu Ting learned about this, there'll be a whole load of trouble. Never mind, I should forget about it."

Yao Tai seemed to think to destroy the furnace, but he was afraid of being held accountable by Liu Ting. His face was filled with hesitation.

"If I have the opportunity, I will help you destroy it." After a moment's thought, Qin Lie exclaimed softly before bowing deeply towards Yao Tai. Then, he went quietly left.

He arrived beside Han Qingrui.

"Uncle Han?" Qin Lie said softly.

Han Qingrui was staring blankly as if spellbound, and when he finally came to, he gave a weak smile and said, "Oh Qin Lie, you better trade in all of your contribution points while you can in the next few days. Otherwise, when Du Haitian and Liu Yuntao comes back, they may cause some trouble for you."

"Uncle Han, what do you plan to do?" Qin Lie asked.

"Me?" Han Qingrui smiled bitterly. "I'll stay for a while and see how it goes. If I really can't stay here any longer then I'll leave. It's not that hard for me to find a living."

"Uncle Han, can the matter of Liu Yuntao and Du Haitian setting up and killing Elder Chu Yan and the Ling Family clansmen count as violating the criminal laws of the Discipline Hall?" After a moment's silence, Qin Lie's eyes shone with a terrible light.

"If they had failed and Chu Yan and the others were all dead in addition to failing to kill the spirit beasts, then the Discipline Hall would definitely interfere and denounce them." Han Qingrui sighed. "But no, they have won a huge victory. With Chu Yan and their deaths killing many spirit beasts and almost turning the situation on its head, they forced the spirit beast king to sign a contract with us. In this case, not only are they not guilty, they are even considered to have scored a great achievement and won praises from all sides. What can the Discipline Hall possibly do?"

"Then, do you mean that Elder Chu Yan and the Ling Family clansmen have died for nothing?" Qin Lie gritt his teeth as the hostility in his eyes grew deeper and deeper.

"There's nothing we can do. There's nothing we can do at all, Qin Lie. You should just accept reality like the rest of us." Han Qingrui sighed.

"I cannot accept this!" Qin Lie gave a low roar.

