

Chapter 271: Exposed

After hearing what Ming Zhaoshu said, Lu Yin lowered his head again and did not dare to answer.

“Are you willing to work for me, Lu Seven?” Ming Zhaoshu suddenly shouted while staring directly at Lu Yin.

Lu Yin felt something jostle within his head. It was that same pressure from Ming Zhaoshu once again. Powerhouses who were able to traverse the universe without a spacecraft might not all be able to use spiritual force attacks, but their bodies had fundamentally transformed, and they were all able to naturally exert pressure on those weaker than them. This was one of the many reasons why so many geniuses were unable to leap realms and challenge powerhouses above them once they became Limiteers. However, this pressure had no real effect on Lu Yin.

“I am willing to work for you, my lord.” Lu Yin pretended to collapse and quickly blurted out a response.

Ming Zhaoshu nodded in satisfaction. “Good. Lift your head.”

Lu Yin did as commanded and felt a strong gust of wind coming towards him. His expression changed quickly as he restrained his urge to make a move while a pleasant scent was inhaled into his body, bringing him a sense of numbness along with the aroma.

“This is a unique medicine of mine that will increase your power and the sensitivity of your five senses. However, there are some side effects. You’ll need to absorb it regularly, or else you’ll be reduced to a puddle of blood and pus,” Ming Zhaoshu coldly informed him.

Lu Yin trembled in fear. “I understand, my Lord.”

“As I said before, you’ve done no wrong. Help me to accomplish something, and I can remove this medicine from you forever. Otherwise, you already know the consequences.” After saying this, Ming Zhaoshu stood up, walked over to Lu Yin, and whispered, “Enter the crown prince’s household.”

Lu Yin was startled. “The crown prince’s household?”

Ming Zhaoshu had a cold glint in his eyes. “You’ve been to Qianshan Village, which means that you should have a slight connection to the royal family. You’re smart, so you will definitely be able to get inside and obtain the trust of the crown prince, Ming Hao. His butler, Wu Xia, died recently, so there is a ripe opportunity for your picking.”

“Yes, my lord,” Lu Yin answered. So Wu Xia had died already? That wasn’t that much of a surprise. After all, he had discovered the location of the node that kept the five planets sealing the continent safe. Wu Xia was already being threatened back when Lu Yin was Possessing him, and it wasn’t a surprise at all that Wu Xia had been killed.

Ming Zhaoshu was very pleased with Lu Yin’s reaction. More importantly, the secret medicine could not be eliminated without a certain amount of strength. The king also couldn’t sense anything abnormal about Lu Yin; he appeared to be completely ordinary. Thus, it should be impossible for the youth to purge the medicine himself. Lu Yin was also very intelligent and aware that, even if he informed Ming Hao about this, the man would not do anything about it on Lu Yin’s behalf; it would be a dead-end.

“If you do well, I will arrange for Yue’er to marry you,” Ming Zhaoshu nonchalantly added on.

Lu Yin looked up in surprise. Yue’er?!

Ming Zhaoshu smiled condescendingly. “Did you think that only young men of noble blood such as Bei Qing had the right to marry her? You’re wrong—you could have the opportunity as well. I can promise you that Yue’er will never leave the Reverent King Estate and that she won’t marry anyone else. She will be yours and yours alone.”

Lu Yin quickly made a sound of acknowledgement. Ming Zhaoshu had a very tight grasp on human behavior. If Lu Yin truly were an ordinary coachman, then he would have definitely been pumped full of vigor at the prospect of obtaining the woman that he had once only been able to admire from afar. Few would ever receive an opportunity such as this. A beautiful woman paired with a debilitating drug—this was Ming Zhaoshu’s way of entrapping Lu Yin.

“That’s all. You may go,” Ming Zhaoshu stated.

Lu Yin bowed once more before leaving. When he reached the door, he heard Ming Zhaoshu say, “I must ask that you leave before we arrive at the capital. I’ll send men to keep in contact with you. Also, you would do well to remember this: don’t try anything funny and never meddle in my business.”

Lu Yin bowed one last time and then exited the study.

Outside, Tang Si watched him with an indifferent expression.

Lu Yin bowed towards him as well before walking away.

Tang Si’s eyes remained trained on Lu Yin’s back as he left before entering the study. “Was that necessary, my lord?”

Ming Zhaoshu smiled. “He’s very smart, ambitious, and lucky. Having him attempt to infiltrate the crown prince’s household could very well turn out to be an unexpected boon for us.” He paused for a moment before continuing, saying, “Besides, he now has a connection to Bei Qing as well. That may prove useful to us in the future as well.”

“Bei Qing won’t pay any attention to him at all. To him, Seven’s merely a slave who was trying to gain his favor,” Tang Si said.

Ming Zhaoshu smiled. “It doesn’t matter if they’re on good terms or not. What’s important is maintaining that connection between them.”

Elsewhere, Lu Yin had already moved away from the study. His mind had not stopped racing ever since. The crown prince’s household did not hold any interest for him; the biggest secret there was the location of the node, and after what had happened to Wu Xia, Ming Hao must have become even more cautious about guarding this secret. It would be very difficult for Lu Yin to obtain that information with his own abilities, and there was no need for him to go to that residence anyway. The drug, on the other hand, was something he could force out of his body on his own as well.

He was now wondering what Ming Zhaoshu’s motives truly were. Based on Wu Xia’s memories and the rumors circulating amongst the commoners, Reverent King Ming Zhaoshu was an upstanding person who was staunchly loyal to the emperor, Ming Zhaotian. He seemed to live solely for the land and the

people. The only thing against him was that he was slightly lacking in battle power. His older brother, Ming Zhaotian, wasn't much older than him, but he was already in the Martial God realm. And Crown Prince Ming Hao, was a Martial Emperor just like him, but it was rumored that, despite being in the same realm, Ming Zhaoshu's battle prowess was greatly inferior to the crown prince.

This was the one bit of Ming Zhaoshu that had been a disappointment.

However, things would be very different if he had truly comprehended a domain. Lu Yin did not believe that anyone who could comprehend a domain was weak. Ming Zhaoshu was also a very accurate judge of people, and yet, he had allowed Bei Qing to continue attempting to woo Ming Yan. From this, it was apparent that he was a very calm person who was not easy to deal with. He was hiding way too much from the public.

Everyone knew that the king's position was being eyed by Crown Prince Ming Hao, and that quite a few people had been sent to sneak into Ming Zhaoshu's household. When he had first heard of this, Lu Yin had been rather confused. Ming Hao was no fool, but he had still somehow let everyone know that he was sending people into Ming Zhaoshu's household. But now, Lu Yin was starting to think that those rumors were actually a way for Ming Zhaoshu to reduce Ming Hao's support.

Of course, this was all merely conjectures by Lu Yin and were perhaps nothing more than nonsense. However, some of it could be true. Lu Yin pondered over this newfound information while walking, and just when he was rounding the corner, he crashed into someone.

"Ah!"

After hearing the shout, Lu Yin reached forward, intending to wrap his arms around the girl who he had run into. He smelled something fragrant and rather familiar. Was this... Ming Yan?

Time seemed to stop. Right at the corner, Lu Yin had his arms around Ming Yan, and the two stared at each other for an indeterminate amount of time.

Yue Xianzi was the first one to react and did so by hitting Lu Yin on the shoulder, forcing him to move back. "How dare you do this to the young miss!"

Lu Yin took several steps backwards and began begging for forgiveness with a bowed head.

Ming Yan looked at him curiously. "Are you that coachman? Lu Seven, was it?"

"Yes, I'm Lu Seven," Lu Yin quickly answered.

Ming Yan gazed at him. "Raise your head."

Lu Yin was speechless. These were the exact same words that Ming Zhaoshu had spoken to him. He slowly did as ordered and looked at the princess with a feigned expression of fear.

Ming Yan stared right into his eyes, and something flashed through her own, as if she was thinking of something.

"How dare you look straight at the Young Miss!" Yue Xianzi shouted as she raised her hand once again.

Ming Yan hastily stopped her. "It's fine, Yue'er. Let's go."

Yue Xianzi shot another angry glare at Lu before leaving with Ming Yan. Ever since Lu Yin had demonstrated those forms, she had lost all interest in him. She believed from the bottom of her heart that he was a native of this continent, and so, she hadn't even used any martial power in her attack.

Lu Yin ducked his head and waited until they left before raising his head once more. He rubbed his shoulder. Thankfully, she hadn't used much strength, or else it would have been extremely obvious that he hadn't been injured.

Two days later, the sun shone brightly and a white mist rose from the ground. Clean air covered the earth.

A row of carriages left the king's palace in Antai City and continued heading towards the center of Ming Island.

Not too long after the entourage left Antai City, a crack that extended all the way into the forest opened in the sky. After the crack appeared, several figures landed.

Lu Yin narrowed his eyes. More trialtakers had appeared.

"My Lord!" Tang Si exclaimed.

Ming Zhaoshu soared up into the air. "Stay here. I'll handle this." He lifted an arm as a fierce martial power distorted the air and spread out in all directions.

Not too far away, a similar force appeared that contended against his attack.

"There's a Martial Emperor realm powerhouse around? They're looking to die!" Ming Zhaoshu shouted as he leaped up and charged out.

Right after Ming Zhaoshu left, dozens of figures appeared from underground. Tang Si exclaimed, "Evil sect members! Kill them all!"

The carriages were all thrown into disarray. The evil sect members had taken advantage of Ming Zhaoshu's preoccupation with the trialtakers to launch an attack on them. It was complete chaos.

Butler Seven hid under the private carriage, trembling in fear. They were in the very middle of the entourage and surrounded by the troops, so they were temporarily safe.

All of a sudden, a sharp attack came rushing their direction, streaking through the air. Tang Si leaped up and counterattacked with his lance. There was a resounding clang, and powerful shockwaves struck the ground, knocking dozens of people unconscious. Tang Si was forced to take about ten steps back and looked up in shock.

The trialtakers were making their moves; they were Limiteers from the Innerverses.

Many of the people who trained in the Innerverses were very powerful, and this person was as strong as a student leader from the Astral Combat Academy. For his move to force Tang Si to stagger backwards was proof in and of itself that the person had the ability to contend with the top sixteen fighters of the Astral Combat Academy.

Some distance further away, Ming Zhaoshu's battle with the Explorer was becoming increasingly heated. The cracks on the ground had even reached the carriages, splitting the entourage in two. Lu Yin and the rest were thus forcibly separated from Tang Si.

Blood spurted out from underground as Yue Xianzi's eyes narrowed. "There are more people underground!"

Right after that, another ten experts appeared and rushed towards them. Lu Yin clenched his fists and watched the situation very carefully.

The carriage was overturned, and Yue Xianzi burst out, carrying Ming Yan with her. She coldly looked ahead to where there were about ten Martial King realm experts attacking them and pushed the princess to the side of the carriage. "Take care of her."

An intense battle had broken out in all directions.

A force tore through the void, aimed right at Ming Yan. Lu Yin grabbed her and pulled her aside. "Be careful."

Ming Yan lay in his embrace and looked up at him. Her eyes flitted about as she said in a very low voice, "Why are you following us?"

Lu Yin was caught off guard. "What are you talking about, my lady?"

Ming Yan pursed her lips and repeated herself. "Why are you following us?"

With a light thud, Yue Xianzi sent a couple Martial King realm experts reeling, but just when she was about to rush over to the princess, she was stopped.

Experts started gathering around Lu Yin and Ming Yan. Compared to all the other carriages, Ming Yan's safety was far more important.

Even during this chaotic battle, Ming Yan did not seem at all afraid for her life and continued to stare right at Lu Yin. "What exactly is it that you want, Lu Yin?"

Lu Yin was startled. "You know me?"

"Someone once told me that your name is Lu Yin. Why are you following us?" Ming Yan stared at him, stubbornness clouding her beautiful face. She fully understood what it meant to have her reputation tarnished in this era and was unwilling to be obsessed with the incident. What had happened had happened, but she did not want to be looked down on.

When it came to anyone else, she could continue to pretend as if nothing had happened. However, it wasn't the same when this man was in front of her. He had destroyed her pure reputation, and she would never be rid of this stain. He had created trouble for her and disturbed her mental state. Even her dreams were no longer pure, as she had dreamed about this person for ten consecutive days.

Chapter 272: Lu Yin vs Yue Xianzi

All of Lu Yin's words were caught in his throat. He saw the stubbornness, sorrow, anger, and a myriad of other emotions in her eyes, but there was nothing that he could say to her. "I'm sorry."

Ming Yan's eyes dimmed. "Leave. Don't come close to us ever again or else my father will not let you off."

"He doesn't know who I am," Lu Yin said.

Ming Yan shook her head. "You underestimate him. Both you and Yue'er underestimate him."

Lu Yin was surprised. "You know everything?"

The corner of Ming Yan's lips curved up and she laughed deprecatingly at herself. "Does a native such as me appear to be very stupid to you, Lu Yin?"

Lu Yin was astonished by her words. Stupid? He seemed to have misjudged this girl. She was kind, beautiful, and definitely not stupid. When it came to her wit and instincts, she was absolutely much sharper than most. Yue Xianzi had created a fake identity with the help of her sect's connections, and while the Reverent King might have some suspicions about her, he would still need to investigate to be sure. Ming Yan, on the other hand, was already completely certain. She was definitely much smarter than the king.

"How did you recognize me?" Lu Yin asked curiously.

Ming Yan blushed before hesitatingly answering, "M-my smell is on you." After that, she struggled out of his arms since Yue Xianzi had finished taking care of the battle. The power that she had displayed was formidable.

Lu Yin felt an emptiness inside his now-empty arms. He looked at Ming Yan and had a sudden impulse and desire to stand atop the world and pull her into his arms. This girl had stolen his heart.

"Are you hurt, my lady?" Yue Xianzi asked worriedly.

Ming Yan shook her head. She glanced back at Lu Yin and discreetly pointed at Yue Xianzi as she stuck her tongue out. It was so adorable that Lu Yin froze at the sight. Her cheeky grin was simply that stunning.

Upon seeing Lu Yin's dazed look, Ming Yan giggled and turned back away.

Yue Xianzi did not notice anything and was still looking around cautiously, fearful that more enemies might appear from nowhere.

When the battle in the distance ended, the evil sect members that had also ambushed them had been completely annihilated. Two of the trialtakers had been killed, but the Explorer trialtaker had escaped; Ming Zhaoshu had not been able to capture him.

"Are you hurt, Yan'er?" Ming Zhaoshu anxiously asked his daughter.

Ming Yan shook her head. "I had Yue'er here to protect me, so I'm fine."

Ming Zhaoshu made a sound of acknowledgement. "Pack up. We're going to continue moving forward."

Butler Seven finally crawled out from underneath the private carriage, his expression still that of abject terror.

“Are you alright, Butler Seven?” Lu Yin asked with concern.

Butler Seven was rather embarrassed and coughed to cover up his fear. “Uh, I checked under the carriage for more evil sect members, but I didn’t find any. You can relax now.”

Lu Yin was rendered speechless. What a great excuse!

The king’s entourage was not the only group that had been attacked. All of the carriages in the Shenwu Empire that were heading towards the capital had been attacked. Most of the attacks were carried out by evil sect members, and the Demon Hunters were so overwhelmed that they were forced into a passive state. It was their job to deal with the evil sect members, but the evil sects were becoming increasingly aggressive, and even the crown prince, Ming Hao, was enraged by their actions. Ming Zhaotian’s birthday was just around the corner, but now, it seemed that there were people who were planning on turning this joyous celebratory event into a gruesome bloodbath.

But none of this had anything to do with Lu Yin. His only wish at this moment was for this journey to never end. Ming Yan’s existence had caused him to forget about a lot of things. The occasional eye contact between the two of them often made his heart race. It was a great feeling.

Unfortunately, no matter how much he wished otherwise, time could not be stopped. After around ten more days passed, the carriages stopped.

“My lord, we’ll reach Mingdu once we cross the road up ahead,” Tang Si reported.

Ming Zhaoshu made a sound of acknowledgement and then glanced at Lu Yin.

Lu Yin nodded back at him. Following Tang Si’s instructions, he left the carriages. He was to leave, head for the capital on his own, and then find a way to enter the crown prince’s household. Before he left the convoy, he sadly looked at one specific carriage one last time. After this farewell, he had no idea when they would be able to meet again. This was a sealed continent that was under heavy surveillance, so he did not know if he would be able to return or even leave this place alive.

With a sigh, he left.

Within the carriage, Ming Yan looked outside through the drapes while seemingly deep in thought.

“What’s wrong, Yan’er?” Ming Zhaoshu asked, surprised by her ruminative behavior.

Ming Yan shook her head and bitterly asked, “Is the grudge between us and the foreign aliens really irresolvable?”

Ming Zhaoshu was dumbfounded. “Why would you ask something like that?”

“I’m just curious. This war has gone on for too long,” Ming Yan quietly answered.

Ming Zhaoshu sighed and replied, “A millennium ago, an ultimate powerhouse appeared on this continent. He was the uncle of my brother and I. His name was Ming Taizhong, and he was a Martial God realm powerhouse. With his aid, the empire was invincible, and he even had the ability to tear through the void. The goal had been to create an era of prosperity, but alas, it was all in vain as this act only attracted the alien invaders to our continent. His Majesty eventually died after sealing the continent with the five planets. Now, after a millennium, countless powerhouses from this continent have died to

protect those planets and our continent as an extension. This grudge has been reinforced with so much blood from both sides that it will not be easily resolved.”

Ming Yan appeared downcast from the answer and tightly clenched her handkerchief.

“Every family has a member who has died at the hands of the invaders. Whether they’re from the empire, the evil sects, or the islands in the boundless East Sea, everyone views the aliens as a common enemy. Once they’re discovered, they must die without exception.”

Ming Yan’s heart leaped, and her face paled. A thousand years had passed since the start of the war, but that wasn’t enough to resolve the grudge. Now, here she was hoping for reconciliation. In the eyes of the people living on the continent, perhaps she was a traitor.

Ming Zhaoshu looked at her with warm eyes. “I know that you’re a kind person, but this is a grudge that has lasted for a millennium. Don’t dwell on this too much. I will take care of everything.”

Ming Yan looked at her father again before lowering her head. “I do not wish to be wed, Father.”

Ming Zhaoshu frowned. “Why is that?” After a moment, he seemed to remember something and said, “Don’t worry, Yan’er. I will find a way to cleanse your reputation. I won’t allow you to suffer.”

“I’m sorry, father,” Ming Yan said in a small voice.

Ming Zhaoshu sighed and patted her on the shoulder, not thinking much of the situation. He assumed that his daughter was worried about her reputation and also reluctant to be separated from him.

Mingdu, the capital, was surrounded by mountains on all sides, and the tall peaks towering into the sky protected it. They formed the wall of an impenetrable fortress that was rumored to have Martial Sovereigns at its core, protecting the capital.

Lu Yin crossed through a forest and looked up. When he saw that the mountains off in the distance were growing larger, he stopped, leaped up into a tree, sat down cross-legged, and began cleansing his body of the drug.

While the drug that Ming Zhaoshu had given him was rather lethal, that was only for non-cultivators. Ordinary Martial King realm cultivators would not be able to eliminate the drug, but it wasn’t much of a problem for Lu Yin.

Half an hour later, Lu Yin spat out a mouthful of blood. It was black and filled with concentrated poison, to the point where it instantly corroded the bark of the tree and let out a terrifying sizzling sound. After wiping the corner of his lips clean, Lu Yin checked his body again. It was actually a pity since that drug truly was able to enhance his strength and five senses, but unfortunately, the side-effects vastly outweighed the benefits. Otherwise, it would have truly been a useful item.

Just as he was about to leave the tree, he saw a figure quickly darting in his direction. Lu Yin temporarily hid himself, remaining in the tree still.

Soon enough, a beautiful figure flitted by, and Lu Yin was shocked to discover that it was Yue Xianzi. She, too, had parted ways with the convoy.

The reason why she had joined the convoy in the first place was to enter Ming Island after it had been sealed off as well as to avoid the Ming guards who were searching everywhere for aliens. Now that she had reached the capital, she had already achieved her goal and would naturally part ways with the convoy.

She considered it a huge pity that she had no choice but to part with Ming Yan. She quite liked this kind and innocent young girl.

Right when she passed by the tree that held the hiding Lu Yin, Yue Xianzi suddenly paused and turned around; she noticed the patch of tree bark had been corroded by poisonous blood. Her gaze grew cold and she turned around, looking right at the tree that Lu Yin was hiding in.

Lu Yin knew that she had discovered him, so he jumped down and directly looked at her.

"It's you?" Yue Xianzi exclaimed in shock. Never had she expected to run into the coachman here.

Lu Yin looked the same as before and still appeared to be Lu Seven. "What a surprise, Miss Yue'er! I didn't think that we'd meet here!"

Yue Xianzi watched him cautiously before asking, "Who are you? You're definitely not some ordinary person."

Lu Yin shrugged. "Take a guess."

Yue Xianzi snorted. "Do you want to die?" She then thrust out with an attack at Lu Yin. Her fair palms followed up with a quick barrage of attacks, leaving multiple afterimages in her wake as she quickly worked to seal off Lu Yin's escape paths. The entire area's space seemed to tremble from her might. At the same time, Lu Yin lifted his arms and struck back against every single one afterimage that Yue Xianzi had created. There was a boom as shockwaves compressed the ground and caused ten or so of the nearby trees to collapse.

Yue Xianzi was forced back by Lu Yin's attacks, and her face turned ashen. She was the young mistress of the Frostmoon Sect and an absolute genius of the wider universe's younger generation. While she couldn't be compared with the strongest freaks, she was not someone whom regular people could match up against. While there were also many powerhouses on the Shenwu Continent, those who were able to match up against Yue Xianzi were only those within the top ten or even top five percent of the List of Tempering. But now, this mysterious person was actually able to block her attacks with ease.

"Who in the world are you?" Yue Xianzi shouted, staring at Lu Yin with a guarded expression.

Lu Yin grinned and used Flash to reach her side. He then bent his hands into claws and used the 96th form of the Skybeast Claw technique. A beast howl echoed through the void as the attack went straight for Yue Xianzi. A cold look appeared in her eyes as the distinct image of a moon appeared on her forehead.

"Congealing Moon!" she cried, causing moonbeams to envelop the area, Lu Yin felt the surroundings' temperature plummet drastically. His Skybeast Claw was also frozen to the point where it began to shatter and break apart. He took a step back and directed a curious gaze at Yue Xianzi. So this was Yue Xianzi's innate gift, Coldmoon, which allowed a moon to illuminate the area.

“Icy Plum Vale Technique!” Yue Xianzi used the power of her Coldmoon to freeze everything around her. The air turned icy as white streaks formed in the air. As she attacked Lu Yin, these white streaks transformed into shapes that resembled plum flowers for a thousand meters in all directions.

Lu Yin easily dodged her attacks. Back during the Astral Combat Tournament, Yue Xianzi had lost to Charon because he had seen through the battle technique that she had gained from the Blackwater Lake inheritance and instantly killed her. At that time, she hadn’t been able to show off her other battle techniques, and her inner gift had little effect on her opponents. Just now, she was finally able to display its power, but it was nonetheless fruitless against Lu Yin. He was quick enough to tear through the void, and while he wasn’t able to do so on the Shenwu Continent, his speed still wasn’t something that Yue Xianzi could contest.

The more they fought, the more shocked Yue Xianzi became. This person was far stronger than she had expected, and his power was at least at the level of the top sixteen in the Astral Combat Tournament. This was not someone to underestimate during the Outerverse trial on the Shenwu Continent. With this in mind, she did not hesitate to use her strongest battle technique that she had received from Blackwater Lake—Poseidon’s Garments.

Martial power simulated the flow of water and began encircling the two of them. Lu Yin leapt out of its area of influence and calmly watched the battle technique unveil itself.

The water spirals gradually expanded to cover a larger area, turning all of the trees within a thousand meters of Yue Xianzi into powder and causing even the earth to be shredded apart. Even the clouds in the sky were affected by her technique. This phenomenon also ended up attracting quite a few passersby’s attention.

Yue Xianzi stood at the middle of it all and stared straight at Lu Yin. “Speak, who exactly are you? If you don’t answer, you’re dead.”

Lu Yin smirked as nine stars started revolving around him. He continued observing the swirling water as he slowly closed in on Yue Xianzi, step by step.

Yue Xianzi frowned. “Do you want to die?”

Then, Lu Yin stepped within the swirls. As soon as he did so, four-lined battle force appeared around his body, protecting him from the powerful tearing force of the water. He easily sauntered over to Yue Xianzi, and when he was about half a meter away from her, asked, “Do you still want to fight now?”

Chapter 273: Threat

Yue Xianzi’s eyes widened as she stared at Lu Yin in shock. This was a very familiar sight to her. During the Astral Combat Tournament, Charon had been able to walk towards her with similar ease and completely defeated her as a result. Now, the same thing had just happened to her again. The difference was that Charon had used a domain to counter her technique while this person had forcefully resisted it through pure battle force. “You-you’re Lu Seven. Lu- Lu Yin?!”

Lu Yin’s face changed as he shifted back his original appearance. “It’s been a while, Yue Xianzi.”

The swirling water surrounding them disappeared, and Yue Xianzi closed her eyes. When she reopened them once more, her face had already changed back to the beautiful Yue Xianzi, the young mistress of the Frostmoon Sect. "It's been a while, Brother Lu."

"Come with me," Lu Yin said before leaving without a second glance. Their battle here would definitely attract a large amount of attention from other people, especially those from the Ming Constables. The two of them could not linger here any longer.

Yue Xianzi did not want to stay with Lu Yin since all trial takers viewed each other as enemies. After all, nobody was willing to stay with someone who could decide their fate. However, she didn't have a choice; Lu Yin only needed a single move to kill her.

About ten minutes later, Lu Yin and Yue Xianzi stopped and faced each other next to a stream. "I didn't expect Lu Seven to actually be you. No wonder I kept getting a familiar feeling from you."

"Thanks to you, Ming Zhaoshu didn't discover me," Lu Yin jested.

Yue Xianzi smiled wryly. "Sorry, Brother Lu. I was just trying to test you a bit and never expected to actually cause you trouble."

Lu Yin smiled. "I'm quite curious. What are your plans after entering the capital?"

Yue Xianzi's expression changed slightly as she stared straight right at him. "This has nothing to do with you. We're both trial takers, so we shouldn't interfere in each other's business. Why are you even asking me this?"

Lu Yin grinned. "But you've already caused me enough trouble. Because of you, Ming Zhaoshu has his eye on me, and now, he even tried to send me to join the crown prince's household as a spy. I'm sure you know what kind of place that is. If I'm not careful, I could easily die there. This is the situation that you've placed me in, so aren't you going to make up for it?"

"You overestimate the people of this Shenwu Continent, Brother Lu. With your strength, you'll be fine so long as you don't run into a Martial Sovereign. And the capital doesn't have any Martial Sovereigns in it anymore since they're all on the five planets, guarding the continent." Yue Xianzi quickly changed the topic.

Lu Yin disdainfully answered, "Don't beat around the bush. Otherwise, I'll be forced to kill you."

Yue Xianzi clenched her fists and her eyes flashed with a trace of bloodlust. However, it soon dissipated. There was no chance of her beating this man, so she had no choice but to answer. "Are you really going to bully me?"

Lu Yin frowned. "That won't work on me. Tell me your plans."

"What plans are you talking about?" Yue Xianzi was feigned confusion.

Lu Yin walked closer to her step by step. The closer he got, the more intense the bloodlust in his eyes. "I already told you this. Don't make me kill you. The Frostmoon Sect must have had undercover agents lying low in the continent for close to a millenia. Your identity was elaborately crafted, so you must have a reason to head into Mingdu. I want to know why."

Yue Xianzi could only respond, "Even if I have a goal, it has to do with my sect and nothing to do with you."

"I'm curious," Lu Yin nonchalantly replied.

Yue Xianzi froze but then laughed. "You're very direct. Fine, I'll tell you. I'm going to join the Demon Hunters Society."

Lu Yin was surprised. "The Demon Hunters Society? Why?"

"Besides the two permanent missions in the Shenwu Continent trial, your results also depend on what you manage to accomplish. The Demon Hunters Society is an assassination organization meant to eliminate the evil sects. The moment you enter, you'll definitely get better results. You entered this trial to get good results and not to complete those two missions, right? Those are impossible to finish, so it's better to be realistic," Yue Xianzi earnestly explained.

Lu Yin nodded. "That makes sense."

Yue Xianzi's eyes lit up. "As long as you don't get in my way, we'd be willing to create a fake identity for you to get inside the Demon Hunters Society as well so that you can raise your results."

"You're willing to let me come with you?" Lu Yin was surprised.

Yue Xianzi laughed before replying, "Of course! My only goal was to enter the Demon Hunters Society and nothing more than that. If you're there as well, then I'll have someone around to give me a hand if it comes to that."

"Besides the Demon Hunters, are there other places that you could help me enter?" Lu Yin asked.

Yue Xianzi thought it over before answering, "Other than the imperial palace and the crown prince's residence, anywhere else should be fine, short-term at least. Even if anyone finds out, it'll be months later."

"I want to join the Ming Constables," Lu Yin said.

Yue Xianzi was thoroughly surprised. "The Ming Constables? What for?"

The Ming Constables was an organization specifically set up to eliminate trial takers. Lu Yin wanted to enter the organization so that he could specifically seek out people from the Daynight clan and kill them, though he wouldn't tell Yue Xianzi that part. "It's more difficult to enter the Ming Constables than the Demon Hunters. If I get in there, I'm guaranteed to receive good results. I want to join the Outerverse Youth Council, so I should at least get into the Ming Constables."

"You want to join the Outerverse Youth Council?" Yue Xianzi looked confused as she asked, "You're already a part of the Council of Astral Academy, so why do you want to join the Outerverse Youth Council?"

"That's none of your business," Lu Yin coldly replied.

Yue Xianzi looked at Lu Yin closely and carefully considered his request. "The Ming Constables aren't the Demon Hunters. With the identities that we've created, Demon Hunters will find out there's something

wrong after around two months, but it'll only take a month for the Ming Constables to discover the discrepancies. Have you already thought this through?"

Lu Yin nodded. "Absolutely."

Yue Xianzi took a letter out from her cosmic ring and handed it to Lu Yin. "All you have to do is hand this over to the Ming Constables' headquarters, and you'll be able to get in. Everything's written in detail there, and you can keep using the name 'Lu Seven' or come up with something else on your own. It doesn't matter. However, in no more than a month, that letter will be discovered to be false. Also, don't say that I didn't warn you about this—the Ming Constables have a Martial Sovereign, so once you get found out, you're dead meat."

Lu Yin took the letter and opened it; he still didn't trust her completely. At first, she had said that there weren't any Martial Sovereigns in the capital, but then, all of a sudden, she had mentioned that there was one in the Ming Constables. She wasn't trustworthy.

The contents of the letter left Lu Yin rather shocked. Everything about him had been written down in detail, and it even contained the seal of the former head of the Ming Constables. There were also a bunch of other seals that belonged to former members of the Ming Constables. He sighed in admiration as he looked at her. "It's indeed great to have connections. I can't believe that you managed to forge something like this."

"It's not forged. It's real. Other than the seal of the previous head of the Ming Constables, everything else is real," Yue Xianzi earnestly answered.

Lu Yin raised an eyebrow, as this method was quite sly. These people might not have even realized that they were working for the Frostmoon Sect. "We're even now."

Yue Xianzi's eyes flickered. "Actually, we can still work together."

"Oh? How so?" Lu Yin asked, interested in what she had to say.

Yue Xianzi answered, "Actually, after that battle that took place a millenia ago, many large organizations in the outer universe have left pockets of people hiding in the Shenwu Continent, lying low. The Frostmoon Sect is actually a tiny sect that's working under the Daynight clan, and we don't have any real rights. If you agree, then we can work together and act against other organizations."

"For example?" Lu Yin enquired.

Yue Xianzi sighed before bluntly answering, "The Daynight clan."

Lu Yin's eyes flashed. He had been hoping to get some information on the Daynight clan's movements in the Shenwu Continent from her, and yet, here she was offering him everything. It appeared that the Daynight clan was rather despised among the other organizations. "Is the organization that the Daynight clan uses in this continent very powerful?"

Yue Xianzi could only smile wryly before explaining, "They're powerful in the entire universe. From your Frostwave Weave to places even further away, everyone knows that those with black and white hair are from the Daynight clan. That is the extent of their influence."

“Who did they send here?” Lu Yin asked curiously.

A hint of terror flashed across Yue Xianzi’s eyes. “Zhanlong Daynight, a genius who managed to defeat Nightqueen Yanqing in one move.”

Lu Yin was shocked. “He defeated Nightqueen Yanqing?”

Yue Xianzi nodded. “Yes, though that’s a secret, and only a few people in the Daynight Flowzone are aware of it. That includes our Frostmoon Sect. He has comprehended a battle technique that nobody else in the clan has in countless years—the Daynight Restoration Technique. He was deemed a genius second only to Nightking Zhenwu. He’s the true opponent we are facing during this trial.”

Lu Yin’s eyes narrowed. He knew full well the extent of Nightqueen Yanqing’s abilities. The fact that this Zhanlong Daynight had been able to easily defeat her meant that he had to be on a similar power level as him. This was the ability of a great clan of the universe; there was a never ending stream of geniuses available to them.

“Did the Daynight clan send any Explorers here?” Lu Yin wondered.

Yue Xianzi shook her head. “Probably not. Explorers attract too much attention. Their ultimate goal is to have a Daynight clan member join the Outerverse Youth Council and then take advantage of that position to meddle in the Outerverse’s matters. If they send an Explorer, then the Ten Arbiters would have had internal conflicts.”

Lu Yin understood that the Ten Arbiters had their own internal conflicts. If the Daynight clan had really sent an Explorer to the Outerverse trial, then the other Ten Arbiters would definitely do the same. That would create chaos in the Outerverse.

“One more thing.” Yue Xianzi stared at Lu Yin with a serious look in her eyes. “They want to wash away the humiliation that Nightqueen Yanqing’s defeat caused them.”

Lu Yin’s eyes glinted coldly.

“Don’t you find things strange? The top four from the Astral Combat Tournament were all required to enter the Shenwu Continent—that was caused by the sole intervention of the Daynight clan. Your battle with Nightqueen Yanqing was also arranged by the Daynight clan.” Yue Xianzi said.

Lu Yin was well aware of this. He was nothing more than a chess piece being moved about according to the Daynight clan’s desires.

“The Daynight clan needs Zhanlong Daynight to defeat the top four tournament fighters and achieve outstanding results during this trial. This would reverse their humiliation that came from Nightqueen Yanqing’s defeat and the shame of you banning the Daynight clan from the trial zones,” Yue Xianzi explained.

“You’re saying too much,” Lu Yin told her.

Yue Xianzi lowered her voice before continuing. “The Daynight clan is incredibly tyrannical and acts openly. We know them too well. That’s all I have to say, Brother Lu. Whether you’re willing to work with us or not is your choice. I’ll be at the Demon Hunters Society’s headquarters and I’ll be going by the name ‘Xiao Yue.’” After saying that, she left.

Lu Yin burst into a fit of laughter. Yue Xianzi had done everything that she could to ensure that he viewed the Daynight clan in a bad light, but there was simply no need for any of that! The grudge between him and that clan could never be resolved except by blood. The moment he had met Qingyu Daynight on Earth, there was no way for this grudge to be dissolved.

Chapter 274: Gathering At Mingdu

Within the capital, one could always find multiple banks open for business in the major metropolitan areas. The local branch of just one bank took up two of the main roads, and other similar branches could be found everywhere. Its main building covered a large area, and there were even experts guarding it. This was the Bank of Wuyun, and it was one of the largest banks in the entire Shenwu Empire.

After the battle that had occurred a thousand years ago, the Bank of Wuyun had suddenly become popular while all the other banks in the empire had collapsed. Right when the empire was about to personally intervene, the bank accepted the imperial family's investment and became subservient to the imperial family. Still, the bank was able to independently influence the economy even after being restrained by the imperial family. After so many years, the Bank of Wuyun financed everything from army rations to financial aid for the empire, salaries, and even rewards. After a thousand years, the Bank of Wuyun had become an unfathomably powerful force that was not to be reckoned with.

While the people in the Shenwu Continent typically thought little of businessmen, the Bank of Wuyun was an exception.

Behind the bank and within a huge manor, a middle-aged man slowly drank a cup of tea while surveying his surroundings. His name was Ming Zhaocai, and from his name alone, it was clear that he was from the imperial family and of the same generation as the current emperor, Ming Zhaotian.

Although he was a member of the imperial family, he was very different from Ming Zhaotian and the other imperial family members. He was good at managing money and was so proud of this fact that he had even changed his name to Ming Zhaocai. Ming Zhaotian had punished him for that matter, but it was to no avail. In the end, Ming Zhaotian let Ming Zhaocai handle the empire's financial matters and even appointed him to the position of the minister of finance.

As he heard light footsteps approaching his room, Ming Zhaotian turned around and saw a girl with an innocent mien and a light smile on her face. She made him feel comfortable and relaxed.

The girl slowly walked over to him and bowed. "Greetings, my lord. I am Ah-Lan."

Ming Zhao helped her back up with eyes full of praise as he said, "You're Ah-Lan?"

"Yes," she answered respectfully.

Ming Zhaocai grunted in understanding as he looked her up and down. "Not bad at all. To be able to become the supervisor of the Bank of Wuyun's branch in Mingdu at the tender age of twenty means that you must be very talented."

Ah-Lan smiled. "You're being very kind, my lord."

Ming Zhaocai looked very satisfied. He made a gesture, and the two of them took their seats.

“I’m sure you’re aware of why I’m here at the Bank of Wuyun today, Ms. Ah-Lan.” Ming Zhaocai got straight to the point.

Ah-Lan nodded seriously. “Of course. The foreigners from the endless Eastern Sea are invading us, and the empire doesn’t have enough warships to fend them off. The Bank of Wuyun is naturally willing to lend its aid and provide some army rations to thank the empire for all its help over the years.”

Ming Zhaocai’s eyes lit up. “To what extent would the bank be willing to aid us?”

Ah-Lan clapped, causing a servant to step forward and hand a list to Ming Zhaocai. He glanced at it, and his expression changed as he exclaimed in surprise, “This is way too much, young lady!”

Ah-Lan smiled demurely. “Not at all. His Majesty’s birthday is just around the corner, so you can treat this as a gift from us at the Bank of Wuyun.”

Ming Zhaocai smiled broadly. “In that case, I’ll offer you my thanks, Ms. Ah-Lan.”

She smiled. “I’m glad that you appreciate it. It’s a bit of a pity, though...”

“A pity? About what?” Ming Zhaocai raised an eyebrow as he looked at her curiously.

Ah-Lan sighed. “I come from a humble background and am a mere merchant. I have no right to enter the palace and participate in the celebration.”

Ming Zhaocai chuckled. “I understand. That’s not an issue at all! If you’re willing, then you can follow me, and I’ll escort you to the palace for the celebration.”

Ah-Lan was delighted. “Really? Would you truly be willing to do such a thing for me on such an auspicious day?”

“Hahaha, it’s no problem at all. I can even take you to meet my brother. He spends most of his time overseeing the five sealing planets and will only come down here on that one day. If you’re lucky, then you might even get the chance to speak to him.” Ming Zhaocai laughed.

Ah-Lan quickly thanked him, and Ming Zhaocai left soon after.

Within the bank, Ah-Lan watched upon his figure fade into the distance. Her expression turned solemn as her appearance gradually changed. If any trialtakers were around, they would have easily recognized her as one of the final four fighters in the Astral Combat Tournament: Grandini Mavis.

Just as Grandini was about to enter the building, the sound of a drum echoed through the city. Numerous people walked out and onto the main road to gaze into the distance with expressions of awe.

Grandini was rather curious and returned to her appearance of Ah-Lan. It was only after she left the bank and asked around a bit that she found out that, because His Majesty’s birthday was right round the corner, one of the scholars who had passed the exams this time wanted to enter the academies and pray for the emperor. She was a bit confused. A scholar? It was quite a traditional way to address someone, but the people who had managed to gain the title of scholar here were definitely the cream of the crop. In ancient times, someone who was called a scholar was definitely someone who held quite a bit of power.

As the sound of the drums grew closer, the troops cleared the way for a man riding a huge beast who waved at the commoners on his left and right while smiling happily.

Grandini's expression quickly turned glum, and she looked like she'd eaten a dead housefly; it was Han Chong. Even though his appearance had been altered, she was still able to recognize him just from his aura. With just one look, she was certain that this so-called "scholar" was none other than Han Chong. How disgusting. He should have come to the Shenwu Continent to participate in the trial, and yet, he somehow became a scholar.

From atop the giant beast's head that was striding through the middle of the road, Han Chong coincidentally saw Grandini, and something flashed through his eyes. He smiled gently without missing a beat and waved at her.

Grandini merely clicked her tongue in annoyance before turning around to return to the Bank of Wuyun.

Han Chong snickered to himself as he glanced at the Bank of Wuyun. He then continued on his way without giving their meeting much thought.

The crown prince's palace was on the other side of the capital, not too far away from the imperial palace. The crown prince, Ming Hao, had a rather nervous expression as he stared at the end of a path. He wasn't waiting for the scholar to arrive, but rather, a mysterious girl who came from a family with a history dating back for a thousand years. This was the family that had created the heavenly globe, and she was the heir to the family's secrets.

After the ancient battle with the foreign aliens, numerous foreigners had descended upon the continent without the empire's knowledge. Someone who called themselves Tian Ji had been worried about this situation and decided to create the heavenly globes to help the empire seek out foreigners. With the heavenly globes in hand, the empire had managed to stabilize its situation.

Tian Ji was not a sect, but rather some kind of inheritance. Nobody knew exactly what it was, but they did know that it involved divination in some way. Even the emperor, Ming Zhaotian, thought highly of Tian Ji. Unfortunately, this person could not be found.

Ming Hao never thought that Tian Ji would come looking for him one day.

"Your Highness, someone—" a person exclaimed as they stared at the end of the road. A young woman wearing a veil while being surrounded by fog was slowly drawing closer.

Ming Hao's eyes lit up, and he immediately approached the woman. A group of people followed behind him.

"Greetings to His Highness. My name is Shao Shu." She spoke gently while bowing to the prince.

Ming Hao was confused. "Are you the current Tian Ji?"

The girl bowed again. "Yes, I'm afraid that this must be disappointing to you seeing as my cultivation isn't very high, Your Highness."

Ming Hao quickly responded in a serious tone. "You're being too kind. Your ancestor who created the heavenly globe back then was nothing more than a Martial Emperor when he passed away, but he still possessed such a unique power. Cultivation is nothing in comparison."

The girl's eyes twinkled brightly as she looked at the prince. "You're being too kind, Your Highness. I still can't live up to the name of 'Tian Ji,' so please call me Shao Shu as that is my original name."

Ming Hao nodded. "Please enter the palace, Ms. Shao Shu."

She nodded. "Yes, Your Highness."

At that moment, Lu Yin had no idea that quite a few of his acquaintances had already appeared in Mingdu. One night later, Lu Yin entered the city himself and finally saw the most flourishing city in the entire Shenwu Continent. There were four tall peaks surrounding the city while the five sealing planets hung in the sky above a wide moat that glittered as it rippled in the starlight.

The capital was where everybody gathered. Nearly half of the top ten on the List of Tempering were here, and numerous experts appeared here both in secret and out in the open. If one actually looked for experts, then they could be found everywhere.

Outside the gates of the capital, dozens of heavenly globes emitted dull rays of light without taking even a second to rest. They constantly radiated martial power that covered the entire capital, placing every square inch under the detection of the heavenly globes. The moment star energy undulations appeared, that person would be discovered almost immediately.

The Ming Constables and the Demon Hunters Society's headquarters were both within the capital. Even Hunters would find it difficult to escape from the city if they were discovered inside.

Lu Yin gaped at how lively the city was as he headed towards the Ming Constables' headquarters.

Four hours after Lu Yin entered Mingdu, the Reverent King's convoy arrived and slowly entered.

Ming Yan looked through the curtain covering the window of one of the carriages, and her face lit up. It appeared as if she had found something she was looking for.

Ming Zhaoshu had his eyes closed and was currently resting.

At that point, Tang Si's voice rang out. "The results of our investigation are in, my lord."

Ming Zhaoshu opened his eyes a crack. "Go on."

"Yue'er's ancestry seems fine, but it can only be traced back eight centuries. There's nothing before that," Tang Si answered.

After hearing that there was indeed a problem with Yue Xianzi's background, Ming Yan's expression changed, and she ducked her head.

Ming Zhaoshu frowned. "Is it difficult to find the information, or is there nothing at all?"

Tang Si stayed silent for a while before answering, "I think that there's nothing at all. Whether in terms of ancestry or locational records, nothing can be traced beyond eight centuries."

"Have Yue'er come see me immediately," Ming Zhaoshu said sternly.

"She's left," Tang Si said in a chilly tone.

Ming Zhaoshu grew furious and exited the carriage. He looked at Tang Si and asked, "What did you say? She's gone?"

Tang Si hung his head. "Yes, my lord. The moment I received this information about her background, I immediately went to look for her, but I found to my dismay that she was no longer with us."

"She was here yesterday, but she's gone today. What convenient timing," Ming Zhaoshu scoffed and then looked around. Quite a few of the capital's commoners who were next to them had glanced over, and he relaxed his expression. "Forget it."

Tang Si looked up. "Are you not going to send men to capture her, my lord?"

Ming Zhaoshu shook his head. "She's most likely a foreigner with powerful connections since they've been able to stay on the continent for the past eight centuries. Besides, she can change her appearance, so we won't be able to find her even if we try. Just forget it." After saying this, he climbed back into his carriage.

Ming Yan heaved a heavy sigh of relief and then grinned, feeling slightly happy. She had quite liked Yue'er even though the girl had lied to her. Yue'er was her very first friend, so she held a rather special place within Ming Yan's heart. The princess did not know much about the millennial grudge between the Shenwu Continent's natives and the foreigners, and thus did not feel much hatred.

Ming Zhaoshu sat down in his own carriage, looking fatigued. He happened to glance at Ming Yan, and to his surprise, he saw that his daughter was... smiling? Had she uncovered Yue'er's origins long ago?

"Since His Majesty's birthday is fast approaching, all of the experts here, the Ming Constables, the Demon Hunters Society, and the army have all gathered here, trying to seek out any traces of foreigners. It's even rumored that the inheritor of Tian Ji has shown himself. As long as this moat is here, there's no way any foreigner will be able to escape once discovered," Ming Zhaoshu calmly stated as if he was addressing himself, yet also informing Ming Yan.

She turned pale after hearing what her father said. "Tian Ji's heir? Are you talking about the same person who invented the heavenly globes and has the ability to predict the future?"

"Yes. Tian Ji has the power to predict the future. No foreigner will be able to escape here alive. It's very likely that Yue'er is a foreigner, and if so, she'll definitely die here. That also means that there's no need for us to go out of our way to capture her," Ming Zhaoshu replied.

Even the tips of Ming Yan's fingers turned white as she clenched her seat tightly while looking uneasy.

Ming Zhaoshu gave her a wry look. This reaction confirmed his suspicions that his daughter had found out that Yue'er was a foreigner long ago. He merely shook his head and did not say anything more. He already knew his daughter best; she was too kind.

However, Ming Zhaoshu had no idea that the person who Ming Yan was worried about wasn't only Yue Xianzi but also that man—the man whom she'd never be able to forget.

Chapter 275: Lu Yin vs. Han Chong

The Ming Constables' headquarters were located in a forgettable corner of the capital. Many people knew that they were located here, but none of them had the courage to approach the building. This was

partially because there were two sculptures of aggressive-looking beasts at the entrance. They weren't real beasts, but they still somehow emanated auras that chilled one to the bone, and they were even capable of casting a terrifying illusion that could cause one to lose their wits.

Lu Yin calmly walked towards the Ming Constables' headquarters. As he gazed at these two strange beasts carved from some unknown material, he grew increasingly surprised. Aren't- Aren't these two things sourceboxes?

Others might not be able to tell, but he could. These two sculptures were obviously sourceboxes, but they had somehow been unlocked only to the point where they looked like beast statues.

Lu Yin got closer and closer and inspected one of the statues up and down. He activated his Cosmic Art, which caused the two aggressive-looking beasts to change into a deep, sea-like, solid energy in his vision. Not even a third of the energy on these beasts had been unlocked.

This had to have been on purpose! Lu Yin guessed. Otherwise, how was it possible that these sourceboxes would be partially unlocked to where they looked like beasts? However, were there even Lockbreakers on the Shenwu Continent? Or had a true Lockbreaker of the greater universe visited this sealed continent and tried to unlock these sourceboxes only to run into some trouble part way through the process?

"Who is it?" a stern voice sounded out from the Ming Constables's headquarters. Nobody appeared, but Lu Yin sensed a cloud of bloodlust surround him. If he acted even slightly oddly, he would be in trouble.

Lu Yin did not say a word and slowly took out the letter. He lifted his hand, and the letter immediately disappeared. Lu Yin patiently waited outside the building.

Quite some time later, the stern voice sounded once more. "Enter."

Lu Yin took a deep breath and stepped into the Ming Constables. This was the place that the trialtakers feared the most. It was filled with the blood of their fellow comrades, and there were rumors that its commander was a Martial Sovereign who was comparable to a Cruiser realm cultivator. Lu Yin presently had only two options—either enter this building or die.

"Wait, this is such a cold place. Hey, where did you go?" the Ghost Monkey's voice suddenly sounded out in his head, startling Lu Yin. However, he did not have the luxury to reply to the beast and entered the building in silence.

"What a strong sense of bloodlust! This is a great place to bury someone. Also, why does it feel dangerous to me? Wait a second, there's someone here who's powerful enough to threaten your life. Damn it, Lu Yin, what are you doing? Don't you know that you should be avoiding these people?" The Ghost Monkey started ranting in an annoying manner.

Lu Yin frowned. He wanted to screen the monkey's senses, but he really didn't dare to do anything at this moment. All he could do was allow the monkey to keep screeching inside of his head.

The inside of the building was decorated quite simply. The entirety of the capital was jubilant due to Ming Zhaotian's coming birthday, but none of that cheer could be sensed here. It was simply dark and gloomy.

All of a sudden, a miserable cry could be heard in the distance. Lu Yin looked up, and a cold edge appeared in his eyes. He walked a short distance forward and briskly rounded the corner. What appeared before Lu Yin was a whole line of people standing there quietly, to the point where it felt like they weren't even breathing. There were bloodstains covering the entire ground, and there was presently a man thrashing about. Blood flowed from the man's neck, dyeing the ground red.

"Foreigners come here everyday, trying to enter the Ming Constables. The blood of countless foreigners have dyed this floor red," a stern voice explained from somewhere out of sight.

Lu Yin headed over and lined up with the rest of the people.

"Oh? Isn't that the guy who came in with you?" the Ghost Monkey asked, surprised.

Lu Yin's eyes turned to the side and glanced at the person who the monkey was talking about. There were three people between him and the person who the monkey had pointed out, and that person seemed unfamiliar. There was a cold look on his face, and he seemed utterly emotionless.

"Yup, that's him. This guy can change his appearance as he pleases, but it doesn't matter how he tries to disguise himself. I'm still able to recognize him at a glance," the monkey said, pleased with himself.

"I'll give you a single chance. If you're a foreigner, step out. If you tell us everything, we promise not to kill you," the stern voice spoke out.

Nobody stepped out.

"Fine. I hope that none of you get found out." After those words, a wave swept past the people lining up. It was weak, but it was extremely thorough. Compared to a normal heavenly globe, it was ten times more accurate in terms of its ability to detect star energy.

Lu Yin felt glad that he had luckily thought to disperse all of his star energy and hidden away any of his items that might have ever had contact with star energy, including his cosmic ring. Otherwise, it would have been impossible for him to pass this test.

All of a sudden, there were signs of rejection from someone nearby. Lu Yin's gaze grew cold, and he smacked the man who was displaying these signs. The person that the monkey had recognized attacked at the same time as well. The two of them had the quickest reactions, and before the others could even make a move, their attacks had landed. With a bang, the man was sent flying far away.

The rest of the people gaped in surprise.

Lu Yin and the man who had also attacked exchanged glances, and then they both looked at the man whom they had sent flying.

The man stood up, patted his body clean, and then looked at Lu Yin and the other man in admiration. "Not bad. The fact that you attacked me proves that you really want to kill the foreigners. You two pass. The rest of you fail, so get out."

Lu Yin narrowed his eyes and sized the man up.

The man chuckled before saying, "I'm Ming Zhaochen." After speaking this, his appearance warped as he took on the appearance of a middle-aged man who looked somewhat similar to Ming Zhaoshu.

“Greetings, my lord.”

The other person who had attacked immediately bowed, and Lu Yin did the same. “Greetings, my lord.”

The master of the Ming Constables was Ming Zhaochen. He was of the same generation as Ming Zhaotian and Ming Zhaoshu. He was a Martial Sovereign and was the sharpest blade of the empire.

Ming Zhaochen scanned the two of them. “The Ming Constables recruits a lot of people every year, but there are very few who are truly qualified. Both power and a strong mind are necessary, but besides that, courage and flexibility are also required. The foreigners who invade our continent are extremely strong, and to them, the Shenwu Continent is merely a trial zone. All who dare to enter here are experts. What you need to do is be stronger than them.”

“Yes, my lord,” the two of them answered.

Two days later, outside the capital, Lu Yin lay on the ground with a heavenly globe in his palm that occasionally emitted undulations.

Many of the Ming Vanguarders were hidden outside of the capital, and they constantly patrolled the surroundings in search of foreigners.

From Lu Yin’s point of view, this most likely did not yield many results. Most foreigners knew to switch from using star energy to martial power and would not be found through this crude method. However, this was the vanguards’ job, and they could not let their guard down.

Within the Ming Constables, the name that Lu Yin went by was “Seven.” The other person who had joined along with him went by the alias Wu Shang.

“Are you sure that this guy came to the Shenwu Continent with me?” Lu Yin asked once again.

The Ghost Monkey seemed very annoyed. “Yes, yes, yes. How many times do you want me to repeat myself? Nobody can hide from me. That goes for you as well.”

“Shut up,” Lu Yin suddenly whispered. He peered into the distance and suddenly activated his Cosmic Art. The space in the air started trembling slightly. There was a person moving about so quickly that the void itself was distorting.

To be able to do this in the Shenwu Continent, the person Lu Yin was observing had to be either an Explorer or a genius Limiteer. Lu Yin had the feeling that he was also capable of such a feat, but there were very few trialtakers who were at his level.

With a whoosh, a strong wind blew past him, and Lu Yin focused on the moving figure. It was a female, but he chased after her without any hesitation. He moved with pure physical strength and concealed his aura so that she wouldn’t discover him.

The further he traveled, the stranger Lu Yin found the situation. This girl was moving about using only her physical abilities and not any martial power, which meant that she would not attract attention either.

For someone to move around like this and even cause the void to distort instantly reminded Lu Yin of the Mavis family. If he wasn’t wrong, this girl was likely Grandini Mavis.

There were four mountains surrounding the Ming Capital, but there were quite a few other mountains around the capital.

She dodged a crowd and stepped into a little house with a thatched roof. Lu Yin paused and then slowly crept closer.

"You're late," someone from inside the house said.

"I had too much to deal with, so it couldn't be helped. At least I'm here, unlike a certain someone else."

"It doesn't matter. On the day of the emperor's birthday, the Darkmist Weave will launch an attack. All the experts who are at the Explorer realm and above on this continent will have their hands full. This includes the four protectors atop the mountains. Our mission is to attack the Tower of Resonating Light."

On the roof, Lu Yin calmed himself and looked down.

There were fewer than ten people inside the small room. Once he heard the term "Explorer," Lu Yin had confirmed that these people were definitely trial takers.

"Are you sure that the Tower of Resonating Light is one of the five points?" the last girl to arrive asked.

Lu Yin merely caught a glimpse of each of the participants as he did not dare to stare too hard at anyone. Experts like them would definitely be able to sense someone staring at them, which was why he couldn't confirm if the woman whom he had tailed was really Grandini Mavis.

"I'm 90% certain. Our sect has had people lying low here for the past millennia. One of our ancestors even protected the Tower of Resonating Light centuries ago, so the information should be true."

"Good. I don't want to help only to find out that it was all for nothing."

At that moment, Lu Yin's expression changed. Someone else was here.

The house fell quiet, and everyone stared outside.

This new person made no attempt to hide their approach and boldly walked straight inside.

"Oh my, isn't it the scholar? How did you find the time to join us here?" the girl mockingly asked.

The person who had just entered the house was Han Chong. "If the manager of the Bank of Wuyun doesn't mind freeing up some time to come here, then a mere scholar like me should be able to do the same."

"I didn't think that Han Chong, who's one of the top four of the Astral Combat Tournament, would become a scholar in the Shenwu Empire. That alone shows that your results will be quite something," someone spoke enviously.

The girl disdainfully countered, "What's so special about someone from the Erudite Flowzone becoming a scholar?"

“Exactly. Let's get back to the point. But before that, we need to clean up a little.” After saying that, Han Chong looked up at the roof.

Lu Yin's eyes widened, and he tried to use Flash to get away. The house crumbled as shockwaves spread in all directions. Han Chong glanced around and then focused on the place where Lu Yin had been before vanishing. With a simple wave of his hand, he used martial power to conjure an image of vast mountains and rivers. Nobody could escape from it.

Lu Yin was rather shocked when he saw that unique battle technique appear in the void. This was Han Chong's ability.

“Who is it?!” With a shout, the girl punched at Lu Yin.

Lu Yin turned around and kicked out. With a boom, a violent shockwave spread out from their collision, damaging the mountains and pulverizing the ground into dust. The two of them retreated at the same time, and Lu Yin used his left hand to bring out Emperor Giant's third eye. After activating his Cosmic Art, he stared at what Han Chong had drawn and then attacked. The martial power was easily dispelled, allowing Lu Yin to dart away.

Han Chong was shocked to see his battle technique being dispelled with such ease. Although he hadn't gone all out, his technique should still have been able to stop even an Explorer, but it had not been able to stop that person. He had to be a Lockbreaker!

The girl had been forced back by Lu Yin's kick as well. In her fury, she wanted to chase after him, but Han Chong stopped her. “Don't bother. You won't catch up.”

The girl was rather annoyed and looked at Han Chong while clenching her fists, feeling surprised. That person had blocked her punch and also dispelled Han Chong's battle technique, which meant that he had to be very powerful. He wasn't even an Explorer yet, but he was already had the ability to match up against them.

The rest charged out. “How did it go, Han Chong?”

Han Chong shook his head in dismay. “He's very powerful, and I didn't manage to get him.”

“What should we do? He definitely knows about our plan now,” someone lamented, but none of them blamed Han Chong. Amongst those present, he and Grandini were the strongest. If even they couldn't stop that person, then the rest of them could say nothing.

Han Chong calmly said, “Don't worry. Let's continue.”

“But we don't know who it is. What if he's from the Ming Constables?” someone asked in a wondering tone.

Han Chong decisively replied, “He's definitely a trialtaker.”

“I think so too. The way he attacked was completely unlike a native's attacks,” Grandini added.

The rest exchanged looks and could only sigh. “Let's try to confirm it then.”

Chapter 276: Deputy Commander

Lu Yin looked back once he had successfully escaped. He had never expected that Han Chong would be able to discover him. This person's comprehension of his domain was quite high, and even Lu Yin's Invisible Aura Technique had not been able to completely avoid its detection. Lu Yin felt that he should also try to learn to comprehend a domain, or else he would remain vulnerable to others' domains in future.

Still, after his interruption, it was not very likely that they would continue with their plans to mount an attack on the Tower of Resonating Light.

Is that one of the nodes for the five sealing planets? Lu Yin wondered to himself.

Back at the now ruined house, Han Chong and the rest each left separately. Grandini had a solemn expression, and she sought out Han Chong afterwards. "That person dissolved your technique, so he should be a Lockbreaker."

Han Chong nodded and smiled. "There's no need to think about it any further. I already have a guess as to who he is."

"Me too. Since he was able to match my strength, is a Lockbreaker, and also has such great speed, it can only be him," Grandini said with an excited tone.

"Who would have thought that the top four would all gather in Mingdu... This will be interesting," Han Chong murmured.

Grandini was shocked. "Top four? Starsibyl's here as well?"

Han Chong nodded. "She should be. Besides us, there are other trialtakers who have come to the capital, and some of them are no weaker than us. There are even those who are more powerful than us. The day of celebration will definitely not be peaceful."

There were only twenty three days remaining until the celebration. As the days counted down one by one, the Demon Hunters called in large numbers of experts to the capital, though the Ming Constables' Ming Vanguard's numbers dwindled. Reportedly, they had been deployed at the last minute to protect important personnel.

Various high ranking officials had gathered from all across the Shenwu Empire. Crown Prince Ming Hao naturally could not let anything happen to them, as the consequences would be severe even in the lightest case. Hence, he had used his authority as the crown prince to mobilize the Ming Vanguard to protect them all.

"Recently, there have been great changes in the List of Tempering. Many experts have emerged, and they could very well be foreigners. The Ming Constables master has ordered us, the Ming Vanguard, to select powerhouses to defeat those who have recently joined the list. Who here is confident in their ability?" stated the Ming Vanguard commander, Bei Zhigui, as he scanned the gathered Ming Constables members.

Lu Yin was a subordinate under Bei Zhigui, who was an Explorer. The commander was not qualified to challenge the members of the List of Tempering even though the list was a method that Crown Prince Ming Hao used to display the empire's strength. Even if they suspected that these new members were all foreigners, the Ming Vanguard could not capture the people on the list without good reason, or else

people would suspect the List of Tempering of being manipulated fair. Hence, they could only kick them off the list before they gained any more influence.

Bei Zhigui spoke simple words, but the List of Tempering was a fair and honest ranking. Any expert who was able to step foot onto the List of Tempering had done so by challenging a previous member, so their strength could not be underestimated. Even though those in the Ming Vanguard had decent strength, they were still not confident in challenging those on the list.

Bei Zhigui felt helpless, as there were very few experts in the entire Ming Constables who could challenge the List of Tempering. The list contained the top 200 Martial Monarch experts of the empire, and when these 200 were dispersed throughout the empire, it meant that there were few left on Ming Island, let alone the Ming Constables. Fortunately, there was still Li Zimo in the Ming Constables, who was ranked second on the List of Tempering.

“Does no one dare to step up to the challenge? The Ming Constables master has given the order that those who enter the top twenty on the List of Tempering will be made into deputy commanders while the top ten will be made commanders,” Bei Zhigui called out again in an attempt to incentivize the soldiers.

Lu Yin felt eager at the offered benefits, but he still did not move, as he felt a trace of unease.

Wu Shang stepped out. “This subordinate is willing to volunteer.”

Bei Zhigui looked at him with a surprised look, but he quickly nodded and said, “Alright, here is the most recent List of Tempering.” He passed one to Wu Shang.

Wu Shang scanned it and then walked out of the Ming Constables.

There were twelve names on the list that had changed recently, and two had even entered the top twenty of the List of Tempering. One was in Mingdu while the other was one city away from Mingdu, in Huaiqi city. Wu Shang headed for the latter.

After leaving the capital, Wu Shang looked at the top of the List of Tempering as his eyes twinkled. His eyes narrowed, and then he quickly moved into the distance.

At that moment, Bei Zhigui appeared in front of Wu Shang, blocking his path. “I’ll go with you.”

Wu Shang respectfully replied, “There’s no need to trouble the commander.”

Bei Zhigui looked at Wu Shang before suddenly making a move. A sword swept out from the commander’s palm while Wu Shang’s eyes turned icy cold and his accumulated martial power suddenly burst forth. In an instant, multiple cracks appeared in the sky as more trialtakers arrived; they were actually coincidentally being dropped off at the capital.

The numerous members of the Ming Vanguard who had accompanied Bei Zhigui were shocked, and they immediately took out their heavenly globes

Lu Yin pitied these newcomers, which unlucky bastards had descended here? This coincidence had simply sent them straight to death’s door!

Five individuals dropped out of five cracks; there were three Limiteers and two Explorers. One Explorer even fell on top of Bei Zhigui's head. The commander immediately retaliated, shouting, "Alien! It's time to die!"

"Native," the fallen Explorer disparagingly shot back. There was a loud rumble as the earth shook.

At the same time, one of the four mountain peaks surrounding the capital lit up with a dazzling radiance as a terrifying martial power swept across the sky, shocking the entire capital.

Ming Zhaoshu raised his head as he muttered, "Martial Sovereign."

In the Bank of Wuyun, Ah-Lan, who was the disguised Grandini Mavis, raised her head. "So the rumors are true. Every peak has a Martial Sovereign overseeing it."

Within the academy, Han Chong was in the midst of praying for Ming Zhaotian, and he looked up as well. "Cruiser."

In the crown prince's palace, Ming Hao raised his head and disdainfully commented, "Know your place."

Not far away from the crown prince, the current Tian Ji, Shao Shu, gazed at the sky with an expression as if she were lost in thought.

Just when everyone assumed that the battle was about to end, a sword qi sliced through the area, tearing the void apart. The attack left a shocking spatial crack in its wake that seemed to cause the heavens to collapse. Many were stunned by the sight and felt their hair stand on end.

Crown Prince Ming Hao was the first to stand up, and his expression had changed drastically. "How is this possible?"

Ming Zhaoshu was similarly shocked as he crushed his glass in his hands. "A super powerhouse."

"So the Sword Sect's Long Yun was here, hahaha!" A tremendous sound wave engulfed the capital before spreading out into the distance. At the same time, terrifying attacks shot out from the other three peaks towards the east.

"Goodbye, hahahaha." Another sword qi swept out, causing the simultaneous attack from all four Martial Sovereigns to be stopped and even directly eradicated. Long Yun had not shown himself from the start of the confrontation to the end.

This was a shocking scene, and many were utterly terrified. One foreign alien had held his own against four Martial Sovereigns; this was an absolute powerhouse.

The experts of the Shenwu Continent believed that while the foreigners may be strong, their top powerhouses were nothing much, and that they were even slightly weaker than the strongest powerhouses of their continent. However, Long Yun's sword had completely shattered those assumptions. It was as if he had torn through a veil and shown those of the Shenwu Continent what reality was.

Crown Prince Ming Hao was also stunned beyond belief; that foreigner was a Martial Emperor like him, but the foreigner had withstood a combined attack from four Martial Sovereigns. How? He could not

understand it. Even if he used all of the Shenwu Empire's resources for his own cultivation, he would never be able to reach this terrifying level of strength.

Ming Zhaoshu had a downcast expression, and a thought that he had long sealed away in his heart now resurfaced; he was going to take the Shenwu Continent out with him. From his view, the Shenwu Continent had never truly stopped the foreigners' invasion, but had instead simply been placed under supervision. The natives were all to be pitied.

Outside the capital, Lu Yin's brows jumped up. The Sword Sect, Long Yun? So he was a genius Explorer who was actually able to withstand an attack of four Cruisers. Although the four had not used their full strength, not even a normal Cruiser would have been able to resist that combined attack without suffering injuries, let alone an Explorer. This person was definitely an expert at the very top of the Top Hundred Battle Rankings, and was someone who even surpassed Wendy Yushan.

Lu Yin had specifically checked once before and verified that Wendy Yushan had not yet become a Cruiser and that she was still an Explorer. Despite that, she had still used her own strength to become the captain of the Second Imperial Squadron and had once defeated a Cruiser.

"Long Yun? That's a familiar name. He's one of the human powerhouses that has a 'must kill' status on the Heaven-Devouring list. It's disgusting to see that someone like that is here as well!" the Ghost Monkey shouted.

Long Yun's sword had not only shocked the entire capital, but it had also saved those who had arrived with him.

Besides the two unlucky fellows who had dropped directly into the capital, the rest had escaped, and Wu Shang had run away as well.

This angered Bei Zhigui greatly, as Wu Shang had definitely been a foreigner. Those experts who had suddenly appeared on the List of Tempering out of nowhere were also possibly foreigners, yet only Wu Shang had the confidence to challenge them. He had also only recently joined the Ming Constables. Clearly, he was also a foreigner. What a pity it was that he had slipped away.

The Ming Constables had always strictly examined every member who joined the Ming Vanguard, and even if Lu Yin had a stamp of approval from the previous court master, the Ming Constables would still investigate whatever they could. Lu Yin himself had nearly been discovered as well.

The top ranker of the List of Tempering had never been revealed, but that might just be a strategy devised by Crown Prince Ming Hao to reveal any foreigners who tried to challenge the List of Tempering. The leader would simply challenge whoever was suspect, which meant that they always had some insurance in the form of a peak powerhouse who was so terrifying that few could withstand them at the top of the list.

Since the List of Tempering had been created by the crown prince, he definitely preferred to leave no loopholes than let the Ming Constables take advantage of it. Lu Yin had just realized this logic, but it seemed that Wu Shang had only thought of it after leaving the city. Unfortunately, he had been noticed by Bei Zhigui and would have been in great danger if not for Long Yun.

Ten days quickly passed by, during which Lu Yin made a great contribution. He captured a trialtaker who was from the Innaverse's Blazing Mist Flowzone on behalf of the Ming Constables. If someone had a good reputation within the Blaze Realm, then they were automatically an enemy of Lu Yin's. He showed no mercy.

The Ming Constables had established itself with the sole goal of slaughtering trialtakers, but not many were uncovered each year. As time passed, the trialtakers had gradually learned how to conceal and hide themselves better, which meant that the Ming Constables was rarely able to capture trialtakers alive. Thus, Lu Yin's contribution caused Ming Zhaochen to praise him lavishly. As Lu Yin had already demonstrated sufficient strength, he was directly promoted to a deputy commander under Li Zimo's command.

Lu Yin simply did not believe that Ming Zhaochen would promote him that easily without ulterior motives—perhaps he wanted to use Li Zimo to silently monitor Lu Yin. Lu Yin was not bothered by this in any case, as he had always been planning on using the Ming Constables to deal with the Daynight clan's members. Doing so would even gain him contributions from the Ming Constables.

Li Zimo was a naturally cold person who was an expert in the sword. His entire body resembled a sharp, unsheathed blade; he openly revealed his danger and ability, but he never hurt anyone. It was as if he had concealed his aura within a very confined space.

Liu Shaoqiu was very talented with the sword, but he had a subdued aura even though he had mastered a sword technique similar to the Thirteen Swords. This Li Zimo was number two on the List of Tempering, so his strength could not be overlooked. However, his sword technique was unknown.

Lu Yin dared not remain too close to the man, for fear that he might detect Lu Yin's true strength.

"For now, we'll head out with three people each to provide security for the Reverent King's Palace," Li Zimo informed Lu Yin after receiving a mission.

Lu Yin was shocked. "The Reverent King's Palace?"

"The Reverent King's Palace is not far from the imperial palace. Let's go," Li Zimo replied indifferently. He then led six people from the Ming Vanguard towards the king's palace.

Lu Yin never thought that he would return to the Reverent King's household this soon. Fortunately, he had changed his appearance prior to joining the Ming Constables, or else he would be definitely recognized by the Reverent King's household members.

The palace was rather courteous to the Ming Constables members, and they requested them to protect the backdoor. This also meant that the Ming Vanguard members could escort any important members of the household to safety if so needed.

"Your Highness, the crown prince has ordered the Ming Vanguard to protect our Reverent King's Palace. Is he trying to monitor us?" Tang Si asked solemnly.

Ming Zhaoshu shook his head. "He's not that stupid. He's only doing this as a show for others. He wants to prove that our uncle-nephew relationship is harmonious. He's actually rather invested in this, to the point where the Ming Constables even deployed a commander this time."

Chapter 277: Brilliant Sword Genius

“Right, have you found Lu Seven yet?” Ming Zhaoshu suddenly asked.

Tang Si shook his head. “No, he hadn’t even set foot in the crown prince’s palace, so he may not even have entered the capital.”

Ming Zhaoshu frowned at the unexpected news. “Did he die?”

“Your Highness, he’s just a commoner. There wasn’t much use even if he did make it into the crown prince’s household.”

“I know, but it’s precisely because he’s a commoner that he should be even safer. No one would ever expect me to send an ordinary person into the crown prince’s household. He’s a scapegoat that I meticulously arranged. Forget it. It’s alright even if he didn’t make it.”

Tang Si remained there, standing silently, as if he had something to say.

Ming Zhaoshu glanced at him. “What’s the matter?”

Tang Si half-kneeled as he said, “Your Highness, your subordinate wishes to challenge Li Zimo.”

“No, the gap between the two of you is too large.” Ming Zhaoshu explicitly rejected the request.

Tang Si’s face dimmed. “Even still, I wish to personally try my hand against the number two on the List of Tempering.”

Ming Zhaoshu looked at Tang Si. “Li Zimo has fascinating blade techniques, such as the killing technique, Silence, that he has honed from a young age. Also, Crown Prince Ming Hao does not allow the top ranker on the list to appear for two reasons: the first is to eliminate the hidden threats within the List of Tempering while the second is to have the top person avoid Li Zimo. He is very strong and can rank at the top of all Martial Kings.”

Tang Si raised his head with a firm look within his eyes. “Your Highness, I beg for your permission. I’ll die without any regrets.”

Ming Zhaoshu sighed and looked up. He then grimaced as he lamented, “Ming Hao, oh, Ming Hao. It looks like you made the correct decision when you created this List of Tempering. How many on this Shenvu Continent will sacrifice everything they have just to leave their name on the list, and how many experts have you found through it? You have my respect.” The king then looked at Tang Si before finally saying, “Very well, I’ll agree to your request. Go now and don’t have any regrets about challenging him. I’ll try to preserve your life.”

Tang Si was delighted. “Many thanks, Your Highness.”

The Reverent King’s palace in the capital was very large, and it even had a specialized training ground.

News of Tang Si’s challenge to Li Zimo quickly spread throughout the Reverent King’s palace, and even outside the palace. It piqued the interest of many.

Tang Si was ranked eighth on the List of Tempering, and he was widely known to be invincible with his spear. Li Zimo was second on the list, and even Ming Zhaotian marvelled at his self-created Silence

technique. He was one of the strongest members of the Shenwu Empire's younger generation. The battle between these two was enough to excite anyone, and even the four powerhouses atop the high peaks would be watching their battle.

Ming Zhaoshu sensed that the time had arrived, and he looked up to look around in all directions before focusing on the battlefield. "A battle between ranked members of the List of Tempering is a battle of life and death."

Outside the grounds, Lu Yin closely stared at the scene. He was very curious about Li Zimo who was ranked second on the List of Tempering. This person represented the standard of the Shenwu Continent's entire younger generation. He stood above all the other Martial Kings, not only those of the younger generation.

Li Zimo had a completely indifferent expression on his face as he held his long sword and quietly stared at his opponent.

Tang Si, on the other hand, gripped his spear as his eyes widened with intense focus. He charged out at an extreme speed and stabbed straight at Li Zimo, the tip of his spear causing the void itself to tremble. A sharp aura streaked past Li Zimo and tore through the void while the shockwave rent the earth and caused sparks to fly out. This attack could not be blocked. Lu Yin was shocked, because he could see that this attack could rival three-lined battle force.

On the other side of the battlefield, Li Zimo's eyes lit up and even held a hint of admiration within them. He gripped his blade and calmly lifted it before letting it fall downwards as his body vanished. The blade returned to its scabbard in one smooth motion, though there was no sound nor any abnormal movements.

Everyone was stunned as they could not understand what had just happened.

Ming Zhaoshu narrowed his eyes and looked apprehensively at Li Zimo's figure.

Bang!

Tang Si's spear broke. Half of it fell onto the ground with a crisp ringing sound. Tang Si seemed to be completely stunned as he remained rooted in place while a look of extreme unwillingness and also respect blossomed in his eyes.

Lu Yin was alarmed. In his mind, Li Zimo's figure was superimposed over that of Liu Shaoqiu. That sword had been nearly identical in form the First Sword of the Thirteen Swords. The only difference was the First Sword did not require any movement and that it could travel through the void. Li Zimo's body had followed behind his sword, and this technique required both of them to travel a certain distance, but the speed of this attack was about the same as that of the First Sword. This difference was probably a result of the space in the Shenwu Continent being more stable than the rest of the universe's. If this attack had been launched in the greater universe, then it may not have required any movement either, and would be almost identical to the First Sword of the Thirteen Swords in every facet.

Li Zimo, a native of the Shenwu Continent, had created a technique that could rival the First Sword! If the Sword Sect were to discover this, they would trip over their heels to recruit him as a core disciple. This was an outstanding level of natural talent, and he was a brilliant genius in every sense of the word.

Liu Shaoqiu was a genius who had inherited the Thirteen Swords, but this Li Zimo was a genius who had created the First Sword. Who knew which was stronger, though Lu Yin was leaning towards Li Zimo, as this person's talent for the sword was too terrifying; he only lacked a solid starting point. If he had been given the Thirteen Swords, then his speed of comprehension might have even surpassed Liu Shaoqiu's.

Lu Yin had finally witnessed the true strength of the Shenwu Continent's younger generation. Li Zimo could definitely match up to the top eight in the Astral Combat Tournament. If that just now was not his strongest attack, then he may even be equal to the top four and be a match for Lu Yin himself.

This was the second rank on the List of Tempering. Lu Yin wondered how strong the top person was.

The surrounding audience had not even recovered from their shock yet, but Li Zimo had already left.

Tang Si was ranked eight in the List of Tempering, but he could not even take one strike from the second rank. The difference was too staggering.

Tang Si was agonized and was still panting heavily. He looked at the broken half of his spear lying on the ground, and he closed his eyes. Before this battle, he had hoped to learn of the disparity between them so that he could chase after it. But now, he no longer entertained any such thoughts; the gap between them was just too great.

Ming Zhaoshu walked over to Tang Si. "This is why I didn't want you to challenge him. Can you still use your spear?"

Tang Si gripped the spear handle and pondered for a moment before raising his head. "Yes."

Ming Zhaoshu nodded. "When you can shake off the shadow of that sword, you'll be able to challenge him again." He then turned to leave.

Lu Yin looked deeply at Tang Si and left. He had to guard the palace's back door.

"Damn! Is this really a primitive continent? That sword was way too vicious! That guy can even rival our five Academy Masters," the Ghost Monkey exclaimed in surprise.

Lu Yin leaned against the door. "The Shenwu Continent has resisted the covert attacks of the Darkmist Weave for a thousand years. It is just one continent, but it has birthed so many experts. There's definitely more than just one genius at Li Zimo's level."

"What a pity. If only this continent belonged to you. I still remember your identity as King Zishan, but with the strength of this continent, you would have had a respectable place amongst your human's Outerverse," the Ghost Monkey casually commented.

The monkey's words moved Lu Yin, as he had not thought of this before. Yes, it would be great if this continent belonged to him, but he could only dream about such a thing. This continent held Hunters, and more than just one at that. Its vast strength could be seen by how it had held back the entire Darkmist Weave. Against that sort of strength, even the entire Great Yu Empire might not be enough to rule it, let alone just Lu Yin himself.

The next few days were very ordinary. There were some changes made to the List of Tempering, as those who had recently won their spots on the list were torn down over and over. Many grew interested in what was happening, though Lu Yin guessed that all this movement was a result of the mysterious

number one pulling them down. He also believed that the person who was ranked number one kept changing, but that their name had been hidden to maintain the mystery.

This genius was Crown Prince Ming Hao's final bit of control that he had placed when he set up the list.

The Ming Constables had been sent out less than usual over these past days, and the Ming Vanguard was mostly sent out to protect important people. However, this was all just on the surface, as Crown Prince Ming Hao would never relax on his hunt for foreigners. After all, they were the true enemy.

Each island sent their congratulatory gifts to the palace, and it was rumored that there were so many that they had overflowed to several drill grounds within the imperial palace. The magnificence of the gifts was astounding.

Countless experts had gathered in the capital, and even soldiers had entered the city to maintain order. The entire capital seemed cheerful for the birthday celebration, but there was also a palpable nervous tension that hung in the air that even Lu Yin could sense.

Over the next few days, Lu Yin did not see much of Li Zimo. This person was as cold as a block of ice, and he was especially guarded while within the king's palace, so they hardly ever crossed paths.

The Reverent King had returned to the capital, so logically, he should have received many visitors. However, during these few days, no one visited the palace, shocking Lu Yin. The relationship between Ming Zhaoshu and Crown Prince Ming Hao seemed to be extremely poor, and even those officials who had forced Ming Zhaoshu to resist the crown prince were nowhere to be seen right now. This was politics.

Fireworks exploded in the sky from time to time, and the entire capital seemed to be exceptionally lively.

Li Zimo walked out of the palace and looked at Lu Yin. "The princess is going to the Tower of Resonating Light to pray for blessings upon His Highness and His Majesty. Seven, go and ensure her safety."

Lu Yin bowed obediently. "Yes, commander."

Not much later, Ming Yan walked out of the palace while accompanied by a maid. Tang Si followed closely behind the two of them with a neat arrangement of soldiers around them. An armored carriage had also been brought along for the princess.

From when he first arrived at the Reverent King's palace in the capital, this was Lu Yin's first time seeing Ming Yan. Although she was wearing a veil, her pure beauty still could not be concealed. Her eyes seemed to shine through the thin fabric, bright and pure. Yet Lu Yin noticed that her face seemed to have paled slightly compared to before, which made him feel a bit uneasy.

Ming Yan walked out of the main gate and was about to climb in the armored carriage when she suddenly paused. Her eyes flashed with delight as she turned around to look at the people surrounding her, as if searching for something.

Tang Si was puzzled. "Princess, please get in the carriage."

Ming Yan's gaze swept across all of their faces before finally landing on Lu Yin, where she briefly locked eyes with him. Lu Yin saw Ming Yan's expression become delighted, and his heart jumped, but he then quickly lowered his head.

A mischievous light seemed to flash through Ming Yan's eyes, as well as a bit of shyness. She spoke up. "Brother Tang Si, my father's safety is more important, and Yan'er already has your protection. There's no need for Brother Li's protection anymore. Would Brother Li please stay behind to protect the palace?"

Li Zimo shifted his gaze. "The safety of the princess is important."

Ming Yan raised her hand and pointed at Lu Yin. "These people are from the Ming Vanguard as well, so please allow them to protect me. Brother Li, protecting my father is much more important."

Tang Si immediately tried to assuage her stance. "Princess, there is no need to worry about His Highness' safety. This is the capital, and His Highness is a Martial Emperor. No one would dare recklessly attack him."

Ming Yan stubbornly shook her head. "Can Brother Li please stay behind to protect my father? Otherwise, Yan'er will feel troubled."

Tang Si looked at Li Zimo and was placed in a difficult position.

Li Zimo simply nodded and turned to Lu Yin. "Seven, bring a few people to guard the princess. Don't show any carelessness."

Lu Yin was both startled and pleased. He felt a strange sweetness and found that he was strangely looking forward to this task. "Yes, commander."

Ming Yan lowered her head, and a faint red blush overcame her covered face. She then hurriedly got back in the carriage.

Lu Yin inhaled deeply and walked beside the cart. He was separated from Ming Yan by just a mere wooden plank; he was even closer to her than Tang Si was right now.

Ming Yan found an excuse to send her maid away, and she played with her fingers as she sat apprehensively inside the carriage. From time to time, she glanced at Lu Yin who was walking right beside the carriage. She had a cheerful expression.

Chapter 278: Lu Yin and Zhanlong Daynight

Since Tang Si was driving the carriage, Lu Yin wasn't able to talk to Ming Yan. However, there was a very strange atmosphere between the two. Despite how noisy it was in the street, the only thing that Lu Yin could hear was Ming Yan's steady heartbeat, and the only thing that he could smell was her delicate fragrance. It was a very wonderful feeling of closeness that left him feeling intoxicated.

"Your heart's racing. Did you get poisoned?" the monkey suddenly asked, startling Lu Yin and forcing him back to the real world.

"No, you weren't. That's strange, what's wrong with your heart? Everything else in your body is working normally. That's really odd..."

Lu Yin didn't have the time to explain what he was feeling to a monkey. However, what the Ghost Monkey had said did sober him up quite a bit; he couldn't allow himself to get drunk over this infatuation. Ming Yan was the daughter of the Reverent King, who was a leader of the Shenwu Continent, while Lu Yin was a mere trialtaker. The difference between their statuses was just too stark, and the blood-feud between the sides that they belonged to had existed for an entire millennia; it was not something that could be easily resolved. The two of them were like two trees on opposite sides of a road; they might be able to see each other, but they would never be able to touch each other. His emotions were like the moon's reflection in a still lake.

After his thoughts reached this point, Lu Yin suddenly felt as if a bucket of cold water had been dumped on his head, chilling him to the bone.

He was merely a student and had neither the power nor the influence to affect the Darkmist Weave, much less the Shenwu Continent. Ming Zhaoshu alone was someone powerful enough to prevent Lu Yin from ever getting close to Ming Yan. This budding relationship was doomed to fail before it could even sprout.

Lu Yin was well aware that emotions were very important to a girl. Someone like Ming Yan, who was intelligent but also rather inexperienced in the matters of the world, would easily lose themselves in their emotions. The instant things fell apart, the amount of pain that she would feel would be far beyond what she could fathom at the moment.

Things couldn't go on like this. Before anything even happened, Lu Yin had already realized that he could not allow this relationship to continue developing. With this in mind, Lu Yin resolutely stared ahead, quickening his footsteps to step in front of the carriage. He did not look back.

Lu Yin's mood change was very apparent to Ming Yan, and her heart jolted. She was overcome with a sense of fear and discomfort that she'd never felt before, and at that moment, her eyes started to burn with tears.

There were some people who one could spend their entire lives with but still feel like strangers. And there were also others who one could instantly know that they were meant to be after a single glance.

For Ming Yan, Lu Yin was that kind of person. Their meeting had come along the wings of a butterfly, bringing happiness and dreams with it. At this moment, however, the illusion had shattered. Women were much more intuitive than men, and the subtle shift in Lu Yin was very obvious to the princess. She could already tell that he had made up his mind.

But why? Ming Yan lowered her head, her wet eyes betraying her sadness and frustration as her fists rightened. You still have my scent on you.

She was very intelligent, but intelligence and emotions were polar opposites.

Lu Yin sighed, filled with frustration, sadness, and pity as well for Ming Yan. Right now, his most ardent desire was to climb to the top of this continent and pull her into his embrace.

All of a sudden, a flash of black and white passed through his vision. Lu Yin's eyes narrowed, and he turned to the side as a procession of carriages from the crown prince's palace moved past them. One of the men inside turned around to look at Ming Yan's carriage, his eyes filled with a burning bloodlust.

Lu Yin felt a chill crawl down his spine, and he quickly pulled back to be flush with the side of the princess' carriage. The man raised a fist and launched an attack while a boundless chill surged through the air. Wind and clouds swirled around each other as a vicious and terrifying martial force descended along with a domineering aura. Tang Si's scalp went numb, and he found himself rooted in place out of fear. This pressure was even more terrifying than the attack that he had faced from Li Zimo!

The entire group of carriages from the Reverent King's palace—no, everyone on the entire street felt as if they'd been punched in the head as they all coughed out blood. That man's attack had destroyed the carriage's walls, and he was about to enter its insides. He completely disregarded the soldiers standing to the sides. It made sense for him to do so. After all, even Tang Si had been subdued and rendered unable to lift a finger.

Lu Yin grit his teeth as all of his muscles went taut. He lifted a palm, disregarding the fact that he might expose himself by doing so. All he wanted to do right now was to save this girl. Without any hesitation, he activated his five-lined battle force, causing dark-gold rays to emanate out from his body. Nine stars revolved around him as a galaxy appeared in his palm; it was the Cosmic Palm.

The man noticed the attack that Lu Yin had sent his way, and his eyes narrowed, never expecting that someone would actually be able to react to his move. This is... five-lined battle force? The man did not dare to let his guard down against such a destructive attack and instantly altered the course of his attack to clash against Lu Yin.

The two palms collided, and with a bang, shockwaves distorted the air above before exploding high in the sky, scattering the clouds. On the ground, the pavement under their feet splintered. Rampant martial power flew about as they continued to contest each other. The shockwaves resulting from their exchange seemed to envelop both of them in a bubble as they continuously tried to dispel the other's attack. Lu Yin and the man exchanged a look, and they both saw shock in the other's eyes. It was at that moment that they recognized each other.

This person must be the genius from the Daynight Family who had defeated Nightqueen Yanqing: Zhanlong Daynight.

Zhanlong Daynight had also recognized Lu Yin. Amongst all the Limiteers, there were very few who could defeat him. Of those people, only Lu Yin had comprehended five-lined battle force. This was the person who the Nightking clan had ordered Zhanlong Daynight to kill no matter the cost.

The two of them never expected to meet the other under such circumstances. Their hands that were still pressed together twisted at the same time, and with another bang, a new round of shockwaves cut through the ground like a sharp blade. The two of them retreated simultaneously, but neither had gained an upper hand through the exchange.

This was not the only place where a fierce battle had broken out. The same scene was repeating itself all across the capital, and loud booms could be heard in all directions.

Zhanlong Daynight looked at Lu Yin seriously while his eyes revealed confusion, shock, and even bewilderment; his Technique of Immunity had been subverted. He licked his lips savagely.

"We'll meet again," he said before fleeing.

The entire battle had consisted of nothing more than just their palms colliding. Everything had taken place in less than five seconds. On top of that, chaos was breaking out all over the capital, allowing Zhanlong Daynight to flee with ease. As he departed, he left a trail of unconscious people behind him. Even Tang Si swayed a little and nearly fainted. He wasn't strong enough to take even a single attack from Zhanlong Daynight.

Even so, he'd seen the entire event and witnessed Lu Yin's true strength. This person was most definitely a Martial King, but he seemed to be even stronger than Li Zimo.

Lu Yin didn't have the time to worry about anything else as he charged into the carriage and immediately checked to see how Ming Yan was faring.

Thankfully, she had only fainted and was just fine. He heaved a sigh of relief. It was quite a relief that she hadn't been hurt even after being within such close proximity of a battle technique from the Daynight clan.

With a loud whoosh, a sharp glint flashed through the air before Lu Yin calmly grabbed a spear that was coming his way. He turned around to glance at Tang Si. "Are you trying to die?" He then exerted some minor force, causing Nine Stacks of power to vibrate through the spear and hit Tang Si. The Reverent King's vassal could handle Five Stacks, but nothing beyond that. He was forced to let go of the spear and take a step back. With a "clang," the spear crumbled to pieces.

Lu Yin loosened his hold and gently set Ming Yan down. He was just about to exit the carriage and leave when he saw that Ming Zhaoshu had suddenly appeared and was eyeing him coldly.

Lu Yin took a deep breath and bowed. "My lord."

At that moment, some strange force surged down from the mountain peaks surrounding the capital and reached them. However, Ming Zhaoshu calmly raised a hand and dispelled the force. He then glanced at Lu Yin. "Come with me."

Lu Yin had no way to hide or run. Ming Zhaoshu had comprehended a domain and must have seen his battle with Zhanlong Daynight. Lu Yin's five-lined battle force was extremely eye-catching, but thankfully, the king had not immediately attacked. This indicated that negotiations were still possible.

Tang Si looked at Lu Yin with eyes filled with disappointment in himself. He had just lost to Li Zimo, and now, he had also been defeated by this person. It was quite a huge shock.

Within the king's study, Lu Yin stood there, waiting quietly.

Ming Zhaoshu had his back to him with his brows firmly furrowed, clearly deep in thought.

After quite a while, Ming Zhaoshu turned and carefully appraised Lu Yin. "Should I address you as the Ming Constables' vice-commander, Seven, or as the coachman of my residence, Lu Seven, or... as the trialtaker, Lu Yin?"

Lu Yin looked up. "How did you know that I was Lu Seven?"

Ming Zhaoshu's eyes narrowed. "I'm not an idiot. Appearances can be changed, but your bones can't be altered. Besides, you didn't even change your external appearance by much. It was pretty simple to make the connection since the two names are so similar."

Lu Yin bowed. "Thank you for not attacking me, my lord."

Ming Zhaoshu snorted. "If you hadn't saved Yan'er, I wouldn't have let you off." At that moment, Ming Zhaoshu revealed his anger as he glared at Lu Yin. "You ruined my Yan'er's reputation."

Lu Yin could only bitterly answer, "My apologies, my lord, but I could not choose where I landed. I never thought that that incident would go on to ruin her reputation."

"That means nothing to me at this moment. How are you going to take responsibility for that incident?" Ming Zhaoshu asked coldly.

Lu Yin was surprised. "I can still take responsibility?"

Ming Zhaoshu sat down while staring straight at Lu Yin. "What do you think this Shenwu Continent is?"

"A prison," Lu Yin answered without any hesitation.

Ming Zhaoshu nodded as a dark look clouded over his eyes. "You're correct. It's indeed a jail. It might seem as if we have successfully weathered all the attacks from the Darkmist Weave, but in reality, our fates were decided the moment we were exposed. It's nothing more than a matter of time."

Lu Yin looked at Ming Zhaoshu. "You've analyzed the situation very accurately. The Darkmist Weave is just one of the seventy two weaves in the Outerverse. The Innerverse is the place where the true powerhouses dwell. No matter how powerful the Shenwu Continent is, it won't be able to hold out against all the powerful organizations from the Innerverse. It really is just a matter of time."

Ming Zhaoshu's eyes flashed. "That's why I would like to work together with you, who is powerful beyond your realm. In this way, my continent will remain safe as we merge into the greater universe."

Lu Yin was confused. "There have been countless disciples from many powerful organizations coming here over the course of the past millennia. Why didn't you seek them out, my lord?"

"Would you want to partner with the people who held your fate in their hands?" Ming Zhaoshu retorted.

Lu Yin shrugged. "If that's how it is, then so be it. For example, right now, you hold my life. As for the continent, the Innerverse's powerful organizations can eradicate you with ease. You have no right to make any choices."

"That's why I'm trying to find a way to resolve things." Ming Zhaoshu got up as he continued, saying, "You're the leader of the Astral-10 branch of the Astral Combat Academy. I've heard that the Council of the Astral Academy holds a great deal of power. The goal of this trial is for the trialtakers to join the Outerverse Youth Council. I'm willing to help you increase your score so that you can stand on your own two feet in that place. With your status as a member of the Council of the Astral Academy, you'll definitely have the right to speak up and even influence the Darkmist Weave."

Lu Yin was shocked. "You know quite a lot about the greater universe, my lord."

"It's been a whole millennia since we were exposed, and since then, we've captured quite a few trialtakers. Not all of them are as hard to open up, such as that disciple from the Blaze Realm. He told me everything that he could and even the secret of the Blaze Realm's ultimate battle technique, the Karmic Flame Sword," Ming Zhaoshu calmly said.

Lu Yin was speechless. Arikar had turned out to be pretty useless.

"If I manage to enter the Outerverse Youth Council and also use my status as a member of the Astral Combat Council, then I do indeed have the right to speak up. However, I won't be able to decide the future of the Shenwu Continent anytime soon," Lu Yin explained, not sugarcoating the truth at all. Ming Zhaoshu was smart, and if Lu Yin tried to pull any tricks on him, it would only lead to a quick death.

Chapter 279: An Eternal Promise

Ming Zhaoshu was very satisfied with Lu Yin's response. "Don't worry, nothing will happen to the Shenwu Continent for now. Even if Hunters or stronger cultivators attack us, the five planets can protect us for at least another year, and it's unlikely that they'll even attack in the first place. That's why I'm sure that, for the next decade at least, the continent will be completely fine. I'm giving you these ten years to train. That should be enough time for you to obtain the right to speak your mind and make decisions. You're one of the final four in the Astral Combat Tournament and one of the top geniuses amongst humans after all."

Lu Yin was rather confused. "Why are you pinning all your hopes on me?"

Ming Zhaoshu narrowed his eyes and took a deep breath. He finally replied in a low voice, "Because of Yan'er."

Lu Yin's heart skipped a beat, and his expression changed.

"Yan'er likes you, and I can tell that you too feel some affection for her in return. Otherwise, you wouldn't have exposed your true identity in order to save her," Ming Zhaoshu stated.

Lu Yin did not deny a thing.

"There's a huge difference between the two of you in terms of status. Only by letting the Shenwu Continent peacefully enter the greater universe will everything return to normal. At that point, you two can be together. I can promise you that," Ming Zhaotian spoke gravely.

Lu Yin's fingers trembled as his heart burned intensely; Ming Zhaotian's words were extremely tempting to him. Emotions were uncontrollable, and yet, they were also the easiest to control others with, and Lu Yin was no exception to this rule. He could sense Ming Zhaotian's ambition, but because of his feelings for Ming Yan, Lu Yin was still willing to make an attempt. If the Shenwu Continent were to truly merge with the greater universe, then it would be possible for him to be with Ming Yan.

At the thought of being with the young girl, Lu Yin felt his heart race. He couldn't control himself at all.

The corner of Ming Zhaoshu's lips curved up. This was the reason why he had chosen Lu Yin. There was no restraint better than raw emotion. He believed that his daughter would be able to tie this person to their interests, but Lu Yin was not the only person who he would choose, though he would never say

that aloud. The Shenwu Continent needed a revolution, and it needed him to save it. It was worth sacrificing some things for this lofty goal.

“How are you planning to help me improve my trial results?” Lu Yin asked.

Ming Zhaoshu glanced at Lu Yin’s finger. “Destroy that thing in your flesh. I’m sure that you don’t want our conversation to be exposed.”

Lu Yin nodded. He lightly flexed his muscles and destroyed the tiny camera without any issues.

“I will now tell you the place where Ming Taizhong is entombed to help you climb up the ranks,” Ming Zhaoshu said seriously.

Lu Yin was startled. “The place where Ming Taizhong is buried? You’re willing to tell me this?”

Ming Zhaoshu nodded. “I can tell you, and you can even tell others if you want. It doesn’t matter. Even my brother has to be careful if he goes there. If you’re not a Martial God, which is what you call Hunters, then it’s extremely difficult to survive in that place.”

“Please tell me,” Lu Yin politely asked.

“Have you heard of the Tower of Resonating Light?” Ming Zhaoshu began with a question, saying two words that Lu Yin never expected to hear.

“The Tower of Resonating Light?” Lu Yin was surprised.

Ming Zhaoshu smiled. “Unexpected, right?”

Lu Yin frowned. “Are you actually saying that Ming Taizhong died in the Tower of Resonating Light?”

Ming Zhaoshu nodded.

“How can that be? If Ming Taizhong really died there, then everyone in the capital should know about it.” Lu Yin was bewildered.

Ming Zhaoshu took out a map and explained, “The Tower of Resonating Light that we see is just a small part of the full tower. Its main structure is actually underground and is even larger than the entirety of the capital. When Ming Taizhong died, he buried himself within the tower. Very few people are aware of this.”

Lu Yin gazed at the map with a shocked expression. So the Tower of Resonating Light is a tower that’s even larger than the capital, Mingdu? Wait, Han Chong and the rest had been planning to attack it, believing it to be one of the nodes for the five sealing planets. It now seemed that their information was false.

“I once heard a rumor that the Tower of Resonating Light was one of the five nodes that controlled the sealing planets,” Lu Yin probed.

Ming Zhaoshu burst into laughter. “Ming Hao spread that news on purpose so that he could capture all of the trialtakers in one go. He’s well aware that the trialtakers will try to attack the Tower of Resonating Light on my brother’s birthday. And in reality, that place isn’t one of the five controlling nodes—it is

where Ming Taizhong died. Even Hunters wouldn't survive there, much less someone like you. Although it's easy to enter the tower, they won't get very far once inside."

Lu Yin fell quiet. Was everything going right according to Ming Hao's plan?

Ming Zhaoshu looked right at Lu Yin and said, "This is considered a public secret as well as the fairest fight between us and the outsiders so far. During my brother's birthday celebration, the foreigners will use all they have to attack the five sealing planets. Every expert above the Martial Emperor level has already gathered on the five planets. The continent is where Martial Emperors and those weaker will fight. And on the continent, the most important battlefield will be the Tower of Resonating Light."

"Ming Hao won't intervene?" Lu Yin tentatively asked.

Ming Zhaoshu smiled. "Long Yun from the Sword Sect arrived some time ago, and both of them have their own trump cards. It's just one battle, so he definitely won't interfere. However, all of the trial takers attacking the tower are done for. I can guarantee at least this much."

Not long after their talk, Lu Yin left the study and sighed while looking in another direction.

Ming Zhaoshu's voice then sounded from behind him. "Yan'er's awake."

Lu Yin paused to think for a moment. He took a deep breath and then headed in that direction.

The door to the study opened. As he looked at Lu Yin's fading back, Ming Zhaoshu grinned. Taking advantage of this youth's emotions was the best way to handle Lu Yin, and there was nothing that could stop him. With Yan'er around, Lu Yin would definitely work his hardest for the king's sake no matter how amazing the young man's talents were.

Within Ming Yan's bedroom, a maid nervously stood near the princess while holding a cup. "Does your head still hurt, my lady?"

Ming Yan knitted her brows and started rubbing her forehead as she felt her head throbbing. She couldn't remember what had happened. All she knew was that, at the most critical moment, Lu Yin had defended her. Right, Lu Yin. Was he alright? Ming Yan hastily stood up, only to nearly fall down again. Just as the maid was about to help Ming Yan up, a figure suddenly appeared and caught her.

A familiar fragrance reached Lu Yin's nose as he tightly hugged the beauty in his arms. He felt like he had the entire world in his arms at this moment.

"Wh-Who are you? Release my lady!" The maid exclaimed in shock as she grabbed him tightly, wanting to pull him away from Ming Yan.

Ming Yan stared blankly at the man who was hugging her, the man with a familiar face and scent.

Lu Yin casually flicked a finger and made the maid collapse, unconscious. Still tightly holding onto Ming Yan, he asked, "Does your head still hurt?"

Ming Yan gazed at him, but then suddenly recalled something and pushed him away hard. "It- It's got nothing to do with you." After saying that, she sat back down on her bed with her head turned away from Lu Yin.

Lu Yin smiled wryly, knowing that she remembered what he had done. He sat down beside her on the bed. "I'm sorry."

Ming Yan's eyes grew red, but she remained silent.

"The difference between our statuses is too great: we're from two different lands with entirely different cultures. More importantly, there's a blood-feud between our people that has lasted for an entire millennia. I don't want to hurt you," Lu Yin said sadly.

Ming Yan turned, and she pursed her lips. "I know."

Lu Yin lifted his hand and began running his fingers through her hair. "Still, I won't give up on you."

Ming Yan's eyes lit up as she looked at him nervously. The anticipation in her eyes was almost enough to almost melt Lu Yin's resolve. It was impossible for him to perfectly describe the feelings coursing through his veins, but the feeling of being relied upon, being desired... From this point onwards, this girl in front of him was his. He had gained one more person in his life.

Lu Yin hugged her tightly. "I won't let you go. I promise."

Ming Yan smiled gently. "Thank you."

All of a sudden, Ming Yan exclaimed, "You should leave! My father will know that you're here."

"You mean my future father-in-law?" Lu Yin teasingly replied.

Ming Yan was embarrassed, "What do you mean, your future father-in-law? Stop joking around! You need to leave or else my father will discover that you're here!"

Lu Yin tousled her hair lovingly as he said, "Don't worry. He's the one who allowed me to come to you."

Ming Yan was astonished. "How can that be? My father hates all foreigners. You..."

"I have my ways. Besides, my future father-in-law is very intelligent and has great insight. You should know your father's disposition well," Lu Yin gently responded.

Ming Yan's eyes showed that she was lost in her thoughts. She finally nodded after recalling some matters. However, she couldn't help herself from frowning and cast an anxious look at Lu Yin. "Did my father demand something from you in return?"

Lu Yin hugged her rightly. "Don't overthink things. You're your own person, and your father is his own person. I already said that I definitely won't let you go, so even if your father doesn't keep his word, I'll still take you away."

Ming Yan giggled happily. She had never been this happy—no, this blessed before. At this moment, her cheeks were colored a rosy red, and she was absolutely stunning. Lu Yin found himself so distracted by her radiance that he lowered his head, bringing their lips together into a gentle touch. The two of them lost themselves in the tenderness of the moment.

A loud clap of thunder suddenly shocked the two of them, and Ming Yan hastily pushed Lu Yin away and shied away from him. "H-How dare you!"

Lu Yin looked outside, knowing that this was Ming Zhaoshu's way of warning him. However, he continued gazing at Ming Yan, unwilling to part from her. He picked out a lock of his hair. "Let's exchange locks of your hair."

Ming Yan was caught off guard, but did not hesitate to cut off a section of her luscious black hair and give it to him. However, she did not turn back around, and Lu Yin didn't force her to do so either. He placed the lock of his hair in her hands and took her hair from her with a serious expression. "Remember, I won't let you go. I never will." And with that, he vanished.

Ming Yan tightly clenched the lock of hair that he had left her, giggling happily even as tears welled up in her eyes. She was very smart, and she knew that it would be difficult for the two of them to ever get together. However, Lu Yin had given her a lock of hair in hopes that she wouldn't give up on him. And if he didn't give up on her, then she would do the same no matter how much time passed.

After leaving Ming Yan's bedroom, Lu Yin looked up, thinking to himself that the sky felt incredibly tall and vast. He reached out with a hand. One day, this will all be mine...

The battles in the capital had ended very quickly. The fight between Lu Yin and Zhanlong Daynight was astounding, but compared to the destruction caused by everyone else, it did not stand out.

Zhanlong Daynight had fled, but quite a few of the other Daynight clan members who had been arranged to stay in the capital had been captured and killed. These people meant nothing to Zhanlong Daynight as to him, because there were too many ants like them in the clan.

"You didn't succeed, Zhanlong?" a girl from the Daynight clan exclaimed in an isolated room, unable to believe the outcome.

The other people from the Daynight clan were just as shocked. They had been certain that this operation would succeed, and they had sacrificed nearly half of their expendable forces to assure their victory. But in the end, they had failed.

In contrast to everyone else's surprise and confusion, Zhanlong Daynight was actually extremely excited. He clenched both fists, unable to hold back the excitement that he was feeling. "It's him! I didn't think that I'd meet him this quickly. He really did defeat Yanqing. That attack was pretty powerful!"

"Who are you talking about, Zhanlong?" someone asked.

Zhanlong Daynight chuckled and swept his gaze over everyone present. "Lu Yin."

"Lu Yin?" a few people exclaimed in surprise. "You met him?"

Zhanlong Daynight clenched his fists, causing a small explosion to ring out in the air.

Chapter 280: The Ghost Monkey's Conjecture

"How was it? Is he very strong?" someone asked.

Zhanlong Daynight's face sank, and his expression turned serious. "Very, very powerful. Even though we only had a single exchange, it was enough for me to tell that his strength exceeds that of a Limiteer. It's completely normal that Yanqing was not able to match up against him. After all, even my Daynight Restoration Technique was nearly broken."

The faces of the surrounding Daynight members immediately changed. "Brother Zhanlong's Daynight Restoration Technique is invincible. It can't be broken through."

"There's no such thing as an invincible technique. This Lu Yin nearly broke through my technique with just one strike. He's much stronger than Yanqing. If I hadn't been imprisoned in the ancestral grounds and forced to increase my strength, then I wouldn't have any confidence in winning a clash against him. Even now, the victor has yet to be decided."

Zhanlong Daynight's words shocked everyone, as he could be considered the strongest Limiteer within the Daynight clan. Lu Yin must be incredibly powerful for Zhanlong to say such things; no wonder Lu Yin had been able to defeat the Sword Sect's Liu Shaoqiu and Nightqueen Yanqing to enter the top four of the Astral Combat Tournament. This person was very frightening.

"Those old farts actually have some pretty discerning eyes. Aside from me, no other Limiteer in our Daynight clan could possibly be Lu Yin's opponent. It looks like I get to have some real fun this time," Zhanlong Daynight exclaimed excitedly as the desire to battle Lu Yin surged within him. That palm of his had been too strange; no one had given Zhanlong Daynight such an exhilarating feeling before, and even his Daynight Restoration Technique had almost been broken. This was something that had never happened in the records of the Daynight clan's history.

The matter of Lu Yin clashing against Zhanlong Daynight was fiercely suppressed by Ming Zhaoshu, and Lu Yin continued to guard the back gate of the king's palace.

Seven very peaceful days passed, tranquil to the extent where it felt strange, as if everyone was preparing for something.

What disappointed Lu Yin the most was that he had not caught so much as a glimpse of Ming Yan in these seven days. She had most likely been grounded and restricted from even walking to the main gate.

Lu Yin was disappointed, but he also rejoiced at this. He wanted to see Ming Yan, but he was also afraid of revealing himself in front of Li Zimo. Ming Zhaoshu had actually handled the situation correctly.

On the eighth day, Lu Yin and the others were called back to the Ming Constables' headquarters, and all the Ming Vanguard troops left the Reverent King's palace, including Li Zimo.

After the Ming Vanguard left the palace, Lu Yin and the rest were ordered to put on blindfolds and other such devices meant to isolate their five senses. They were then taken to a dark and gloomy place where Li Zimo also underwent the same procedure.

"You guys are being brought to the Tower of Resonating Light," the Ghost Monkey's voice rang out in Lu Yin's head.

Lu Yin peeled off his blindfold, only to see that it was pitch-black all around them. He could only vaguely make out a few others figures. Li Zimo was not that far from him, and they were definitely beneath the

Tower of Resonating Light. That was to say, they were the ambush that had been prepared for Han Chong and the other trialtakers.

There was a mutual understanding between both sides that, on the day of celebration, they would compete in strength. From Han Chong's perspective, as long as they could bring down the Tower of Resonating Light and destroy the node controlling the five sealing planets, then the external experts would swarm in and occupy the entire Shenwu Continent. To Crown Prince Ming Hao, this was a trap designed to capture the vast majority of the trialtakers.

"Everything is in position to move out once the order is given. For now, everyone can rest in place," Ming Zhaochen ordered in a sonorous voice.

Lu Yin remained silent and he looked around as the map that Ming Zhaoshu had shown him of the Tower of Resonating Light floated up in his mind. The Tower of Resonating Light had thirteen levels in total, and only five were above the surface, which made up the Tower of Resonating Light that everyone could see. The other eight levels were hidden underground, and the area became wider the further down one went. The thirteenth level was nearly as expansive as the capital on its own. Of course, Ming Taizhong was buried on this lowest level.

Lu Yin looked down; a great powerhouse was buried some distance beneath his feet. There should be precious battle techniques, treasures, and training materials buried down there, but it was a shame that he could not reach them. Ming Zhaoshu had mentioned that even Hunters would find it hard to return from Ming Taizhong's tomb alive, which should be in the thirteenth level. Lu Yin's current position was somewhere in the seventh level.

Crown Prince Ming Hao had leaked information saying that the control node for the five sealing planets was located underneath the Tower of Resonating Light. Since Han Chong and the other trialtakers already knew about the sixth level, the ambush had been set up on the seventh level. Of course, the trialtakers had also probably already guessed that there was more than one subterranean level.

Why is Crown Prince Ming Hao so confident that this will capture all of the trialtakers? Lu Yin wondered to himself as he curiously looked around.

The scope of the seventh layer was massive and very dark since it was underground. There were no traces of sunlight anywhere, and all he could see were the solid slabs of stone beneath his feet.

However, the martial power here was abundant and almost felt like it was overflowing. This allowed the Ming Vanguard to maintain their peak combat state while they were waiting.

"How strange, this place feels very odd," the Ghost Monkey mumbled.

Lu Yin could not speak and thus could only listen to the monkey muttering to himself.

"Aside from the abundant martial power here, there are various other energies mixed in as well, and that's not even mentioning this place's massive size. This feeling is like—how should I put it?—right, a sourcebox!" The Ghost Monkey finally made this connection as he cried out in realization.

Lu Yin's gaze flashed as a bolt of lightning seemed to streak past his brain. He recalled the two strange-looking mutant beast statues at the Ming Constables' headquarters' entrance, which were both sourceboxes as well.

“That’s definitely the case. We’re surrounded by sourceboxes!” the Ghost Monkey cried out again.

“What does that mean?” Lu Yin softly asked as he moved to the edge of the area that they could roam around in.

The Ghost Monkey muttered back, “It’s not easy to explain this. Hmm, if you consider the entire Tower of Resonating Light to be a giant sourcebox, then we would currently be trapped inside it.”

Lu Yin was astounded by the explanation. “How is that even possible? Can the sourcebox still be used?”

“Of course, let me tell you this: the human race isn’t the only group that has Lockbreakers. Our Astral Beast Domain has some as well! We can also unlock the treasures sealed by the universe. Your Lord Hou here is also a Lockbreaker!” the Ghost Monkey proudly declared.

“You’re a Lockbreaker?” Lu Yin was truly taken aback this time. This monkey was supposed to be a Lockbreaker? What a joke!

The Ghost Monkey sternly replied, “I’ll warn you again. Don’t look down on us astral beasts. Never. Since the dawn of the universe, astral beasts have existed for ages, and our history far surpasses you humans’. And I’ve also mentioned this before, but humans really are just another species of astral beasts. From our perspective, all of humanity is just one branch of the beasts. Naturally, astral beasts can do anything that the humans can, and lockbreaking is no exception. Many astral beasts have strange innate gifts that far surpass the humans’ as well.” The monkey was boasting again. “Such as myself, Lord Hou.”

“How do you lockbreak?” Lu Yin asked in a puzzled tone.

The Ghost Monkey was unhappy at the question. “What do you mean?! My grasp of star energy is extremely advanced, and I almost comprehended a domain! But regardless of all that, Lord Hou was born with special eyes, and I can see the changes in star energy that normal beings cannot. Based on your human grading of Lockbreakers, I should have reached the standard of a five-star Junior Lockbreaker.”

Lu Yin rolled his eyes, as he did not believe the monkey one bit. However, he knew that this monkey did indeed have a sharp pair of eyes that could pierce through any disguise. On second thought, it may actually be possible for the creature to lockbreak.

“So are you saying that we’re trapped in this giant sourcebox, the Tower of Resonating Light?”

“Of course, the Tower of Resonating Light is not actually a sourcebox. Rather, it’d be more accurate to say that there are sourceboxes placed all around us that have caused this underground area to develop a strange environment that is concealed by various energies. This environment has been fundamentally changed, and it has even caused the entire underground area to be sealed, which is very similar to the solid coating of energy that the dust of the universe forms on a sourcebox.”

Lu Yin had a much better understanding of the situation now. It seemed that Ming Hao was planning on using this method to entrap everyone, but where had he found this many sourceboxes? Did the Shenwu Continent somehow have a vast number of them?

“Can we escape if we’re trapped by these sourceboxes?”

“I’m not sure. It depends on the intensity of the energy.”

Lu Yin’s eyes flashed. He then closed his eyes, waiting for the day of the emperor’s birthday celebration to arrive.

Three days later, there was a loud rumbling in the sky. Fireworks blossomed above Mingdu, and various cities in the different islands throughout the Shenwu Empire also launched fireworks. The birthday celebration had finally begun.

Reverent King Ming Zhaoshu was dressed splendidly for the occasion as he escorted Ming Yan towards the palace. High-ranking officials from all over the empire had converged here like tributaries feeding into a single, massive river as numerous experts carefully watched the proceedings. The soldiers had also sealed the city gates.

The entire empire was celebrating on this day, but only the upper echelons knew that this day was also the day where they would have a decisive battle against the foreigners.

Lu Yin was waiting in the dark, not knowing what was happening outside the Tower of Resonating Light. All the members of the ambush party were waiting for the possibility of battle to break out.

After an unknown amount of time passed, the ground vibrated as a ray of light burrowed through the ground towards them. An intense sonic boom soon followed behind it, prompting Li Zimo to unsheathe his sword and move out from his hiding place underground. Blood soon spread through the earth.

Lu Yin opened his eyes, and he looked up. The ceiling had been split apart, causing the dust from the floor above them to drift down. The entire Ming Vanguard stood up and rushed up and out of the seventh level.

At the same time, a happy celebration filled with songs and dance had started in the imperial palace. Ming Zhaotian had not appeared yet, so Crown Prince Ming Hao was overseeing the event and hosting the celebration. Ming Zhaoshu occasionally looked into the distance at the direction of the Tower of Resonating Light.

Ming Yan sat behind him with a worried look.

Not far away from them, Bei Qing stared passionately at Ming Yan. Unfortunately, at that moment, he was interrupted by a middle-aged man who was standing beside him. This man was the empire’s minister of defence, Bei Hong.

At the other end of the proceedings, finance minister Ming Zhaocai was beaming from ear to ear. Behind him sat Grandini Mavis under her pseudonym, Ah-Lan. She intently stared ahead at a woman behind Crown Prince Ming Hao. She had never imagined in her wildest dreams that Starsibyl would actually be sitting there. She really was too brazen and determined.

Suddenly, a crack extended across the sky, seemingly splitting it asunder. A boundless and terrifying aura dropped down upon them.

A cold glint flashed across Ming Hao’s eyes.

The four peaks surrounding the capital emitted a shining radiance that combined to stop the aftershocks shaking the city. The protecting figures then dashed out of the void and joined the battle.

Aside from these four experts, many other figures shot into the sky from the capital, rushing towards the five sealing planets to participate in a decisive battle against the foreign invaders.

Many powerhouses from various places across the entire Shenwu Continent also headed towards the planets. This was a rather moving scene to most, as regardless of if they were friend or foe, everyone in the Shenwu Continent was charging up together to fight to the death for their homeland. It was anyone's guess as to how many would perish in the heavens this day.

Within the Tower of Resonating Light, dozens of trialtakers charged down with a simple goal: destroy the control node of the five sealing planets that was hidden beneath the tower. When they broke it, the Darkmist Weave's powerhouses would be able to enter in full force, and the Shenwu Continent's independence would finally be ended.

Yue Xianzi frowned in a corner; it should not be like this. Even if the Darkmist Weave had placed a great deal of pressure on the Shenwu Continent, there shouldn't be a complete absence of Explorers here. This was the control node—the most important place on the entire continent—and the trialtakers had made very detailed plans before carrying out their attack. They had even made preparations for if a Cruiser appeared, so why was there not even a single Explorer here?

Yue Xianzi wasn't the only one who had a feeling that things were odd; Han Chong and the other hidden members of the Daynight clan held similar thoughts. But since they had already arrived, there was no longer an option of retreat.

Lu Yin clashed with a trialtaker, but he did not end the fight quickly. He forced the trialtaker around the area so that he could observe the rest of the battles taking place.

That trialtaker was bewildered by Lu Yin, as he had used all his strength but could not get rid of this brat before him. This person was even idly looking all around and was obviously not taking the trialtaker seriously. "Go and die, idiot!"

Lu Yin retreated several steps and frowned at the inexplicably angry male. "Huh?"