

## T. Times 341

### Chapter 341: Neither Sun Nor Moon, the King to Make His Own

Zhao Changhe felt a chill run down his spine.

When he thought back about his relationship with Sisi, they were nowhere close to such a stage. In fact, they were practically estranged. Now, Sisi's only connection to the Central Plains was through Tang Wanzhuang, and he did not even know where she was.

It had nothing to do with him anyway.

Back in the capital, he had prepared a new sword art for Tang Wanzhuang to pass on to Sisi. He had not glimpsed the door to the Profound Mysteries at that point, but a few months had already passed since then and many things had changed. He decided that once he truly broke through, he should organize another Profound Mysteries-level sword art to send over. He was not doing this just because of the agreement with Sisi; he himself needed to seek out Profound Mysteries-level techniques for both the sword and saber.

His mastery of the Vicious Blood Saber Art, along with a few compatible ultimate techniques from the Sword Emperor, had already reached their peak at the Profound Gate level, only lacking more refinement. Zhao Changhe was confident that there were very few left below the Profound Mysteries who could give him a good fight.

Yet, he suspected that he still would not be able to defeat the versions of Yue Hongling or Chichi before they broke through.

The reason was simple: Yue Hongling and Chichi had deeply integrated their techniques into their essence and spirit, and their martial arts were a natural part of them. On the other hand, he had too many distractions and lacked such a deep level of integration and comprehension. He still treated his saber techniques as mere skills.

Moreover, he had not yet seamlessly integrated Tang Wanzhuang's martial arts with those of the Sword Emperor. The marks of forced combination were still evident, and it had yet to fully transform into his own unique style.

His breakthrough to the Profound Mysteries likely hinged on this: a profound understanding of his own martial arts.

Based on Huangfu Qing's explanation of Profound Mysteries manifestations, Zhao Changhe could see a clear progression within the Vicious Blood Saber Art, from the lower to higher levels. It all began with the intent within Scattering the Gods and Buddhas, cultivating a force that merged with one's martial spirit. When breaking through to the Profound Mysteries and truly assimilating No Man's Land, the resulting strike using Hell on Earth would likely bring about a manifestation of his martial path, one of a bloodthirsty demon.

This was where the value of a well-structured martial arts system could be seen; it lay far beyond simply picking up random techniques from here and there. It was less like struggling to climb a wall and more like having someone guide you up a well-built staircase. Despite having come across numerous figures on the Ranking of Heaven and the Ranking of Earth, and despite having seen numerous brilliant martial arts, Zhao Changhe still regarded the Vicious Blood Art and the Vicious Blood Saber Art as his foundational techniques. The cost of abandoning them was simply too high to bear.

In other words, to break through to the Profound Mysteries, he still needed to diligently work on his Vicious Blood Art and Vicious Blood Saber Art.

His thoughts wandered, revealing just how many things he had to deal with and how unclear the order of priorities was.

As his mind wandered, Zhao Changhe slowly flipped through the Atlas of Mountains and Rivers.

Most of it read like the mythical stories from the Classic of Mountains and Seas, but the records of the Ancient Spirit Tribe validated its reliability.

It was truly a treasure.

Even though many of the mountains and rivers within were unheard of today, it could serve as an atlas for ancient secret realms. Some entries even included detailed maps. Should he ever venture into a large secret realm, these maps would prove invaluable.

It seems that the ancient Black Tortoise was far more diligent than Lady Three... Being able to write down this level of detail on all of these various locations meant that they must have extensively explored the world. I wonder what this has to do with the will of Black Tortoise, though? Maybe this was actually something they acquired from someone they defeated in battle?

Considering that Black Tortoise treasured this atlas so much to leave it in a ring on an altar, this indicated that even in an era filled with gods and demons capable of flying at will, there were few who would meticulously survey every corner of the world. Thus, it would have been a vital resource even in the ancient era, let alone today.

Wait... It was placed on an altar...

A thought struck Zhao Changhe.

A sword bearing the stars, a book bearing the world's mountains and rivers. Placed in a storage ring, enshrined and worshiped...

There's a good chance that these don't belong to the Black Tortoise... but to the Night Emperor! Perhaps the Night Emperor ordered or commissioned Black Tortoise to make the atlas!

Lady Three mentioned that the Night Emperor had grand ambitions involving the stars in the sky, but he only completed the four idols.

Why did Vermillion Bird not know about this and had to ask Lady Three? Obviously, it was because the one responsible for this was Black Tortoise; thus Vermillion Bird was entirely unaware, while Lady Three knew bits and pieces. Each of their inheritances was different, and not every detail could be perfectly exchanged.

But even Lady Three did not know that Zhao Changhe had these items.

From this point of view, the sword represented the unfinished ambition of the Night Emperor, and the Atlas of Mountains and Rivers was created for someone to find the necessary materials for forging the sword.

It was quite possible that one of the pages of the Heavenly Tome was cataloged as a resource of the world. Since the Night Emperor did not have that page, he resorted to the painstaking method of creating this atlas... Yearning for the firmament above, overlooking the world below, that was the will of the Night Emperor.

Zhao Changhe turned to the final page while in deep thought.

There were a few lines clearly written on it: The four idols represent the four seasons, the four cardinal directions of the world, the foundation of heaven and earth, and the Dao. Yet beyond the four idols, are the minor stars not part of the sky? Beyond the mountains and rivers, are the sands not part of the earth? Beyond kings and nobility, are the commoners not part of humanity? The Dao of His Majesty is difficult to prove; perhaps this is the mistake.

The stars in the sky illuminate this dark night. There is neither sun nor moon; the king shall make his own.

Black Tortoise was tasked with surveying the mountains and rivers for the forging of a divine sword. Upon completion, it shall be called the Rivers of Stars.[1]

This was where the atlas originally ended.

However, there were some abrupt additions afterward, clearly incoherent with the previous text and added at a later time. The handwriting was noticeably more hurried and the writing style simpler, reflecting the writer's inner turmoil.

Is the Heavenly Dao dead? I can no longer complete my task... I leave these things here, hoping someone in the future, regardless of how many eras may pass, will come and finish it. My legacy lies in the seabed cave below; those fated may take it, those unfated should not enter. This place temporarily holds the Zhenwu[2] Sword Stone, which can aid in cleansing the body and forging the Supreme Sword Body.

The method of forging the sword is as follows...

Zhao Changhe sighed, finally understanding the whole story.

Essentially, Black Tortoise's inheritance was in a single place, divided into two levels. In the secret realm they visited, items meant for forging the Night Emperor's sword were enshrined, while the lower level originally led to his seabed grave.

After the collapse of the era, the two levels were separated due to the differing protections of their respective treasures. The inheritance in the tomb was likely obtained by Lady Three early on, which was how she had come to possess Black Tortoise's techniques and knowledge. The upper level, which enshrined the ring and gemstone, ended up in the Rocky Mountain. Lady Three had suspicions of where it was and wandered the area for years but could not find the entrance, the entrance only being discovered fatefully by Zhao Changhe and Yue Hongling.

During this separation process, part of the gem fell into the sea and was eventually acquired by the Sea Tribe in the Eastern Sea, which was then used to create the marine clay that the Wang Clan came to have. The Sea Tribe's influence subtly infiltrated the Wang Clan through the marine clay. It also became a clue that led Zhao Changhe to find the secret realm.

The gem was not actually called the Black Tortoise Gemstone as they assumed it was; it was called the Zhenwu Sword Stone. It was meant for cleansing the body and forging the Supreme Sword Body. Its original purpose was to be passed to the swordsmith, so they could forge a sword body to match the sword, making the completion of the sword worthwhile.

Yue Hongling absorbed its sword intent, but most of it went to Lady Three. Given Lady Three's focus on her snake whip martial arts, she likely would not pursue the Supreme Sword Body, whereas Yue Hongling might be more aligned with it.

According to the Heavenly Tome, it's supposed to lead up to the Supreme Dao Body[3]. I'm not sure if it's just a different name or if the sword body is just a part of the Dao Body, with further advancements possible. Perhaps Yue Hongling took its sword intent, while Lady Three took the Dao essence, and I benefited from its cleansing effects, which significantly improved my meridians.

It seems as if we fairly divided the gemstone's value.

Having inherited the legacy, partaken in the gem, taken the ring, and reviewed the atlas, should I now finish this sword?

Zhao Changhe felt a bit troubled. It was not that he could not fulfill this wish, but the forging method for the sword, upon a cursory glance, seemed exceedingly complex. The materials that were lacking were not many, as the primary form of the sword and the most intricate preliminary work were already done. What remained should not be too difficult. But integrating the essence of the stars and the mountains and rivers, was that even something an ordinary person could do?

Hm... wait... Zhao Changhe suddenly fell into contemplation.

"The stars in the sky illuminate this dark night. There is neither sun nor moon, the king shall make his own."

This will was very much like his own. He felt as if he was the unfinished sword itself, lacking in refinement.

In truth, there really was not much left to do. All these endeavors could be aligned to a singular purpose—seeking his own path to becoming a master and breaking through the door of the Profound Mysteries.

As he was in deep thought, there was a knock on the door. The voice of a young Daoist from the Yukun Gang called out, “Mister Zhao, Daoist Yuxu has responded. He asks you to go to Yuxu Palace to see him.”

### Chapter 342: Kunlun Yuxu

Zhao Changhe had so many things on his plate that he did not even feel like going at the moment. His main purpose for meeting Daoist Yuxu was to probe for clues about the Heavenly Tome, but he had no idea how to even go about it. He could not just ask outright, “Hey, do you have a page of the Heavenly Tome?” That was no different from stirring trouble and asking to get beaten to death.

Moreover, the Heavenly Tome was something the blind woman wanted. While he was interested in it, his desire for it was not that strong. There really was no point in trying to compete for a page of the Heavenly Tome against someone ranked fourth on the Ranking of Heaven. If he wanted to die, he didn’t need to go through all that trouble; he could just jump off a cliff.

However, he had already requested the meeting, and since the other party had agreed, backing out now would be disrespectful.

Zhao Changhe put away the unfinished sword and the atlas and began his ascent up the mountain.

Kunlun City was built along the mountains. Entering from the west led directly to Yuxu Peak. All the activities he had engaged in so far only took place on the peripheral peaks; the actual Yuxu Peak was off-limits to unauthorized individuals. According to Yang Qianyuan, only those whose identities had been verified and accepted by Daoist Yuxu were granted entry. Others, who either were unverified or preferred the convenience of the city, resided within the confines of the city.

Could Daoist Yuxu, the very same who shelters such a large group of evildoers, truly be that humble woodsman who sang with such great inner peace?

Zhao Changhe was unsure.

There was only one narrow path leading up the mountain, one that had probably been trodden by countless others.

Snow blanketed the surroundings, even covering the narrow path itself, indicating that no one had climbed the mountain for quite some time. Yet the little stream alongside it ran clear and unfrozen.

There were no guards. He walked for a long time without encountering a single soul.

No guards were needed. The deterrence of the figure ranked fourth on the Ranking of Heaven was enough. No one dared to enter without permission.

Zhao Changhe looked up at the mist-shrouded peak, which could not be observed from below, and continued his climb.

As he walked, his chaotic thoughts began to dissipate, and his mind became clearer. His steps became leisurely as well.

There was no need to rush, and overthinking things was pointless. It would do him better to slow down, take in the snowy sights of Kunlun, and observe the clouds of Yuxu.

He did not want to return one day and have Tang Wanzhuang ask him what Kunlun looked like only to be left speechless, unable to answer.

The woodsman's song from that day echoed faintly in his mind. Cloudy peaks, separating the shores of the mortal world; journeying and observing, within the flagon a vast world.

There was a slight coolness at his Baihui acupoint[1] on the top of his head, where external qi communicated with internal qi, transforming into warmth within his body and dispersing into the wind and snow. This cyclical process, characteristic of the ninth layer of the Profound Gate, involved the conversion of acquired qi into innate qi, and it was a cultivation experience he had yet to fully explore.

There was a slight pulsation at the center of his brow, a sense of impending insight that was elusive and indescribable. Trying to grasp it in detail revealed nothing tangible, yet it was clear that something was in fact there, waiting for him.

This was what it meant to be on the brink of breakthrough. It was the point at which you became constantly aware of the next realm's existence, knowing that with just that last push, you would be able to step into the next realm of cultivation.

The path of a master was a journey of seeking the Dao. It involved a comprehensive transformation and elevation of one's mind, techniques, and understanding of martial arts.

He was indeed just one step away.

Unknowingly, Zhao Changhe had already been climbing the mountain for four or five hours, from noon until sunset. He had climbed very high, yet the peak still seemed elusive. The clouds of the mountain seemed to envelop him, and looking back, the fog made the world below appear like the land of immortals.

At some point, he began to hear the faint sound of wood being chopped. Initially distant, it gradually grew closer. Each chop was rhythmic and resonant.

Zhao Changhe continued walking, unconsciously aligning his steps with the rhythm of the chopping. He noticed that the intervals between chops were perfectly consistent, as precise as a machine.

The clouds began to part, revealing several wood cabins ahead. The melted snow formed streams that flowed around the cabins and down the mountain.

From a distance, Zhao Changhe gazed at the cabins in the distance. Surrounded by clouds and mist, the cabins didn't seem like something built by human hands; rather, they seemed to have existed in harmony with Kunlun since the beginning of time.

Of course, this was an illusion. They were definitely built by man, but the man who built them had achieved such unity with nature that it made things seem otherwise.

Zhao Changhe's eyes finally settled on the large courtyard in the center of the cabins, where a pile of firewood lay seemingly haphazardly. An old woodsman calmly picked up a log, split it in half with a single strike, and tossed the pieces aside before grabbing another log.



Zhao Changhe just watched quietly, not disturbing him.

From start to finish, every movement of the woodsman seemed like a mechanical repetition of the previous one, yet there was no feeling of rigidity. Each chop flowed naturally as if the air itself moved with the swing. The ax was like the wind, the blade like snow, creating a harmonious beauty rather than robotic monotony.

However, the direction of the wind and snow were clearly not with his chopping, making it difficult to understand how he achieved such an effect.

Was it the ax that merged with the wind and snow? Or did the ax guide the wind and snow?

But the wind and snow remained unchanged.

Zhao Changhe took a long breath, closed his eyes, and replayed the actions of the woodsman in his mind. To his surprise, he felt a wave of dizziness.

The gap in their levels was too vast for him to even comprehend the other party's actions.

Thwack!

The woodsman split the last log and casually tossed it aside.

The split logs stacked perfectly, forming a neat, precise shape as if meticulously measured. The length, width, and height, were all exactly the same, forming a perfect cube.

Zhao Changhe did not need to measure it to know it was exact. It felt like the old man was either showing off or perhaps trying to demonstrate something. However, the gap between them really was just too wide, and even if it was a demonstration, it only added to the impression of showing off.

He finally sighed. "Old man, I've come to have a drink with you."

The old woodsman stood up and went inside. He smiled and said, "The snow will get heavier soon, come inside for a drink."

Zhao Changhe followed him into the nearby cabin. There was a stove burning inside, making it quite warm and cozy. A large vat of wine was warming on the stove. The old woodsman, seemingly oblivious to the heat, grabbed the vat and set it on the table with a thud, then said sternly, “You came at the wrong time. I could have quoted, ‘evening descends, so too heavy snow, care to enjoy a cup with me?’[2] But now it’s already snowing, and that line doesn’t fit anymore. It bothers me quite a bit.”

The corners of Zhao Changhe’s mouth twitched and his expression turned odd.

You’re the man ranked fourth in the world. Are these wood cabins what makes up Yuxu Palace?

The woodsman took out two large bowls, poured wine from the vat, and said, “Right, you should be the one treating me to a drink. How did it turn into me treating you?”

Zhao Changhe replied, “Why should I be the one treating you? I’m the guest here...”

“Without my advice on your inner fire, could you have handled the flames of Kunlun?”

“Uh...” Zhao Changhe conceded, “I should thank you for that, senior. But was I supposed to carry a jar of wine up the mountain?”

“Why not?”

Zhao Changhe thought for a moment. “I suppose I could. Next time, for sure.”

As they exchanged words, the two bowls of wine were filled just right. The woodsman set down the vat of wine, and raised his bowl for a toast. “It’s been a long time since anyone has shared a drink with this old man. Your visit is timely.”

Zhao Changhe asked, “Does Senior Thief Saint not come around?”

“He doesn’t like it here. Every time he comes, I can see him suppressing his urge to steal something. Unfortunately, he can’t really steal anything even if he wants to. These three cabins hold nothing but me, and he can’t stand it.”

Zhao Changhe could not help but ask, “It’s said that many villains come here. Is Yuxu Palace really an organization of evildoers? Why is it just you here?”

“If that were true, would you have dared to come here for a drink?”

“Why not? It’s not like I’m some saint either.”

The old woodsman said calmly, “Hah, the evildoers who entered this mountain, they naturally all ended up dead. If I don’t carefully evaluate them first, it would not be right to just let anyone in here to die, don’t you think?”

Zhao Changhe: “...”

So, the place that people think is a refuge for evildoers is actually a death trap for them?

“Drink up,” the old woodsman said, downing his bowl of wine with relish and wiping his mouth with satisfaction. “What I do here is not your concern. Asking too many questions won’t do you any good. You’re a young man who, seeing the cold wind and snow, was willing to offer an old woodsman a coat. I’m happy to share a drink with you, and that’s all there is to it. After this, go from whence you came. Your path to becoming a master is not here.”

#### Chapter 343: Night Conversation Over Wine

Zhao Changhe smiled and did not dwell on the old man’s words too much. He raised his bowl and drank all of the wine within, then exclaimed, “Woah, excellent wine! I’ve never had such fine fruit wine before.”

Yuxu was delighted and laughed heartily. “Of course, I picked the mountain fruits myself, used the best spring water, and brewed it with my own hands. I may not claim to be the best in everything, but when it comes to wine, no one can compare to me.”

Zhao Changhe said, “Can I take some with me? I just got a new gourd, and it’s empty.”

Yuxu waved his hand with a smile. “Help yourself... While you’re at it, take a jug and deliver it for me.”

“To whom?”

“Li Shentong. Ask him how he likes it and if he acknowledges it’s good.”

“...Alright. Let me first toast you, old man.”

Yuxu happily raised his bowl and drank. It was clear that he truly enjoyed having someone to share a few bowls of hot wine with in this snowy wood cabin.

Zhao Changhe enjoyed it, too.

Every great figure had their own story and pursuits.

Zhao Changhe felt that there had to be deep reasons as to why Yuxu chose to seclude himself here. It did not make sense for him to only be doing so to trick evildoers. His carefree attitude of living amid the clouds and moonlight, enjoying the days leisurely, did not seem like someone overly concerned with human good and evil.

Instead, his attitude suggested a stance of worldly matters not having anything to do with him.

It was as if he were saying, “Let the puppets play their part while I gaze at the peak of Kunlun.”

Moreover, the evildoers were not fools. If people kept disappearing, why did they naively believe they were being sheltered rather than being slaughtered? There had to be a reason they still believed that they were being sheltered.

However, Yuxu had stopped him from asking any questions right from the start. He was told not to ask, simply enjoy a drink, and then go on his own way.

Zhao Changhe truly did not pry further. There was no point in prying into others’ affairs. Instead, he asked about his own concerns: “Senior, you can see that I’m seeking the path to becoming a master?”

“How can I not?” Yuxu sipped his wine and smiled leisurely. “You climbed this mountain, listening to the wind and admiring the scenery. It was as if you weren’t here to visit me, but to experience Kunlun. Was that intentional?”

Zhao Changhe said, “To be honest, I did start out with the intention of visiting you, but the higher I climbed, the more I forgot about everything else.”

“That’s normal... Initially, you deliberately seek, but gradually it becomes natural. This applies to everything.”

“Yes, I’ve experienced that.”

“However, your foundation in the cultivation of vicious blood doesn’t seem to align with this path. It’s truly unusual.” Yuxu stroked his beard. “I’ve heard you have no master. Who taught you to slow down? Ver... The woman on Kun Ridge you were with cultivates fiercely like fire. She doesn’t seem like someone who would guide you this way.”

Just as Ye Wuzong had judged, those who could guess that it was Vermillion Bird would not want to expose it.

Yuxu was quick to adapt.

Zhao Changhe did not catch the shift and answered, “It was First Seat Tang.”

Yuxu nodded slightly. “Without her, your temperament would definitely not be what it is now.”

Zhao Changhe knew that his temperament had changed significantly, and the turning point was indeed his encounter with Tang Wanzhuang in Gusu. From then on, he slowed down, started to show more grace, and shed the brash and loud demeanor of his early bandit days.

Tang Wanzhuang had essentially tried to shape him into the crown prince she envisioned, but she indeed acted like a mentor or master.

In fact, he could not really say that he never had a master, it was just that he never formally acknowledged anyone as his master. Whether it was Yue Hongling, Tang Wanzhuang, or Huangfu

Qing's guidance a few days ago, they were all of extremely great significance to him. Each of them could be considered his master.

And at the moment, he was even seeking guidance from Daoist Yuxu.

Zhao Changhe thought for a moment and asked, "Senior, you mentioned that the woman I was with at Kun Ridge cultivates fiercely like fire, walking her own path. So, does that mean that seeking the Profound Mysteries does not necessarily require one to slow down?"

"Of course it doesn't," Yuxu replied. "Everyone's path is different. There's no rule that says you must become tranquil or calm. Li Shentong is even more impulsive than her, but he's doing just fine. Cui Wenjing and Wang Daoning are preoccupied with mundane affairs, yet they still managed to reach higher realms of cultivation. If you followed the vicious blood cultivation path of the Blood God Cult fervently, it would be just as feasible for you—perhaps it would be even easier for you to break through. Your current temperament, however, is at odds with the Vicious Blood Art, which might be causing you some confusion."

Zhao Changhe poured Yuxu more wine and humbly said, "But I feel like this approach has been beneficial and hasn't hindered me..."

"There's no doubt that it has its benefits," Yuxu said, savoring the wine as he did. "If you followed the cultivation path of the Vicious Blood Art, you might have been able to unlock your door to the Profound Mysteries more easily, but you would likely end up a violent, crazed killer, or at least a coarse and irritable person. Tang Wanzhuang must have great expectations for you and does not want to see you become such a figure. Likewise, if that were the case, you would not be sitting here drinking with me today. "

Zhao Changhe took a deep breath.

Yuxu continued, "That woman—and her superior, Venerable Vermillion Bird—are more typical examples. That woman walks the path of fire, pressing forward fiercely. She does not need to slow down, nor can she do so; instead, she must advance more courageously. However, if she encounters a test of inner demons, it could prove more dangerous to her than for others. She might suffer from her inner fire burning her, resulting in her being reduced to ashes. This is why it's considered a demonic path. In the demonic path, you progress quickly but with many latent risks."

Zhao Changhe's understanding of cultivation paths was improving with every word from Yuxu. After hearing this, he tried asking, "Earlier, when she faced the heart flame, you pointed out..."

Yuxu said lightly, “I’ve always known about the heart flame’s location. The rumors surrounding Fiery Kun Ridge can draw people from ten thousand li away to investigate. I live here, so how could I not have taken a look myself? I’m naturally aware of it. However, I’m not a practitioner of fire, so I can’t subdue it or move it. It is not out of generosity that I left it for others to take.”

Zhao Changhe nodded, understanding now. Huangfu Qing had mentioned that she could not move the heart flame, and it seemed like Yuxu was unable to move it either. It was only after she subdued it that it attached itself to her spiritual platform.

“Since I could not move it, my options were to either completely seal off that space to prevent it from harming people or to leave it there, letting it ignite inner fires and cause wicked people to turn on each other,” Yuxu said with a faint smile. “This is actually the origin of the earliest legends about Kunlun attracting evil people. That Huangfu girl is just one of the many evil people drawn to Kunlun...”

“...”

Inner fire ablaze, external manifestation as a demon. The evil of Kunlun was nothing more than this.

It turned out that Yuxu had already made this clear when they first met.

In others’ eyes, the Four Idols Cult was a demonic cult. However, Zhao Changhe had never thought of Huangfu Qing or Xia Chichi as demons. In fact, to him, they seemed more endearing with their little bouts of mischief. Lady Three was quite adorable to him as well. The only one he felt was a true witch was Vermillion Bird, who was truly not to be trifled with.

Of course, he did not say any of this. Instead, he poured more wine for Yuxu and asked, “In that case, why did you guide me to save her?”

Yuxu picked up his wine bowl and took a sip, then he replied, “Initially, I wanted to see how she burned herself to death. In fact, when I saw you rapidly approaching, I sang to draw your attention, thinking it had nothing to do with you and to dissuade an innocent person from risking their life.”

Zhao Changhe’s expression became awkward.

Sure enough, Yuxu's continued, "Upon meeting you, however, I realized that you were far from innocent. Essences of the Azure Dragon and the Black Tortoise were evident within you, along with a secret technique that resonates with the stars. I dare say not even the core members or protectors of the Four Idols Cult embody the cult as much as you do."

Zhao Changhe's eyes widened.

Was it not supposed to be impossible to discern another person's cultivation with just a look? Why does Daoist Yuxu seem to be able to see everything? And the aura is one thing, but even the secret techniques? Isn't that a bit too much?

As if sensing his thoughts, Yuxu clicked his tongue, "Don't bother wondering how I can see through all your peculiar techniques. The fact is, I then thought of letting you die along with her, but then you went and draped a coat over me."

He smiled slightly. "Whether one is a demon or not is not really the point. Some things can make even a demon become soft."

It was all about love.

"How wonderful!" When it all transpired, Yuxu did not care that someone considered demonic had broken through to a level comparable to his own, nor did he mind that the valuable heart flame had been taken away. He drank contentedly, laughing as he slapped the table. "In this wretched place, it's rare to witness such things. Truly rare!"

Zhao Changhe truly appreciated the mindset of this senior and saw him as a genuine senior. He raised his bowl in respect once again. "Another toast to you, senior."

"No more, no more." Yuxu waved his hand dismissively. "One should not be greedy."

Zhao Changhe took a big gulp himself. "Then... will you allow me to be a bit more greedy with questions?"

Yuxu laughed heartily. "You really are an interesting young man."



Zhao Changhe said, “When encountering a great senior such as yourself, it would be foolish not to ask about my confusions. You mentioned earlier that my current state of mind conflicts with the Vicious Blood Art, potentially causing me confusion. I’m now at the door of the Profound Mysteries, but still unable to enter. Is this due to the conflict you mentioned earlier?”

Yuxu was quite surprised. “We’ve strayed quite far from the original topic, yet you still remember it.”

Zhao Changhe sighed helplessly. “I have to do so. My mind is consumed with thoughts of the Profound Mysteries at the moment, and I must consider everything that might hinder my breakthrough.”

“Although the current state of your mind conflicts with the Vicious Blood Art, making breakthroughs more difficult, you are a lot more stable now. The chances of you going mad due to a backlash from the vicious blood qi are greatly reduced. You should know how long it’s been since you’ve last been troubled by vicious qi.”

“Yes.”

“When you practice demonic arts, while enjoying the initial speed of cultivation progression, you must be prepared for certain hurdles that are particularly deadly. Even Vermillion Bird faced risks when breaking through, so what more someone like you? Do you know why Xue Canghai has always been afraid to break through to the Profound Mysteries?”

Zhao Changhe took a deep breath. “I understand now. It seems it’s not my personal problem. Actually, with what you’ve said, I feel relieved. I’m happy as long as it’s not a mistake.”

“You have great opportunities and a commendable state of mind. You should continue to maintain it. Slow down a bit, and just let nature take its course,” said Yuxu, looking quite amazed. “You’ve already progressed incredibly quickly. Why are you in such a hurry? Is there something pressing you from behind, forcing you to speed up? Is it the three-year agreement?”

Zhao Changhe was struck by his words and thought it might be an opportunity to probe into other matters. He pointed a finger toward the sky and said, “Yes, there is something.”

The amiable demeanor of an elder that Yuxu had maintained all throughout the time they were drinking vanished in an instant, replaced by a look of extreme seriousness.

## Chapter 344: Return After Reaching the Ranking of Earth

In this world, everyone knew about the previous era and the existence of gods and demons, and they either sought their power or believed in them.

However, very few knew that some gods and demons were still alive.

Those who knew often had encountered them directly. Otherwise, who would believe someone claiming that beings survived the collapse of the era and still existed?

Once contact was made, various relationships naturally formed. Ignoring their existence and living independently became nearly impossible.

As people continued to cultivate and reach higher levels, they encountered numerous ancient connections that were impossible to sever. In fact, most people were inheritors of these ancient legacies.

Thus, they either opposed them or became their agents in the mortal realm, striving to help them fully revive.

The former described Xia Longyuan, while the latter described Bo'e, the Great Shaman of Tngri.

In a certain sense, Zhao Changhe could also be considered to be part of the latter group, though he harbored rebellious thoughts.

Yuxu looked at Zhao Changhe with a serious expression, trying to determine which category Zhao Changhe belonged to.

Based on Zhao Changhe's cultivation level, he should not have encountered such things yet. If he had been nurtured by gods or demons from a young age, his inheritances would not have been so fragmented. His fundamental cultivation technique, the Vicious Blood Art, did not align with that thought, and his techniques could only really be considered "adequate" at best.

How could an agent of gods or demons have such a mediocre upbringing?

Ah, his supporting internal art should be the Six Harmonies Art, which was created by Xia Longyuan after he unified the world. It's said that Zhao Changhe is a prince... But then why doesn't he know any of Xia Longyuan's other techniques?

Yuxu slowly asked, "Did Xia Longyuan send you to Kunlun?"

Zhao Changhe was taken aback for a moment, but then he laughed. "This has nothing to do with him."

Yuxu was silent for a moment and then asked, "What are your thoughts on them?"

Zhao Changhe replied, "Actually, I don't have strong opinions about them... If I were to put myself in their shoes, if I were living my life peacefully and suddenly faced a calamity that left me gravely injured and forced into hiding to survive, would it not be natural for me to seek revival?"

These words were sincere. Zhao Changhe resented the blind woman's deception, but he never felt that their desire to be revived was wrong. If she had not tricked him, he would not have used his beauty lotion to try and insult her.

Yuxu looked at him for a while and nodded. "There seems to be more to your thoughts. Continue."

Zhao Changhe continued, "If I use myself as an example again, assuming I was severely injured and hiding somewhere, if someone happened to pass by, I would hope that they would help me with things to ensure my revival. I would request assistance and offer ample rewards. If they agree, I would be eternally grateful. If they refuse, I wouldn't be able to force them."

Yuxu gradually smiled, "Well said. But what if the assistance you need is very troublesome and no one is willing to help?"

"Then I might resort to some deceitful means..." Zhao Changhe paused here, then laughed. "If they end up finding out and wanting to beat me up, I would accept that too."

"Beat you up..." Yuxu laughed heartily. "You're at the ninth layer of the Profound Gate, half a step into the Profound Mysteries. If that was just a normal person, how could he beat you up? Would you willingly sit there and let him beat you up?"

Zhao Changhe was silent.

Yuxu added, “Everyone in the world is just a normal person. After you wake up, you will look around and see that everything has been reduced to ruin. Will you continue to live your own life, or will you spread your Dao techniques widely? Or would you... feel that you can rule over the entire world?”

Zhao Changhe thought for a while, shook his head, and said, “It depends on the person. If it were me, I would just continue to live my own life, and cut down those I find displeasing.”

“That’s right, it depends on the individual. We can only hope they think the same way.” Yuxu’s expression was calm. “Unless there’s a devoted agent who has been striving for this all along... How many others, upon finding out, would be willing to entrust the future to someone else?”

Zhao Changhe finally nodded. “Yes. It seems irreconcilable.”

In the Sword Emperor’s tomb, whether it was Tang Wanzhuang, Sisi, or Zhao Changhe himself, there had been no need for discussion; the consensus had instantly been to keep it sealed.

Who would dare entrust the future to the whims of the revived Sword Emperor? The tomb was filled with a dense vicious qi. If he wished to unleash a massacre, who could resist?

It would be much better to simply let him lie in his tomb.

The Sword Emperor was right to want to revive, but everyone else not wanting him to revive was not wrong either.

Yuxu looked at him for a long time and suddenly said, “Seeing as you speak this way, it seems you aren’t an agent.”

Zhao Changhe said, “Of course I’m not.”

Yuxu said, “Since that’s the case, you should use their legacies sparingly.”

Zhao Changhe asked, “Is it because there would be a sense of indebtedness?”

“That’s one reason... But whether someone feels indebted or not also depends on the person,” said Yuxu lightly. “The key is, using their legacies or inheritances might lead to some strange consequences. Some simple skills or techniques are fine, but as for cultivation techniques and arts, it would be best to use them sparingly if you can, or create your own.”

At this, Yuxu laughed heartily. “It seems that the Blood God Cult’s inheritance suits you quite well. That ancient demon god likely wasn’t particularly powerful. If something goes wrong, dealing with it should not be too troublesome. Moreover, it’s highly probable that he’s truly dead. If he had any awareness, then knowing that he has a legacy in this world, the Blood God Cult would not be so pathetic...”

Zhao Changhe: “...”

“In my youth, I admired the Dao of the immortal palace[1] in ancient Kunlun, and thus took on the name Yuxu, seeing it to be passed down onto me just like how the surnames of the Cui and Wang Clans are passed down. In hindsight, it was ridiculous. There were no gods or demons in ancient times named Yuxu. It was all just a legend spoken of in tales.” Yuxu laughed again. “Now, I lie drunk in Kunlun, amidst the clouds and mountains. I am Yuxu, who dares say otherwise?”

Zhao Changhe cupped his fist in respect and said, “Indeed.”

In his heart, he began to piece things together. Yuxu had inherited the Daoist legacy, believing himself to follow the Dao, but some entities might not see it that way, thinking he followed their path instead.

Tensions thus emerged.

Yuxu was probably forced to do certain tasks for them, perhaps to repay some kind of debt, but it was highly likely that these tasks went against his own will. Instead of doing them himself, he tricked evildoers into it.

It was likely that not all the evildoers who entered the mountain died. Some of them could be working on certain tasks. Occasionally, some of them might leave the mountain and enter the city, which would explain why people believed that the evildoers were hiding and being protected in the mountain.

If this reasoning was correct, then it suggested that those evildoers were likely being driven to search for the Heavenly Tome.

The Heavenly Tome page was probably not in Yuxu's possession. Otherwise, the blind woman would have had no reason to send Zhao Changhe here to look for it. A Profound Gate martial artist seeking a page of the Heavenly Tome from the figure ranked fourth on the Ranking of Heaven? That was no different from a death wish. It would make much more sense if the page of the Heavenly Tome was hidden somewhere within one of the secret realms across the peak, and Yuxu had not obtained it himself.

Furthermore, Yuxu may not even want it. It was possible that it was a completely different entity that truly sought it, and Yuxu was merely cooperating perfunctorily. If he were to obtain it himself, it might instead prove to be a burden.

He simply wanted to sleep and drink.

Initially, Zhao Changhe thought that Xia Longyuan was a rebel, but later realized that he was more of a challenger instead.

Yuzu, however, was a true rebel, though his nature or Dao made his form of rebellion appear more passive.

This completely explained Yuxu's attitude to Zhao Changhe when he first arrived. It was why Yuxu told him not to ask about what he was doing in this place, and that it would not benefit him in the slightest. Instead, Yuxu urged him to leave and go where he needed to go.

Zhao Changhe suddenly asked, "If I want to have another drink with you, when would it be convenient?"

Yuxu looked at him for a while, then smiled. "When you reach the second layer of the Profound Mysteries and enter the Ranking of Earth. At that time, you may come again."

Zhao Changhe nodded. "Where should I go now?"

Yuxu's eyes bulged, and he almost threw his bowl at him. "If you wish to hone your Vicious Blood Art, where else should you go but Wushan?"

Zhao Changhe stood up and respectfully said, “Understood. I’ll come back to have a drink with you in the future, and I’ll bring the wine next time.”

#### Chapter 345: A Sincere Invitation

Night had fallen, and the mountain was blanketed in wind and snow.

Zhao Changhe did not receive an invitation to stay the night. He filled his gourd with wine, stashed another jug into his storage ring, and was then sent down the mountain.

Originally, Yuxu intended to keep him around for a bit longer to chat. He found himself becoming quite fond of the young man, but when the topic turned to the gods and demons, he knew that it would not be prudent to keep him there. If certain entities took notice, it could bring danger to Zhao Changhe.

When Zhao Changhe tactfully asked when it would be convenient to share another drink with him, it was actually just a subtle way of asking, “If you don’t want to find what they’re looking for, what are the prerequisites for me to come back and be able to take it away instead?”

So, while it seemed like a casual inquiry about when they could share another drink, Yuxu’s response, “When you reach the second layer of the Profound Mysteries and enter the Ranking of Earth,” was quite telling.

They mutually understood each other.

As long as one had enough strength, they could go wherever and get whatever they wanted.

Yuxu’s attitude was very interesting. His subtle hints implied that if Zhao Changhe were to come for that item in the future, Yuxu would make it easier for him. In fact, he could ask for it now, and Yuxu might even be willing to get rid of the hot potato. It was just that Yuxu felt Zhao Changhe was still too weak and would only get himself killed.

Zhao Changhe did not say more and descended the mountain.

This time, he did not leisurely stroll and enjoy the moonlit scenery. Instead, he used his movement art and sped down the mountain, arriving at a stable in the city in barely any time.

Snow-Treading Crow, well-groomed and shiny, stood in the stable looking at him.

Zhao Changhe smiled and patted his horse's head. "A lot has happened since we arrived here, but it hasn't been that long. Are you bored?"

Snow-Treading Crow neighed, seemingly in agreement.

Zhao Changhe laughed heartily, "Indeed, it's only been a few days and you're already restless. But I've gained a lot in these few days, hahaha."

Snow-Treading Crow would have been speechless if it could speak to begin with.

What kind of person boasts to his horse...

Zhao Changhe patted Snow-Treading Crow's head again. "There's just one last thing I have to do. After that, we'll have a good meal and head out. There's no need to rush out in the middle of the night."

Snow-Treading Crow stamped its hooves, as if saying, "Hurry up then."

The last thing he wanted to do was to find the blind woman.

This time, Zhao Changhe did not passively wait for the blind woman to come to him while he slept. Instead, he sat on the edge of the bed and spoke to the air, "If you want the page of the Heavenly Tome, there are two options. One, I can come back when I've made it onto the Ranking of Earth, and maybe Yuxu will help me then, but who knows when that will be. The other option, if you want it now, is for you to step in yourself, as I am simply not strong enough.

"I would never believe the ancient gods and demons to have been united. There must have been various factions competing against each other, and you're just one of them.

"Xia Longyuan has broken free. I don't know if you've chosen anyone else, but as it stands, it seems that I'm the only one extensively dealing with these matters."



After saying that, Zhao Changhe climbed into bed and said, “I’m going to sleep now. Choose which option you prefer—you can come and tell me about your choice. If you don’t show up, I’ll assume you’ve chosen the first option, and I will leave after breakfast.”

The night was silent, with nothing but the sound of the wind.

Zhao Changhe lay with his eyes closed, and just before drifting off, he wondered if this counted as “sincerely inviting her to dream together”?

It probably did count, and not only did it count, it actually worked.

In his dream, the blind woman stood by his bed, staring at him intently.

Zhao Changhe smiled and said, “I suddenly thought of something.”

The blind woman had been ready for his usual sarcastic remarks and had prepared to keep a straight face, but she still subconsciously asked, “What is it?”

Zhao Changhe said leisurely, “I just realized that out of everyone, you’re the one who has slept with me the most.”

The blind woman remained expressionless. “Why don’t you just say that I’m the lover of your dreams? After all, I’m the one you’ve dreamt of the most.”

“Ha, that’s true. You’ve been to Earth, so you’d naturally be a lot more quick-witted... You know, I actually feel a sense of familiarity talking to you, it’s like I’m chatting with a modern girl. How come I never noticed this before?”

The blind woman sneered. “I’ve always kept a so-called modern tone when talking to you. You just didn’t notice it because you had issues with me before. Now that you think you’ve got the upper hand, you’re feeling cocky.”

“That’s great, this cockiness feels just right. Now I understand how Xia Longyuan felt when he talked to me. Is this a local dialect?”

“Yes, of course, it’s a local dialect, the Zhao Family dialect.” The blind woman did not want to waste any more time speaking nonsense with him and said flatly, “Let’s get to the point.”

Zhao Changhe chuckled. “Since you’ve come into my dream after just a few words, it means that you want to find the Heavenly Tome now, right? What else is there to discuss?”

“Do you know where it is?”

“I don’t, but you do. You can clearly sense that the page of the Heavenly Tome is in Kunlun... But this place is complicated, so you sent me here to explore. Now, as your eyes and ears, I’ve seen everything I needed to see. You can find the exact location yourself. If you can’t find it, don’t blame me.”

“...” The blind woman held back her words for a while before finally saying, “The Heavenly Tome is the ultimate treasure.”

“Yeah, so what?”

“It’s also very useful to you. Have you failed to notice how much the golden foil has already benefited you?”

“Of course not.” Zhao Changhe smiled. “But are you trying to say that finding this page in Kunlun is my responsibility?”

“Is it not? Who in the world would not want it?”

“Yuxu.”

The blind man opened her mouth, then closed it again.

“Everyone has their own ambitions,” Zhao Changhe sighed. “Actually, I haven’t used the golden foil much recently. No matter how much I reference other people’s martial arts, it ultimately requires my own understanding. The Heavenly Tome can analyze the martial arts of others, but it can’t help me comprehend it. When I was weaker, it helped me considerably, but as I seek my own path, it may only serve to blind me.”

The blind woman said coldly, “Do you think you’re Xia Longyuan or Yuxu? They can think like that, but you’re just a child learning to speak, naive and egotistical.”

Zhao Changhe: “...A bit more modern, please.”

“You’re trying to sound smart and you’re making a fool of yourself.”

“Well, damn.”

“The Heavenly Tome is crucial for you. Whether it’s killing that witch and returning home, or breaking the limits of space-time to return home. Without the Heavenly Tome, you can do neither. Even Xia Longyuan has a page of the Heavenly Tome. Otherwise, how could he reach his current level?” the blind woman said calmly. “If you consider me a guide NPC for this world, I can just give you the main quest right now, which is to collect the Heavenly Tome. Everything else, whether it’s martial arts or heroism, are just conditions for seeking the Heavenly Tome.”

She paused, revealing a hint of mockery. “You also know that multiple factions are competing. What do you think the competition is centered around?”

“The Heavenly Tome.”

“Exactly.”

Zhao Changhe raised his head and thought for a while, then sighed softly, “In that way, they’re all tomes of troubled times.”

The blind woman said coldly, “Do you think I personally want the Heavenly Tome? You’re wrong. It makes no difference to me whose hands it’s in; I just want it to be gathered together. The one who truly needs it is you.”

Zhao Changhe glanced at her. “Maybe. Then let’s go... Point the way.”

The blind woman said, “Are you sure that Yuxu won’t stop you?”

“I’m not sure, but I have sixty to seventy percent confidence that he won’t. It’s a kind of tacit understanding,” said Zhao Changhe. “Are you wary of Yuxu?”

The blind man remained silent.

Zhao Changhe let out a light laugh.

The blind woman knew what he was laughing about.

Back when Xia Longyuan pointed to the sky and cursed, she remained silent, proving her weakness.

There were some existences who could confront Xia Longyuan. Her silence or inaction may not necessarily mean that she was weaker than those existences. It may just be that Xia Longyuan was not at odds with her, and so she was happy to sit back and watch the tigers fight. This applied to her with Yuxu as well. She may not fear Yuxu but rather the entity behind him.

Zhao Changhe did not dare to underestimate someone who could manipulate dimensions and bring him to this world. Such an ability was top-tier in every sense.

But still, he could not help but feel that her influence was not as lofty as he once thought.

Even she had things she feared.

The blind woman said irritably, “What are you laughing at? If you keep stalling, it’ll be dawn soon. Are you going or not?”

Zhao Changhe said, “I’ve never seen you while awake, only in the modern world, I guess. I need to know what form your intervention will take when the time comes.”

The blind woman shook her head slightly. “You don’t need to know. Just focus on your fight. Unless you encounter something beyond this world’s understanding, the evildoers in this mountain can’t pose much of a threat to you.”

She paused, her smile ambiguous between mockery and lament, “Your strength is roughly within the top hundred in this world.”

She lamented his rapid progress.

She mocked how weak this world was.

Zhao Changhe opened his eyes. It was still pitch black outside, indicating that the “sleep” he had lasted only about half an hour.

Now was the best time to enter the mountain, during the deepest part of the night before dawn.

#### Chapter 346: Kunlun within Kunlun

On the northwest side of Yuxu Peak, opposite the direction Zhao Changhe had previously taken up and down the mountain, there was a Daoist temple with a plaque above the gate that read “Yuxu Palace.”

There were not many buildings, and people were sparse. Yet, it barely matched the image of Yuxu Palace that people had in mind: a Daoist temple housing a group of evildoers.

This was the true Yuxu Palace, not the three wood cabins at the top where the old woodsman drank and chopped wood.

But Yuxu Palace also had no guards, because there was no need. Nobody dared to even approach the mountain, let alone the palace itself.

This time, Zhao Changhe had disguised himself with a yellow face and donned high-quality brocade robes. He stored his saber and gourd in his ring. His disguise finally made him look like someone else, enough so that Ye Wuzong would not scold him if he saw him. Next time, I’ll even add a five-willow beard.[1]

While stealing the Heavenly Tome, Yuxu might not intervene, but the evildoers searching for it certainly would. It would not do to be recognized as Zhao Changhe, as he would then have to face endless troubles. That was why he decided to let Wang Daozhong take the blame for now.

He quietly leaped over the wall, lightly touching down on the rooftops, and quickly reaching the rear courtyard.

The courtyard was dimly lit, with a few guards loitering outside what appeared to be a storage cave.

Despite their idleness, the fact that guards were stationed here while the main gate was unguarded indicated that this cave held something important.

Zhao Changhe swept past them like a gust of wind, snowflakes gently falling. The two guards felt a chill at the back of their necks simultaneously before collapsing to the ground.

In a swift, seamless motion, Zhao Changhe darted into the cave, his shadow barely perceptible.

Being at the ninth layer of the Profound Gate, and on the verge of unlocking the Profound Mysteries, he was already one of the top figures in the world, even though he still felt that his understanding and mastery of martial arts were lacking and not yet fully his own.

To the blind woman, Zhao Changhe seeking guidance from Vermillion Bird and Yuxu was of little significance. What he truly lacked was time and extensive combat experience.

With enough exposure and practice, his understanding would naturally deepen. In other words, in her perspective, there was no need to ask others.

For instance, now.

Tak!

Zhao Changhe leaped into the cave. As expected, it was not just a simple cave. After passing through a short passage, he emerged into a vast expanse, revealing a towering mountain peak similar to Yuxu Peak, majestic and reaching into the clouds.

It felt like a nesting doll—Kunlun within Kunlun.

This was a grand secret realm that already had its spatial barrier breached. Inside was an entire mountain, not just a small room, a cave, or a tomb as he had seen before.

The immense, familiar aura of the space felt almost like the Heavenly Dao, and Zhao Changhe felt his heart stir.

Even though he knew to expect a vast secret realm with many inhabitants, witnessing this nested space firsthand was still awe-inspiring. The mysteries of space were simply too fascinating.

The Tome of Troubled Times that occasionally flashed in the sky was also just a page of the Heavenly Tome. Yet it exuded a high level of prestige, and it was honored by all. In comparison, the golden foil in his hand felt lackluster. The disparity was not just due to its incomplete nature but also because of the strong seal imposed by the woman at the bottom of the Ancient Sword Lake. The incomplete page struggled to lift this seal, being made to sacrifice its completeness to ease the unsealing.

The page of the Heavenly Tome in this place appeared to be an unsealed Heavenly Dao ultimate treasure on par with the Tome of Troubled Times in the sky. With that being the case, it was then no wonder that it could sustain such a large space. Beside the mountain peak, there were still other areas within the space, the mountain peak simply being the core.

What form would it take?

Zhao Changhe looked up. At the peak, shrouded in mist, there was a faint golden light, illuminating the entire space. There was neither sun nor moon in this space; the golden light was the sole source of light, casting a sacred and ethereal glow over everything.

A long golden scroll seemed to float up in the sky, its detail obscured by the mist.

Thus, the people of Yuxu Palace have been hacking their way through thickets and other obstacles, tirelessly climbing toward the mountain peak for years, yet no one has ever reached the top. Countless lives have been lost here, consumed by the allure of the Heavenly Tome, which compelled everyone to stake their lives in pursuit.

Zhao Changhe carefully avoided areas with voices, choosing instead to climb up from paths less traveled and more treacherous.

After a short while, he began to hear the faint sound of a musical instrument, as if an illusory melody flowed through the mountains, like a clear stream reaching directly into his soul.

At first, the sound was soft and gentle, but gradually, it grew louder, transforming from a babbling brook into a rushing river, from the chirps of birds to the cries of cranes, swirling and echoing around him.

Suddenly, he felt his blood and qi surging within him. Upon closer inspection, he realized that his heartbeat had synchronized with the music, accelerating along with the melody. His blood and qi surged in harmony with the flowing sound.

He immediately understood the nature of this phenomenon.

The music was designed to manipulate his internal state, compelling his body to follow its rhythm. Those who failed to suppress it or remained unaware of it... perished.

Is it a test of the Heavenly Tome? Or is it the page's innate abilities manifesting, presenting these challenges to anyone who attempts to approach it?

It swiftly became clear to Zhao Changhe that the reason the evildoers had been stuck for years was precisely these obstacles preventing them from advancing further up the mountain.

Zhao Changhe took a deep breath and closed his eyes.

He had already learned some things about music... By analyzing the sound from a professional perspective, focusing solely on the technical aspects—the scales, the techniques, the essence of the music—he could detach himself from its emotional influence.

This was akin to a writer reading another's novel with a critical eye, losing the ability to become emotionally invested and instead only noticing the skill and proficiency of the writer in emulating the world or portraying the world of their mind.

With this mindset, the music no longer stirred his emotions. Instead, he found himself thinking, Damn, how is this music being made? It's incredible.

He felt this way because the music was not played by human hands but was a natural symphony.

If this could be incorporated into martial arts, it would probably become a powerful sonic attack technique. Maybe Tang Wanzhuang has similar techniques?



Does this page of the Heavenly Tome represent strange and unique techniques? But such techniques and arts should still fall within the realm of martial disciplines, and that should fall within the scope of the golden foil. That would be quite redundant, wouldn't it?

Without dwelling on it further, Zhao Changhe continued his stealthy ascent. Others had already explored to great heights, and he needed to catch up.

The music continued to echo around him, following him like an invisible force. It subtly exerted pressure, warning him not to lose focus. Diverting his attention even for a moment could cause his blood and qi to run amok, potentially leading to his body imploding or a descent into madness.

Amidst these conditions, the trees and rocks around him began to take on an eerie appearance.

Strange, why does it feel like I've seen the stones and trees ahead just a moment ago?

Zhao Changhe frowned slightly and reached out to peel off a small piece of bark from a nearby tree.

Continuing upward, it was not long before he encountered the same tree with the bark he had just peeled off.

An illusory maze.

Zhao Changhe was taken aback. He had only learned the basics of formations. He had previously wanted to study them more deeply, but someone had told him that it was better to focus on one thing rather than spreading himself too thin, so he had only been taught the basics.

Are the basics enough to break through this maze?

The musical test earlier did not require a profound knowledge of music, just a basic understanding. After all, these were likely just natural manifestations of the Heavenly Tome's will, not an intentional test set up to block him or others.

Zhao Changhe raised his head and studied the surroundings for a while, and then he looked down at his position, calculating for a long time before scratching his head.

Based on his limited knowledge, he should have fallen into the Returning[2] position, causing him to loop back repeatedly.

Theoretically, moving forward from the Returning position should lead to the escape position, allowing him to exit. However, he could not figure out how to interpret this correctly.

To the front left was the Leading position, and further ahead of the Leading position was the Innocence[3] position. According to his basic knowledge, stepping into Innocence should be the correct solution.

But before reaching Innocence, he had to go through Leading. And in this context, the term “leading” actually referred to leading troops, leading an army.[4]

There would be a battle!

Then I’ll fight. If the Heavenly Tome has a spirit, it wouldn’t just let people sneak through. It would force everyone onto the same narrow path, making them compete to see who’s most qualified.

Zhao Changhe decisively leaped to the front left.

Almost at the same time, a sword light slashed toward his abdomen from the side. “Where did this idiot come from? Leave him to me!”

#### Chapter 347: Flying Across the Sky

Zhao Changhe was mid-jump, yet he simply spread his arms and the speed of his fall mysteriously decreased, making him seem almost as if he was flapping his wings.

The sword light brushed past his feet.

Zhao Changhe sent a kick toward the opponent’s face, who raised his sword to block the attack.

With his toes touching the other party’s wrist, Zhao Changhe used the momentum to bounce off and land on a nearby pine tree. He then rebounded, forming his fingers into a sword, and thrust his hand at the other party’s eyes.

His use of this fluid and elegant sword art was simply masterful; anyone would be hard-pressed to see that his foundation was actually in saber arts.

Zhao Changhe was not doing this just to better impersonate Wang Daozhong. In fact, Zhao Changhe did not even know the Wang Clan's sword art. The main reason he previously avoided using sword arts, even though he had learned them, was that carrying an extra sword was too cumbersome.

But now he had a ring that could store items, one of said items being an unfinished sword. He also had a bellyful of sword arts that he had acquired from the Sword Emperor's legacy. Not employing a style that made use of both the sword and saber would be a waste of the opportunities he was granted.

His current opponent was not particularly strong, making him perfect for Zhao Changhe to practice sword arts.

This was also a process by which he could truly integrate and understand what he had learned. Learning many sword arts without actually using the sword could not lead to true comprehension. Was it truly possible to understand sword arts just by using a saber?

The opponent exclaimed, "Excellent sword arts, excellent movement arts! You're definitely not some unknown figure. Do you dare state your name?"

Zhao Changhe did not respond. As his opponent slashed horizontally at his fingers, Zhao Changhe's left palm redirected the sword's path upward, then he swiftly struck downward with two fingers, hitting his opponent's shoulder.

The other party's body went numb.

He was just thinking he was doomed, only to see Zhao Changhe casually snatch his sword and laugh loudly as he left, saying, "Stirring up trouble for no reason... The will of the Heavenly Tome is not for the likes of you to comprehend."

His voice lingered, but he had already disappeared.

Within a few moves, he had broken the maze and reached the Innocence position.

He played the role of a master perfectly. The blind woman, who was observing, found it amusing.

This guy had no idea how to make it through the formation just a moment ago, but now he's acting as if he knows everything.

The man, still immobilized by the acupoint strike, stood there awkwardly. He eventually shouted, "Someone come and help me!"

Before long, rustling sounds came from the surroundings. Someone hacked their way through the bushes nearby, panting. "Damn it, what kind of dogshit formation is this? I spent a year learning formations and still can't break out of it. This is clearly the innocence formation, so why can't I get out?"

The immobilized man helplessly said, "Release me from the acupoint seal first."

"Who did it?"

"A stranger... Very strong, possibly on the Ranking of Man."

"Did the Daoist bring in a newcomer from outside again? Tsk... There have been fewer and fewer people entering the mountain over the past years. I thought the competition was decreasing, but it seems like that old man is can't wait any longer."

"That's obvious. How many years has it been? Not a single one of us has even made it halfway up the mountain. How many more years do you think that old man has left? He can't afford to wait. I wouldn't be surprised if he soon tricks the entire city into coming here... Hey, can you unseal me first?"

"Oh..." The man nodded, then suddenly drew his saber and chopped off the immobilized man's head.

Blood spurted out like a fountain. The decapitated man died with a bewildered expression, not understanding why his comrade had killed him.

“Bah, you think you’re some kind of major character?” The killer sheathed his saber with disdain. “After so many years, you still don’t understand. You seriously think you’re helping that old Daoist find the treasure? If he could get it himself, he would have done so already. It’s just a matter of seeing who gets lucky enough to find it. Once someone gets it, he’ll just snatch it from them.”

Since it was all about luck, others were not comrades but competitors.

As for whether Daoist Yuxu would confiscate the treasure later on, that was a problem for the future. For now, reducing the number of competitors was the priority. Getting the treasure was hard enough without considering future issues.

What the killer did not know was that Zhao Changhe was actually standing nearby. Zhao Changhe tilted his head and watched the scene with interest.

So many evildoers, and none of them has even made it halfway up this mountain in all these years. The reason why Daoist Yuxu let them come for the Heavenly Tome was probably because he knew that there was no way they’d succeed.

The killer stood in thought for a moment, then clapped his hands. “I get it now. To reach the Innocence position from the Leading position, one must fight without regret. It’s not just about finding the right path. Does my kill count as winning a fight?”

He suddenly rushed to the Innocence position, and Zhao Changhe watched as the man ran past him, heading into the unknown.

The path he took will lead him down the mountain. The position behind Leading is Journey, meaning a journey in the wrong direction.

Zhao Changhe took a deep breath and continued ascending the mountain.

This place is truly fascinating. It’s not about testing your attainments in music or formations, or even your character. It’s about understanding nature... One should not get lost in the music or focus too much on solving formations. When the time is right, the solution will present itself to you.

No wonder this page of the Heavenly Tome is in Kunlun. It’s not about strange and unique techniques; it’s about the application of the Dao of nature, integrating all aspects of nature into martial arts.

At the moment, what I require in order to unlock the first layer of the Profound Mysteries is deeply related to how I connect myself with heaven and earth. It's almost as if this place was tailor-made for me.

Zhao Changhe walked up slowly, speaking to himself, "You didn't tell me about this page of the Heavenly Tome in Kunlun earlier; you waited until I came here. Is it because the timing was right, or because I needed this experience now?"

The blind woman's voice seemed to penetrate directly into Zhao Changhe's mind, "Simply follow what fate has in store, this is the way of nature. Whether it was at the bottom of the Ancient Sword Lake or the peak of Kunlun, you just happened to be there, so I told you. If I had sent you there or here, would it still count as fate?"

"So you're saying that I am fated with the Heavenly Tome?"

The blind woman was silent for a while, then slowly said, "Yes, you are."

Both of them simultaneously recalled the third card that Zhao Changhe had drawn in her fortune-telling shop.

She had never explained what it was, and he had never asked.

Zhao Changhe continued forward until he encountered a cliff. A stream flowed below, and the gap above measured over thirty meters, making it impossible to cross. Occasionally, birds flew over the chasm, their chirps blending with the tranquility of the mountain.

A man sat at the edge of the cliff, leisurely twisting a rope. He did not even glance at Zhao Changhe when the latter approached, remaining indifferent to his presence.

Zhao Changhe asked directly, "Why didn't anyone build a bridge?"

"You new here?" The man still did not raise his head, and his manner of speaking was rather wooden. "It's impossible to build a bridge. No matter how you do it, it will always break midway. Otherwise, it would have been built long ago, and you wouldn't be asking."

Zhao Changhe observed for a moment and slightly shook his head.

For those who had unlocked the Profound Mysteries, it was difficult to say, but for martial artists still at the Profound Gate, who could possibly leap over thirty meters using a movement art alone? Using a movement art to leap halfway over the chasm would be impressive enough; one that allowed the user to make it to the other side would no longer be a movement art but downright flying.

Zhao Changhe's movement arts, among those at the same level, were not top-tier but were decent. With nowhere to leverage from when leaping through the air, he could only jump twenty meters at most, which would already be quite the feat to the eyes of ordinary people.

If he had a rope like the one being twisted by this man, Zhao Changhe could see himself jumping halfway and then throwing the rope to wrap around a tree on the other side. It seemed possible, but it would take quite some time.

Zhao Changhe asked, "Why make your own rope? Why not buy one from the city?"

The man said impatiently, "Doesn't work. No idea why. Don't bother me."

Zhao Changhe smiled and said: "So even stolen ropes don't work?"

The man was stunned for a moment, then chuckled. "You're quite smart."

Zhao Changhe turned his head again and took a look, realizing that this test was about utilizing nature. A certain foundation in movement arts was required, but not one that was outrageous. Like the previous tests, it continued with the theme of having mastery over at least the basics. Using tools beyond one's abilities would not be recognized by the Heavenly Tome. Twisting a rope from available materials counted, but stolen ropes would not qualify as one's own use of nature.

An interesting test, indeed.

Zhao Changhe did not start making his own rope. He turned back once more, seemingly calculating something.

After a moment, he suddenly sprinted and leaped into the air.

The man twisting a rope was dumbfounded.

He's jumping without any tools? Is he suicidal?

Zhao Changhe indeed ran out of momentum midway and was about to fall. However, at that moment, he casually extended his foot and... stepped on the air!

He effortlessly took advantage of the support to spring forward.

The rope-twisting man suddenly realized what had happened and was shocked.

Just now, a crane had flown by, and the "newbie" had stepped on it. In this sense, he had truly utilized only what nature provided, without any artificiality.

Not only was he highly skilled, but he also had great deal of courage. How could he be certain that a crane would pass beneath his feet at just the right moment? What if it didn't? Or what if his calculations were off and he missed?

But there was no need to think about so many "what ifs." This man had ultimately managed to step on the crane and cross the gap. Yet instead of admiration, the rope-twisting man felt a surge of hostility and anger.

There is only one page! He can't be left alive!

Swoosh!

A needle, silent and deadly, flew toward Zhao Changhe's back!

Zhao Changhe effortlessly flicked his sword, deflecting the needle back.

The man never expected Zhao Changhe to be able to defend against the needle, as if he had eyes on the back of his head. Unfortunately for the man, the needle shot back and pierced his forehead.



With a crazed expression, he laughed maniacally. “You’ve run out of breath. You won’t make it. Let’s die together, hahaha...”

Zhao Changhe, having just stepped off the crane and still in mid-air, indeed found himself running out of momentum and beginning to fall once more. There was still a meter left between him and the other side.

He suddenly stretched out his palm and exerted a suction force through it.

Earlier, someone had thrown a rope across the chasm, securing it to a tree on the opposite side. The other end of the rope, lying on the ground, was swiftly pulled into his hand. He used it to leverage himself and made one final jump to land firmly on the opposite side, disappearing into the forest without even sparing a glance at the rope-twisting man.

On the opposite side, the man fell to the ground with regret in his eyes.

#### Chapter 348: The Path of Lightning

Zhao Changhe continued his rapid ascent, shaking his head.

It appeared that some entities, such as the blind woman, existed in the weakened state of a spirit body or a divine soul. They could not enter this space themselves and needed someone to bring the Heavenly Tome out for them. Yuxu cooperated rather passively, choosing not to come in person but instead tricking evildoers into doing the task for him. He could thus tell the ancient entity or entities that he could not be accused of not helping—after all, he organized so many people to work on the task! If they failed, he could not be faulted.

With that in mind, Zhao Changhe truly admired the persistence of these villains.

After so many years, they still fought against one another, ambushing each other, and dragging each other down. Not only did this leave them in a state far short of cooperation, but given the attributes of this page of the Heavenly Tome, he believed that the page abhorred such petty behavior. Despite all the time they had been in this space, they never reflected on why they could not even get past the halfway point and continued their ways.

Yuxu selected the right people for his goal, making things much easier for himself. He did not need to care about whether or not these people could obtain the Heavenly Tome. He chopped his firewood and drank his wine, incidentally removing some evil from the world in the process.

As he continued upward, another unusual scene presented itself before Zhao Changhe.

Although the space he was in clearly did not have wind or snow, he had gone through lush vegetation and waters. Yet, the cliff ahead was covered in ice and snow, with smooth ice surfaces and steep, vertical walls that were impossible to climb.

Only a few vines of varying lengths dangled from different spots, swaying in the wind. Based on the assessment style of this page of the Heavenly Tome, these vines likely provided a complete path to the top, and all one had to do was climb them and jump between them.

However, even if there was no one else around at the moment, Zhao Changhe did not dare to climb.

The gaps between the vines were very wide, and leaping from one vine to another was perilous and extremely prone to failure. This might have been manageable, given a high enough skill level in climbing. However, there was a chaotic wind that blew to and from all directions, making the vines sway around in an unpredictable manner.

It looks like this area's supposed to test my ability to observe wind patterns and determine the optimal path up the vines. Am I just taking some civil service exam?

Zhao Changhe felt that this test was somewhat forced. It looked like it involved utilizing and blending with nature but seemed "unnatural" and possibly misleading.

After carefully observing for some time, Zhao Changhe eventually came up with a plan.

He suddenly leaped up, grabbing the central vine, and climbed. When he reached the top of the vine he was on, he jumped to the nearest vine on the right, catching its end. Then he stopped climbing and let the wind sway him around gently.

When the wind blew to the far right, he suddenly leaped, using the momentum from swinging on the vine and soaring like an eagle to smoothly land on a distant protruding platform.

The icy cliff looked uniform at first glance. Only a close inspection would reveal this platform.

As it turned out, the platform faced a cave. Entering it, he found ascending stone steps leading directly to the top.

It turned out that the numerous vines were indeed just a distraction. Climbing them all the way up might work, but that also came with a high chance of failure.

In fact, this was not a test of observation and summary like a civil service exam. Observation was just the foundation. The training of the five senses was mainly so that one could make better observations.

Each challenge on the mountain was related to martial arts. After all, the Heavenly Dao of this world was martial arts. Every page of the Heavenly Tome was related to martial arts, and the page in this space simply highlighted the use of nature to better one's martial arts.

Sonic attacks, an illusory maze, movement arts... This stage's use of wind and the momentum one can manage on the vine echoes what Huangfu Qing once said about the difference between a blade moving against the wind and with the wind.

Zhao Changhe suddenly recalled Yuxu splitting wood. Yuxu had already reached the level where he could harness the wind and snow for his personal use.

Swoosh!

Zhao Changhe suddenly drew his sword.

Wind rushed into the cave, and his sword flowed with the wind, becoming almost invisible, as if it had merged with the wind.

Usually, he used the saber to invoke sword intent. At this moment, however, he used a sword to invoke saber intent. Using Hell on Earth, or perhaps a more advanced version of it that even he wasn't aware of, he completely integrated with the environment.

Clang!

The sword shattered a reflection on ice in the dark, and a shrill scream suddenly came from behind the stone steps as a figure attempted to flee.

Zhao Changhe flicked his finger lightly.

A shard of ice was propelled by his flick, piercing the fleeing man's back and exiting through his chest.

The man froze in place, looking down at the shard of ice protruding from his chest, and he said softly, "Who are you?"

Zhao Changhe said lightly, "Wang Daozhong of Langya."

Thud!

The body collapsed on the stone steps, rolling down and off the platform, falling off the cliff.

Zhao Changhe kept his sword and strode up the steps.

I've finally come to the right place. This is the thrill I was looking for after entering this "Valley of the Wicked." Moving alone, cutting down obstacles, and reigniting my dimmed martial spirit. The encounters in Kunlun City with Tian Lingzi and Tarantula were quite lacking.

As he walked, his Niwan Palace[1] began to pulsate again, signaling that he was about to break through.

Unexpectedly, this trip for the Heavenly Tome ended up as a journey where he integrated his martial arts comprehensively. Integrating with nature, integrating with heaven and earth, and forming his own martial dao.

Eyes, ears, body, and mind—all senses attuned; whether he used the sword or the saber, it felt natural; wind, snow, ice, and frost—all at his command.

Could I be considered a master now? No... not quite. I'm still a little shy of it.

This was because the way of nature was not his fundamental practice, his fundamental cultivation technique was the Vicious Blood Art.

This was the root of his inability to break through—he had understood many things that were different from what he practiced. Although they were correct, they fell just short of helping him break through.

According to Yuxu, this situation would indeed be a hindrance but was ultimately beneficial. Once his Vicious Blood Art was perfected, he would naturally break through, and he would break through without the aftereffects typical of demonic cultivation.

Does this count as turning a demonic cultivation technique into an orthodox cultivation technique? It doesn't matter—demonic or orthodox, it's just a cultivation technique. Cultivation techniques or cultivation arts don't determine anything.

Tchk!

Zhao Changhe stepped onto the top of the stone steps. Outside, there was no ice or snow, just the mountains. The summit was in sight, with golden light seemingly within reach.

The Heavenly Tome was near at hand.

A burly man stood not far away, hands clasped behind his back, looking up at the sky.

Hearing Zhao Changhe come out, the burly man indifferently: “Are you really brother Daozhong?”

Zhao Changhe smiled and said, “Names are just labels, they don't matter much. I don't care to know your name.”

The burly man chuckled and said, “But I can tell you.”

“Oh?”

“I'm Yan Que.”

Thirty-third on the Ranking of Earth, Blood Demon Hand Yan Que.

Coincidentally, he ranked slightly higher than Wang Daozhong, which explained his somewhat condescending attitude.

Zhao Changhe smiled and said nothing.

Is this the reason why Yuxu suggested that I return after making it onto the Ranking of Earth? Well, it's fine, I've got the blind woman with me this time.

Yan Que sighed. "I don't know why someone from an aristocratic family like you would come here. You must have made some agreement with Daoist Yuxu, but I won't pry. However, for you to reach this place within two hours of coming inside is truly impressive. It seems that your reputation isn't all for show."

This was why he had not bothered to verify if Zhao Changhe truly was Wang Daozhong. After all, even if he was not, he had to be a top-tier expert.

For so many years, no one had reached this point so quickly. Although these tests did not require absolute strength, they were extremely difficult for villains, given their vast differences in mindset and nature, not to mention their predisposition for backstabbing and schemes.

Moreover, everyone had weaknesses. Some stages might even require luck. For example, Yan Que had passed all the previous tests easily but had gotten stuck at the maze for over a year. Even after studying formations outside and returning, he could not solve it. Only after a coincidental fight did he realize that combat was the key, aligning with the Leading position. Who would have thought? If he had not fought that one time, he might still be going in circles until now. This was both luck and fate.

Yan Que believed that this "Wang Daozhong" had great fortune. Thus, he did not waste any time. "Brother Daozhong, how about we cooperate?"

Zhao Changhe asked, "To do what?"

Yan Que said, "Do you see the situation ahead?"

Zhao Changhe could see it.

It was a path of lightning.

There was lightning striking down all the way to the top of the mountain. It seemed that enduring the lightning strikes would allow one to reach the Heavenly Tome.

If it were just a short distance, it might be feasible to simply force one's way through. However, with the path stretching for several li, it was clearly impossible to simply walk through it.

The bridge test earlier clearly proved that bringing some kind of insulating materials from outside would not work. The Heavenly Tome would not acknowledge someone who made use of such means. One had to rely on the visible resources here or martial arts that could integrate with and influence the lightning.

Obviously, Yan Que could not do it, and neither could Zhao Changhe.

Yan Que said, "I have been stuck here for a year and three months, observing the situation every day. I have some ideas, but I lack a reliable helper."

Zhao Changhe asked, "There are plenty of villains around, how could you not find a helper?"

"They lack ability and luck, but you're different." Yan Que turned to face Zhao Changhe, his eyes gleaming. "I can sense that this golden page repels bloodthirsty individuals like me but may not reject someone of noble heritage such as yourself. Let's cooperate. I'll share my year's worth of insights to help you obtain the page. If we succeed, just let me have a copy. What do you say?"

Chapter 349: Thank You, Brother Yan

Zhao Changhe did not reply immediately. He observed the path of the lightning.

The martial artists of this world were unlikely to be knowledgeable of insulation and conductivity. Ancient people certainly were ignorant of such things, after all, and while martial artists who studied nature or the five elements might have some awareness of such concepts, someone like Blood Demon Hand Yan Que likely was not in that group. It was simply a wonder as to what ideas he might have come up with.

For example, wood was an insulator. However, as trees contained water, ancient people were much more likely to believe that trees were conductive. They probably never even entertained the thought that if the water in the tree was removed, it could be used to protect against lightning. At least, Yan Que probably would not think of such a method.

In fact, Zhao Changhe had already seen scattered pieces of wood far down the path, along with long-dead corpses. This showed that someone had tried using wood for protection but was electrocuted because the wood they used contained water. Seeing this, those who managed to reach this area later on were led to abandon the thought of using wood.

Nearby, there was a thick wooden board half-carved but discarded. It seemed that someone started carving but stopped after seeing the tragic fate of those who had gone before them.

The cracked and shattered wood on the road also indicates another problem. Conductivity alone might not be the only concern. It's likely that the lightning unleashes an impact force that easily shatters wood.

That means that martial arts needs to be integrated with the solution. For instance, I probably have to carve a thick wooden board and use true qi to evaporate the water within. While holding it up to protect myself, I'm supposed to use true qi to prevent the wood from breaking. This approach should allow me to cross the path.

Actually, there is a more direct method. If Dragon Bird is willing, then it can float above me and absorb the lightning for me. However, I doubt Dragon Bird would agree, and using an external divine artifact will probably not be acknowledged as a fair solution by the Heavenly Tome.

Cui Wenjing suggested that he tame Dragon Bird, but Zhao Changhe had still not attempted to do so. It was not because he did not want to, but he had no idea how. He could not just grab Dragon Bird and ask it, "Hey, will you accept me as your master?" Besides, he felt that he could not defeat Dragon Bird and would just end up being chased and attacked by it.

In short, this entire environment was naturally created by the Heavenly Tome. It was not some kind of sadistic trial designed to make people suffer, but simply a test. The problem had to be solvable given a decent foundation in martial arts and the right method. It could not be that difficult.

Zhao Changhe nonchalantly picked up the half-carved thick wooden board beside him, drew his sword and began carving it slowly. He said, "I think we can try using this..."



Yan Que sneered. "Someone already died using that. Go ahead if you want to try."

Zhao Changhe pretended to just notice and made himself look slightly embarrassed. "Ah... That does seem to be the case... Well, do you have any ideas?"

Yan Que pointed to a large stone slab nearby. "I'll cut that slab out from the mountain wall. Lifting it above our heads should protect us from lightning. But I only have a single life, so I don't dare to try it just like that."

Zhao Changhe chuckled. "You aren't expecting me to try it then, are you? Are you taking me for a fool, brother Yan?"

Yan Que shook his head and said, "I am not stupid. My point is, it would be much more stable if we did not have to hold it up with our hands. In other words, we can try supporting the slab up with true qi from a distance. But you and I both know that our individual strength is not enough to hold such a heavy slab with just true qi while traveling such a long distance."

Zhao Changhe understood. "So, you mean that we go together?"

"Exactly, that's why I said that I haven't got any helpers. Others aren't even able to project their true qi, let alone hold something like that up for such a long time," explained Yan Que. "This method should be stable. Are you willing to give it a try?"

This approach was indeed more stable. As long as they did not touch it with their hands, there would not be any major problems, and the stone slab would not be easily broken.

However, am I really supposed to just trust you and stand so close to you with both of my hands raised while I project my true qi? Even if I don't die from the lightning, I'd probably die at your hands first.

Zhao Changhe smiled slyly. "Brother Yan, do you trust me that much?"

Yan Que sighed and said. "Deceit and treachery among individuals often prevent things that can be accomplished... This golden page, whatever it is, is likely testing us, and I believe that it wants to test unity and cooperation, hence this final path."

Zhao Changhe almost laughed out loud. “That makes sense. You’re quite insightful.”

Yan Que said, “If I’m right, then the only solution is for the two of us to hold the slab together. This is likely what the page wants to see. So I suggest that we put aside our schemes and truly cooperate just this one time. What do you think?”

Zhao Changhe pondered for a moment, seemingly moved. “The rumors say that you’re cruel and ruthless. I never expected you to have such a broad mind.”

“Cruelty and ruthlessness do not conflict with one’s ability to cooperate. What conflicts with cooperation is deceit and dishonesty, and I believe that I don’t have such a reputation. And neither do you, brother Wang.”

“Indeed.” Zhao Changhe strapped the wooden board to his back and smiled. “Then let’s go.”

Yan Que looked curiously at the wooden board on his back, which resembled a turtle shell. “Brother Wang, I told you that thing is useless.”

“Better to be prepared,” Zhao Changhe said. He then bent down and easily lifted the stone slab, tossing it up and catching it with one hand. “Let’s go.”

Seeing Zhao Changhe handle the stone slab as if it were as light as the piece of wood on his back, Yan Que’s eyes flashed with surprise.

What incredible strength! Wang Daozhong truly is worthy of his reputation.

“You’re really straightforward. It’s a pleasure to have such a cooperative partner,” Yan Que said as he moved to stand at Zhao Changhe’s left side. Both of them extended their right hands, projecting their true qi to lift the stone slab slightly off the ground.

His choice of position was interesting. With both of them using their right hands to lift the slab, standing at Zhao Changhe’s left side placed him at a disadvantage. In this way, “Wang Daozhong” could still attack him with his left hand, and he would be harder for him to defend. It appeared that he wanted to alleviate Wang Daozhong’s doubts.

Zhao Changhe felt a sense of relief. “Brother Yan, you’re quite considerate. Alright, let’s go!”

The two of them moved together, carefully lifting the stone slab into the lightning-filled area.

Sure enough, the lightning struck the stone slab, but it did not reach underneath. The slab was as solid as Mount Tai.

However, Zhao Changhe found the lifting quite strenuous. His ability to project true qi was not as stable and long-lasting as Yan Que's. He was barely managing to keep up, relying on his endurance from the Six Harmonies Art. While this lifting did not test his strength, it was still exhausting.

On the bright side, this was some good training for his true qi projection, and it was valuable for increasing his mastery of the Crane Controlling Art.

Throughout his journey, Zhao Changhe felt like he was continuously training all of the techniques he'd learned. He even considered returning for further practice in the future...

Wait, if I acquire the page of the Heavenly Tome, won't I be able to train like this anytime? I mean, the golden page I have can basically give me a VR experience now. What if I unseal it further?

At this moment, he kept his spiritual sense up, keenly aware of Yan Que's every move beside him. Everything about Yan Que, down to the smallest detail, was clear as the moon's reflection on still water to him.

Yan Que really was behaving honestly, just walking slowly by his side.

Zhao Changhe smiled slightly, knowing when the real action would begin.

There's no way he's actually willing to share the page with me. When we reach the page, that's when he'll attack.

Zhao Changhe was not sure if the blind woman would act against Yan Que. She might only target the gods or demons, so it was likely that he would have to handle the humans himself.

He and Yan Que walked slowly alongside each other, each with his ulterior motives. The end of the path of lightning neared, with the mountain peak now just a dozen or so zhang away. The golden page floated in mid-air, exuding a captivating aura of the Heavenly Dao, vast and mysterious.

Yan Que's eyes narrowed, and Zhao Changhe could almost feel his muscles gradually tensing and his energy flow changing.

For someone like Yan Que, standing on the left or right made no difference at all.

Boom!

Zhao Changhe stepped forward, then suddenly retreated, leaving the stone slab's protection.

At that moment, a blood-red light shot out from Yan Que's left hand, aimed precisely where Zhao Changhe had been standing. By moving away, Zhao Changhe avoided the sneak attack.

In the next instant, Zhao Changhe raised the wooden board on his back to shield himself and quickly retreated back into the path of lightning.

Yan Que, whose sneak attack missed, was dumbfounded.

He had anticipated "Wang Daozhong" to make a move, but that move had to be rushing forward, not retreating.

He actually retreated into the path of lightning? Does he want to die?

With the wooden board held over his head, Zhao Changhe found that it indeed provided complete protection. He did not even need to prop it up with true qi; he could simply hold it up with his hands. True qi protected the board, and the lightning strikes did it no harm. His arrangement was as stable as a rock.

Yan Que was baffled. Why is his wooden board able to stop the lightning?

Pursuing Zhao Changhe was not an option. Yan Que knew that supporting the stone slab alone for such a long distance was beyond his capabilities. Otherwise, he would have long gone through the

path and would not have hesitated at the entrance for so long. Returning to chase Zhao Changhe and then coming back for the page would be too exhausting. Yan Que made a prompt decision and ignored his former “partner.” He rushed forward the last couple of zhang to grab the page.

Just as he was about to touch the page, Zhao Changhe, who Yan Que believed had retreated, abruptly turned back, throwing his sword straight at Yan Que’s back!

Yan Que was prepared, and his hand glowed with a blood-red light as he struck the sword.

The air suddenly froze for a moment.

Lightning struck the sword, sending electric currents straight through Yan Que’s hand and into his body.

Yan Que convulsed and screamed in pain, dropping the stone slab onto his own head with a thud.

Zhao Changhe dashed by like smoke, unleashing a Heavenly Sea-Suppressing Palm. He created a powerful blast of wind that struck Yan Que’s side from a distance.

Yan Que’s muscles were temporarily paralyzed by the lightning and he could not defend himself. He took the hit, spitting blood as he stumbled back.

Zhao Changhe snatched the golden page and ran back while holding the wooden board over his head. “Thank you, brother Yan. The assistance was much appreciated.”

## Chapter 350: I Am Wang Daozhong

Grabbing the Heavenly Tome page meant victory, and Zhao Changhe did not really dare try to kill Yan Que.

Despite Yan Que having been electrocuted and struck square by Zhao Changhe’s palm, he had only ended up spitting out some blood. Someone on the Ranking of Earth was still someone on the Ranking of Earth. Zhao Changhe felt that a fight to the death against Yan Que did not bode well for him, and it may simply lead to his own death.

Taking the Heavenly Tome would likely cause the environment to gradually return to normal, with areas like the path of lightning disappearing. He thus felt it best to take advantage of the lightning barrier while it still existed and escape while Yan Que was still unaware of his true identity.

Sure enough, Yan Que, blocked by the lightning, was unable to give chase. Zhao Changhe stuffed the page of the Heavenly Tome into his storage ring and fled down the mountain in a flash.

The environment had not changed yet, and having gone through the tests once, they were now much easier for him. It had taken him over two hours to climb the mountain, but descending took less than half an hour. He leaped over huge stretches of land and streams, frantically fleeing the secret realm. When he reached the outside world, the sun had just begun to rise.

The moment that Zhao Changhe saw the sunlight, his heart was suddenly seized with pain.

An invisible and intangible pressure enveloped his entire body, making it difficult for him to even breathe. He felt as if he were at the bottom of a deep ocean, where just the water pressure could crush a person into mush.

However, what he was experiencing was neither water pressure nor air pressure.

It was soul pressure!

A terrifying sound erupted in Zhao Changhe's mind, preventing any coherent thoughts from forming. There was only a single thing on his mind: I'm going to die.

In the next moment, the pressure was suddenly interrupted by something, accompanied by a strange explosion that then subsided.

Zhao Changhe panted as he looked up at the sky.

In his soul sea, there was a faint, astonished "Huh?"

An ancient voice echoed from a distant dimension into his mind. "It's actually you..."

The blind woman's cold snort followed, but she gave no reply.

“So, even you could no longer resist and have gotten involved personally. Ha... hahahaha... Interesting... But this shouldn’t be. Are you sure you won’t regret it? Hah...”

The voice gradually faded and disappeared, and Zhao Changhe could no longer see the blind woman.

However, the sky cleared after the rain, and the morning sun rose as if nothing had happened.

Zhao Changhe let out a long breath, drenched in cold sweat.

He had truly snatched food from a tiger’s mouth, facing off against someone on the Ranking of Earth, while the blind woman repelled an ancient being... But since it was for a page of the Heavenly Tome, it was all worth it.

Zhao Changhe did not stay for long. He quickly left the mountain and headed into the city. He headed straight to the stable where his horse was at, mounted it, and sped away. As for continuing his training, to hell with it...

In the distance, he seemed to see horse hooves raising dust toward Kunlun. Zhao Changhe reined in his horse and took a detour, heading southeast.

On Kunlun Peak, amidst morning mist, Yuxu stood at the cliff’s edge, gazing into the distance. It was unclear if he could see Zhao Changhe’s departing figure.

It seemed like a voice echoed in his soul sea, “Why not chase after him?”

“If you couldn’t stop him, what do you expect me to do?”

“That entity will not move against you.”

Yuxu leisurely took a sip from his wine gourd. “This page of the Heavenly Tome is very particular about fate, forcing it would be unwise.”

“That page of the Heavenly Tome would greatly benefit you.”

“My greatest benefit lies in resting here on Kunlun.”

“Utter foolishness!”

Yuxu chuckled. “I’ve done what you asked of me. If Yan Que and the others failed to acquire it, it’s because of their incompetence, not mine. Now that my debt is cleared, I am at peace. Whether my actions are wise or foolish is none of your concern now. Please leave.”

A wise man once concluded that everything could be boiled down to “none of my business” and “none of your business.” If you can master these two phrases, you become invincible.

For example, at this moment, Yuxu was perfectly making use of the latter.

The other party was silent for a while before saying faintly, “I hope you won’t regret this in the future.”

Yuxu repeated, “That’s none of your concern.”

Boom!

A muffled sound came from within the mountain. The voice that had been speaking with Yuxu disappeared, and Yuxu seemed to be too indifferent to even care about the changes within the mountain. He continued drinking his wine alone.

As the page of the Heavenly Tome had been taken out of the space, the anomalies within the space began to disappear gradually. The ice melted, the snow thawed, the lightning stopped, and the illusory maze vanished. The space transformed into a typical, albeit vast, secret realm.

Yan Que hid in the spot where the Heavenly Tome had been, trembling as he healed his wounds in a place where the lightning could not reach him. Only when the lightning stopped did he take a deep breath and angrily rush out of the secret realm. “Wang Daozhong! You and I cannot live under the same sky!”



Wang Daozhong was Zhao Changhe in disguise. This was something that had been made clear when Yang Qianyuan was captured at the headquarters of the Jinqian Gang. The main members of the Jinqian Gang were thus aware that the person parading around as Wang Daozhong was actually Zhao Changhe. However, apart from them, the other forces did not know that the Wang Daozhong who had appeared at the Jinqian Gang and the Zhao Changhe who had appeared at the Yukun Gang were the same person. These two gangs were clearly enemies, and most people would not associate the two in any way.

Yan Que inquired with various forces in the east of the city and learned that Wang Daozhong had indeed appeared at the Jinqian Gang.

As for the informed members of the Jinqian Gang, after being heavily attacked by Tian Lingzi and losing many strong members, the gang had fallen into decline. While Zhao Changhe was dealing with matters involving Huangfu Qing and Xia Chichi, Chen One had already started absorbing the remnants of the Jinqian Gang. By today, they had all already been brought under his control. When Zhao Changhe handed over the affairs involving the secret realms to Chen One, he asked him to prevent the Jinqian Gang from revealing his identity.

So when Yan Que went to ask the Jinqian Gang, the answer that he got was that Wang Daozhong had indeed appeared and had even killed their then-leader Yang Qianyuan.

But finding this Wang Daozhong was an entirely different matter as he seemed to have vanished.

While Yan Que furiously searched throughout the city for any news or information on Wang Daozhong, a lone rider entered the city from the east of Kunlun and stopped near the inn where Zhao Changhe stayed. The rider looked around curiously. "Heh, this city actually has an inn."

The inn had originally been the property of the Jinqian Gang. Now, Chen One had assigned some of the older members of the Jinqian Gang to manage it. Seeing a potential customer, someone immediately greeted him with a smile, "Would you like to stay at our inn, sir?"

"I might stay for a while," replied the man as he got off his horse. The man then asked, "Have you heard of Zhao Changhe?"

The heart of the person who came to greet the potential customer skipped a beat. They were now under Chen One's command, and Chen One had instructed them not to disclose anything about Zhao Changhe. Thus, how could he dare speak carelessly? The man quickly replied, "I've never heard of him..."

The man pondered for a moment, then shook his head and said, "Forget it. How do I get to Yuxu Peak?"

The Jinqian Gang member instinctively bent down and cautiously replied, "Yuxu Peak is just west of the city, into the mountains... May I ask who you are?"

The man said proudly, "I am Wang Daozhong of Langya. I'm here to visit Kunlun. You may announce my arrival."

The members of the Jinqian Gang exchanged glances, their expressions turning wary and unfriendly.

Do you think we're stupid? We were just deceived, and now you come to us claiming to be Wang Daozhong? Is everyone claiming to be Wang Daozhong now?

They were more experienced now. They believed that a true member of the Wang Clan of Langya would travel with a grand entourage. A lone rider claiming to be Wang Daozhong was likely a fraud, just like Zhao Changhe from before.

The members of the Jinqian Gang exchanged subtle glances. They then discreetly took the man's horse, smiling as they said, "Mister Wang, please rest here first. We will send someone to announce your arrival."

Wang Daozhong said casually, "Make sure my horse is well fed."

"Of course." One of the members secretly poured a large amount of croton seeds into the horse's feed.

They laced Wang Daozhong's wine and food with knockout drugs, while someone else quickly went to notify Chen One and Ye Wuzong, just in case the person who had come really was Wang Daozhong.

Wang Daozhong, being indeed himself, was unaffected by ordinary knockout drugs and simply finished his meal as if they hadn't just tried to knock him out and rob him. "Innkeeper, the bill—"

“Wang Daozhong is here?! Where is he?!” rang out a shout from the distance.

A large man, surrounded by a blood-red aura, rushed down the street. “Wang Daozhong, prepare to die!”

The ferocious Blood Demon Hand struck from a distance, and Wang Daozhong, puzzled, met the attack with his palm.

Boom!

This clash proved both sides were evenly matched, and both were momentarily stunned.

“Ah, the Heavenly Sea-Suppressing Palm. Good!” Yan Que’s expression was maniacal. “Take another palm from me!”

“Wait!” Wang Daozhong was bewildered. “Are you Blood Demon Hand Yan Que? I’ve never met you...”

“You may not have met me, but I recognize your palm art! Don’t think that you can deceive me just by changing your appearance! Die!”

And so, a battle between the figures ranked thirty-third and thirty-fifth on the Ranking of Earth erupted in the east of Kunlun City. In just a few exchanges, the inn collapsed.

The members of the Jinqian Gang, unperturbed by the inn’s destruction, watched in amazement.

A duel between experts on the Ranking of Earth! How many in the world are fortunate enough to witness such a sight even once in their life? ...Hey, wait, if he can fight Blood Demon Hand evenly, does that mean that he really is Wang Daozhong? Fuck, did I just try to poison Wang Daozhong?!

The members of the Jinqian Gang exchanged glances, sensing that the battle was reaching a conclusion.

Yan Que, after all, was injured and had not fully recovered, so he basically had no chance of taking down Wang Daozhong. Meanwhile, Wang Daozhong, uninterested in this nonsensical fight he was

suddenly faced with, forced Yan Que to retreat with a palm and quickly mounted his horse, rushing toward Yuxu Peak in the west of the city.

However, unlike before, Yuxu Peak was now guarded. Perhaps Yuxu deliberately did not want to see anyone from the Wang Clan.

Two burly men stood at the mountain path entrance, and they raised their hands to stop Wang Daozhong. "Halt!"

Wang Daozhong said, "I am Wang Daozhong of Langya. I've come to discuss something with Daoist Yuxu of Kunlun."

One of the guards said, "Please show your identification."

Wang Daozhong reached into his robes, and his expression suddenly froze.

His money, identification papers, and identification token were all gone.

When did I lose them?

Was it during the fight? Or was it that old man who walked past me while I was eating? But that old man never even touched me...

Seeing his expression, the guards sneered. One of them said, "You've got some guts pretending to be from the Wang Clan of Langya. I wonder how they deal with impersonators. In any case, since you don't actually seem to be from the Wang Clan, please go back."

Furious and anxious, Wang Daozhong was about to say something when Yan Que caught up from behind. "Help me take that guy down, and I'll reward you well!"

Yan Que was fairly reputable in Kunlun. Without hesitation, the guards drew their weapons and charged at Wang Daozhong

What had been a duel just now turned into a brawl. Knowing that he could not win in this situation, Wang Daozhong thought it was absurd to enter the city. He could not understand what had gone

wrong with everyone here. He swiftly decided that it was best for him to leave first and sort things out.

As Yan Que's palm strike approached, Wang Daozhong deflected the guards' swords and spurred his horse to flee to the side.

He had not gotten far when his horse suddenly collapsed to the ground, nearly throwing him to the ground.

The croton seeds from the inn had taken effect.

Fortunately, Wang Daozhong was a genuine expert and was able to react in time. He leaped into the air, avoiding a disgraceful fall.

Looking back at the approaching Yan Que and his beloved horse, which was foaming at the mouth on the ground, Wang Daozhong felt a mix of anger and confusion. He felt as if he were in some kind of absurd dream.

I only came here to hunt down Zhao Changhe... Why is everyone in this place crazy?