

The Eternal 101

Chapter 101: Beastmaster

His profession was that the extremely rare beastmaster, and he spent most of his time on how to control demon beasts. After years of hard work, he was finally able to barely control this Darkthunder, a fifth-tier demon beast. And yet, a boy who was only a warrior had just announced aloud that he would deal with it. That notion was both funny and annoying for him.

Even a tame fifth-tier demon beast was equivalent to a Martial King of the Five Elements Realm, not to mention all demon beasts were savage and had mighty physical strength.

But, Ji Meng did not find it funny. According to him, Yunxiao would never be wrong. He drew his soft sword, and with a cry of "Unseal!", the weapon transformed into a long snake that darted toward Xu Pinghong.

Knowing that his opponent was a four-stars Martial Lord, Ji Meng did not dare to be careless, so he fought with all his might and trapped the man in a fierce battle. Meanwhile, Yunxiao walked smilingly toward the Darkthunder.

Although demon beasts had no intelligence, they had keen intuition that no human being could compare with. The beast immediately sensed that Yunxiao was approaching with a bad intention. So, it stood up, staring at him warily and looking as if it would pounce on him at any time.

"Hey, it's alright." Yunxiao began to sing softly.

My child, my child... why are you so bad?

Bullying, cheating... how can you do that?

Learn to be good... learn to be loving.

Love is in your heart... filling your life with warmth.

Be good, be good, and come home soon.

My arms are always ready to embrace you.

My child, repent with a sincere heart...[1]

“Roar!”

The Darkthunder could not stand it anymore. As it did not know how to vomit, it roared to express its anger and sick feeling toward the song. However, as soon as it had finished roaring, its big eyes turned dull.

Yunxiao’s pupils had turned into blood-red crescents, and there was a look of unspeakable evilness on his face. “Come in now, baby...” he murmured softly.

The Darkthunder shuddered as a feeling that came from the depths of its soul made it tremble, and in the next instant, it discovered that the sky had totally changed: it was now under a clear, cloudless sky.

At some point, Yunxiao, who was standing in front of it, was now sitting cross-legged far away. While smiling, he stood up and walked toward it, “Don’t be afraid, baby! This is the interior of the Divine Realm Tablet, and I’ve only pulled one of your soul and one of your spirit in.”

Relying on the bloodthirsty power and mighty flesh, demon beasts were much stronger than human beings of the same level. But, their only weakness was that their divine sense was extremely weak, and they did not have intelligence. Therefore, once they met experts like Yunxiao, who were good at soul attacks, they would always be in a passive position.

The Darkthunder did not understand Yunxiao’s words, but instinctively felt a little fear. Moreover, the golden texts that constantly flashed in the sky made it tremble with a rush of anxiety rising from the bottom of its heart, and filled it with dread and restlessness.

A bloodthirsty instinct that came from the ancient bloodline was immediately triggered by the powerful pressure. The beast's eyes turned red, and it pounced on Yunxiao with a roar.

Seeing the attack, Yunxiao's soul-form turned into streams of golden light and vanished. But, he appeared in the sky in the next instant, with the same faint smile on his face.

They were in the Divine Realm Tablet, and with the nourishment of the Great Expansion Divine Technique, Yunxiao's soul was several times stronger than when he was outside. So, even if an alchemist who was a few tiers higher than him came here in soul-form, he would not be his match.

He knew about beastmasters. They usually controlled demon beasts through some assistive mystic equipment and various mystic arts. The bell hanging around the Darkthunder's neck was one such assistive mystic equipment.

The reason Yunxiao pulled it into Divine Realm Tablet was that he wanted to subdue it with his powerful soul power.

Outside, Xu Pinghong was startled. He saw his mount roar and then lay down on its belly there without moving. Meanwhile, the boy warrior also sat cross-legged down, staring into its eyes, which were filled with a dull look.

"Darkie! Darkie!" Xu Pinghong called aloud, but it was useless. The beast seemed to be taken aback slightly at the sound of his voice, but then it quickly turned back to that dull and blank look.

That was when Xu Pinghong started to panic, his heart filled with horror.

According to the standard of the arts of beastmaster, the Darkthunder was eighty percent under his control after all the training. It was almost impossible for it to betray him. However, it just turned a deaf ear to him, even though he had called it several times with the mystic art. This instantly filled him with panic and anger.

It had cost him all his resources, time, and efforts to cultivate this fifth-tier demon beast. It was almost equivalent to his strongest fighting strength and trump card. Even then, he thought of the boy's words, and he did not find them funny anymore.

He wished he could rush over and kill the boy immediately, but his opponent, a two-stars Martial Lord, fought fiercer and fiercer as the battle progressed. His cultivation base was two stars higher, but not only did he fail to defeat the other, but he was constantly faced with danger. As a result, he was getting impatient and angrier.

“Bast*rd! Green Thunder!”

In a fit of rage, he took out a pair of metal hoops and put them together. Immediately, streaks of lightning flashed and bolted out of them, and with the power of thunder, he smashed them down on his opponent.

Ji Meng was not panicked or nervous; his mind was as calm as water. Although he was only a two-stars Martial Lord, his understanding of the martial essence was far greater than his opponent’s. As long as he met the attack calmly, he would definitely win in the end.

“Peach Blossom Sword Intent!”

He made an upward cut with his sword. With that, a tiny seed emerged in the air and sprouted, instantly blooming into a huge peach flower. Numerous shafts of golden light broke out of it, completely enveloping the thunderous attack unleashed by Xu Pinghong.

“Saying that I’m crazy, others just laugh at me;

I laugh at others for the Truth they cannot see.

The emperors’ mausoleums are nowhere to be found;

With no flowers, no wine, the land’d been turned into farms!” [2]

A painting scroll of peach blossom and flowing water unfolded under his sword; it seemed that he was now standing under a peach blossom grove, singing aloud and drinking to his heart’s content. His sword danced faster and faster, and the more he swung it, the more unrestrained he seemed.

Thousands of peach flowers bloomed around him, and soon, they completely flooded Xu Pinghong.

“Impossible!” Xu Pinghong growled. “Bast*rd! How can you beat me!”

But, the cruel reality immediately despaired him, and he shouted frantically at the Darkthunder, “Darkie, Darkie! Help me!”

It was worse, because the beast did not even move slightly this time, as if it had not heard his voice at all. Xu Pinghong’s heart sank. Not daring to fight again, he hurriedly freed himself and was about to flee.

“Trying to run away from me?” Ji Meng sneered as the scene of Yunxiao conjuring seven lotus flowers with one sword strike in Feifeng came back to him, and he shouted, “The Song of Blue Lotus Sword!”

His soft sword swept out through the air. However, what bloomed in the sky were not blue lotus flowers, but peach flowers. And yet, they were all conjured with the sword intent of the Song of Blue Lotus Sword.

Seven huge peach flowers emerged once again in the void, and this time, they were much more vivid than in the town. A breeze blew gently over as the flowers bloomed and faded, and thousands of pink petals fell from the sky.

Xu Pinghong was stunned, watching in horror as the petals fell from the sky. He could not bear it any longer and shouted with all his strength, “Uncle-Master, help me!”

His voice shook the sky and rang directly into Mount Phoenix.

“AHHH!”

But unfortunately, the peach blossoms had already fallen. Xu Pinghong gave a miserable shriek as he died under thousands of peach flowers.

Ji Meng glanced at Yunxiao in the distance. He did not dare to disturb him, and besides, he suddenly felt a faint sensation of restlessness in his body, which filled him with wild joy and made him quickly sit down to meditate. It was the sign of breaking through.

As time went by, the Primordial Qi in him finally broke through the bottleneck. He was finally a three-stars Martial Lord! He observed the flow of Primordial Qi in his body in disbelief while a feeling of excitement washed him over.

A month ago, he was only a seven-stars Great Martial Master, and his biggest dream in life was to become a Martial Lord someday. Little did he know that after only a month with Yunxiao, he had broken through six stars and become a three-stars Martial Lord!

He opened his eyes slightly, and was shocked to find that Yunxiao was standing quietly aside, staring at him with a smile.

“Young Master Yun!” he said, somewhat moved.

“Not bad!” Yunxiao praised, “The sword strike just now did have some flavor of the Song of Blue Lotus Sword, but it is far from close. Nevertheless, with your current understanding of martial arts, it is more than enough for you to become a three-stars Martial Lord.”

Ji Meng’s heart was filled with gratitude, but the words got stuck in his throat. Suddenly, he saw the Darkthunder standing beside them, which gave him a pause. “Young Master Yun, this...”

While smiling, Yunxiao patted the beast’s head and said, “Darkie is our friend now.”

As if to prove his words, the Darkthunder twisted its body and rubbed its head against Yunxiao’s palm, putting on the look of a tamed pet.

“Ugh!” Ji Meng’s jaw almost dropped to the ground, somewhat at a loss. He could clearly feel the aura emanating from the beast, and he knew it was as strong as a Martial King. And yet, it was behaving like a kitten now.

He was once again rendered speechless by Yunxiao's divine abilities.

"Let's go! With the help of Darkie now, it will be easier for us to rush into the mountain!" Yunxiao patted the beast on the back.

All of a sudden, a fierce attack came shooting down from the mountain, smashing and crushing all the trees and rocks along the way. Shockingly, a vacuum trace was formed under the impact, and the attack was pointing directly at Yunxiao and Ji Meng.

"Move away!" Yunxiao cried out. The two men and a beast immediately jumped up into the air and then fell back somewhere far away, staring alarmingly at the figures that gradually emerged in the mountain.

Sun Xiumei still leaned gently against Li Wenshi's shoulder as she looked affectionately at Yunxiao and Ji Meng. Her eyes flashed with a trace of surprise as she said, "How did you subdue Senior Brother Xu's little lion?"

Li Wenshi glanced at the two men with a cold face. "I thought some big mice had broken in. It turns out only a three-stars Martial Lord and a nine-stars warrior. Rubbish!" He scoffed disdainfully. "Since Senior Brother Xu couldn't handle ants of these levels, he deserved to die!"

Chapter 102: Two Martial Kings

Yunxiao was taken aback. Somewhat speechless, he said, "You must be the fellow disciple of that guy with the lion, right? You even said the same thing. Is your name rubbish as well? And are you from the Rubbish Sect? Well, I've never heard of that before."

Li Wenshi's face flickered as he bellowed, "You're digging your own grave, boy! Junior Sister, trap that beast! I'll come and help you deal with it once I've killed these two mice! I heard the Darkthunder's blood is a great tonic. Our cultivation base will surely increase significantly after we've consumed it!"

With a shy smile, Sun Xiumei darted through the woods as swiftly as a swallow, heading toward the Darkthunder. "I knew you have been waiting to taste the beast's blood for quite some time," she chuckled. "Now that Senior Brother Xu is dead, we can finally get what we want."

Sensing the waves of killing intent coming at it, the beast flew into a rage. Without waiting for Yunxiao's order, it roared and rushed at Sun Xiumei, its body flashing with lightning.

Ji Meng's eyes lit up. The lightning was exactly the same as the one Xu Pinghong had used. 'He must be taken it from the Darkthunder, but his is much weaker than the beast.'

Placing each step on a different tree branch, Sun Xiumei heightened her vigilance. The Darkthunder's strength was so strong that even she did not dare to underestimate it. She raised both arms over her shoulders, and rings of blue water vapor began to rise from her. Then, with a loud cry, she pushed her hands down. "Aqua hula hoops!"

Hoops kept flying out of her body and grew larger and larger in the air, trapping the Darkthunder.

"Shrink!"

She gave a light shout, and at that the huge hula hoops shrank, binding tightly around the beast. There was a hint of joy in her eyes, and she laughed. "A demon beast is always a demon beast. It is so easy to catch!"

The Darkthunder seemed to be unconvinced. It roared furiously, and the lightning around its body crackled and flashed. Soon, the hoops, which were composed of water, began to boil, seemingly having a hard time trapping the beast.

"Hmph! You better stop struggling!" said Sun Xiumei as she pointed out a finger, attracting the hoops up into the air and making them hover before her. Suddenly, one of her hands turned into the color of water, and she shoved it into the hoops. It looked like her hand had vanished completely.

The beast, who was about to break free, widened its eyes suddenly and growled. The hoops around it began to turn solid and strong once again, and no matter how it struggled, they just would not budge.

Looking coldly at the struggling beast, Sun Xiumei smiled charmingly and said, "Oh, don't move again, you little thing! Senior Brother and Lil Mei will come and drink your blood later. If you struggle too hard, your blood will become toxic and turn bitter, making it not nice to drink."

Her harmless, seductive look was a sharp contrast to the Darkthunder's savageness, which could be painted into a picture of a beauty and a beast. However, the beauty here was a tigress while the beast was the sheep.

"Where are you looking, boy?"

Ji Meng suddenly felt a gust of strong wind come blowing at his face. Startled, he swung out his sword and made a straight cut, only then did he find that it was a false attack, and Li Wenshi was looking at him with a mocking expression. Even then, he saw the man's face begin to turn ugly, with tiny blisters popping up here and there as if someone had just poured some boiling water at him, burning his skin and transforming him into a monster.

"You are about to die, and yet you still turn your attention to somewhere else." Li Wenshi laughed evilly. Not only did his face turn ugly and terrifying, but even his voice had changed completely.

'Not good!' thought Yunxiao as his pupils constricted slightly. He knew it was an inheritable divine ability of demon beasts, and few human beings could obtain it. But, when an individual obtained it and began to cultivate, he or she would be able to transform into the demon beast form.

He quickly took out an enhanced origin blasting pill and gave it to Ji Meng.

Ji Meng hesitated, but when he sensed that Li Wenshi's aura had risen to the level of a Martial King, he clenched his jaws and swallowed the pill. He knew the side effects of the enhanced origin blasting pill. After the battle, he would no longer have the strength to move on, and would have to retreat. Besides, once he lost the strength to fight, Yunxiao would be an extremely dangerous situation.

But, the crisis in front of him did not give him time to think further!

"Unseal! Peach Blossom Sword Intent!"

After taking the pill, his aura rose instantly, from three-stars to four-stars, five-stars, six-stars, seven-stars...and rising constantly. He roared, and not waiting for Li Wenshi's transformation to complete, he raised his sword and began his attack.

Sun Xiumei watched in astonishment as she said with shock, “What pill is that? How can it augment so much strength in such a short time?”

The sword moved like a dragon, and by the time it was in front of Li Wenshi, Ji Meng’s cultivation base had already climbed to the level of a nine-stars Martial Lord, stopping just before the next major realm. He did not dare to be arrogant, so the attack was unleashed with his peak strength, with its power unlimitedly close to that of a Martial King. He wanted to kill the man with one strike.

Whoosh!

A blast of air ejected from Li Wenshi’s mouth. At this moment, he no longer looked like a human being. His head and his body had completely transformed, and he looked like a toad standing on its hind legs, huge, fat, and ugly.

He gave Ji Meng’s sword radiance a cold glance and casually raised an arm at it. He wanted to fight against it with his flesh alone!

Bam!

The sword radiance smashed down, shattering into thousands of pink light dots and drifting away in the air. As for Li Wenshi, a layer of uneven skin appeared on his arm, and he was not hurt at all!

“Hmph! When you rely on medicine pills, there’s only so much strength you can obtain! Although you are unlimitedly close to a Martial King, you are still not a Martial King!” Li Wenshi’s eyes flashed coldly, and he said with a bloodthirsty smile, “Whereas I, in this form, am a genuine three-stars Martial King!”

“You can die now! Swallowing Heaven and Spitting Earth!”

Li Wenshi opened his mouth and inhaled a huge mouthful of Primordial Qi before blasting it out, which turned into a vacuum energy wave, sweeping toward Ji Meng. Under the attack, the surrounding air began to distort and tremble.

Bam!

The whole woods shook as a straight line with nothing in it tore the woods apart, the energy wave crushing all the trees in an instant. The powerful impact caused blood to ooze out of Ji Meng's seven orifices and knocked him flying dozens of meters away. The gap between their strength was just too enormous. Even though he had taken an origin blasting pill, he was still no match for him.

Ji Meng felt his body about to be ripped apart. He roared in pain and sent all his Primordial Qi into his legs, only then he was able to stop after being pushed tens of meters back. Even then, he was already covered in wounds, as if he was cut a thousand times.

At some point, Yunxiao appeared behind him and put a palm on his shoulder, grabbing him and running down the mountain at full speed.

The difference in strength between them was so great that there was no chance of winning at all, so their only option now was to retreat and plan again. Moreover, they had obtained sufficient information for the trip.

Swoosh!

A huge shadow of a toad flew over them and landed in their path. Staring coldly at them, Li Wenshi said, "Now you want to run away? Well, stop dreaming!"

He put his palms gently on the ground and began to inhale and exhale deeply. Rings of smoke popped out of his mouth, growing larger as they spread out across the air. With every inhalation and exhalation, his body grew bigger and his appearance became more and more like a toad.

Yunxiao and Ji Meng's expressions changed drastically at the same time. The increasingly powerful demon aura made them feel stuffy in the chests, and their breathing also became difficult.

"Young Master Yun!" Ji Meng suddenly grabbed Yunxiao's arm and said decisively, "Stimulate my potential with the method you used the other day!"

Yunxiao's face flickered, and there was a trace of horror in his eyes. "You've just taken an origin blasting pill, and you will die if I use the method on you."

With a resolute look on his face, Ji Meng said anxiously, "If we don't try, we will really die here! There's still a chance if we do it now!"

The hesitation in Yunxiao's eyes vanished, and he very quickly pulled out a few five-color divine air needles. Although he had obtained two five-color divine air stones from Lan Fei and Lan Xuan, these were the last few needles he had.

Swiftly, he inserted all the needles into Ji Meng's body. "I've only stimulated half of your meridians, but it is still extremely dangerous," said Yunxiao in a deep voice. "Try your best to control the extent of your power outbursts. Don't lose control!"

Ji Meng instantly felt streams of power spread out from where the needles were inserted, all flowing through his meridians and heading toward his dantian. They were so strong that he began to tremble violently.

"HA!"

He howled, and in that instant, his aura broke through the barrier of a nine-stars Martial Lord, rushing directly into the Five Elements Realm! The sight made Sun Xiumei's pupils constrict, and her beautiful face was full of shock.

Li Wenshi was stunned too as he watched that happen right in front of him. But, he still wore the same indifferent expression. "Heresy! Now taste my Toad Fiend Technique!"

After inhaling and exhaling several times, his body finally swelled to the point where it seemed to have reached its limit. Suddenly, an impact force of unimaginable magnitude burst out of his mouth while his whole body also leaped forward with the sound wave.

"The Song of Blue Lotus Sword!"

After his strength soared, Ji Meng's head was clearer than ever, and he was able to understand the martial essence of the Song of Blue Lotus Sword in an instant. A huge blue lotus flower bloomed suddenly, stopping the sound wave!

Clang!

Li Wenshi's hands clutched at Ji Meng's soft sword while two forces crashed into one another, and it seemed that they were equally powerful!

"Damnit! How's this even possible!" Li Wenshi's face became unusually ferocious as he bellowed, "How can a little piece of rubbish like you stop an attack I've unleashed with all my strength! Fine! I'll now use 120% of my power to crush you to pieces, you foul beast!"

"Beast?" Ji Meng's eyes were shot with blood as he sneered coldly, "We all know who the real beast here is, you ugly toad! Now die, will you?"

Boom!

The two forces collided again. Both men fought desperately, determined to kill each other.

Crack... crack!

Suddenly, a discordant noise rang out from between them.

Ji Meng's pupils constricted; his second-tier mystic weapon had given way to the pressure at this moment and begun to crack with lines.

Chapter 103: Love and Hate

Li Wenshi's eyes shone with wild joy, and he laughed. "You are a dead meat!"

Clang!

He put more force into his hands, shattering Ji Meng's second-tier mystic weapon.

Ji Meng's eyes narrowed, but he showed no sign of panic. Instead, his eyes were full of madness. He sneered and put his palms together, suddenly causing the shreds of his mystic weapon to spin and wheel in the air around him, turning into gusts of wind and spreading out.

"What!"

Li Wenshi, who was about to kill Ji Meng, got his hands cut by the shreds as soon as he touched the edge of the whirlwind. His face was covered in disbelief.

"Ten thousand peach blossoms!"

Ji Meng shouted aloud and pushed his palms straight out. With that, the whirlwinds around him combined and transformed into a brutal air force that blasted toward Li Wenshi. With all the shreds of the mystic weapon mixed in it, the attack was incredibly fierce and deadly.

"Block it, Toad True Body!"

There was not enough time to dodge, so Li Wenshi hastily shielded himself with demon energy and curled his body up into a ball. Under the strong air force, he was pushed back for tens of meters.

"Take this sword, Ji Meng!" Yunxiao threw out the cold sword of Taiyin.

"That sword..." Sun Xiumei squinted at the weapon and said in surprise, "Senior Brother Yi's Taiyin? How did you get it?"

Yunxiao turned and gave her a smile. "He gave it to me. You got a problem with that?"

Face darkened, Sun Xiumei said coldly, "Are you so eager to get yourself killed? Who gave you the right to talk to me like that?" Although she was usually sweet, it actually depended on whom she talked to. Yunxiao was only a warrior, and in her eyes, he was no different from an ant.

Yunxiao held up a middle finger and said mockingly, "If you don't want to talk, shut that big mouth up, b*tch!"

Sun Xiumei's nostrils flared. "What did you say, little bast*rd? Do you know who I am?"

With a disdainful smile, Yunxiao said, "Of course I know. You are a b*tch!"

"Fine, fine! It seems that you really can't wait to be killed!" Sun Xiumei flew into a rage. "Do you believe I'll come down and kill you now?"

Yunxiao grew impatient. "You are indeed a b*tch, even though you refuse to admit it. It is plain that you can't come down, and yet you still want to pretend you can kill me! If you move, your mystic art will be negated, and Darkthunder will kill you instantly! Now stop glaring at me, your fake eyelashes are falling off. Come down and kill me if you have the guts. Otherwise, just keep your mouth shut, stay there, and stop being a b*tch. You are making me look down on you."

When she heard the first few words, Sun Xiumei was already boiling with rage. But by the time Yunxiao had finished, she was struck dumb and at a loss of words.

After taking the sword, Ji Meng immediately rushed up, using it to hack and slash and cut at Li Wenshi. He was not familiar with the sword, but the sharpness of a third-tier mystic weapon did not reduce because of that. Each one of his strokes froze the air into a chunk of ice, which filled Li Wenshi with terror.

Sun Xiumei held her tongue for some time, but at last, she could not help but ask, "What did you do to him, boy? How did his strength grow so much in such a short time?" Her voice was gentle.

Yunxiao paid her no mind. His eyes were following Ji Meng, filled with deep worry. He knew Ji Meng was burning his life force in exchange for strength!

The snub angered Sun Xiumei again, and yet there was nothing she could do, so she just glared at him. If she rushed down to kill him, the Darkthunder would surely escape, and it would be not so easy for her to capture it again.

“Haha! Haha!”

Ji Meng’s eyes began to show madness as he hacked again and again with the sword, laughing aloud, the power of each stroke greater than the one before. At some point, Li Wenshi had gotten himself a pair of hammers from somewhere, and he was using them to defend against all the attacks. But, it seemed that his strength was failing him. Sparks flew as the sword smashed at the hammers, but Ji Meng did not feel pity at all. He was immersed in the madness of slaughtering, totally controlled by the mighty power in himself.

Puke!

After holding on for a little while, Li Wenshi finally ran out of strength. He coughed out a mouthful of blood as his demon form slowly faded away. Fear crept into his eyes, and he quickly moved back into the mountain while struggling to defend himself.

“Hah! Now you want to run! Die!”

Ji Meng looked like a madman as he hacked again and again with the sword, striking terror and dread into Li Wenshi’s heart. “Help me, Junior Sister! I can’t hold on any longer!”

“Senior Brother!”

Sun Xiumei cried out in alarm. She knew she had to give up the Darkthunder. Very quickly, she pulled herself out of the aqua hoops and flew down to the rescue.

“Roar!”

As soon as it was freed, the beast transformed into a thundercloud and bolted over. Its violence and anger of being trapped for so long exploded in an instant; the whole woods were smeared with a shade of dark blue, as if a great storm was about to descend.

“Senior Brother!”

Sun Xiumei landed lightly next to Li Wenshi. She held up her right palm, in which a glob of water vapor condensed, and then she pushed it out. In the blink of an eye, the glob spread out and transformed into a water mirror, shielding both of them from the attack.

Meanwhile, Ji Meng made a cruel slash with the sword. The blade cut straight into the mirror, but he felt like he hit nothing at all, as if there was another dimension in it. Eyes widened in shock, he hurriedly drew the sword back.

The mirror lasted a few more seconds before it began to vaporize. Even so, it had given Sun Xiumei enough time. She grabbed the wounded Li Wenshi and retreated at full speed.

“Roar!”

The sky rumbled with thunderclaps as Darkthunder pierced through the void in a bolt of lightning and came in front of the couple in an instant, bringing with it a great thunderstorm.

Li Wenshi instantly turned pale. The force of thunder was so strong that even he, a Martial King, was trembling with fear. As for Sun Xiumei, although she had a panicked look on her face, her eyes were calm as water, and even flashed with a hint of surprise and excitement.

“Senior Brother, do you love me?”

“Of course, I love you. But, why do you ask this now?”

“Since you love me...”

A hint of a smile emerged on her face. All of a sudden, she threw Li Wenshi out and kicked him into the thundercloud. Her face flashed with a trace of evil excitement as she said, "Since you love me, please die for me now!"

"AHHH!"

Li Wenshi let out a bloodcurdling scream. All his hair stood and his skin was charred as the lightning in the cloud struck him, and then he was thrown out of it.

After venting its anger through the attack, Darkthunder seemed to have calmed down. It landed on the ground and fixed its eyes at the couple vigilantly, ready to strike again.

There was a flicker of resoluteness and ferocity in Sun Xiumei's eyes as she watched Li Wenshi being thrown away. Clenching her jaws, she leaped into the air and dashed over to him.

A sharp blade stabbed through his heart and came out of his chest. Looking at the bloody blade, Li Wenshi's eyes were filled with nothing but incredulity. He knew the dagger; he had captured three second-tier alchemists and forced them to craft it for her birthday.

Afterward, he had killed all three alchemists, who had nursed a grudge against him.

"Why?" He knew he would die even if his heart were not pierced by the dagger, as he was already severely wounded. But, he felt a pain in his heart which was much intense than the one caused by the dagger itself.

"Why?" Sun Xiumei burst into laughter. "Why ask me? Why don't you just look at what you have turned yourself into?"

She pulled the dagger out and kicked Li Wenshi to the ground as she jerked a finger at him and snapped, "Look at yourself! You have completely turned into a toad! How can I stand it?"

She put a foot on his head as she looked down at him and said, "I can still remember those days, you in your pure white clothes, and I in my bright, colorful dress. I was moved by your appearance, your

temperament, and strength. Although among the Supreme Six, Senior Brother Yi and Senior Brother Song are always stronger than you, you were forever the best in my heart.”

Her face began to turn ferocious as if she had recalled something painful, and she put more strength into her foot. “But, in order to become stronger than them, you went to the Land of Demon and got yourself this damnable Toad Fiend Technique, transforming yourself into a monster, a toad...an UGLY TOAD!”

Two streams of tears trickled down her cheeks, and her eyes were filled with hatred. She gave his head a few kicks, then said in a fierce voice, “Have you ever thought of my feelings? The feeling about the fact that my handsome husband had changed into a toad? Do you know what those people are talking about me behind us? Damn you! Ever since you transformed into a toad whenever you were cultivating, my love for you had begun to diminish, and in the end, I wanted nothing but to kill you!”

Puke!

Her kick made Li Wenshi cough out another mouthful of blood. His eyes began to turn blank, and his pupils dilated. Before very long, the flashing of a trace of obsession in his eyes stopped before melting and fading away.

“Haha, haha! You’re dead at last!” Sun Xiumei burst out laughing wildly, as if she were in the height of her joy. Suddenly, she stopped in place to give Yunxiao and Ji Meng a cold glance, and scoffed, “Do you want to kill me? Well, follow me if you think you can do that!” When she had finished, she transformed into a watery shadow and bolted up toward the mountaintop.

While scowling, both Ji Meng and Darkthunder were about to chase after her.

“No, let her go!” Yunxiao strode over and slapped Ji Meng on the back. A dozen needles shot out of him, piercing into some trees and coming out of the other side of the trunks. The color on the needles was mostly faded.

Ji Meng felt all his strength drained in an instant; he could no longer remain standing and collapsed to the ground.

Yunxiao quickly helped him up as he took out a few medicinal pills and shoved them into his mouth. Putting him on Darkthunder's back, he patted the latter on the head and said, "Darkie, take him down the mountain and back to the city of Anyong!"

The intelligence of a demon beast increased with its level. As a fifth-tier demon beast, this Darkthunder already had the intelligence of a human child. And after being trained by Xu Pinghong for years, it could understand its master. With a reluctant look, it rubbed its head against Yunxiao's arm.

"Haha! Don't worry, I'll be back soon." He patted the beast's head and chased it off the mountain.

Chapter 104: An Ancient Formation

As he watched Darkthunder leave with Ji Meng on its back, Yunxiao's face grew serious. He turned and rested his eyes on the mountaintop, where the True Spirited Fire Phoenix had danced in the Divine Realm Tablet.

"A True Spirited Fire Phoenix...I can't believe it is a treasure related to a True Spirit! Even a Martial Sovereign would fight desperately for such a treasure. How can I give up?" He clenched his jaws. He knew there would be strong enemies waiting for him ahead, but he still could not help walking up the mountain.

At the top of the mountain, Qi Zhenzi seemed to be losing his patience. "How much longer will it take you to open it, Huyan Ming?"

The red-haired man sitting before the cliff wall thought for a moment. "Soon...about six more hours."

"Six hours?" Qi Zhenzi was somewhat angry at the answer. "The day before yesterday, you said twenty hours. And now, you need six more hours? You've been working on it for one whole month here!"

A trace of anger crept into Huyan Ming's eyes, and a look of displeasure flickered across his face. "This is a seal left behind by some ancient almighty expert," he said in a cold voice. "If it hadn't been corroded by years because of its long history, there is no way I can crack it even if you give me ten thousand years! I'm already working fast enough!"

Qi Zhenzi was taken aback. He did not think Huyan Ming would dare to talk back to him, but he choked back his fury. After all, he had to rely on him to crack the formation.

Huyan Ming was the only alchemist among the Supreme Six. As a fourth-tier Alchemy Lord, he enjoyed a great reputation even in the Firecrow Empire, and his status was not lower than that of Qi Zhenzi, which made him an important figure who suffered no rebuke of others. Had it not been because the treasure here was too tempting, he would have left after being pushed several times.

“Help! Uncle-Master, help me!” At that moment, Sun Xiumei ran up to the mountaintop with a frightened face, sobbing and crying. “Senior Brother Li and Senior Brother Xu were both killed!”

“Who’s down there?” asked Yi Xiaoshan in shock, his eyebrows frowning. “Although Junior Brother Xu was only a Martial Lord, he had trained that Darkthunder to obey only his orders. That beast is as strong as a Martial King, and even I am a little bit afraid of it!”

Song Chengtian was shocked as well. “Who is the enemy? Both you and Junior Brother Li are Martial Kings, and yet even you failed to stop him?”

She was lost for words, as she did not know how to explain, so she just said, “There were only two people, a Martial Lord and a warrior.”

That gave everyone a pause. Qi Zhenzi’s face grew dark instantly, and he said angrily, “Are you kidding me, Xiu?”

Yi Xiaoshan and Song Chengtian had a suspicious look on their faces as well. Panicked, Sun Xiumei hurriedly said, “I don’t know how Senior Brother Xu died, but when we arrived, his Darkthunder was already subdued by the enemies. I managed to trap the demon beast, and Senior Brother Li was dealing with the two of them. He had victory within his grasp, but the warrior had used some mystic art and made the Martial Lord’s strength soar instantly, who later killed Senior Brother Li!”

“How can this be?” Qi Zhenzi said in shock. “You mean that warrior had subdued the Darkthunder and given the Martial Lord the strength that could kill a Martial King? Could he be an alchemist?”

All eyes turned to Huyan Ming at the same time. He was already frowning as he listened to them. "It is naturally easier for an alchemist with strong soul power to subdue a demon beast, but how strong the soul power of a warrior can be? I'll call him a genius if he is a second-tier alchemist, but that's still not enough for him to subdue a fifth-tier demon beast who had a master," he analyzed. "Moreover, I've never heard of a mystic art that can push the strength of a Martial Lord into the next major realm!"

"In any case, I want all of you to be more alert!" Qi Zhenzi said in a deep voice. "There are only a few more hours to go, and I don't want any mistakes! If you take a wrong step, I'll flay you even if your Master will scold me!"

Everyone stood still and did not say a word.

"The Martial Lord is seriously wounded," said Sun Xiumei, "and I don't think that warrior and the beast will have the courage to come up here."

Huyan Ming sneered. "Said who? He's already here."

"What?" Everyone was taken aback and quickly sent their divine sense out into all directions.

Yunxiao, who was hiding in a blind spot, smiled bitterly. He did not expect that there was not only a Martial Grandmaster, but also a fourth-tier alchemist among the enemies. 'Since when did Baizhan have such mighty forces?' he thought to himself.

"Come out now if you don't want to die, boy!" Qi Zhenzi roared and Primordial Qi immediately gathered in the sky, rumbling and spreading out to envelop an area almost a thousand miles around them.

Yunxiao could taste bitterness in his mouth. With a Martial Grandmaster and a fourth-tier alchemist here, there was no way he could escape even if he knew how to fly. Reluctantly, he stood out from where he was hiding as he smiled wryly and said, "Can I live if I come out?"

"That's him, Uncle-Master!" Sun Xiumei cried out in astonishment. She could not believe that Yunxiao had the courage to follow her up here, more so alone. His bravery amazed her.

Qi Zhenzi said coldly, "If you wanted to live, you wouldn't come up here. Now that you're here, you can't hope to live!"

He lifted a hand and was about to strike when Yunxiao grinned cheekily and said, "Why? You are a senior and an expert, and you are the one who asked me to come out if I don't want to die. I listened to you, so I came out because I don't want to die. Are you going back on your own words now?"

Qi Zhenzi paused, then snorted coldly and said, "Don't hope you can sway me into sparing your life with that glib tongue. Whatever you say, you are going to die today!"

"Hold on!"

Huyan Ming, who was cracking the formation, suddenly said, "Spare his life. I want to ask him something!"

Qi Zhenzi's face grew dark. "Huyan Ming, what we are working here is too important for you to mess around with!"

"Mess around? Uncle-Master, are you afraid of a boy warrior?" said the alchemist angrily. "What trouble can a warrior cause? I'll bear all the responsibility if anything happens!"

"Oh, really? But can you?" Qi Zhenzi said in a cold voice. "I'm the supreme commander of this operation, and also your Uncle-Master, so you have to obey me!"

Huyan Ming was so angry that he laughed. "In that case, crack the formation yourself! I'll not do it for you!" He stood straight up and was about to leave.

"You!" Qi Zhenzi was fuming, but he had no other choice. With a flick of his sleeve, he said, "You better be careful, or I'll flay you if anything happens!"

Huyan Ming answered that with a snort, then turned to Yunxiao and said, "Come over here, boy!"

Yunxiao breathed a sigh of relief. He was temporarily safe now, but he had to tread carefully from here. He quickly strode over and said, “Yes?”, but as soon as his eyes rested on the cliff wall, his face flashed with a trace of astonishment.

“Oh? You know this formation?” Huyan Ming asked in shock.

“Formation? Is this a formation?” Yunxiao hastily hid his emotions by playing dumb, “It does look like a formation, but what is the meaning of those texts that look like tadpoles?”

Huyan Ming breathed a sigh of relief. ‘I was too sensitive,’ he thought, ‘How could a second-tier alchemist recognize this ancient formation when even I had to spend a long time studying the description related to it, which I accidentally found in the books and records in the Supreme Palace, to find the way to crack it?’

He smiled and said, “You have a good gift. It is rare for someone to become a second-tier alchemist at the age of fifteen. Who is your Master?”

What he said stunned everyone. The boy was a second-tier alchemist? They could not tell Yunxiao’s alchemy level, but they could tell how old he was at a glance.

He was already considered to be extraordinarily gifted for being a nine-stars warrior at the age of fifteen years old, and yet he was also a second-tier alchemist? That made him an existence who would one day shake the whole world!

The killing intent in Qi Zhenzi’s eyes grew thicker. Such a freakish genius must have an extraordinary background. ‘I must find an opportunity and kill him before he grows up and become a major threat!’

“My Master is the president of Tianshui’s Alchemist Association, Xu Han!”

“I knew it,” Huyan Ming smiled. “Apart from Zhang Qingfan and Xu Han, there are no other good alchemists in Tianshui. You are at least a hundred times more gifted than Xu Han, and he will delay your progress if you learn from him. I’m Huyan Ming, a fourth-tier alchemist from the Firecrow Empire. Would you like to become my disciple?”

Both Yunxiao and those around them were taken aback while Qi Zhenzi flared and snapped, "Leave this matter to some other day, Huyan Ming! Focus your attention on cracking the formation!"

"Hmph!" Huyan Ming snorted with disapproval, but when he saw the dumb look on Yunxiao's face, he said, "You just stand aside and consider that. I believe you know how big the gap is between two alchemists who are one realm apart."

When he had finished, he paid Yunxiao no more mind and began to focus on cracking the formation.

It was impossible for Yunxiao to become Huyan Ming's disciple, so he wasted no time to consider that. Instead, he stood aside and watched how the alchemist cracked the formation. Although the man's technique was still rusty and monotonous, he had grasped the key of the formation. Even though he was a little slow, the formation was being cracked bit by bit.

The clue of this treasure in Mount Phoenix was accidentally discovered by Qi Zhenzi among the ancient books and records in the Supreme Palace. He was skeptical at first, but after carefully studying the clue, he found that it was real. So, he instigated the Supreme Six to help him. In order not to divulge the news, he made an army trap Kunjin, and at the same time, slaughtered all the people in the three towns beneath the mountain.

The formation on the wall was indeed an ancient restrictive formation. Even Yunxiao could not fully understand it, and he could not crack it in a short time unless he was given a year or so to study it. The texts on the formation were indecipherable silver scribbles that looked like tadpoles, which had some similarities with the Great Expansion Divine Technique's golden tadpole texts. Although they were not identical, they seemed to come from the same system.

It was because more than half of the formation was cracked that there was a sign of a precious treasure about to be born.

Yunxiao learned something as he watched Huyan Ming crack the formation. At his level, few formations could let him learn something new, but when he did, they were usually extremely ancient formations.

As the formation was being gradually cracked, Qi Zhenzi and the others became more and more excited. They all fixed their eyes at the fire phoenix on the wall, nervous to know what the treasure was. After all, it was an ancient relic that had been passed down for heaven-know-how-long, and none of them

knew what was inside. Perhaps, a real True Spirited Fire Phoenix would fly out of it when the formation was cracked.

Chapter 105: A World of Consciousness

“Raise!” Huyan Ming cried in a soft voice. He was more nervous than anyone else, as he was now at the last phase of cracking the formation. His forehead was already covered with sweat. With the last incantation gesture sent into it, all the tadpole texts on the wall finally turned silver, and then they flew out of the rock one after another, forming into chains in the air before gradually fading away.

The fire phoenix pattern trapped in the middle of the wall was finally released, and it flew straight out of the rock and soared into the air. Immediately, the whole sky turned red, with a crimson phoenix dancing gracefully in the center of it.

“True Spirited Fire Phoenix...A True Spirited Fire Phoenix!” Qi Zhenzi murmured in excitement as he stared at the phoenix in the sky.

Shocked, Huyan Ming and the others looked up as well. Could it really be a living phoenix? But, that was ridiculous, wasn't that?

Yunxiao, on the other hand, was on his guard. He knew that thing in the sky was just the remnant of a phoenix's consciousness, and it would vanish soon after it was released. The real treasure was likely to appear at any time after that.

Suddenly, the fire phoenix let out a long cry and plunged headfirst toward the ground. Wherever it passed, the world was set ablaze, and the sky turned red with all the burning. It seemed the whole world had turned into a burning hell.

“Not good! It is coming at us!” Qi Zhenzi was greatly terrified. The mighty pressure of a True Spirit pressed down on him and rendered him motionless. A fear of being powerless rose from the depths of his heart, and he even felt like kneeling and worshipping the phoenix.

Sun Xiumei was the first to give in to the pressure. She dropped to her knees and crouched on the ground, shaking violently. After that, the others, including Song Chengtian and Yi Xiaoshan, did the same.

Boom!

The phoenix finally fell on them, enveloping everyone in a burning hell instantly and turning the whole world around them into a sea of fire.

A short while later, everyone was shocked to find that they were still alive, and although the flames around them emanated a deadly temperature, their bodies were not burned at all, and they did not feel any pain.

“This... this...” Huyan Ming was awestruck. “This is just the remnant of a fire phoenix’s consciousness? So, it means...we should be inside the memory fragment of a fire phoenix’s consciousness now? Heaven! I can’t believe a consciousness world can be materialized! What kind of existences are those ancient True Spirits?”

Yunxiao was flabbergasted as well. As a ninth-tier alchemist in his previous life, his soul power was so strong that few in the whole Heavenly Martial Continent could surpass him. However, he could sense through the fire phoenix’s remnant consciousness that its soul power was far greater than his in his previous life!

“What exactly does this fire phoenix want? There must be a reason why it brings us into its consciousness.” Just when everyone was panicked and at a loss, the sea of fire around them gradually faded away, revealing a boundless desert.

“This place...” Yunxiao felt the sky looking a bit strange, and when he sensed that the Primordial Qi in the surroundings was ten times richer than usual, he cried out in terror, “Could this be the Heavenly Martial Continent of ancient times?”

“What?” Qi Zhenzi was stunned when he heard that. “Are we back in the ancient times?”

Huyan Ming gave Yunxiao a surprised look, then glared contemptuously at Qi Zhenzi and sneered. “We are inside the fire phoenix’s consciousness, and this is the land of ancient times remaining in it. We are not back in ancient times.”

Qi Zhenzi choked back his anger and asked with a dark voice, “So what now? How can we get out of here?”

“Get out?” Huyan Ming laughed. “If I am not mistaken, the treasure should be in this consciousness. I’ve finally come in here after all the hard work, so how can I leave just like this?”

In this world constructed entirely by consciousness, the strength of an individual’s consciousness could transform the whole world!

As a fourth-tier alchemist, Huyan Ming’s soul power was far greater than Qi Zhenzi and others. He felt extremely comfortable here like a fish in the water; therefore, he thought nothing of others.

“Where exactly is the treasure?”

Everyone was glancing around, but apart from the boundless desert, there was nothing else in sight.

Huyan Ming was also searching by sending his divine sense out in all directions. If truth be told, he was not very sure about his guess. After all, it was the first time he had ever experienced something like this, and it was inevitable for him to feel uneasy.

“What are you looking at, boy?” Yi Xiaoshan suddenly asked as he fixed his eyes at Yunxiao. Hearing his voice, everyone turned and looked over.

Yunxiao was staring up into the sky, his face full of doubts.

“Oh! The sky!”

Everyone looked up and saw a giant phoenix shadow, with a bright flame throbbing at its center.

“That is...the flame of the phoenix?” Huyan Ming was shocked, and then he went wild with excitement. “I see! The so-called treasure must be this flame of the phoenix!”

As an alchemist, his desire for all kinds of strange flames was stronger than anyone else’s.

The phoenix was an ancient True Spirit, and no one could estimate how strong its flame was. Although the others did not have to refine items, if they could get the flame, it should still bring great benefits to their cultivation of martial arts. For a moment, everyone was very excited.

Yunxiao gave them an indifferent look and sneered. “Why are you all looking excited like monkeys? The flame is ten thousand miles away from the ground, so how are you going to get it? Even if you can fly, we don’t know if there’s any difference between the void here and that of the outside. Also, this world of consciousness might collapse at any time, and we have no idea if we would be alive after it collapses.”

His words immediately dampened everyone’s enthusiasm like a bucket of cold water.

‘He’s right. We don’t know how to get out of here, not to mention whether we can get the phoenix flame. Would I be alive if this world collapsed?’ Suddenly, they were at a loss of what to do.

Yunxiao sneered in his heart and squinted up at the sky. The phoenix shadow was falling at a great speed, but because it was too far away, it looked like it was not moving at all.

His eyes were filled with greed and excitement that could not be concealed. At a glance, he immediately felt that the flame in the shadow was unimaginably powerful, and he knew it was not an ordinary phoenix flame. In fact, he was sure that it was the natal true flame of a True Spirited Fire Phoenix!

Legend had it that all ancient True Spirits were existences of the Ten Worlds realm, and the natal flame of a fire phoenix was condensed of its origin essence. Ignoring its power, which was certainly great, just the essence of the Ten Worlds realm contained in it was more than enough to make all the Martial Sovereigns in Heavenly Martial Continent go wild!

Huyan Ming’s eyelids suddenly twitched as he cried out in alarm, “Look, the shadow seems to be slowly descending!”

The others' divine sense was nowhere near as good as that of Yunxiao and Huyan Ming, so it took them a little while more to discover that. All the same, they were extremely happy, and Qi Zhenzi announced in high spirits, "Let's put aside how are we going to leave this place now and get the phoenix flame first!"

Face slightly tensed, Huyan Ming said in a cold voice, "There's still some time before the shadow lands. Let's discuss how we are going to share the flame."

All eyes rested on Qi Zhenzi at the same time. Although he was their Uncle-Master, everyone was an enemy in the face of such a precious treasure, not to mention his cultivation base was the strongest among them.

Meanwhile, Huyan Ming was sneering in his mind. 'They don't know that the strength of the soul in this world of consciousness could make up for the lack of cultivation base. If a fight were to break out later, I'll be the strongest one!'

When he saw everyone looking at him, Qi Zhenzi laughed and said, "My dear Disciple-Nephews, are you worried that I'll pocket the treasure without sharing with you? Rest assured, you will get a fair share of it."

Song Chengtian snorted coldly. "We don't know yet the volume of the flame and whether it can be divided. What's your suggestion, Uncle-Master?"

"If the flame can be divided, I'll get two parts and each of you one part. What do you think?"

"Hmph!" Huyan Ming sneered. "You have a big appetite, Uncle-Master! It was me who had worked so hard to crack the formation, and all you did was push me from the side. And yet, you want to take two parts?"

Qi Zhenzi's face grew cold. "Oh, it seems Disciple-Nephew Huyan is not happy? Tell me, does any one of you dare to handle such a major operation? Had it not been because of me, you would all have long been killed by Tianshui! Not to mention that I'm the one who found the clue of this treasure in books and records. So, why can't I take two parts?"

Huyan Ming smiled and said, "I have no objection to that, if only I take two parts as well."

Song Chengtian snorted again. "You want to take two parts as well? Then what about Senior Brother Yi and me?"

Yi Xiaoshan nodded and said, "I have no problem with Uncle-Master taking two parts, but if you also want to take two parts..."

"What if I really do?"

A cold look flashed across Song Chengtian's face. "Defeat both of us, then we'll give it to you!" he said with a grim grin.

"If that's what you want," Huyan Ming said in a cold voice, "Fight me together, both of you!"

"Together?" Song Chengtian was taken aback, but then he burst out laughing. "Hah! Huyan Ming, are you out of your mind? You, a Martial Lord, want to fight two Martial Kings at the same time?"

"You are wasting my time!" Huyan Ming pointed a finger at the sky and said, "If you don't want to attack first, I will! Come, thunder!"

The whole world of consciousness shook as a thunderbolt as thick as a bowl materialized in the void and smashed down hard.

Boom!

The thunderbolt landed next to both men. They avoided it by jumping lightly to the side, but their eyes were filled with shock and incredulity. Although it could not hurt them, the thunderbolt was as strong as any attack unleashed by a genuine Martial King!

Qi Zhenzi's pupils constricted. He did not sense any fluctuation of Primordial Qi from Huyan Ming just now, but how was that even possible?

"Haha!" Huyan Ming laughed wildly, his face full of excitement and disdain. "Have you forgotten? This is not the real world, but the fire phoenix's space of consciousness! Everything here is a condensation of consciousness. Whoever has a stronger divine sense would have a greater degree of control over the space to do whatever he wants! In other words, I, Huyan Ming, am the strongest man in this world!"

A flicker of determination flashed across his face as his soul power spread out crazily. As if triggered by the power, the sky began to slowly distort and change, and in the blink of an eye, the boundless desert began to slowly turn green, with patches of grass and flowers growing out here and there.

Chapter 106: Phoenix True Flame

Apart from the descending fire phoenix shadow, the whole world of consciousness was changing. At this moment, Huyan Ming was like the god who created the world, standing high up and looking down at everything.

Yi Xiaoshan and Song Chengtian were struck dumb. How could they fight against such mighty power?

Yunxiao's face flickered, and he cried out loudly, "Stop it! This space of consciousness has gone through too many years, and most of its power has vanished! If you keep wreaking havoc wantonly like this, you will cause the space to collapse and kill us all in here!"

That gave Huyan Ming a pause. As if he had thought of the possibility as well, he gave Yunxiao a surprised look before slowly retracting his soul power. "Am I eligible for two parts now?" he turned and threw the question at Yi Xiaoshan and Song Chengtian.

Both men's faces had turned livid as they gave no answer. From the power Huyan Ming had demonstrated just now, they knew they could not defeat him. Besides, if they were to leave this place, it was very likely that they would have to rely on his power. So, they had no choice but to accept that in silence.

Huyan Ming sneered, then turned to Yunxiao. "It seems that you are not just an average second-tier alchemist. Who exactly is your master? I don't believe Xu Han has the ability to cultivate a disciple like you!"

Yunxiao gave him a faint smile. "Why do you ask so many questions? Do you want to share a part with me?"

Qi Zhenzi snorted coldly and said, "If you want a part as well, buy it with your life!"

"Hah," Yunxiao did not say another word, but he was extremely relaxed on the inside.

Huyan Ming frowned slightly. Although he thought Yunxiao was a bit strange, he did not think much of it. After all, a second-tier alchemist could not pose any threats to him.

Everyone was standing still, looking up at the rapidly falling shadow of the fire phoenix. Finally, after some moment of waiting, a vast phoenix landed on the earth. The ball of throbbing True Flame quickly burned along the outlines of the shadow and, in an instant, blanketed the whole world in a sea of fire.

"Illusion?" Huyan Ming was shocked. The flames around him appeared to be unreal, and he could only feel a shuddering fear from where the ball of True Flame was, which made him want to kneel and worship it.

"What are you doing, boy!"

As the few men were somewhat struck dumb, Sun Xiumei's cry rang into their ears, and then they saw Yunxiao walking slowly toward the True Flame, one step at a time.

"What am I doing? Claiming the True Flame, of course!" Yunxiao answered with a casual smile, showing no sign of stopping.

"Claiming the True Flame? You really want to die!" While fuming, Qi Zhenzi leaped into the air as a mass of pale blue Primordial Qi emerged around him and gradually converged in his palm, which he threw it at Yunxiao. "The True Flame is not something that a boy as lowly as you can claim!"

Yunxiao narrowed his eyes, and a hint of a sneer emerged on the corner of his mouth as his right hand drew a circle in front of him. Immediately, the whole world changed color, and thousands of clouds began to gather in his palm, while all the Primordial Qi within a few miles around was drained by him. Then, he threw the palm out.

“What!”

Qi Zhenzi turned pale with fright. He could feel that the power of Yunxiao’s palm was far stronger than his. The other men’s faces fell as well, all stunned by the sudden change!

Bam!

Two forces collided, and sure enough, Qi Zhenzi was weaker, and the impact knocked him flying away.

Everyone sucked in a cold breath while Huyan Ming, aghast, cried out at the top of his lungs, “The power to control the space of consciousness! You are just a mere second-tier alchemist! How can you do it!”

With a cold grin, Yunxiao said, “Both of us are alchemists. If you can do it, why can’t I?”

Huyan Ming flew into a rage, and he bellowed, “I am a fourth-tier alchemist, and you are just a mere second-tier alchemist! We are not the same at all! But, since you’ve revealed your strength too early, you are dead meat!” He had decided to kill Yunxiao. “Ten Thousand Thunderbolts, strike this boy!”

Rumble!

Dark clouds began to emerge in the sky while masses of lightning energy crackled and gathered, forming a huge energy mass. For a moment, the sky was flashing with blinding blue light. If struck by such a tremendous force of lightning, even a Martial Grandmaster would have died on the spot!

All the others gave Huyan Ming a startled look and backed away, fearing that the force of lightning might injure them by accident. But, Yunxiao just stood there calmly as he looked up at the sky and cried in a soft voice, “Who allowed you to produce thunder and lightning when I am here? Be gone now!”

Be gone now!

His voice rang straight up into the sky, echoing across the earth. As if his words were the law, the dark clouds and the thunderbolts that veiled the sky fell silent in an instant, and even began to slowly disappear. Before very long, a shaft of sunlight shone through the clouds and landed on the ground!

Puke!

With his power forcibly dispersed, Huyan Ming felt like someone had struck him hard in the head, causing him to cough out a mouthful of blood. “How is this possible!” he screamed in both anger and shock. “Who the hell are you? Why is your soul power stronger than mine!”

Yunxiao narrowed his eyes as he lifted his head and enjoyed the warm sunlight, with golden tadpole texts flashing between his eyebrows. As this place was the condensation of the True Spirited Fire Phoenix’s consciousness, he could use the Great Expansion Divine Technique without any restriction. Under this sky, the strength of his soul was at least above the fifth-tier!

He felt the consciousness of the sky. The connection between his soul and the world was getting closer and closer, and he could now utilize the power of the fire phoenix’s consciousness. “I haven’t felt so powerful in a long time,” he murmured under his breath.

“This boy is just too weird! Let’s kill him together!” Huyan Ming felt a terrifying force driving his soul power out of the connection with this world of consciousness.

Qi Zhenzi bellowed angrily as well, “Use your strongest attacks!”

All four of them immediately rotated their Primordial Qi at maximum speed, and each took out and unsealed their mystic weapons. Meanwhile, Huyan Ming—with his bloodshot eyes, bulging veins on the forehead, and menacing face—was trying his best to stop Yunxiao from communicating with the world of consciousness using his soul power.

“The Divine Thunder of Bluenether!”

“The Holy Saber of Greenfire!”

“Extreme cold energy!”

“The Dark Claws of Rain!”

Four terrifying auras towered into the sky, rushing toward Yunxiao as fast as bolts of lightning. As long as Huyan Ming could cut off Yunxiao’s connection with the world, he would certainly die under the joint attack of three Martial Kings and a Martial Grandmaster!

Yunxiao only smiled lightly, as if he had not seen the attacks, or he thought nothing of them. Suddenly, he raised his right hand. Streams of natural Primordial Qi began to gather from all directions, forming into a long sword in his grip. If one looked at it carefully, one would see that the blade’s surface was carved with the sun, the moon, stars, birds, animals, mountains, and rivers!

“How’s that possible!” Sweating all over, Huyan Ming gasped and screamed, “Why can you still effortlessly control the power of consciousness under my full attack? Who the hell are you!”

Yunxiao paid him no heed. Instead, he looked affectionately at the sword in his hand and mumbled with a smile, “Long time no see, my old friend! Although we are in a space of consciousness, being able to look at you again brings back a lot of memories.”

He lifted the sword up high. There was a cold, serious look in his eyes as he watched the four attacks coming at him and cried out, one word at a time, “Starslash Sword, Reigns Supreme Over the World!”

Almost all the power of consciousness that could be mustered was gathered on the sword. As Yunxiao slashed it out, the whole space began to rumble and become extremely unstable.

Boom!

All four forces were completely devoured by the sword strike, which lost none of its momentum and smashed down hard on the five people. In the next instant, a deafening explosive noise filled the air, drowning all the miserable screams and shrieks.

Yunxiao's face turned extremely pale, and he could no longer maintain the Starslash Sword, causing it to dissolve into streams of light and vanish from his grip. However, the golden tadpole texts of the Great Expansion Divine Technique on his forehead became brighter and more vivid as they crazily nourished his damaged soul power.

“Not good, this world is about to collapse!”

A look of anxiety came over Yunxiao's face as he hurried off toward the Phoenix True Flame. If truth be told, nothing would happen if this space of consciousness collapsed, and he would just return to the top of Mount Phoenix. However, the True Flame would also be gone with the space.

After taking a hit from him, Qi Zhenzi and the others were nowhere to be seen. But, Yunxiao did not have time to look for them. He ran as quickly as he could, and after a while, he finally touched the edge of the True Flame. Holding back his excitement, he gently grabbed at it with one hand.

The flame jumped up, as if it were alive, and darted directly into his hand and kindled his arm.

“Ahhh!” An intense pain frightened Yunxiao as the flame penetrated his Primordial Qi shield and burned his flesh. In just the blink of an eye, he was already covered in flame from head to toe, screaming and struggling painfully.

“What the hell is this! Am I going to die here?”

He was horrified to find that the flame not only burned his flesh, but also his soul!

“Impossible! I'm Martial Sovereign Vanquisher! How can I die so easily!”

Yunxiao was scared out of his wits. He would be dead if his soul were consumed by the flame! Paying no more attention to the flame on his body, he quickly sat down and materialized his soul in the Divine Realm Tablet, which instantly saved him from the crisis.

“This is bad! My fleshly body is completely gone!”

He was struck dumb as he stood there in the Divine Realm Tablet and sensed the destruction of his body. What shocked him even more was that he saw flaming clouds begin to form in the sky inside the tablet, which slowly transformed into a phoenix!

As if it had found Yunxiao, the phoenix let out a long cry and swooped down from the sky toward his soul-form, turning the air into a sea of fire as it flew. Soon, the whole Divine Realm Tablet was ablaze.

Yunxiao was completely dumbfounded. Now, he had nowhere to run!

Chapter 107: Reincarnation

He watched the phoenix descend and felt a sense of helplessness as a bitter smile crept upon his face.

‘I was given another chance to live, and I’ve only awakened for a very short time...but I’m going to be dead again. And this time, my soul will be completely burned off, so it is very likely that I won’t be able to reincarnate again.’

As he felt a bitter taste at the back of his throat, the phoenix landed on him, sending sparks all over the world. His soul began to burn amidst the roaring flames, and his consciousness gradually faded away.

...

At that moment, a faint phoenix cry rang out from the bottom of his heart. His vague consciousness was afloat, drifting into a great distance with the cry. Strange images appeared in his mind, and he felt he had turned into a phoenix, soaring in the sky.

The world in his eyes seemed to be the Heavenly Martial Continent, but there were minor differences. He could see much further than he usually did, and he felt he could see the edge of the world with just a blink of the eye.

“This...”

Beneath him, or the phoenix, was an endless stretch of mountains with terrifyingly rich energy. He was shocked; he knew the mountains with only a glance. Although its energy was not as rich as what he saw now, he would never forget this place, where he died in his previous life—Tiandang Mountains.

As the phoenix wheeled above the mountains, bits of memory locked in his mind slowly returned to him. He could hardly calm down, with what happened in his previous life surfaced back up, which seemed to wake him up.

“I thought I was dead? Why is my consciousness still existing? What I am looking at right now should be the phoenix’s memory.

“Well, since there’s nothing I can do, I’ll just follow it and have a look at the ancient Heavenly Martial Continent.”

Yunxiao recalled of the state he was in now, and that calmed him down instantly. He threw away all the distracting thoughts and focused his attention on the things in the phoenix’s eyes.

Suddenly, a light beam shot out of Tiandang Mountains, towering into the sky. It was followed by another, located in different angles, then another. Soon, a total of six light beams rose from within the mountains, stabbing straight into the clouds, each separated by a distance of about a thousand miles.

The six light beams formed a circle around the phoenix, trapping it within. With their appearance, the whole mountain began to shake violently. Flocks of birds took to the air in panic and packs of animals ran wildly through the forest, and even natural Primordial Qi seemed to recede rapidly. Gradually, an evil aura began to spread out.

Rumble!

A muffled roar rang out of the mountains as streams of black aura began to emerge and spread, dispersing the rich Primordial Qi in the air. Then, all of a sudden, a huge monster appeared out of those black streams, with only its upper body in corporeal form, and its lower body composed entirely of dark gases. No sooner had it taken shape that it looked up at the True Spirited Fire Phoenix in the sky.

Yunxiao was shocked when he saw the monster. It looked exactly the same as some ancient drawings he saw in Tiandang Mountains. According to the text accompanying the drawings, the monster was called Blackfire Fiend.

“ROARRRRRR!”

The Blackfire Fiend’s upper body puffed up suddenly, and then it roared. In the blink of an eye, the void around it shattered to pieces like a mirror while the sky was filled with long rifts and dark holes. Meanwhile, a strong sound wave blasted toward the phoenix.

...

The fire phoenix let out a long cry and made a graceful turn, before spitting out a stream of flame. The sky turned red in an instant as a sea of fire poured down and crashed into the approaching sound wave.

Rumble!

The impact of the two forces ripped the sky in half; a long black rift appeared, filled with all kinds of negative cosmic energy, devouring everything around them.

Yunxiao was completely awestruck. He was once an existence who stood at the pinnacle of Heavenly Martial Continent, and yet, he had never seen a battle that could shatter the void with just one attack.

The story of how he had almost collapsed the Holy City when he and Martial Sovereign Tyrant fought each other for the rank on the Heaven and Earth Power Chart was already passed around like a legend. But, compared to what he saw now, it was like child’s play.

Although he had lost his body, he still swallowed reflexively. That was not the only thing that shocked him. He wondered what kind of a monster was this Blackfire Fiend. Since it was strong enough to fight a True Spirit, why had he never read about it in books and records?

When he first saw its drawing on a cliff wall, he had thought it was just a totem of some ancient tribes, perhaps a stronger demon beast. But, when he finally saw it now, he realized how wrong he was.

This Blackfire Fiend also had the power of the Ten Worlds realm.

“ROARRRRRR!”

The black monster seemed unhappy when it saw the phoenix block its attack. It roared and rushed straight up. The black gases that formed its lower body stretched thinner like a rope that was pulling at it.

The two mighty experts of the Ten Worlds realm caught each other in a fierce battle, filling the sky with streams of red flame and plumes of black gas that tangled together. Soon, the bright clear sky grew dark, the void within ten thousand miles around was riddled with black rifts, and everything within a hundred miles was shattered to pieces. Huge black holes were crazily devouring all kinds of energy. Under such a chaotic environment, the two experts continued to fight crazily.

The fire phoenix’s attacks were all about dexterity. It flew gracefully over the black holes, constantly breathing True Flames.

The Blackfire Fiend, on the other hand, kept chasing and attacking the phoenix with plumes of black gas ejected from its hands. Yunxiao squinted at the black gas for some time, but he could not figure out what it was, and why it could resist the True Flame.

The more they fought, the fiercer they became, and like that they fought for seven days and seven nights in the sky. Eventually, they became weaker, and the broken sky began to heal itself.

Yunxiao’s consciousness was with the phoenix, so he knew that it was already at the end of its tether, and it was barely fighting with its life. As for the Blackfire Fiend, he guessed it was not much better, because its black gases had turned extremely faint. Their wounds were even more appalling; the

phoenix's crimson body was covered in black specks, almost turning it into a black phoenix, while the Blackfire Fiend was all red from the burning.

Eventually, the Blackfire Fiend was the first to exhaust all its power. After letting out a few furious roars, it fell from the sky rapidly, the black gases that formed its lower body shrinking and retreating into Tiandang Mountains. Then, natural Primordial Qi began to pour into the mountains once again from all directions.

At that moment, the six towering light beams grew thinner, and then dissolved into light dots and vanished. Apart from numerous black holes, the sky fell calm and silent.

Dragging its seriously wounded body, the fire phoenix gave a sad cry and flew into the distance. Yunxiao could clearly feel that its life force was draining rapidly, and the black gas was wreaking havoc in it, crazily devouring its vitality.

After flying for a long time, the phoenix could no longer continue, falling headfirst to the ground. Yunxiao's consciousness ended at that moment, and his world turned black.

"So, that is the fire phoenix's memory before it died. It is said that a phoenix can be reincarnated, but why didn't it?" Yunxiao was puzzled, but there were other questions that confused him even more. "What is happening to me now? I can't feel my body and soul, but why can my consciousness still exist?"

Even then, a ball of flame leaped up in the darkness, gradually consuming his consciousness. He knew it was the phoenix's natal true flame. Although wreathed in flames, instead of burning off, his consciousness became clearer.

"What is this?" He 'stared' in horror at the swaying figure that gradually emerged in the flames, which was his soul-form.

At last, he felt his soul, and his consciousness finally had an embodiment. Slowly he opened his eyes, and he saw that he was still inside the Divine Realm Tablet.

The Phoenix True Flame was still burning over his soul, but he did not have any discomfort. Instead, he felt more and more comfortable. After some moments, the flame concentrated and flew into his soul, drawing all the flames that veiled the sky into it and forming into a mark of a fire cloud on his forehead.

“My soul is rebuilt!”

Yunxiao was shocked as he felt the brand-new soul-form, and a mighty, surging power that was circulating in it.

“Third-tier...I’ve reached the level of a third-tier alchemist!” His jaws almost dropped to the ground as he murmured, “Not only that, the energy in my soul is so vast that it seems to be endless!”

He looked up slightly. The sky in the Divine Realm Tablet was bright and clear. Then, he sat cross-legged down, trying to sense his connection with the outside world. When his soul fled into here, his fleshly body had burned to ashes in the flames. Soon, a strange expression crept up his face.

Inside the fire phoenix’s space of consciousness, Yunxiao was sitting cross-legged on the ground. His body was flashing brilliantly, transparent, with every blood vessel visible. It was the Tyrant Body Tempering Technique’s Glazed Body.

His eyes flicked open suddenly, and they were filled with amazement. Carefully, he inspected his body and found that not only was he not wounded, but his flesh was also at least a few times stronger than before.

“My body is rebuilt as well!” Yunxiao was both surprised and glad. The rushing Primordial Qi in his body told him that he was now a three-stars Martial Master!

He had advanced three stars in a row!

His heart was filled with great joy in an instant. “It turns out that the phoenix flame was not trying to kill me, but making me reincarnate!”

He jumped to his feet, and a mark of a fire cloud emerged on his forehead. At a careful glance, inside the mark was a sea of fire.

“I wonder if it is a fortune or a disaster to have the Phoenix True Flame in my soul. It is way too strong for me to control now. I think I can only use it when I am back to the peak-level of the Nine Heavens realm.”

He sighed, but in the next moment, the corner of his mouth curved upward into a smile. “However, protected by the flame, who in this world can hurt my soul, when all the True Spirits are long gone?” he said to himself proudly.

Chapter 108: The Army Return

The surrounding space began to transform rapidly. The world was collapsing, and Yunxiao knew it was because he had taken the Phoenix True Flame, and the remnant of the fire phoenix’s consciousness had vanished completely.

Anyway, with the soul power of a third-tier alchemist, he would be safe amidst the collapse. So, he just stood there, unmoving, and watched quietly as the world around him broke apart. Soon, everything in the surroundings floated and drifted away in streams of light, and he was back on Mount Phoenix in the next instant.

He looked over his shoulder at the cliff wall. It was now as smooth as jade, and the ancient formation was gone. He then spread out his divine sense, which was at least several times stronger than before. In just a moment, the whole mountain was under his watch, the trees, plants, animals, and anything that moved.

“Do you think you can hurt me when you are so seriously injured?” Yunxiao suddenly sneered and looked up.

A shadow blocked the sunlight. Covered in blood, Qi Zhenzi was floating in mid-air with his right hand lifted. Streams of Primordial Qi gathered from all directions in his palm, but they were as thin as threads, and it took a very long time for them to form a small ball.

“Well, if you insist on trying, I won’t stop you!” With a sneer, Yunxiao took out the sword of Springwater. The blade flashed coldly as it darted up into the air.

Qi Zhenzi’s pupils constricted, and an unconvinced look mixed with despair could be clearly seen in them. “You have become a three-stars Martial Master!” he screamed in a hoarse voice. “I can’t accept this! This is impossible!” As soon as he saw Yunxiao swing out the sword, he knew he could not win with a body that would collapse at any time.

He never dreamed that as a Martial Grandmaster, he would be schemed by a boy warrior and fall into such a miserable state.

“Just you wait, boy! When I recover, I will find you and kill you, no matter where you hide!”

After bellowing once, he finally gave up the idea of killing Yunxiao and dragged his injured body, flying into the distance.

Meanwhile, three figures darted out of three different places on the mountain and left after him. They were none other than Yi Xiaoshan, Song Chengtian, and Huyan Ming. They, too, were almost killed by the attack, and they were at the end of their tethers now. They knew they would certainly be killed if they stayed, so when they saw their Uncle-Master had left, they quickly fled the mountain as well.

As the weakest among them, Sun Xiumei had been blown to pieces in the space of consciousness, vanishing together with the world.

“Wait until you have recovered? Hah! We will know who is the one to get killed then!”

Yunxiao’s eyes flashed cruelly. Their injuries were too grave, and it would take them at least a year to recover. Such a time was more than enough for him to cultivate to a level where he could kill them easily, now that both his soul and fleshly body had reincarnated.

Suddenly, his eyebrows frowned, then a hint of a smile emerged on his face as he felt a warmth in his heart. In his divine sense, he saw four figures running up the mountaintop: Xiao Qingwang, Luo Yunshang, and Chen Dasheng, led by Darkthunder.

“Young Master Yun!” Xiao Qingwang and Darkthunder arrived first. The man glanced around suspiciously and found nothing unusual, but the beast was staring at Yunxiao with curiosity, as if it had sensed some changes in him. Carefully, it came to him and rubbed its head against his arm.

“Yunxiao!” Luo Yunshang came next. She looked him up and down nervously and asked, “Are you alright?”

“I’m fine. What could happen to me?” Yunxiao answered with a smile.

“Where are the enemies, kiddo?” Chen Dasheng was the last to arrive. He breathed a sigh of relief when he saw that Yunxiao was fine.

Yunxiao chuckled. “I’ll tell you what happened when we return. I estimate Baizhan’s army will retreat within the next few days.”

Chen Dasheng was taken aback, then he suddenly cried out in shock, “You...you have become a Martial Master? A three-stars Martial Master!”

The other two were stunned at the same time, and they felt great storms raging in their hearts. It was not long ago that Yunxiao parted with them, and now he had broken through another three levels, not to mention that he had stepped into the next realm, from a warrior to a Martial Master!

There were beads of cold sweat on Xiao Qingwang’s forehead as he smiled wryly and said in an incredulous voice, “Before the army set out, you were just an eight-stars warrior. It has only been half a month, and you are already a three-stars Martial Master...Are you trying to shame us to death?”

In addition to being shocked, Yunshang was even more sure that Yunxiao was Gu Feiyang’s disciple. ‘Apart from that man, who in this world can cultivate such an extraordinary disciple?’

“I’m just lucky, that’s all,” Yunxiao smiled. “Let’s talk again after we have left the mountain.”

“Lucky...” Everyone was speechless, and even Darkthunder gave him a scornful snort.

Soon, they returned to Anyong. With Huyan Ming gone, the formation that enveloped the three towns disappeared as well. Under Chen Dasheng's command, the army of eight hundred thousand soldiers marched straight toward Kunjin.

The operation immediately threw Baizhan's army into confusion. With both ends under attack, it routed and retreated into Baizhan's territory, but not before suffering heavy casualties.

Finally, the army marched into the city and joined those inside.

Yunxiao was a little nervous when he was about to see Li Changfeng. The major part of his soul and memory was Gu Feiyang, but for the last fifteen years, he was also the eldest grandson of the Li Family and Li Changfeng's son.

The man was a middle-aged general. Although he had an extraordinary appearance, Yunxiao still felt a little embarrassed to call him father.

"Why are you so quiet when you see your father!"

Li Changfeng swung down from his horse, then walked over and threw his palm at Yunxiao's face.

With a wry smile, Yunxiao caught the slap with a hand, and then was surprised to find that it did not carry much strength at all. He felt a warmth in his heart as he moved his lips, "Dad!"

The father pulled back his hand angrily and snapped, "How dare you block my slap! I'll teach you a lesson when we are back home!" Despite that, Yunxiao could see a hint of happiness flashing in his eyes.

"You got yourself a good son, boy!" said Chen Dasheng grudgingly with a look of envy in his eyes.

That gave Li Changfeng a pause. "Did this kiddo cause troubles along the way, Uncle Chen? Don't worry, I'll beat him to death later!"

Chen Lin gave him a punch on the chest and said angrily, "Will you stop pretending?"

"Pretending?" Li Changfeng did not understand. "Pretending what?"

"I say he's not pretending, just playing dumb!" Han Qianfang joined them. "I can't believe you have hidden such an amazing son for so many years! Fu*k! We thought you were our brother!"

"I get frustrated whenever I see my good-for-nothing son, but the thought of your Yunxiao would always balance me out," Chen Lin added. "How am I going to balance myself now? Fu*k!"

"What are you talking about?"

Han Qianfang snapped, "We are not brothers anymore if you keep playing dumb like this! Can't you see your Yunxiao is already a three-stars Martial Master?"

Chen Lin was fuming as well, "Can't you see your Yunxiao is already a second-tier alchemist?"

A three-stars Martial Master? A second-tier alchemist?

'I thought this kiddo's aptitude is so bad that he can't cultivate at all!'

Both men's words struck into Li Changfeng's head like thunder. He turned and looked at Yunxiao. As a Martial Lord, he could tell that Yunxiao was indeed a three-stars Martial Master with a glance. It was just that he did not want to probe his son with divine sense; therefore, he did not find that out as soon as they met.

"You...You really have become a three-stars Martial Master?"

"Yes."

"And you...are also a second-tier alchemist?"

“Ugh...I was.”

“Why did you hide that from me?”

Li Changfeng’s eyes turned red in an instant, and he was shaking from head to toe. Holding back the tears in his eyes, he ran over and kicked Yunxiao hard, knocking his son flying away.

After staying in Kunjin for three days, the army set out again, returning to the capital. Using the excuse that he was sick and wanted to recuperate in the capital, Li Changfeng threw the command of the city to his few deputies and joined Chen Dasheng’s army. He even took the same chariot as Yunxiao.

Yunxiao did not have the mood to pay him any mind. Every day, he monitored Ji Meng’s situation closely, and his face grew heavier as days passed by.

Ji Meng had been in a coma since he returned from Mount Phoenix. Jia Rong had fed him some medicinal pills, but those only stopped his condition from becoming worse. His vitality was getting weaker. However, as long as he was still alive, Yunxiao was confident that he could save him, although it might be a little troublesome.

Chen Dasheng had purposely chosen the longest route for the return journey, one that would make the army visit the most cities. As a result, it added nearly twenty days to the trip, and when they finally arrived in the capital, it was already a month later.

But, none of the officers or soldiers had any complaints about the long journey. They were all beaming with joy and excitement, and if they had any complaints, it would be about not having enough cities visited.

The victorious return of the army shook the entire court. The result of the largest military operation against Baizhan over the last five years was exceedingly well, and the court was shrouded in a nervous atmosphere.

After all, everyone knew that the return of the army was not the end of the episode, but the arrival of the final moment that would decide the fate of the two princes who fought each other for the throne.

A greater storm was about to envelop the capital of Tianshui, and everyone was busy choosing sides. It would be too late if they chose their sides after the situation was clear. Adding icing on the cake was easy, but only by offering timely assistance could one step into the inner circle.

Qin Yang was reading the reports brought to him with a gloomy face in his mansion, his eyes filled with venomous hatred. "I knew those fools from Baizhan were unreliable! Fortunately, that matter has been a success, and I've also received a piece of unexpectedly great news!"

He rose to his feet and stood in the empty great hall while speaking coldly, "Qin Yue, Li Yunxiao, Xiao Qingwang, I'll be waiting for you here, and I'll watch how you all fall to pieces from your high position!"

Chapter 109: An Important Moment

A platform for welcoming the army was being built outside the city. Whenever an army returned in triumph, it was a custom for the emperor to welcome it with all the courtiers.

And, it was no exception this time. But, the whole court could smell the scent of an approaching storm. It was said that the emperor had no plan to welcome the army himself this time, and the platform was built under Qin Yue's order. The situation in the city was growing tense.

The army had made camp thirty miles from the city, waiting for the welcoming ceremony. Everyone was speculating if the emperor would appear on the platform on the day the army marched into the city. If he were truly absent, then Qin Yue's move would be deemed as roping in military ministers without authorization, which was a felony.

So, the people in Qin Yue's faction were restless with anxiety. If they left the city and welcomed the army with him, they would have committed a felony as well. However, if they did not, they would undoubtedly be kicked out of the faction. Anyone with a pair of keen eyes could see that Qin Yue, who had the support of almost the entire military, was bound to succeed.

Three days later, the construction of the platform was completed.

Qin Yue had taken a bath and changed into a fresh garb. He was clad in a brocade robe embroidered with the pattern of five dragons chasing a pearl and a black rhino belt around his waist. Beaming with energy, he stood with head held high on the platform like a lord who reigned supreme over the world.

Bai Mou was still in her white dress, and her face was still veiled with a thin sheet of satin. She stood behind the prince and watched him with an approving and affectionate look in her eyes.

“Your Highness, it seems His Majesty will not be here today,” Lord Xu’s cautious voice rang out from behind.

Qin Yue threw a glance at the imperial palace in the center of the capital, and saw it blanketed in a shade of dusk, lifeless and almost dying.

According to the laws, no building in the capital could be taller than the imperial palace. However, the height of the welcoming platform was doubled purposely, which made it about ten meters taller than the palace. Standing on top of it, Qin Yue could see the complete landscape of Tianshui.

With a sneer, he walked straight to the nine-dragon throne prepared for Qin Zheng, then turned and sat down on it in front of all the courtiers. “Father is unwell, so I will carry out his duty today.”

“Long live Your Highness Prince Yue!” Lord Xu hurried to the front of the throne and dropped to his knees as he cried out loudly. The courtiers looked at each other. It was a rebellious act to call that out so openly and loudly, but they were no idiots, and they knew it was time for them to choose a side. So, they all knelt and picked up the cry. Their voices soon spread out over the capital.

“Long live Your Highness Prince Yue!”

“Long live Your Highness Prince Yue!”

The cries stunned those courtiers who had chosen to stay in the city, filling their eyes with deep concern and worries. Even the common people in the streets were terrified on hearing that, as if they could sense that something serious would happen soon. Street vendors and shops keepers packed their things and shut their doors in a hurry, and everyone returned to their homes and dared not to come out.

Standing atop the city gate, Long Qing stared at the lofty platform in the distance. At last, he sighed as he spun and ordered, "From now on, the city is under martial law and enters the first level of control. No one is allowed to wear weapons to the streets or gather a crowd to engage in an affray. You may kill any offenders at will!"

In the courtyard of his home, Lan Hong had brewed himself a pot of tea, and was sipping slowly from his cup. He looked up at the sky and murmured, "Has it finally begun?"

...

Li Chunyang was standing on the platform now. When he saw the group of courtiers flattering the prince, he felt disgusted as if he had just swallowed a fly. While frowning, he said, "Your Highness, don't you think this is not so appropriate?"

Qin Yue was slightly taken aback, but he held up a hand all the same and stopped the cries with a smile. "Alright, that's enough. You may rise, my loyal subjects!" Then, he turned to the side and said, "Lord Xu, list down the names of all the courtiers who have not come today."

"Yes, Your Highness!" Lord Xu answered hurriedly. He was bursting with joy; by assigning such an important task to him, the prince had clearly taken him as one of the loyal confidants.

The courtiers who had knelt and bowed their heads breathed a sigh of relief. They were glad that they had made the right decision, and at the same time gloated over those courtiers who were about to suffer. Some were thinking about the offices that were about to be emptied, wondering if they could climb higher this time or fill the vacancies with their own juniors.

"How much longer do you think it would take them to arrive, Duke Jingguo?" Unable to contain his joy, Qin Yue asked with a big smile.

Li Chunyang sent out his divine sense as he narrowed his eyes slightly and answered, "About the time it takes for half an incense stick to burn."

"Great! I can't wait for this historic moment to arrive!" The prince rubbed his palms together in excitement.

Suddenly, a cold voice rang out from beneath the platform, "I wonder what historic moment made you, my brother, excited like a monkey?"

Everyone looked down at the same time and saw Qin Yang, who was holding Qin Zheng with both hands while staring coldly at Qin Yue.

At that moment, a eunuch cried out in a sharp voice, "Here comes His Majesty the Emperor! You are requested to come down the platform and pay your respect!"

All the courtiers looked nervous, and their eyes were fixed on Qin Yue, waiting for his orders.

Qin Yue sneered and said loudly, "Pray pardon me for not paying my respect, Father. The platform is too high, and it is troublesome to come down. It will be better to let Qin Yang help you up here, only then I will pay my respect."

Face dark with rage, Qin Zheng stared at Qin Yue like a venomous snake and mumbled in a trembling voice, "Fine, fine...You are indeed my son!" With Qin Yang's help, he walked slowly up the platform. It was very quiet as everyone watched the historic moment in silence.

Time made it inevitable for the old to be replaced by the young, and every new sovereign brought his own courtiers. However, when many courtiers saw this with their own eyes, they still had mixed feelings.

Li Chunyang let out a faint sigh. He felt that he was really old, and his heart was filled with sadness when he recalled the harmonious days he had with Qin Zheng.

Soon, Qin Zheng and the others walked up the platform.

"His Majesty is here. Why are you all not paying your respects?" Qin Yang said in a cold voice. "And Qin Yue, don't you think you should stand up and return the throne to Father?"

Qin Yue snorted, then reluctantly got up from the throne and bowed stiffly. "Greetings, Father."

As soon as he did that, all the courtiers dropped to their knees and bowed their heads. Li Chunyang was the only one who remained standing like a statue. As a Martial King, he was exempted from kneeling and bowing to the emperor.

Qin Zheng gave Li Chunyang a glance with his cloudy eyes, and there seemed to be a lonely look flashing across his face covered in gray hair. With the careful help of a few people, he sat down on the dragon throne.

Qin Ruxue was here too, following behind Qin Zheng in silence. She knew today would be a special day. As a member of the royal family, she knew this would happen sooner or later. The main reason she came was to have a look at Yunxiao, and she also could not bear to watch her aging father be bullied by his own son.

“Rise!” Qin Zheng said to all the courtiers in an indifferent tone. “You all are very good.”

Nobody knew what he meant by that, but the loneliness and helplessness in his voice were plain to hear. Looking at the dying old man who was once their ambitious emperor, many people sighed in their hearts.

Not long after the emperor sat down, a dark cloud drifted over the bright clear sky, and the earth began to tremble slightly. Meanwhile, numerous figures emerged on the distant horizon, accompanied by tall poles with flags waving in the air.

Qin Zheng sat dully on the throne, and he seemed drowsy. While frowning, Qin Yue walked up and said, “Father, it’s time.”

Only then did he look up and speak softly, “Let’s begin.” His voice was weak, and when he had finished, he fell back into the drowsy state.

When he saw the many tiny green dots in his father’s cloudy eyes, Qin Yue could not help but sneer in his heart, and at the same time, he gave Qin Yang a scornful look. Then, he walked to the front of the platform and cried out aloud, “Let the welcoming ceremony begin!”

Immediately, two columns of cavalry clad in ceremonial outfits blew into their horns and slowly spread out to make a passage. After that, a chariot with several drums was pushed out, and two muscular men beat the drums with all their might, shaking the sky with loud pounding noises.

Riding on horses, Chen Dasheng and others wore grave expressions. They had communicated with Qin Yue, and they knew today would be a historic day for Tianshui.

Chen Zhen said excitedly, “Young Master Yun, your contribution is the biggest in this operation, and I think Prince Qin Yue will at least give you the title of Duke. Tsk, tsk, your family will have two Dukes then!”

Yunxiao gave him a faint smile and said indifferently, “When he ascends to the throne, I will leave Tianshui.”

“Why?” Chen Zhen asked in shock, but then seemed to understand something suddenly, so he fell silent.

Meanwhile, Chen Dasheng gave him an approving look. He knew Tianshui was too small for someone so gifted as Yunxiao, and he would leave the place sooner or later.

Luo Yunshang, on the other hand, felt her heart skip a beat when she heard that. Suddenly, she was seized with fear. Was that man leaving Tianshui? For a moment, she got restless, but then very quickly made up her mind. No matter where Yunxiao planned to go, she would follow, so that she would not be too far away from that man at least.

All the eight hundred thousand soldiers of the army were fully clad in armor, which shone blindingly under the sunlight. It looked as if a sea of armor was pouring over. And what followed them was the murderous air of soldiers, which swept over the courtiers on the platform, making them extremely uncomfortable.

“Stop!”

Chen Dasheng cried out at the top of his lungs when the army was beneath the platform. The soldiers halted at the same time, their footsteps so uniform that they seemed like machines.

“Father!” Qin Yue shouted.

Qin Zheng woke up. With the help of Qin Yang and Ruxue, he walked slowly to the edge of the platform. Looking down at the flashing sea of armor, the old emperor felt a stab of pain in his eyes.

In a hoarse voice, he said softly, “I have brought my courtiers here to welcome the return of our victorious army.” He purposely raised his voice, trying to shout his words out. But, his face looked so tired after trying, and only those stronger martial warriors could clear him.

“Today is not only the day our great army defeated the enemy and returned in triumph, but also the day the state of Tianshui will set a new course for the future.” His words instantly shocked everyone and made them nervous.

Colors and spirits seemed to return to his eyes as he cried out, “Today, I will announce the crown prince for Tianshui!”

Qin Yue’s expression changed drastically as he strode up and shouted, “Hold on!”

Chapter 110: A Sharp Turn

Qin Zheng’s words shocked everyone, and Qin Yue’s face turned dark and cold as soon as he heard them.

If he allowed his father to announce Qin Yang as the crown prince, the legitimacy of his throne would be questionable when he ascended it in the future. So, he had to stop it from happening.

“What do you want, Qin Yue? Are you trying to stop Father from announcing the crown prince?” Qin Yang demanded coldly. The respect for heaven, earth, monarch, parents, and teacher was the most important virtue for a man, so although every man here belonged to Qin Yue, he would not dare to violate that virtue openly.

There was a flash of menace in Qin Yue’s eyes when he said, “No, how would I do that? However, before the announcement is made, I wish to ask Father three questions.”

Qin Zheng gave him a look and said wearily, "You may ask your questions."

Clang!

Qin Yue drew a sword and lifted it up high as he asked in a loud voice, "Father, is the sword in my hand sharp?"

No sooner had his voice faded away than the eight hundred thousand soldiers beneath the platform cried out in unison, "SHARP!"

Their voices shook the sky; even the platform almost collapsed under the mighty shout. Qin Zheng's face fell and turned bloodless in an instant while Qin Yang fell silent.

Qin Ruxue felt a pang of sadness, but her eyes were not on the platform; she was staring at the gallant figure that stood at the forefront of the army.

"Second question...Father, is my army mighty?"

Eight hundred thousand soldiers cried out in unison again, "MIGHTY!"

A triumphant smile appeared on Qin Yue's face. He lightly tapped the sword in his hand with a finger, making it ring like a dragon roar, and then shouted, "Last question! With such a sharp sword and mighty army, am I, Qin Yue, your son, qualified to take over the state of Tianshui?"

A perfect silence fell. Everyone was stunned, but their eyes shone with excitement as they watched the great historic moment unfold. Pressured by the army's murderous air, Qin Zheng's face turned as pale as a sheet, and he was shaking all over. He looked like he was about to collapse at any time.

Even Qin Yang was stupefied by the display of power.

Li Chunyang sighed quietly and looked away. Staring at the calm face of his grandson beneath the platform, he felt joy and thought, 'The world is their playground now.'

Beneath the platform, Chen Dasheng's face grew serious as he suddenly cried out in a strong voice, "We beg Your Majesty to abdicate!"

His cry was immediately picked up by thousands of men. Not only the courtiers, but even all the eight hundred thousand soldiers shouted in unison, "We beg Your Majesty to abdicate!"

"We beg Your Majesty to abdicate!"

"We beg Your Majesty to abdicate!"

The cries echoed and spread thousands of miles away, but amidst them, the capital was unusually quiet, with only columns of imperial guards listening in the empty streets.

Qin Yang mustered all his strength and roared, "This is treason, Qin Yue!"

Showing no fear at all, Qin Yue took a step forward and sneered, "Father has done too much for this state. Now is the time for him to enjoy his life. As his best son, I need to shoulder the burden for him and take care of this state."

"His best son?" Qin Yang scoffed. "Who would believe that?"

"Who dares to not believe that?"

"Me!"

A discordant voice came from behind. Everyone turned and wanted to see who was so bold to stand out at this moment.

Several figures walked slowly up the platform. Their auras were not overly strong, but they gave everyone a feeling of reverence, which made everyone bow their heads slightly.

“Master Zhang Qingfan! Master Xu Han! When did you come out of your seclusion?”

Qin Yue was taken aback. There was a look of horror on his face and a flicker of rage in his eyes. He did not expect their arrival at such a critical moment.

“You are very wild, Qin Yue!” Zhang Qingfan gave him a cold look, which made the prince’s heart sink instantly. He was shocked to discover that Zhang Qingfan’s aura seemed to be different from before. In the past, the alchemist had always displayed his ability to the full extent, but now, he was like a pool of calm water, unfathomable.

Zhang Qingfan walked straight to Qin Zheng and bowed as he said gently, “I’m here, Your Majesty.”

A hint of a smile emerged on Qin Zheng’s face as he said, “I’m glad you are here. Who are these people?” His eyes rested on the few strange faces behind Zhang Qingfan and Xu Han. They, too, were emanating the same noble air, which clearly showed that they were alchemists.

While smiling, Zhang Qingfan introduced the men to the emperor. “This is Master Yuan Hao from the Firecrow Empire’s Alchemist Association, and he is a fourth-tier Alchemy Lord. This is Master Wang Chen, a third-tier Great Alchemy Master and also Lord Yang Di’s personal disciple. This is Sun Zhengzong, also a third-tier Great Alchemy Master. And this is Su Xiang, Master Yuan Hao’s follower and a Martial Grandmaster.”

The crowd was dumbfounded as Zhang Qingfan introduced the men one by one. Ignoring the two third-tier alchemists, just the fourth-tier alchemist and the Martial Grandmaster were enough to strike awe into everyone’s heart.

And one of them was even Yang Di’s personal disciple! For the people of Tianshui, Yang Di was almost like a god.

A moment ago, everyone was in high spirits, but now their hearts began to sink.

Li Chunyang's face fell as well as he looked at Su Xiang in horror. His heart raced when he sensed the faint Primordial Qi emanating from the man, and he knew that was undoubtedly the aura of a Martial Grandmaster.

Su Xiang's eyes were cloudy and slightly closed. As if he had sensed Li Chunyang's gaze, he sneered and his eyes flashed with a glimmer of light, which shot into Li Chunyang's chest like an arrow.

Li Chunyang grunted and coughed out a mouthful of blood. The fact that he, a one-star Martial King, was wounded by a mere glance filled his eyes with terror.

Nobody knew the secret exchange between them. Yuan Hao's eyes swept across everyone, then he smiled and said, "You are treating us like outsiders when you introduced us like that, brother Zhang. I'm sent here by the Firecrow Empire's third-tier Alchemist Association to award badges. After yesterday's tests, brother Zhang and brother Xu had passed the assessments and officially become fourth-tier Alchemy Lords."

"What!"

Upon hearing what he said, everyone was stunned as if they had been struck by lightning.

It was a great shock to everyone that two fourth-tier alchemists were born at the same time in Tianshui. Even Qin Zheng's old face was covered in shock. He stared incredulously at Zhang Qingfan, as if asking for confirmation.

Zhang Qingfan smiled and said, "I'm just lucky, Your Majesty."

His acknowledgment immediately made all the courtiers feel like falling into an abyss, and when they saw the wild joy on Qin Yang's face, they felt a great weight pressing down on their chests.

Qin Yue was dumbfounded. He already had the success within his grasp; all it would take was Qin Zheng's abdication. And, he still had the eight hundred thousand soldiers and all the courtiers behind him even now. However, in the face of these few gray-haired old men, his strength and claim seemed so weak and groundless.

He suddenly felt a trance at this moment that his pursuit of the throne seemed like a joke.

Qin Zheng laughed, but then, it quickly turned into a fit of violent coughing. "It's been so many years, Qingfan, and you've finally broken through!"

A smile appeared on Zhang Qingfan's face, and his eyes were filled with gratitude. "Your Majesty, I remember when I started following you in my twenties, my biggest dream had been to keep exploring the field of alchemy. About ten years ago, I began to feel that my ability fell short of my wishes, and I thought I would just be a third-tier alchemist for the rest of my life. I didn't expect that heaven was so kind to me and had given me a chance to break through again."

When an alchemist broke into the next tier, not only would his strength be greater than before, but his lifespan would be prolonged as well. If Zhang Qingfan still failed to break through, he would not have much time left. But now, he was given another fifty years to live.

The smile on Qin Zheng's face gradually faded away as he said bleakly, "Too bad that I'm not far away from the end of my life, and I can't witness your glorious moment."

Yuan Hao was somewhat moved as he watched both men talk about the old days. He said smilingly, "Please accept my congratulations, Your Majesty. As long as either Master Zhang or Master Xu is willing to stay in Tianshui, then your state will be directly promoted to an upper-rank state without the need to fight."

"Qingfan!" Qin Zheng grabbed Zhang Qingfan's hand hard, his eyes filled with a look of pleading.

Looking at his withered arm, Zhang Qingfan sighed in his heart. He was actually older than the emperor. "Rest assured, Your Majesty," he said, "I'll stay in Tianshui for the rest of my life. Besides, Master Yunxiao, to whom I am most grateful, is also in Tianshui. So, how can I leave?"

"Master Yunxiao?" That gave Qin Zheng a pause, and he looked puzzled.

"Yes. It is all because of Master Yunxiao's guidance that brother Xu and I could make the breakthrough this time."

The courtiers were looking at each other. “Who is this Master Yunxiao? Does Tianshui have such a great alchemist?”

Yuan Hao was shocked as well, and his eyes lit up. “Oh? I did not expect there is such a hermit in Tianshui. Can you introduce him to me, brother Zhang? I wish to visit him!”

Wang Chen and Sun Zhengzong also looked startled and expectant. It was an extremely rare opportunity for alchemists to learn from each other and ask for advice, and anyone would hope to visit an existence who could make two third-tier alchemists break through to the next level with just a lecture.

Zhang Qingfan glanced at all the courtiers and shouted loudly, “Is Master Yunxiao here? Qingfan wishes to express my gratitude for the guidance you’ve given me!”

Xu Han, too, stepped forward and said, “Xu Han also wishes to express my gratitude for the guidance Master Yunxiao had given me!”

Nobody dared to make a sound when two fourth-tier alchemists were shouting. Everyone was thinking hard, trying to recall anything related to this Master Yunxiao, but they got nothing.

Beneath the platform, Li Changfeng murmured to himself, “Master Yunxiao? Why does he have the same name as my son...”