

The Heavens 111

Chapter 111: A Gratified Shang Quan

Shang Xia's inner qi was unique and had the ability to transform and separate at will. Even so, it was still considered a single entity.

Compared to other cultivators at the Martial Extremity Realm, Shang Xia was probably the only one who could convert his inner qi freely. It was an obvious advantage he had above the rest.

Realizing that fact allowed him to come to a realization. Not only could he create rank two talismans of other attributes, but he could also create a new type of talisman!

Even though he used up all the talisman paper he exchanged with the Tongyou Peak, he still had 36 rank two talisman jades!

Those talisman jades were of much higher quality than ordinary talisman paper and they were able to boost the success rate of creating a rank two talisman! The energy that could be contained in a talisman jade was much more than a talisman paper, allowing it to release a much stronger effect! Of course, the cost of a single piece of talisman jade was much higher than a piece of talisman paper.

A single piece of talisman jade cost twenty silver essence, double that of a piece of talisman paper!

There was no way he could use them to verify his guesses and use them in his experiment. It would be a godly waste of resources, and not even the Shang Clan would be able to sustain his training if he were to squander away resources like that.

Then again, when Shang Xia first obtained the box of talisman jade pendants, he didn't expect them to be so expensive. If he traded them for herbs, he might be able to get a complete set to make his advancement medicine!

After leaving his quarters at the Shang Pavilion, he went over to look for Yan Ni'er who was taking care of the four eggs.

Even though so many things went down in recent days, the little Mutated Rain Swallow remained faithfully in its little nest.

Naturally, it looked a little downcast due to the absence of Shang Xia and the fact that it had to remain obediently in its nest. Luckily, it didn't seem long before the eggs would hatch.

When Shang Xia saw the eggs moving about slightly, a trace of anticipation filled his heart. Making his way over to the window after saying hello to Yan Ni'er, Shang Xia opened it and a streak of silver lightning tore through the skies. The Lightning Bird had been waiting for Shang Xia's permission to enter the Shang Pavilion and it finally got the chance to visit the little rain swallow! In an instant, the room turned extremely lively.

Shang Xia didn't bother the two birds as he went to the training grounds behind the pavilion. Grabbing a sword as per usual, he started to practice his sword art.

This time, he was training in the Cloud Drizzle Sword Art he obtained not too long ago.

The Cloud Drizzle Sword Art focused on the qi of void and reality, and the technique had the reputation of being extremely annoying to their opponent.

The complete technique had sixteen moves, and the first eight moves were known as the Cloud Sword Manual. They could also be named the Void Sword. The final eight techniques made up the Drizzle Sword Manual, and those were known as the Reality Sword.

Strictly speaking, the sword art was extremely profound and had the effect of assisting the cultivator in gaining a better understanding of void and reality qi. However, the strength displayed by a cultivator who trained in it was pretty ordinary.

After reading through the sword manual after obtaining it from his aunt, Shang Xia realized that there were many insights written on the various pages of the manual. Other than that, the author of the Cloud Drizzle Manual also left behind a huge chunk of knowledge debating void and reality qi. It was clear that the creator of the manual not only possessed deep knowledge of the two types of qi... The sword technique they practiced was also not limited to the Cloud Drizzle Sword Art!

With the insights and pointers left in the manual, Shang Xia managed to progress at a terrifying pace! His understanding of the void and reality qi also deepened immensely!

His gains were extremely valuable as they allowed him to understand more about the Yin Yang Mysterious Art he was cultivating! His foundations became a lot more solid!

To explain it properly, Shang Xia's Yin Yang Mysterious Art was a frighteningly high-level technique! However, that didn't mean that his knowledge of the dao was at the same degree. He had to learn a lot more in order to fully comprehend the Yin Yang Mysterious Art.

To put it into perspective, the Yin Yang Mysterious Art was like a lofty castle. Shang Xia knew what it looked like, but he had no idea how to actually build the castle. All he could do was to experiment with the knowledge he had to obtain some results.

Luckily for him, he had the Triple Mystery Polarity Art as the foundation of his Yin Yang Mysterious Art. He understood the principles behind changing his inner qi at will and with the River Sword Policy to supplement his knowledge, it became a lot more smooth sailing. Now that he had the Cloud Drizzle Sword Art, his technique was slowly taking shape.

Finishing the final move of the Cloud Drizzle Sword Art, Shang Xia leaped tens of feet into the air and stabbed his sword out. Void qi and reality qi fused into a single entity and dozens of sword lights rained down from the skies above. Holes were stabbed deep into the ground.

Even though the final strike was supposed to be part of the Drizzle Sword Manual, Shang Xia combined both types of qi when unleashing it. Some of the sword lights that fell were fake, and some were real. His opponents would be hard-pressed to determine which one of them they had to defend against.

His achievements were terrifying. Not even experts at the grand completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm would be able to do what he did.

When he finally landed on the ground, he took a deep breath and his attention turned to the blood-red tablet in his sea of consciousness.

As streaks of crimson light flashed across its surface, the words on it started to change.

Martial Intent: Yin Yang Sword Formation (Can be advanced)

Prerequisite Cultivation Technique: Yin Yang Mysterious Art (In Progress, Yet To Reach The Large Completion Stage)

Prerequisite Martial Art: Vigorous Sword Art, Formless Sword Art, Flexible Sword Art

Subsequent Martial Art: Cloud Drizzle Sword Art

Requirement: Yin Yang Diagram

Medicine Required: Meridian Tempering Powder, Meridian Replenishing Powder

Required Item: Yin Yang Sword Talisman

Success Rate: 70%-85%

After he deepened his understanding of void and reality qi, it seemed as though his Yin Yang Mysterious Art improved a little. However, according to the tablet, it hadn't reached the large completion stage.

Shang Xia guessed that his understanding was too low for the tablet to make proper recommendations and evaluations.

A bold guess also entered his mind. Was it possible that he had to reach the large completion stage of his current cultivation technique before a recommended martial intent would be produced?

Maybe it was because of the Yin Yang Diagram in Shang Xia's dantian that allowed him to convert all his inner qi into one of the two attributes to make it seem as though it reached the large completion stage.

Even though it was a mere facade, it seemed as though it was enough to activate the tablet.

After Shang Xia circulated his inner qi normally and transformed it back into a state of balance, it naturally fell back down below the threshold of qi required to reach the large completion stage.

Other than that, there was a new addition to the tablet, the Cloud Drizzle Sword Art.

Shang Xia felt that after cultivating the Cloud Drizzle Sword Art, the power of his Yin Yang Sword Formation would be increased.

The slight change in the success rate was in line with Shang Xia's expectations. After all, he started to learn a new sword art in order to comprehend his martial intent. It certainly added some complications to his understanding.

"Clap, clap, clap..." The applause interrupted his train of thought and caused him to snap awake.

Turning to the entrance of the practice field, Shang Xia saw Shang Quan walking towards him slowly. He exclaimed in admiration, "Is this the sword art that contains the use of void and reality qi? You managed to comprehend so much in such a short amount of time... It's incredible! No wonder the Murong Family took the Triple Mystery Polarity Art as their inheritance treasure. Changing qi as they please... Impressive!"

"Murong Family?" Shang Xia was slightly shocked. "Is that the Murong Family that is part of the Evil Remnants? They were the ones who created the Triple Mystery Polarity Art?!"

Murong Yuntian was the first person he thought of. It was no wonder he was able to use the secret art so smoothly! The technique was produced by his family!

Shang Quan nodded and chuckled, 'You haven't told me the name of the sword art you're practicing!'

A strange look appeared on Shang Xia's face and he muttered, "Wait... You don't know about it either? Isn't this an inheritance from our Shang Clan?"

Shang Quan roared with laughter. "Of course not! Our Shang Clan has some sword manuals for cultivators at the Martial Extremity Realm, but they don't contain the use of void and reality qi."

"Something doesn't seem right! I heard from Instructor Liu that our Shang Clan had a swordmaster and I asked Aunt Shang Xi to look for a suitable sword art for myself. She gave me this Cloud Drizzle Sword Art a while ago! Isn't it from our Shang Clan? Anyway, who is the swordmaster Instructor Liu told me about?"

Shang Quan stared at Shang Xia in stunned silence for a moment and a trace of hesitation flashed across his eyes. "I heard that you've been in seclusion to practice the art of talisman creation the past few days... Even though you're already close to becoming a rank two talisman master, it won't be easy for you to take the final step! You need to practice more in order to advance! Don't worry about wasting resources, I..."

Before he could finish, Shang Xia retrieved the Golden Sword Talisman from his sleeve, forcing Shang Quan to swallow his words.

"You... You... Is this a Golden Sword Talisman?!" Shang Quan stuttered. A look of excitement flashed in his eyes. "This is great! No! This is amazing!"

Shang Xia revealed a bitter smile in response, "What do you mean? I used twenty talisman papers to make three of these. It's such a waste!"

"No, it's not! It's not a waste!" Shang Quan was jumping in joy. "You became a rank two talisman master at such a young age! Just practice a little more in the future and your success rate will definitely increase!" After he spoke, he seemed to have thought of something and reached into his sleeves. He brought out a stack of rank two talisman paper and cried, "Here's twenty sheets of rank two talisman paper! Use it to your heart's content! Now that you have become a rank two talisman master, you need to practice as much as you can. There's no need to worry about the cost! I'll bring you as many resources as you need!"

Chapter 112: Eyesore

Shang Xia was no longer the ignorant young master he once was. He learned about the true worth of all the cultivation resources he took for granted in the past.

The stack of twenty sheets of rank two talisman paper Shang Quan passed him cost two hundred silver essence in total, and it might not be worth anything to a superpower like the Shang Clan. However, the amount was astronomical for a single cultivator!

Even if Shang Quan was the manager of the Shang Clan's businesses on the Tongyou Peak, he couldn't use the clan's resources as he pleased. Shang Xia was a third generation member of the Shang Clan, and he might be able to obtain several hundred silver essence worth of cultivation resources, but any more and tongues might start to wag.

Shang Quan couldn't possibly allocate Shang Xia more resources just because of his identity! Not even Shang Bo who was the patriarch of the Shang Clan could do as he pleased!

Shang Xia knew how important it was, and he wasn't willing to accept so many resources from his uncle! He wanted to use his achievements and resources to exchange for the materials he required.

"I can't accept this! Uncle Quan, these cost a considerable amount of money!" Shang Xia tried to reject Shang Quan's goodwill.

He received a nonchalant response from Shang Quan. "Haha, I'm not giving these to you for free. Don't forget, we still have an agreement between us. All the talismans you have over to the clan will be sold and we'll split the profits 80-20. You can consider this an early investment."

Even so, Shang Xia continued to refuse them. "I will definitely take them if they're rank one material. After all, I would be able to create rank one talismans with no problem. However, I barely started to create rank two talismans and I managed to complete most of them by luck. Uncle Quan, you should wait for a little more for me to consolidate my foundations. We'll still split the profits 80-20 as per our original agreement!"

"Even so, you'll still have to keep these." Shang Quan chuckled.

Before Shang Xia could say anything, he continued, "Did you forget about the treasures you gave me previously?"

"You managed to sell them away?" Shang Xia was pleasantly surprised.

A grin appeared on Shang Quan's face and he explained, "Yeah. We got lucky. The protection formation of the Tongyou Peak was damaged and we required a huge amount of resources to fix it. The Blue Clay you handed over was one of the ingredients required, and I sold it to the institution for seventy silver essence. The gloves might not be a graded weapon, but they're extremely powerful. I bought it on behalf of our Shang Clan for seventy silver essence."

Shang Xia took out two of the three Golden Sword Talismans he created and handed them over to his uncle, "The talisman paper costs sixty silver essence more than what they sold for... Here. Two of these talismans should be able to sell for that price to make up for the difference."

Receiving the Golden Sword Talisman, Shang Quan shook his head slightly and sighed, "Alright, alright!"

After keeping the twenty sheets of talisman paper, Shang Xia finally changed the topic. "Uncle Quan, our Tongyou Peak seems a lot quieter these days."

"Yes, it is. After the beast tide retreated, the Contribution Division created a lot of tasks. Many cultivators have already left the mountain to complete their missions. There were also several scattered cultivators who left the Tongyou Peak after the battle ended." Shang Quan explained.

Shang Xia raised an eyebrow and continued, “Even if the beast tide retreated, the surrounding area might not be safe! Are the missions related to the Four Spiritual Peak? Also, Deputy Patriarch Liu and the disciples of our Tongyou Peak are trapped somewhere by the members of the Rose Party. Shouldn’t we be focusing our resources on rescuing them?”

Shang Quan nearly burst out laughing after hearing what he said. “Brat, do you think it’s easy to carry out a rescue mission?! Do you know where the inheritance of the Zhu Family is?!”

“Isn’t it in the Coral Forest?” Shang Xia heard about it from Shang Xi in the past.

A snort left Shang Quan’s lips suddenly. “Yeah. But you don’t seem to know what the Coral Forest actually is... It’s a natural maze formed in the battlefield between two worlds!”

“Maze?” Confusion filled Shang Xia’s mind.

“Not only is the Coral Forest massive, but there are also countless natural formations guarding the area! It’s an extremely bizarre region and it’s said that the Zhu Family’s inheritance might have something to do with the strange happenings going on there. We’re not sure that it’s true, but what we do know is that even Martial Extermination Realm cultivators won’t be able to fly in there. Many people got lost in the Coral Forest and failed to return!” Shang Quan introduced the strange region to Shang Xia.

“This... Looks like it’s not a problem we can solve by sending more men over...” Shang Xia sighed.

Nodding, Shang Quan continued, “Yeah. Even if we choose to rescue Liu Jitang and the rest, only the Martial Extermination Realm experts and several stronger Martial Intent Realm experts of our Tongyou Peak would be involved. We won’t be dragged into it.”

“However, Deputy Patriarch Liu brought a huge group of disciples to look for the inheritance! Aren’t there a ton of disciples at the Martial Realm and the Martial Extremity Realm?” Shang Xia frowned.

“Haha... No matter how many people he brings, he won’t be able to enter the inheritance lands of the Zhu Family easily. Even if they had members with the Zhu Family bloodline, it won’t change a thing!”

Shang Xia understood what his uncle was saying instantly. He snorted in amusement before changing the topic yet again. “What are the missions issued by the institution anyway? I’ve been on the Tongyou Peak for so long, but other than cultivating in seclusion, practicing the sword, and creating talismans, I have not done anything else. I wish to take a look around...”

“The changes in the battlefield between the two worlds take place extremely quickly. There might be places that contain resources and previous herbs. The missions should include mining for precious minerals, collecting herbs, looking for spiritual springs, or other resources. There are all sorts of missions!” Shang Quan introduced. “If you bring back intelligence on places that can be used in the long run, the institution will probably send people out to protect those regions!”

“Of course, the situation changed due to the beast tide that passed. We need to look for everything all over again. Otherwise, we’ll lose a lot in the long run!” Shang Quan sighed.

Seeing as Shang Xia understood what he said, Shang Quan continued, “That’s not all. We’re extremely lucky to receive an early warning from your flock of Mutated Rain Swallows that the beast tide has arrived. The Four Spiritual Peak isn’t so lucky!”

A light flashed in Shang Xia’s eyes and he completed what his uncle was trying to say. “Since the Four Spiritual Peak will also be protecting some regions of precious resources, the beast tide destroyed everything they worked hard for! Now that all of their Martial Extermination Realm experts are injured, it’s a great chance for us to take over those regions!”

“A huge portion of the missions issued by the Contribution Division involves protection. We need to guard the regions that produce precious resources, and you didn’t manage to see the usual distribution of missions due to the sudden war that broke out.” Shang Quan chuckled.

Turning to head for the Contribution Division, Shang Xia asked one last question. “Uncle Quan, do our Shang Clan possess any special regions in the battlefield between two worlds?”

“Of course we do. The experts of our clan have already been sent out. Your Grandpa Ke took care of everything as soon as the beast tide subsided.”

“What about me?” Shang Xia frowned.

Shaking his head, Shang Quan already knew what Shang Xia wanted to say. “You’re different. You’re still a disciple of the institution and you should focus on the missions issued by the Tongyou Peak. You can worry about matters regarding the clan later. Remember, the institution should come first.”

A sudden realization hit Shang Xia. It seemed as though that was the real reason why his uncle came looking for him. Despite the understanding, he found it a little weird.

He was just an outer disciple of the institution. No matter how talented he was, he was merely a disciple at the Martial Extremity Realm. Moreover, he had been staying quietly in the Shang Pavilion throughout his time there! How could he have offended an old monster of the institution causing his uncle to remind him about his identity? Did someone high up there find him an eyesore?

Anything that warranted Shang Quan giving him an explicit warning like that definitely had something to do with the higher-ups of the institution. The Shang Clan was powerful enough to shield him against any ill intent or annoyance of Martial Intent Realm cultivators... Even if a few of them joined hands to cause trouble for the Shang Clan...

There was only one reason... A Martial Extermination Realm expert was acting behind the scenes!

Chapter 113: Accepting a Mission

The Contribution Division didn’t possess their own hall on the Tongyou Peak and they were allocated a region somewhere near the top of the Tongyou Peak. It wasn’t too far from the main hall!

When Shang Xia arrived at the entrance of the Contribution Division, he discovered that it wasn't like what Shang Quan had said. There were several disciples picking out their missions, but it wasn't as bustling as he had thought.

"A lot of them have already accepted their missions and left the Tongyou Peak." A voice rang from behind him and Shang Xia's head snapped around.

Noticing the lady standing behind him, a look of joy appeared on Shang Xia's face. "Senior Sister Sun, have you left seclusion? Did you actually enter the Martial Intent Realm this time?"

A bitter smile appeared on her face and she sighed, "It's not that easy! Even though the remnant energy around the pool allowed me to take another step towards the Martial Intent Realm, it wasn't enough for me to cross the threshold!"

A look of shock flashed across Shang Xia's eyes. "Senior Sister, did you refine the medicine you need to break through? Wouldn't that mean..."

"Of course not. I plan to eat it only when I have accumulated enough inner qi to break through." Sun Haiwei explained. A self-defeating smile soon appeared on her face. "I didn't think that breaking through would be so difficult! At least I know the way to break through now. I need to look for several regions with thick heaven and earth qi to strengthen my inner qi. It's a matter of time before I finally enter the Martial Intent Realm..."

Shang Xia nodded solemnly before talking about something else. "Senior Sister Sun, did you come to accept a mission for the institution?"

She was just about to reply when she felt something coming from outside.

Shang Xia was able to feel the disturbance too, and he looked in the direction she was staring at.

In the air above the main hall of the Tongyou Peak, a pillar of light pierced high into the heavens.

Many disciples noticed the abnormality and turned to look up at the sky.

Soon after, the rattling of chains that couldn't be more familiar in the ears of those who took part in the war rang through the skies. A formless barrier seemed to form around them, surrounding the entire Tongyou Peak.

When the formless barrier took shape, the pillar of light that came from the top of the Tongyou Peak disappeared.

"What's going on?! Did someone attack us again?!" One of the weaker disciples cried in panic.

"No. This is a sign that the protection formation of our Tongyou Peak has been completely restored!" Sun Haiwei yelled to calm the crowd down.

Audible sighs of relief could be heard through the land.

Even though the disturbance only lasted for a short period of time, it caused such a huge commotion that not only did those from the Tongyou Peak notice it. Those who were situated extremely far away from them could probably also notice the change!

A mighty voice rang in the minds of everyone who was within a ten-mile radius of the peak. “Everyone please refrain from panicking. This is a sign that our protection formation has been fully restored!”

Shang Xia could tell that the voice belonged to Liu Qinglan, and the commotion soon died down.

A look of confusion could be seen on Shang Xia’s face and he turned to Sun Haiwei, “Senior Sister Sun, this...”

“I have no idea what’s going on. However, I am sure that the protection formation is completely restored now.”

Nodding slowly, Shang Xia continued to walk into the hall.

“Junior Brother Shang, what mission do you plan to accept?” Sun Haiwei looked at the huge board before asking.

Shang Xia was examining the missions on the jade board and he sighed, “I don’t know much about the battlefield between two worlds and I can’t make my decision easily. I’ll take a look before making my decision.

Sun Haiwei’s eyes brightened up all of a sudden and she tilted her head to look at Shang Xia, “Why don’t we join hands and take on a mission together?”

Shang Xia raised an eyebrow in suspicion when he saw the look of expectation on her face.

“What do you have in mind?”

Sun Haiwei giggled and chose one of the missions on the board before passing them to Shang Xia.

“Essence stone mine?” He started to look through the information on it.

A moment later, he seemed to have reached an understanding. “Hahaha! Are you planning to make preparations for your advancement?!”

Sun Haiwei didn’t bother hiding her intentions either. “Of course! The mine might be a little barren, but the heaven and earth qi in there should be dense enough. We might not be able to extract the ores as we please, but I should be able to cultivate there for quite some time!”

Shang Xia sighed in response, “Things might get dangerous there though...”

“The beast tide just passed, and the disciples of the Four Spiritual Peak suffered greatly in the war that passed! It’s extremely unlikely for them to appear at this time and the worst we should face should be some random beasts that chose to nest there. However, the mine I chose seems pretty barren and higher leveled rare beasts shouldn’t bother taking it as their territory. We should face some rank two beasts and it’s nothing we can’t handle.”

“What if we really run into a rank three rare beast?” Shang Xia couldn’t help but ask. “I know the reason behind choosing this particular mine. Other mines would be populated with Martial Intent Realm cultivators and we won’t be able to gain much from being there. That’s the reason we get to accept this mission! However, we should plan for the worst in case anything happens.”

Sun Haiwei wasn’t annoyed by his comment in the slightest. Instead, a trace of admiration flashed across her eyes. “Relax. I’m more than confident in our ability to retreat unharmed.”

Shang Xia nodded and chose to remain silent. He didn’t think that she was overestimating herself either.

After all, her talent was extraordinary. The institution wouldn’t allow her to die easily!

The two of them received the mission and obtained a piece of directional talisman from the disciple of the Contribution Division. However, they had to pay twenty silver essence in order to accept the mission.

The locations in the battlefield between the two worlds changed all the time. No one knew if the location of the mine had changed. That was why a disciple left behind a guiding talisman, allowing them to look for its approximate location. The twenty silver essence was to pay for the guiding talisman that made their mission easier.

When the duo left the region protected by the formation on the Tongyou Peak, Shang Xia whistled loudly.

A clear chirp came from the skies and a ray of cold light flashed through the air, landing accurately on Shang Xia’s shoulders.

Sun Haiwei looked at the large bird that was close to the size of his head and gasped, “Oh right, I forgot that you are able to call the Lightning Bird for help. This way, our journey to the mine should be much smoother than I thought!”

Shang Xia chuckled before whispering into the Lightning Bird’s ears. Chirping loudly, it soon shot back up into the clouds.

Sun Haiwei activated the guiding talisman at the same time, and a streak of golden light flew in a certain direction, sending them on their way.

“Let’s go!” Retrieving the talisman, she spoke to Shang Xia.

“How many times can we use this talisman?” Shang Xia asked.

Since becoming a rank two talisman master, Shang Xia was able to understand the principle behind the talisman with a glance.

Every time it was activated, it could point them in a certain direction.

Of course, it couldn’t be used unlimited times. After the energy contained in it was exhausted, it would shatter.

As such, they couldn’t use it repeatedly. Otherwise, they would exhaust the talisman completely before finding the mine, causing them to waste all their time looking for it.

“We can use it seven more times!” Sun Haiwei replied. “However, it would give us a proper sign when we arrive within ten miles of the mine and we might not need to use all seven chances.”

The two of them weren't weak, and they traveled quickly.

Since the beast tide had subsided, the region around the Tongyou Peak was pretty peaceful.

After leaving three hundred miles from the Tongyou Peak, the two of them finally ran into some trouble. Several tiny beasts came to attack them.

Luckily, they had the Lightning Bird to warn them. They managed to deal with the threat easily.

...

Resting at the side of a tiny stream, Sun Haiwei activated the talisman for a second time.

All of a sudden, loud chirps came from above them. Looking at the Lightning Bird circling the skies above, Shang Xia frowned.

“What's wrong? Are we in danger?” Sun Haiwei asked.

Sighing softly, Shang Xia replied, “Nope. The Lightning Bird probably discovered something wrong up ahead. There seem to be some people fighting in the region. Should we head over to take a look?”

Chapter 114: Danger

“There seem to be some people fighting in the region. Should we head over to take a look?”

After the Lightning Bird managed to advance thanks to Shang Xia's Chaos Essence Lightning Palm that contained a trace of heavenly lightning, it seemed to have become more intelligent. The communication between the two became a lot smoother than before.

Sun Haiwei frowned and muttered, “Those around here can only belong to our Tongyou Peak! Let's hurry up and head over!”

The two of them used their movement arts and appeared outside the entrance to a valley. They heard the sound of battle echoing within.

Looking at each other, they tactfully hid themselves before making their way in.

“This...” Shang Xia looked at the vegetation that grew at the entrance to the valley.

He might not be extremely knowledgeable in the field of herbs, but he could tell that many of them had faint wisps of heaven and earth qi swirling about the petals. They seemed to be undergoing some sort of transformation into precious herbs!

If that was happening at the entrance of the valley, what would be contained in it?!

Even someone like Shang Xia who had seen a lot of treasures felt his hands getting itchy. Greed threatened to fill his heart. At the same time, he cursed at the bastards fighting in there.

Do you know how many resources you're wasting by messing up the place?!

“This... This is a medicine valley!” Sun Haiwei exclaimed all of a sudden.

Even without her reminder, Shang Xia could have guessed as much.

All he wanted to do was to hurry up and enter the valley to stop those who were fighting. The faster the battle ended, the fewer herbs they would damage!

A medicine valley was a unique existence that existed in the battlefield between two worlds. There were countless herbs growing in the valley, and among them were even several precious herbs that couldn't be found in the outside world!

Regardless of whether it was the Four Spiritual Peak or the Tongyou Peak, they tried endlessly to replicate a medicine valley in the battlefield between two worlds, but never once had they succeeded. The only way to obtain one was to find a naturally born medicine valley!

The appearance of a medicine valley was naturally a heaven-sent miracle. As such, the appearance of one would be a closely guarded secret by either party. As long as the medicine valley occupied by the other power was found, a bloody battle was bound to occur.

“There aren't any beast cries and the only explanation is that the battle is between cultivators of our Tongyou Peak and the Azure Spiritual World!” Shang Xia exclaimed.

The two of them revealed their weapons and got ready to jump into the battle.

“Azure Spiritual World? Is the Four Spiritual Peak crazy? Why would they send their cultivators out now?” Sun Haiwei found it weird, but she didn't slow down as they advanced towards the scene of the battle.

When they arrived, they watched the chaos from afar.

They could see that there were two groups fighting relentlessly in the middle of the valley, and there were several figures already lying motionless on the ground.

Indeed... It was a battle between cultivators of the Tongyou Peak and the Four Spiritual Peak!

Even though the number of cultivators from the Tongyou Peak easily outnumbered that of the Four Spiritual Peak, they weren't able to gain an advantage.

There were more than a dozen cultivators at the Martial Realm on the Tongyou Peak's side, and there were only three from the Four Spiritual Peak! However, all three of them were cultivators at the Martial Extremity Realm!

The strongest of the three had already started to use both types of qi he practiced! Shang Xia could tell that he had already reached the large completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm.

If not for the fact that there were disciples from the Tongyou Peak who knew how to use the five man formation used by the patrol squads to forcefully hold their opponents back, they would have lost a long time ago!

The Martial Realm cultivators could only try their best to encircle their opponents.

Luckily for them, the two weaker cultivators from the Azure Spiritual World weren't too strong. They were barely stuck in a deadlock.

However, Martial Realm cultivators were, after all, weaker than those at the Martial Extremity Realm. They were clearly out of steam.

“Hah... They’re pretty lucky...” Shang Xia snorted.

A chuckle left Sun Haiwei’s lips and she replied, “I’ll deal with the strongest of the three. You can sneak attack any of the other two.”

“Alright!” Shang Xia laughed. With their strength, killing the three cultivators from the Azure Spiritual World would be as easy as flipping their palms. With the addition of the Martial Realm disciples of the Tongyou Peak, the fates of their opponents were practically sealed!

Regardless of whether it was Shang Xia or Sun Haiwei, they were terrifying existences in the Martial Extremity Realm. They would be able to kill any of the three in a single strike! Since they still had a mission to complete after this, they decided to deal with the problem as quickly as they could while wasting the least amount of energy.

Sun Haiwei appeared from behind a tree and dropped like a hawk on her target.

A pair of sharp spikes appeared in her palm as a trace of orange flame surrounded one of them. On the other, a chilling frost created a layer of ice on its surface.

Her target noticed her at the last moment and released an enraged cry.

Shang Xia smiled and made his move.

The disciples who were surrounding the two other cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World felt a breeze brush against them and before they could tell what happened, a massive blast rang through the air. One of the cultivators from the Azure Spiritual World was struck by the sudden explosion and he slammed into the ground with his skin burnt and his body twitching.

“Chaos Essence Lightning Palm! It’s Senior Brother Shang!” Someone exclaimed in shock.

Before anyone could react, the sound of metal scraping against metal rang through the air, causing the skulls of the Martial Realm cultivators to go numb. A miserable shriek filled the air before the sound stopped.

Everyone turned to stare at the other cultivator and saw Shang Xia standing there with his arms hanging casually by his side. The cultivator from the Azure Spiritual World was propping himself up with his weapon as he stared at Shang Xia with a gaze full of fear.

“Good... Good sword technique...”

After the words left his lips, he crumpled to the ground in defeat.

Blood started pouring out of his wounds all of a sudden, and his body withered in an instant.

When the disciples of the Tongyou Peak were staring at Shang Xia incredulously, he was equally as shocked. Clearly, he didn’t know the effects of his sword art.

“What technique is this?”

The question caused the group of disciples to move away, and Sun Haiwei could be seen approaching with a frown on her face. Examining the corpse, she muttered, "Looks like some sort of mysterious energy entered his body before igniting suddenly, pushing all the blood out of his body."

Shang Xia didn't respond immediately. Instead, he turned to look at the frozen statue that was the third cultivator of the Azure Spiritual World in the distance.

It was clear that Sun Haiwei managed to deal with her opponent when Shang Xia was busy with the two of them.

"Cloud Drizzle Sword Art... It's my first time using it and I didn't think that it would turn out this way." Shang Xia smiled.

Nodding slowly, Sun Haiwei evaluated, "Yeah... You put too much into it."

A bitter smile formed on Shang Xia's face. "Indeed... I didn't know how strong he actually was. I could only give it my all... Who knew, he couldn't even take a few hits! Hehe."

Only then did the disciples recognize Sun Haiwei.

"Teacher Sun!"

"Many thanks to Teacher Sun for lending a helping hand!" Many disciples started to send their greetings.

After all, the number of disciples who were from the third outer division among them was numerous.

"Senior Brother Shang!"

"Chief Shang!"

The disciples also greeted Shang Xia to express their gratitude.

"All of you are pretty lucky to locate a medicine valley!" Shang Xia laughed. "How did you run into cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World here?"

"When we found this medicine valley, they were already stationed here. They probably hid in here when the beast tide broke out and we were ambushed by them! Several fellow disciples died! Luckily some of us here knew how to use the five man formation and stopped the strongest one among them. Otherwise, we wouldn't have lasted till now!"

"Dou Zhong?" Shang Xia was surprised when he recognized one of the disciples in the crowd. He no longer bothered about the explanation and he stared at the youngster with unwavering determination on his face.

The instant their gazes met, Shang Xia chuckled. A deep light flashed in Dou Zhong's eyes, and Shang Xia noticed it right before Dou Zhong could turn away.

Chapter 115: Wind Manipulation Zoysia and Compelling Ningpo Wigfort

Even though Shang Xia's actions in the institution were slightly over the top, there was nothing actually bad about what he did. Other than the fact that he liked to show off a little, he wasn't as rash as young masters of large families tend to be. He wasn't extremely unfriendly either.

After he entered the battlefield between two worlds, Shang Xia's actions were indeed impressive.

It was especially so when he saved the disciples of the third outer division and helped them to break through to the Martial Realm! After that, he had numerous contributions in the war, and he even discovered the beast tide just before it started! The various outer disciples had a great impression of him, and there were even some who were extremely grateful.

If they had to use something as an example, Shang Xia and Sun Haiwei killed three cultivators of the Azure Spiritual Race, saving several disciples! They received a ton of thanks. It was especially so for the disciples who were injured during the battle. Their lives were saved by the duo's actions! Even if they had to force themselves to their feet, they wanted to thank Shang Xia for his grace!

After all, if not for them, the injured cultivators would definitely die! They wouldn't be able to run away from the cultivators on the other side!

The disciples might be a little hesitant to talk to Sun Haiwei due to her status as a teacher in the institution, but they were extremely familiar with Shang Xia. It didn't take long before they were joking around with him.

"All of you were too damn lucky. You even managed to find a place like this! When you report this to the institution, you'll be able to obtain a lot of herbs!" Shang Xia laughed.

"Haha! If not for you rushing over in time, our good fortune would have ended in the hands of the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World!" One of the disciples who barely stepped into the Martial Realm sighed with displeasure.

Shang Xia didn't respond to his comment and continued, "How did all of you form such a huge group to go adventuring anyway? You're not from the same class..."

"All the other teachers disappeared after we arrived at the Tongyou Peak. All of us were left out to dry. After the beast tide, someone said that there are cultivators of the Four Spiritual Peak who are weak and injured left out in the wild and we chose to take a chance. We joined forces and left to look for an opportunity outside, but this happened..." The person who spoke seemed pretty familiar with Shang Xia from the way he spoke.

Shang Xia chuckled in response, "Xu Xindi, weren't there many fellow disciples of our third division who broke through to the Martial Realm? Why are you the only one in this group?"

Xu Xindi was indeed a disciple of the third outer division. He was also one of the ones who broke through when Shang Xia saved them from the hidden valley from the cultivators of the Wind Swallow Race.

A helpless sigh left his lips. "Senior Brother Shang, Teacher Sun sent them out to the Warehouse Division to take on various tasks. Not only will they be able to learn something there, but they will

also be able to earn silver essence! I missed the chance because I was in seclusion. When I wanted to look for Teacher Sun after emerging, I found out she entered seclusion. That's why I came out here with them."

...

On one of the massive planes not too far from the valley...

Five disciples with Dou Zhong at the lead stood silently as they looked at the larger group chatting happily around Shang Xia.

One of the youths snorted coldly beside Dou Zhong, "Hmph. Look at him showing off... When did he learn to make a good reputation for himself?"

Dou Zhong turned around and glanced at him. Before he could say anything, two of his companions got to their feet. "Second brother, we'll head over to take a look. We'll be back soon!"

The disciple who was grumbling earlier felt his expression hardening. "Didn't we already greet Teacher Sun? What are you going there for? Are you trying to kiss up to Shang Xia?"

An awkward smile appeared on the faces of those who stood up, but the last of the five spoke suddenly. "Brother Yong, you can't say that. The only reason we managed to enter the Martial Realm is because of the help we received from the disciples of the third outer division. We should definitely show our gratitude..."

Before he could retort, he was pulled aside by Dou Zhong.

"Second brother..." Dou Zhong didn't care about his reaction at all and he smiled at the two who wished to head over. "Of course. Go ahead but be back soon..."

The two of them ran over to Shang Xia as soon as they heard what he said.

Looking at their backs, the disciple who was called 'Brother Yong', growled, "Useless freaks!"

Dou Zhong shook his head and sighed, "That's how the world works... Your method seems a little too offputting..."

"I hate the way he does things! He's only able to gain all his achievements because he was born into a good family!"

Staring at Shang Xia, the look in Dou Zhong's eyes grew even deeper. No one knew what he was thinking about.

...

After chatting with almost everyone around him, Shang Xia smiled, "Alright, alright. This medicine valley is a valuable resource. Even though high level herbs might be hard to find, there should be a ton of low level herbs. It's extremely useful for your cultivation. All of you should look around and look for them. You should grab it before the institution sends a team down here to guard the resources. When that happens, you won't be able to pick them freely anymore."

Xu Xindi raised an eyebrow in shock. "Brother Shang, aren't you going to join us in our search?"

“It’s not that easy. Even though the valley possesses remarkable abilities, rank two herbs are extremely difficult to find. I might not be able to find one I can use either. All of you can go ahead.” Shang Xia sighed.

As the group dispersed amidst laughter, the valley became boisterous again.

“You’re pretty good at building relations...” Sun Haiwei’s voice rang in his ears.

He chuckled in response, “All of us are fellow disciples. I’m doing all I can to help them...” His tone changed all of a sudden and he asked a question of his own. “How was it? Did you find any treasures on them?”

Sun Haiwei tossed over a bag of silver essence before dropping the rest of the items onto the ground. A helpless smile formed on her face. “You’re going to be disappointed this time. The three of them have nothing of value. Looks like they hadn’t been here for a long time too. They didn’t collect any herbs...”

“What a pity...” Shang Xia looked through the items on the ground and discovered that there were several empty bottles. It was clear that they had used everything in there.

Seeing as there was nothing noteworthy on the ground, he turned to look at the spikes in Sun Haiwei’s hands. The signs of wear were clear. “Senior Sister Sun, your martial intent is too wasteful... You can’t possibly waste a pair of weapons after using your martial intent, right? You should look for a pair of graded weapons...”

Sun Haiwei rolled her eyes at him in annoyance. “Do you think graded weapons grow on trees?!”

Shang Xia chuckled in amusement, “Well... You’ll definitely be able to find it...”

Since the two of them were still on a mission, they decided to take their leave now that they had dealt with the danger.

Just as they were about to leave, a strange cry rang through the air. “Hey! Looks! It’s a Wind Manipulation Zoysia! This is a rank two herb! It’s one of the ingredients to create the Meridian Tempering Powder!”

Shang Xia turned to stare in the direction of the voice instantly.

Sun Haiwei raised her eyebrows in shock, but he had already disappeared by the time she turned to look at him.

“You know about the Meridian Tempering Powder?” Shang Xia’s voice rang in his ears just as he carefully plucked the zoysia from one of the cliff faces. He was startled and nearly tossed the herb away.

“Huh? Senior Brother Shang?” Chen Hanyang gasped when he noticed Shang Xia standing behind him. He quickly came back to his senses. “Oh? Are you talking about the Meridian Tempering Powder? Of course I don’t know much about it! It’s one of the most expensive medicines a disciple in the Martial Extremity Realm can use! I only heard about it in passing!”

Not too far from them, Dou Zhong and several other disciples also heard the commotion. They rushed over quickly but stopped when they saw that Shang Xia had already arrived.

Chen Hanyang saw the solemn expression on Shang Xia's face and guessed that his senior brother really needed the medicine. A helpless chuckle escaped his lips. "Senior Brother Shang, I'm a student who studies herbs... That's how I learned about the Wind Manipulation Zoysia! Also, none of the recipes on the Tongyou Peak can be used for medicine for cultivators at the Martial Extremity Realm. If you wish to learn about the Meridian Tempering Powder, you need to return to the institution. The medicine is extremely difficult to create, and not even rank two chemists would dare to take on the task of making it."

Shang Xia thought about it for a moment and asked, "So... The institution does have the recipe to make the Meridian Tempering Powder..."

"Yeah... Of course! However, they will never teach it to outsiders."

Shang Xia nodded slowly and looked at the herb in his hand. "Junior Brother Chen, let's do a trade for this herb."

Chen Hanyang handed the herb over to Shang Xia without even thinking about it. "What do you mean a trade? All of us here cannot even begin to thank you for the help you gave us. If you need it, you can have it!"

"No. I can't accept this without giving you something in return..." Shang Xia paused for a second. "I admit. This Wind Manipulation Zoysia is extremely useful to me. Alright... The Meridian Tempering Powder should be priced close to three hundred silver essence... As one of the main ingredients of the medicine, let's price the Wind Manipulation Zoysia at eighty silver essence..."

"That... That's too much!" Chen Hanyang waved his hands and cried. "I'll take fifty silver essence at most! I can't accept any more than that!"

"That's close enough..." Sun Haiwei appeared at the side and spoke up.

"Alright. Fifty silver essence it is then." Shang Xia nodded his head before turning to look at Sun Haiwei, "Hehe, Senior Sister Sun, can you lend me some money right now? I'll pay you back when we return..."

"..."

...

Zhou Yong started to panic when he saw Shang Xia keeping the herb. "Second brother, you need the Wind Manipulation Zoysia to advance too! Are we really letting him keep it?"

Dou Zhong stared at Shang Xia before sighing, "It's true that the five of us would have been able to retreat from the battle eventually if things got ugly. However, they saved all of us. Since he got there first, it won't be appropriate for us to fight him for it."

"Hmph... Second brother, you're too honest for your own good! Do you think he cares about your feelings when he takes away the Wind Manipulation Zoysia? You might

have already obtained one of the main ingredients to create your medicine, the Compelling Ningpo Wigfort, you still need the zoysia to perfect it!"

Dou Zhong chuckled. "There's no need to rush... There's still time! After all, it's better to take the final step before trying to break through to the Martial Extremity Realm..."

A light flashed in Zhou Yong's eyes. "This... Are you really going to comprehend your martial intent before stepping into the Martial Extremity Realm?"

Dou Zhong revealed a deep smile and replied, "I managed to gain some insights into it..."

Chapter 116: Essence Qi Stone Mine

A ray of golden light shot through the sky before slowly dissipating.

"Senior Sister Sun, how many times have we used the talisman?" Shang Xia stood on a giant rock and asked while he stared into the distance.

"Five..."

Sun Haiwei slowly kept the guidance talisman in her hands and looked all around her. She seemed to be looking for something.

"That means that we still have two more chances!" Shang Xia jumped off the rock and continued, "Looks like the mine was really affected by the changes in the battlefield between two worlds. We traveled for close to three thousand miles and we don't even seem close!"

Shang Xia sighed, but when he turned to look at Sun Haiwei, he discovered a worried look on her face.

"Senior Sister Sun? Teacher Sun?" He only managed to catch her attention after calling her twice.

"We... We're getting closer to the Coral Forest!" Sun Haiwei looked around as if to confirm something.

"Coral Forest?" It wasn't the first time Shang Xia heard the name and he continued, "Senior Sister Sun, how can you be sure that we're close to the Coral Forest?"

The changes happened quickly in the battlefield between two worlds. One would hardly be able to determine their location from their surroundings.

Sighing, Sun Haiwei muttered, "I'm afraid it's true. We should be close to the Coral Forest."

Understanding the confusion Shang Xia was feeling, Sun Haiwei explained, "It's true that the geography here changes regularly. However, that's not the case for every region. For example, the Tongyou Peak and Four Spiritual Peak. They've existed since the creation of the battlefield between two worlds."

"Do you mean... Is the Coral Forest also a region like that?" Shang Xia asked.

Sun Haiwei nodded. "Regions where Martial Extermination Realm cultivators are will rarely experience a shift. It's the same for regions that contain formations."

Shang Xia seemed to have reached an understanding. "Our Tongyou Peak and the Four Spiritual Peak contain our respective grand formations... That's why they won't be affected! We also have several Martial Extermination Realm experts stationed there!"

"That is why we can be certain that we're close to the Coral Forest!"

"Senior Sister Sun, do you mean that the Coral Forest is like our Tongyou Peak and Four Spiritual Peak? Is that because of the Zhu Family's inheritance?" Shang Xia gasped.

Sun Haiwei muttered, "We guessed as much previously, but now, it seems as though it's true!"

Shang Xia no longer needed a reminder as he quickly raised his guard.

Sun Haiwei's caution rang in his mind once again. "In the future, you need to be careful when you roam the battlefield between two worlds. If a region remains the same for a really long time, you might have entered the territory of a Martial Extermination Realm expert..."

As the two of them proceeded cautiously, they were about to climb over a mountain when Sun Haiwei tugged on his sleeves.

Taking a step back in shock, Shang Xia turned to look at the plains below. There were countless strange stone formations and it looked like corals that grew at the bottom of the sea. The strange formations extended as far as the eyes could see.

"That... Is that the Coral Forest?" Shang Xia gasped.

"Swish, swish!" Sun Haiwei used the guidance talisman in her hands again, sending out another beam of golden light.

It seemed to draw out all the power left in the talisman before making a beautiful arc through the skies to land on a certain region. When it did, it exploded into a burst of golden light.

Shang Xia estimated the general position where the light had landed, and he found it to be pretty close to the Coral Forest.

"Let's go!" Sun Haiwei sighed as if she had already expected it and started making her way towards the location.

"We're finally going to complete the mission... Let's hope that everything goes smoothly!" Shang Xia followed behind her.

The closer they got to the location marked by the talisman, the more careful they became.

The region they were in was too far away from the Tongyou Peak. They had practically no influence there! There might be various beasts that were roaming about, and seeing as it was where Deputy Patriarch Liu was trapped, there might even be cultivators of the Rose Party nearby!

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Luckily for the two of them, their final leg of the journey became pretty peaceful. Very quickly, they noticed a hole that extended into the ground below.

The Essence Qi Stone Mine was close to thirty feet deep in the ground and its radius was similar. It extended downwards in a spiral shape. When Shang Xia looked into the deep hole, he could see that it was completely flooded.

“What do we do now?” Shang Xia asked.

“Let’s go down and take a look. There’s something strange about the water.” Sun Haiwei replied before leaping down.

Shang Xia could only follow behind obediently.

As the two of them descended, Shang Xia could feel the density of the heaven and earth qi increasing as he descended.

Along the way, he noticed the spots of light flashing on the walls. Those should be the remnants of the essence qi stones left behind.

The two of them quickly arrived close to the water surface and Shang Xia took the lead. “There’s no need to rush. I’ll check it out!”

Drawing his sword, he pointed it at the surface of the water.

A streak of lightning flew in the direction he pointed and a massive blast shattered the still water surface. As arcs of lightning danced across the water surface, nothing weird happened.

“Looks like we got lucky.” Shang Xia laughed.

Sun Haiwei stared at him before snorting, “Yeah. Now, we have to drain the water out of the mine.”

“Huh?” Shang Xia cried. “Wasn’t our mission just to look for the mine and activate the location formation within?”

“Yeah. The location formation is at the bottom of the mine. Are you planning to dive down and activate it?” Sun Haiwei sneered in response. She seemed to be laughing at him silently.

Staring at the giant body of water before him, Shang Xia scratched his head. Right before he could agree, he saw Sun Haiwei’s pupils shrinking and she seemed to be staring at something behind him.

“Be careful!” She yelled before pushing him away.

He fell straight into the water and right before he did, he saw a corpse rushing towards Sun Haiwei.

“Shit! It’s an undead corpse of the third rank!”

Chapter 117: New and Improved Flexible Sword Art

“Plop!” Shang Xia was quickly swallowed by the muddy water.

Other than the ripples that formed on the surface, Shang Xia was nowhere to be seen!

Sun Haiwei glanced at the water that swallowed Shang Xia up, but she was quickly forced to retreat by the undead corpse.

It was actually a rank three creature! How unlucky were they to run into it?!

However, that begged another question. How did the rank three undead corpse enter the mine?!

Sun Haiwei could see that the clothes on the undead corpse was slightly damp, but it could be considered overall neat. It wasn't a surprise that his clothes seemed completely outdated.

"How can it look so unaffected by the sands of time?" Sun Haiwei gasped. Her thoughts turned to a rumor they had on the Tongyou Peak and recalled that they were close to the Coral Forest.

"Could it be?! A member of the Zhu Family?! How did they run out of the Coral Forest?"

She waved the spikes in her hands and a wall of orange flames and thick blue ice formed around her.

However, a strong shockwave caused the ice wall to shatter to bits, forcing her several feet back. Even so, she failed to nullify the effects of the shockwave. Slamming into the wall behind her, she felt a sickly sweet sensation welling up in her mouth.

Although she took a huge loss in the exchange, she managed to tear a layer of skin off the palm of the undead corpse. Jet-black rotten flesh was revealed under the layer of skin.

"Crap! It has overwhelming strength and extremely thick defenses!" Sun Haiwei yelled right before the undead corpse made its next move. Roaring loudly, the corpse rotated its wrists towards Sun Haiwei.

Instinctively, she leaped to the side.

The wall behind her converged as it tried to trap her within. If she moved a little slower, she would have been sealed within!

The undead corpse didn't wait for her to catch her breath. It continued its relentless assault. Raising its leg, it stomped downwards.

Giant cracks formed in the ground below and huge boulders started to fall from the ceiling.

As her body twisted and turned to avoid the falling debris, a sharp spike emerged from the wall beside her, stabbing into her shoulders.

"Damn it! Why hasn't he emerged from the water?! Could there also be danger beneath the surface?!" Sun Haiwei grumbled. Her thoughts didn't stop her from counterattacking. Her spikes glowed orange and blue as she lunged at the undead corpse.

She was greeted with a shriek from the creature, and the rocks that had fallen onto the ground started to rise. They flew towards Sun Haiwei like iron to a magnet.

When that was happening, a figure broke through the surface of the water and soared through the air. Thick strands of crimson-red lightning tore through the void and created a lightning web that trapped the undead corpse.

“Crackle!”

As the lightning lashed against its body, a wretched cry left the corpse’s dried-up lips.

Shang Xia, who just appeared, looked extremely haggard. Mud was stuck in his hair and it stained his clothes a dirty brown.

Truth be told, that was the worst state he had been in. Not even when he had been hunted down by Yan Ming did he feel so haggard.

It was one of the reasons behind the anger in Shang Xia’s heart. Of course, he couldn’t vent his frustration on Sun Haiwei as she saved him from the attacks of the undead corpse. All his rage was channeled to the undead corpse.

As the corpse lost control of the mud and rocks it threw at Sun Haiwei, she managed to make use of them and transform it into a frozen bridge with her icy qi.

Stepping onto the frozen bridge, one of the spikes in her hand blazed with an orange flame. She approached the rank three undead corpse that was trapped in Shang Xia’s lightning web and the moment the lightning subsided, she stabbed the spike deep into the frozen bridge beneath her feet.

The ice and fire qi in the air clashed against each other, causing a massive explosion. At the same time, the strand of destructive qi shot towards the undead corpse, causing great damage.

“Senior Sister Sun, are you alright?” Shang Xia yelled from the side.

With her face slightly pale, anyone present could see that she wasn’t in her best shape. She seemed to have suffered some injuries, but she gritted her teeth in reply, “I won’t die so easily!”

She didn’t forget to remind Shang Xia, “Be careful! A rank three undead corpse won’t be killed so easily!”

After the dust settled, Sun Haiwei and Shang Xia approached the location where the undead corpse was blown to. However, they discovered that nothing was left other than several fragments of bones and rotted flesh.

“Don’t tell me we destroyed its body completely with our attacks...” Shang Xia gasped.

Right as he completed his sentence, Sun Haiwei cried, “Be careful! It’s underground!”

The ground beneath their feet caved in as soon as she spoke and a hand that was missing three fingers grabbed onto Sun Haiwei’s ankles.

With her expression changing drastically, her inner qi circulated violently throughout her body. The arm of the undead corpse started to emit smoke as the smell of charred flesh filled the air. Soon, a layer of ice covered the smoking arm.

Despite that, the undead corpse’s grasp remained firmly on her ankles. It tightened its grip as Sun Haiwei’s face scrunched up in pain.

Shang Xia leaped into the air as soon as the ground started to shatter, and he grunted slightly before slashing his Delicate Jade River Sword towards the undead corpse's arm.

As his blade came slicing downwards, the debris in the surroundings gathered around the creature's wrists to form a protective layer.

A loud clang echoed through the air and his attack failed to cause a single scratch to the creature.

When that happened, Sun Haiwei's body started to sink. It was clear that the undead corpse wanted to drag her down to prevent Shang Xia from joining the fight.

Sun Haiwei didn't let it do as it pleased. Her spikes stabbed straight into the wall beside her to stop her descent.

Realizing that there was no time to waste, Shang Xia's sword shot out again as lightning flashed about the blade.

Landing on the layer of rocks around the undead corpse's arm, the impact blew away a huge chunk. Unlike the previous time, Shang Xia's attack wasn't completely useless. The lightning surrounding the blade tore into its arm. It released Sun Haiwei while howling in pain.

Sun Haiwei didn't manage to escape unscathed either. The lightning numbed her legs, and the undead corpse managed to recover quickly to grab her other leg.

A frown appeared on Shang Xia's face. The inner qi in his body started to transform, and the lightning around his blade disappeared. He used the Vigorous Sword Art to attack the undead corpse, but the effects were abysmal.

Changing his sword style once again, his sword turned soft and wrapped around the wrist of the annoying creature. It cut deep into the undead corpse's skin, but it quickly used the surrounding rocks to block itself from receiving further damage from Shang Xia's sword.

"It's no use! This is a rank three undead corpse that specializes in manipulating the dirt and stone around us! It's pretty impressive for you to manage to cut through a layer of its skin!" Sun Haiwei cried.

"It's alright! There's definitely a way to deal with it!" Shang Xia continued to use his sword to slash at the creature.

"It's useless to waste our energy like this! Hurry up and cut off my leg!" Sun Haiwei exclaimed.

Raising his head in shock, he saw an ugly smile plastered on her face. Her arms trembled violently, and it was clear she wouldn't be able to hold on for long.

"At the very least, I'll be able to stay alive..." Sun Haiwei muttered.

Shang Xia's sword chopped downwards again. His strike was even more terrifying than before and it destroyed the layer of rocks around the arm.

His inner qi transformed in the instant he destroyed the layer of protection on the undead corpse's arm and he flowed perfectly into the next sword strike. A bone-chilling scraping sound echoed through the air and Shang Xia successfully unleashed the most difficult move of the Flexible Sword

Art. It was one of the most profound techniques recorded in the River Sword Policy as it required the cultivator to transform their qi instantaneously to catch their opponent off guard!

Even though the River Sword Policy in the Tongyou Peak's Scripture Depository wasn't complete, Shang Xia had already understood the theory behind it. It wasn't difficult for him to extrapolate the moves to complete the inheritance.

The sword managed to injure the creature, but it failed to rescue Sun Haiwei.

"Good technique!" Forcing a smile, Sun Haiwei tried to hide the pain in her legs.

A trace of hesitation flashed across Shang Xia's face and he paused for a second.

"Flexible Sword Art... The principle behind it requires one to perfectly fuse softness and strength qi, making up for each other's weaknesses. Even though he managed to hurt the undead corpse earlier, Shang Xia's technique involved two strikes in total. It wasn't a true fusion of both types of qi!"

Shang Xia nearly slapped himself when he thought about it,

Equilibrium! That was what Shang Xia learned ever since he entered the Martial Extremity Realm! Why didn't he think of it earlier?!

Fusion of both softness and strength qi to unleash a single strike... That was the pinnacle of the Flexible Sword Art!

Watching the hesitation flash across Shang Xia's face, Sun Haiwei thought that he was reluctant to chop off her legs for real and she forced a smile, "Hurry up! I can't hold on much longer!"

Shang Xia raised his head to stare into her eyes all of a sudden, and she noticed the confidence and joy contained in them. His gaze caused her to lose all focus all of a sudden and she forgot about the existence of the rank three undead corpse.

The sword in his hand slashed out towards the arm clutching her ankles, and the sword strike seemed as ordinary as could be.

"Clang!"

Before she could react, she felt the grip loosening around her ankles. She lost her balance all of a sudden, and she tumbled onto the solid ground nearby.

A heaven-shaking roar came from under the ground, and despite the many layers of earth between them and the undead corpse, its cries echoed clearly in their ears.

Chapter 118: Even

"Ring..." A sharp cry came from Shang Xia's Delicate River Jade Sword. If not for the fact that the sword was a mid-grade weapon and was sturdy enough to withstand the power he used, Shang Xia might have lost control of it completely.

Even so, a nasty expression lingered on his face. The strike that looked as ordinary as could be returned a huge backlash when it accurately stabbed into the undead corpse's hand.

It was a terrifying backlash that nearly caused his inner qi to flow in the opposite direction!

When Shang Xia realized that he could combine the two types of qi to achieve the pinnacle strike of the Flexible Sword Art, he didn't hesitate to try it out. Succeeding on his first try, the frightening strike sundered the rank three undead corpse's arm!

Despite unleashing the fearsome strike, it was his first time performing the move and he barely understood the principle behind fusing the different types of qi. The two types of qi didn't dissipate after cleaving the corpse's arm into two. Instead, it remained in the sword. The two differing types of qi clashed with each other, forming a horrifying backlash.

Luckily for Shang Xia, he had great control over his inner qi. With the additional help from the Yin Yang Diagram in his dantian, he managed to quickly quell the fluctuations.

As for the remaining qi that remained in the Delicate River Jade Sword, it wasn't powerful enough to damage the weapons itself. However, the ringing sounds it caused reverberated through the cavern they were in and made their skulls go numb.

Suppressing the rampaging qi in the sword, it quickly returned to normal.

Even though everything happened in a split second and Shang Xia managed to regain control over his sword, he still felt a sharp pain shooting through his body. With the experience he gained, Shang Xia seemed to deepen his understanding of his qi controlling methods.

"This... What type of sword technique is that?!" Sun Haiwei finally reacted. The surprise caused her to temporarily forget that they were still trapped in the cavern with a rank three undead corpse, and she turned to ask Shang Xia.

"It's the proper way to use the Flexible Sword Art!" Shang Xia muttered as the glow around his Delicate River Jade Sword started to dim.

When the undead corpse reached out of the ground once again to try grabbing one of them, Shang Xia unleashed his move a second time. In a flash, the second arm of the undead corpse fell to the ground beside him.

This time, he was prepared. He quickly scattered the remaining qi in the sword to reduce the negative effects it brought about. Even so, he felt a throbbing pain running through his body.

Now that he used the technique for a second time, he realized that even after scattering his qi, it would affect his sword slightly. In the long run, the Delicate River Jade Sword would definitely be damaged if he did nothing about it.

"I need to continue to improve... I can't possibly change my weapon often! This is a mid-grade weapon we're talking about!" Shang Xia cursed in his heart before looking towards Sun Haiwei.

He could see dark puddles of blood forming under her feet when she stumbled away.

"It's poisoned!" Shang Xia's expression sank.

"It's ordinary corpse poison. I can suppress it easily. We need to kill the undead corpse as quickly as possible. Otherwise, it's going to regenerate after some time." Sun Haiwei spat. She was exhausted after struggling against a rank three corpse.

Without her efforts, Shang Xia would never have been able to slice off the corpse's arms.

Even though that was what she said, Shang Xia understood that even if she was affected by ordinary corpse poison, it came from a rank three undead corpse! It was definitely a lot more potent than the poison from ordinary undead corpses.

He didn't know how long she could last, but he knew that killing the undead corpse as quickly as possible was a must. It was either that or he had to abandon Sun Haiwei and escape alone. There was no third option.

Since Shang Xia cut off both its arms, the undead corpse vanished without a trace. He was unable to find any signs of it.

"It has to appear soon... No matter how strong it is, it can't stay underground forever." Sun Haiwei explained. She was much more experienced than Shang Xia with regard to matters regarding the battlefield between two worlds.

She stood a dozen feet away from Shang Xia and held the wall while panting. She looked extremely frail but there was a deep gaze in her eyes.

Shang Xia understood what she was doing. She wanted to act as bait to lure the undead corpse out.

All of a sudden, she slapped her palms against the wall beside her while twisting away. The entire wall collapsed, and a sorry figure of a corpse lunged towards her.

Her palms slapped against the undead corpse's chest, and a loud cracking sound could be heard as its ribs were shattered beyond belief.

Even so, it didn't avoid Sun Haiwei. Instead, it pressed whatever was left of its arm into Sun Haiwei's shoulders, forcing her into the wall behind. Opening its smelly mouth, it tried sinking its teeth into her neck.

"Shang Xia!" Sun Haiwei screamed, and she tried pushing it away with all her might. Her martial intent had already destroyed half of the undead corpse's body in her attempt to avoid its attack.

Even so, it ignored all the damage it sustained in an attempt to chomp down on Sun Haiwei's neck.

Despair filled her heart when she realized that she couldn't stop the corpse no matter how hard she tried.

Closing her eyes in defeat, the pain she expected didn't come. Opening her eyes slightly, she saw a soft sword wrapped around the undead corpse's head.

Yanking backwards, he pulled the corpse off her body instantly. Without its hands to grab Sun Haiwei, she was thrown towards the pool of water in the middle of the cavern.

"Shang Xia!" She screamed as she fell into the pool of water. She created a huge splash.

However, she managed to see Shang Xia decapitating the undead corpse before her head sank beneath the water.

When she finally crawled out of the water, Shang Xia stared at her messy appearance and he chuckled in amusement. “We fell into the water once each. Now we’re even!”

Chapter 119: Vermillion Plaque

The sound of water dripping from her wet clothes echoed through the cavern as she dragged herself out of the pool.

“Shang Xia, did you do that on purpose?!” She growled while stepping out of the water.

Shang Xia calmly sliced the nails off the rank three corpse and cried out indignantly, “Of course not! Senior Sister, you knew how urgent the situation was previously. That’s a rank three undead corpse we’re talking about! How was I supposed to know where to throw you while cutting off its head?”

Sun Haiwei stared at him suspiciously before looking for a sunny spot to dry herself off. Taking out a pill that was the size of her thumbnail, she swallowed it quickly.

“Senior Sister Sun, is that an antidote? Can it cure the poison of rank three undead corpses?” Shang Xia asked in concern.

Glancing at him from the corner of his eye, she muttered, “Relax... Just protect me while I try to force the poison out of my body. During this time, I cannot be disturbed!”

Shang Xia retrieved the final nail off the corpse’s body before smiling happily, “Of course! I’ll do everything you say!”

When he spoke, Sun Haiwei had already closed her eyes and started circulating her inner qi. Faint fluctuations of heaven and earth qi appeared around her body.

The part of her face that was revealed to Shang Xia seemed to flush a gentle pink and she seemed a lot more ladylike than before. The headstrong teacher in the institution was nowhere to be seen at the moment.

Her actions showed how much she trusted Shang Xia. She was confident that he would protect her while she was recovering.

As Shang Xia admired her looks from the side, she seemed to have felt his gaze as she snapped, “The rank three undead corpse is full of treasures. Its nails aren’t the only thing of value. Its bones should be comparable to rank two treasures after absorbing so much heaven and earth qi...”

It was true. After all, Shang Xia failed to cut through the corpse’s arms when he used his mid-grade weapon initially. That alone proved how strong its body was.

Turning to look at the messy and tattered corpse lying against the wall, Shang Xia was too lazy to dig out its bones right away. He went to the side and started to recover his inner qi before trying anything new.

Sitting down, he continued to pay attention to his surroundings as Sun Haiwei was still expunging the poison from her body. He played with a piece of vermilion-colored plaque in his hand. The material it was made from was pretty unique as it was something between gold and jade.

He obtained the plaque after killing the undead corpse, and it seemed as though it was the only thing of value the body carried.

There were four words carved into the face of the plaque, 'You Continent Zhu Family', and there was a single word carved into the back, 'Kuang'.

"Zhu Kuang of the Zhu Family?" Shang Xia muttered under his breath. "If this is truly the identity plaque of the undead corpse, this might actually be the famed Vermillion Plaque of the You Continent's Zhu Family!"

Shang Xia tried his best to recall everything about the Zhu Family and all sorts of guesses formed in his mind.

Before the two worlds collided, the Zhu Family was the strongest among the five great families that ruled the You Continent!

In that period of time, the Shang Clan was a second-rate power. They weren't as strong as the five great families, but they were close.

If the records in the institution and the Shang Clan were true, only direct descendants of the Zhu Family would be able to obtain a Vermillion Plaque!

Seeing as the battlefield between the two worlds had already existed for twenty years, the undead corpse that was called Zhu Kuang should be of the same seniority as his grandfather!

During the collisions of the worlds, no one knew why, but the Zhu Family was completely destroyed! The only ones who managed to escape were the peripheral members of the Zhu Family. They could barely be considered descendants of the Zhu Family due to their faint bloodline.

In the twenty years that passed, the only person who could barely be called a member of the Zhu Family was Zhu Ying!

The only reason he managed to survive peacefully all those years was because of the Liu Clan's assistance!

"What's that in your hand?" Sun Haiwei's voice rang in his ear.

"Huh? Did you already deal with the poison?" Shang Xia tossed the plaque over to her as he spoke. He saw her pale face and couldn't help but worry. "Why do you look so bad?"

Looking at the plaque in her hands, she explained helplessly, "The poison isn't the problem. My internal injuries are more serious than I thought. I'm afraid that I'll have to remain in seclusion for some time to recover.

"Here?" Shang Xia looked around and continued, "Alright. I'll open up a place for you to enter seclusion..."

Sun Haiwei didn't respond immediately. When Shang Xia turned to look at her, he saw her frowning at the plaque in her hands.

“Is this... Is this the Vermillion Plaque?” Sun Haiwei wasn’t as knowledgeable as Shang Xia on these matters. She could only read through the history and records in the institution once in a while, unlike Shang Xia.

“Yeah. It’s probably it. Looks like our luck isn’t too bad...” Shang Xia chuckled.

It was already a blessing that they managed to kill a rank three undead corpse as two cultivators at the Martial Extremity Realm.

The number of treasures on the rank three undead corpse was pitiful. The gains of killing it were far from killing a rank three rare beast!

Sun Haiwei tossed the plaque back to Shang Xia and muttered, “The number of people who managed to obtain a Vermillion Plaque in the Zhu Family is extremely few in number. It’s said that anyone with the Vermillion Plaque had the ability to enter the Zhu Family Manor as they pleased. They could also browse the inheritance of the family and enter the forbidden regions whenever they liked... I wonder how true it is...”

Shang Xia laughed in response, “Would you like to take a look?”

Sun Haiwei snapped at him immediately. “Do you think I’m in any state to go looking for treasures right now? Moreover, we only have a single Vermillion Plaque! Even if the rumors are true, only one person will be allowed to enter the inheritance of the Zhu Family!”

In the battle that passed, it was an undeniable fact that Sun Haiwei had it the worst. She was targeted by the rank three undead corpse and she fought it head-on.

Shang Xia attacked it from the side and even though he expanded a lot of inner qi, it was mostly recovered already.

Sun Haiwei glanced at Shang Xia from the corner of her eye and muttered, “I’ll remind you again... There are countless dangers in the Coral Forest. Even a deputy patriarch of our Tongyou Institution is trapped there. The members of the Rose Party are probably hiding somewhere inside too. Even up till now, the Martial Extermination Realm cultivators on our Tongyou Peak remained completely quiet... Don’t you think that there’s something weird about all this?”

Shang Xia guessed. “Senior sister, do you think that Deputy Patriarch Ji and the others will come?”

“They might already be here! After all, none of us will be able to keep track of their movements. Since Deputy Patriarch Liu is trapped, they can’t possibly leave him to die!” Sun Haiwei struggled to get to her feet. It was obvious how frail she was at that moment. “The best thing we can do is to hand this plaque over to Deputy Patriarch Shang. In fact, any other Martial Extermination Realm expert will do. We can do that after we’re done here. Now, we need to activate the location formation in this mine. When that happens, we’ll be able to lock down this location and the essence qi stone mine will belong to our Tongyou Peak!”

That was their original mission anyway.

Shang Xia walked around the cavern and looked for the location where the heaven and earth qi was the densest before carving out a cultivation cave in the wall beside him. No matter what, she had to recover before they could complete their mission.

When she entered seclusion, Shang Xia looked for a massive piece of rock to carve out a stone door for her cultivation cave.

After he was done, he seemed to have realized that he had forgotten something.

Rushing out of the cavern, Shang Xia whistled loudly into the air. Despite waiting a long time, he failed to receive a reply from the Lightning Bird.

Chapter 120: Tunnel

“This damn bird... Where did it go now?” Shang Xia cursed. Since he didn’t wish to disturb Sun Haiwei who was recovering in seclusion, he decided to head out before calling for the Lightning Bird.

Despite calling out several times, he failed to receive a reply. The sense of unease in his heart grew stronger.

After it bathed in the heavenly lightning back then, Shang Xia believed that the Lightning Bird had already entered the third rank!

With its speed, not even Martial Extermination Realm cultivators had the ability to threaten its life.

“Well... It’s not likely that it ran into trouble... Did it discover something interesting?” Guesses formed in his mind. “I wonder when that damn bird left... I was too careless... I should have thought of it when the Lightning Bird didn’t come to our assistance when we faced the rank three undead corpse. With its help, the battle would be much easier. Senior Sister Sun’s injuries wouldn’t be so serious either..”

Shang Xia thought about what might have happened to the Lightning Bird while concealing himself in his surroundings to look for clues.

Without the Lightning Bird to warn him of any dangers he might be in, he could only rely on himself and proceed cautiously.

With the essence qi stone mine in the center, Shang Xia first secured the area around them. It seemed that the battlefield between two worlds became a lot calmer after the beast tide that passed.

That also allowed Shang Xia to relax slightly. He stared all around, but he noticed the Coral Forest not too far away.

Shang Xia’s heart trembled slightly. Could the Lightning Bird have entered the forbidden region?

According to what Sun Haiwei said, the Coral Forest was a giant maze made from natural formations. If the Lightning Bird really went in, there was no way for it to hear Shang Xia’s cries anymore.

The only question in Shang Xia’s mind was if the Lightning Bird entered the Coral Forest on its own...

Moreover, it was said that nothing could fly in the Coral Forest. Not even Martial Extermination Realm cultivation were able to do so.

If that was really the case, the Lightning Bird shouldn't be drawn to the Coral Forest. Unless, the restriction only stopped creatures who used their cultivation to soar through the air. It was possible that birds and other beasts that had the ability to fly weren't affected.

The disappearance of the Lightning Bird wasn't the only thing troubling him. He also wanted to find out how the rank three undead corpse entered the mine.

Even though they were pretty close to the Coral Forest, it didn't make sense for a rank three undead corpse to appear!

For a very long time, there hadn't been an appearance of an undead corpse in the Coral Forest. Why did one appear at such a weird time? That was also one of the reasons Deputy Patriarch Liu had the ability to deploy so many people from the Tongyou Peak to join his mission. After all, the number of casualties would be much lower without the interference of undead corpses!

Shang Xia turned to look in the direction of the Coral Forest once again. There was no doubt that the corpse belonged to someone of the Zhu Family. With the changes that were going on, he knew that the situation in the Coral Forest had changed.

It was too bad he wasn't strong enough to enter the Coral Forest alone to look for clues.

Sun Haiwei was recovering slowly in the mine, and he could only wait for her before they set off.

Even though he walked around the mine to ensure its safety, it seemed as though he returned with a belly full of questions instead.

When he finally returned to the entrance of the mine, the look in his eyes changed as panic threatened to take over his mind. The water that existed at the bottom of the mine when they first arrived was gone! In its place was a pile of sludge, and the water was nowhere to be seen! Shang Xia examined the place again but failed to notice anything wrong. Rushing down to where Sun Haiwei was in seclusion, he noticed that the entrance to the cave he made for her hadn't been touched.

Pausing for a second outside her cultivation cave, he only heaved a sigh of relief when he felt that the heaven and earth qi in the surroundings was moving normally.

As the two of them were attacked the moment they arrived at the essence qi stone mine, they didn't have time to think too much about things that happened.

There was something off about the mine!

If it was used to mine essence qi stones, why would there be water in the mine? Even if it's a pool of accumulated rain water, there shouldn't be so much!

If the explanation was that the mine shifted locations in the battlefield between two worlds and that a vein of water just happened to be in the mine, how could he explain the disappearance of the water?!

With question marks filling his mind, he started his investigation without caring about the sludge in his way.

When he finally arrived at the center of the crater where the water used to be, he discovered that it was where the location formation laid down by the institution was.

They estimated that something went wrong with the location formation due to the beast tide, but now, it didn't seem so.

Shang Xia kicked away the sludge around his feet and revealed several broken stones filled with endless markings of some sort of runes. The essence qi stones that lined the stones were completely dim.

Shang Xia's gaze followed the largest crack on the stone slab and after some careful examination, he discovered a small hole enough for a human to pass through.

That's it!

Sighing in his heart, Shang Xia could tell that although the walls of the hole had eroded a little, it hadn't been long since it appeared! The only creature or person that could have dug out a hole like that was the rank three undead corpse!

That begged the next question. Where did the hole lead?

A trace of hesitation flashed across Shang Xia's face. Turning back to glance at Sun Haiwei's cultivation cave for a split second, he decided to scout it out. Without another word, he jumped in.

The rank three undead corpse was obviously extraordinarily strong. Not only was it able to carve out a hole into the essence qi mine, but it also disguised the hole as an ordinary well in the eyes of outsiders!

After he entered the opening, he appeared in a tunnel that stretched on for as long as the eye could see. From the looks of it, the tunnel seemed incomplete and the reason behind the undead corpse's appearance in the mine was because its path was blocked by a sturdy stone wall.

Initially, Shang Xia thought that the tunnel was created due to the presence of an underground river. However, that didn't seem to be the case. Touching the sides of the walls, Shang Xia understood that no matter how strong the undead corpse was, it didn't possess the ability to dig out such a massive tunnel while maintaining its structural integrity. The tunnel was obviously a massive project that had existed for god knew how long!

The rank three undead corpse probably created the opening to the mine after realizing that there was nowhere else to go after reaching the end of the tunnel.

Without hesitation, Shang Xia drew his Delicate Jade River Sword. He started his exploration carefully.

He realized that he had severely underestimated the length of the tunnel. He walked close to five miles in a single go, but he was nowhere near the end.

Even though the tunnel consisted of some twists and turns, causing Shang Xia to not know his current location, there was one thing he was sure of. If he continued down the tunnel, he would end up in the Coral Forest.

A trace of suspicion filled his heart. Was it really possible to enter the Coral Forest from under the ground?!

There was no way he was the first person to think of it. Other people would definitely be able to come up with the same idea!

There had to be something off!

As he cursed in his heart, he discovered some flickering dots of light ahead. Carefully approaching, he discovered that it was a screen of multi-colored light blinking somewhere in front of him.