

The Heavens 1291

Chapter 1291: Looking for the Essence Xing World

After Shang Xia returned to Star Beast Nest No.2, he entered seclusion to craft a few more rank six talisman papers. Other than those prepared for the 3 great powers of the Essence Xing World, Shang Xia kept the rest for himself, including 2 Myriad Tinted Cloud Talismans.

After making his preparations, Shang Xia left a second tier True Immortal clone behind before leaving behind several rank six Illusion Talismans. He could pretend to be a high-level True Immortal whenever necessary, and Shang Xia went to give Hai Yuanyuan a heads-up before leaving.

He didn't plan to follow the members of the 3 great powers when they came to get their talismans. After all, those who came were high-level True Immortals and he could tell they were extremely cautious.

Under such circumstances, Shang Xia wasn't confident he wouldn't be discovered by them if he tried. Since there was no way to follow them, he could only search for the Essence Xing World slowly.

Thankfully, a massive Essence World wasn't going to be difficult to locate. The real challenge was how he was supposed to locate them without alerting any high-level expert. What was more, he had to infiltrate the world under the noses of more than 1 Martial Emptiness Realm expert.

Even though it wasn't Shang Xia's first time flying around the chaotic space outside the Essence Xing World, he had only been moving around near the Star Beast Nest. This time, he would have to head out further to look for the massive world...

The calmer space outside wasn't as dangerous as the chaotic space around the Star Beast Nest, and Shang Xia had the experience of looking for worlds from what he went through in the Spirit Faith World back then. He had been following a heavily injured True Immortal, but it still took him some time.

The Essence World might be larger than the Spirit Faith World from back then, but Shang Xia was still prepared to use a good amount of time flying around aimlessly.

There might be stars flashing in the dark sea of stars, but they wouldn't be able to be used as a reference most of the time. While flying in the vast space, those specks of lights were too far away to be reliable. There was no concept of height, and they might even forget how long they had been flying. In extreme cases, loneliness might cause them to go mad.

As such, cultivators would only try to venture deep into space after entering the Martial Dipper Realm despite the ability to enter the sea of stars in the Martial Extermination Realm. If they wished to look for foreign worlds or infiltrate them alone... They would usually have to be True Immortals.

After Shang Xia traveled for more than a million miles, he ran into a massive asteroid belt that was like a maze.

Because he hadn't expected to run into it, he took a few days before he managed to free himself from the flying asteroids despite his cultivation.

When he emerged, he no longer had any idea which direction he had been traveling in.

Helpless, he could only choose a random direction that led him away from the asteroid belt and continue flying aimlessly.

After several more million miles, he couldn't see the asteroid belt any longer, and there was nothing else he could use as a reference. He was completely lost!

Fortunately... He didn't need to care about the consumption of his inner qi at the moment, After all, he stored a good amount of world origin in the Crimson Soul Tablet. He also had a shocking number of Essence Crystals he could use to replenish his energy if required.

Flying around a little more, he failed to gain anything.

Shang Xia was no longer able to estimate how far he had traveled and without a proper sense of direction, he was truly floating aimlessly in space.

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After flying about for some more time, he suddenly discovered specks of light in the endless darkness like fireflies buzzing about.

He thought he was mistaken at first, or it might be light produced by distant stars. However, as he continued to make his way forward, the specks of light started to grow and they soon became the size of candlelight.

Becoming alert again, Shang Xia started to circulate his inner qi, and all the lethargy he felt was swept away.

He increased his speed slightly as the specks of light grew larger and larger. He started to make out their general outline, and he discovered that they were Earth Stars of different sizes.

Shang Xia was no stranger to Earth Stars that might contain sights of life. However, after concealing his tracks and inspecting them, he discovered that only 2 of them had signs of life. 1 of them showed signs of human life, but they were still in their barbaric stages.

Shang Xia was disappointed by his findings, and he didn't intend to interfere with the development of those worlds.

After inspecting all the Earth Stars, he discovered that there was no sign of a World's Will being born or any signs of remnant World's Will after separating from another world. From the saying from the Heavenly Star Palace, those Earth Stars didn't have the qualifications to form a spirit and develop a will.

That would also mean that if those worlds developed normally, those worlds would be unfit for cultivation and there would be no such thing as cultivation on them.

Strangely enough, Shang Xia discovered a strange metal sphere that was close to 3000 miles in diameter in one of those worlds. It could be considered a rank two spiritual treasure if he truly wished to classify it.

That was also what could be seen on the surface. Shang Xia felt that the deeper he dug, the higher quality it would become.

However, he was in no mood to play with metal balls at that point. He also understood he wouldn't be able to drag the massive Earth Star away, and he simply left a marking so that he would be able to come back in the future.

The Star those Earth Stars were revolving around was the main focus of his investigation, but Shang Xia didn't hold high hopes of finding anything.

If the Essence Xing World was somewhere in the surrounding region, there was no way they would miss such a massive system that existed.

"The only question now is if they noticed the system, or if they can't give half a shit about it..." Shang Xia muttered to himself while shaking his head. He decided to no longer think about it and started to adjust his condition again to continue looking for the Essence Xing World.

Spending close to 20 days of time to restore himself to his peak state and after leaving behind enough marking such that he would be able to use the system as a reference point, he started to head deeper into the void.

Just like that, Shang Xia traveled millions of miles more before he discovered strange traces of construction on some broken continents floating in space.

He was invigorated. He quickly looked at the traces that had been left on them and discovered that the fragments of land he was seeing actually came from the same continent. There was a sentry post on them, and he even discovered traces of a formation surrounding the structures on them. They looked to be the remains of a destroyed harbor.

From how destroyed they were, Shang Xia felt that they had been abandoned for hundreds of years.

Shang Xia refined the Four Seasons Extermination Origin in his Four Constellation Realm and he was rather sensitive to the flow of time. He might not be able to tell the flow of time just from a general observation, but he could tell it had been long.

"Let's hope I'm going in the right direction!" Shang Xia muttered to himself. Looking through everything to see that there was nothing of value, he adjusted his direction before setting off again.

Another million miles later... Shang Xia actually discovered the ruins of another world!

"Oh? I finally found something of value now. Even though from the looks of it... This looks like an Azure World..."

Before he could enter the ruins, a strange surge of starlight caused him to raise his guard.

In that instant, he even wanted to escape.

Shang Xia was no stranger to the strange power. It was Seventh Order energy, and it had been surrounding the ruins.

It wasn't pseudo-Seventh Order energy like what the Star Origin Dao Field gathered usually. It felt similar to the powerful attack Zhuo Gudao unleashed after reaching the grand completion stage of the Martial Void Realm with extra help.

The Seventh Order energy seemed to be drifting around the ruins while also being completely infused within.

Other than that... There was nothing else.

Shang Xia's eyes widened in shock as he realized what happened. The Azure World was destroyed by an existence in the Martial Emptiness Realm!

Chapter 1292: Sudden Enlightenment: Fifth Tier

That was an Azure World that had been destroyed by a Martial Emptiness Realm expert. Even though it had been hundreds of years since it was destroyed, the Seventh Order energy remained.

After thinking for some time, Shang Xia eventually decided to come into contact with the Seventh Order energy contained in the ruins.

It was an extremely dangerous decision, but Shang Xia could vaguely feel that it would also be a rare opportunity.

When he approached a certain distance from the ruins, Shang Xia felt the Seventh Order energy entering his domain and started to turn serious. His initial plan was to stop the energy from seeping into his domain before approaching it on his own terms.

He tried to stop the energy that had already entered his domain, but his efforts were basically in vain.

Seventh Order energy was an upgrade of Sixth Order energy, and even though Shang Xia's Six Direction Qi was special, it couldn't go head to head with Seventh Order energy. It was already impressive he managed to discover it entering his domain!

From that point alone, Shang Xia was certain that the energy left behind by the Martial Emptiness Realm expert from the Essence Xing World is far stronger than the Seventh Order Energy Zhuo Gudao unleashed using the help of some strange treasure.

Helpless, Shang Xia could only distance himself from the ruins and get rid of the Seventh Order energy before trying again. Otherwise, if he allowed the Seventh Order energy to touch him, it might bring about irreversible damage and he wasn't willing to take the risk.

Just as he was about to retreat, the Crimson Soul Tablet in his sea of consciousness started to thump. The next second, he was strangely reassured that the Seventh Order energy wouldn't be able to harm him.

It might have something to do with his long-time interaction with the Crimson Soul Tablet, but he didn't doubt the feeling for a second.

After the Seventh Order energy was devoured by the Crimson Soul Tablet, he didn't notice any change with it.

A strange sense of realization filled Shang Xia's mind. "The Seventh Order energy here might be too weak for the tablet!"

Glancing at the ruins, Shang Xia didn't hesitate to approach now that he knew he couldn't be harmed.

Seventh Order energy quickly wrapped around his domain and despite the powerful suction force from the Crimson Soul Tablet taking in large amounts of Seventh Order energy, Shang Xia was trying to push it back with his inner qi in an attempt to analyze it to the best of his abilities.

As he got closer and closer with the protection of his Crimson Soul Tablet, his divine soul completely immersed itself when experiencing Seventh Order energy. Eventually, he landed deep among the ruins.

No one knew how long had passed, and the ruins showed no signs of change. The only difference was that the energy it contained was slowly dissipating.

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A speck of light appeared in the void before dimming without warning. When it reappeared, it turned into a streak of light that illuminated its surroundings, and the ruins of another world was also lit up by the strange streak of light.

The light that appeared paused slightly before changing directions and rushing at the ruins Shang Xia was situated on. Seeing as it was about to rush into the ruins, the space thousands of miles behind the streak of light started to ripple as 2 figures appeared from a spatial gate that formed.

“Hmph, it really is the survivors of the Cloud Piercing Bandits... You can’t escape!” A low snort came from the void and seemed to awaken something in the region of space.

The streak of light showed no signs of stopping as it rushed into the ruins of the destroyed Azure World before completely covering its tracks. It was clear they were trying to get rid of those chasing after him by hiding in the fragmented land.

“This... This is the remnants of the Azure Parasol World!” One of the 2 True Immortals who appeared from the spatial gate sighed softly to his companion. “Slightly more than a hundred years ago, I hadn’t become a True Immortal. However, I recall news being sent back to our world that the Azure Parasol World was working together with Star Pirates and had been leaking information about the trade routes of our world’s merchant Star Ship fleets. It caused the 3 great dynasties to suffer considerable losses and enraged Ancestor Qi Jing who had been cultivating some sort of secret art in the void around our world. He decided to exterminate the Azure Parasol World’s Will while he was at it, and the entire world fell into ruins.”

“Back then, I rushed out of the heavenly screen after hearing the news and followed many people to the Azure Parasol World to see if we could witness the destruction. We didn’t know the immensity of the heavens and earth back then and wanted to see if we could learn a thing or two from the arts of a Martial Emptiness Realm ancestor...” He couldn’t help but shake his head and chuckle bitterly. “Now, I know that I was overestimating myself... What a shame...”

The more mature-looking True Immortal beside him revealed a strange smile on his face. “True Immortal Yu, you might not know, but the matter regarding the Azure Parasol World isn’t as simple as you put it...”

True Immortal Yu was shocked but he quickly followed up with a question, “What else happened? I am truly a frog at the bottom of a well... True Immortal Kang, you entered the Martial Void Realm long before me and I hope you can enlighten me on what happened...”

True Immortal Kang waved his hand and replied, “Since this matter concerns an ancestor of the Martial Emptiness Realm, how much can I know? I only heard some news that I can’t verify the validity of... We don’t know if the Azure Parasol World colluded with Star Pirates, but it’s possible they were only a step away from ascending to a Spirit World...”

“Oh, this...” True Immortal Yu’s expression changed and he seemed to understand something, but there was a part of him that seemed reluctant to believe in what happened. He didn’t know what to say for a moment.

True Immortal Kang chuckled the next second, “It’s just a rumor, and you don’t have to take it so seriously. Let’s work together to capture the Cloud Piercing Bandit before talking about anything else.”

True Immortal Yu quickly agreed, “Yes, yes, yes. We should capture him first. Rumors like that probably originated from the desolate continents or ill-informed Elysiums...”

They quickly changed the topic as they started to approach the ruins that was once the Azure Parasol World.

“Speaking of which, when the Azure Parasol World was destroyed by Ancestor Qi Jing, the Seventh Order energy he used hasn’t scattered and it’s so powerful that True Immortals wouldn’t be able to approach. In the end, all of us chose to leave. Now... This place seems a little strange. The Seventh Order energy in it seems to have disappeared...”

True Immortal Kang looked a little confused as he had once tried to approach the destroyed Azure Parasol World.

True Immortal Yu snorted casually, “No matter what, more than a hundred years passed, and the energy contained in this region of space would have broken down or dissipated. Also... I heard another rumor that the ancestor who has been supporting the Daqi Dynasty might have reached the end of his lifespan...”

“Silence!” True Immortal Kang snapped instantly and he turned serious. “Is this something you and I can discuss?”

True Immortal Yu chuckled softly and seemed a little embarrassed, but the lights flashing across his eyes showed that he was thinking of something else.

A hesitant look appeared on True Immortal Kang’s face and he eventually nodded to agree with how True Immortal Yu might be right about the energy in the region disappearing. “To prevent any accidents, we shouldn’t venture too far away from each other in case we are ambushed by the enemy...”

“The Cloud Piercing Bandit is completely exhausted and he can’t even cover his tracks properly... We will definitely be able to capture him once we make a move.”

Even though that was what True Immortal Yu said, he didn't let his guard down in the slightest. He didn't bother lowering his voice either as though he was intentionally allowing the Cloud Piercing Bandit to hear him.

True Immortal Kang knew that his companion might seem rash, but he was extremely scheming. He quickly played along, "True... If he wishes to escape using this place as a cover, he's greatly mistaken..."

As they entered the depths of the ruins, they started to feel like something was wrong. It was as though they were being observed in all directions.

The deeper they went, the stronger the feeling became and they were starting to feel a sense of extreme discomfort. However... They didn't dare to turn around to leave immediately.

A strange feeling filled their hearts that told them if they tried to turn around to run, they would be destroyed by an unknown power.

"Brother Kang..." True Immortal Yu's cultivation was slightly weaker than True Immortal Yu, and he glanced at his companion for help. He looked helpless, and the carefree feeling he once felt was nowhere to be seen.

True Immortal Kang fell silent for a moment, but he didn't stop venturing deeper. He could only sigh, "Since we're here, we can only go all the way. We might have unintentionally ventured into a high-level senior's cultivation grounds..."

They continued to make their way forward, but they could feel something drawing them in a certain direction. As they passed several land fragments, they eventually discovered the region around them growing more spacious as the fragments were spaced further and further apart.

They saw a figure bowing right in front of them, and not far away from them, they saw a figure whose aura was chaotic forcing himself to maintain his respectful appearance. Bowing deeply, he didn't seem to dare to look directly at the mysterious figure in the distance.

The bowed figure was the Cloud Piercing Bandit True Immortal Yu and True Immortal Kang were chasing after, but they didn't dare to make a move even though they were so close to him.

When True Immortal Yu turned to look at True Immortal Kang, all he was was his companion mouthing silently to him, '*Fifth tier True Immortal!*'

Chapter 1293: Exposed

Fifth tier!

True Immortal Yu felt as though a bomb went off in his mind as he lowered his gaze instantly. He was afraid the high-level True Immortal would be able to notice the look on his face.

At the same time, he couldn't help but become confused. The existence of a fifth tier True Immortal was at the level of the emperors of one of the great dynasties... In any of the 11 Elysiums, they would also be a prominent figure. There was no way they wouldn't recognize him!

Even though the high-level True Immortal had his back to them, from the aura he was exuding, it was clear he wasn't any of the emperors or an expert of the Elysiums. In fact, among the high-level True Immortals of the Essence Xing World, there was no one like him!

Could he be a hidden expert one of the top powers have been nurturing?

However... Any True Immortal would have to brand their souls into the world and a massive phenomenon would be produced every time one was born. Even if a Martial Emptiness Realm expert personally made a move, it wouldn't be easy to hide an existence like that.

As such, it didn't matter if it was the Essence Xing World... In any world, the birth of any True Immortal couldn't be hidden and everyone would learn of their existence!

If the fifth tier True Immortal in front of them wasn't from the Essence Xing World... Things would get troublesome!

True Immortal Yu looked at True Immortal Kang and saw the look of worry in his eyes. It was clear he had also thought of the terrifying consequences of the origin of the high-level True Immortal.

“Did the Piercing Cloud Bandit intentionally lure us over here? Could the high-level True Immortal be from the Cloud Piercing Bandits? Perhaps... Is he their leader?!” True Immortal Yu sucked in a cold breath and sent a voice transmission to True Immortal Kang.

Even though the Cloud Piercing Bandit seemed to be trembling in his shoes, there was no honor among Star Pirates in the first place. For him to mess up so bad that he was hunted down by them meant that he failed his mission. It wouldn't be a surprise if he was killed by his leader.

However, even if that was the case, the 2 of them basically walked straight into a trap.

From the strange feeling they felt the moment they entered the ruins, it seemed as though they wouldn't be able to fight back in the slightest. They didn't even have the qualifications to go all out and die with the enemy!

“Fellow experts from the Essence Xing World, you seem afraid?” A clear voice came from the mysterious figure, and there was a trace of amusement in his voice. “From the looks of it, you seem to have misunderstood something.”

True Immortal Kang seemed to hesitate, but with his cultivation being at the higher of the 2, he eventually asked, “Senior... Is something the matter for you to guide us here?”

The mysterious figure started to laugh and he mumbled, “I was in seclusion here and you guys came in on your own accord... Actually, you came in without an invitation... Why is it my fault?”

True Immortal Kang felt beads of perspiration dripping down his forehead and replied hastily, “Senior, you're right. We were too rash and came in without an invitation... If there is nothing else, we will take our leave immediately. We won't disturb you any further.”

They couldn't wait to just leave, but their bodies weren't listening to them at the moment.

The figure who had his back towards them mumbled placidly, “No rush. Since you have already come, tell me about the situation in your Essence Xing World.”

True Immortal Kang was greatly taken aback, but True Immortal Yu had already spoken. “Senior... What do you wish to know?”

The mysterious figure laughed softly and seemed to have already seen through True Immortal Yu's intent. However, he didn't seem to care too much and he continued, "Tell me about how you found the tracks of this Piercing Cloud Bandit. I am actually really interested... From what he said, you guys seem to have been lying in ambush along his journey. Who gave you information about him?"

True Immortal Kan was still hesitant to respond, but True Immortal Yu spoke instantly, "Senior, we won't hide it from you... The information came from the Dachen Dynasty, and I'm afraid only the higher-ups of the Dachen Dynasty are qualified to understand the movements of the Piercing Cloud Bandits. We won't be able to learn anything about existences at that level and we were just following orders..."

"Whose orders?" The mysterious figure continued to ask.

This time, True Immortal Yu was the one to hesitate.

The mysterious figure let out a soft chuckle and didn't press on. Instead, he changed his line of questioning. "From the looks of it, it's true that the emperor of the Dachen Dynasty is about to break through to the Martial Emptiness Realm..."

True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu exchanged a glance, but no longer spoke.

"Are you guys following the orders of the Daqi Dynasty or Dayu Dynasty?" The mysterious figure asked again.

True Immortal Yu and True Immortal Kang felt their hearts trembling but True Immortal Kang finally spoke, "Senior, we don't know anything. We come from the Yu Sect and are not direct members of the dynasties..."

The mysterious figure nodded slowly before mumbling, "So you're members of Elysiums under the dynasties... From the looks of it, you're the same as the Ten Winged Gate. Why don't you learn from the Wanyun Association and rely on yourselves without submitting to any of the dynasties?"

Both of them felt as though a giant freight train slammed into them but they quickly revealed bitter smiles.

True Immortal Yu gathered his courage and asked, "Dare I ask... Senior, who are you exactly?"

"Haven't you guys already guessed?" The mysterious expert's voice rang in their ears suddenly.

True Immortal Yu wasn't done and he asked, "Senior, is it possible for you to let us go?"

"I'm not a killer, but you guys interrupted my cultivation. I can't just let you leave without paying a price." The mysterious figure replied.

True Immortal Kang realized the mysterious expert's intentions and he mumbled, "We are members of the Essence Xing World and that is where our sect and friends are. Don't hope for us to betray our world. If you were thinking of that, you might as well kill us now!"

Casually waving his hand, the mysterious expert didn't kill them. Instead, their spatial artifacts and several treasures they had on them flew towards him.

True Immortal Yu instinctively wanted to stop it, but he was stopped by True Immortal Kang. He saw True Immortal Kang shaking his head lightly at him and watched as his treasures fell into the hands of the mysterious expert. The treasures they accumulated with so much effort were taken away just like that!

More importantly, the most precious treasures they obtained after leading a group of experts to intercept the Cloud Piercing Bandits were with them... Now, everything would go to the mysterious expert!

When their spatial artifacts hovered before the mysterious expert, a strand of inner qi swept across them, and all the restrictions they placed on their treasures disappeared in an instant. True Immortal Yu and True Immortal Kang's eyes widened in shock.

“There is quite a bit of good stuff here... There's just one thing missing, and it should be the true goal of your mission...” The mysterious figure inspected everything with a single glance before adding casually, “Don't you guys have anything else left to say?”

True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu looked at the Cloud Piercing Bandit who was shaking even more violently after hearing the mysterious expert.

Clearly, before they arrived, the Cloud Piercing Bandit had already told the mysterious fifth tier True Immortal everything he knew.

Chapter 1294: Exposed Pt.2

The Essence Xing World couldn't support the birth of a fourth Martial Emptiness Realm expert.

However, when the emperor of the Dachen Dynasty wanted to take the last step to break through, he made a bold decision that shocked the world. He wanted to rid himself of the restrictions of the Essence Xing World and retrieve his soul from the World Origin Source!

The growth of an expert has always been supported by their world and that was where they received nourishment. No matter how high one's cultivation got, they would have relied on their world for its provision and blessing.

For an expert to completely free themselves of the restrictions of their world and obtain complete freedom, the main thing they needed to do was to sever their karmic ties with their world.

In other words, he needed to repay the favor he had obtained from the world. At the very least, they had to ensure that the world acknowledged that the cultivator had paid their dues and obtained enough interest before they would release the soul and allow the cultivator to go free.

As for why the Dachen Emperor would make such a decision... Even True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu didn't know.

With their cultivation merely in the second tier of the Martial Void Realm, they didn't have the qualifications to learn about high-level secrets like that.

As for what would happen after one freed themselves from the world... They wouldn't understand what that entailed when the expert broke through to the Martial Emptiness Realm either.

Shang Xia might be disappointed by the concussion, but when he heard the true goal of the experts of the Essence Xing World from the Piercing Cloud Bandit, he felt a little excited.

The Dachen Dynasty had actually made a deal with the Piercing Cloud Bandits to obtain the fragments of a Spirit World. The true goal of True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu was to spoil the deal. They couldn't allow the fragment of the Spirit World to land in the hands of the Dachen Dynasty, and it would be best if they could retrieve the fragment.

Because the Dachen Dynasty was dealing with the Piercing Cloud Bandits in secret, that was why the Piercing Cloud Bandits disguised themselves as a group of merchants and sent a second tier Martial Void Realm chief to be in charge of the operation so as not to arouse suspicion.

They didn't think that others would learn of the deal, which led to the Yu Sect behind True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu sniffing out their plan, and intercepting the fleet on their way.

Knowing they would be taken as the scapegoat after the operation ends, True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu planned to kill everyone on the other side so as not to leave behind any evidence.

The second tier True Immortal of the Piercing Cloud Bandit knew that he wasn't the opponent of the experts of great powers of the Essence Xing World, so he decided to run. He might not be as strong as them, but as a seasoned Star Pirate, he wasn't lacking in methods to save himself.

Not only did he manage to flee from their sneak attack, but he managed to run all the way over to the ruins of the Azure Parasol World. If not for the fact that he was a little unlucky at the very last moment to run into Shang Xia, he might just have escaped.

"It's just the fragment of a Spirit World... Even though it's rare, what can it do to a world like the Essence Xing World? It was even enough to make them risk their second tier True Immortals to face the wrath of the Dachen Dynasty if found out. Was an Essence World so powerful to the point where they didn't have to care about the lives of True Immortals?"

Even though the mysterious expert in their eyes sounded confused when he spoke that way, there was a hidden rage hidden in his voice.

What he didn't know was that the moment he spoke, True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu were certain he didn't come from the Essence Xing World.

True Immortal Kang forced a smile and explained, "Senior, you might not know, but even though our Essence Xing World has been trying to expand for the past hundreds of years, our luck hasn't been too good. We managed to establish several spatial tunnels out of the chaotic space of our world, but we ran into another Essence World and 2 Spirit Worlds. Those Spirit Worlds were on the verge of reaching a peak state. To launch an all-out expedition against them wouldn't be easy, and we would have to risk a lot in order to take them down. In the most recent 200 years or so, our growth has stagnated and to be able to obtain a fragment of a Spirit World is an extremely difficult task the Dachen Emperor has achieved."

True Immortal Yu quickly agreed, "Exactly! Even though the Wanyun Association and the Qingling Palace located the stronghold of another world in the chaotic space, it's actually another Essence World called the Essence Ping World! They occupied a Star Beast Nest there and stationed a high-level True Immortal to watch over it."

True Immortal Yu couldn't help but shake his head, sighing at the unlucky Essence Xing World.

True Immortal Kang raised his head suddenly and looked at the mysterious figure with a light shining through his eyes.

Unfortunately, the mysterious figure didn't react in the slightest. He simply said, "Since your Essence Xing World is finding it difficult to attack another world, you can only choose to work with Star Pirates. Why would your Dachen Emperor try to break through now while even planning to sever his karmic ties with the Essence Xing World?"

True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu fell silent, but this time, it didn't seem as though they were completely clueless about the situation. Rather, they were unwilling to speak further.

The mysterious expert with his back against them mumbled, "What's the matter? You were trying to probe me earlier but now that I'm doing the same, you don't dare to speak further? Or do you think that the Dachen Dynasty won't know that you're behind this if I let you go now?"

True Immortal Yu gritted his teeth and explained, "The reason the Dachen Emperor wishes to free himself from the restraints of our world is because he wishes to accelerate the growth of our world... In order to make a world grow faster, there are other methods than absorbing foreign worlds. The other way is to shatter Elysiums, Holy Lands, and other strongholds before returning their world origin to the World Origin Source."

True Immortal Kang wanted to stop True Immortal Yu from speaking, but every time he tried, a strange restriction would stop him from opening his mouth.

The mysterious expert whose back was facing them seemed to have reached a realization and he gasped, "So... This is the real reason the Dachen Dynasty is waging war on other Elysiums!"

True Immortal Kang eventually sighed and took a step forward to speak. Surprisingly, the restrictions around him disappeared. "We had no other choice as the Dayu and Daqi Dynasties reached an agreement with our sect to protect us when the Dachen Dynasty wages their war against the other powers. Only the 2 dynasties would possess enough strength to resist the Dachen Dynasty who is about to possess 2 Martial Emptiness Realm experts..."

Chapter 1295: World Fragment

The Essence Xing World was put in an extremely awkward spot as they couldn't grow stronger normally any longer.

As a world with thousands of years of history, the Essence Xing World produced 3 super experts who had reached the Martial Emptiness Realm. They could be considered an extremely powerful world with another Martial Emptiness Realm expert ready to break through.

At their level, they would usually run into existences with similar strengths. If they wished to take another step forward, they could only wage war on Essence Worlds...

With their current presence, they might be strong, but they weren't strong enough to threaten the worlds around them. Or at the very least, they weren't strong enough yet.

The turning point might come with the birth of their fourth Martial Emptiness Realm expert, but it wasn't easy to reach that level.

As such, they were put at an impasse.

The Essence Xing World couldn't possibly launch another expedition in the near future, and that would mean that they couldn't receive the world's blessing. Breaking through by themselves would mean that they would take a massive risk that would most likely end up with them dying. With the Dachen Emperor planning to free himself from the restraint of the world... That means that his breakthrough would be even more difficult, bordering on impossible.

However, if the Essence Xing World didn't birth another Martial Emptiness Realm expert, they wouldn't be able to attack their neighboring worlds with their lack of strength and cause the growth of their world to stall.

That was why the Dachen Emperor was helpless and could only resort to other approaches. He tried to get his hands on a fragment of a Spirit World from Star Pirates while also turning the sword of his dynasty against other Elysiums or Holy Lands of his world.

That was why the Wanyun Association chose to fight back and escape to somewhere outside their control.

With the explanation by True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu, along with the interactions he had with the other 3 great powers of the Essence Xing World, Shang Xia managed to guess some truth about what was happening.

Even though the True Immortals standing behind him were members of another great power of the Essence Xing World, they had to submit to their circumstances. In order to obtain the protection of the other dynasties, they had to mess up the deal between the Dachen Dynasty and the Star Pirates, which would lead to the war in their world growing more intense.

The Dachen Dynasty might be strong, but once they forced a bunch of Elysiums, Holy Lands, and other factions to band together, they would still face considerable resistance!

If that were to happen, even if the Dachen Emperor stepped into the Martial Emptiness Realm, the Dachen Dynasty would be too weak to do anything. They wouldn't be able to gain much advantage against the other dynasties.

Everything was a massive scheme, and the experts of the Dachen Dynasty were no fools. They could naturally see through the plot, but the Dachen Emperor not only refused to give up on his goal. He could only continue to wage a massive war and walk down the path the other dynasties had built for them.

Well, there was another way. If the Dachen Dynasty had the balls, they wouldn't have to attack the other Elysiums and Holy Lands. They could simply wage a massive war against either of the 2 dynasties!

After explaining all they could, True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu fell into silence.

A massive pressure descended amidst the silence, and both of them could tell that their lives were in the hands of others. The only reason they had been desperately explaining the situation was in a bid to live.

As for whether they would reveal the true secrets of the Essence Xing World or if they disgraced themselves as True Immortals of the Essence Xing World... They didn't care too much about that.

The Essence Xing World was a powerful existence with 3 Martial Emptiness Realm experts! They felt that even if they revealed some information, the other party wouldn't be able to do anything about it!

If anyone was lusting over their Essence World, that would mean that they also hailed from an Essence World of similar strength.

Both of them felt that if the mysterious expert with his back to them wanted to try his hand at taking advantage of the Essence Xing World, he was dreaming!

That was also why they decided to go along and explain what they could.

Of course, staying alive was another important reason they chose to talk...

Only after some time did the mysterious expert with his back to them mutter, "Actually, you 2 seem really afraid of death... Am I wrong?"

True Immortal Kang didn't respond. Instead, it was True Immortal Yu who replied, "If we have a chance to live, we clearly don't wish to give up easily..."

"Give me a reason I should let you live." The mysterious cultivator asked, "You should have already guessed that I'm not an expert from your world. I have no need to worry if you're protected by a high-level True Immortal or a Sage in the Martial Emptiness Realm. However, I don't wish to reveal my identity, or leave without gaining anything."

His intentions were fully revealed. Not only did he wish to fish for benefits, he also didn't wish to take any risk. Perhaps, he even wanted them to become his chess pieces in the Essence Xing World in the future...

True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu exchanged a glance and understood what the other was thinking.

However... Since their lives were at risk, they had no choice but to lower their heads. "The fragment of the Spirit World obtained by the Piercing Cloud Bandit... We are willing to hand it over to you!" True Immortal Yu made the decision on their behalf.

The body of the Piercing Cloud Bandit started to twist unnaturally, as though he was trying his best to speak, but the mysterious expert had no intention to allow him to interrupt.

Hearing True Immortal Yu's proposal, the mysterious expert in their eyes finally spoke, "No matter what, you guys were moving under orders. If you return empty handed, wouldn't they suspect something? What's more... From what you said, there were many people involved when intercepting the Star Pirates..."

Seeing the look of hesitation on True Immortal Kang's face, True Immortal Yu gritted his teeth and growled with a sinister expression, "We'll kill them all! No one will be able to return with news of what happened!"

The mysterious expert with his back towards them chuckled softly in response, "You can leave behind a few members you truly trust. After all, killing everyone will only make you look more suspicious. After all, the bunch of Piercing Cloud Bandits are extremely crafty. Why shouldn't you play the same game as them? You can say that there might be more than 1 True Immortal among them, and you can inflate the number of experts they had. Wouldn't that ensure a bitter battle

between you guys, resulting in more casualties? Not only would you be able to cover up the fact that you lost the world fragment, you can even fuck with the person who gave you the mission in the first place.”

True Immortal Yu pretended to chuckle with glee. “Senior, you know best! That way, not only would we not be punished, but we would be heroes who saved our men from complete annihilation! If you don’t have any other orders for us, we’ll take our leave...”

“Are you in a rush?” The voice rang in their minds suddenly, causing their hearts to tremble.

True Immortal Kang immediately interjected, “Senior, please don’t get angry. True Immortal Yu is only afraid there might be an accident if we continue to drag things out...”

It was then that the figure with his back to them waved his hand to activate 2 talismans. The talismans turned into streaks of light that shot at them.

True Immortal Yu wanted to dodge, but he was stopped by True Immortal Kang again.

As soon as the light came into contact with them, it disappeared. They might seem fine on the surface, but the moment the stream of light entered their bodies, it was as though they were facing a great enemy. They prepared themselves for whatever would come, but their expressions changed suddenly. They discovered that foreign energy had invaded their bodies and they couldn’t control the circulation of energy. They could only watch as the foreign energy gathered in their dantians.

They felt that they had already been extremely careful ever since entering the ruins. However, they didn’t expect to be caught off guard at the very end.

“These talismans were made with my essence qi. It wouldn’t affect your cultivation or combat abilities. However, if I wish to seal your dantian, you will become powerless with a single intention from me.” The mysterious expert spoke with barely concealed mockery, “Of course, if you don’t believe me, you can go ahead and test it out. You might try to get rid of it however you like. I believe your faction should also possess high-level True Immortals. You can get them to help...”

True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu quickly indicated that they wouldn’t dare to try anything like that.

With a casual wave of his hand, the mysterious expert seemed to be extremely confident in his sealing talisman as he muttered, “Alright, I’ve done what I need to. You can leave now. Remember to send the world fragment and stuff you gained during the trip over.”

True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu exchanged gazes again before bowing carefully and taking their leave.

Not too long after they left, the Cloud Piercing Bandit felt the restriction on his body disappear as though he had received a grand amnesty. He quickly sucked in several breaths to try to calm his trembling body and he staggered slightly before standing properly.”

“I am Song Zhen... I am the Fourth Chief of the Cloud Piercing Bandit, and my title is the Sweeping Cloud. I am willing to give my life up to work for senior!” The Cloud Piercing Bandit fell to his knees as soon as he caught his breath.

“Stand up when you talk to me.” The mysterious expert spoke casually.

Song Zhen immediately got to his feet and held his hands behind his back.

The next second, a palm-sized token that seemed to contain a twisted sea of stars appeared before him.

“Do you know what this is?”

Song Zhen stared at the token in shock and gasped, “Dark Star Pirates?!”

Chapter 1296: Chaotic Sea of Stars and Dark Star Pirates

Shang Xia never thought that his operation to infiltrate the Essence Xing World might end before he even entered their world.

When he ran into the ruins of the Azure Parasol World that contained the remnant energy of a Martial Emptiness Realm expert, he decided to enter the ruins on a whim to examine the Seventh Order energy left behind.

He didn't think that with the help of the Crimson Soul Tablet, he would experience a sudden sense of enlightenment. After a period of seclusion, not only did he manage to refine the Seventh Order energy left behind, but it also caused the inner qi in his dantian to undergo a fundamental transformation.

Shang Xia hadn't been in the fourth tier of the Six Direction Realm for long, but after using Three Lights Water and the Essence Refining Void Returning Formation, he closed in on the peak of the fourth tier.

However, breaking through to the fifth tier wasn't going to be easy. Other than the fact that he hadn't accumulated enough energy, he still needed his inner qi to undergo transformation. It was something that could only come about by chance when his cultivation had reached a certain level.

One of the reasons he planned to infiltrate the Essence Xing World was also to find an opportunity to break through.

He didn't think that happiness would come so suddenly. Before he could locate the Essence Xing World, he already advanced into the fifth tier!

In the ruins of the Azure Parasol World, Shang Xia comprehended the powerful ability of the Seventh Order energy to seep into his domain, its everlasting properties, and its destructive might. He replicated those traits with his Six Direction Qi, eventually achieving the transformation!

With that, he found his way to enter the fifth tier...

The only thing he found strange was the situation he was in. If he wanted to step through the final bottleneck and get rid of the nagging feeling at the back of his mind, he would need to return to the You Continent.

That was also a reason he was hesitating. He used too much effort to travel into the depths of the region of space that contained the Essence Xing World and if he turned back, the entire operation would be considered a massive blunder.

When he was at a loss of what to do, True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu of the Essence Xing World barged their way into the ruins in search of the Piercing Cloud Bandit they were hunting down.

As soon as they entered, they were surrounded by Shang Xia's domain.

Rather than escaping immediately, the 2 of them didn't make any rash moves once they were in his domain. They didn't try to call for help either. That was because they discovered that the Piercing Cloud Bandit was also located in the high-level True Immortal's domain!

They felt such intense pressure when they barged into his domain as he had replicated the properties of the Seventh Order energy. Also... With their entry, it was as though a massive pie had fallen right in front of him!

A fragment of a Spirit World and the loot of a massive fleet... Shang Xia even gained the latest information of the Essence Xing World and he would basically learn of their location once the 2 True Immortals returned... It seemed as though his journey was just too damn worth it!

What Shang Xia didn't expect was that he would gain even more information from Song Zhen after he took out the token.

Before Song Zhen reacted to the token, Shang Xia was actually more interested in the strength of the Cloud Piercing Bandits. After all, Song Zhen was in the second tier of the Martial Void Realm, but he was only the fourth chief. He learned that in the Piercing Cloud Bandits, they had 3 massive Star Ships, 7 ordinary ones, and other smaller ships which didn't really matter. The important part was that they had 6 True Immortals leading them!

There were 3 other experts above Song Zhen, the first was Gao Takong, their leader, whose title was the Chaotic Piercing Cloud with cultivation at the fourth tier of the Martial Void Realm and the only high-level True Immortal of the Piercing Cloud Bandits. Second Chief Hu Ruoxu, Burning Cloud, was next, and finally came Third Chief Jiang Qiu, Thunder Cloud. The second and third chiefs were both in the third tier of the Martial Void Realm.

After Song Zhen came the Fifth and Sixth Chiefs. The Fifth Chief was on par with Song Zhen in terms of cultivation, and the other was a first tier True Immortal.

Even though Song Zhen gave him a casual rundown of the Piercing Cloud Bandits, Shang Xia was extremely shocked. He didn't expect there to be 6 True Immortals in the Piercing Cloud bandits. They had close to a hundred Star Ships if they counted everything in their possession, and their strength was on par with an Azure World.

With their strength, annihilating an Azure World or two wouldn't be difficult for them. It was no wonder they were able to obtain a fragment of a Spirit World. Also, it was no wonder they had the qualifications to make deals with the Dachen Emperor who was about to become an existence in the Martial Emptiness Realm.

Shang Xia might be shocked by the strength of the Piercing Cloud Bandits, but Song Zhen was extremely respectful when speaking to him. He carefully mumbled, "Lord... This... This... Actually,

our Piercing Cloud Bandits can only be ranked among the middle ranks among all the Star Pirates in the Chaotic Sea of Stars...”

“Hmm?” Shang Xia grunted softly, but he realized his reaction might have revealed the fact that he wasn’t as knowledgeable as he was supposed to be. However, he didn’t seem embarrassed at all. After all, killing the Fourth Chief of the Piercing Cloud Bandits was a mere thought by him.

Song Zhen was extremely obedient and after realizing Shang Xia knew very little about the Star Pirates among the Chaotic Sea of Stars, he quickly introduced, “Star Pirate groups are usually split into 3 different categories. Those with ancestors in the Martial Emptiness Realm would be considered large-scale Star Pirate groups. Those with high-level True Immortals at the helm would be considered mid-scale Star Pirate groups. As for those without high-level True Immortals... They can only be considered small-scale Star Pirate groups. Well, those without True Immortals couldn’t even be considered Star Pirates.

Shang Xia chuckled mirthlessly before he asked, “So... I guess the Piercing Cloud Bandits would be considered a mid-scale Star Pirate group then?”

Song Zhen quickly replied, “We barely managed to squeeze into the ranks... We naturally can’t compare to a large-scale Star Pirate group like the Dark Star Pirates! That is a behemoth rumored to have a Martial Emptiness Realm ancestor!”

?!

Shang Xia thought of something and asked, “What do you mean rumored? Do you think the Dark Star Pirates are faking their strength?”

Song Zhen could only explain helplessly, “Lord... As you know, the Dark Star Pirates are very famous, but the Chaotic Sea of Stars is massive. There are countless groups out there and even we don’t know about many of them. The Dark Star Pirates proclaim to be a mid-scale Star Pirate group, but we know that they have at least 3 high-level True Immortals. What we can be sure of is that they once had an existence in the Martial Emptiness Realm among them. Moreover, existences at that level appeared more than once. Even though they would be able to tempt experts at that level into working for them with enough benefits, there are rumors going around that the Dark Star Pirates are backed by an Essence World...”

Chapter 1297: Star Explorers

“The Dark Star Pirates might be back by an Essence World!” Song Zhen revealed a heaven-shaking conjecture to Shang Xia.

If what he said was true, was it possible that the Essence Ming World was behind the Dark Star Pirates?!

Shang Xia asked suddenly, “Since Star Pirates are great at plundering the various worlds, are they also good at finding other worlds through the chaotic space?”

“Of course!” Song Zhen replied instantly. “Actually, the term Star Pirates is a derogatory term used by the various worlds to address us. We call ourselves Star Explorers... Not only would we look for worlds in the massive sea of stars, we explore

unknown areas, conquer strange beastly worlds, and hunt weird Star Beasts. We enjoy the beauty of the endless sea of stars..."

Song Zhen probably carved the job of a Star Pirate deep into his bones and looked proud of his achievements as he introduced. He was so worked up that he nearly got to his feet to cheer.

Fortunately, he recalled what circumstances he was in and quickly restrained himself. Instead of jumping in joy, he simply stared at Shang Xia with a wide smile on his face.

Finally, Shang Xia turned around to look at him. However, his Six Direction Qi covered his features and Song Zhen was unable to see his real appearance.

"There's another problem that has been bothering me. True Immortal Song, For True Immortals like yourself... Where do you place your soul when you ascend?" Shang Xia finally asked the question that had been bugging him for so long.

Being addressed by his title shocked him, and Song Zhen didn't know how to react. He didn't dare to be called like that by Shang Xia, but he also understood that the high-level True Immortal before him probably came from a relatively sealed-off region of space and didn't know too much about Star Pirates.

Facing Shang Xia's questions, Song Zhen replied seriously, "There are a lot of ways for True Immortals of Star Pirates to ascend and brand their souls. Some of them came from different worlds, and that is where they branded their souls. Other Star Pirate groups hold several worlds under their command and that's where they left their souls. As for others... The Star Ship they created is akin to a moving Elysium where their soul remains. As for the rest... Like people like me... We would look for a secluded region and brand our soul into a star..."

"Star?!" Shang Xia gasped, "Do you mean an Earth Star?"

He suddenly thought of the Heavenly Star Palace's rank six inheritance.

Song Zhen nodded to confirm Shang Xia's guess. "It's also possible to brand your soul on an Earth Star. After all, Earth Stars would usually possess some spirituality. It's a lot easier to brand a soul into one. However, an Earth Star is much too limited and only 1 person will be able to brand their soul there. Moreover, it's nearly impossible to grow further unless someone is willing to use a lot of effort while paying a huge price to develop the Earth Star into a proper world."

Shang Xia fell deep into thought and mumbled, "In that case... Your soul doesn't seem to be branded on an Earth Star?"

Song Zhen nodded. "Back then, I had to venture deep into the sea of stars to find one that is big enough and not easily found by others..."

"Is this way of breaking through risky?" Shang Xia asked.

With a soft sigh, Song Zhen explained, "We don't have a choice. I can only hope that in the endless sea of stars, there are too many Stars and no one will be able to notice the one that I used to advance..."

Shang Xia seemed to understand the concerns as he continued, "So... Is the Star you branded your soul onto your greatest secret?"

“Exactly... That is why even though I am willing to be your subordinate and follow all your orders... If you really wish for me to reveal where my soul is branded, I can only choose to die!” Song Zhen spoke frankly.

Shang Xia chuckled in amusement. “Allowing you to live will depend on whether you can bring out enough treasures that will justify your life.”

Song Zhen was no fool and he quickly replied, “Lord, what do you wish for me to do? Are you planning to get me to betray the Piercing Cloud Bandits or to continue my duties while acting as a spy for you?”

To that, Shang Xia only shook his head while sighing, “I haven’t thought of it. However, what we need to do now is to receive the treasures from the 2 of them.”

After he spoke, he started to fly out of the ruins.

Earlier, he didn’t move from his spot because he was still absorbing the last portion of Seventh Order energy from the ruins. Now that he had refined everything, the ruins lost their worth and he didn’t wish to stay longer.

As they emerged from the ruins, Song Zhen called out loudly behind him, “Lord, please forgive me for being direct, but those 2 wouldn’t be fully loyal to you. Since you let them go earlier, news of your presence might have already reached the Essence Xing World.”

Shang Xia wasn’t surprised at all, but he already thought of a method to deal with them. He simply laughed, “Do you think the Essence Xing World will try to save them? Or do you think the Martial Emptiness Realm experts will personally descend because of what they said?”

“Probably not. They are merely pawns used by the Daqi Dynasty Dayu Dynasty. Since they destroyed the fleet and the world fragment failed to reach the Dachen Dynasty, the goals of the other dynasties have been met. They might feel like the world fragment landing in the hands of a foreign expert might even be the best case scenario.” Song Zhen summarized.

Shang Xia laughed to himself. “Looks like the situation in the Essence Xing World is far worse than they described!”

“Lord, you are right. Actually, the bossman... I mean, Gao Takong, the leader of the Piercing Cloud Bandits once mentioned that the best possible outcome for the Essence Xing World would be to find a target to invade. They offered a massive bounty to the Star Pirates operating in the Chaotic Sea of Stars for any information about foreign worlds, but they failed to gain any information in recent years.”

Song Zhen seemed to be trying to remind Shang Xia about the current situation, and Shang Xia’s expression didn’t change after hearing it. Actually, he had already raised his guard when he first heard the situation from them.

No one knew how long he could scare the Essence Xing World with his bluff of being from the Essence Ping World. Or perhaps... They might have already suspected that he wasn’t telling the truth...

“Other than dealing with your Piercing Cloud Bandits, did they work with other Star Pirate Groups? For example... Have they worked with the Dark Star Pirates?” Shang Xia asked.

Song Zhen shook his head and answered truthfully, “I don’t know.”

As they conversed, a broken Star Ship slowly drifted over to their position.

Standing behind him, Song Zhen muttered in a low voice, “Lord, this is the flagship of the merchant group I was pretending to lead and the world fragment should be on it...”

Chapter 1298: Turn, turn, TURN

“I’m afraid one can’t place a world fragment into a Star Ship with normal methods, right?” Shang Xia asked in shock.

Song Zhen was stumped by his sudden question and became even more confused as to Shang Xia’s identity. He didn’t know how the mighty high-level True Immortal before him didn’t know about things like that, but with the other party controlling his fate, he quickly explained, “It’s not easy, but this is a special method used by those in the Chaotic Sea of Stars. It’s used to transport world fragments. Lord, please take a look. This Star Ship is made with special methods. It’s like an artifact that consists of talismans and formations. Everything is fused in one and it’s a rare treasure.”

Shang Xia mumbled thoughtfully, “From the looks of it, Star Ships such as these that can transport would serve as standard equipment for the Star Pirates in the Chaotic Sea of Stars, right?”

Song Zhen quickly replied, “Special Star Ships like these are called Arks in the Chaotic Sea of Stars, and there are some who call them World Arks. However, those whose worlds have been attacked would refer to them as the Doomsday Ark. Whatever it is, only Star Pirates of a certain scale have the ability to possess one. Small-scale Star Pirate groups will be able to own an Azure World Ark at the very best. As for mid-scale Star Pirate groups, it’s impressive for them to get their hands on a Spirit World Ark.

Shang Xia asked, “Do Azure World Arks and Spirit World Arks refer to the level of world fragment they can contain? Are there Essence World Arks or those of even higher rank?”

“Lord is wise... That is truly the case. Actually, with the foundations of the Piercing Cloud Bandits, we barely qualify to own a Spirit World Ark. However, Leader Gao Takong ran into a huge opportunity and snatched one during a massive battle between 2 Star Pirate groups in the Chaotic Sea of Stars. He used a fortune to repair it and this is it... It’s also how the Piercing Cloud Bandits became a rare group among the mid-scale Star Pirate groups to own one...” Song Zhen replied.

Shang Xia glanced at him with a smile that didn’t seem like a smile. “In that case, doesn’t that mean that the Piercing Cloud Bandits lost big time? Not only did they lose their Fourth Chief and a world fragment... They even lost their Spirit World Ark!”

Song Zhen chuckled helplessly, “Who would have thought that such a massive power like the Essence Xing World would experience such serious inner conflicts? What’s more, they sent me, a second tier True Immortal, to escort the fleet alone. Even though the Piercing Cloud Bandits have

another Azure World Ark, they would lose a lot now that they lost this... The ranking of the Piercing Cloud Bandits in the Chaotic Sea of Stars is sure to take a huge hit as well..."

Shang Xia understood that different Star Pirate groups were ranked based on their collective strength and the level of their fleets, and also, if he wanted to bring the world fragment back, he would need to control the ark...

Understanding the importance of the Spirit World Ark, be it True Immortal Kang or True Immortal Yu of the Essence Xing World, or Song Zhen, who was part of the Piercing Cloud Bandits, they intentionally fought far away from the World Ark, not allowing it to be too damaged from the massive battle from before.

It was then that Song Zhen sighed again, "Thinking back... When the members of the Dachen Dynasty looked for us, it was because we had a Spirit World Ark. However... They couldn't seem to keep their plan a secret..."

After he spoke, Song Zhen shook his head and remained silent.

The Spirit World Ark slowly made its way over, slowing down as it approached. Several cultivators appeared from within as True Immortal Yu and True Immortal Kang flew at Shang Xia and Song Zhen.

"Lord, they..." Song Zhen was startled, and he wanted to say something. However, he started to hesitate.

Shang Xia chuckled and watched as True Immortal Yu and True Immortal Kang stood before him. "How is it? Can you get rid of the restriction in your dantian?"

They were unable to see Shang Xia's true appearance, but they could tell that he was pretty young. Glancing at each other, True Immortal Yu eventually muttered, "Of course we don't have the ability to do so. However, it doesn't mean that no one in the Essence Xing World can get rid of it! Aren't you afraid that we would call for more reinforcements after leaving earlier? Or do you really think that we are too afraid of death and wouldn't dare to try anything like that?"

"Hehe..." Shang Xia continued, "Cultivators like us have been training our souls ever since the Martial Intent Realm. Unless one is willing to be controlled, no one would be able to force them. I was only planning to make a deal with you guys, but the circumstances under which we met were a little unfortunate. I could only show off some of my skills... However, that's just so that I get an additional layer of assurance. After all... I'm in a foreign space right now and I can't be too careful."

True Immortal Yu couldn't help but ask, "Who exactly are you?"

They had long since guessed that the powerful high-level True Immortal before them wasn't from their world. Also, Shang Xia didn't seem to be intentionally hiding the fact.

With a soft chuckle, he asked, "What do you think?"

He silently signaled to Song Zhen as he spoke.

Responding to his command, Song Zhen flew over to the Spirit World Ark and took control. He instructed the Martial Dipper Realm members of the Essence Xing World to control the ark to accelerate.

Those on board survived the silencing attempt by True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu and seeing as they had no objections to Song Zhen's actions, they quickly followed his instructions. The giant ark started to speed up.

As Song Zhen was the true controller of the ship, it was only able to display its true might with him back in control.

When he was hunted down by True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu earlier, Song Zhen actually left behind a lot of hidden problems with the Spirit World Ark that wouldn't allow it to fly too quickly. Naturally, it was to give the Piercing Cloud Bandits a chance to snatch their Spirit World Ark back after it fell into the hands of the enemy.

Now... It didn't matter anymore.

When it started to accelerate through the sea of stars, Shang Xia, along with True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu, arrived back on the ark.

True Immortal Yu shook his head at Shang Xia's question, and True Immortal Kang remained silent at the side.

Shang Xia looked at True Immortal Kang and asked, "Looks like you managed to guess something?"

With a soft sigh, True Immortal Kang explained, "Several years ago, the Wanyun Association managed to escape from the Dachen Dynasty by using the Myriad Tinted Cloud Talisman that hadn't appeared in a long time. After that, there were rumors mentioning how they located a Star Beast Nest occupied by a foreign world. There, they met a Talisman Grandmaster and used their Myriad Tinted Cloud Talisman inheritance to trade for the grandmaster's time and effort to craft several Myriad Tinted Cloud Talismans."

True Immortal Kang raised his head and looked at Shang Xia. Even though he couldn't see the high-level True Immortal's appearance, he seemed to be able to tell that there was a strange smile hidden under the mysterious energy veil around his face.

Lowering his head immediately, True Immortal Kang continued, "The great powers of our world have been trying to probe the Wanyun Association for the source of their talismans, but they refused to say anything. As time passed, there were several powers that managed to find the Star Beast Nest. The Dachen Dynasty and the Qingling Palace also managed to form a connection to the Talisman Grandmaster there to request talismans. However, with all 3 of them taking part, information regarding the Star Beast Nest became even more difficult to come by. In the end, the Daqi Dynasty decided to go all out and revealed a spy they had hidden deep in the Dachen Dynasty to learn of the existence of the Essence Ping World!"

Shang Xia wasn't surprised in the slightest, and he was actually slightly curious how those 3 great powers managed to keep news of the Star Beast Nest hidden for so long.

"Essence Ping World?" Song Zhen gasped when he heard the familiar name.

When Shang Xia discovered Song Zhen's shock, he couldn't help but ask, "What's the matter? Have you heard the name before?"

Song Zhen had already decided to submit to Shang Xia in order to live, and he knew that he needed to prove his worth. The Dachen Dynasty had once tried to use the Piercing Cloud Bandits to look for information regarding the Essence Ping World, and the information had been passed around through the higher-levels expert among the Star Pirates.

Shang Xia's heart sank, but he continued to chuckle softly, "Alright, you can leave now."

True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu raised their heads to look at Shang Xia in shock. Even though he had already shown that he didn't really care about taking their lives, they were still shocked when he allowed them to leave.

"Are you really going to let us live?" True Immortal Yu asked.

Shang Xia couldn't help but laugh. "Of course, however, if I head over to the Essence Xing World in the future, I hope you won't repay my kindness with hostility."

True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu didn't know if Shang Xia was fooling around, but since they were allowed to leave, they quickly called for their trusted aides from the Ark before cupping their fists respectfully towards Shang Xia. Once they turned around, they didn't look back as they made their way back to the Essence Xing World.

Song Zhen, who was standing behind Shang Xia the whole time, looked at the departing figures of the Essence Xing World and wanted to say something, but he seemed to have second thoughts as he quickly changed what he was about to say. "Lord, without the help of those cultivators, the speed of the ark will be affected..."

"That's your problem!" Shang Xia laughed in response.

Slightly taken aback, Song Zhen's lips started to twitch, but he managed to suppress his emotions.

Shang Xia's voice rang in his ears the next second. "Let's change direction."

Song Zhen wasn't surprised by his order and replied without even raising his head, "Yes!"

He turned to walk into the interior of the ark after he spoke.

It was then that Shang Xia took a step out and appeared in the middle of the void. With the ark slowly progressing, he retrieved his Stone Rod and slammed it into the void before returning to the ark.

Where he once stood, the void tens tens of thousands of miles across turned into a region of chaotic space.

Chapter 1299: Elder Feng and Patriarch Tie

In the void, a cultivator whose face was a healthy red but looked a little childish appeared. He had a face full of white hair.

Beside him stood a figure clad in simple robes and exposed bronze skin. No matter how one looked at the middle-aged man who sported a long beard, he looked like a blacksmith.

True Immortal Kang and True Immortal Yu stood behind them, but both of them looked mighty guilty.

The True Immortals standing in front of them stared at the region of chaotic space before them and fell deep into thought.

The kid-like expert suddenly laughed, “Interesting... Patriarch Tie, are you able to determine where the Spirit World Ark went?”

Staring in the void, the blacksmith’s gaze turned sharp. However, he chuckled in a low voice at the question. “The other side already destroyed everything here, and it’s obvious they were expecting us to try following their tracks. Also... Even if we did manage to catch up, what are we supposed to do? Bring the world fragment back?”

The kid-like expert laughed along. “Yeah, that’s true. My Phoenix Cry Sect can’t bear the pressure of the Dachen Dynasty. The Yang River Sect probably wouldn’t be willing to step into this pile of shit either. Even if we want the world fragment, none of us can get our hands on it. It’s a shame we have to give away a Spirit World Ark while we’re at it... That’s a treasure which doesn't pale in comparison to a world fragment...”

“From this region of chaotic space, the other side isn’t weak. Even if we manage to catch up, they would be able to shatter the world fragment and ark before leaving... Those things never belonged to them to begin with, and even if they destroy it, they wouldn’t care too much. We might as well give everyone a way out and not go crazy.” The bearded man clasped his hand behind his back and spoke casually.

Looking at him with a strange gaze, the kid-like expert eventually laughed, “Patriarch Tie, you are optimistic indeed... In that case, are you planning to forgive Leader Yu of the Great Gu Stronghold?”

Patriarch Tie didn’t seem to care too much as he continued, “I never planned to hold him responsible in the first place. The Great Gu Stronghold holds an extremely important position in Duckweed Lake. It’s a key position that ensures the balance of the Yang River Sect and Dayu Dynasty. Leader Yu has much to do and we’re just messing with them now, not using him as a weapon to kill our enemies... However, Leader Yu also knows what to do when things go south. He acted decisively and left behind several trusted aides around... As for the Kang Family of the Phoenix Cry Sect... Elder Feng, why did you send them out?”

The kid-like expert mumbled, “Feelings will dull over time... Disciples of the later generation might have developed another way of thinking and I can’t possibly watch them go down the wrong path. However...”

Elder Feng stopped suddenly and glanced at True Immortal Kang behind him. He broke out in laughter the next moment, “They probably know what they need to do next.”

“Are we talking about the Daqi Dynasty?” Patriarch Tie seemed to have realized something and he didn’t wait for Elder Feng to confirm his guesses. He continued, “The Kang Family isn’t too perceptive... It’s said that the ancestor of the Daqi Dynasty

is reaching the end of his lifespan... Hehe... I wonder if that's true. Anyway, the Kang Family actually dares to throw in their all despite the rumors..."

"Oh? Patriarch Tie, where did you get the news? There is actually a matter like this?!" Elder Feng put on a look of surprise as though it was his first time hearing of it.

"Haha..." Patriarch Tie smiled, "It's just hearsay... Please don't take me seriously."

Elder Feng laughed along. "Yeah, of course! How can people like us know about matters regarding Martial Emptiness Realm ancestors? I wonder where those rumors originated from..."

"Yup, yup." Patriarch Tie nodded as though he couldn't hate those who created such a nasty rumor more.

Soon after, the 2 experts of their respective great powers fell into silence as they watched as the chaotic space before them returned to its original state.

Eventually, Elder Feng said, "Patriarch Tie, who do you think is behind this? What I heard from Leader Kang is that the high-level True Immortal who did this seems very interested in the inner conflicts of our Essence Xing World. However, his understanding of us is also very limited. His guess is that it's possible for the Essence Ping World the Dachen Dynasty, Qingling Palace, and Wanyun Association came into contact with to be behind this."

"Unfortunately, they are too strong. Otherwise, we should be able to find out what's going on by giving chase." Patriarch Tie sighed with pity. "You should have heard of the ruins of the Azure Parasol World. We went there earlier and the Seventh Order energy that used to be there is completely gone! That person... He's definitely more than meets the eye. If he's really from the Essence Ping World, that can only mean that the Essence Ping World is also a powerful existence. Elder Feng, you best not forget... There's another high-level True Immortal who is also a Talisman Grandmaster capable of crafting Myriad Tinted Cloud Talismans in the Star Beast Nest..."

"A hundred or so years ago was when we last saw Sage Qi Jing make his move, right?" Elder Feng seemed to be thinking of something and he explained, "Even after a hundred or so years, the energy he released shouldn't degrade so easily. Otherwise, why did all of us leave the ruins up for the picking? For the energy to disappear now..."

Elder Feng didn't say more but Patriarch Tie knew what he was referring to.

Unless Sage Qi Jing's lifespan is about to end, and even his strength has been affected...

That was what they understood from that.

"Alright, let's go. Since they don't wish to meet us, there is no point staying here."

Patriarch Tie said suddenly, “No matter what, the loss of a Spirit World Ark is no small matter. After we return, we need to take care of everything that is to come. At the very least, we have to deal with the members of the Daqi and Dayu Dynasties...”

Elder Feng turned to leave with Patriarch Tie, but he seemed to have thought of something and asked, “I heard that after the Wanyun Association fled, they haven’t been living a very good life recently... Should we try to approach them?”

“Are you planning to...”

...

Obviously, Shang Xia could tell that someone would try to track them down which was why he shattered the void where they once were. One reason was to hide their tracks, the second was to give them a display of his strength.

However, he didn’t know the 2 fifth tier True Immortals who came chasing after him were frightened by the strength he displayed. They also didn’t know that strictly speaking, Shang Xia wasn’t an actual fifth tier True Immortal yet.

Whatever the case was, after traveling a certain distance, Shang Xia changed direction again and left behind several strange tracks to mislead anyone who would try to track him down before returning to the ark. He was only satisfied after feeling no one behind him.

Shang Xia, who had been diligently mapping down his route ever since leaving the Star Beast Nest, didn’t hesitate to take another million mile detour back while bypassing the asteroid belt he had once been to despite Song Zhen not knowing where they were.

Finally, the Spirit World Ark arrived in the region of chaotic space around the Star Beast Nest and a smile appeared on Shang Xia’s face as he asked, “Can the ark pass through chaotic space?”

Chapter 1300: Nearly 3 Years

With Song Zhen’s pointers, Shang Xia gradually got used to controlling the Spirit World Ark.

Also, after Shang Xia explicitly promised that he wouldn’t kill Song Zhen, the Fourth Chief of the Piercing Cloud Bandits started to become extremely enthusiastic when assigned tasks by Shang Xia.

The Spirit World Ark didn’t pass through the chaotic space where Shang Xia first emerged. Even if his brains were a little spoiled, he could tell that the members of the Dachen Dynasty, Qingling Palace, and Wanyun Association would send their members to take note of everything happening there. He didn’t wish for his journey to be discovered by them.

Actually, Shang Xia took a huge detour when he first left. Because he left behind anchoring formations in the Star Beast Nest, he wasn’t afraid of getting lost.

From what Song Zhen had explained, the ark used to be able to travel through chaotic space. After all, the main job of a Star Pirate was to explore dangerous regions through chaotic space, and look for worlds or distant ruins that could produce rare treasures because of their unique climate.

However, Song Zhen was the only person operating the ark and no matter how good he was at it, he had no crew! Traveling through chaotic space would prove to be difficult.

In the end, Shang Xia decided to learn how to use the ark.

With the coordination of a second tier True Immortal and a high-level True Immortal, the Spirit World Ark traveled into chaotic space. There were several close calls along the way, but Shang Xia resolved everything with brute strength.

As time passed, Song Zhen found it hard to hold on.

Fortunately, Shang Xia could tell that they weren't far from the Star Beast Nest. He didn't plan to drive the ark directly over to the Star Beast Nest. Instead, he parked it in the regions of chaotic space nearby. He ordered Song Zhen to remain there as he hurried back.

It wasn't that he was intentionally keeping the existence of the ark a secret. After all, the various powers would know the moment he brought it back, seeing as it also contained a Spirit World fragment. He just didn't wish for the news to spread immediately. Also, such a massive ark wouldn't be able to return to the Spirit Luxuriant World through the Five Element Teleportation Formation they established anyway.

Even though the possibility of the experts of the Essence Xing World discovering the ark was small, it wasn't zero. He had to race back to the Star Beast Nest to grab a bunch of people to operate the ark with him and Song Zhen. They would have to travel through chaotic space for a long time before they could return to the Spirit Luxuriant World...

As soon as he entered the Star Beast Nest, news of his return traveled back to the Spirit Luxuriant World. Kou Chongxue quickly arrived through the formation to find him.

Actually, when Shang Xia returned to the Star Beast Nest to look for Hai Yuanyuan, he was shocked. He learned that the 24th year of the Spirit Luxuriant Calendar had already arrived and he had been missing for 2.5 years!

When he left, it was only the latter half of the 21st year. He had been traveling for several months, and it also only took less than a month for him to drive the Spirit World Ark back. That would mean that he entered seclusion in the ruins of the Azure Parasol World for more than 2 years!

The moment Kou Chongxue arrived, he laughed, "Damn brat, you went missing for so long! If not for your clone being perfectly alright in the institution, I would have charged into the Essence Xing World to look for you!"

As soon as he spoke, his eyes widened in shock and he gasped, "Shit, your cultivation seems a little strange... Don't tell me you managed to step into the next..."

Shang Xia smiled and explained, "I didn't step into the Essence Xing World this time. In fact, I don't even know where they are! However, I wasn't too unlucky. I found a good opportunity to cultivate. Even though I have yet to reach the level of Returning to the Origin to reach the fifth tier, all I have to do is to return to the Land of Origin to complete the transformation."

The Land of Origin Shang Xia was referring to was naturally the You Continent where he broke through.

Soon after, he spoke of his experience, including how he broke through, the situation in the Essence Xing World, the Star Pirate groups in the Chaotic Sea of Stars, and how he obtained a Spirit World fragment and a Spirit World Ark.

Even with his wealth of experience, Kou Chongxue was greatly taken aback by half the things he revealed. However, he was still fully pumped up by the time Shang Xia finished his explanation. “Good, this is great! Your breakthrough came at the perfect time. As for the Spirit World fragment... I’ll need to come up with a plan for it. It’s good you didn’t bring it back immediately...”

Shang Xia seemed to have heard the hidden meaning behind his words. After the members of the Tongyou Institution who rushed over after being summoned left, he asked, “Did anything big happen in our world when I was away?”

“Well, nothing too big. After the War of the Spirit Tinkle World, the various worlds have been recovering. Right before you left on your adventure, the Eternal Palace and Divine Capital Sect produced their first Free True Immortals. In the 2 years since then, based on some incomplete information we gathered, there were at least 4 attempts to enter the Martial Void Realm. Those only make up the numbers of those who managed to reach the last step where they would try to brand their soul into the world. No one knows how many people failed and only 1 of them succeeded in the end.”

Shang Xia raised an eyebrow and guessed, “Is he from the Northern Sea Mystic Sect?”

Kou Chongxue chuckled softly before nodding.

Shang Xia couldn’t help but gasp, “The Northern Sea Mystic Sect truly deserves its reputation as the sect with the richest history in our world. After Zhang Xuansheng came Lu Wuzi, and Zhang Jianzi broke through back then. With this...”

Kou Chongxue interrupted him before he could finish, “The new True Immortal is called Fei Xuzi. Actually, he was bestowed his name after ascending...”

“... Alright, with Fei Xuzi, the Northern Sea Mystic Sect produced 4 True Immortals! This is the true might of the actual strongest power in our Spirit Luxuriant World!”
Shang Xia sighed.

In reality, before Lu Wuzi, the Northern Sea Mystic Sect produced another True Immortal. It was said that Zhang Xuansheng was behind his death, which led to Lu Wuzi leaving the sect and establishing the Ice Essence Sect. That would mean that they produced even more True Immortals!

Whatever it was, the Spirit Luxuriant World had 13 True Immortals at the moment and were starting to grow stronger.

Shang Xia couldn’t help but ask, “Those who failed probably didn’t come from the 6 great powers, right? Where did their advancement formulas come from?”

Kou Chongxue shook his head in response. “1 of them came from the Yuanchen Sect, but he failed. Of the others, 2 of them caused the World Origin Source connected to the Ji Continent to shake, while the other probably tried to advance in the Xu Continent. However, the Triple Frost Palace and Zhenyang Gate denied that their experts attempted a breakthrough.

Shang Xia snorted coldly in response.

“As for the matter of their advancement formulas... Other than the great powers who have their own, they most likely bought them from the Star Origin Dao Field. In recent years, in order to restructure the Star Origin Guards, the Star Origin Dao Field paid a lot in order to purchase a large amount of resources from the various worlds.” Kou Chongxue concluded.