

The Heavens 151

Chapter 151: Break!

...

Wait a minute. I was just in the Unstable Region... Where am I now?!

Shang Xia looked all around him and noticed a sea of green as far as his eyes could see. A powerful gust of wind brushed against him, and it seemed to contain the gift of life.

Regardless of how experienced Shang Xia was at adventuring, he was stunned for a good second. He didn't know where to go!

In the next instant, the warm breeze disappeared. A chilly wind took its place.

Even though it wasn't bone-biting cold, it still made Shang Xia pretty uncomfortable.

The grass that was swaying happily in the breeze earlier started to wither at a speed visible to the naked eye.

The flourishing greenery turned a sad yellow, and Shang Xia stomped on them as he traversed the land.

That wasn't all. As he walked across the endless plains, he felt his life force draining from his body. He became a lot more lethargic than before.

Could this weird region steal other people's life force?!

Shang Xia felt a chill running down his spine. Examining himself, he heaved a sigh of relief when he noticed that nothing was wrong. "This is clearly not the Mountain and Sea Fantasy Spiritual World. It's not the Unstable Region either. That left only the Willow Forest or the Dual Season Land. Well, there are no willows around... This has to be the Dual Season Land!"

Shang Xia could only make the deduction based on the knowledge he had of the Coral Forest so far.

If he was really in the Dual Season Land, that would be great! It was where the Zhu Family grew their herbs, and precious herbs should be lying all about.

"This..." Staring at the endless grasslands, Shang Xia muttered to himself, "I can't see anything of value here... It's all ordinary grass!"

Even after walking for the time it took an incense to burn out, he was still stuck in the endless grassland. At least there was a change. The ground was no longer flat and he seemed to be climbing uphill.

The chilly wind blew directly against him, but the sound of metal scraping against metal rang in his ears.

Shang Xia's expression brightened up suddenly and he started to move towards the source of the sound.

After climbing over a tiny hill, the sound became even clearer.

Lying belly to the ground, Shang Xia carefully hid in the grass before observing the commotion. When he saw what happened, he was promptly taken aback! There were two groups of experts

exchanging blows in the naturally formed pit in front of him. There were hills surrounding the pit, and it formed an isolated region.

The pit was different from everything he experienced earlier. Not a single blade of grass grew on it, and Shang Xia started to make his deductions in his mind.

Could the region be a dried-up lake? Hmm...

As he continued to observe the surrounding, he noticed that the weaker group was starting to gather to form a fighting formation while being surrounded.

Shang Xia could recognize their formation from afar. It was the Tongyou Peak's five man protection squad formation! He didn't hesitate to run downhill as soon as he recognized it. The moment he revealed himself, two experts from the opposing side broke off to stop him.

"Shang Xia?! Be careful!" A voice rang through the air and the owner of the voice was clearly worried for him.

Shang Xia didn't have the luxury of thinking about who it was, and his sword slashed out the moment the two enemy cultivators arrived. Sword light rained down on the two as he leaped into the air.

The two of them were shocked by his sudden assault, and they stopped dead in their tracks. They waved their weapons in the air in an attempt to shatter the sword lights.

However, Shang Xia's body shot out the moment he touched the ground again. He charged towards them and disregarded the rain of sword light.

The two of them didn't expect Shang Xia to rush towards them when they were still in the midst of defending themselves.

Before they could react, Shang Xia's sword stabbed into one of their chests. Even though his sword didn't poke too deep, the strand of strength and softness fusion qi caused every single organ in his body to rupture.

Spitting out a mouthful of blood that also contained pieces of his innards, he was as good as dead.

The other cultivator clearly didn't expect his companion to die so quickly and in such a gruesome fashion. He quickly retreated.

Shang Xia obviously wouldn't make the rookie mistake of letting his opponents retreat unscathed. He took out another sword from his Embroidered Cloud Case and stabbed it towards the other cultivator.

As the other cultivator retreated, he smashed his weapon downwards in a desperate attempt to defend himself.

A loud clang rang through the air as Shang Xia's sword was deflected. However, a chilly qi invaded the cultivator's body and he shivered involuntarily.

"What pure ice qi..." As the thought flashed through the cultivator's mind, Shang Xia's Delicate Jade River Sword arrived.

With only one weapon in his hand, the cultivator tried to stab it between both blades to stop himself from getting skewered.

Shang Xia perfectly predicted his actions and his blades started to glow as fire and ice qi entered them. He unleashed the Twisting Twin Blades perfectly.

Even though the cultivator's weapon contained a lot of precious materials, it was still an ungraded weapon. Shang Xia's technique allowed him to slice through the cultivator's weapon like a hot knife through butter.

After cutting through his weapon, Shang Xia's blades continued towards the cultivator's body.

Staring death in the eye, the cultivator managed to overcome his limit and he retreated at a speed faster than he had ever moved before. Even so, he failed to dodge the strike. As Shang Xia's sword sliced through his belly, his intestines threatened to fall out.

Screaming in pain and fright, the cultivator retreated desperately. He even tried to push his innards back to where they were supposed to be while circulating his inner qi to close the wound.

Well, his reaction was correct. However, he forgot one very important point. The person who injured him was still hot on his trail!

Shang Xia's figure flashed, and he closed in once again. His Delicate Jade River Sword shot through the air, and the cultivator clutched his neck with his eyes wide open. Blood sprayed out from the wound on his neck as his guts leaked onto the ground.

From the time he appeared to the time he slayed both cultivators, he only used four moves. Even though his opponents were cultivators in the same realm, they were unable to put up the slightest bit of resistance!

Shang Xia was taken aback too! He was shocked that he could suppress them so easily!

However, that wasn't the time to celebrate. He didn't stop as he continued to run towards the two groups of cultivators.

"How dare you kill our friends?! Have a taste of my blade!" One of the cultivators left the battle and brandished his short knife while charging towards Shang Xia. He greeted Shang Xia with a slash of his blade.

"Be careful! He's at the grand completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm! He already comprehended blade intent!"

Another yell came from the cultivators of the Tongyou Peak.

This time, Shang Xia caught sight of the person who spoke. He was Ma Xiaofeng, a custodian of one of the outer divisions!

He wasn't the only one Shang Xia recognized. There was also Ye Mingyuan, another custodian of the outer divisions!

The three others looked slightly older than Shang Xia but younger than the two. Even though Shang Xia didn't know who they were, he could guess that they were inner disciples or disciples of the upper division.

Watching the blade fall towards him, Shang Xia could tell that the person was at the grand completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm. Compared to the two he killed earlier, it was going to be a tougher battle! Shang Xia circulated his inner qi and stabbed out three times.

They landed accurately on the incoming blade.

The cultivator who attacked felt all his qi being sucked out of the blade every time Shang Xia's sword tapped on it.

Shang Xia counterattacked swiftly after stopping the blade. His opponent didn't expect Shang Xia to react so quickly, but he wasn't flustered.

He raised his blade again and when Shang Xia's sword light arrived, he twisted his body and drew a crescent in the space before him. Three arcs appeared to block off Shang Xia's movements.

That was his martial intent, the Triple Blade. Every strike he made would possess triple the strength, and it was considered one of the most elementary martial extremity intents.

Even though it wasn't that strong, Shang Xia revealed a solemn expression when facing his attack. With a calm heart, his options flashed through his mind.

He didn't choose to unleash his Chaos Essence Lightning Palm. Instead, he chopped out with his second sword.

Softness and strength qi covered the Delicate Jade River Sword and it shattered the first blade light that was above the other two.

Void and reality qi filled the other sword, and it released countless rays of sword light that eroded the bottommost blade light. By the time Shang Xia's sword light disappeared, he managed to destroy his target.

As for the third blade light... He transformed his qi once again and severed it right before it could touch him!

With the Twisting Twin Blade, he managed to slice away the final threat!

Looking at his weapons, the Delicate Jade River Sword was undamaged. However, the same couldn't be said for the other sword. Not only was its tip shaved off, but there was also a giant dent in the middle of the blade. It was basically ruined.

"You... How did you shatter my martial intent?!" The expert standing opposite Shang Xia cried. Ever since he had stepped into the Martial Extremity Realm, his willpower was extremely solid! Now, it started to tremble at the thought of Shang Xia's feat of destroying his martial intent!

Chapters 152: Spiritual Thread Grass

A martial intent was a clear indication that a cultivator had stepped into the grand completion stage of their cultivation level!

Those with martial intent didn't just mean that they were a step away from entering the next cultivation realm! It also meant that they were unbeatable existences among those in the same cultivation realm!

That was an unspoken fact in the cultivation world! However, the scene before them shattered that belief!

With two swords in hand, Shang Xia used three different sword arts to destroy his enemy's Triple Blade martial intent!

That wasn't the most unbelievable part. They were more surprised by the fact that Shang Xia was merely at the large completion stage of the Martial Extremity Realm!

What he did basically shattered their worldview on the difference between cultivation realms!

The cultivator started to panic when his martial intent was shattered, but Shang Xia wasn't planning to let him off easy. The sword in his hand that showed signs of breaking slashed out towards his enemy.

"Sima, retreat!" One of the disciples yelled.

A reminder was all they could do. They couldn't send anyone else to assist him. After three of their cultivators broke off from their formation, those that were left were unable to suppress the members of the Tongyou Peak anymore!

As the cultivators of the Tongyou Peak counterattacked, those from the Rose Party resisted desperately. The tables were slowly starting to turn.

The cultivator who was attacking Shang Xia snapped awake, and he twisted his wrists violently to block Shang Xia's sword.

Painting Finger! Shang Xia heard of the move from Shang Xi previously during the war on the Tongyou Peak.

Well, so what if it was?

Shang Xia unleashed his Irregular Steps and his figure turned blurry.

Since his confidence took a big hit after his martial intent was broken by Shang Xia, he became even more flustered when Shang Xia's figure pressed closer to him. Since he couldn't lock on to Shang Xia, he waved his blade around recklessly.

A piercing pain ripped through his body and it originated from his ribs. Even without lowering his head, he could tell that Shang Xia's sword had found its mark. Softness and strength qi exploded inside his body, turning his innards to mush!

As he fell backwards, blood mixed with his crushed up organs leaked from his lips.

With countless battles under his belt, Shang Xia had already familiarized himself with fusing softness and strength qi into his attacks. He could unleash a lot more power than before.

That was also the reason he dared to take on his enemy's martial intent head-on.

Now that he killed the opponent's grand completion stage Martial Extremity Realm expert, he had to stop to catch his breath. Even though his foundations were solid and he had a deep reserve of inner qi, the battle exhausted him.

He had to dissipate the qi left in his meridians after releasing the strike.

Back in the Mountain and Sea Fantasy Spiritual World, Shang Xia used the Meridian Replenishing Powder to strengthen his meridians. That was the reason he could release repeated strikes.

Of course, that was a basic fusion of qi. When he really comprehended his Yin Yang Sword Formation, his meridians would be in for a world of torture.

As such, he definitely had to obtain some Tempering Meridian Powder.

“Retreat!” The members of the Rose Party who surrounded the disciples of the Tongyou Institution yelled.

They might outnumber the disciples of the Tongyou Institution, but numbers meant nothing when faced with a monster like Shang Xia who killed one of their strongest members in the blink of an eye! They chose to make a decisive retreat.

All of them acted with tacit understanding. When they left, they covered each other’s back to stop Shang Xia from taking advantage of the situation to kill a few more of them.

Watching them disappear into the distance, the cultivators of the Tongyou Institution finally relaxed. They sat down where they stood and started to recover their inner qi.

When Shang Xia approached, Ma Xiaofeng struggled to get to his feet to address him. The look in his eyes was complicated as he spoke, “Brat, weren’t you at the grand completion stage of the Martial Realm before you entered the battlefield between two worlds? Even though you were about to step into the Martial Extremity Realm, you progressed a little too quickly... Your improvement really puts all of us to shame...”

Shang Xia chuckled softly in response, “Teacher Ma exaggerates... This disciple only managed to meet with some good fortune after escaping death narrowly several times!”

Ma Xiaofeng sighed, “Yeah... Nothing comes free in this world. Everyone can only see the opportunities others obtained. They will never see the dangers one experienced...” Sucking in a long breath, Ma Xiaofeng seemed to have recalled something and he continued, “With your current strength, you won’t be able to learn anything in the inner division! No... You might even be too good for the upper division now! Right... All of us here are fellow disciples from the inner and upper divisions. Let me introduce you... Oh right. There’s no need to address me as your teacher anymore. With your strength and achievements, your place in the Tongyou Institution is already solidified! Just call me Martial Brother Ma from now on...”

Shang Xia barely managed to nod before Ma Xiaofeng started with the introductions. “I’m sure I don’t need to introduce Brother Ye to you. Next is Senior Sister Lu Lijing of the upper division, and that’s Brother Hao Yuanfang from the inner division. Lastly, meet Brother Yu Yifeng. He is also from the inner division.”

Shang Xia greeted all of them one by one.

Lu Lijing, who was clad in skintight green robes smiled, “Leader of the outer divisions, I’ve long since heard about you. Senior Sister Sun mentioned your accomplishments, but I refused to believe her. Looks like she wasn’t lying. In fact, she seems to have underestimated your abilities...”

Shang Xia didn’t dare to accept her praise.

After all of them exchanged some form of greeting, Ma Xiaofeng asked, “Junior Brother Shang, how did you enter the Coral Forest?”

“I’m not the only one... I’m afraid the Martial Extermination Realm experts of our Tongyou Institution and even those from the Four Spiritual Peak have entered! The three powers are going all out against each other and the situation is extremely chaotic...” After introducing the current state of things, Shang Xia realized that those who entered with Liu Jitang earlier had no idea what was going on in the outside world. He quickly summarized the situation.

“If the Tongyou Peak was really invaded, our hard work for the last 20 years would go down the drain! All of us will be sinners!” Ye Mingyuan muttered.

Their expression turned somber and nodded in unison.

However, Shang Xia broke the serious atmosphere with a chuckle. “Luckily for us, we managed to hold the enemies off. We even made them suffer huge losses! There’s no need to worry about it anymore...”

Ma Xiaofeng asked, “In that case, is Senior Sister Chu Jia really in control of the Mountain and Sea Fantasy Spiritual World?”

Shang Xia nodded. “Yes. She’s not the only one there. There’s another formation master under her command. Instructor Gu, my Grandpa Ke, and Senior Sister Sun are stationed there too.”

Li Lijing finally smiled. “That’s great! The Rose Party controls two of the four special regions of the Coral Forest. We control a portion of the Willow Forest, but we’re currently being suppressed by the Rose Party. The others can’t take a single step out of the Willow Forest at all! We thought that the Mountain and Sea Fantasy Spiritual World would also fall to them, and Deputy Patriarch Liu risked it all to charge into the Zhu Family’s Manor. He wished to obtain the Coral Command to control the Zhu Family’s territory to turn the tables on them. Who would have thought that the Mountain and Sea Fantasy Spiritual World would also be controlled by us... Now, we control two special regions each. At least we have something to rely on...”

“Since Deputy Patriarch Liu entered the Zhu Family Manor, who’s in charge of the Willow Forest?” Shang Xia asked.

“Instructor Peng and Ma Mingzheng...” Ye Mingyuan replied.

Instructor Peng was called Peng Lanqing, and he was one of the instructors in the outer division. Ma Mingzheng was a rank three formation master from the Hundred Professions Pavilion, and he had a lot more experience than Chu Jia.

Nodding slowly, Shang Xia asked another question. “Do you know what happened to the Coral Forest recently? Why did we appear in other regions?”

Shang Xia also learned that his guess was correct. He was currently situated in the Dual Season Land.

Ma Xiaofeng and Ye Mingyuan looked at each other and after communicating with their eyes, Ma Xiaofeng sighed. "After Deputy Patriarch Liu entered the Zhu Family Manor, a Martial Extermination Realm expert of the Rose Party barged in behind him..."

Shang Xia's eyes widened in surprise. "So... All this happened because Deputy Patriarch Liu and the expert from the Rose Party started fighting over the Coral Command?"

"That's what we think..." Ma Xiaofeng sighed.

Shang Xia quickly fell into thought. Shang Ke mentioned that Liu Jitang was after the formula to break through to the Martial Dipper Realm, and for the two of them to be fighting over the Coral Command...

One could only say that the accumulation of the number one family was unfathomable.

"As for us..." Ye Mingyuan revealed a bitter smile. "Even though we occupied the Willow Forest, we only controlled a part of it. We were suppressed by the members of the Rose Party and our group was sent out to deal with the enemies... Hah... Because of the sudden shift, we ended up here. Luckily all five of us gathered together. We even managed to run into you! Otherwise..."

Shang Xia could hear the implied meaning behind Yu Mingyuan's words. Since Liu Jitang mobilized a huge portion of the Tongyou Peak's strength, a portion of them had to be his trusted aides! The others were probably brought in to be used as cannon fodder! Those who were dragged into the mess might not even know what they were going to do!

Shang Xia had seen the core diagram of the Mountain and Sea Fantasy Spiritual World previously. He knew how small the core region was! The core regions of the Willow Forest and other special regions wouldn't be too big either!

Since the Tongyou Peak brought out so many disciples, they were definitely unable to all stay in the same area. As such, a group of them were abandoned!

Even though Ma Xiaofeng and the others were also in the Martial Extremity Realm, they were probably not part of Liu Jitang's faction. That's why they were sent out to fight members of the Rose Party.

Naturally, Shang Xia couldn't be bothered to think if the entire operation was Liu Jitang's plan to get rid of those who weren't part of his faction. All these things weren't for him to worry about anyway.

"What do you plan to do next?" Shang Xia asked.

As the five of them looked at each other, silence ensued. After some time, Ma Xiaofeng broke the silence. "Junior Brother Shang, look at this!"

Ma Xiaofeng and Ye Mingyuan moved to the side, revealing something cool to Shang Xia.

There was a region of earth that seemed a little twisted, and Shang Xia saw three strands of grass growing what looked like a screen of twisted space.

Shang Xia looked at Yu Yifeng and laughed, "I didn't think Senior Brother Yu would also be a formation master!"

“I’m not that good at it. This is just something I put together haphazardly...” Yu Yifeng smiled.

Ma Xiaofeng quickly explained, “The reason we chose to fight them was because of these herbs. We found three strands of Spiritual Thread Grass!

Chapter 153: Great Haul

The Spiritual Thread Grass was an extremely precious herb that changed its color according to how many years it had grown! Rank one Spiritual Thread Grass was gray in color, and cultivators referred to them as Iron Thread Grass.

Those that reached the second rank would turn slightly bronze in color and they were called Bronze Thread Grass.

When the grass turned completely silver in color, it would have reached the third rank. That was when it was called the Silver Thread Grass.

As for the fourth rank... Shang Xia’s vision was filled with a strand of grass in the earth that was completely gold in color. Gold Thread Grass!

“Gold Thread Grass? Silver Thread Grass? Wow, you guys are really lucky...” Shang Xia whistled. A trace of envy flashed across his face.

According to what he knew, the Spiritual Thread Grass had a lot of uses! The only problem was that it was extremely rarely seen.

It was so versatile and had so many uses that it could even take the place of many other herbs during the refinement process!

As such, there was another name for the Spiritual Thread Grass. It was also called the Thousand Gold Reserve!

Most importantly, Shang Xia knew that it was one of the two main herbs used to make Tempering Meridian Powder. One of them was the Wind Manipulation Zoysia that he obtained previously, and the other was Amethyst Whiskers which could be replaced with the Spiritual Thread Grass.

That was the true reason he envied their discovery.

Ma Xiaofeng chuckled in response, “You’re equally as lucky! If not for the fact that you killed three of them and caused them to retreat hastily, we won’t be able to keep the herbs! The five of us might even be killed by them! I believe that this strand of Gold Thread Grass belongs to you.”

After he spoke, none of the five rejected his decision. After all, their lives were countless times more valuable than the treasure.

“I can’t accept it!” Shang Xia rejected immediately. The five of them were nearly killed because they wanted to protect the treasure. Now, they were giving him the most valuable of the three Spiritual Thread Grass the moment he arrived. He felt that even if he saved their lives, the Gold Thread Grass was too valuable!

The five of them might be willing to give him the treasure, but he wouldn’t feel good taking it!

“Nonsense! Why not?” Ma Xiaofeng looked at his fellow companions. Their faces were filled with smiles and not a shred of insincerity could be seen.

Even though everyone wanted him to keep the Gold Thread Grass, Shang Xia was still unwilling to accept it. “I still can’t accept it! Fellow senior brothers and sisters, all of us are from the Tongyou Institution... Even if you don’t give me the Gold Thread Grass, I would still have saved you!”

Now that he said that, things started to become awkward. If they still insisted that he kept the Gold Thread Grass, they would be questioning his character.

Ye Mingyuan chuckled to break the silence. “Alright, we’ll keep the Gold Thread Grass. However, the two Silver Thread Grass must belong to Junior Brother Shang. Otherwise, we won’t be able to answer to our conscience.”

Ma Xiaofeng and the others quickly added, “That’s right! Junior Brother Shang, you need to take the Silver Thread Grass. Otherwise, we’ll be too embarrassed to show our faces in the institution!”

Shang Xia nodded helplessly. “Alright, your junior brother here will accept your goodwill. However, I’ll only take one of them!”

Ye Mingyuan and the rest tried to convince him to take the other, but Shang Xia was adamant about only keeping one of the two Silver Thread Grass.

Seeing as he had already made up his mind, all of them could only thank him profusely before getting Hao Yuanfang to retrieve the herbs from the soil.

Shang Xia finally realized why the entire valley-like area was barren. The growth of the rank four Gold Thread Grass and rank three Silver Thread Grass probably sapped up all the nutrients from the ground!

When he mentioned his deduction to Ma Xiaofeng, his guess was somewhat verified.

“Junior Brother Shang, you’re on the right track, but...” Ma Xiaofeng looked all around him before continuing, “... Even if all the heaven and earth qi in this area and the nutrients in the ground were channeled to the growth of these herbs, it should never have been able to reach the rank four level!”

Seeing the look of confusion on Shang Xia’s face, Ma Xiaofeng continued, “Do you know the true meaning of the Dual Season Land?”

“It was said that the Dual Season Land was used by the Zhu Family to grow spiritual herbs in the past, could it be...” Shang Xia frowned.

“Everything in the world is balanced. Even though they used this region to grow precious herbs, did you notice the endless grass plains in the surroundings? The life force of ordinary greenery would be channeled into the precious herbs with the help of the grand formation, shortening the time needed for the herbs to mature!”

Shang Xia recalled the chilly wind he felt when he first arrived and how the lush greenery withered before his eyes.

After hearing their explanation, Shang Xia asked, “Does this mean that every time a huge patch of grass withers, a precious herb would be growing nearby?”

“Probably. That was how the five of us located this place.” Ye Mingyuan added from the side.

Shang Xia’s heart trembled slightly and he continued his line of questioning. “Senior Brothers, do you know about the Resplendent Grass?”

Ma Xiaofeng raised his eyebrows slightly, and Ye Mingyuan chuckled. “Of course I do. It’s a rank three herb. Junior Brother Shang, are you starting to collect herbs to prepare for your breakthrough?”

Shang Xia shook his head and sighed bitterly, “Not yet... I haven’t obtained the medicine formula to enter the Martial Intent Realm, and I have no idea which herbs I need. I heard that many medicine formulas require Resplendent Grass. I wonder if it’s possible to find any in this region!”

“Junior Brother Shang, you’re progressing too quickly! Hahaha, it’s no wonder you haven’t found a medicine formula to advance!” Ye Mingyuan chuckled in amusement and envy before turning serious again. “The Resplendent Grass is similar to the Spiritual Thread Grass in a sense that it can be used to replace many precious herbs when refining rank three advancement medicine! Obtaining it early isn’t a bad choice...”

As Ye Mingyuan introduced everything he knew about the Resplendent Grass, Ma Xiaofeng remained unnaturally silent. In fact, he had quite an unusual expression on his face.

Turning his attention away from the conversation, Shang Xia looked at the corpses of those he killed as Hao Yuanfang was still extracting the herbs.

He was disappointed after looking through their belongings. Even though he found quite a few items, none of them managed to catch his eye.

These people are so much poorer than those in the Mountain and Sea Fantasy Spiritual World...

Shang Xia looked at the knife lying on the ground. When the cultivator unleashed his martial intent with the blade, Shang Xia thought that it was a graded weapon. However, that wasn’t the case after he examined it closely. Even though it was forged using some precious materials, it was far from reaching the standard of a graded weapon.

“Well... If I manage to find some suitable materials in the future, it might be possible to turn it into a low-grade weapon!” Shang Xia comforted himself before tossing the blade into his Embroidered Cloud Case. After sorting out the rest of the items, all that was left before him were rank one and rank two herbs.

Even though they weren’t too valuable, Shang Xia estimated that some of them could be used when he refined the Tempering Meridian Powder in the future.

“Wind Manipulation Zoysia, Silver Thread Grass... With all these herbs, my preparation to create the Tempering Meridian Powder is more or less complete. All

that's left to do is to find a proper chemist. Once that's done, I can start to comprehend my martial intent, the Yin Yang Sword Formation!"

After thinking about how he was one step away from completing his preparation, excitement started to boil in his heart.

Hold up...

However, the excitement that was rising in his heart was quickly doused when he thought about how many sword arts he would have to fuse into his Yin Yang Sword Formation. With so many sword arts, the amount of Tempering Meridian Powder required might be more than one portion!

From the current looks of it, one portion was far from enough!

His hands crept towards his Embroidered Cloud Case and he thought about the Meridian Replenishing Powder. He obtained it after killing Murong Yuntian back in the Mountain and Sea Fantasy Spiritual World. He had one final portion left, but from what he knew, the Rose Party gave Murong Yuntian three portions because that was how many portions it took for the Meridian Replenishing Powder to display its full effects.

Falling deep into thought, Shang Xia also recalled that he needed three portions of Tempering Meridian Powder for it to reach its optimal effects.

Looking at all the herbs he had, all the excitement he felt started to disappear. It seemed as though he had to get his hands on several more sets of herbs!

Shang Xia suddenly recalled Dongfang Mingyu. That guy seemed to have a portion of Tempering Meridian Powder on him...

He also practiced the Dual Interference Sword Manual, a sword art that combined both light and heavy qi. If he carried the manual with him...

It seemed as though he had a lot of items Shang Xia coveted!

Due to the difference in cultivation level, Shang Xia was far from matching up to Dongfang Mingyu. As several sinister ideas flashed through Shang Xia's mind, his train of thought was suddenly broken by a wave of cheers that came from behind him.

Turning around, he saw that the Spiritual Thread Grass had already been extracted from the ground. Hao Yuanfang placed them in cases that he prepared earlier.

Ma Xiaofeng brought a case containing a strand of Silver Thread Grass over to Shang Xia.

Chapter 154: Interception

Receiving the box from Ma Xiaofeng, he kept it in his sleeves. That was where his Embroidered Cloud Case was hidden and he dumped it directly within.

It was something he had done out of habit.

Since they were all fellow disciples of the Tongyou Institution, he found no need to hide it from them. When he made the knife disappear earlier, they should already have expected him to possess some sort of spatial artifact.

“Junior Brother Shang, what other plans do you have? If you’re willing, we can travel together. That way, we can look out for each other.” Ma Xiaofeng smiled.

Shang Xia chuckled in response, “That would be great. Since the Coral Forest is going crazy at the moment, we have no idea what will happen in the future.”

Ye Mingyuan and the others were happy to hear that he would be joining them. After all, the strength he displayed earlier showed the rest that he was the strongest one present. Ye Mingyuan chuckled, “Since we’re all going to stick together, the dangers we will face will be much less. Even if we’re transported again, we can gather together quickly. That’s how we found each other in the first place.”

Due to the sudden changes happening in the Coral Forest, no one could be sure what would happen next. Since there was strength in numbers, it would be in everyone’s best interest for them to stick together. Shang Xia had no reason to refuse.

“Then... Senior brothers and sisters, what do you plan to do next?” Shang Xia asked.

“This... Haha, what other plan can we have? We need to travel as far away from the core area of the Dual Season Land as possible!” Ma Xiaofeng laughed bitterly.

The Dual Season Land and Unstable Region were controlled by experts of the Rose Party. No matter what happened to the Coral Forest, the core region would remain unaffected! The experts of the Rose Party definitely set up camp there, and even with the strength of Shang Xia’s newfound party, rushing towards the core region meant certain death!

Shang Xia nodded slowly, but questions started to form in his mind. “In that case, which direction should we head towards? Senior Brother Ma, do you know where the core region is?”

“Junior Brother Shang, did you forget where those people ran towards when they made their retreat?” Ye Mingyuan laughed.

Realizing his mistake, Shang Xia was about to snort in amusement when he suddenly recalled another pressing problem. “Wait... If that’s the case, wouldn’t they bring Martial Intent Realm experts back here to look for us?”

The Silver Thread Grass was more than enough to attract Martial Intent Realm experts over. Since the two parties came to blows, it was clear that the opponents had already seen the treasures Ma Xiaofeng and the others were protecting! They definitely noticed the even more precious Gold Thread Grass, and there was no way they would give up on it. That was a rank four herb they were talking about! Even if they flipped the Dual Season Land upside down, how many rank four herbs would they be able to find?

“Yeah! That is why we have to leave right now!”

Smiling at each other, they came to a common understanding. They started to run in the opposite direction of where their opponents left!

In order to retrieve the herbs, the group wasted no small amount of time.

As they ran in the opposite direction, it didn’t take long before they felt a trace of divine sense stretching slowly towards them.

“It’s a Martial Intent Realm expert! Feeling this level of divine sense, he should have reached the large completion stage of the Martial Intent Realm!” Ma Xiaofeng and the rest stopped dead in their tracks while looking over their shoulders.

“Since they locked on to us, we won’t be able to escape!” Ye Mingyuan muttered.

“We have no choice. We have to fight!” Ma Xiaofeng growled.

The moment the words left his lips, Lu Lijing, Hao Yuanfang, and Yu Yifeng got into position behind the two of them.

Shang Xia had to admit that the five of them worked pretty well together. Forming the five man patrol squad formation was like second nature to them!

However, they quickly realized that they had a problem. There were six of them, and Shang Xia would be left alone outside the formation. In their eyes, he was as good as dead.

The situation turned awkward instantly.

Once he was left out of the formation, he would be attacked by the enemy mercilessly! The cultivators who followed the Martial Intent Realm expert of the Rose Party were definitely in the Martial Extremity Realm, and Shang Xia would have to face a few of them alone!

Ma Xiaofeng quickly left the formation. “Junior Brother Shang, take my place!”

Before Shang Xia could say anything, Ye Mingyuan also left the formation with a smile. “It’s alright. He can take my place. My movement art is a lot better than yours... Even without the formation, I have the highest chance of staying alive.”

Ma Xiaofeng shook his head in response. “Even though you have good movement arts, your cultivation isn’t as good as mine. Junior Brother Shang can take my place!”

“Are you joking?! What do you mean my cultivation isn’t as good as yours? I’m the custodian of the second outer division! Which division are you in charge of? You’re in charge of the fourth! Don’t you know that four comes after two?! You’re ranked behind me...” Ye Mingyuan snapped.

“Senior brothers...” Lu Lijing’s voice came from behind them.

“Be quiet!” The two of them yelled in unison. “Can’t you see that we’re having a conversation here?”

Shang Xia was extremely touched that both of them were fighting to give up their position in the formation so that he had a higher chance of survival! There was no way he could allow that to happen. After all, they would be giving up their lives for him and he couldn’t accept that!

“Senior brothers...” Shang Xia interrupted them all of a sudden. “I am thankful that you’re giving me the chance to stay in the formation, but... You didn’t ask if I knew how to work with the rest in the formation!”

Ma Xiaofeng and Ye Mingyuan’s expressions changed. They finally recalled that Shang Xia was still a student in the outer division and had no idea how the patrol squad formation worked!

After all, the Tongyou Institution had a rule that stated that disciples could only learn the formation after stepping into the inner division and after their completion of training with the Protection Division.

Naturally, Ma Xiaofeng and Ye Mingyuan had no idea that Shang Xia already learned how to fight in formation during the war on Tongyou Peak.

Shang Xia took the chance to distance himself from the formation to force Ma Xiaofeng and Ye Mingyuan back into formation. Standing several dozen feet away, his voice rang through the air. “Senior Brother Ma, you might be a little stronger than Senior Brother Ye, but you’re not stronger than me. Senior Brother Ye, your movement art might be good, but is it better than my Shang Clan’s Irregular Steps?”

Shang Xia’s figure disappeared in the distance, but his voice rang clearly in their minds. There was even a trace of smugness contained in it. “Haiz... Senior brothers, neither of you are qualified to leave the formation... I’ll take my leave!”

Lu Lijing whispered behind the two of them, “Did... Did he just look down on the both of you?”

Ye Mingyuan quietly walked back to his original position and so did Ma Xiaofeng. Both of them snapped at the same time, “Let’s just focus on fighting the enemy...”

Yu Yifeng frowned suddenly. “Wait, he’s not running in the right direction... He should be heading in our original direction! From the way he’s moving now, their Martial Intent Realm expert might detect him!”

Ye Mingyuan sighed softly. “He’s not running away... He plans to intercept the rest of the Martial Extremity Realm disciples after our battle with the Martial Intent Realm cultivator begins...”

Yu Yifeng widened his eyes in surprise.

Shang Xia’s idea was correct. The five of them were enough to stop a Martial Intent Realm cultivator, but if they added a few more Martial Extremity Realm disciples to the mix, their formation would be overwhelmed. As such, he chose to stop all the Martial Extremity Realm disciples by himself!

His actions were extremely dangerous. The moment the Martial Intent Realm expert turned around to focus on Shang Xia, he would be in terrible danger.

However, now that they were in such a desperate situation, he could only risk it all. He was relying on the fact that his actions wouldn’t be discovered by the Martial Intent Realm expert, and that Ma Xiaofeng and the rest would be able to hold him off for a long time!

Moreover, from the looks of it, the random changes in the Coral Forest would continue for the foreseeable future. As long as the battle lasted till their locations shifted again, it would be extremely likely for them to be able to escape the precarious situation they were in!

Shang Xia transformed his inner qi into light and heavy qi as he moved. When he unleashed his Irregular Steps, his speed increased by quite a bit. From afar, he looked like he was zooming across the lands.

After traveling out several miles, he felt a massive eruption of heaven and earth qi behind him. The battle between the Martial Intent Realm expert and those of the Tongyou Institution began.

Changing his direction immediately, he ran towards where the Martial Intent Realm expert came from.

...

Out of the eleven cultivators of the Rose Party who surrounded Ma Xiaofeng and the rest, three of them died in Shang Xia's hands when he appeared. The remaining eight were traveling slowly towards their Martial Intent Realm expert. They seemed to be in no hurry at all.

"Those bastards of the Tongyou Institution are really tough! Not even Brother Sima Lixin will be able to take them down in a short amount of time! In the end, he has to call us to back him up!"

The person leading them this time was the one who called for them to retreat last time. He took over the position of team leader after their original boss was killed by Shang Xia previously.

"Shouldn't we be heading there as quickly as possible?" Someone asked.

"Nope!" Their leader explained, "Not only should we not hurry, we need to head over as slow as possible. It would be great if we arrived right after both sides severely injure each other. We'll head over there and wrap the battle up, securing the victory!"

"Why would we do that?" Another person in the group asked.

The person in the lead snapped, "Are you stupid? If we head over and help Sima Lixin end the battle quickly, we can't obtain any benefits... Do you think you're stronger than him or something? Don't forget, those bastards of the Tongyou Institution obtained one Gold Thread Grass and two Silver Thread Grass. Even though all we ask for are the lower-ranked Silver Thread Grass, do you think Sima Lixin would share the treasures with us? He's a Martial Intent Realm expert! We're nothing but cannon fodder to him!"

Everyone in the group slowed down as the battle became more intense. The fluctuations of heaven and earth qi grew wilder and wilder.

"Right. You're absolute geniuses! In fact, why don't you slow down even more?" All of a sudden, a voice disrupted their beautiful daydream of swooping in at the last minute to 'save' the exhausted Sima Lixin from the members of the Tongyou Institution.

"You?!" The person leading the group of eight gasped after recognizing Shang Xia's voice. Those standing around him stopped dead in their tracks. They couldn't forget the scene where Shang Xia killed three of their companions in the blink of an eye.

"Wait! He's the only one here! There's nothing for us to be afraid of! You must be crazy to think that you can stop all eight of us alone..." The leader among them quickly discovered Shang Xia's lone presence.

On the hill where Shang Xia stood, he drew his Delicate Jade River Sword. After thinking about it, he pulled out another ordinary-looking sword from his Embroidered Cloud Case. "Actually, I've been meaning to test out my limits for a long time now. Come! I hope you won't disappoint me!"

After he spoke, Shang Xia leaped towards the eight of them.

Chapter 155: Exchange Between Martial Extermination Realm Experts

...

“Am I trapped here or something?” Sima Zhanxing continued walking forward, towards the supposed light at the end of the tunnel. No matter how far he walked, he would always seem to be transported back to some point in the forest whenever he was about to escape. The sense of irritation in his heart grew stronger and stronger.

Obviously, he knew that he had been trapped in some sort of maze.

The person controlling the maze he was in was either extremely adept at the Mountain and Sea Fantasy Grand Formation, or they were really talented in the art of formations.

That was the only way they could restore the grand formation to a point where it could trap a Martial Extermination Realm expert like Sima Zhanxing in such a short amount of time.

“How did those freaks of the Tongyou Institution enter so quickly? Sima Zhanxing muttered to himself. Of course, he quickly determined who controlled the region. He raised his guard secretly. “Looks like those who came in earlier have all met their end... Moreover, the Tongyou Institution seems to have set their eye on the Mountain and Sea Fantasy Spiritual World...”

Sima Zhanxing’s heart trembled slightly. All of a sudden, a soft whistling sound rang through the air as a flying squirrel leaped at him.

Before it could arrive, Sima Zhanxing, whose attention seemed to be somewhere else, pointed at it casually.

The sound of shattering could be heard as the squirrel returned to its original form. It became an ice sword surrounded by bright orange flames that quickly crumbled.

Two shards of ice fell at Sima Zhanxing’s feet and his expression changed slightly. Reaching towards it cautiously, he didn’t expect the two pieces of ice to transform into huge maces that swung towards him.

Waving his hands in fright, his extermination origin flashed across his palm. Slapping the maces away, he retreated slightly. His chest heaved up and down and he looked to be slightly injured.

As he stumbled backwards, his surroundings changed again.

The rock formations standing tall above the water surface started to shift. They formed a giant arena with him in the center. When he raised his head, he saw a giant boulder flying at him.

“Enough!” Sima Zhanxing grunted once and his inner qi started to move. The space around him twisted slightly and the boulder that flew towards him popped like a bubble.

At the same time, Sima Zhanxing snorted in contempt. His extermination origin surrounded his body and he punched towards another boulder falling towards his head. Debris filled the air.

A mocking smile appeared on his lips. “Gu Shou, instructor of the inner division in the Tongyou Institution. Are you stupid to use the same move twice against me?”

Sima Zhanxing wasn't done. He followed up with two quick jabs towards the falling rocks.

Several loud clashes rang in the air as the heaven and earth qi in his surroundings shook. The rock shards were turned into ash.

“As long as it's effective, I can use it as many times as I wish!” Gu Yuan's voice rang through the air as another rock formation appeared beside Sima Zhanxing. Despite the blood dripping down his face, Gu Shou raised his mace and slammed it towards Sima Zhanxing's skull.

“You're asking for death!” Sima Zhanxing roared as he punched out yet again. Gu Shou was sent flying as the rock formation he stood on turned to dust.

Sima Zhanxing wasn't done. He wanted to rush up towards Gu Shou to land the final blow. However, he discovered that the ground beneath him had already caved in due to the impact of his blows. It stopped him from moving immediately.

When Sima Zhanxing raised his head to look at Gu Shou again, he noticed a crafty smile on the man's face.

.

His heart sank as he spun around instinctively. His fists which were still covered in the lights emitted from his extermination origin shot straight out.

“Bang!”

A clear blast rang in Sima Zhanxing's ears as the tip of a spear stabbed straight into the brass knuckles that appeared on his hands.

The resulting explosion caused the illusion to shatter instantly. The rock formations that surrounded him started to crumble.

A burst of rainbow light could be seen on the other side of the spear, and when it disappeared, Shang Ke's unwavering gaze met Sima Zhanxing's incredulous one.

A bitter smile started to appear on Sima Zhanxing's face. “Suspended Spear? Martial Extermination Realm?”

Fresh blood leaked out of his nostrils after he spoke.

“Too bad it's not enough to kill me!”

Even after the serious wound inflicted by Shang Ke, Sima Zhanxing still seemed unperturbed.

The sound of cracking could be heard as the brass knuckles on his hand shattered. A formidable surge of energy pushed Shang Ke back several steps.

In that instant, another howl echoed through the Mountain and Sea Fantasy Spiritual World. The void started to twist as the Coral Forest started to shift again.

“Hahaha! The heavens haven’t given up on me!” Sima Zhanxing roared with laughter as he sped towards the twisted void.

“Leave your life behind!” When Sima Zhanxing stepped into the air above, Sun Haiwei’s figure emerged from the water below. A frozen sword glowing with orange flame shot towards Sima Zhanxing’s back.

“You can’t...” Shang Ke yelled, but it was too late.

Without even turning back, Sima Zhanxing’s extermination origin surrounded his body. It shattered the ice sword and the resulting shockwave slammed against her. She fell unconscious the moment she hit the ground.

“Hehe, a mere Martial Extremity Realm kid has the guts to make an attempt on my life?” As the words left his lips, Sima Zhanxing’s figure disappeared in the spatial fluctuations.

“Quick! How is she?!” Shang Ke yelled. Even though it seemed as though he wasn’t talking to anyone, he knew Chu Jia could hear him.

Instead of an acknowledgment, Chu Jia’s urgent reminder sounded in his ears. “Senior Shang, be careful!”

The instant Sima Zhanxing disappeared, a long sword stabbed through the air towards Shang Ke.

“Seven Conch Sword! Ran Biluo!” Shang Ke roared as his spear stabbed out swiftly. “Everyone, retreat!”

Gu Shou propped up his body and Bai Luming emerged from some random hole in the ground. The two of them grabbed Sun Haiwei before retreating towards the core region of the Mountain and Sea Fantasy Spiritual World.

“Ring...” The Seven Conch Sword was deflected, but Shang Ke grunted anyway. He backed away quickly.

“Huh? You reached the Martial Extermination Realm too?” A jade white hand extended from the void and caught her sword. She casually tore through space and arrived outside the core region of the Mountain and Sea Fantasy Spiritual World.

She looked at Shang Ke and the others who were fleeing and giggled softly before revealing a sinister smile. The sword in her hand started to ring angrily as dozens of sword qi appeared around her. Without another word, she charged into the core region.

...

In the Unstable Region...

Murong Gaofeng, whose breakthrough had failed at the very last second due to a huge disturbance, couldn’t even regulate his breathing before fighting for his life.

Shang Lubing's relentless attacks and Murong Gaofeng's desperate defense shattered several islands floating in midair.

Even though the Coral Forest started to shift during their battle, the spatial folds didn't affect them in the slightest.

The two of them continued their battle.

Even though Shang Lubing was much stronger than Murong Gaofeng, the latter had Martial Intent Realm experts to assist him. Both sides were able to fight evenly for some time...

...

In the Dual Season Land...

Shang Bo quickly located the core region after he arrived. Despite his formidable cultivation base, he didn't know that Shang Xia was holding off eight cultivators of the Rose Party alone.

Whatever the case, he wasn't going to allow the members of the Rose Party to remain in control over the core region now that he had arrived. He commenced his attack on them immediately.

As a giant palm formed from heaven and earth qi crashed downwards, a figure rose into the sky to stop him.

A grunt left the newcomer's lips as he was sent flying back into the core region, slamming heavily into the protection formation.

Shang Bo glanced at the person who stopped him and sneered with contempt. "Yuwen Shengjie, it's you! I didn't think that your injuries would heal so quickly. Looks like you used quite a lot of precious treasures..."

Yuwen Shengjie wasn't planning on sparring with Shang Bo with words and he quickly hid inside the protection formation around the core region.

Shang Bo wasn't planning on letting him off so easily. He rushed towards the core region behind Yuwen Shengjie.

Naturally, the members of the Rose Party expected him to do so. With Yuwen Shengjie's help, they managed to stop him outside the barrier.

With a trace of irritation rising in his heart, Shang Bo tried to shatter the barrier. With each attempt, the skies trembled and the earth shook.

Despite the violent attack and desperate defense, both sides seemed to be holding back slightly. Shang Bo didn't unleash his full strength, and the members of the Rose Party didn't try to force him into a corner. They were afraid that they would destroy the Dual Season Land.

After several rounds, both sides realized that they weren't going to do anything to each other. Shang Bo felt slightly drained. Just before he decided to call for backup, he stared at the space beside him and muttered, "Old lady, you've been here for quite some time now. Why haven't you revealed yourself?"

Three colored lights appeared from the void after he spoke, and Yan Su'er stepped out with her walking stick in hand.

“Old man Shang, you were so strong that I thought you could deal with them on your own. If I step in suddenly, won’t you think that I’m trying to steal your spoils of war?”

Shang Bo chuckled in amusement. “Looks like I’m going to have to disappoint you. I’m not as strong as you think I am. I will have to trouble you to make your move, otherwise, we won’t be able to open up this region.”

“Alright, alright, since you’re willing to admit that you’re not strong enough...”

Before she could complete her sentence, Yuwen Shengjie who was hiding in the protection formation yelled, “Hey! You better not forget our deal! Without our help, do you think your Four Spiritual Peak will be able to hold the Tongyou Institution back?”

Shang Bo revealed a mocking smile as he looked at Yan Su’er. “Oh? What deal did you make with each other? Why don’t you tell me?”

“Deal? Hah... I didn’t make any deals with these losers...” Yan Su’er raised her walking stick after she spoke. A massive staff condensed in the air as it smashed heavily into the protection screen below, causing the earth to tremble.

The lush greenery around the core region was torn to bits as the shockwave swept through the lands.

“Yan Su’er, you...”

“Oi, what are you doing? Are you planning to destroy the Dual Season Land?” Shang Bo frowned. Didn’t he hold back just because he was afraid that he would destroy the precious treasures contained within the region?

Before Yan Su’er could explain herself, a loud roar tore through the skies yet again. Several spatial folds appeared in the air.

...

This time, the shifting of space seemed a lot worse than the previous times.

Shang Xia felt his vision turning upside down as a trace of foreboding filled his heart. When his feet touched the ground again, he only found his footing after leaning against something behind him. Holding his knees, he retched uncomfortably.

“This...”

Chapter 156: Ji Wenlong’s Thoughts

In the core region of the Willow Forest...

As the Coral Forest shifted yet again, a blade sliced through space and four colored lights emerged from the tear. A door formed in mid air as Ji Wenlong stepped through it with a cold expression. His gaze swept across the area under him.

The Coral Forest was filled with countless restrictions, and even Martial Extermination Realm experts would find it impossible to fly within.

That was one of the most important reasons behind their inability to control the Coral Forest even after so many years of exploration. The Coral Forest itself was too damn large! It contained the territory of the great Zhu Family, and it wasn't something they could traverse through by walking!

However, due to the sudden change in the Coral Forest, the space around started to tremble and shift, and the restriction that stopped cultivators from flying seemed to have lost its effect.

The moment Ji Wenlong appeared, the protection formation around the core region of the Willow Forest trembled slightly and a figure rose into the air.

“Deputy... Deputy Patriarch Ji!” A trace of excitement could be seen on the face of the person who spoke, but his excitement seemed to mask his uneasiness.

Ji Wenlong's expression was mega unsightly as he groaned, “Peng Lanqing, look at what you guys have done!”

Peng Lanqing was also an instructor of the institution, and he was like Gu Shou. They were all Martial Intent Realm cultivators.

A trace of embarrassment appeared on his face, but he quickly thought of something. “Deputy Patriarch, Liu Zhiyuan...”

“Shut up!” Ji Wenlong shut him down instantly.

Peng Lanqing raised his head to stare at Ji Wenlong, only to be met with Ji Wenlong's pitch-black face. “Scram!”

No matter how wronged he felt, Peng Lanqing could only take his leave. He slowly descended back into the protection formation.

When Wang Shihai saw that Peng Lanqing had returned, he complained indignantly, “How can Deputy Patriarch Ji say such things? No matter what, all of us were following Deputy Patriarch Liu's orders...”

Wang Shihai was also a teacher in the institution, but he wasn't in charge of cultivation. His position was somewhat similar to Chu Jia, and he was Peng Lanqing's great friend.

The two of them were in charge of holding down the fort at the Willow Forest when Liu Jitang was absent. As such, they were the ones with the highest authority among those who came into the Coral Forest initially.

“Just keep quiet...” Peng Lanqing snapped at him.

“Haiz...” Wang Shihai chuckled in indignation. “Why does it sound like we did something wrong? It's not our fault!”

Peng Lanqing glanced at the small wooden house in the core region and sighed, “Well, we just need to be more careful. Tell Old Ma that there might be enemies hidden outside the core region.”

Wang Shihai's expression sank slightly. “Since that's the case... What do we do about Liu Zhiyuan?”

“Hah. What’s done cannot be undone. Regardless, Liu Zhiyuan is someone on our side. We cannot allow anyone to disturb his advancement! Moreover, Deputy Patriarch Ji might have already learned about it.” Peng Lanqing sighed.

“How is that possible?” Wang Shihai chased up to Peng Lanqing when he saw that his friend was walking away.

“Nothing is impossible. Other than the destroyed Zhu Family, the Murong, Ji, Yun, and Liu Clans should be quite familiar with this territory! Moreover, the Zhu Family was a colossal existence. How can we be sure that Zhu Ying is the only one who survived?”

Wang Shihai gasped in shock. “Do you mean...”

Before he could complete his sentence, Ji Wenlong’s voice boomed across the entire Willow Forest. “Since the two of you have come, why don’t you show yourselves?”

“Hahaha... Mister Ji is really quick. I can’t even keep up with you...” A gentle voice replied.

As Ji Wenlong stood high in the skies above the Willow Forest, he saw a trace of light flashing across the leaves and branches below. His tense expression loosened up slightly.

The gentle voice that rang earlier appeared again. “Mister Ji, I’m really curious. Why don’t you enter the core region of the Willow Forest to control the protection formation? With you to hold the fort, even if I worked together with Mister Dongfang here, we won’t be able to do a thing to you!”

Before Ji Wenlong could say anything, another raspy voice echoed through the air. “Isn’t it simple? This old bastard is afraid that he’ll be stuck controlling the barrier. He won’t be able to carry out his master plan!”

Ji Wenlong’s expression didn’t change in the slightest. He sneered in response, “Lang Xiaoyun, your little doggy nose is really efficient. You even managed to chase me all the way here...”

He turned to the other person and sighed, “Dongfang Daying, the Rose Party has been playing with fire all these years... Aren’t you afraid that you’ll burn yourselves?”

Dongfang Daying roared with laughter. “Old Man Ji, did you grow stupid after teaching in the institution for so many years? Even if we choose to give up, do you think you’ll let us off?”

Lang Xiaoyun ignored the both of them and asked “So... What exactly does Mister Ji plan to do here?”

Dongfang Daying snorted in contempt, “He’s after the Zhu Family Manor... Do you really think that they don’t have any schemes to take over the Coral Forest? Liu Jitang only entered earlier than Ji Wenlong and the rest because of his greed!”

“Oh? The number one family of the You Continent?” Lang Xiaoyun chuckled. “We heard of the Zhu Family before. Since Mister Ji knows where the Zhu Family Manor is, why don’t you bring us there?”

“Hah... Do you think bloodline cultivators like you guys have a use for the inheritance of the Zhu Family?” Ji Wenlong glanced at Dongfang Daying from the corner of his eye and muttered, “Lang Xiaoyun, are you going to go back on your words and help the Rose Party to take over the Coral Forest?”

Dongfang Daying’s expression changed slightly. But he quickly regained his calm. “Hah... What an elaborate show of sowing discord among us. Brother Lang, there’s no need to bother with him...”

After he spoke, Lang Xiaoyun tossed his weapons out and a giant moon appeared in the skies above, crashing straight down towards the protection formation of the core region of the Willow Forest.

A light flashed through Ji Wenlong’s eyes, but he didn’t stop Lang Xiaoyun.

Before his Startling Moon Loop could smash into the protection barrier, the willow trees that were swaying in the wind a second ago enlarged tens of times. They stretched high up into the skies, forming a large barrier around the protection formation.

Three colored lights emerged from Lang Xiaoyun’s Startling Moon Loop as it slammed into the row of trees below. They sliced through the long branches and scattered the thin leaves, but the trees grew back endlessly.

Lang Xiaoyun’s Startling Moon Loop and the protection formation were stuck in a stalemate as neither managed to overpower the other.

Lang Xiaoyun laughed, “The protection formation is really amazing... I wonder how long it can last? Brother Dongfang, can you hold him back for a second? I wish to experience the intricacies of the protection formation.”

Dongfang Daying smiled in response, “Oh, sure!”

Ji Wenlong snorted in contempt, “Are you blind? Can’t you see that he’s destroying the Coral Forest as much as he can?”

Dongfang Daying revealed a helpless expression and sighed, “I don’t want this to happen either. However, your Tongyou Institution is too overbearing! Old man, if you really plan to keep the Coral Forest as intact as possible you better lead the way over to the Zhu Family Manor.”

Ji Wenlong shot him a deep gaze before looking at the giant willows protecting the core region before sighing, “Alright, I’ll bring all of you over.”

Lang Xiaoyun retrieved his Startling Moon Loop and smiled, “Alright, please!”

Ji Wenlong glared at the two of them and a helpless smile eventually appeared on his face. “You better not regret this...”

After speaking, he took out an item to tear open the space before him. A huge scarlet door was revealed in the depths of the space he tore open.

“Vermillion Plaque! You actually have one!” Dongfang Daying turned his gaze away from the scarlet gates in the depths of space and stared at the tiny item in Ji Wenlong’s hand. “In the past, the members of the Zhu Family who were scattered outside started disappearing... Hehe...”

“This time, Let’s hope you can keep up.” Ji Wenlong ignored him and stepped into the spatial tunnel he opened.

Dongfang Daying didn’t think twice and stepped into the tunnel.

“Heh... There cannot be a third power in the battlefield between two worlds, but we can’t allow anyone to control the Coral Forest by themselves either!” Lang Xiaoyun sneered before following behind.

...

“They’re gone?!” Wang Shihai’s heart thumped in his chest and he sighed, “I thought that they discovered us!”

Peng Lanqing’s expression was full of worry as he continued, “I don’t think... I don’t think we affected his cultivation, right?”

A bald-headed expert stood behind Peng Lanqing and he was another rank three formation master of the Tongyou Institution called Ma Mingzheng. One of the biggest reasons behind the war on the Tongyou Peak and the destruction of the protection formation around their territory was because of Ma Mingzheng’s absence!

He shook his head in response, “Nope. Lang Xiaoyun didn’t use much power in his strikes. They were probably only trying to force Deputy Patriarch Ji to lead them over to the Zhu Family Manor.

Wang Shihai sighed, “Who would have thought that Deputy Patriarch Ji would be so gracious. If he allowed them to remain for some time, they definitely would have discovered our secret! This... Doesn’t this make Deputy Patriarch Liu seem...”

Ma Mingzheng nodded slowly in acknowledgment. “That is true. The moment Liu Zhuyuan enters the Martial Extermination Realm, the ranking of the Four Great Clans in our city might change. With two great Martial Extermination Realm experts, the Liu Clan will not only overtake the Ji Clan as the largest clan in the city, but they might also leave the constraints of the Tongyou Institution! As instructors of the institution, this... This might not be the best choice for all of us!”

Peng Lanqing thought about it for a second and he muttered hesitantly, “No matter what... The appearance of a new Martial Extermination Realm expert is a good thing for our Tongyou City! Didn’t Deputy Patriarch Ji lead the two of them away before they could discover us?”

Wang Shihai frowned suddenly. “Yeah... Where do you think Deputy Patriarch Ji brought them anyway?”

Peng Lanqing and Ma Mingzheng looked at each other, but they had no idea how to answer him.

All of a sudden, Peng Lanqing turned to look at the little wooden house in the distance and a streak of jade-green light shot through the skies. The grass around the house grew a little taller.

“He’s about to advance... Old Ma, use the formation to stop any signs of his breakthrough from leaking out!”

Chapter 159: Beheading

“Hundred Days Longevity Intoxication!” That was an advancement formula for Marital Intent Realm experts to reach the Martial Extermination Realm!

Shang Xia released another sword light and weakened Zhu Ying’s strike several times over.

When it landed, he only managed to destroy some words that had been carved into the chamber.

Originally, Zhu Ying wanted to shatter the entire wall with his strike! Now that he failed, he tried again.

Shang Xia was prepared for his nonsense this time. Several rays of sword light slashed outwards and destroyed Zhu Ying’s palm strike.

By the time their attacks collided, Shang Xia had already forcefully memorized the formula on the wall.

“Hundred Days Longevity Intoxication, Main herb:... Assistive Herb...”

Even though stopping Zhu Ying’s strikes with his sword light was something he had done casually while trying to burn the formula into his memories, it was nothing short of disrespect in Zhu Ying’s eyes. The more nonchalant Shang Xia was, the angrier Zhu Ying became. The hatred in his heart became even deeper.

“Shang Xia, you’re going too far!” Zhu Ying raised Mu Qingyu into the air by her head and tossed her at Shang Xia.

Retrieving his sword, he released a strand of qi to dissolve Zhu Ying’s inner qi. Without injuring her, he placed her softly against the wall behind him.

“Hah, I knew it! You’re a pair of adulterous scumbags!” Zhu Ying sneered. However, Shang Xia was unable to stop his strike this time and cracks started appearing in the wall. It crumbled to dust in front of his eyes.

Shang Xia’s expression turned frosty as a streak of lightning surrounded his Delicate Jade River Sword. He stabbed it towards Zhu Ying yet again.

Lightning surrounded the tip of his sword and Zhu Ying felt his body going numb long before the sword arrived.

As someone who had already experienced Shang Xia’s Chaos Essence Lightning Palm and was scarred from his previous encounter, Zhu Ying didn’t hesitate to tear another rank three talisman.

The heaven and earth qi in the stone chamber condensed to form a deep green tortoise shell-like shield before Zhu Ying.

A ray of condensed lightning slammed into the shield, causing it to dim significantly. However, it failed to shatter the shield.

Of course, it didn’t end there. Shang Xia’s Delicate Jade River Sword arrived soon after, and with a soft knell, it stabbed deep into the shield.

The moment it did, a strand of softness and strength fusion qi caused the rank three talisman to reach its limit.

“Luckily it’s another rank three talisman with no divine sense. Otherwise, I won’t be able to destroy it so easily...” Shang Xia heaved a sigh of relief in his heart.

In stark contrast to Shang Xia’s pleased expression, Zhu Ying’s eyes were so wide his eyeballs were threatening to pop out of their sockets.

“You... You... How do you know about the fusion of qi?! This isn’t a martial intent... How is this possible?” Zhu Ying stuttered.

A sneer from Shang Xia was all he received in response. Another sword appeared out of nowhere, and Shang Xia held it right above his Delicate Jade River Sword. Snipping both swords inwards, he used one of the techniques recorded in the Twisting Twin Blades! In one smooth motion, the shield shattered completely!

“Who told you that only martial intents can achieve fusion of qis? Haha, my knowledge runs a lot deeper than you think!” Shang Xia chuckled in amusement as he transformed his qi yet again. Instead of softness and strength qi, a soft fiery glow and a thin layer of ice covered both swords. He didn’t stop after he destroyed Zhu Ying’s shield. Fire and ice qi fused together as it pincered Zhu Ying.

Screaming in fright, Zhu Ying brought out a huge machete and waved it towards the intersection between Shang Xia’s swords.

As the sound of scraping metal rang through the air, Zhu Ying was sent flying through the air. When he slammed into the wall behind, he felt a sickly sweet sensation on the tip of his tongue. His lips parted uncontrollably and he spat out a mouthful of blood.

The machete he brought out at the last second was of really high quality. Even though Shang Xia fused fire and ice qi in his last attack, he noticed a huge chip in the ungraded sword he took out. From the looks of it, the sword had to be scrapped after the battle.

A cold light flashed in Zhu Ying’s palm and a tiny knife appeared in them. Tossing it out with incredible accuracy, it shot past Shang Xia towards Mu Qingyu who was lying defenseless on the other side of the stone chamber.

Displaying the might of his Irregular Steps to the maximum, Shang Xia’s body appeared before Mu Qingyu as he swung his Delicate Jade River Sword to block the throwing knife.

Even though he deflected the throwing knife, it drew an arc in the air and returned to stab towards Mu Qingyu.

“Sword talisman...” Shang Xia snorted lightly as he summoned hundreds of sword lights to destroy the throwing knife.

The rain of sword light swallowed the throwing knife and shrill ringing rang through the chamber. Shang Xia’s sword light eventually exhausted all the energy contained in Zhu Ying’s sword talisman and the throwing knife fell to the ground powerlessly.

When Shang Xia finally turned his attention to Zhu Ying, he realized that the man was standing before a newly opened passage. Holding the Vermillion Plaque in hand, a sneer could be seen on Zhu Ying’s face.

“Roar! Roar!”

The sound came from deep within the passage that opened behind Zhu Ying, and three undead corpses soon appeared. They brushed past Zhu Ying, and they lunged at Shang Xia.

Why didn't they attack him?? Even though the thought ran through Shang Xia's mind, he didn't have the luxury to think of the reason. The last thing he saw was Zhu Ying disappearing into the passage behind him. The doors of the passage disappeared suddenly, and Shang Xia's vision was quickly filled with the three undead corpses.

At the same time, another passage opened in the stone chamber. Two more undead corpses appeared. They were like fatties who smelled the greatest delicacy in the world as they rushed towards Shang Xia.

Shang Xia couldn't be bothered with them if they were all rank two undead corpses, but there was a rank three undead corpse among them!

They managed to surround and suppress Shang Xia the instant they appeared.

Luckily for him, they were stuck in a confined space. The undead corpses might be fast, but they couldn't move nimbly in the stone chamber! His Irregular Steps allowed him to bring out his greatest fighting strength in the confined area. Since the undead corpses had limited thinking ability, Shang Xia could remain relatively safe under their relentless assault.

The question quickly resurfaced in his mind. Why did Zhu Ying not get attacked by the undead corpses? The corpses had no ability to think for themselves. How did they recognize him as one of their own?

Shang Xia's thoughts turned to the Vermillion Plaque in Zhu Ying's hands before he disappeared.

Did the Vermillion Plaque have something to do with it?

With a flick of his wrist, Shang Xia took out his own Vermillion Plaque. However, the undead corpses still didn't leave him alone.

Shang Xia twisted his body to avoid a rank two undead corpse and his Jade River Sword stabbed outwards. A deep gash appeared in the corpse's rib, but it was evidently not enough to damage an undead creature like that.

Shang Xia circulated his Yin Yang Essence Qi and sent some of it into the Vermillion Plaque in his hands. Even though faint red light appeared on its surface, it didn't stop the undead corpses from attacking him.

An idea quickly surfaced in Shang Xia's mind. His inner qi started to transform to become light and heavy qi. Even though nothing seemed to change in the plaque, the undead corpses seemed to be slightly affected. Something seemed to cloud their judgment.

The sword in Shang Xia's hand stabbed straight into one of the undead corpses' temples.

A deep howl came from the rank three corpse all of a sudden, rallying all the rank two undead corpses. They started to attack Shang Xia together.

Helpless, Shang Xia could only dodge with all his might. He tried to send his inner qi into the Vermillion Plaque again, but it didn't do anything this time.

Shang Xia suddenly recalled that Mu Qingyu entered the Coral Forest with Zhu Ying. He turned to look at her unconscious figure in the corner and thought to himself, "Why are they attacking me when she's lying there defenseless?"

Could Zhu Ying possess the ability to control the undead corpses in the Zhu Family Manor?

However, he quickly got rid of that thought. If Zhu Ying had the ability to do that, he wouldn't have killed all of them while making his way over to where they were right now.

Shang Xia's attention turned to Mu Qingyu when he realized that she was struggling to open her eyes.

"If you keep wearing those clothes that have been stained with Zhu Ying's blood, they won't stop!" A hoarse voice left Mu Qingyu's lips.

Only then did Shang Xia realize that his clothes were stained with Zhu Ying's blood. Earlier, Zhu Ying spat out a mouthful of blood. Shang Xia didn't know if it was intentional or not, but it didn't matter anymore.

Is his blood the reason behind those undead corpses going crazy? Or will any blood from the members of the Zhu Family do?

Whatever it was, Shang Xia quickly removed his outerwear.

He tossed the cloth over one of the undead corpses that were running at him. When his clothes landed on the undead corpse, the creature tore at it mercilessly.

That wasn't the only undead corpse that was affected. The other rank two undead corpses joined their companion in the relentless attack on the ownerless clothes.

The only undead corpse that hesitated slightly was the rank three undead corpse, and it seemed a little confused.

Shang Xia wasn't going to give it the luxury of time. His sword beheaded the rank three undead corpse when it was still disorientated.

Taking another step forward, his sword stabbed through the skull of another undead corpse. In the next instant, he stabbed in another direction, skewering another skull.

Chapter 160: Meridian Expanding Powder, Tempering Meridian Powder, Meridian Replenishing Powder

"Why?" Shang Xia's chest heaved up and down. Ever since he arrived, he destroyed two rank three talismans, and dealt with the attack of five undead corpses where one of them was a rank three monster. He finally settled all the troublesome matters, and he had to take a break to catch his breath. He was too lazy to walk over to Mu Qingyu to undo the restrictions on her body.

"What are you referring to?" Mu Qingyu twisted her body slightly to put herself in a more comfortable position before replying.

"Since he won't be attacked once he holds the Vermillion Plaque, why did Zhu Ying kill those in the Zhu Family Manor?" Shang Xia asked Mu Qingyu. He was clearly vigilant

of her since she came in with Zhu Ying. Even though her inner qi was sealed and her movements were restricted, Shang Xia wouldn't let his guard down.

"Because of me. The undead corpses won't attack him, but I turned into their target!" Mu Qingyu snorted as if it was a stupid question. "Of course, I was merely bait. He would abandon me the moment I became useless!"

Shang Xia frowned in confusion. "If you know that, why would you follow him to the Coral Forest? With the relationship you two share... Especially after you broke off your engagement with him... Why would you still choose to work together? Wouldn't you find it awkward?"

Mu Qingyu fell silent for a second and she seemed to have noticed the trace of mockery in Shang Xia's voice. She chuckled softly, "It's simple. He promised to give me a complete advancement formula for those in the Martial Extremity Realm to enter the Martial Intent Realm."

"Hah... Is that it?" Shang Xia snorted. "Aren't you selling yourself short? Moreover, you're not even close to the grand completion stage of the Martial Realm... You have no use for it."

Mu Qingyu raised her head in a fit of rage and she yelled in agitation, "What do you know? You know nothing!" A sneer formed on her face and she continued, "Of course you don't. You're the direct descendant of the mighty Shang Clan in the Tongyou City. The genius of the Tongyou Institution... Why would you care about a mere advancement formula for the Martial Intent Realm? Hah... The moment you reach the requirement to break through, your Shang Clan and the institution will probably bring out all their advancement formulas for you to choose from. You won't even need to worry about how compatible you are with the formula! How can you ever understand how precious an advancement formula is? You will never understand the worth of an advancement formula not controlled by the institution!"

Mu Qingyu's words made sense. It was true that he was never worried about not being able to find a suitable advancement formula.

However, his mood wouldn't be affected just because of her agitated emotions.

After thinking about it for a second, not a trace of emotion could be seen on his face and he asked, "The Mu Family wishes to obtain your own inheritance not controlled by anyone. However, your aunt has already entered the Martial Intent Realm. Doesn't she possess an advancement formula?"

Mu Qingyu snorted in disdain. "Looks like you really don't know anything. Ever since your Shang Clan rose to power, Patriarch Kou increased the requirement to learn rank three advancement formulas! It isn't too difficult for disciples of the institution to advance, but none of us are allowed to leak the formulas. It's nearly impossible for anyone to enter the Martial Intent Realm without the help of the institution! Unless we find an advancement formula on our own, our family will forever be controlled by the institution!"

Shang Xia snorted under her breath. "So... The institution only allows contributions but it doesn't allow its secrets to leak..."

"That's right." Mu Qingyu muttered.

Shang Xia obviously knew the reason behind Kou Chongxue's actions. Not only would their possession of advancement formulas increase the prestige of the Tongyou Institution, but it would also strengthen their control over the various families under their banner.

Mu Qingyu looked at Shang Xia's expression and she couldn't help but break the silence after some time. "Are you really unable to break the restrictions on my body?"

Without hesitation, Shang Xia replied, "Zhu Ying wishes nothing but death upon me. You're someone who colluded with him. Hah... Even if his original plan was to use you as a cultivation furnace, I'm not planning to let you run loose here... Who knows what your plan is... Anyway, you can rest assured that I won't use you as my cultivation furnace!"

"If Zhu Ying wishes to comprehend his martial extremity intent, he has to look for me. Are you planning to use me as bait?" A trace of anguish flashed through Mu Qingyu's eyes. However, her body was restrained by the restrictions laid down by Zhu Ying. She couldn't do anything!

Shang Xia glanced at her from the corner of his eye. "You're thinking too much into it. I might not be able to undo what Zhu Ying did anyway."

After his explanation, he placed her back on the stone bed. At the very least, she would be more comfortable than when she curled up against the wall.

"What are in these?" Shang Xia asked as he pointed at the bottles Zhu Ying brought out earlier.

All of these were prepared by Zhu Ying when he planned to use her as his cultivation furnace earlier. When Shang Xia emerged and caught him by surprise, Zhu Ying escaped frantically and failed to collect his stuff.

"He prepared those medicines for him to comprehend his martial intent..." Mu Qingyu muttered.

"Oh? What medicine are they?" Shang Xia's eyes lit up and he opened the jade bottles and wooden boxes without waiting for her to answer.

Mu Qingyu could tell that he didn't trust her from his actions and she replied casually, "He told me that he was planning to comprehend the Burning Blood Ice Sealing Art..."

"I know what he plans to comprehend." Shang Xia interrupted her before she could finish. He closed the lid on the wooden case before opening the jade bottle beside it.

Pausing slightly Mu Qingyu continued, "According to him, the Burning Blood Ice Sealing Art possesses huge explosive strength. Cultivators will need to ensure that their meridians can withstand the violent flow of their inner qi. All of these items are used to strengthen and expand one's meridians. From what I know there are some Meridian Replenishing Powder, Life Blood Powder, and Expanding Meridian Powder in there."

Shang Xia sniffed the bottle while listening to her. He grunted once after she completed her explanation. "At least you're not lying. There's actually some Expanding Meridian Powder in here."

Looking at Shang Xia's suspicious expression, Mu Qingyu thought that he was testing to see if she would lie. As such, she revealed everything she knew.

"There's some Life Blood Powder in the wooden case, and it's one of the most important medicines for him to comprehend the Burning Blood Ice Sealing Art. The most valuable medicine he prepared, the Expanding Meridian Powder, is contained in the other jade box."

A smile eventually appeared on Shang Xia's face. "Looks like you know quite a lot. I bet you obtained a lot of good stuff from him too."

Mu Qingyu remained impassive. "All of these are merely a small part of what he obtained. Some of the stuff he brought into the Coral Forest was given to him by the Liu Clan, but he obtained most of his treasures after entering this place. Weirdly enough, Liu Jitang and the others didn't discover all the treasures when passing through the place."

Shang Xia wasn't surprised at all. After all, Liu Jitang's objective wasn't those low leveled talismans or medicine.

His only goal was the inheritance of the Zhu Family! Before obtaining the inheritance, he could overlook Zhu Ying getting some benefits.

The reason behind Zhu Ying's huge leap in cultivation was naturally Liu Jitang's assistance. To Zhu Ying, those were the least they could do since they coveted his Zhu Family's inheritance! It was even possible that he thought he was the one gracing them with the help they needed to enter the Coral Forest...

After thinking about it, Shang Xia realized what Liu Jitang was doing by allowing Zhu Ying to obtain so many treasures after entering the Coral Forest. By letting so, everyone who came in with them would start to detest Zhu Ying, causing Zhu Ying to seek protection from Liu Jitang.

After writing out the entire story in his mind, Shang Xia continued to look through the other containers.

When he popped open the lid to a violet-colored jade bottle, his heart trembled slightly. "Tempering Meridian Powder! He actually has Tempering Meridian Powder!"

Sucking in a cold breath, Shang Xia stopped his hands from trembling and he thought to himself,? Yeah, that's about right. In order to comprehend his martial intent, he definitely needs some Tempering Meridian Powder...

Now that he had a portion of Tempering Meridian Powder, he could start comprehending his Yin Yang Sword Formation!

It was no wonder he was so agitated. Regardless, his loss of composure nearly destroyed his cool image in front of Mu Qingyu.

There were six containers in front of the stone bed, and Shang Xia verified those that contained Meridian Replenishing Powder, Life Blood Powder, Tempering Meridian Powder, and Expanding Meridian Powder. Those were the four he knew about.

As for the other two, Mu Qingyu said that they were suitable for strengthening his physical body. After examining them several times, Shang Xia had to admit that he had no idea what they were. Of course, he wouldn't use any medicine he couldn't recognize.

"These medicines are pretty good... Guess I earned big this time." Shang Xia chuckled to himself before sweeping everything into his Embroidered Cloud Case.

His gaze soon turned to the other items in the chamber and he asked Mu Qingyu, "What are these?"

"He gathered those along his way. Since his Embroidered Cloud Case was full, he can't keep any of these within." Mu Qingyu muttered softly.

Casually looking through the items on the ground, he discovered that all of them were items or herbs that were of the second rank or lower. Even so, the sheer quantity of it caused Shang Xia to be dumbstruck. It was too bad Shang Xia's Embroidered Cloud Case was also pretty limited in space...

"So... The treasures in that fellow's possession are rank three or higher?" Shang Xia's eyes lit up suddenly.