

The Heavens 261

Chapter 261: Leeroy Jenkins

Shang Xia's suggestion was simple. Since metal countered wood, all they needed to do was to counter the metal element! At the same time, the water-attributed fate dipper would serve to strengthen his Eternal Spring Fate Dipper.

If that were to happen, Kou Chongxue wouldn't just recover. His strength would reach an unprecedented level. He would enter the third element Martial Dipper Realm without a hitch!

Naturally, that would only happen in the best case scenario. One had to know that other than the first fate dipper Kou Chongxue obtained by a stroke of luck, he used close to ten years to create and refine the second.

With the pressing situation at hand, Kou Chongxue probably wouldn't be able to find a third strand of fate dipper so easily, much less a water-attributed one that suited him.

It was a shame that he was in an extremely precarious situation at the moment. Shang Xia knew that even if Shang Lubing and Kou Chongxue were to trust him unconditionally, the first method would never work!

Shang Xia's true intention was to guide Kou Chongxue to his second solution.

Once they soothed his condition a little and allowed him to recover some fighting strength, they would be able to pull through the dangerous situation that was about to arise. At the same time, Kou Chongxue would be able to hold on until he found his third fate dipper.

After he laid out both his ideas, Shang Xia stared at the two of them in silence.

Shang Lubing initially thought that Shang Xia was merely messing around, and he wanted to casually praise the kid for his insights no matter what he said. However, from the nonchalant look on Shang Xia's face, he couldn't find it in himself to say anything.

Kou Chongxue didn't quite believe Shang Xia anyway, but he was also struck silly by Shang Xia's confidence.

An awkward silence filled the wooden hut as the three of them chose to remain quiet.

Shang Xia eventually took it upon himself to break the silence. "Patriarch, when you entered the Martial Dipper Realm, you risked it all and left your fate up to the heavens. Why don't you give my idea a try anyway? It's better than nothing."

"Hah, you're too young to be playing psychological tricks on us." Shang Lubing followed up quickly.

Roaring with laughter, Kou Chongxue seemed to have reached a conclusion. He glanced at Shang Lubing to signal his intentions. With their years of brotherhood, they were more than capable of telling what each other wanted to say with the gesture.

As Kou Chongxue's laughter died down, Shang Lubing looked out of the hut and muttered, "Kid, I received your suggestions. However, it's getting late. You should head on back. Be careful when entering the spatial tunnel. If you get thrown into some random part of the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range, you'll find it difficult to return to the Tongyou City."

Shang Xia knew that the two of them wanted to talk about his suggestions and they didn't fully trust him. However, he didn't choose to explain everything about the five elements to the two of them.

He said enough. He couldn't possibly reveal his deepest secret just so the two of them would believe him. After all, that might bring more trouble than it was worth.

After hearing Shang Lubing, Shang Xia knew that it was time for him to take his leave. After bidding farewell to the both of them, he returned from the path they came from.

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In the wooden hut, the two of them stared at Shang Xia's leaving figure until it disappeared in the dense shrubbery.

"There's something strange about the kid. His divine sense is unusually strong. He managed to fuse it with the world after undergoing the second transformation, and he even managed to spy on me without me realizing it was him." Shang Lubing said all of a sudden.

Ignoring what he just said, Kou Chongxue asked a question of his own. "Third brother, where's the nearest water-attributed spiritual land we know about?"

Widening his eyes, Shang Lubing responded, "Are you really going to believe that kid?!"

"Didn't you say that there's something weird about him? Why don't we try out his suggestion?" Kou Chongxue smiled.

"But..."

"Don't tell me the kid's suggestion is really geared towards harming me." Kou Chongxue chuckled.

Shang Lubing quickly shook his head in disbelief. "He's just a kid! Why are you taking his words seriously?"

Kou Chongxue's laughter didn't stop. "Well, it won't hurt to try. Nothing can make it worse anyway."

Based on Shang Lubing's understanding of Kou Chongxue, the patriarch was hell bent on trying it out now that he took the suggestion. He could only mention all the water-attributed spiritual lands they knew about. "There's a water-attributed spiritual vein running under the Changfeng City. However, the place there isn't well protected, nor is it secretive enough. Also, they might not be willing to let you cultivate there. Another location is in the western direction of the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range. There's a cliff face there that's frozen all year round, and rumors have it that the region had turned into a spiritual land. However, that region is controlled by the Yanmen Institution. I'm afraid that they have guards standing by round the clock around the area and it won't be easy to remain hidden there. Lastly, there's the Solitary Sea. The only problem is that it's located near the border of the Ji Continent."

Thinking for a moment, Shang Lubing added, "Whatever the case, your movements will most definitely be discovered by others the moment you appear in any one of the three regions. It's not a good idea to travel around right now."

“Haha. Do you think they won’t be able to guess where I am if I remain hidden here the whole time?” Kou Chongxue chuckled.

“Since that’s the case, where do you plan on going?” Shang Lubing sighed. However, a flash of inspiration struck him the next moment. He slapped his forehead due to his sudden realization. “Shit! How did I forget about this?! There’s a spiritual land in the Coral Forest called the Mountain and Sea Fantasy Spiritual World.”

A look of excitement could be seen on his face after he spoke and he turned to look at Kou Chongxue. However, he discovered that the patriarch was standing beside the window as he stared solemnly in the direction of the forest in the distance.

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After leaving the secret region, Shang Xia ran into the dense jungle and he explored his newfound abilities after his divine sense transformed the second time.

Since he drank the Illusory Tea back in Kou Chongxue’s courtyard, he gained many insights about his Triple Providence Chapter and his Providence Spear. It was a pity all his gains were locked in the back of his mind. He would have to unlock them slowly again.

His sudden realization earlier that the memory of the rank five advancement formula was sealed in his memory also served as a distraction. Along with Kou Chongxue’s storytelling, Shang Xia was unable to think about his insights he gained. Now that he had finally left, he could start recalling them.

All of a sudden, a ray of sunlight pierced through the dense forestry and landed on his face.

Narrowing his eyes due to the glare, Shang Xia discovered that the region around him was different from the time they arrived. Those massive trees that stretched high into the skies were nowhere to be seen.

That wasn’t the spatial tunnel that led back to the institution!

A soft rustling sound filled the air and something rushed towards Shang Xia while hidden in the forestry.

Chapter 262: Ambush

Out of the blue, Shang Xia discovered that he had strayed from the spatial tunnel leading towards the institution.

Behind him, a soft rustling sound ran through the forest as something rushed towards him.

Twisting his body, his Jade River Sword appeared in his hand. It stabbed straight towards the incoming object.

It struck accurately at a black light that came from the thickets nearby.

The black light exploded in an instant. Shang Xia finally managed to see the appearance of the item and discovered it was a black iron arrow. Flying in the other direction from the recoil of the blast, it tore through one of the tree trunks nearby.

Shang Xia didn't hesitate. He charged in the direction of the fired arrow, and a frosty light flashed in his eyes.

A loud roar rang through the skies as a ferocious wave of energy rushed towards him. The heaven and earth qi in the surroundings turned into an arrowhead and a terrifying gust caused the surrounding greenery to sway violently.

The arrow that flew at him earlier wasn't the true killing move. Instead, it was the heaven and earth qi that it brought along with it.

When Shang Xia deflected it earlier, he could tell that the person who sneak attacked him was in the Martial Intent Realm or higher!

Facing the incoming energy wave, Shang Xia wasn't surprised. He destroyed the incoming wave, and the remnant energy rushed against the surroundings. One of the tall trees nearby was stripped bare by the energy wave, and the bushes below suffered the same fate. Shang Xia saw a black robed figure running in another direction.

At the same time, a massive explosion happened nearly seventy feet away from him. A tree was blown apart as a massive figure wielding a giant axe leaped at him. Releasing a loud roar, an ape-like phantom that was created with heaven and earth qi could be seen behind them man.

"Bloodline technique? You're from the Azure Spiritual World!" Shang Xia's expression changed and he roared in astonishment. The sword in his hand drew a beautiful arc through the skies and smashed heavily against the axe.

He didn't even have the time to think about why members of the Azure Spiritual World had appeared in their Azure Origin World!

The collision between their weapons caused a giant outburst of heaven and earth qi in the skies above. As the shockwave tore through the lands, giant swathes of forestry were destroyed. Trees were uprooted and debris filled the skies. The region around the two cultivators became a barren wasteland.

"What the fuck! This guy didn't just break into the Martial Intent Realm!" The massive cultivator who wielded an axe took three steps back and bumped into one of the fallen trunks. He yelled in fright to remind his teammate, and a trace of resentment was contained in his voice. There was also a hint of fear.

Shang Xia also retreated towards wherever had the most cover and he growled, "This guy's divine sense definitely completed its third transformation! He's strong!"

With Shang Xia's experience in the battlefield between the two heavens, he was familiar with the fighting style of those from the Azure Spiritual World. He knew how those bloodline fighters fought, and looking at the expert before him, he was sure that his opponent came from the Azure Spiritual World. However, he wasn't part of the four great races that made up the Four Spiritual Peak.

Due to the sudden attack and his lack of understanding of his opponent, Shang Xia decided that retreating was the best course of action. Moreover, they were able to affect and infiltrate the region

controlled by the institution. Adding on the fact that the axe wielding cultivator was freaking strong, it wasn't a bad idea to make a tactical retreat.

Retreating due to the backlash, Shang Xia wanted to use the chance to disappear into the forest surrounding them. However, another black iron arrow flew towards him with impeccable accuracy.

A roar echoed in Shang Xia's ears as the axe wielding cultivator rushed in his direction once again.

They were clearly unwilling to let him escape easily.

Naturally, Shang Xia wouldn't be played by their stalling tactics. His sword slashed backwards and a ball of reddish gold lightning exploded. Lightning bolts that were as thick as a man's arm zapped all over the place and one of them slammed into the arrow while shattering the energy wave it brought along with it.

Unleashing his Irregular Steps, Shang Xia's speed increased at irregular bursts. He would step towards his right and left in a seemingly weird rhythm, and it caused the archer to be unable to lock on to him.

He opened up the distance between himself and the axe wielding brute behind him too.

Seeing as he was about to disappear into the thick forest, a pale-faced cultivator appeared from a giant boulder not too far away.

A mocking smile could be seen on the newcomer's face as he drew his blade from his back. A giant phantom of a praying mantis appeared behind him. He welcomed Shang Xia with a downward slash of his blade.

With his eyes widening in shock, a trace of terror appeared in Shang Xia's eyes for the first time since their encounter.

His body trembled in mid air as he released seven slashes with his Jade River Sword. The sword qi released by all seven slashes fused in mid air and Shang Xia unleashed his famed technique, the Seven Laceration Sword!

The fused sword qi struck the blade qi that was aimed at him, and the two released their divine senses at the same time. The world around them was thrown into chaos from the collision of their attacks and their divine senses.

Shang Xia's martial extremity intent was unable to overwhelm his opponent at all!

"Grand completion stage of the Martial Intent Realm!" Shang Xia's expression turned ugly to the extreme. His hand trembled violently as he tightened his grip on his sword.

The reaction of the cultivator who stopped Shang Xia was similar. His expression was one of shock and fright as he couldn't understand how they reached a draw. He was an existence who had touched upon the gates of the Martial Extermination Realm!

He didn't hold back in his previous strike. Even so, it was stopped by his opponent! That was the greatest humiliation he suffered in a long time!

Without waiting for the chaotic heaven and earth qi to settle down, he charged towards Shang Xia and started his second round of attacks.

The axe wielding cultivator also arrived by that time, and they pincerd Shang Xia from the front and back.

Without giving him a chance to catch his breath, another black iron arrow flew towards Shang Xia.

Helpless, Shang Xia could only stop the arrow that was an immediate threat to his life. Striking the arrow and shattering the energy it contained, he turned to face the other two.

There was no escaping it. He had to fight them head on! Pushing himself to his limit, he resisted their strikes before being thrown into the air.

The archer on the other side was no amateur. He took the chance to fire another shot at Shang Xia when he was in mid air.

“We want him alive!”

Barely deflecting the arrow this time, the energy contained in it sliced a gash across the left side of Shang Xia’s face.

It was the worst state he had ever been in.

At the critical moment, his head cleared up and the entire situation became obvious.

With two extremely strong cultivators to hold him down and another hidden archer to hinder his movements, it would be nearly impossible for him to escape.

From the location and time he was attacked, there had to be an elaborate plan covering the entire assault. Moreover, they seemed to understand his strength really well. To put it simply, it was a scheme aimed at Shang Xia alone!

However, that begged another question. Why was he the target?

Even though he was someone with some sort of background, he felt that it hadn’t reached the level where the Azure Spiritual World would set their sights on him.

A chill ran through his heart when he thought up to that point.

Even if they managed to tear open the spatial barrier, they wouldn’t be able to hide their actions from an expert at Kou Chongxue’s level. If the patriarch didn’t appear when Shang Xia ran into such a dangerous situation, there was only one possibility. Kou Chongxue wasn’t faring much better!

That made sense. If the Azure Spiritual World could ambush Shang Xia on his way back, they wouldn’t leave Kou Chongxue alone.

For the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World to infiltrate deep into their territory, there was no doubt about it. There was a damn traitor in their midst. After all, Kou Chongxue’s location was supposed to be a guarded secret. Even though the cultivators could enter the Azure Origin World without detection, they wouldn’t be able to discover Kou Chongxue’s hiding spot! Since things had come down to that point, anyone with half a brain would be able to narrow down the traitor to be someone in the Tongyou Institution.

“You guys are really fearless alright. Aren’t you afraid that you’ll have to leave your lives here forever?” Shang Xia gasped for breath as he asked. He tried to suppress the

rampaging inner qi in his dantian. He felt a trace of killing intent close to twenty feet behind him as he spoke.

Just as he was about to stretch his divine sense in that direction, it was stopped by another powerful divine sense. He was unable to locate the hidden attacker and he was forced into a passive situation.

“Since we’re able to come here, we can definitely leave. As long as we capture you, no one can do anything to us!” The axe wielding cultivator roared with laughter.

“He’s trying to stall for time. Yuan Gang, don’t give him a chance to catch his breath. We’ll take him down right now!” The blade wielding cultivator snorted .

As the two of them closed in on him once again, Shang Xia made up his mind. There was no escape. If he didn’t give it his all now, there wouldn’t be a chance for him to give anything anymore.

Several talismans appeared in his hand and he tossed them towards the duo mercilessly.

The four talismans he threw out at them turned into brilliant rays of light and displayed their terrifying might. They either turned into tyrannical rays of sword qi, or they split into several smaller ones. A giant scissors that emitted dense flames on top of a bed of frost also appeared, and there was another giant ray of sword qi that glowed a weird black and white. Everything flew towards the two cultivators.

“Be careful! All of them contain divine sense!” The blade wielding cultivator roared. It seemed as though he knew his stuff, but he was deceived by the power they contained. Those were talismans created by Shang Xia and despite their special attributes, they should be unable to heavily injure cultivators at the level of the blade and axe wielding experts.

When the two of them shattered the attacks from the four talismans with all their might, they wasted a breath of time. That was Shang Xia’s goal to begin with. With the two of them distracted, he rushed towards the hidden archer.

“Yin Lian, be careful!”

Chapter 263: Incoming Storm

Tossing out the various talismans, Shang Xia bought himself some time to deal with the only way to break out of his sticky situation.

Instead of taking the risk of trying to run, he chose to rush towards the hidden archer!

Shang Xia knew it clearly. As long as the hidden archer lived, his chances of running away were slim to none.

The only way he could live was to deal with the hidden archer.

“Yin Lian, be careful!” The blade wielding cultivator roared the moment Shang Xia moved.

That only served to confirm Shang Xia’s guess that he was moving in the right direction.

It didn't take long for him to hear the whistling of another arrow as it tore through the air. A burst of lightning emerged from the top of Shang Xia's sword as it greeted the arrow. No match for the explosive lightning, the black iron arrow shattered to bits.

Before the lightning could dissipate, another black iron arrow ripped through the air and closed in rapidly towards Shang Xia.

Realizing it was too late to deflect the arrow with his sword, Shang Xia extended his left hand and a layer of formless inner qi gave it a nice coating. With the extra protection, Shang Xia grabbed the arrow directly.

Despite the layer of protection from his inner qi, his flesh was clearly weaker than metal. A thick gash appeared on his palm as the arrow was stained a deep red. By the time it lost all its momentum, the arrow was barely three inches away from Shang Xia's eye.

Despite his injury, his movements didn't slow down. Due to the two arrows he shot, the hidden archer's location was revealed to Shang Xia.

"I found you!" With a shake of his body, Shang Xia changed direction in mid air yet again. With the assistance of the heaven and earth qi in the surroundings, he leaped twenty feet in the air and saw a figure running desperately through the forest. He held a long bow in his hand.

"Where do you think you're going?" Shang Xia's sword had disappeared at an unknown time, and the Waning Spear Moon replaced it. Even though it was nearly destroyed, it was barely usable.

After all, it still maintained its spear-like appearance.

Only with a spear would Shang Xia be able to unleash his full strength!

"Void Evasion!" He stabbed towards the fleeing cultivator who was nearly eight feet away with the fourth move he comprehended. During the second transformation of his divine sense earlier, he was struck with a flash of inspiration and he created his fourth move from his comprehension of the Providence Spear.

He visualized the technique several times, but that was his first time actually using it in battle.

Before his inner qi could travel fully through the spear to complete the move, the Waning Moon Spear was finally unable to withstand his Origin True Qi any longer. It shattered like glass and it was completely scrapped.

"Hah, brat, you're dead now!" The axe wielding cultivator behind roared with laughter.

At the same time, the archer who was running away paused to draw his bow.

Only then did Shang Xia discover that he had mistaken the archer for a male. It was actually a lady who was clad in men's clothes!

Unfortunately for her, she wasn't able to fully draw her bow when a giant spear made entirely of heaven and earth qi appeared in mid air. In the blink of an eye, the spear stabbed deep into her left chest. Shang Xia's spear struck before she could react.

“I... I...” Before she could say anymore, she spat out several mouthfuls of blood in a row and she collapsed.

Her body hadn't even hit the floor when Shang Xia's figure arrived. He plundered the corpse easily and grabbed the bow firmly in his hands. His actions were so swift that he broke two of her fingers with the bowstring.

“AHHHH!!! Yin Lian! Shang Xia, you deserve death!” The blade wielding cultivator roared with rage and he seemed to unleash some sort of forbidden art. He accelerated once again and he closed the distance between himself and Shang Xia in several breaths of time.

“Hmph. They're probably a couple.” Shang Xia didn't forget to sneer at the two of them despite the dangerous situation he was facing. Although he just killed his lover, Shang Xia's emotions weren't affected in the slightest. He remained extremely calm and looked over the situation once again.

Without the hidden archer hindering his movements, Shang Xia felt that even if he couldn't kill the two of them easily, they wouldn't be able to take him down either. Much less when one of them had already lost his cool and was charging towards him like a madman.

As he continued to run, the Jade River Sword appeared in his hand once again and he twisted his body to unleash his attack. Even though he was holding a sword, he used the third move he created after comprehending the Providence Spear Art, Flashing Meteor.

The blade wielding cultivator released his full powered strike at the same time.

A loud blast rang through the air and the two of them tumbled into the surroundings. The eruption of heaven and earth qi that resulted from their exchange caused the ground below to sink three feet lower.

The two of them released a grunt as they flew. Borrowing the strength of the recoil, Shang Xia opened up the distance between them by close to thirty feet. The moment he landed, he felt his legs going soft and he nearly fell to the ground. A sickly sweet sensation rose up his throat and he quickly spat out a mouthful of blood.

Taking a deep breath, he circulated his Origin True Qi and continued to escape in the other direction.

His Irregular Steps was extremely useful when it came to avoiding attacks and moving in close quarters. Now that he had fallen into the heart of a dense jungle, he was like a fish in the water as he started to run. In a flash, his figure disappeared.

Several feet away from the blade wielding cultivator, the axe wielding man frowned. Surprisingly, he didn't chase after Shang Xia. “Brother Shan Dao, what do you think we should do?”

Shan Dao wiped the blood that was trickling down the side of his lips before looking in the direction where Shang Xia disappeared. “Forget it. We can't catch up to him anyway. We'll just have to take the L this time. Let's go.”

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Yuan Gang, the axe wielding cultivator, glanced at Shan Dao in shock. “We failed the mission and got Yin Lian killed... How are we supposed to report when we return?”

Shan Dao kept his sword and hung his head in shame and pain. “I’ll bear the responsibility.”

“Brother Shan, you know that’s not what I meant. Crossing the spatial barrier isn’t easy. Was our sole mission after coming over here to capture that punk? He’s just a Martial Intent Realm brat and his identity isn’t exactly impressive anyway. His clan isn’t exactly the strongest in the Azure Origin World. Why should we capture him?”

As the words left his lips, the two of them arrived beside Yin Lian’s corpse. Shan Dao lightly pressed his hand against the ground that had sunken in and sighed, “There’s no way we can bring her corpse back. Let’s bury her here.”

Tapping the ground, a deep grave was created and he placed her corpse into it carefully. Sealing up the hole, he piled soil on top and turned it into a simple grave.

“Let’s go.” When he was done, he glanced at her grave once more before running in the direction Shang Xia had escaped.

“Brother Shan, you haven’t answered my question!” Yuan Gang ran after him while yelling.

Without slowing down, Shan Dao mentioned casually, “It’s better for you not to know. It won’t benefit you in any way either. Sometimes, ignorance is bliss.”

Yuan Gang paused for a second but when he saw Shan Dao rushing onwards without any intention to wait for him, he could only follow obediently.

Hastening his steps, Yuan Gang pressed, “I really hope Brother Shan can tell me the reason.”

Chuckling softly, Shan Dao eventually gave in. “Since you wish to know... Do you remember what happened in the Changbai Holy Land half a year ago?”

“Are you talking about Yu Cangze?” Yuan Gang gasped.

“That’s right. It’s said that he went into hiding after stealing an item from the Changbai Holy Land. From what we know, the mission we were assigned came from the Changbai Holy Land itself.” Shan Dao muttered.

“Changbai Holy Land?!” Yuan Gang frowned. “What has catching the kid have anything to do with Yu Cangze?”

“I have no idea. The Changbai Holy Land was reluctant to reveal any information about what Yu Cangze stole from them, or anything to do with him for that matter. From the connection we made, Yu Cangze might have been bribed by the Azure Origin World to steal the Changbai Holy Land’s holy treasure.”

Sucking in a cold breath, Yuan Gang nearly cried out in shock. “Did someone related to the brat obtain the item?! Is that why we have to capture him alive?!”

“That is very likely the case.”

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Weaving through the thick forest, Shang Xia ran more than ten miles before stopping. He crossed three large hills and traveled through several ravines. Only when he couldn't detect any movement behind him did he slow down to rest.

“Looks like I'm really in the depths of the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range now. The Tongyou Institution should be located extremely far from me, but I have no idea which direction to travel in anyway!” Circulating his Origin True Qi to recover his tired legs. Even though his exhaustion slowly faded, he failed to calm his heart.

“Cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World entered our world, and they managed to sneak attack me on my way back to the institution. They plan on capturing me alive, but what's the point? They even dared to attack me under the noses of Kou Chongxue and Shang Lubing... It doesn't make sense for them to leave Kou Chongxue alone if they managed to find me there...”

“They definitely need someone to liaise with them when they come over. Who can the spy actually be? Could it be the members of the Rose Party, or are there even more hidden spies we don't know about?”

“By now, the Tongyou Institution probably received news of the intrusion. With the experts of the five institutions gathered together, a storm is about to sweep through the continent...”

Chapter 264: Kou Chongxue's Disappearance

Ever since the worlds collided, a spatial barrier formed, separating the battlefield between the two worlds and the You Continent. At the same time, it was slowly eating into the Azure Origin World through the You Continent. That was the meaning behind the fusion between the two worlds.

The Thousand Leaf Mountain Range that existed since a long time ago extended across the borders of the You, Ji, Bing, and the battlefield between the two worlds.

To put it in a clearer perspective, the battlefield between the two worlds extended slowly towards the central region from both the east and the west. The central region was where the You Continent was located, and it formed a weird horseshoe shape.

The Tongyou Institution was located at the very edge of the horseshoe, and it was also where the tunnel to the battlefield between the two worlds was located. They were the first line of defense against the Azure Spiritual World.

However, a strange occurrence could be seen on the northernmost part of the barrier. The originally smooth spatial barrier was completely deformed.

The deformity was completely insignificant when compared to the rest of the spatial barrier, but several Martial Extermination Realm experts from the Tongyou City were gathered there at that moment.

“Is Patriarch Kou really cultivating in seclusion here? Can anyone confirm this?” Han Chongwei stared at the wasteland in front of him and saw how the ground looked like it had been flipped several times over. He couldn’t help but ask.

Those who came quickly threw their glances towards Ji Wenlong, Shang Ke, and Liu Zhiyuan. Those were the three Martial Extermination Realm experts of the institution who came with them.

Shang Ke and Liu Zhiyuan were clearly as confused as the others and they too, turned to look at Ji Wenlong.

Nodding slowly, Ji Wenlong explained, “Yes. He discovered this place and made it his cultivation grounds. Even though I came here in the past, I wasn’t sure of its exact coordinates. Now that I’m here again, I can confirm that it’s the place he chose to enter seclusion.”

Wei Zhongwen couldn’t help but add, “So... Patriarch Kou has been in seclusion here all this time... Who would have thought that he would choose a place past the spatial barrier to cultivate...”

Chang Huaiwu sighed too. “Since Patriarch Kou was able to enter the spatial barrier to create his own cultivation ground, I guess the rumors were true. Martial Dipper Realm experts are able to tear through the spatial barrier at will.”

An Baimei raised both his eyebrows in response. “Why would Patriarch Kou choose to enter seclusion here? Could there be some sort of secret behind it?”

Once again, the gazes of everyone present landed on Ji Wenlong.

However, he chose to remain silent this time. Seeing as he wasn’t willing to share any more, the rest chose not to push the matter.

Yu Chengjin started to walk in the direction of the spatial barrier after hearing what they all said. He examined it carefully and he sighed, “Even though the damage looks serious, there are many traces of people trying to cover up the battle. One thing we can be sure of is that the battle involved cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World.”

Yu Chengjin’s evaluation caused the expressions of the others to change.

“Are we sure of this?” Shang Ke asked.

Hesitating for a second, Yu Chengjin continued, “Yes. The inner qi of bloodline cultivators and those of us who cultivate our inner qi in our dantian. The situation here is clear. However, we cannot eliminate the possibility that they did this on purpose to cloud our judgment. After all, every family and clan in our Azure Origin World have been trying to understand the cultivation methods of those from the Azure Spiritual World. There are members of the Azure Spiritual World in every one of your clans here...”

Everyone present was a Martial Extermination Realm expert. All of them were obviously part of the core strength of their faction. Yu Chengjin’s words might be shocking, but it couldn’t surprise any one present.

Wei Zhongwen snorted lightly. “Looks like the Rose Party is in on this shit again. They definitely assisted the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World in breaking into our world.”

“Are they actually strong enough to open up another path into the battlefield between the two worlds other than those controlled by our institutions to lead the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World in?” Han Chongwei snorted in disbelief.

“Twenty years ago, the five great families managed to draw the entire Azure Spiritual World over and caused the entire calamity. What’s so surprising about the Rose Party bringing a few cultivators over?” Wei Zhongwen sneered.

Staring at him in shock, Han Chongwei chose to remain silent.

An Baimei seemed to have thought of something and he asked, “Brother Ji, I heard that the reason behind the great war on your Tongyou Peak was because members of the Rose Party hid in your ranks to create a chance for the Four Spiritual Peak to launch their attack. Is that true?”

Ji Wenlong nodded after shooting a glance at him.

An Baimei continued, “Since you obtained a decisive victory over the Four Spiritual Peak and thwarted the plans of the Rose Party, are you certain that you wiped out everyone from the Rose Party?”

Ji Wenlong’s expression sank and no one could tell what he was thinking about. However, he eventually spoke up. “Nope. There’s at least one other Martial Extermination Realm expert of the Rose Party who managed to escape into the Azure Spiritual World through the Four Spiritual Peak.”

“Martial Extermination?” A soft gasp left the lips of those present and the story started to make sense.

Chang Huaiwu growled, “The Rose Party is growing stronger and stronger. Today, they managed to collude with the Azure Spiritual World to tear open the spatial barrier to lead cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World over to the Ji Continent. That would also mean that they’re capable of doing the same to the other continents.”

Wei Zhongwen’s gaze landed on where Yu Changjin was looking at earlier and he muttered, “Do you think that it’s possible the members of the Azure Spiritual World only managed to tear open the spatial barrier because Patriarch Kou weakened it when he opened the tunnel in the past?”

Liu Zhuyuan who had remained silent the whole time finally frowned in response. “That’s not possible, right? The gray colored chaotic qi that was created by the spatial barrier seems unaffected. If it was weakened, the gray chaotic qi wouldn’t be there anymore. Elder Yu, can’t you see that?”

Wei Zhongwen chuckled. “If someone created a spatial tunnel, isn’t it possible for them to close it off in the future?”

“This junior doesn’t know if I’m hearing it right, but from seniors’ words, you think that Patriarch Kou shouldn’t have created his cultivation grounds here.” Liu Zhuyuan frowned.

“Zhuyuan, don’t be rude! Brother Wei is only bringing up his observation. We can’t possibly know everything that happened here and we need to hear every single possibility.” Ji Wenlong muttered.

Chuckling in response, Wei Zhongwen didn't seem to mind.

Yu Chengjin threw another question out once again. "Brother Ji, even though this might sound disrespectful, I need to ask you a question. Are you able to tell us what Patriarch Kou's current state is?"

The faces of everyone changed the moment he asked his question. At the same time, they perked their ears up while waiting for Ji Wenlong's reply.

Shaking his head, Ji Wenlong sighed. "I might not be willing to believe it either, but from the looks of it, he went missing."

"Can we determine whether he's alive?" Yu Chengjin continued.

Hesitating for a second, Ji Wenlong knew that the next words out of his mouth could cause disastrous effects. Shaking his head, he sighed, "The Hidden Frost Sword is currently in the battlefield between the two worlds. Due to the presence of the spatial barrier, we cannot confirm anything right now."

Strange expressions were quickly thrown about.

The Hidden Frost Sword was Kou Chongxue's divine weapon. He nurtured it for a long time and the divine weapon developed its own spirituality. Its connection with Kou Chongxue should allow it to discover Kou Chongxue's current state. However, Yun Jing was suppressing the four great races of the Azure Spiritual World with the sword in the battlefield between the two worlds. Due to the separation through the spatial barrier, it might not be able to detect Kou Chongxue's current situation.

Shang Ke spoke up all of a sudden. "Only by making sense of what happened here will we be able to locate Patriarch Kou."

"That's exactly what we need to do. Regardless, Patriarch Kou is a Martial Dipper Realm expert. Even if he's injured, they won't be able to kill him so easily!" Liu Zhiyuan added.

Han Chongwei thought about it for a second and spoke, "Even though it won't look good for us to interfere in the Tongyou Institution's business, I heard that there were five talented disciples of the Tongyou Institution invited over by Patriarch Kou. They received the invitation after their impressive performance in their training plaza. The disciples of our institutions were extremely envious of their treatment. I wonder if we can meet with the five geniuses?"

Shang Ke exchanged a glance with Liu Zhiyuan and they remained silent. Instead, Ji Wenlong was the one who replied. "Only four of them returned. Shang Xia was the last to meet with Patriarch Kou, and he hasn't been back to the institution since."

One had to say that Shang Xia's performance was too dazzling. Everyone present had a deep impression of the kid.

Han Chongwei continued, "So... In addition to Patriarch Kou, the genius of the Shang Clan is also missing."

Shang Ke's expression sank instantly.

Everyone present could tell that the enemy's main goal was Kou Chongxue. If they sent a squad capable of fighting a Martial Dipper Realm expert, Shang Xia's fate was looking really bleak. Naturally, they didn't know that the other side also formed a special squad to hunt Shang Xia down.

Even if Kou Chongxue was injured, no one would dare to underestimate the strength of a Martial Dipper Realm expert. Under such circumstances, they had to send several powerful experts. Without enough assurance to protect himself, where would he find the opportunity to look after a mere Martial Intent Realm disciple?

"Chief Shang Lubing was also present." Ji Wenlong mentioned all of a sudden.

Staring at him in shock, even Liu Zhiyuan and Shang Ke didn't expect Shang Lubing to be there.

A trace of hope appeared in Shang Ke's heart. Shang Xia might be useless in the face of an assault on a Martial Dipper Realm expert, but Shang Lubing was a whole other story.

With Shang Lubing's assistance, Shang Xia's fate didn't look as bleak as it once was!

The Martial Extermination Realm experts present were also starting to reevaluate the situation once they heard that Shang Lubing was there.

Liu Zhiyuan couldn't help but ask, "When did Mister Shang return from the battlefield between the two worlds?"

Before Ji Wenlong could say anything, Shang Ke stole the chance to reply. "You've been in seclusion to consolidate your foundations the whole time. It's not unusual for you not to know."

Naturally, that wasn't the true goal of Liu Zhiyuan's question. He was more concerned about what Shang Lubing's true goal of returning to the institution was. He could tell that Shang Ke was equally confused about Shang Lubing's return, but it didn't seem smart to reveal everything in front of the others.

Realizing Shang Ke's subtle reminder, he quickly released a gasp before nodding in 'understanding' "Yeah! Haha, I didn't take note of the situation because of my cultivation. I guess it's nothing special."

There were only two possible reasons for Shang Lubing to return. One was that the situation in the Coral Forest was about to be wrapped up and there was no need for him to be present any longer. The second was to guard against the Martial Extermination Realm experts of the other continents. No matter how friendly they seemed, they might be plotting against the institution. On the surface, only Ji Wenlong and Kang Ci were present to look over the institution. Shang Ke and Liu Zhiyuan had been cultivating in seclusion in their manors, and Shang Bo was hiding somewhere out of sight from those of the other institutions.

As such, Shang Lubing's silent return was most likely linked to the second reason.

Both sides knew each other's intentions and neither brought it up explicitly.

Ji Wenlong, Yu Chengjin, and Wei Zhongwen frowned and turned to stare in a certain direction all of a sudden. It didn't take long for the others to also react accordingly.

A black shadow flew towards the group at a high speed.

When they noticed the figure, Ji Wenlong's expression sank and he snapped, "Why aren't you standing guard in the institution? Why the hell did you come here?"

Kang Ci couldn't be bothered with Ji Wenlong's scolding for now and he yelled, "I discovered the traces of a huge battle! It's probably related to Shang Xia and from the looks of it, he was fighting Martial Intent Realm experts from the Azure Spiritual World!"

The faces of everyone present changed yet again.

"Let's go!" Four rays of extermination origins wrapped around Ji Wenlong in an instant as he instructed Kang Ci to bring them over.

Behind him, Shang Ke and the rest got ready to follow and in the blink of an eye, all of them disappeared.

Chapter 265: Expert Deduction

In the depths of the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range, several Martial Extermination Realm experts were soaring through the skies. Ji Wenlong, Shang Ke, and Kang Ci were in the lead as the others followed them casually.

At the same time, Kang Ci's voice rang in the minds of Ji Wenlong, Shang Ke, and Liu Zhiyuan. "Instructor Liu is back. With her back in the institution, I came over here to take a look."

Before Ji Wenlong could say anything, Shang Ke asked hastily, "What did Instructor Liu say when she returned?"

"This... Deputy Patriarch Yun is still suppressing the four great races with the Hidden Frost Sword. Deputy Patriarch Shang managed to shift the Mysterious Coral World (Coral Forest) over to our Tongyou Peak with the help of all the formation masters. It won't be easy for the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World to mess with it anymore. After receiving news that Patriarch Kou suffered a sneak attack, Deputy Patriarch Shang sent Instructor Liu back to the institution to prevent anything from going wrong."

Shang Ke was disappointed by the news. "Is there really no news about Patriarch Kou?!"

Kang Ci stared blankly at Shang Ke. "Patriarch Kou was sneak attacked in the depths of the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range. Why the hell would there be news of him in the battlefield between the two worlds?" After speaking, he turned to look at Ji Wenlong.

Sighing softly, Ji Wenlong repeated everything they discovered earlier.

"That's not possible. If a Martial Dipper Realm expert forcefully tears through the spatial barrier and enters the battlefield between the two worlds, it will cause a greater commotion than the arrival of the divine weapon! The disturbance he will cause will definitely affect the entire battlefield between the two worlds." Kang Ci shook his head and sighed.

Ji Wenlong and the rest fell silent. They expected as much. Many of them were flustered by the disappearance of Kou Chongxue and failed to recall that point.

Shang Ke was the next to ask the question. "How did you discover the traces of the battle then? Why didn't we notice it when we came?"

A look of embarrassment appeared on Kang Ci's face and he muttered, "I lost my way earlier and discovered it accidentally..."

Without an exception, those beside him were struck speechless. However, his mistake was understandable.

The moment Kou Chongxue's cultivation ground was destroyed, those in the city could feel the destructive spatial fluctuations. Rallying all the Martial Extermination Realm experts immediately, Ji Wenlong led them towards the disturbance.

Leaving Kang Ci behind in the institution, Ji Wenlong didn't bother telling him where Kou Chongxue's cultivation ground was.

Only when Liu Qinglan returned from the institution did Kang Ci leave. He could only travel in the direction he remembered. However, the spatial fluctuations had already died down and there wasn't a clear direction to follow.

As he traveled in the direction he recalled, he got lost several times on the way there. That was how he chanced upon the destruction caused by Shang Xia and the others.

It didn't take long for the various experts to arrive. By the time their conversation had concluded, they closed in on the scene of destruction.

Descending into the forest below, all of them noticed the traces of the battle. All of them basically released their divine sense at the same time to look for any clues in the surroundings.

Pointing at the ground down below, Kang Ci released his extermination origin and they transformed into tiny little images of snakes that slithered across the ground below.

A moment later, those little snakes started to gather before fusing to form a huge one. Raising the upper half of its body towards the skies, it spat out several broken shards. Looking at them, the experts present quickly made them out to be remnants of a spear tip.

"It's Shang Xia's Waning Moon Spear." Shang Ke gasped.

"His spear was about to shatter from the battle before. That can't tell us anything decisive." Ji Wenlong muttered.

"There's this too." Kang Ci brought everyone to a mound that had obviously been made recently. Sending in a stream of his inner qi to sweep away the soil, the corpse of a female cultivator of the Azure Spiritual World was revealed.

"The fatal wound on her chest is clearly made by a spear..." Kang Ci's addition was clearly unnecessary. After all, everyone present was seasoned experts.

"It's the Providence Spear!"

“Shang Xia didn’t just face a single opponent. There seem to be two more of them. From the battle marks, one of them looks like they use an axe or some sort of heavy weapon. The other seems to use a blade...”

“The person who used the blade definitely comprehended his martial intent. From the looks of it, the other looks to have completed his third divine sense transformation. This lady is the weakest of them all. Even so, she’s at the large completion stage of the Martial Intent Realm.”

“She’s a bow user. Look at her waist. Her quiver still holds several black iron arrows.”

“Hmm, her right hand is missing two fingers though. Looks like they were torn off when someone grabbed her weapon. Her companions won’t do this to her. Unless... That little kid, Shang Xia, managed to kill her and grab her weapon?”

“Since he chose to grab her weapon, it means he’s still alive!”

“Moreover, they had the time to bury their teammate. That can only mean that the kid ran away after realizing he wasn’t their match.”

“Yeah. He would only be able to escape after killing this archer. However, he might have suffered some injuries in order to do so.”

“Haven’t you thought about it? One of them here is at the grand completion stage of the Martial Intent Realm. The other two are at the large completion stage. Even so, the brat managed to kill one of them and run away. How strong is he exactly?!”

The conversation between the various Martial Extermination Realm experts was cut short after they realized how terrifying Shang Xia actually was.

“He’s even stronger than before. Unless he was hiding his strength from us intentionally during the battle against the other Martial Intent Realm disciples of the other institutions, he definitely grew stronger since then.” Yu Changjin added.

Evidently, it wasn’t quite believable for Shang Xia to be able to hide his strength from so many Martial Extermination Realm experts present.

As such, that could only mean that he grew a whole lot since then.

“Hmm... This kid met with Patriarch Kou and grew stronger. Did his divine sense transform a second time?” Chang Huaiwu deduced, and he looked to the rest for support.

An Baimei coughed dryly and added, “Don’t you find it strange? The experts of the Azure Spiritual World should be here for Patriarch Kou. However, it looks like they’re targeting Shang Xia on purpose.”

“Hey, that’s true. It is understandable if they sent a party after Patriarch Kou. Moreover, everyone in that squad should be in the Martial Extermination Realm. If Patriarch Kou and Shang Lubing were both present and were hell-bent on escaping, their enemies would have no choice but to pursue them relentlessly. That’s probably the reason they chose to send another squad to deal with Shang Xia. The kid might be talented, but sending a group of experts into our world won’t be easy even if they have someone to receive them here. Is it really worth it for a mere kid?”

Everyone had differing thoughts on the matter, but without a doubt, the mystery surrounding the Tongyou City became more and more interesting.

Regardless if it was to get to the bottom of the matter regarding the Azure Spiritual World’s hunt against Shang Xia, or the Azure Spiritual World’s plot, or even Kou Chongxue, the experts of the other institutions decided they would get involved with it all.

Kang Ci and the others had been joining in the conversation initially, but he became silent towards the end. Ji Wenlong, Shang Ke, and Liu Zhiyuan also remained silent during their discussion.

Seeing as things were starting to get out of hand, Ji Wenlong decided to step in. “Alright. This isn’t the time for wild speculation. The kid managed to run away from his attackers and we need to locate him as soon as possible. We can learn what happened by asking the kid. Furthermore, we’re able to determine the direction where the two Martial Intent Realm cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World went. They might be chasing the kid, or they might have left on their own accord. Regardless, we should be able to catch up to them considering the fact that the attack happened not too long ago. Now that my Tongyou Institution is facing both an internal and external threat, I hope everyone here can assist us!”

“Alright!”

“Naturally!”

“...”

The various Martial Extermination Realm cultivators agreed quickly and split themselves up into two groups. One went in search of Shang Xia while the other looked for the two Martial Intent Realm cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World.

As several hours passed, the Martial Extermination Realm experts who went in every direction in search of their targets eventually returned. None of them achieved their goals.

That was weird...

In such a short amount of time, three Martial Intent Realm cultivators shouldn’t have left the range searchable by the few Martial Extermination Realm experts.

One had to know that the Martial Extermination Realm experts were able to soar through the skies! They were much faster than those running on foot!

Eventually, Ji Wenlong and Shang Ke had a secret discussion before ending the search. They brought the group of Martial Extermination Realm experts back to the city.

At the same time, the news of Kou Chongxue's secret hiding spot and the incursion of the experts of the Azure Spiritual World ripped through the Azure Origin World. Kou Chongxue's fate was unknown, and the experts of the Azure Spiritual World were possibly still hiding in the Azure Origin World.

...

After Shang Xia ran ten miles out, his internal injuries started to act up. He had no choice but to stop to take a break.

However, he only took a short break for the time it took a stick of incense to burn before running through the forest again.

Shang Xia's thought process was clear. Earlier, the three of them were hell-bent on catching him alive. Now that they failed, the next person who came looking for him might just be a Martial Extermination Realm expert.

Of course, he knew that the experts in the Tongyou City weren't there for show. They would definitely arrive in the depths of the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range quickly after realizing that Kou Chongxue was under attack.

Well, that might be the case, but Shang Xia wasn't planning on risking his life to find out if the Azure Spiritual World had a Martial Extermination Realm expert lying around in wait just to capture him. Betting his life was never a smart thing to do.

Even if a Martial Extermination Realm expert did show up, assuming they were from the Tongyou City... That didn't mean that they were on the Tongyou Institution's side!

Since neither option was feasible, Shang Xia had to take matters into his own hands. Keeping himself alive was the priority, and everything else came after.

After traveling another ten miles out, Shang Xia discovered that he was still in an endless jungle. He also realized that even if he ran at full speed, he wouldn't be able to outrun a Martial Extermination Realm expert if they came looking for him!

Going into hiding was his next course of action. He would restore himself to his peak state before making any more decisions.

Running into a random cave he found, he killed the bear living within with a single slap before sealing off the entrance. He tried connecting his divine sense to the world around him, and it was something he had experienced after his breakthrough at Kou Chongxue's place. When he merged with the world, even Martial Extermination Realm experts wouldn't easily detect his presence.

Chapter 266: Situation in the Shang Clan

In the Shang Clan Manor in the Tongyou City...

After the search for Shang Xia yielded no results in the depths of the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range, Shang Ke rushed back into the Shang Clan Manor. He flew straight through the city and went directly into his courtyard after returning.

The Tongyou City had a rule to forbid anyone from flying within. When Yin Jing was guarding the institution alone, she didn't hesitate to reveal the divine weapon to protect the city. The might of the weapon alone scared the experts from the other regions into submission.

However, things happened too quickly and the sudden attack on Kou Chongxue caught everyone off guard.

When Ji Wenlong felt the fluctuations in the air earlier, he was the first to soar through the air. The Martial Extermination Realm experts he gathered followed suit, and several streaks of light appeared above the Tongyou City. Even a dumbass would realize that something big happened.

In the Shang Clan Manor, several core members of the clan had already been waiting for quite some time. When they saw Shang Ke rushing back to the manor, they knew that things were extremely serious.

Shang Jian, Shang Xi, Shang Yang, Shang Bei, Shang Dong, Xu Huizhu, and Yan Qi quickly headed over to look for him.

Shang Xi was extremely anxious. She was more familiar with the situation regarding the institution and she was the first to ask, "Fifth Uncle, what happened."

Hesitating for a moment, he swept his gaze across those present and sighed, "We'll talk in my courtyard."

Glancing at each other, they quickly followed behind him.

Noticing the tense air in the manor, the attendants and everyone who wasn't part of the clan's core strength chose to avoid Shang Ke's courtyard.

Yan Qi wanted to leave too, but Shang Ke stopped him. "Yan Qi, come here."

Without a change in his facial expression, he could only enter the courtyard with the rest. However, he chose the seat closest to the exit.

Shang Jian, Shang Xi, and Shang Yang were members of the same generation as Yan Qi and they weren't affected by his presence.

The same couldn't be said for Xu Huizhu and her children. Naturally, Xu Huizhu had the demeanor of a Martial Intent Realm expert. She glanced at Yan Qi once before suppressing her suspicion. Shang Dong and Shang Bei were the only ones who were looking at Yan Qi in confusion.

There was no need to hide Kou Chongxue's current situation. Everyone in front of Shang Ke was a core member of the Shang Clan, and he quickly broke down the situation for them. They learned that Kou Chongxue was attacked and was currently missing.

After talking about Kou Chongxue, Shang Ke started to mention what they discovered about Shang Xia. When he mentioned that Shang Xia was likely injured and none of the Martial Extermination Realm experts managed to locate him, Shang Xi was unable to sit still. "Fifth Uncle, is Little Xia in danger?!"

Xu Huizhu, who was sitting opposite Shang Xi, revealed a trace of shock before looking downwards. A pensive look appeared on her face.

Shang Ke's voice sank. "Stay calm. No news is good news right now. Since no one found his corpse, he should still be alive!"

"I'm going to look for him!" Shang Xi yelled.

With his mood already in the dumpster from everything that happened, Shang Ke was trying his best to keep up his dignified appearance as the patriarch of the clan. However, he snapped after hearing Shang Xi. “Where are you going to start looking for him?! Even Martial Extermination Realm experts like us failed to locate him, do you think you can do better?!”

Shang Xi was stuck silly in that instant, and anxiety filled her heart.

Shang Jian’s lips twitched slightly. He wanted to say something, but when he saw Shang Xi’s eyes turning red, he chose to remain silent.

Unlike Shang Jian, Shang Yang quickly spoke up. “Seventh Sister, calm down. Since no one found anything, it’s likely that the kid’s still alive. No matter what, he’s a Martial Intent Realm expert. Moreover, he was attacked by three Martial Intent Realm experts from the Azure Spiritual World. Even so, he managed to kill one and escape. He’s definitely a lot stronger than we think; He might have found some random corner to treat his injuries. The Thousand Leaf Mountain Range is vast. Even a Martial Extermination Realm expert won’t be able to look through the entire place alone.”

Shang Yang’s reassurance was clearly more effective than Shang Ke’s scolding. Shang Xi managed to rein in her wild emotions, but she couldn’t help but ask, “Fifth Uncle, no matter what, I’m going to take a look at the place Little Xia went missing. He... He’s the only remaining bloodline of...”

Grunting softly, Shang Ke chose not to say anything more.

Only then did Shang Jian speak up. “Seventh Sister, please hear me out. You should calm down a little.”

When Shang Xi finally turned to look at him, Shang Jian glanced at Shang Ke from the corner of his eye before starting his evaluation. “From what Fifth Uncle said, the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World seem to be interested in catching Little Xia alive. We might not know the reason behind their actions, but since he managed to run away, the members of the Azure Spiritual World and those who are working with them might set their sights on other core members of our Shang Clan...”

Even Shang Ke was caught off guard by his deduction. He couldn’t help but stare at Shang Jian, waiting for him to continue.

“If that is truly the case, god knows how many people have their eyes on us now. The moment anyone leaves to look for Little Xia, we’ll be walking right into their trap.” Shang Jian paused for a second and continued, “All of us here are family. I won’t beat about the bush. Even though Seventh Sister has already entered the large completion stage of the Martial Intent Realm, you shouldn’t be stronger than Little Xia, right?”

“Then what are we supposed to do? We can’t possibly do nothing!” Shang Xi yelled.

“I’ll go.” Yan Qi’s voice came from the back of the courtyard. “Patriarch Shang, those with their eyes on our Shang Clan Manor might not be interested in me anyway.”

However, Shang Ke shook his head immediately. “Your inner qi is a dead giveaway. The moment you leave the manor, you won’t even be able to go anywhere in the Tongyou City.”

Who would have thought that Shang Xi would speak up once again. “I’ll go with Seventh Brother! With me around, no one will dare to stop him. Moreover, the two of us will be comparable to a Martial Intent Realm expert at the grand completion stage.”

“Enough! We’ll wait for the dust to settle after the institution successfully moves the Mysterious Coral World to the Tongyou Peak. Before that, everyone is forbidden from leaving the city!” Shang Ke roared.

Even though it was hard to make the decision, Shang Ke knew that he had to do it. He spoke resolutely, and there was no challenging his decision.

Tears flowed down Shang Xi’s face and she cried in anger, “Why? Why can’t we do anything about this?!”

Shang Ke ignored her for the time being and turned to Shang Jian. “Tell your third brother to enter the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range secretly to look for the kid.”

Shang Xi and Shang Yang were shocked by the sudden revelation. However, Shang Jian’s face froze and an awkward expression quickly formed.

“This concerns the fate of our clan. Tell him to deal with this seriously.” Shang Ke continued.

His words caused the faces of everyone present to change once again.

Rising to his feet, Shang Jian muttered, “Alright.”

Shang Yang got to his feet too, and the usual smile on his face faltered. “Father, is it really so serious?”

“No shit!” Shang Ke was naturally more casual when speaking to his own son.

With his face twisting up slightly, he fell back into his chair.

However, Yan Qi brought up something that piqued the interest of the rest. “Patriarch, we can get Yan Ni’er to look for the Sixth Young Master!”

“Hmm?” Shang Ke raised an eyebrow in surprise.

A look of joy blossomed on Shang Xi’s face. “Yeah! Yeah! That’s right! I almost forgot! The Mutated Rain Swallow he brought back from the battlefield between the two worlds seems oddly fond of Little Xia. It’s extremely familiar with his aura too. It’s a good idea to send her out to look for him! Moreover, no one will take note of a little bird.”

A smile slowly formed on Shang Ke’s face too. “That is actually a brilliant idea!”

With the suggestion from Yan Qi, the originally sunken atmosphere in Shang Ke’s courtyard lifted significantly.

Shang Ke eventually arranged for some missions for those present. After all, the migration of the Mysterious Coral World to their Tongyou Peak could be said to be of monumental importance. It not only affected the fate of the Tongyou City, but it also influenced the fate of the You Continent!

That was the big picture the Shang Clan had to take note of. As one of the most prominent families in the city, they had to put in all the effort they could in order to reap the corresponding benefits after the dust settled.

All of a sudden, someone rushed to the entrance of Shang Ke's courtyard and yelled, "Patriarch, Master Duan Hong has already completed his preparations. He wonders when he can start to refine the graded weapon!"

...

Shang Xia awakened from his nap and when he emerged from his cave, he saw that the world was covered in a layer of white.

Counting the time, Shang Xia recalled that it was close to the end of the eighth month when he returned from the battlefield between the two worlds.

He entered seclusion to attack his bottleneck to enter the Martial Intent Realm after, and he tried to comprehend his Triple Providence Chapter and Providence Spear. After that, he went back to sweep the geniuses of the other institutions away. Next, the incident with Patriarch Kou happened. All of that took less than two months.

Estimating the time, Shang Xia felt that it was probably somewhere in the tenth month. Due to the high altitude in the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range, it wasn't impossible for it to snow in the tenth month.

Feeling the chilly breeze around him, Shang Xia looked at the mound of snow that was probably two feet thick in front of the cave and sighed. From the amount of snow, Shang Xia knew that he had been in there for some time.

Smacking his forehead, he sighed, "How long was I in there for?!"

Luckily for him, the frost couldn't really affect him due to his high cultivation level.

Circulating his Origin True Qi, Shang Xia discovered that as long as he wanted to, he could easily heat up the entire cave and maintain it at a comfortable temperature.

By that time, his injuries had fully healed.

Due to the second transformation of his divine sense back at Kou Chongxue's place and the huge battle that happened right after, Shang Xia gained a lot of inspiration. As such, he wasn't willing to emerge from seclusion easily. Taking the chance when his ideas were still clear, he chose to return to seclusion.

With his current cultivation level, not eating anything for eight to ten days was nothing.

Moreover, Shang Xia's Embroidered Cloud Case had a ton of supplies. Using the cave as his temporary cultivation abode, he returned to seclusion.

As he entered the space within his dantian, he discovered that the ball of formless chaos had increased yet again. It was more than twice as large.

What was more shocking was that only a trace of his Yin Yang Essence Qi remained.

Shang Xia once learned that cultivators in the Martial Intent Realm would only complete their transformation of their inner qi when their divine sense transformed for the third time. Even though

that was a general guide, it was what most cultivators experienced! They would only be able to complete the conversion when they perfected their martial arts.

Now, Shang Xia had just completed his second divine sense transformation and achieved what others could only do after transforming their divine sense for the third time. His actual fighting strength could also be said to be more terrifying than them!

Regardless, Shang Xia felt that his cultivation in the Martial Intent Realm wasn't as heaven-defying as his cultivation in the Martial Extremity Realm. Back in the Martial Extremity Realm, he seemed to have experienced a fundamental change that sent him on a different path than those in the Azure Origin World. When he entered the Martial Intent Realm, other than possessing a larger quantity of inner qi and having it be of higher quality than cultivators of the same realm, there was nothing else!

Shang Xia discovered that the Martial Intent Realm only affected one's willpower and development of divine sense. Moreover, the development was affected by one's abilities and strength they possessed in the Martial Extremity Realm. Outside factors didn't really affect the development of one's divine sense by much.

For example, Shang Xia's Triple Providence Chapter and Providence Spear didn't rely on external help. He had to develop the techniques through his own understanding.

Through his insights, Shang Xia even managed to create his fifth move of the Providence Spear Art. As previously mentioned, the Providence Spear Art only contained the dao of the spear. Everyone who cultivated it would have to create their own moves that suited themselves. Those who trained in the Providence Spear Art would probably come up with different techniques.

The only thing Shang Xia found pitiful was that he didn't possess a spear to practice his fifth move.

Chapter 267: Changfeng City

...

In a sealed off courtyard in the Shang Clan Manor, heatwaves wreaked havoc as they swept through the lands. Even though they were three feet away from the entrance, Shang Ke and the rest could still feel the searing heat.

"Damn it. If we try crafting another graded weapon in the future, we definitely cannot do it in the city!" Shang Ke raised his head to look at the skies above the manor and saw that the void was turning blurry from the heat.

"Who could have expected this? Even after two whole months, the weapon isn't complete... Now, the entire city knows that we're trying to craft a graded weapon..." Shang Yang muttered at the side.

Shang Jian added, "No matter what, it's his first time refining a graded weapon. It's amazing he managed to hold on until now. If nothing goes wrong, our Shang Clan will really be able to produce a master blacksmith capable of refining graded weapons this time..."

Shang Yang was still unconvinced. "Hah... This is all because of our support. He's a wandering cultivator who managed to get his hands on some inheritance. Without our support, he won't be able

to gather enough materials to create graded weapons even if he had fifty years! Moreover, Second brother gave him that item to increase the success rate. Of course he'll succeed this time."

Shang Ke turned to look at Shang Jian all of a sudden and asked, "Did your third brother say anything?"

Shang Jian shook his head and sighed, "I received news one and a half a month ago that he was in the northern region. The last I heard from him was a month ago when he entered the Changfeng City. With his speed, he might already be somewhere in the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range."

"A month..." Shang Ke sighed. Next, he turned to ask Shang Yang, "What about Yan Qi? Did he bring any news?"

"All he does is to play with birds all day... However, he didn't bring any news with him. From the way he behaves, he even looks like he can communicate with the Mutated Rain Swallows... Is that even possible?"

Shang Ke glanced at him from the corner of his eye and Shang Yang immediately shut his mouth.

"Fifth Uncle, did the institution send any news? The ambush on Patriarch Kou was such a huge matter. However, two months have passed since then. Has there really been no clues at all?" Shang Jian sighed.

Shang Yang added, "Yeah! Seventh Sister returned to the institution a month and a half ago. Why hasn't she been back?"

Shang Ke sighed and shook his head. "First of all, no news is good news. A missing Kou Chongxue is actually the most terrifying existence of all."

Shang Jian interrupted, "This... Do you think everyone else will be terrified because of the institution's decision to not investigate the matter?"

"What's there to investigate? How are we supposed to start? A cultivator who refined his origin dipper is already a peak existence under the heavens! If he wishes to hide himself, no one will be able to locate him! If he dies, I'm sure the disturbance to the heaven and earth qi will alert everyone in the surroundings."

"Even if that's true, did no one try to probe the situation?" Shang Yang followed up with another question even though his previous one was ignored.

A soft sigh escaped Shang Ke's lips. "That's why I forbade everyone from leaving the city. Anyway, Ji Wenlong reached the large completion stage of the Martial Extermination Realm. It's even possible that he comprehended his fourth martial intent. With him in the institution, it's enough to deter those with nefarious intentions..."

"Ji Wenlong already entered the large completion stage of the Martial Extermination Realm?! No wonder..." Shang Jian's expression turned solemn. "That would mean that the situation will only become clearer once the matter with the Mysterious Coral World is settled..."

The three of them stood in silence outside the courtyard for a little longer before Xu Huizhu came looking for Shang Jian. Seeing as no one else was left, he rubbed his hands together and turned to Shang Ke with a mischievous glint in his eyes. “Dad, this... Once Master Duan Hong completes the refinement, why don’t you lend me the spear for a bit?”

Seeing how Shang Ke’s pupils constricted and how he was about to start a lecture, Shang Yang quickly explained himself. “Wait! Don’t misunderstand. I’m not going to take the spear for myself. However, Little Xia is missing right now. Why not lend me the weapon to increase my fighting strength for now? I’ll return the spear the moment he returns!”

Releasing a long sigh, Shang Ke didn’t answer his question. Instead, he asked one of his own. “I told you to recall the members of our Shang Clan from the Ji Continent two months ago. Where are they now?”

An awkward smile appeared on Shang Yang’s face. “This... Dad, your daughter-in-law, and your grandchildren were on their way. However, the Tongyou City broke out into chaos recently and I told them to remain in the Changfeng City for the time being. When the situation takes a turn for the better, they’ll return immediately.”

A snort left Shang Ke’s lips and his time became a little more severe. “Well, let me ask you another question. You squandered away a lot of resources back in the Ji Continent. How much have you contributed to the family since then?”

With his face flushing red, Shang Yang didn’t know how to reply.

“Looks like you know what shame is...” Shang Ke sneered. Nodding his head slowly, he looked at the sealed entrance to the courtyard Duan Hong was in. “How successful is your comprehension of the Triple Providence Chapter and the Providence Spear?”

“I somewhat completed the first chapter, and there were some parts of the Providence Spear I was confused by. I managed to create two moves from my understanding of the Providence Spear.” Shang Yang muttered.

Chuckling in amusement, Shang Ke chided, “That’s it? You had the balls to ask for the spear after developing two moves? You’re not worthy.”

With a trace of reluctance in his heart, Shang Yang pouted, “If I’m not qualified to use the spear, is that little brat worthy?”

“Yes, he is.” Shang Ke stared resolutely at his son and sighed.

After he spoke, Shang Ke turned to leave. As he walked away, he muttered without even turning his head, “That kid improved upon the Chaos Essence Lightning Palm when he was in the Martial Realm. He practically made a perfect version of it. Next came the advancement formula. He completed an entire inheritance for cultivators to enter the Martial Extremity Realm with the corresponding martial art, secret art, and advancement medicine. In the Martial Extremity Realm, he cultivated at least six sword intents and made his own martial intent. Do you know how many people have their eyes on him? That’s why your second brother gave Duan Hong the material to increase the chances of successfully refining the weapon. He’s trying to get on his nephew’s good side too! Back in the battlefield between the two worlds. That little fellow killed close to a hundred

cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World. His contributions to the war on the Tongyou Peak, the beast tide that came after, the takeover of the Mysterious Coral World, and even the battle on the Four Spiritual Peak after was legendary! There were times when he changed the tide of the battle himself! There's no need to mention how many contributions he made to our clan. Moreover, you're one of those who benefited from it. Back when our convoy was attacked in the city, he defeated the geniuses of the other four institutions alone. Not too long ago in the Tongyou Institution, he suppressed all four Martial Intent Realm core disciples of the four institutions. He's not even eighteen yet and you're approaching thirty. What do you think? Do you think you can compare yourself to him?"

Shang Ke's figure was nowhere to be seen, but his words rang in Shang Yang's ears.

All of a sudden, a loud ringing filled the skies and brought him back to attention. A crimson streak emerged from the sealed courtyard and tore through the heavens.

"I did it! It succeeded!" Duan Hong's booming laughter emerged from the sealed courtyard.

Shang Yang turned around to leave despite the birth of a blacksmith capable of creating graded weapons. He didn't turn his head back at all, and as Duan Hong's laughter grew louder, his footsteps became more hurried.

...

In the depths of the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range.

A soft whistle came from above as an arrow accurately stabbed into a grouse that was flying in mid air.

The body of the bird exploded into a thousand pieces and so did the arrow.

Shang Xia, who was holding on to a bow, looked at the feathers that were falling from the skies and sighed. "Well, accuracy isn't much of a problem now. In fact, that's barely a challenge. With my divine sense, I can lock on to most things, much less a tiny little bird like that."

Shang Xia shook his head as a bitter smile revealed itself on his face. He understood that locking on to a bird was no trouble, but experts who were on the same level as himself would have no problem avoiding his divine sense if he tried shooting them down.

After all, it had been several days since he left seclusion and despite the bow being a low-grade weapon, he was a newbie when it came to using it. All he had was several days of practice with it. There was no way he was going to be as good as Yin Lian who tried hunting him down previously.

As Shang Xia looked around him, he had a sense of his surroundings. However, he had no idea where he was in the entire Thousand Leaf Mountain Range.

With the mountain range extending all the way across the Ji, You, and Bing Continents, Shang Xia knew that all he had to do was to travel in the northern direction. That was where the You Continent was located.

Raising his head to gather his bearings, he casually retrieved the bow into his Embroidered Cloud Case. Pushing against the ground, his body soared through the air and he flew for over ten feet before landing on the ground below.

Ordinarily, cultivators would have to enter the Martial Extermination Realm before they could fly. They would use their extermination origin to counteract gravity to keep them in the air.

However, when a cultivator entered the Martial Intent Realm, they were already able to affect the heaven and earth qi in their surroundings to a certain extent. They could glide across the air to cross a certain distance.

Ever since he exited seclusion, Shang Xia discovered that his divine sense could practically merge perfectly with his surroundings. He could use the heaven and earth qi in his surroundings to increase the distance he could travel in the air.

Previously, he experimented several times with his ability to glide through the air. If the terrain was relatively flat, he would be able to travel close to a hundred feet through the air. If he was on an elevated surface, he might be able to move nearly twice that when going to a region of lower elevation.

Naturally, Shang Xia could tell that merging completely with the world around him wasn't the smartest thing to do. If his divine sense made a complete fusion with the world, it might be difficult for his consciousness to return to his body.

On the third day of his travels, he finally left the mountain range. He saw a giant city in the distance as the sun was about to set.

“This... This is the Changfeng City!” Shang Xia gasped.

From what he knew, the You Continent wasn't exactly flourishing. There were only two places that had ‘city’ in their name, and one of them was the Tongyou City where he originated from. The second was the Changfeng City in front of him.

Chapter 268: 5 Star Delivery Service

The distance between himself and the city was barely dozens of miles. To Shang Xia, that wasn't a huge deal at all. However, he chose to enter the city after dawn broke the next day.

Night came quickly in the winter. Finding a spot on the bottom of the mountain, Shang Xia lit a fire and roasted a pheasant he caught earlier for dinner.

With the waning moon hanging high in the skies, a wave of lethargy soon swept over Shang Xia who was getting cozy in front of the fireplace. Draping the bear skin coat he made over his body, he got ready to take a nice nap.

No one knew how long had passed, but the moon in the skies was soon covered by a layer of dense clouds. The sound of horse galloping sounded in the distance.

Shang Xia's eyelids trembled slightly, but a frown formed on his face before his eyes were truly open.

“Go!” The rushed gallops of a horse could be heard, and Shang Xia could hear the voice of the rider urging the horse to move faster.

A wretched moan rang in the air all of a sudden, and the rider was clearly caught off guard. He gasped and a frightened cry of a child entered Shang Xia's ears.

The sounds didn't last for long as a strong wind blew across the land, muffling their voices. They became softer and softer as they left the area.

At that moment, another wave of galloping could be heard. Eight horses raced across the land, and Shang Xia could hear the conversation of the riders.

"The footsteps on the ground are fresh. They shouldn't be too far away from us."

"Look! That's the corpse of their Scarlet Scale Horse! It died of exhaustion!"

"The body is fresh and their valuables are still here. They can't be far! Quick, get them!"

"We're not too far away from the Changfeng City... We have to get them before they enter."

"Hurry up!"

...

On the morning of the next day, Shang Xia wrapped a piece of cloth that was shredded a long time ago around his bow. Picking up a large stick on the ground, he bundled up the birds he killed along the way and the thick bear skin coat he was using as a blanket before walking in the direction of the city.

Shang Xia didn't know how long he had been traveling for. Soft hair grew out from the bottom of his chin, and his unkempt mustache caused his face to look older than it really is. Due to the batterings of the cold winter winds, his skin looked pretty rugged. He became much buffer than before, and if anyone looked at him from afar, he would look like an experienced young hunter.

The distance of a little more than ten miles to the city could be crossed by Shang Xia in a short period of time. Even ordinary people wouldn't find it difficult to make the journey.

By the time he arrived at the city gates, the sun was shining high in the skies. He made it just in time for the city gates to open.

After passing through a series of checks by the guard, he would be able to enter the city.

"Why are the gates of the Changfeng City closed during the night? We also have to get checked by the guards every time we wish to enter or exit..." Shang Xia overheard the conversation behind him.

The person who asked was a middle aged man who looked to be a manager of a caravan, and his question was directed to a local beside him.

The local carried a basket of vegetables on his shoulders and from the looks of it, he was planning to sell them off for a good price at the marketplace. He chuckled in amusement, "Around a month ago, the city lord captured the heads of one of the bandit groups up north close to the Ji Continent. Apparently, their brothers are planning to make a rescue attempt. In order to prevent any suspicious personnel from hiding in the city, the city lord ordered for the closure of the gates during the night and tightened security to screen everyone who enters and exits."

“Oh...” The caravan manager nodded slightly, but his expression turned weird the next moment. “That’s weird... Why would the head of a bandit group in the Ji Continent head down south? There’s only so little resources in our You Continent. What’s there to plunder?”

A youngster who was clad in clothes befitting of a martial artist sneered at the back, “Hehe, you definitely don’t know this. Our You Continent might be small, and we look poor. However, that’s precisely the reason they set their sights on us.”

The interest of the caravan manager was piqued and he turned around to see several other martial artists walking side by side. Their clothes looked pretty similar, and a light flashed in his eyes. He seemed to have thought of something and his expression became several times more respectful. “Would you please enlighten me?”

The youngster seemed pleased with the caravan manager’s tone of flattery and he started to explain, “Sure. The Changfeng City is where the various bandit groups use to fence their goods. Hehe, they’re willing to sell whatever is in demand here. As long as they can make some money off it, they won’t care!”

The words barely left his lips when a guard snapped at him. “What the hell are you guys on about? Do you still wish to enter the city?!”

Cupping his fists towards the young martial artist, the caravan manager nodded his head before returning to his group.

Chuckling softly, a trace of disdain could be heard in the young martial artist’s laughter.

Shang Xia was standing in front of them, and he was able to observe everything with his divine sense. He noticed the look of superiority in the young martial artist’s eyes when he gave his explanation earlier.

The Ji Continent was vast. The number of great families there was much larger than the You Continent, even before it suffered the calamity. There was also the presence of the White Deer Paradise which gave cultivators of the Ji Continent a sense of superiority over those in the You Continent.

Shang Xia didn’t know if the young martial artist was part of a great family there, or if he was a disciple specially nurtured by the White Deer Paradise.

The only thing he didn’t understand was the reason they had appeared. Regardless, his poker face made it such that no one could tell his thoughts. He looked like an ordinary hunter who left the city for a short trip.

Who would have thought that Shang Xia would discover something interesting with his divine sense while waiting for his turn? He saw a young woman who was wrapped up in thick clothing holding a child in her hands. The kid’s face was flushed red, presumably from the cold, and they squeezed their way into the crowd. He also discovered something weird. The young woman seemed to be heading straight for him.

She grabbed his shoulder all of a sudden, and a soft voice rang through the air. “Honey, didn’t you promise to bring us into the city? Why didn’t you wait for us?”

As the words left her mouth, Shang Xia felt the edge of a sharp knife pressed against him. She was using her thick clothes as cover, and he could tell that she would stab him the moment he said something off.

With his divine sense, he managed to tell that the sharp knife she held was actually a small dagger.

Coughing dryly, Shang Xia seemed to have caught a chill. In the eyes of the young lady, she felt that Shang Xia was frightened by her sudden appearance. In order to ensure that nothing went wrong, she tightened her grip on her dagger and pressed it closer to Shang Xia.

“Isn’t it cold today? I didn’t want to drag the two of you out of bed. I planned on bringing back some clothes for you two after selling my stuff.” Shang Xia coughed awkwardly.

“It’s alright. We wish to experience the bustle of the city. Just buy some more food to last us the winter...” The young lady pouted coyly. Those around them couldn’t help but toss over some glances of envy. After all, the three of them portrayed the perfect picture of a loving family.

When they finally arrived at the city gates, a guard who was in the Martial Realm approached. His gaze landed on Shang Xia’s bow, but he didn’t take a second look when he saw that the cloth wrapping around it was tattered beyond belief. He flipped through Shang Xia’s belongings that were wrapped in his bearskin coat and muttered, “What a huge piece of bear skin. It looks pretty complete too. You should be a pretty good hunter!”

As the words left his lips, Shang Xia felt the grip around his arm tightening.

“Hehe, I was just lucky. I found a sleeping bear in the woods.” Shang Xia scratched his head in ‘embarrassment’ and released a booming laugh.

“Alright. Go ahead. Your bear skin should be worth at least three pieces of silver essence. Don’t be scammed by anyone.” The guard waved his hand and sent the three of them on their way.

Thanking the guard sincerely, Shang Xia and the young lady packed up their things and entered the city.

They didn’t walk far before they heard the guard again. “Oh my! Young Master Fan, Young Master Han, Young Master Lu, Young Master Zhang! It’s my honor to meet you today. The young master of my family said that he had already booked the best rooms in the Changfu Inn for you! You can head over any time. He also said that he would hold a feast for you at night.”

Shang Xia’s eyebrows jumped slightly and he turned his head to see the youngster who spoke to the caravan manager earlier cupping his fists while laughing, “Many thanks to your young master. I shall represent everyone here to thank Brother Yang!”

All of a sudden, a weird divine sense emerged from the city gates. It seemed to be searching for something.

“This...” Shang Xia suppressed his curiosity and he maintained his poker face as he turned to walk deeper into the city.

He felt the grip around his arm loosening but he didn't think too much about it. Without even looking closely at the young lady and her daughter, he went on his way.

As deep winter was approaching, there weren't many chances left to purchase fresh goods off the streets.

An attendant quickly rushed over to Shang Xia when he saw the four pheasants he carried, and he purchased it for a piece of silver essence after some negotiating.

The bear skin brought a much better price. It even caused three shopkeepers to start a bidding war, and eventually, it was bought by a fatty who wore a dog-skin cap. Parting with four pieces of silver essence, he bought the bear skin off?Shang Xia.

Weighing the five pieces of silver essence in his hand, Shang Xia chuckled before stuffing them into his sleeves.

Who would have thought that a familiar voice would ring in his ears again. “Mummy, I'm hungry...”

Turning around in fright, Shang Xia saw the young lady and her daughter once again.

The young lady looked to be around twenty in age, and she carried her three year old daughter in her bosom. The little kid stared at Shang Xia with her large round eyes, and Shang Xia couldn't help but ask, “Why are you here again?”

Lowering her head, the young lady's face flushed red. No one knew if it was because of the cold or because of shame, but she whispered, “I... I I don't have any money anymore...”

Shang Xia was flabbergasted. He could tell that she was at the Martial Extremity Realm, and she shouldn't be poor.

A rumbling sound came from the little kid's stomach, causing the young lady's face to turn even redder.

Glancing around, Shang Xia saw a stall by the side of the road that sold dumplings and he chuckled in amusement, “What a coincidence. I'm getting hungry too. Let's get some food over there.”

He started to walk towards the stall after he spoke.

The young lady's gaze turned a little weird as she looked at Shang Xia's back, but she quickly ran behind him.

“Owner, get me three bowls of dumplings and six sesame cakes. Bring me the chili and vinegar on the side.” Shang Xia yelled before looking for a place to sit. He turned to look at the young lady who was following closely behind him.

She wanted to sit beside him, but after thinking for a second, she chose to place the little girl between them.

Chapter 269: Hai Min and Yuanyuan

“Alright, eat it while it’s hot.” Shang Xia said when the three piping hot bowls of dumplings were served. He took the lead and picked up his utensils.

Chewing on the juicy meat wrapped in a slightly chewy but still soft layer of dumpling skin, the fragrance of the soup lingered in his mouth. Narrowing his eyes a little, Shang Xia recalled the scene when he entered the city earlier.

At the city gates, Shang Xia could basically confirm that the strange divine sense came from a cultivator of the Azure Spiritual World. It scanned through the four young martial artists who came from the Ji Continent, and after careful deduction, Shang Xia realized that at least one of them was a cultivator of the Azure Spiritual World too.

If not for his special divine sense that could merge with the world, his disguise would have been seen through by the owner of the strange divine sense right away!

The owner of the divine sense and the four young martial artists weren’t the only ones who didn’t discover Shang Xia’s true identity. The young lady was also unable to see through Shang Xia’s cultivation level.

They might not have discovered his identity, but Shang Xia saw through all of them! There was even an urge burning in his heart to kill the cultivator from the Azure Spiritual World.

If they were at the entrance of the Tongyou City, Shang Xia wouldn’t hesitate to start a bloodbath. The problem was that he was currently in the Changfeng City. Moreover, he was lost in the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range after suffering from the ambush. He concluded that Kou Chongxue was also attacked, and he couldn’t be sure of the current situation in the You Continent. As such, he couldn’t move about recklessly.

There was also another reason Shang Xia didn’t make his move. There were three experts who were sent to ambush him. Who could be sure that there weren’t more hiding in the You Continent? It wouldn’t be a smart move to expose his identity at that moment.

His decision to remain passive was quickly proven to be correct. As the city standing between the Ji Continent and the You Continent, the Changfeng City was also the only other city in the You Continent other than the Tongyou City. It might be controlled by the city lord, but the four great clans of the Tongyou City naturally had their affairs in order there.

As he walked through the city, he discovered that many warehouses and storefronts were being silently observed by different people/

Shang Xia didn’t know if they were truly the members of the four great clans in the Tongyou City, or other experts. He couldn’t be sure if they were targeting him too. All he knew was that he shouldn’t reveal himself at that moment.

Luckily he had remained in the wilderness for quite some time. His facial features were basically covered by his newly grown beard and mustache, and his appearance was a lot more weathered than before. No one would be able to recognize him as the young master of the prestigious Shang Clan if they weren’t familiar with him. In their eyes, he was nothing more than an ordinary hunter.

It seemed as though he would have to lie low for quite some time in the Changfeng City. At the very least, he couldn’t do anything before he verified the current situation in the You Continent.

It didn't take long for him to devour the bowl of dumplings and two sesame cakes.

The young lady and the little kid weren't lagging far behind him either. By the time he placed his chopsticks down, the young lady had emptied her bowl of dumplings. The little girl also managed to finish half a bowl of dumplings and half a sesame cake.

"How much is it?" Shang Xia wiped his mouth before taking out a piece of silver essence.

"Twelve copper boards!" The owner approached his table with a cloth in hand and a smile on his face.

"What?" Shang Xia stared at the owner of the stall in shock.

With a strange look on his face, the owner stared at Shang Xia before explaining, "A bowl of dumplings and soup cost two copper boards. A sesame cake is one copper board each. You had six of them, and it cost twelve copper boards in total. This..."

Seeing how the young lady and little kid were turning to stare at him, Shang Xia was still unable to hide his state of shock. "How is it so cheap?"

Widening his eyes in shock, the stall owner chuckled in amusement, "I'm just running a small business over here... I can't possibly overcharge my customers!"

"Alright. Get me another eight sesame cakes to go. Let's make it a nice number." Shang Xia said while tossing a piece of silver essence over.

"Coming right up!"

Whistling happily, he grabbed another eight sesame cakes. Along with those the little girl left, the owner packed them all up before handing them to Shang Xia with his change of four copper plates.

Speaking of which, Shang Xia understood how the currency system worked in the Azure Origin World. A piece of silver essence was worth a hundred copper boards. Copper plates were larger in size compared to a copper board, and one of them was worth twenty copper boards.

Weighing the copper plates in his hand, Shang Xia smiled. It was indeed his first time using copper boards and copper plates as his method of payment.

As the young master of the Shang Clan, he mainly dealt in silver essence. There was also the rare occasion where golden coins were used.

The amount he paid was barely worth anything in his eyes. At that moment, he had close to three hundred pieces of silver essence in his Embroidered Cloud Case. It was the payment he extorted from Yu Changjin when he came over to ask for the talismans to cure the disciple of his institution. However, the copper boards and copper plates in his hand held a more significant meaning as he made them all through his hunt in the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range.

After receiving his change, Shang Xia got to his feet and the young lady quickly picked up the little girl to follow him.

They looked much better after eating the piping hot bowl of dumplings. As he strolled down the street, the little girl's voice rang from behind. "Uncle, where are you going?"

“Winter in the You Continent is really unforgiving. You won’t survive for long in your clothes. I’ll bring you to get some.” Shang Xia said without even turning around.

“It’s alright. You can get a set for Yuanyuan. I’ll do fine...” The young lady finally revealed her true voice and it sounded clear and melodious as it entered Shang Xia’s ears.

Turning around, Shang Xia’s gaze landed on the little girl and he chuckled. “Yuanyuan... You have a nice name, hahaha.”

Widening her eyes, the little girl’s smile extended across her face. “Thank you, uncle!”

Shang Xia turned around and saw a clothing store. He laughed happily, “Alright, we’re here. Let’s go take a look!”

When they emerged from the shop, the little girl was wrapped in a puffy red jacket. Coupled with her round face, she looked like a cute swollen red snowman.

The young lady didn’t leave empty handed like she wanted to. A jade green jacket hugged her body, and it protected her from the cold without compromising her figure.

Shang Xia noticed a long time ago that she had been injecting her inner qi into the little girl’s body to keep the kid warm. It was like he said. They wouldn’t last long without warmer clothes.

As the little girl had eaten her fill and she was comfortable in her new jacket, she no longer wanted to remain in her mother’s embrace. She squirmed her way out and the young lady had no choice but to let her walk on her own. She jumped happily around the young lady and Shang Xia as her laughter quickly lightened up the mood.

By the time they reached the end of the street, she had her fill of osmanthus cakes, cotton candy, fried dough sticks, and she was gnawing on a stick of candied hawthorn.

Shang Xia looked at the young lady before chuckling in amusement. “This looks like her first time trying these stuff...”

Grunting softly, the young lady lowered her head in embarrassment.

“Looks like you’re going to remain in the city for some time.” Shang Xia mentioned casually.

Glancing at Shang Xia, the young lady lowered her head once again and sighed, “Yes.”

“You don’t have any money on you... Do you have any skills you can use to earn some?” Shang Xia asked.

“No...” The young lady whispered softly after hesitating for a long time.

Nodding slowly, Shang Xia no longer harped on the matter. He led the way to a property broker and requested to rent a small courtyard.

The broker moved quickly. It didn’t take long for him to locate a suitable property for Shang Xia. Before long, the three of them followed behind the broker to take a look at the place.

The courtyard was clearly made for a small family. It faced the south, avoiding any direct sunlight in the day, and there was a main room along with two smaller rooms beside it. There were two fruit trees in the courtyard, and there was also a well covered in bluestone.

Looking through the property, Shang Xia felt that it was quiet enough and decided to rent it out.

“It’s three silver essence for a month.” The broker threw out a price that Shang Xia was unfamiliar with. After all, he wasn’t well-versed in the property prices of the Changfeng City.

Taking out the money he had left in his sleeves, Shang Xia didn’t know if he should bring out more from his Embroidered Cloud Case to rent the courtyard for a longer period of time.

When the broker saw Shang Xia’s reaction, he thought that Shang Xia was hesitating due to the price. He couldn’t help but explain, “It might be a little more expensive, but you can’t blame us! In the past few months, there were many outsiders who came to our city. The prices of every single property increased by a huge amount! If you don’t think it’s worth it, you can always look for another place.”

Shang Xia chuckled softly. “I didn’t say that I won’t rent.”

Counting out three silver essence, he handed it over to the broker. While doing so, he made a casual offhand comment. “I haven’t been here for a while and the city became so crowded. I wonder where these people came from? Could they be the original inhabitants of the You Continent?”

Shaking his head, the broker sighed, “Previously, the original inhabitants of the You Continent had already returned. Nowadays, they seem to be cultivators from the Ji Continent. They might not be throwing their weight around, but it’s obvious that they look down on people of the You Continent like us.”

Since he paid for the courtyard and got the information he wanted, he decided to send the broker away.

Turning back to the mother and daughter duo, he decided to bring them out to get some supplies. Spending all the money he had left from the sale he made earlier in the day, they brought back several bags full of items.

Shang Xia lit a fire in his room and it finally regained its warmth. The little kid poked at the sweet potatoes that Shang Xia had thrown in the fire earlier and started drooling.

Shang Xia laughed happily when he saw her actions. However, he turned around to look at the young lady who arrived behind him.

“Why don’t you ask about our identities?” That had been the question she was dying to ask since they entered the city.

Shang Xia’s gaze returned to the kid and he chuckled, “Why should I ask? Even if I did, will you tell me?”

“No.” The young lady remained silent for some time before muttering.

“Haha. It’s quite alright. Little Yuanyuan is pretty cute!” Shang Xia burst out laughing when he saw her comical expression as she ‘cooked’ the sweet potatoes.

Walking beside Shang Xia, the young lady stared at the little girl as her expression finally thawed. She whispered, "Yuanyuan hasn't been this happy in a long time. It has also been long since she experienced such peace... Thank you!"

Glancing at her from the corner of his eye, he muttered, "You chose this for her."

Shaking her head slowly, she turned to walk towards her door. When she arrived, she turned around to look at Shang Xia. "I'm called Hai Min. Don't forget my name if anyone asks. What should I call you?"

"You can call me Shang Xia. I come from an ordinary family of hunters." Shang Xia spoke without turning to look at her.

"Alright. Yuanyuan shall now be called Shang Yuanyuan for now. She's the daughter of an ordinary hunter." Leaving the room, she sighed, "I'll prepare dinner now."

Perhaps it was because of the long journey they experienced, the two of them chose to turn in early after dinner.

Shang Xia went to one of the side rooms and he started to circulate his inner qi. He didn't forget to cover the entire courtyard with his divine sense in case anything went wrong. After some time, he discovered that Hai Min had left her room silently.

Chapter 270: Eavesdropping

With his divine sense covering the courtyard, nothing should be able to hide from him.

The moment Hai Min left her room, Shang Xia's eyes snapped open. He quickly assumed a sleeping position and he took deep breaths as though he was sleeping.

Hai Min had changed into a set of clothes that allowed her to camouflage in the night and she stopped outside Shang Xia's room for a moment to ensure he was asleep.

It took a few moments, but she was convinced that Shang Xia was asleep. Leaping into the air, she started to run across the roof and out of the courtyard.

The Changfu Inn might be the largest and best inn in the Changfeng City, but the reputation of the best restaurant in the city belonged to the Yanlai Restaurant.

That night, the son of the city lord, Yang Zhenbiao, was hosting several esteemed guests on the second floor of the Yanlai Restaurant.

Hai Min used the cover of night to approach the restaurant, but when she arrived a hundred feet away, she discovered that the entire area was crawling with guards. The streets around the restaurant were also well lit to stop anyone from hiding in the darkness.

Pausing for a second on the roof of a nearby house, Hai Min retrieved a cape and after draping it over herself, her blurry figure disappeared in the darkness of night.

That wasn't all. Her body odor, the sound of her breathing, and anything that could give her presence away disappeared. It was appropriate to say that she managed to merge herself into her surroundings.

In the restaurant, a young man who looked barely twenty and had a high nose bridge and a large forehead stood up and raised his cup. "It's not every day all of us get to gather together. In order to make things less awkward, let me start the introductions!"

He was clearly one of the higher ranked members in the group. The moment the words left his lips, everyone broke out into laughter and someone in the crowd replied, "Brother Li, you're too kind. Brother Li is a third generation disciple of the White Deer Paradise. It's our honor for you to start with the introductions!"

"Thank you, Brother Tianshou!"

Li Tianshou downed his cup of wine and the introductions in the hall started.

The first person to continue was Yang Zhenbiao. He was around 24 years of age, and his cultivation had also reached the Martial Intent Realm. He was the host of the feast that was currently happening. Along with him was his father's disciple, Qin Yuyuan. He was also an expert who had condensed his divine sense.

Other than the two of them, there were four other members present. They were the four young martial artists Shang Xia noticed at the city gates.

"This is the second young master of the Liu Clan, Liu Yunjia. The Liu Clan is one of the three largest families in the Ji Continent."

"This is Guo Yuxi. He's the fourth young master of the Guo Clan. Similarly, the Guo Clan is one of the three largest families in the Ji Continent."

"That is Young Master Zhang Yushu. He's the fifth young master of the Zhang Clan. Naturally, the Zhang Clan is also part of the three largest families in the Ji Continent."

After introducing the three of them, everyone drank another toast.

A strange look appeared on Li Tianshou's face when he introduced the fourth person. "This... This is Young Master Chen Sanyang..." Pausing slightly, he suppressed his emotions before continuing. "Young Master Chen comes from the Changbai Holy Land!"

The faces of Yang Zhenbiao and Qin Yuyuan changed as they stared at the fourth person in confusion.

Qin Yuyuan eventually waved his hand to dissolve the awkward atmosphere. "Brother Tianqin, I apologize for my ignorance, but I wonder where the Changbai Holy Land is located?"

Roaring with laughter, Li Tianshou refused to say anything more.

Chen Sanyang raised his cup slowly and the corners of his lips curled upwards. "Brother Qin, have you heard of the Liao Continent?"

A frown appeared on Qin Yuyuan's face. There wasn't a place in the Azure Origin World called the Liao Continent. However, he seemed to have heard the name somewhere before.

In contrast, Yang Zhenbiao's face darkened. His voice became extremely low. "Are you from the Azure Spiritual World?"

Qin Yuyuan jumped in fright after hearing what Yang Zhenbiao said.

Noticing the mocking looks on the faces of the other three and Li Tianshou, Qin Yuyuan quickly suppressed his emotions. He also saw that Yang Zhenbiao's initial anger transformed into contemplation and he decided not to do anything.

Even so, his heart was filled with unrest and he raised his caution to the maximum. Naturally, his facial expression didn't show a thing.

Chen Sanyang laughed loudly before releasing his aura.

In that instant, an energy wave swept through the room. From the senses of those present, it was clear that Chen Sanyang had already entered the Martial Intent Realm.

"Indeed... It's bloodline essence qi..." Yang Zhenbiao's gaze shifted over to Li Tianshou and his divine sense emerged. "Brother Tianshou, what's the meaning of this?"

Yang Zhenbiao was at the large completion stage of the Martial Intent Realm, and even though the aura released by Chen Sanyang was threatening, he was clearly unafraid to take on any challenges.

Li Tianshou waved his hand once to stop the rampaging heaven and earth qi in the hall and forced their divine sense back. He chuckled with amusement, "Young city lord, please don't get worked up. Brother Chen merely wishes to take a look around the You Continent and experience your culture. That's all there is to it."

Sniggering softly, Chen Sanyang looked at Li Tianshou before cupping his fists towards Yang Zhenbiao. When he was done, he returned to his seat.

Yang Zhenbiao was sullen. He wasn't worried about Chen Sanyang. Instead, a trace of vigilance was born in his heart after seeing how easily Li Tianshou suppressed the two of them earlier.

Liu Yunjia broke the awkward silence. "Brother Chen is our friend and we were the ones who invited him to the You Continent."

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Guo Yuxi also added, "That's right. Ever since the collision between our worlds twenty years ago, we had multiple instances of interactions with each other. There might be a spatial barrier separating both our worlds, but cultivators have entered each other's worlds regardless. Brother Yang, there's no need to make a fuss of things now. "

"That's precisely the case." Zhang Yushu continued. "Brother Yang, as the young city lord, you'll eventually ascend to control the Changfeng City. You should go out and take a look at the world before then. I'm not trying to be insulting here, but the only ones seeing the Azure Spiritual World as an enemy are the cultivators in the five border regions. Your You Continent is taking the grudge to a new level, hating on everyone in the Azure Spiritual World."

Liu Yunjia chuckled. "Brother Yang, why don't you think about it? So what if the five border regions win, or lose the war? It doesn't matter. The five border regions are barren as fuck anyway. With the limited population, you can't even find many talented individuals around. Why should the fate of our Azure Origin World be decided by them? The only ones who have the authority to decide

the situation on the Azure Origin World belong to the eight great holy lands in the central continents!”

Qin Yuyuan was in a state of complete bewilderment. He didn't know what was going on anymore. However, a trace of unease flashed in Yang Zhenbiao's eyes. It seemed as though he was fighting hard with his morals.

A casual smile hung on Li Tianshou's face as his gaze went back and forth on everyone present.

A snort eventually left Yang Zhenbiao's lips. “Whatever. The matter regarding Brother Chen here has nothing to do with me. That's not the point of this gathering anyway.” Turning to Li Tianshou, he continued, “Brother Tianshou, what do you say?”

Nodding in response, Li Tianshou took over. “Brother Yang is right! We can deal with other matters next time. Today, I'm going to act as a middleman. Why don't we get on with today's agenda? All of you can speak as you please. I won't interrupt anything.”

“Alright.” Yang Zhenbiao nodded before looking at the person who came with him. “Brother Qin, please.”

Suppressing his emotions, Qin Yuyuan spoke. “The reason behind our meeting today is regarding the cooperation of the great families of the Ji Continent and our Changfeng City against the bandit group up north. The situation involving the Eighteen Horsemen is basically resolved. We have the third horseman, Hai Pei, in custody. Due to their strong sense of comradery, they will definitely launch a rescue operation soon. When the time comes, we will be able to capture all of them in one fell swoop. However, my master, City Lord Yang Hu, hopes to take them in as his subordinates. After all, the reputation of the Eighteen Horsemen is too striking. Everything they own can go to the three great families of the Ji Continent. What do you think?”

“That's not possible.” Zhang Yushu spoke right after Qin Yuyuan gave his proposal. “The Eighteen Horsemen have been messing around in our Ji Continent for too long. The number of crimes they committed can fill countless books. The members of our Ji Continent want nothing more than to capture them and sentence all of them to a horrible death. Now that we finally have a chance to do it, we won't allow them to live. Moreover, the resources they plundered came from our Ji Continent anyway. Naturally, everything has to be returned to us.”

“Hehe, since when have your families cared about the well being of the common population of your Ji Continent?” Qin Yuyuan sneered.

A frosty light flashed across Liu Yunjia's face and he growled, “Brother Qin, what's the meaning of this. The Eighteen Horsemen have been terrorizing my Ji Continent for a long time and our clans suffered endless pain in their hands. Don't tell me we're unreasonable to request that all of them die for their sins?”

Glancing at Yang Zhenbiao, Qin Yuyuan continued, “All of you came here wanting us to cooperate with you. Now, you're not even willing to give us some benefits. Where's your sincerity in this matter?”

Guo Yuxi sneered in ridicule, “Even if we don’t kill them all, do you really think they will serve City Lord Yang? If we’re not wrong, those bastards are backed by the Tongyou City anyway. Isn’t City Lord Yang afraid of raising a bunch of wolves that might overthrow him in the future?”

“How do you know we won’t be able to...” Qin Yuyuan wanted to speak, but he was interrupted by a cough from Yang Zhenbiao.

“There’s no need for you to worry about how we convince them. That’s our problem.” Yang Zhenbiao added.

Liu Yunjia turned to Li Tianshou and asked, “Brother Li, you’re from our Ji Continent too. What do you say?”

Casually sipping his drink, Li Tianshou muttered casually. “That’s easy.”

“I hope you can enlighten us.” Yang Zhenbiao sighed.

“Even though they’re called the Eighteen Horsemen, there are only five or six of them who can truly fight. The rest are nothing more than garbage. Since Young Masters Liu, Guo, and Zhang want an explanation, you can bring a few of them back and kill them. The rest will be left to the Changfeng City.”

After he spoke, no one stood out to reject his suggestion.

Waiting for a moment or two, Li Tianshou chuckled to break the silence. “Alright. Since there’s no objection, let’s do it my way. Many thanks for giving me the honor of making the decision.”

Since the matter was concluded, the banquet quickly returned to its original high.

After some drinks, the relationship between the few young masters became better and they started to chat casually.

“Brother Yang, all of us know that the Eighteen Horsemen are backed by the Tongyou City. Even if City Lord Yang Hu is an expert at the Martial Extermination Realm, he isn’t worth mentioning in front of the Tongyou City. How do you plan to convince the Eighteen Horsemen? Not to mention the fact that we’re going to kill the stronger ones.” Zhang Yushu asked suddenly.

Yang Zhenbiao chuckled softly, but he didn’t explain their actions. However, a cackle quickly tore through the air. “It’s easy! Once the Tongyou City gets run over, the Eighteen Horsemen won’t be able to rely on them anymore! They will have to change a backer.”