

The Heavens 41

Chapter 41: Treasures

As the medicine cultivators require to enter the Martial Realm were at the elementary level, they were usually paste or powder-like substances.

The quality of the medicine was determined by the ingredients they used!

Medicine used by cultivators trying to break into the Martial Realm were easily created. To put it bluntly, they could cook it in a pot as long as they wanted to!

The way to make the medicine they needed might be more complicated than the medicine crafted by ordinary mortals, but for students who studied in the Tongyou Institution for a year, it was a task they could accomplish.

Medicines that could allow cultivators at the Martial Realm to break through to the Martial Extremity Realm were classified as rank two medicine! Those were usually in a powder form, but that didn't mean that it was easy to create! Shang Xia's Powder of Purification was a good example. He had to get a proper chemist to create the medicine!

There was medicine that cultivators injected themselves with, and there was also liquid medicine, but Shang Xia had no idea who would take them.

After scouring through all six carriages and getting all the herbs required, the five got ready to prepare their own medicine.

Because of the effects brought out by the herbs during the cooking process, it would be extremely easy to fail if all five of them cooked their medicines beside each other. Of course, cooking the medicine one at a time wasn't feasible either as they had limited time. The five of them left the valley and looked for their own area to prepare themselves to break through.

Jiao Haitang sighed when she saw them heading out in different directions. "If they go so far away, Senior Brother Shang won't be able to save them all if anything happens. Moreover, this is only the cooking process. The five of them still have to break through. The distance between them will only increase when we reach that phase..."

Jiao Haitang had a way to advance, but she was part of the unfortunate trio who couldn't find enough herbs in the carriages.

When the disciples were leaving to cook their medicine, Shang Xia looked through the inventory list in each carriage.

That was the only other list that contained the list of goods in each carriage other than the copy in Yuan Zilu and the warehouse manager's hand.

Previously, he told them to take as much as they could as long as it didn't affect their movements.

He might have convinced them that it was because he didn't want to allow the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World to benefit easily, but he was clearly not doing it for the sake of the institution. He wasn't going to make a loss from this.

If he didn't take the chance to raid the supplies with his 'moral high ground', was he supposed to go back to receive an empty praise from the institution for being honest?

He naturally heard Jiao Haitang's concern when doing his own stuff. He reassured her, "Relax. There isn't any danger in the area around us."

Seeing as she was about to ask him more questions, Shang Xia quickly added, "I know everything that happens in a ten mile radius. If they run into any danger when advancing, I'll know."

Jiao Haitang was no fool. She recalled the silver flash of light that beheaded Qing Que, and her thoughts quickly turned to the Mutated Rain Swallow that Shang Xia left with before. A light flashed in her eyes, "Senior Brother Shang, is it because of the Mutated Rain Swallow?"

Shang Xia glanced at her casually. He knew that she was really smart, but he didn't expect her to connect the dots so quickly. However, he didn't plan to hide anything. Nodding, he replied, "That's right."

"That's great! Congratulations, Senior Brother Shang!" She wasn't purely trying to kiss up to Shang Xia. Instead, she felt that the protection of the Mutated Rain Swallow was extremely crucial to their safety.

Of course, she misunderstood Shang Xia's confirmation for something else. She thought that he only controlled a single Mutated Rain Swallow when in actuality, he had the entire flock working for him!

If she knew, the expression on her face would be priceless!

"It's a pity... There aren't any books or manuals regarding secret art for cultivators at the Martial Extremity Realm." Shang Xia sighed before tossing the list to the back of the carriage.

Medicine, martial arts, secret manuals, and martial intent were the four most important things for cultivators. There wasn't a need to speak about medicine as they were the key to advancement.

Martial arts increased the effects when using inner qi, and it allowed cultivators to control their energy better.

Secret arts allowed cultivators to refine heaven and earth qi.

One had to add that the main use of the medicine was to transform the inner qi in a cultivator's body. With the transformation, a cultivator would be able to gain an insight of the transformation process and start doing it themselves.

Like Shang Xia when he advanced into the Martial Extremity Realm, the inner qi in his body started to transform into Yin Yang Essence Qi in the Origin Tide. With such a huge amount of heaven and earth qi produced in the Origin Tide, Shang Xia managed to greatly increase his reserves of inner qi in his dantian, leaving cultivators at the same level far behind.

Due to the large amount of inner qi he had, the transformation process took a lot longer than expected. He had a lot of inner qi that hadn't transformed, and if they clashed with the transformed Yin Yang Essence Qi, he might experience cultivation deviation.

Even with the Yin Yang Diagram in his dantian to maintain a careful balance, the effects were far from actually practicing a secret art for cultivators at the Martial Extremity Realm.

What a pity... Secret arts for cultivators had always been a precious resource. There was no way he would be able to find one so easily. As such, Shang Xia was already prepared to fail when he looked through the carriage.

Even though he failed to find it, he managed to find three other items that piqued his interest.

One of them was a medicine kept in a clay bottle.

The clay bottle was made from volcanic ember, and it had the ability to restrain the qi from fire attributed medicine. It could prevent the medicine from losing its effect.

There was a rank two medicine contained in it, and Shang Xia recognized it as the Scarlet Crystal Powder.

It was medicine cultivators at the Martial Extremity Realm would use. Moreover, it was exceptionally useful for those who cultivated fire arts.

Shang Xia pouted silently. He didn't know how his Yin Yang Essence Qi would react if he refined it. When he finally opened the bottle and felt the fire qi resonating with his Yin Yang Essence Qi, Shang Xia realized that it would definitely help his cultivation.

That begged another question. Shang Xia wondered if his dantian was actually filled with Yin Yang Essence Qi or other types of qi?

Thinking back to the Origin Tide where there were both extreme fire and ice qi surrounding the lake, the answer to his question became slightly unclear.

The most important thing he had to do was to locate a suitable secret art. Once he controlled his inner qi, he would be able to uncover the secret behind it.

He turned to look at another item, a pen.

It was a pen made from the spike of a Thorny Wolf, and it was named the Thorny Brush.

The Thorny Wolf was a ferocious creature, and its spikes could pierce through essence steel. Those thorns were especially useful to make rune brushes.

As Shang Xia was slightly accomplished in creating talismans, he could be considered a rank one Talisman Master.

He might only be able to create a single type of talisman, the Lightning Wood Charm, but he learned the fundamentals to be graded as one.

He could easily expand his knowledge to create other types of talismans.

"With the Thorny Brush, I'll be able to create talismans until I become a rank two Talisman Master." Shang Xia muttered as he kept the brush. According to him, the brush was comparable to a low-grade weapon!

The third item was a box of jade pendants.

Different from protective talismans, the jade pendants in the box were purely pendants that hadn't been inscribed with a protection rune.

If not for the fact that he found the pendants and brush in different carriages, he would suspect that they belonged to the same person!

Ordinarily, the supplies would be split into different categories. They would either be part of the general supplies used to restock the Tongyou Peak, or they would be special equipment meant for someone.

Those that were for general use were less troublesome to deal with. The other might pose a slight problem.

Like the boards Shang Xia used to create his Lightning Wood Charms, the treasures meant for special use were of a completely different grade! Like the box of jade pendants, they were much more valuable compared to ordinary talisman papers. Runes inscribed on it would be able to display a much stronger effect!

Shang Xia noticed that there were thirty six pendants in total, and each one of them was the size of a small rectangular tablet slightly smaller than two inches in length.

Their value could be compared to the boards from the Lightning Tree Shang Xia used in the past.

“It’s a waste to create rank one talismans with these...” Shang Xia said as a weird light flashed in his eyes. “Since I have already entered the Martial Extremity Realm, I should try creating some rank two talismans...”

Chapter 42: 5 Martial Realm Cultivators

After keeping all three items into his pouch, Shang Xia knew that that was all he could carry.

The more he brought with him, the more it would tire him out when traveling to the Tongyou Peak.

They weren't truly out of the woods yet. Seeing as he had to leave so many good items behind, Shang Xia’s thoughts turned to the Embroidered Cloud Case Shang Xi had.

When would he be able to obtain his own Embroidered Cloud Case?

A high pitched chirp came from the skies all of a sudden, bringing Shang Xia back to reality.

Raising his head, he saw a silver light shooting down towards him.

A smile slowly formed on his face and he didn’t attempt to dodge it.

“Senior Brother Shang, be careful!” The disciples who were still in the valley yelled when they noticed the incoming danger.

However, they saw Shang Xia waving his hand nonchalantly at them in response.

The chirps got louder, and the bird seemed to be displeased with Shang Xia’s lack of reaction.

Before the silver light crashed into him, it stopped. The Lightning Bird hovered several feet above his head and circled him a few times before eventually landing on his shoulder.

“Lightning... Lightning Bird!” The disciples standing around gasped in horror. They didn’t forget the creature that attacked them several days ago.

However, the little bird stood with its chest puffed up on Shang Xia’s shoulder, and the disciples looked at each other in disbelief.

“Did the Lightning Bird behead the cultivator from the Azure Spiritual World?” Jiao Haitang’s gaze was filled with admiration and she asked.

“Chirp, chirp!” The Lightning Bird chirped impatiently while looking at Shang Xia. It was pestering him for the ball of lightning he promised to provide.

Before he could react, another chirp sounded out above him.

A bird that was slightly smaller than the Lightning Bird soared through the skies and faint flashes of silver would appear behind it from time to time. It was slightly slower than the Lightning Bird, but it quickly landed on Shang Xia’s other shoulder.

“Chirp, chirp!” The Mutated Rain Swallow glared at the Lightning Bird in response. It seemed to be saying, “What are you so anxious for?! Since we promised, we’ll definitely give it to you! Do you really not trust us?”

Shang Xia raised an eyebrow slightly while staring at Yan Ni’er.

“Wait... Is that the Mutated Rain Swallow Senior Brother Shang captured?” The disciples in the valley were slightly numb to the surprises Shang Xia brought to them.

The Lightning Bird wanted to cry out once again, but Shang Xia opened his palm to reveal a ball of lightning. It was precisely the other part he promised to give it.

The Lightning Bird charged at it instantly. Devouring the entire ball of lightning, it cried out pleasurably. Eventually, it turned into a silver streak that disappeared into the heavens.

Yan Ni’er chirped loudly on his shoulder and seemed to want to follow the Lightning Bird into the heavens. Thinking again, she remained on Shang Xia’s shoulder while staring expectantly at the sky.

Shang Xia could estimate that the Lightning Bird was about to evolve and he started to regret his actions. He might have given the ball of essence lightning to the creature too early...

After all, there were several disciples trying to break through to the Martial Realm. If the Lightning Bird started its advancement, the disturbance it created might affect the others!

After some time, it seemed as though Shang Xia had worried for nothing. The Lightning Bird’s advancement couldn’t be done in a short amount of time, and one of the five disciples returned.

“Congratulations, Brother Meng!” Shang Xia could feel his aura long before he approached.

Meng Liangchen revealed a brilliant smile and he cupped his hands to thank Shang Xia sincerely, “Senior Brother Shang, many thanks! I will definitely repay you for this favor!”

After he spoke, he nodded and left for the carriages.

“He really is something else... He can even say such weird stuff.” Jiao Haitang wrinkled her nose and snorted.

Shang Xia knew Meng Liangchen's personality, and he laughed in response, "He was extremely close to breaking through before entering the battlefield between two worlds. It makes sense that he's faster than the others. I wonder how the rest are doing."

Not too long after he spoke, another disciple returned. This time, it was Huang Zihua who had a slightly better relationship with Shang Xia.

"Did you succeed?" Jiao Haitang might not be able to determine his advancement from his aura due to her lack of cultivation, but from the look on his face, it wasn't hard to realize that he had succeeded.

"Of course!" Huang Zihua laughed and he cupped his fists towards Shang Xia, "Senior Brother Shang, I didn't let you down!"

Jiao Haitang rolled her eyes when she heard what he said. "What are you so happy about? You weren't the fastest anyway..."

Huang Zihua looked at Meng Liangchen and he slapped his forehead, "Oh right! With my increase in strength, I can probably bring a few more items with me!" As soon as he spoke, he approached the carriages.

He looked at Jiao Haitang with a smug smile on his face and he ran over. "I won't let that brat steal all the good stuff!"

Jiao Haitang glowered silently, "Humph! You're just going to get Senior Brother Shang's leftovers..."

Huang Zihua nearly tripped over himself when he heard what she said.

Shang Xia didn't know whether to laugh or cry. How was it his problem?!

As the weather turned gloomy slowly, it was unlike anything they had ever experienced in the battlefield between two worlds.

Shang Xia looked up, and he caught a faint glimpse of silver light flashing through the clouds from time to time.

Could the evolved Lightning Bird affect the weather conditions?!

Shang Xia found it unbelievable.

While that was happening, the disciples who went out of the valley to break through peacefully started to return.

No one knew if it had something to do with the denser heaven and earth qi in the battlefield between the two worlds, but none of the five failed when trying to break through!

That was a miracle in itself!

If that were to happen back in the institution, it would bring about an uproar! Also, their success was met with envious gazes from the other eight.

They would definitely get a chance to advance in the future, but who knew if they would be lucky enough to succeed?

Those who broke through quickly started to rummage through the carriages to look for additional items they wanted to bring with them.

Naturally, Shang Xia remained silent at their actions.

After entering the Martial Realm, one would experience an increase in strength. They would be much stronger than before, and it would be understandable for them to carry more.

There was no way they would leave the treasures to the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World. They would bring the most valuable treasures with them, especially since Shang Xia did the same. The treasures Shang Xia picked out were the best among the supplies!

All of a sudden, a heaven-shattering cry came from the skies.

Everyone raised their heads in unison only to see a silver streak dancing in the air. Every time it appeared, a ray of lightning would shoot towards it. The flashes lit up the otherwise dark clouds for a moment, but they would soon disappear.

As the silver sliver light continued to soar around in the skies, the dark clouds seemed to contain the rage of the heavens as it gathered tightly around the Lightning Bird.

Finally, the rage contained in the heavens erupted all at once. Massive bolts of lightning emerged as thunderous blasts roared.

The heavens shook and the earth trembled.

The silver light that was the Lightning Bird nimbly danced around, shuttling about the dark clouds that covered the earth.

It was like a tiny dancer that directed the grand tribulation striking down at it.

“Is this a sign of transformation or advancement?” Meng Liangchen asked.

From what Jiao Haitang said, the disciples learned about the relationship between Shang Xia and the birds.

Moreover, they could see the Mutated Rain Swallow standing on Shang Xia’s shoulder, verifying their guesses.

All of them envied him.

“It already advanced... This looks more like something it’s attempting...” Shang Xia muttered.

He knew that the Lightning Bird had already advanced the moment it swallowed the ball of lightning. The lightning storm in the skies above seemed to be orchestrated by the little creature.

“Will it return after advancing?” Meng Liangchen asked again.

Shaking his head, Shang Xia sighed, “It was never under my control to begin with... I probably won’t be able to subdue it after this either.”

Meng Liangchen looked at the Mutated Rain Swallow on Shang Xia’s shoulder and muttered, “By the way, you’re a target of the Azure Spiritual World...”

“I know. Jiao Haitang reminded me earlier.” Shang Xia sighed.

“Alright then.” Meng Liangchen raised an eyebrow and asked, “What are your plans after this? I mean... Assuming we arrive at the Tongyou Peak, what do you plan to do next?”

After thinking for a moment, Shang Xia replied, “There’s a lot I wish to do. The most important thing should be to find a suitable martial art...”

No longer looking at the silver streak flying through the air, he looked at Meng Liangchen. “What about you?”

“Me?” Meng Liangchen chuckled. “I plan to stay in the battlefield between two worlds for some time to look for the inheritance left by my Meng Family.”

Chapter 43: Slap Slap Slap

At the foot of the hill, a group of disciples on horses rode peacefully across the lands.

“Brother Shang, the environment here is pretty good. We traveled for an entire day and we should take a break.” One of the disciples pulled on the reins of his horse and said.

His large face and thick features gave him a dignified look, until one caught a glimpse of his tiny neck.

Behind him was a disciple who had a huge forehead, and his eyes were long and narrow. He quickly pulled on the reins of his horse seeing as the person before him had slowed down.

An anxious look hung on his face, but the exhaustion in his eyes couldn’t be hidden by his anxiety. After several days of searching, he had already received numerous complaints. Since he heard the captain of the patrol team suggesting they take a break, he replied softly, “We’ll listen to Brother Ji’s commands.”

Captain Ji chuckled happily in response. “Dismount! We’ll take a two hour break!”

The four other disciples behind the two of them cheered and quickly got off their horses.

The disciple with a huge forehead revealed a bitter smile, but he swallowed his words eventually.

Their group consisted of disciples from the Protection Division of the Tongyou Institution, and they were in charge of patrolling the area.

Other than the person Captain Ji addressed as ‘Brother Shang’, the other five formed one patrol squad. Captain Ji Sheng was at the late stage of the Martial Extremity Realm, and the deputy captain, Jiang Changyu, was at the early stage of the Martial Extremity Realm. The other three were seasoned cultivators in the Martial Realm.

The extra person in the group was called Shang Quan, and he was a member of the Shang Clan. He followed the patrol squad in order to look for traces of Shang Xia!

Ji Sheng took out a pouch of water and finished half of it, and when he was done, he tossed it over to one of his men. Turning to Shang Quan, he asked, “Brother Shang, other than the fact that they were ambushed by the bunch of cultivators from the Wind Swallow Race, is there any news from the Shang Clan?”

Shang Quan chuckled bitterly. “Brother Ji, I’ve been with you all this while. If I get any new reports, I can’t hide it from you.”

“True...” Ji Sheng sighed as he got comfortable on the ground.

“The cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World have been chased out by us. If your young master is still alive, he should have arrived at the Tongyou Peak by now... Even if he has to crawl over, three days is more than enough time.”

Shang Quan’s expression sank and he glared at the person who spoke, “Brother Jiang, what do you mean by that?”

Ji Sheng smiled and placed a stalk of grass in his mouth.

Jiang Changyu rolled his eyes and snickered, “Brother Shang, there’s no need to get angry. We’re speaking the truth here. The corpses of people that died in the battlefield between two worlds can form a mountain. Is it something new for someone of our Tongyou Peak to fall? If not for the fact that one of the disciples is a member of your Shang Clan, they won’t bother sending us out to search the area.”

Shang Quan seethed with anger, “The Tongyou Institution will not give up on locating a student who might still be alive! Shang Xia isn’t the only one who’s missing... There are more than ten disciples of the third outer division who have yet to be found too!”

Ji Sheng laid on the grass casually and he looked at the birds in the sky while ignoring the two of them.

Jiang Changyu sneered in response, “Of course we won’t give up on any students who might still be alive. Right now, you should head over to the Wind Swallow Race to start negotiating with them for the hostages. There’s no point wasting your time with us!”

“You!” Shang Quan glared at Jiang Changyu who had a mocking smile on his face.

Snorting heavily, he turned to Ji Sheng. “Brother Ji, what do you think?”

The moment the words left his lips, Ji Sheng leaped to his feet. A grave expression hung on his face. “Not good... Someone has their eyes on us.”

“Who?!”

“Where?!”

The two who were locked in a quarrel a second earlier raised their guards instantly.

The three ordinary members of the patrol squad rushed over with the horses as soon as they heard the captain.

As the institution had a secret technique that combined the power of five cultivators, every single patrol squad consisted of five members! With Ji Sheng’s group as an example, they could hold off an early stage Martial Intent Realm cultivator if they worked together! If they were lucky, they might even defeat the enemy!

If they were to ride into the battle on their Scarlet Cloud Beasts, the chances of victory would increase significantly! That was the reason why Ji Sheng's men returned with the horses the moment he yelled.

According to the rumors, the Protection Division on the Tongyou Peak had cultivated an elite patrol squad.

Their members had cultivation levels that surpassed the Martial Extremity Realm!

The moment they unleashed the secret technique and worked together, they would be able to slay cultivators in the Martial Intent Realm! Their battle records were legendary. They had countless records where they killed Martial Intent Realm cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World! It was even said that they retreated without any casualties when up against a late stage Martial Intent Realm expert!

Of course, the elite squad wouldn't patrol the path that connected the Tongyou Institution to the Tongyou Peak. They traveled around the chaotic regions of the battlefield between two worlds. They would even actively enter regions where cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World were active to slay them.

Ji Sheng turned in a particular direction and yelled, "Who's there?! Come out right now!"

The members of the patrol squad turned in unison while getting into formation. Shang Quan was left at the side to fend for himself.

A figure popped up from behind a rock and started waving at them. Before they could react, the figure started running towards the squad.

"Are you the patrol squad from the Tongyou Peak?! Uncle Quan?! It's me, Shang Xia!" As he got closer to them, the looks on their faces stiffened. Wasn't that the brat they were ordered to find?

"Xia'er! It's you!" Shang Quan looked at Shang Xia who was perfectly alright and he roared with laughter. He wanted to run over to welcome the kid, but before that he turned to look at Jiang Changyu who had an unnatural expression on his face. "Looks like you're right. I don't have to waste my time with you anymore. Moreover, I don't have to go to the Wind Swallow Race to carry out hostage negotiations... Too bad for Brother Jiang. I'll have to trouble you to look for the other disciples."

The words were like a giant palm that slapped Jiang Changyu mercilessly.

Shang Quan giggled in amusement before walking towards Shang Xia.

Jiang Changyu harrumphed coldly when he looked at Shang Quan's leaving view.

...

When Shang Xia left the area, he realized that he had no idea where to go! Even with the advice he had gotten to head towards the highest peak, there were too many people following him! There was too much to consider.

Helpless, he could only bring them back to the place they were ambushed. From there, they would follow the path the convoy took to the Tongyou Peak.

Luckily for Shang Xia, he could use the Mutated Rain Swallows to scout ahead. That allowed them to avoid many dangerous situations to arrive safely back at the region they were ambushed.

Because of that, Shang Xia traveled ahead of the group in case he ran into anything unexpected.

That was why he discovered the presence of Shang Quan and the others.

Ordinarily, he would have to verify their identities if they claimed to be a patrol squad from the Tongyou Peak. However, there was no need for that considering that Shang Quan was present.

There was no doubt about it, the patrol squad came from the Tongyou Peak and it was there to look for them.

He failed to contain his excitement when traveling over and that was how he was discovered by Ji Sheng.

...

“It’s good that you’re back!” Shang Quan clapped Shang Xia’s shoulders and laughed. However, the harmonious atmosphere was broken by a sarcastic voice.

“Yeah, it’s good that you’re back. You saved us a lot of trouble. Don’t you know how much time we’ll save now that we don’t have to look for someone who fled before the battle started?”

Shang Quan snapped his head around, and he glared at the person who spoke.

Shang Xia looked at the man and asked curiously, “This... Who are you again?”

“Xia’er, let me introduce you... This is...”

Shang Xia interrupted him before he could start. “I’m not interested in who they are. They’re all useless bastards who allowed the enemy to run rampant in our own backyard.”

“You!” Jiang Changyu wasn’t the only one offended by him. Everyone in the patrol squad turned unfriendly as they glared at Shang Xia.

Despite that, they knew that everything he said was true. For the members of the Wind Swallow Race to ambush the convoy and kill so many cultivators of the Tongyou Peak, the patrol squads were definitely at fault.

Since the convoy was ambushed, the report of the deaths and damages were sent to the Tongyou Peak. The patrol squads had to endure extreme pressure coming from the higher ups for failing to do their job.

Deputy Patriarch Ji Wenlong, the expert in charge of the Protection Division, was stationed in the Tongyou Institution. However, he personally rushed over to the Tongyou Peak the moment he heard the news in order to take charge of the situation.

Ji Sheng could no longer pretend to be deaf when he heard Shang Xia’s accusations.

“Bullshit! What do you know?! How dare you accuse us without knowing anything?!” Ji Sheng snapped at Shang Xia.

Jiang Changyu rolled his eyes and sneered, “Of course he gets to look down on us... Don’t you know who his grandfather is?”

His statement instantly dragged the Shang Clan into the crossfire.

Shang Quan’s expression sank, and he growled, “Preposterous! Who do you think you are to sow discord between my Shang Clan and the Protection Division? You best remember that my Shang Clan was the first to send aid when your patrol squads were falling short of manpower!”

“Brother Shang, there’s no need to get so agitated. He didn’t mean it.” Ji Sheng glared at Jiang Changyu, signaling him to stop talking.

Seeing as they took a step back, Shang Quan explained, “Because of something that happened that day, a huge part of the Protection Division was drawn away. They had not enough men, causing a gap in the defense.”

As Shang Quan didn’t say anything about the reason they were drawn away, Shang Xia decided not to ask about it.

Heaving a sigh of relief now that Shang Xia was found, Shang Quan spoke to Ji Sheng, “Brother Ji, about this... What do you plan to do now?”

Ji Sheng knew that Shang Quan was no longer interested in assisting their squad now that Shang Xia was found. Even though he was unhappy about it, he could understand Shang Quan’s considerations. “Since you found your nephew, you can bring him back to the Tongyou Peak. Let’s not let Uncle Ke worry.”

A smile formed on Shang Quan’s face. “Many thanks to Brother Ji! After bringing him back, I’ll return to assist you once again.”

Ji Sheng hadn’t said anything when Jiang Changyu’s voice drifted over. “Hehe, seventeen disciples of the outer division went missing. Only one survived... What a fortunate ending!”

Shang Xia turned his head and looked at Jiang Changyu deeply.

Before anyone else could speak, Ji Sheng snapped, “Shut up!”

Jiang Changyu got to his feet and he ignored his captain entirely. “Are you not willing to admit it? Do you dare to tell us that you weren’t the first to escape that day? Everyone was resisting the enemy the best they could. Now, all your fellow disciples are missing and you returned without the slightest trace of injury on your body. Their deaths were really unjust!”

Chapter 44: The Slapping Continues

Jiang Changyu growled. No one knew where his enmity towards Shang Xia came from.

Ji Sheng saw how his subordinate ignored his order, but he didn’t push it. He sneered angrily, but he continued to watch the show from the side.

Shang Quan wasn’t going to let Shang Xia be insulted. He retorted, “Jiang Changyu, Shang Xia left on Yuan Zilu’s order! He didn’t run away from the battle. There are witnesses to this! Are you

ignoring the rules set by the Tongyou Institution? Do you want to take a trip to the Contribution Division for spreading rumors about a fellow disciple?"

Jiang Changyu's expression changed slightly, but he snorted in contempt the next moment.

"Humph, you can't talk your way out of it and you're using your authority to suppress me..."

Hahaha, I can't challenge your massive Shang Clan! Left based on orders? Is there anyone in the Tongyou Peak who doesn't know that Yuan Zilu is someone from your Shang Clan? Of course he'll send Shang Xia away before the dangerous battle."

"That is complete bullshit! Yuan Zilu sent him away because he captured a live Mutated Rain Swallow! It concerns..." Shang Quan roared angrily.

"Oh really? Where's the Rain Swallow now?" Jiang Changyu interrupted him. A sinister smile formed on his face. It seemed as though his plot had succeeded.

"You..." Shang Quan pointed at Jiang Changyu angrily, but he failed to say a word.

Shang Quan finally understood that he had fallen for Jiang Changyu's trap.

Of course Jiang Changyu knew that Shang Xia left on Yuan Zilu's order! So what?! It was true that he left before the battle.

Even if he had a reason to leave, he couldn't avoid being the target of malicious rumors.

Moreover, Shang Xia returned without the Mutated Rain Swallow. That was what the higher ups of the Tongyou Peak wanted, and there was no sign of it! Jiang Changyu was precisely using the point to shame Shang Xia.

"Yuan Zilu is a member of your Protection Division." Shang Xia's voice rang in their ears and he stared directly at Jiang Changyu. "Are you prepared to back your words up that Yuan Zilu is part of my Shang Clan and ordered me to leave because of our relationship?"

Jiang Changyu was stumped by the simple question. He seemed to have forgotten a serious point and the haughty expression that was forming on his face froze.

Indeed... Yuan Zilu was an expert of the Protection Division. He was extremely capable and his position in the institution was no weaker than many instructors. How could someone who had no ability or backing gain such a position in the Protection Division?

If Jiang Changyu's accusations were to spread, the first person to deal with him wouldn't come from the Shang Clan! It would be Yuan Zilu himself!

Deputy Patriarch Ji Wenlong might be in charge of the Protection Division, but he wasn't the only one who had the ability to influence things there!

Jiang Changyu was a mere vice captain of a patrol squad! Even with the slight connection to the Ji Family because of their captain, the Ji Family wouldn't bother offending a deacon of Yuan Zilu's level for him!

Ji Sheng realized that he had no choice but to step in now that things had gotten so serious. “Hey, this brat is busy sprouting nonsense. He doesn’t think his words through. Little Brother Xia, please don’t lower yourself to his level.”

“Oh? Uncle Ji finally plans to step in now that your subordinate fucked up...” Shang Xia might have said it jokingly, but his words firmly stabbed into Ji Sheng’s heart.

He suppressed his rage and smiled mirthlessly.

Shang Xia didn’t bother with his response. Instead, he turned to Jiang Changyu, “Not to worry, my Shang Clan will definitely invite Yuan Zilu to make things clear to the Contribution Division. I’ll prove that you were wrong in your accusations.”

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The Contribution Division not only evaluated the merits one brought to the faction. They were also used to mete out punishment to those who made mistakes.

There was no way Shang Xia would let Jiang Changyu off so easily after the animosity the other party showed.

Jiang Changyu’s expression started to flicker uneasily as he glanced at Ji Sheng.

Noticing Shang Quan’s gaze on him, Ji Sheng decided to close his eyes to ignore Jiang Changyu’s silent cry for help.

“As for your accusation where I left my fellow disciples to die... You’ll find that you’re wrong.” Shang Xia waved his hand in the air and several heads popped up from the rocks behind him.

Turning around, a brilliant smile bloomed on Shang Xia’s face. He turned to look at Jiang Changyu and his expression turned serious again. “There were only three who lost their lives.”

Several figures started to make their way over and the members of the patrol squad realized that they were the people they were looking for!

“They’re still alive! Hahaha! They’re alright!” Shang Quan chuckled and patted Shang Xia’s shoulders again. “Did you save them yourself?”

Shang Xia snickered, “That’s right. I ran into some luck and found their hiding spot. After killing the cultivators of the Wind Swallow Race taking them hostage, I brought them out.”

Ji Sheng, who was pretending to be deaf and blind just a moment ago, failed to hide the shock he felt.

One had to know that practically every single patrol squad was sent out to look for the hostages the Wind Swallow Race took.

The cultivators of the Wind Swallow Race used their secret movement art and fled the moment they ran into the patrol squads. Even though they managed to kill a few members of the Wind Swallow Race, they were unable to find the hiding spot.

After some time, the patrol squads started to slacken off. After all, quite some time had passed and the disciples were nowhere to be found. According to their estimates, the disciples should have already been brought out of the battlefield between the two worlds.

The experts on the Tongyou Peak knew the motive of the Wind Swallow Race.

With more than a dozen of their outer division disciples captured by the members of the Wind Swallow Race, the Tongyou Peak would be beaten to a passive state.

However, the 'hostages' taken by the Azure Spiritual World reappeared right in front of them!

How else were they supposed to react?

It was especially so for Shang Quan and Ji Sheng. They knew everything that was happening on the Tongyou Peak, and they knew that the reappearance of the outer disciples would solve a lot of problems!

In front of such a sensitive issue, not even Ji Sheng dared to be careless. He no longer bothered with Jiang Changyu and he hurried his other subordinates, "Quick, light the Cloud Piercing Rainbow Arrow! Get the other patrol squads over to assist us!"

The three members immediately ran off to light the signal.

Shang Quan roared with laughter, "Great... This is great! Little brat, you did a great service this time!"

Shang Xia chuckled in amusement, "Uncle Quan is exaggerating... I merely got lucky. After running into them, I took a gamble and killed those guarding them! It's nothing much!"

At this point, Jiang Changyu's expression turned completely pale.

He wanted to beg Ji Sheng for help, but the man was ignoring him completely.

Even though whatever he said earlier was slander, he knew that Shang Xia wouldn't be able to talk his way out of it without anything to back him up. Now, Shang Xia saved nearly all the outer disciples alone! It was a task that all the patrol squads couldn't complete! None of the accusations against him would work any longer!

All of a sudden, Shang Xia turned to Jiang Changyu and said in a serious tone, "Looks like you were wrong!"

Shang Xia might seem serious, but in Jiang Changyu's eyes, the mockery was evident.

He knew that whatever Shang Xia said wasn't only an explanation to him. It was a warning to tell him that their grudge wasn't over.

After all, his repeated attempts to discredit Shang Xia had already infuriated the other party. Shang Xia's continued 'explanations' only served to deepen the grudge between them.

Jiang Changyu wasn't planning on taking the beating passively. He tried one last trick. Raising his voice, he asked, 'So what? You lost the Mutated Rain Swallow!'

Jiang Changyu looked at Ji Sheng who had a cold gaze in his eyes before turning to Shang Quan. "Do you not know what state the Tongyou Peak is in right now? The Mutated Rain Swallow might be the key to all of this! He had to go along and lose it! Hahaha..."

“Huh? Mutated Rain Swallow? Senior Brother Jiang, wasn’t it flying in the air above your guys? Why would you say that Chief Shang lost it?” Huang Zihua who just arrived asked.

Jiang Changyu’s smile froze on his face.

Whistling lightly, Shang Xia looked at Jiang Changyu with a sarcastic smile on his face.

Ji Sheng suddenly remembered the bird that was flying in the air above him when he laid on the ground, and he raised his head only to be greeted by a blur flashing past his eyes. It landed on Shang Xia’s shoulder and it looked at the strangers that surrounded him.

Jiang Changyu opened his mouth but failed to utter a word. He stared at the little bird resting on Shang Xia’s shoulder.

“Is this the Mutated Rain Swallow?” Shang Quan widened his eyes and asked.

“You... You managed to subdue it?!” Ji Sheng gasped.

That was the only explanation for the scene he was seeing. If Shang Xia hadn’t tamed the bird, he wouldn’t have released it from its cage!

Shang Quan seemed to have thought of something, but his surprise was quickly replaced by rambunctious laughter.

Shang Xia turned to look at Jiang Changyu who had an ashen expression on his face and sighed. “Looks like you’re wrong again!”

Chapter 45: Surprising Aftermath

Capturing a living Mutated Rain Swallow and taming one was a completely different concept!

Selling and buying a live Mutated Rain Swallow was one thing, but taming one had a much deeper meaning!

Shang Quan and Ji Sheng’s reactions were more than exaggerated.

If Shang Quan felt both relief and excitement when Shang Xia returned, the feeling he had when he saw Yan Ni’er standing obediently on Shang Xia’s shoulder could be described as endless reverence!

Naturally, his reverence had nothing to do with Shang Xia. That little brat wasn’t worthy of his veneration! He stared at Yan Ni’er like she was a precious treasure!

As for Ji Sheng, the look on his face turned pretty colorful. He tossed Jiang Changyu to the back of his mind and no longer cared about his existence. His tongue was twisted together and talking became a little difficult.

“Little brat, you made a real contribution... No! This is a great contribution to our faction!” Shang Quan didn’t know how else to express his joy. He could only slap Shang Xia’s shoulder happily.

If not for the fact that his body became a lot stronger after entering the Martial Extremity Realm, Shang Quan’s slaps would have shattered his bones.

“Uncle Quan, how important is the Mutated Rain Swallow exactly?! I’ll make things clear first. Since Yan Ni’er agreed to follow me, I won’t allow anyone to kill her..” Shang Xia could guess that the Mutated Rain Swallow was extremely important to the Wind Swallow Race of the Azure Spiritual World, but he didn’t know what the Tongyou Peak wanted to do with her.

“Chirp, chirp!” Yan Ni’er flapped her wings aggressively as though she understood what Shang Xia meant.

“Umm...” Shang Quan scratched his head and muttered, “You’ll know when we arrive at the Tongyou Peak... At least, I don’t think they’ll kill her..”

Shang Quan’s words were completely useless at reassuring Shang Xia.

“No! We won’t let her die!” Ji Shang spoke all of a sudden.

Meeting Shang Xia’s bewildered gaze, Ji Sheng explained, “If you only managed to capture a live Mutated Rain Swallow, they might not care so much. Now that you tamed the bird, the patriarch will definitely not allow them to kill her!”

Ji Sheng’s cultivation level was comparable to Shang Quan, and their status in their respective families were about the same too. However, Ji Sheng’s identity as a captain in the Protection Division allowed him to learn some things Shang Quan couldn’t.

His words managed to calm Shang Xia to a certain extent, but due to their reluctance to say anything about what they wanted to do to Yan Ni’er, Shang Xia felt extremely irritated.

In the short time that it took for them to conclude their conversation, a rumbling sound could be heard coming towards them.

Other patrol squads were gathering towards their location because of the signal they sent out earlier.

Indeed... Five disciples riding on Scarlet Cloud Horses approached.

The captain of their group pulled on the reins and he looked at Shang Xia and the others as a trace of surprise crossed his face. “Huh? There’s actually so many of them... Brother Ji, you made a great contribution by finding the outer disciples! I’ll congratulate you in advance.”

The disciples dismounted after he spoke.

A bitter laugh left Ji Sheng’s lips and he waved his hands to dismiss the other captain’s blessing. “Junior Brother Tang, you’re mistaken. Anyway, it’s a long story. I’ll tell you when we return. We’re taking a short break here. When Junior Brother Li comes, we’ll return to the Tongyou Peak.”

Three patrol squads would be sent out to secure a single area. As they wouldn’t venture too far away from each other, they could assist the other squads in case anything happened.

Tang Youqian, the other captain, tossed his reins to another disciple. He walked to the side with Ji Sheng and Shang Quan, and they seemed to be discussing something. Shang Xia felt their gaze on him from time to time.

“Shang Xia!” A young disciple whose age was comparable to Shang Xia ran over all of a sudden. “I heard that you managed to comprehend your martial intent and teach Zhu Ying a lesson! Is that true?”

Shang Xia raised an eyebrow and gasped, “Ju Hang? When did you enter the Protection Division and join a patrol squad?”

The youngster chuckled happily, “Haha, you definitely didn’t expect it. After all, I entered three months before you. I managed to catch Master Tang’s eye and when he invited me over to enter the Protection Division, I had to accept!”

As long as a disciple in the outer division entered the Martial Realm, they would be allowed to do whatever they want!

Previously, Ju Hang was a disciple of the second outer division. He was fighting for the position of the leader of the outer division with Shang Xia, but he chose to enter the battlefield between two worlds eventually. He didn’t even take part in the final evaluation!

The two of them could be considered acquaintances back in the institution and when Shang Xia heard the smugness in his voice, he was slightly taken aback. How important did one have to be for one of the heads of a division to personally invite them? Shang Xia could tell that Ju Hang probably received a letter of appointment, but he was blatantly exaggerating in Shang Xia’s face.

However, there wasn’t a need for Shang Xia to expose him. “Congratulations, Brother Ju!”

“So... We...”

Before he could speak, he was interrupted by a cry of shock. “What?! He saved them?”

Ju Hang and the others turned to look at Tang Youqian who just yelled out loud. Shang Quan slapped his shoulder and snapped, “Little brat, there’s no need to shout!”

Tang Youqian looked at Shang Xia once again, but he was dragged even further away by the other two and their voices became softer.

Ju Hang stared at Shang Xia as a confident expression returned to his face. He clearly didn’t understand what was going on. “Let’s compete again, what do you think?”

His words drew the attention of the other disciples.

Jiang Zihua looked at Ju Hang and asked, “You know that Senior Brother Shang has already comprehended his martial intent... Did you also comprehend your martial intent?”

Ju Hang chuckled lightly without giving an answer.

“You did?!” Huang Zihua cried. This time, more people started paying attention to them.

Shang Xia finally turned serious when he looked at Ju Hang. Clearly, he wasn’t the only one who ran into some sort of fortune! Indeed... It was difficult for him to be the only outstanding cultivator in his generation!

Ju Hang revealed a crafty laughter and explained, “I’ve long since had enough of you! Hehe, you’ve been sitting in the position of the leader of the outer division... Today, it’s time...”

“WHAT?! That little brat managed to tame a Mutated...” Ju Hang couldn’t complete his sentence when he was interrupted once again.

Turning to look at his captain, Ju Hang didn’t know what was going on there.

“Can you shut up?! Keep your voice down at least! Are you trying to tell the whole world what happened?!” Ji Sheng snapped at him again. Grabbing Tang Youqian by the neck, the three of them lowered their volume.

With the repeated interruptions, Ju Hang couldn’t maintain his haughty attitude any longer. His feelings were slightly affected. After all, he entered the Protection Division before entering the inner division! Wasn’t he supposed to be special since they broke the rules for him?! Weren’t the disciples of the outer division supposed to be admiring his prowess?

Moreover, he managed to comprehend a martial intent too!

When he was trying to show off to everyone, he was interrupted time and time again!

The person who did it was none other than his own captain! He didn’t even know how to react!

Noticing the awkward expression on Ju Hang’s face, Huang Zihua couldn’t hold it in any longer. A mischievous smile formed on his face and he asked, “Ju Hang, are you trying to challenge Senior Brother Shang?”

Even though he was interrupted several times, Ju Hang felt that he had to at least uphold the inspiring momentum he had! He tilted his chin up slightly and spoke, “That’s right! Chief Shang, do you dare to take me on?”

Shang Xia snickered, “You...”

“Are you fucking joking?! Didn’t you see that at least five of them entered the Martial Realm?!” Tang Youqian’s voice came from the side once again. However, no one yelled at him after he spoke.

Shang Quan, Ji Sheng, and Tang Youqian stared at the outer disciples all of a sudden. Ji Sheng and Shang Quan failed to hide the shock on their faces.

Ju Hang wanted to smash his head in the ground due to the interruption once again. He seemed to have forgotten his identity as a newcomer to the patrol squad and he grumbled at Tang Youqian, “What are all of you on about?! Aren’t you afraid of scaring us to death?!”

He turned around and stared at Shang Xia. Afraid that someone would interrupt him, he spoke quickly, “Do you accept or not?!”

Shang Xia was helpless. When he wanted to reply, he caught sight of someone and a strange look appeared in his eyes.

Ju Hang didn’t have to turn his head when a giant hand pressed down on his head. A familiar voice entered his ears. “Little brat, don’t you know that he has already entered the Martial Extremity Realm? Are you sure you wish to challenge him?”

Tang Youqian scraped his knuckles on Ju Hang's head and slowly turned to look at Shang Xia. There was an incredulous look in his eyes. He seemed to have forgotten that Ju Hang was yelling in pain beside him until the kid spoke up. "Captain, can't you address me by my name?!"

After speaking, he turned to look at Shang Xia with a suspicious look on his face. The pain he felt seemed to disappear. "What?! You... You entered the Martial Extremity Realm?!"

Shang Xia couldn't be bothered with Ju Hang as he looked at Tang Youqian who was staring at him. There had to be something off about how the man was looking at him...

Shang Xia explained helplessly, "I was hunted down by the members of the Azure Spiritual World and I had no choice but to risk it all. Luckily, I managed to break through and survive..."

"..." How the fuck were they supposed to fight? They weren't even on the same level!

Ju Hang's expression froze on his face, but he slowly raised his thumb at Shang Xia. "Alright, you're something else indeed..."

After escaping from Tang Youqian's grasp, Ju Hang returned to his mount in dejection.

Shang Quan and Ji Sheng approached Shang Xia and asked in disbelief, "How did they do it?"

"Oh, about this... I found six intact carriages in a hidden valley. It should still be there now..." Shang Xia explained the matter entirely.

Chapter 46: Shang Xia's Dedication

"All of them are located in a hidden valley..." Shang Xia spoke casually as though the news he was revealing was completely useless.

However, the news caused the hearts of Shang Quan, Ji Sheng, and Tang Youqian to shake.

When they heard how casually Shang Xia was describing it, other than Shang Quan who still had a brilliant smile on his face, the two captains felt an urge to beat the brat up.

That was six carriages they were talking about! Even if they estimated the worth of the goods in each carriage conservatively, they would be worth more than a thousand silver essence each!

As for the Embroidered Cloud Carriages that could carry eight times that of an ordinary carriage, they were worth a considerable amount too!

The convoy that was headed to the Tongyou Peak consisted of nearly forty carriages. A lot of them were destroyed, and a ton of supplies were lost!

When the patrol squads arrived to assist Yuan Zilu and the others, they saved eleven carriages. Even so, the Tongyou Peak was short of supplies!

At the very least, they would have to ration their goods before the Tongyou Institution sent them another batch.

As such, the six other carriages were extremely important!

Even though the number of supplies contained in them was less than the eleven carriages that were salvaged, it would be able to ease the shortage slightly.

Just recovering the carriages themselves would allow the patrol squads to earn some merits!

The third patrol squad finally arrived when Shang Xia was done explaining.

After Ji Sheng and Tang Youqian revealed everything that happened to the third squad, Shang Xia became the center of attention once again.

Luckily for him, he experienced it with Tang Youqian's squad. He wasn't flustered at all.

After Shang Quan discussed their next course of action with the three captains, they decided to split into two teams. Shang Quan would lead members of the three squads to return to the Tongyou Peak with Shang Xia and the outer disciples.

The captains of the three squads, along with Jiang Changyu and Ju Hang, would head to the location where the carriages were hidden.

Initially, only the three captains were supposed to go. However, Jiang Changyu and Ju Hang strongly insisted on following them. They were unwilling to follow the group with Shang Xia and Shang Quan after the humiliation they received.

On the way back to the Tongyou Peak, Shang Xia asked Shang Quan about the outcome of the raid.

"Yuan Zilu stood his ground and fought the enemies to the best of his abilities. If not for him holding down both enemy experts who were at the Martial Intent Realm, the entire convoy would have been destroyed!"

Sighing lightly, Shang Quan continued, "He managed to keep his life in the end, but according to the doctors on the Tongyou Peak, he received several serious internal injuries. Without three to five years to recover, he will never return to his peak state."

Shang Xia nodded solemnly. "What about the rest?"

"The upper division disciples suffered serious injuries too, but they should be able to recover in two months. As for the disciples of the Protection Division... Eight of the fifteen disciples died... The other seven were seriously injured."

No matter how prepared Shang Xia was to receive the bad news, he was shocked by the high death rate.

"What in the world happened to the patrol squads? From what I heard, they took extremely long to arrive after the signal was fired. We didn't run into any of them on the way to the Tongyou Peak either..." Shang Xia muttered. His accusations caused Shang Quan to jump in fright, but after noticing that the members of the patrol squad didn't hear them, he explained, "Liu Jitang left the Tongyou Peak and brought a batch of experts with him. There were several strong patrol squads with him, and the Tongyou Peak didn't have enough people. In order to prevent an invasion from another power, we gathered most of our strength back to the Tongyou Peak. We had no choice but to decrease the number of patrol squads."

Shang Xia gasped silently. Shang Quan expected Shang Xia's reaction and signaled for him to remain silent.

With unease in his heart, Shang Xia asked, "How is this possible? Didn't he arrange for people to take over his post when he left the peak? Isn't he afraid that the Azure Spiritual World would attack the moment he left? Twenty years of hard work would go down the drain if that happened!"

Shang Quan sighed, "With our foundations laid down over the past twenty years, we thought that no one would find out when he left."

"How long did he leave for? Now..." Shang Xia felt the unease in his heart growing.

"He should have left for more than ten days... Relax. The moment we received news of the convoy being attacked, Ji Wenlong rushed over to the Tongyou Peak. Now, we should be relatively safe..." Shang Quan tried to reassure Shang Xia.

Calming down slightly, Shang Xia could tell that there was something his uncle wasn't telling him. "Did the news of Liu Jitang's departure get leaked?"

"Liu Jitang's absence wouldn't matter if Ji Wenlong arrived at the Tongyou Peak. However, our enemies managed to learn of Liu Jitang's departure before Ji Wenlong came!" Shang Quan sighed.

There had to be a traitor in their ranks!

Even without Shang Quan stating it explicitly, Shang Xia knew what he meant. However, there was something still bothering him. He couldn't help but ask, "Why didn't the Azure Spiritual World take the chance to siege the Tongyou Peak when they learned that Liu Jitang had left?"

"I don't know too much about the details. You can ask around when you arrive at the Tongyou Peak, but..."

"But what?" Shang Xia quipped.

Shang Quan thought about it for a moment and continued, "According to my guesses, the Azure Spiritual World couldn't verify the news of Liu Jitang's departure. They didn't know if he had actually left the Tongyou Peak. They were afraid that we released the news in order to draw them into a trap and decided to probe us by raiding our convoy. In the end, they lost their best chance."

Shang Xia nodded slowly. After all, the appearance of the Wind Swallow Race deep in the territory of the Tongyou Peak was probably the Azure Spiritual World verifying their guess.

Too bad for them, the Tongyou Peak reacted in time.

The moment they felt that something was off, they quickly notified Ji Wenlong to head over to the battlefield between the two worlds, stabilizing the situation.

Shang Xia heaved a sigh of relief. "Since that's the case, the situation on the Tongyou Peak should be a lot better than before. It's no wonder there are so many more patrol squads out in the wild."

Shang Quan's voice echoed in his mind, "That might not be the case. Uncle Ke said that Ji Wenlong had been confronting the members of the Four Spiritual Peak recently. All the experts on the Tongyou Peak who had reached the Martial Intent Realm are on edge right now. Everyone is ready to react in case anything happens."

Shang Xia looked at Shang Quan with a face full of shock. He didn't believe his ears.

To that, Shang Quan could only reveal a bitter smile.

Shang Xia muttered softly in disbelief, "Liu Jitang might have transferred some of the elites of the Tongyou Peak, but Ji Wenlong is one of the strongest deputy patriarchs. His strength is second only to Patriarch Kou. Shouldn't the Four Spiritual Peak be wary of him?"

"If not for him, the Four Spiritual Peak would have already launched their attack on us. None of us knows what is actually going on. However, I can see that Uncle Ke has been extremely weary over the past few days. There are things he can't tell us, and we are in no position to question him about it." Shang Quan whispered.

Shang Xia thought back to the conversation he overheard from the members of the Wind Swallow Race back at the hidden valley. "Uncle Quan, did you hear anything about Patriarch Kou and our ancestor recently?"

Raising an eyebrow in surprise, Shang Quan looked at him. "Nope... What's wrong?"

Shang Xia shook his head and frowned. "It's nothing... Let's hope that I'm wrong. The moment we return to the Tongyou Peak, I have to look for Grandpa Wu."

"Alright. I'll make the arrangements the moment we get back."

After a long period of traveling, they finally caught sight of the towering peak that was their destination! They finally caught sight of the Tongyou Peak!

It was no wonder Yuan Zilu told Shang Xia to head towards the highest mountain after ordering him to leave. Looking at the majestic sight before him, Shang Xia sucked in a cold breath.

There was no need to mention the other outer disciples who had come to the Tongyou Peak for the first time. They were awed by the sight.

Before they could even arrive at the Tongyou Peak, the news of the outer disciples' rescue had already reached the ears of the higher ups.

As such, there were many people waiting to welcome them when they arrived. There were even several familiar faces.

"Hey, Huang Zihua, I heard that your entire division turned into captives of the Azure Spiritual World!" A joking voice reverberated through the air.

"Your ass!" Huang Zihua sneered in response, and he waved his sleeve to reveal three heads. As they fell to the ground, those standing around gasped in shock.

"Do you see this? We worked together to kill three cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World! We're here to claim our rewards!"

Chapter 47: Short Term Restructuring

Everyone knew that the sixteen disciples of the third outer division had turned into captives of the Azure Spiritual World, and it was nothing to be proud of.

Even though they were disciples who had yet to enter the Martial Realm, they didn't seem to put up any resistance.

However, the implications were completely different if they managed to kill their captors and escape!

The experience wouldn't be a blemish on their lives. In fact, they would receive endless praise and respect from other disciples for accomplishing such a feat!

Naturally, there were many higher ups in the Tongyou Peak who learned about everything that happened. Even so, they wouldn't jump out to discredit the disciples. They were more than happy to use the disciples' experience as a motivational factor for the rest.

Besides, it was true that Shang Xia received Huang Zihua and Jiao Haitang's assistance when he killed Qing Que and Ling Que. Of course, Shang Xia exaggerated slightly when he mentioned the battle to Ji Sheng and the others.

Huang Zihua's actions were met with shocked gasps from the crowd. Jiao Haitang and the other disciples of the third outer division didn't expect Huang Zihua to exaggerate so much, but they were smart enough to not jump out and push the credit away. They could only silently thank Shang Xia in their hearts.

Shang Xia didn't tell anyone when he mentioned the matter to Ji Sheng and Shang Quan as he didn't want them to think that they owed him.

The only person that could pull off such a shameless act would be Huang Zihua, and that was precisely the reason why Shang Xia revealed his plan to the kid alone.

However, there was someone in the crowd who raised some doubts. "Hey Little Huang, did you really kill three cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World with your ragtag group?"

The disciples there heard of Shang Xia, but they refused to believe that he could lead the disciples of the third outer division to kill three experts of the Azure Spiritual World.

"Who the hell said that?! Who called me Little Huang? Your whole family is called Little Huang! Fuck!" Huang Zihua roared with rage, "Are you guys really looking down on us? Do you really think we are that weak?"

As soon as he spoke, he released his aura to reveal his cultivation level. He wasn't the only one. Meng Liangchen did the same, and everyone saw that they had already entered the Martial Realm.

Next came Wang Hua, Xu Xindi...

Other than Shang Xia, five disciples of the third outer division revealed their cultivation bases to be at the Martial Realm!

The faces of the disciples standing around them didn't just change slightly. Gasps of shock filled the air.

One had to know that before their breakthrough, there were four other disciples who entered the Martial Realm other than Shang Xia in the third outer division. With Shang Xia's identity as the leader of the outer division, the third outer division was ranked way above the rest!

Now, Huang Zihua, Meng Liangchen, and three other disciples entered the Martial Realm. They pushed the third outer division's strength to a whole new level!

There was no doubt about it! None of the other outer divisions could hold a candle to them!

Moreover, there were three more disciples who hadn't broken through due to the lack of resources! Now that they have arrived at the Tongyou Peak, breaking through would be a matter of time.

As for the other disciples who weren't close to breaking through, they had several pieces of precious treasures ready to trade for items they required. They could also rapidly increase their strength with the help of those treasures.

Of course, that was only if the treasures weren't confiscated by the Tongyou Peak.

...

Since they arrived, no one asked about the three disciples who were missing. After all, thirteen of the sixteen managed to return! So what if three died?

After the charade where they entered the Tongyou Peak, the disciples were quickly whisked away to get their injuries looked at. They would probably be sent to the Contribution Division in order to reveal everything that happened.

Shang Xia left with Shang Quan and headed to the stronghold of the Shang Clan on the Tongyou Peak.

Along the way, Shang Xia asked Shang Quan about the exact date outside the battlefield between two worlds. He learned that it was the twenty fourth of the sixth month outside, and fourteen days had passed since he entered.

As one of the four great clans in the Tongyou City, the Shang Clan had their own foundations on the Tongyou Peak. The expert stationed there was the second strongest expert of the Shang Clan, Shang Ke! Shang Ke was the cousin of Shang Bo, the ancestor of the Shang Clan!

The Shang Clan might possess a lot of resources on the Tongyou Peak, but on the surface, their main income stream came from the Shang Pavilion. It was a three story building located in the middle of the mountain.

There, Shang Xia saw a giant drawbridge connecting the Tongyou Peak to two other individual peaks in the distance.

In actual fact, there were several drawbridges like that connecting the surrounding peaks to the Tongyou Peak. It allowed disciples to travel around easily.

The Tongyou Peak was more like a mountain range and the tallest peak they were on was considered the main peak of the Tongyou Peak.

When Shang Quan and Shang Xia arrived at the Shang Pavilion, they learned that Shang Ke had already left.

That was Shang Xia's first time in the Shang Pavilion, and under Shang Quan's introduction, he discovered that the entire place was pretty quiet. Not many people frequented the place, and the amount of goods they sold was lacking. Many shelves were empty.

Even though it was his first time there, he could tell that the prices of goods there were extremely inflated.

He quickly realized the reason. "Did the raid on our convoy cause so much damage to the economy on the Tongyou Peak?!"

“The robbery affected it to a certain extent, but it shouldn’t be so serious. The true reason is because Liu Jitang left the Tongyou Peak and the cultivators here started to panic.” Shang Quan explained.

“Ji Wenlong might have arrived promptly, but the clashes against the Four Spiritual Peak started and things are not as peaceful as before. An incoming battle looms over our heads, and everyone started stocking up on supplies. With no choice, we can only raise our prices to retain some supplies. Even so, it’s basically all gone now.”

After some thought, Shang Xia muttered, “Uncle Quan, I still have some treasures on me. Should I...”

Shang Quan waved his hand and laughed. “Just keep them. You barely entered the Martial Extremity Realm. The most important thing for you is to locate a suitable secret art and the relevant martial arts. The reason we need to meet Uncle Ke immediately is because of the inheritances left behind by the Shang Clan.”

“There’s no need for so much trouble! The institution already promised to give me a complete set of secret art and the relevant martial arts!”

Shang Quan slapped his forehead and sighed. “Oh right! I completely forgot about that... When you comprehended the Chaos Essence Lightning Palm and handed over the key points to the institution, your Uncle Ke joked that our Shang Clan made a serious loss...”

“Hehe, Aunt Xi managed to fight for me to get an entire set of cultivation techniques and herbs I require to break through!” Shang Xia chuckled.

However, the pout on Shang Quan’s face betrayed his true emotions. “That’s barely enough... Little Sister Xi is too soft on them. She should have extorted them for more!”

“...”

Not knowing whether to laugh or cry, Shang Xia recalled the stories he heard. In the past, Shang Xi came to the Tongyou Peak to learn from Shang Quan how to care for the business. Everything she learned came from him!

Shang Quan didn’t care too much about Shang Xia’s reaction and he continued, “Do you want me to bring you to the Scripture Depository now? Only a portion of inheritances are kept there though... It’s not complete either...”

“There’s no need to rush! Uncle Quan, arrange a room for me here. I haven’t slept well in a long while!” Shang Xia yawned. Indeed... It had been a long time since he slept peacefully. “We’ll go over when I wake up. If there’s something suitable for me there, that would be for the best! Otherwise, we’ll talk after I return to the institution.”

“But... Alright. Follow me.” Shang Quan smiled.

Since the convoy was attacked, Shang Xia hasn't had a good night's sleep!

Even though cultivators were much more resilient than ordinary humans, they could be exhausted mentally too!

The moment Shang Xia fell onto his bed, he fell into a deep sleep. He didn't know that the undercurrents of the battlefield between the two worlds were gathering.

“Bang!”

Snapping awake, Shang Xia leaped out of his bed to discover that one of his windows was blown open by a strong gust of wind.

Looking out of the window, Shang Xia realized that there was something strange going on outside. Half the night sky was filled with twinkling stars, and the other half was pitch-black!

“Are you awake?” Shang Quan's voice came from downstairs.

Shang Xia looked down from his window only to discover his uncle staring up into the skies. He had no idea what his uncle was looking at.

Scratching his head, Shang Xia asked, “Uncle Quan, how long have I been asleep for?”

“Looks like you were really tired... You slept for nearly 12 hours!” Shang Quan chuckled.

Cultivators would usually sleep for 4 hours a day due to their increased vigor.

“What are you looking at?” Shang Xia asked again.

Looking up at the skies, Shang Xia had no idea what he was looking at.

However, Shang Quan's gaze extended deep into the distance and he sighed, “Did you feel that? That isn't wind produced by the forces of nature. It's a surge of qi...”

Shang Xia's heart trembled and he focused on the heaven and earth qi around him. Indeed, they were swirling around like a hurricane.

Shang Xia guessed, “Did the Tongyou Peak activate our protection formation?”

“No...” Shang Quan sighed. “This happened because a cultivator at the Martial Intent Realm fell... Moreover, it might have something to do with you.”

“Something to do with me?” Shang Xia frowned.

Chapter 48: Scripture Depository

The disturbance in the heaven and earth qi was evident. Even though there were places with denser heaven and earth qi, it wasn't something that could be affected by ordinary winds!

Shang Quan pointed into the distance and said, “You didn't notice a thing because you were asleep. However, a giant tornado of qi appeared in the distance and it resembled a giant pillar that extended into the skies. It looked like a sign when Martial Intent Realm cultivators fell.”

Shang Xia asked, “Will the deaths of Martial Intent Realm cultivators cause something so big to happen?”

“No... They will only affect the area around them after going all out.” Shang Quan explained. “I heard from Uncle Ke that Martial Intent Realm cultivators have already consolidated their divine sense intent. Their divine sense can interfere with reality. When they die, the energy in their body would scatter and affect the surroundings around them.”

“Since it’s able to affect the main Tongyou Peak, the person that died has to be a true expert! Unless... Unless they died around the area?”

Shang Quan smiled. “Did you remember where Ji Sheng and the others went while we returned to the Tongyou Peak?”

“They went to the hidden valley to retrieve the six Embroidered Cloud Carriages!” Shang Xia paused for a second.

“Didn’t you realize what they were truly doing? Since the members of the Wind Swallow Race hid the carriages and captives there, they would definitely return. Our patrol squads wouldn’t miss this opportunity to give them a heavy blow.”

“But... There are only five of them!” Shang Xia raised an eyebrow in shock.

Shang Quan burst into laughter. “Do you really think that we only sent out three patrol squads? If I’m not mistaken, there were more than five other squads that were sent out. They probably received Ji Sheng and the others’ report and hid around the area in order to ambush the members of the Wind Swallow Race! Master Tang Yuan might have even rushed over to join the battle!”

Shang Quan continued his explanation when he saw the look of confusion on Shang Xia’s face. “After the convoy was attacked, the Protection Division was placed under a lot of pressure. It was especially so for the patrol squads under them. As the person in charge of the patrol squads, Master Tang Yuan had to take responsibility! They were looking for a chance to redeem themselves, and you conveniently gave them the opportunity.”

“Wouldn’t that mean that the Protection Division would owe me big time? At least, the patrol squads will have to repay the favor..” Shang Xia gasped.

“No... You’re thinking too small! Think bigger!” Shang Quan smiled. “Don’t forget, you brought the outer disciples back...”

The heaven and earth qi started to return to its original calm bearing and it signified that the battle had truly come to an end.

After their short conversation, Shang Xia decided to return to his bed to continue napping. However, Shang Quan seemed to have thought of something else. “Right... Your fellow disciples came over to look for you, but they left when they realized you were sleeping.”

Shang Xia couldn’t help but ask, “Did the Contribution Division release them already? Did they say anything about me?”

“Haha! They were only captured for a few days! They were kept together, and none of them were brought away by the enemy... There’s no way they could have betrayed us! The Contribution Division probably kept them there for some time for formality’s sake. Oh right, they didn’t say anything... Everyone’s waiting for you to wake up now.”

...

The battlefield between the two worlds didn’t have a set day and night. Cultivators who remained there for a long time would rest whenever they were tired and there wasn’t a proper sleep schedule.

After Shang Xia felt better, he headed towards the Scripture Depository under Shang Quan’s arrangement.

The Tongyou Institution left behind a portion of secret arts in the Tongyou Peak, but most of it was uncompleted. After all, they couldn’t leave behind too many treasures in such a dangerous place.

Regardless, the Scripture Depository was a sacred land in the Tongyou Peak. It wasn’t just open to the students at the Tongyou Institution. Any cultivator from the Azure Origin World could apply to enter!

Naturally, the requirements for cultivators not of the institution to enter were much higher... Even so, it was extremely attractive for wandering cultivators who had no affiliations!

When Shang Xia arrived, he took out his identity plaque and handed it over to the guardian.

As the plaque contained Shang Xia’s personal information, the guardian managed to quickly obtain his record.

Handing the plaque back to Shang Xia, the guardian raised an eyebrow and reminded Shang Xia, “You should return to the Scripture Depository in the institution. The secret arts there are of much higher quality.”

Shang Xia laughed in response, “I’ll be using it for the time being. These should be enough.”

Not saying anything else, the guardian opened the restrictions around the Scripture Depository.

The Scripture Depository was located in a natural cave formed in the Tongyou Peak and it was pretty wide within. There were various crystals lighting up the place to give it a homelier feel.

The Scripture Depository contained several natural platforms that cultivators used to differentiate the different qualities of secret arts.

Every single stone platform had its individual restriction, and without enough authority, they couldn’t open it.

Anyone who tried to break through forcefully would be attacked by the restrictions. They might even alert the protective formation surrounding the Tongyou Peak.

Because of the institution’s promise, Shang Xia managed to obtain the highest permission level to open any restriction he wished.

He looked through the vague descriptions of every secret art, but he couldn’t see any detailed information unless he chose the specific art. He would have to obtain the recognition of the guardian in order to release the restriction around the secret manual.

Before that could happen, he would also have to swear an oath never to hand over the details of the secret manual without the approval of the institution. That included anyone who was related to him by blood.

Of course, there were many cultivators who would lie. However, they wouldn't dare to make an oath easily.

In the cultivation world, one would experience a terrifying backlash if they went against their oath.

The Tongyou Institution also had another goal behind their actions. They didn't want the contents of the secret manuals to spread as they wanted cultivators to gather at the Tongyou Peak.

When Shang Xia entered the Scripture Depository, he headed straight for the two tallest platforms.

Those were the ones that contained the secret manuals for cultivators at his level.

Shang Xia headed towards the platform on the left and drew a line in mid air with his plaque. A gap formed in the restriction, and a wave of heaven and earth qi emerged.

Understanding that it was a sign that the restrictions around the platform had opened up, Shang Xia stepped onto it confidently.

The number of books on the platform could barely be compared to the others. There was a single bookshelf that was the height of a human and it had five shelves in total. The two on top contained proper books while the three at the bottom contained books made from bunches of bamboo strips.

Due to the fact that most of the books were copied by hand, many of them were in poor condition.

From what Shang Xia knew, the original copies were kept in the Tongyou Institution. They were written on stuff like turtle shells, stone tablets, wooden plates, bones, or even caved in bronze!

That wasn't the most extraordinary part. There were even more exaggerated ones that used formations to demonstrate the skill once! Not only did they take up a lot of space, they had limited amount of uses!

Naturally, the most effective ways to record a secret manual weren't any of those. Instead, it was to record them on jade strips. Cultivators referred to them as Jade Books.

However, those would only be used when one broke through to the Martial Intent Realm since reading one could only be used when one gathered their divine sense. As such, cultivators under the Martial Intent Realm would probably use ordinary methods to record their manuals.

Shang Xia grabbed one of the paper books and read the words on its cover. "Fire and Ice Art"

That was one of the more common techniques practiced by most people in the Azure Origin World. The requirements for one to start training in the Fire and Ice Art wasn't too high, and it was pretty safe. Most people would choose to learn it, but the drawbacks were apparent. It was difficult to advance, and the heaven and earth qi they could produce in their dantian wouldn't be of high quality. When using martial arts, the second rate inner qi they had would cause attacks to possess much weaker power.

The introduction of the book alone described the more important parts of the secret art in order for cultivators to make their choice.

Shang Xia tried reading more, but he only managed to read three hundred words before the rest started to turn blurry. He knew that the amount of information he read was more than enough for most cultivators to make a choice.

The moment he chose the Fire and Ice Art, he could look for the guardian of the Scripture Depository. After making his oath, he would be able to read the rest.

Putting the book back, he looked at another book, the 'Water and Fire Mysterious Manual'.

The similarities between the book in his hand and the one he placed away was obvious. The only difference was that it followed the path of water instead of ice.

Next came the Icy Flame Dao...

Then came the Blazing Ice Code...

There was a secret art called the Earth Fire Tide, and it was definitely a manual only crazy people would choose. If they didn't lose themselves in the process of cultivation, they would be stuck at the Martial Extremity Realm for the rest of their lives.

"Mysterious Ice Heart Fire Skill" That was somewhat interesting. One could transform ice into fire! However, a large proportion of the people who practiced the art would probably turn themselves into an ice sculpture before they could master the art.

"Mountain Collection"... Finally, there was a book that didn't contain either fire or ice... After reading the introduction, Shang Xia was extremely confused. That was definitely a book written by beginners... Training in it would lead nowhere!

"Spring and Autumn Manual" The name sounded pretty impressive, but most of the content within came from guesses. The writer of the book probably didn't dare to train in the way he described...

"Sun and Moon Divine Art" That was a bold name. According to the contents, the cultivator had to take the night and day as the two extremities and train in them accordingly. The idea was there, but the naming convention was somewhat off...

Shang Xia flipped through the rest of the book and even though he didn't choose anything, he managed to expand his horizons.

There were a couple of secret arts that suited him, but after looking through it, there seemed to be something lacking about them!

Was he supposed to return to the institution before looking for a suitable secret art?!

Shang Xia looked at the last few books lying on the ground and the fire in his heart was extinguished. He decided to flip through them to increase his knowledge, and he casually grabbed one of them.

"Triple Mystery Polarity Art"...

This...

Chapter 49: Triple Mystery Polarity Art and Sword River Policy

What type of secret art was this...

Shang Xia opened the book slowly and read the description.

As it turned out, the creator of the secret manual had his own views on the matter. The secret art didn't consist of two different powers at the different extremes. Instead, he wanted to merge three pairs of opposite powers into one!

In the manual's introduction, the author wrote about comprehending one pair of opposing qi. With the experience they had, they would try to comprehend two other pairs of opposing qis, eventually fusing all three pairs together.

When that happened, the cultivator would be able to freely use three pairs of different qis!

The most interesting part was that said cultivator would be able to use many different types of medicine when training. Due to the numerous types of qi they comprehended, they would be able to switch between various herbs when refining medicine.

Shang Xia felt his mind jolting when he read that part as thoughts started to form in his mind.

Ever since he entered the Martial Extremity Realm, he managed to transform his inner qi to the Yin Yang Essence Qi. His dantian contained a massive Yin Yang Diagram and from what Shang Xia knew, the meaning of yin and yang back in his original world contained the power of balance.

He agreed with Triple Mystery Polarity Art in a sense, but only a part of it.

From what Shang Xia knew, the true Yin Yang Essence Qi was countless times better than other types of qi! It could transform freely between all types of qi!

The Triple Mystery Polarity Art could allow a cultivator to switch between three pairs of qi, but it was far too lacking when compared to the Yin Yang Essence Qi.

Shang Xia was a living example. With the Yin Yang Diagram in his dantian, his qi had already started to transform! During the Origin Tide, Shang Xia stood in the middle of the lake. He experienced both extreme heat and frost, and he knew that his inner qi could easily transform into them!

During the crucial moment when he was advancing, his inner qi also transformed to encompass the sun and moon in the sky!

What Shang Xia was lacking wasn't a secret art. In a world where none of their concepts could align with his, Shang Xia decided that he had to gather enough insights to create one of his own!

All he was missing was a stroke of inspiration!

.

Now, he found it!

It was contained in the Triple Mystery Polarity Art he was holding...

"Are you sure you wish to train in this technique?!" The deacon looked at the book Shang Xia handed him.

"That's right!" Shang Xia nodded.

Thinking for a moment, the deacon continued, “You’re a disciple of the institution and there are some things I will have to remind you of. Even though the contents of this book is novel, there are extreme risks associated with switching between different types of qi. Not many people dare to try, and the number who succeed are few and far between.”

“Many thanks for your reminder. This disciple has already thought it through.” Shang Xia replied.

Once again, the deacon tried to change his mind. “Are you sure? Have you consulted your elders about this?”

The deacon of the Scripture Depository clearly knew Shang Xia’s identity. That was also the reason why he was trying to make him rethink his choice.

Shang Xia chuckled in amusement. “I’m sure!”

Knowing that it was no longer his place to say otherwise, the deacon unsealed the book. The words that were blurry started to become readable again.

Handing it over to Shang Xia, he didn’t forget to add a reminder. “This book is split into two different parts. You’re holding the first part of the book and it should be enough for you. When you return to the institution, you can look for the second part there.”

Thanking the deacon, Shang Xia seemed to have thought of something. Turning around, he asked, “If someone not from the institution chose this secret art, what would you do?”

The deacon smiled in response, “I would strongly recommend it. If they manage to learn its contents, they wouldn’t be able to continue anyway! They wouldn’t be able to get their hands on the second part of the manual!”

Shang Xia instantly knew the reason behind the institution's actions. They were clearly trying to refine and improve on it and there was no better way than to use the lives of the wandering cultivators to do so!

Those who chose the secret manual would become lab rats for the Tongyou Institution!

Naturally, the institution wouldn’t use their own students to conduct experiments. The wandering cultivators who chose the secret art wouldn’t be so lucky. After all, they chose it...

Hold up... Wouldn’t that mean...

Did I become their new guinea pig?!

Shang Xia widened his eyes slightly in surprise. He found it slightly amusing.

Whatever the case, Shang Xia felt that the deacon’s straightforward personality was something he admired. “Disciple not only wants to select a suitable secret art, I also wish to look for a set of martial arts. Deacon, you’ve been here for a long time and should be really knowledgeable. Can you recommend something to me?”

The deacon was taken aback slightly, but whatever the case, it wasn’t difficult for him to do so. “There are countless martial arts suitable for those at the Martial Extremity Realm here. What requirements do you have?”

“A sword technique that can assist in my comprehension of the Triple Mystery Polarity Art.” Shang Xia replied after thinking for a moment.

A chuckle left the deacon’s lips, “What do you know... There actually is something like that.”

“Is it complete?” Shang Xia’s eyes lit up, but he was slightly confused.

Turning towards the other platform, the deacon signaled for Shang Xia to follow him instead of replying.

He brought out a scroll made from sheep’s skin that was around a foot in length.

“This...” Confusion was visible on Shang Xia’s face when he looked at the item.

The deacon didn’t bother explaining too much. Instead, he released the binding on the scroll and revealed the upper portion of the scroll.

“River Sword Policy...” Shang Xia read the words before turning to the deacon. “Sword Policy?!”

In the cultivation world, there was a simple saying. As long as a sword technique was merely called a Sword Method, it would rank at the very bottom. Like its name suggested, anyone would be able to train in it.

Of course, the power they could unleash would be limited. Many people would call the moves flashy and lacking in substance...

Above that would be Sword Techniques.

Sword Techniques required a cultivator to use their inner qi a certain way. The move unleashed like that would contain a lot of power!

However, the cultivator had to ensure that there was no clash between their inner qi and the technique.

Above that were Sword Policies. They appeared when cultivators started to comprehend sword intents. Cultivators who did would compile their experience and provide it as a Sword Policy to those after them.

Above a Sword Policy was a Sword Scripture! The cultivation method recorded in it was much more complete, but the requirements were much harsher than usual!

That was because there were dedicated techniques and martial arts related to the sword intent it referred to.

The moment the inheritor started to comprehend the sword scripture, they would be able to receive techniques, cultivation methods, and the relevant secret arts. Their path would be set for them!

Their road of cultivation would become extremely smooth with all the guidance they received.

Shang Xia knew that there were rumors of a higher level, called Sword Laws, but that was merely theoretical.

Of course, any mention of Sword Laws was closely monitored.

It was said that there were several fanatics of the sword who were trying to create something like that in order to ‘clear the path’ for fellow sword cultivators.

The gist of it started from the moment a cultivator started training. Their techniques, martial intent, and secret arts needed to contain the core of their practice, the sword. When they advanced to the Martial Extremity Realm and the Martial Intent Realm, they would deepen their understanding of the way of the sword with every step they took!

From what it implied, they would toss away everything that had nothing to do with the sword! Even if they received another inheritance in the future, they would never be able to make any advancement in it!

Of course, that was just in theory. Many people felt that it wasn’t feasible. Despite that, many cultivators were affected by the idea of it.

In the Scripture Depository, Shang Xia slowly calmed himself down and asked, “Why is this called the River Sword Policy?”

“The sword art focuses on the two extremities, softness and strength. The Triple Mystery Polarity Art you chose also focuses on them too. The two of them should complement each other. The name probably came from one of the ideas the author had. You can try to comprehend this later. Anything I say now might affect your comprehension of the manual.”

“Coupling strength with softness...” The thought flashed through Shang Xia’s mind, and he knew that that was the sword manual he was going to choose.

Chapter 50: Right to my Doorstep

The moment Shang Xia left the Scripture Depository, he saw an attendant of the Shang Pavilion sitting under a tree nearby.

His eyes lit up the moment Shang Xia appeared and he approached, “Young master, Master Quan sent me here to wait for you. He said that you have several disciples waiting for you back at the pavilion and he hopes you can return soon.”

“Oh?” Shang Xia wasn’t surprised. He walked towards the Shang Pavilion quickly and he asked along the way, “Did Uncle Quan say the reason they were looking for me?”

“Nope... However, they look a little panicky...” The attendant rushed to keep up with Shang Xia and replied.

When Shang Xia returned to the Shang Pavilion, Jiao Haitang and the others had already refilled their cups twice. Shang Quan sat in the hall with them as they awaited Shang Xia’s return.

They stood to greet him the moment he stepped through the door.

“Senior Brother Shang!”

“Chief Shang!”

Signaling for them to sit, Shang Xia couldn't even get the question out of his mouth before he was interrupted by Shang Quan. "Alright, I'll let you young ones talk. We caught two Nine Feather Phoenix Chicken the other day. I'll head over to the kitchen to oversee the preparations. Please stay for lunch."

After Shang Quan left, Jiao Haitang went straight to the point.

They wanted Shang Xia to introduce them to some avenues to obtain precious herbs.

Ever since they entered the Tongyou Peak, Jiao Haitang and the other students had been looking for students who were trying to advance. They had herbs they obtained from the carriages before, and even though they couldn't use it themselves, they could trade it with other disciples.

After the incident with the supply convoy, the Four Spiritual Peak started to loom down on the Tongyou Peak. Many disciples were afraid that they would no longer be able to obtain useful herbs in the short term and adding on the fact that all of them were unwilling to leave their residence, basically no trades were taking place.

No matter how precious the herbs Jiao Haitang and the others had, it was useless if they couldn't trade it for something they could use.

If they really wished to force it, they would definitely be lowballed by other cultivators and receive a lot less than they were supposed to!

To make things worse, the way they obtained their treasures was dubious to begin with! If they went to the higher ups to force a trade, many people would start asking questions on the origin of the treasures!

They only thought of Shang Xia after looking around the entire peak for an avenue to sell their goods. They hoped that he would assist them in some way.

"Is there a need to rush things? Why don't you wait for the situation to settle down before trying to trade for the stuff you need? Now, even if you trade with my Shang Clan, you'll definitely be incurring a loss. Even though I can help you guys out to reduce your losses, the trades won't be in your favor!"

Shang Xia didn't agree immediately.

However, a bitter smile formed on Jiao Haitang's face. "Senior Brother Shang, did you forget that the experts of the patrol squads have already gone to retrieve the carriages?"

Chuckling in embarrassment, Shang Xia seemed to have realized their worries.

The carriages contained the records of all the supplies it contained, and it would be extremely easy to discover the missing treasures.

Even though the members of the Azure Spiritual World would be the prime suspects, Shang Xia and the others wouldn't be overlooked either.

No one could be sure that there was no one on the Tongyou Peak who noticed them when they were going around trying to trade in their treasures. The moment the Protection Division conducted a serious search, the outer disciples would be exposed instantly! After all, the herbs they had were precisely the ones that were missing from the carriages!

When that happened, they couldn't argue even if they had ten mouths.

Shang Xia finally noticed that the number of disciples from the third outer division who broke through to the Martial Realm was more than he expected. Previously there were three others who didn't gather enough herbs to enter the Martial Realm. However, there were five sitting in front of him right now!

"The two of them managed to claim some credit after going to the Contribution Division and they found a chemist to make their advancement medicines." Jiao Haitang explained on their behalf. That would mean that the third outer division's strength increased once again.

As such, there should be only three disciples who had yet to enter the Martial Realm before the school semester started!

It was extremely possible that they would be able to set a record in the Tongyou Institution for the most number of students who broke through!

Whatever the case, since all of them had come to him, he wouldn't turn away a chance for them to owe him a favor. Congratulating those who advanced, Shang Xia started to address the issue. "Since all of us are fellow cultivators, I can help out a little. However, you should know that I don't call the shots in the Shang Clan. You'll have to negotiate for the stuff you need yourselves and all I can promise you is that the prices won't be too exaggerated!"

Looks of joy formed on their faces as soon as the words left his lips.

All of them knew that they had to get rid of the hot potatoes in their hands right now. The moment they traded the treasures and herbs for items to help them advance, things would get much better! The moment they entered the Martial Realm, their status would definitely increase. The consequences of the things they did might not cause them to be punished so severely!

Due to the inflated prices on the Tongyou Peak, the outer disciples would be alright even if the Shang Clan were to rip them off a little. Anyway, the stuff they obtained was free!

Shang Xia invited Shang Quan over and found an excuse to leave.

Strolling around the Shang Pavilion, Shang Xia familiarized himself with the place before heading straight for the kitchen. He grabbed a slice of Nine Feather Phoenix Chicken and tossed it into his mouth.

While waiting, he saw several attendants running around the place. They were bringing stuff in and out, and they were clearly moving the supplies owned by the Shang Clan on the Tongyou Peak.

Looking around casually, Shang Xia placed another piece of meat into his mouth. It was a shame that it didn't really taste that good. The only saving factor was the soup. It provided great nourishment for cultivators, and after Shang Xia took a sip, he felt the inner qi in his body speeding up.

The soup should be a type of medicine that could assist in cultivation, but they managed to infuse it into a dish. Shang Xia decided to annoy Shang Quan till he got the recipe after his uncle was done with the deals.

His train of thought was broken by the din that came from the foot of the mountain.

As there were many messengers who traveled around the various peaks, Shang Xia quickly learned of what happened.

Victory! The Tongyou Peak was victorious!

Tang Yuan, the head of the patrol squads, led five squads out to lay an ambush for the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World the night before. They managed to kill an expert in the Martial Intent Realm, three cultivators at the Martial Extremity Realm. The other Martial Intent Realm cultivator of the Azure Spiritual World paid a heavy price, but eventually managed to escape.

In return, a captain and a vice captain of their respective patrol squads gave up their lives. They were at the Martial Extremity Realm, and three other cultivators at the Martial Realm were killed by the enemy.

The Tongyou Peak might have suffered one more casualty compared to the cultivators of the Azure Spiritual World, but they managed to take down a Martial Intent Realm cultivator! Just that alone was more than enough to claim a huge victory.

After the news of their victory started to spread, celebrations also went about when the news of four carriages being recovered entered the ears of the cultivators of the Tongyou Peak.

With the amount of supplies found in them, they would be able to weather the tough days ahead!

Shang Xia snorted in contempt when he heard the news. "What the fuck! They only managed to kill four people after laying down an ambush. This granddaddy over here killed three of them alone! One of them was even at the Martial Extremity Realm!"

"Who would have thought that the Protection Division would be so damn corrupted... They reported four carriages in total, but there were six in the valley! Humph... Won't their conscience hurt from telling such lies..." Shang Xia pouted.

However, he quickly realized that it was possible two carriages were destroyed during the battle.

Whatever the case, the members of the Protection Division who escorted them back, along with the outer disciples, had already reported the total number of carriages left in the valley. There was no way for the patrol squads to steal anything.

In fact, the destruction of two other carriages was good news for the members of the outer division!

Shang Xia felt a commotion happening behind him, and he turned around only to be greeted by the sight of the outer disciples leaving the Shang Pavilion. From the looks on their faces, they seemed to have already obtained what they wanted from Shang Quan.

The bustling sight around the mountain caused them to be slightly taken aback.

"What... What's going on right now?" Huang Zihua asked.

A trace of mischief flashed through his eyes and he quickly revealed everything he learned.

The faces of Jiao Haitang and the others changed instantly. They bade their farewell before taking their leave.

Even though Huang Zihua and Wang Hua had already entered the Martial Extremity Realm, they couldn't help but feel extremely pressured after hearing the news. Only after thinking about it for a moment, they calmed down.

Of course, they didn't accept Shang Xia's invitation to stay for lunch. They might not be as worried as Jiao Haitang and the others, but they were still slightly afraid that they would get in trouble. Finding an excuse, they returned to their quarters.

Not too long after they left, Shang Quan sauntered out from the Shang Pavilion.

It seemed as though he had also received news of the great victory.

"Uncle Quan, I hope I didn't trouble you." Shang Xia sighed.

"What do you mean? All of the herbs they wanted were rank one herbs. Our clan has more than enough of those. As for the other random supplies they wanted, we managed to profit from them too! Not to mention the fact that they'll owe us a favor after the deal is complete... Where else am I supposed to find such a good deal?" Shang Quan chuckled.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Shang Xia changed the topic. "Uncle Quan, do you know any craftsman who can repair weapons?"

Raising an eyebrow, Shang Quan asked, "Our Shang Clan has someone capable of that on the Tongyou Peak. Which one of your weapon is damaged?"

Shang Xia took out his Ivory Fan that was stained in blood and Shang Quan frowned after seeing it. "I can get rid of the stuff on the fan, but if you wish to repair the spine of the fan, bring it over to our craftsman."

"Oh right. I nearly forgot that Uncle Quan is a qualified ink master..." Shang Xia quickly kissed up to Shang Quan before handing over another pair of gloves. He pointed out the damage on it before mentioning, "I won't be able to use this. Uncle Shang, you can just sell it away after repairing it."

Shang Quan inspected the item and raised an eyebrow in surprise, "The quality of this is pretty good. Even though it's not a low-level weapon, it should contain some precious materials. This should be worth fifty silver essence or so... If we can find someone who really wants the weapon, we might be able to get seventy silver essence for it."

Fifty silver essence was enough to buy precious herbs to create half a set of medicine required for one to enter the Martial Extremity Realm.

"Oh right. I have something else too..." Shang Xia spoke casually, and Shang Quan chuckled in amusement.

However, the smile froze on his face when he saw the item Shang Xia brought out.