

The Heavens 421

Chapter 421: The Disturbance Under the Yuxi Peak

Clearly, the Gale Thunderbolt Talisman wasn't going to be easy to craft.

Shang Xia just completed 3 Formation Talismans and even though he didn't exert himself too much, he didn't plan on starting immediately.

What's more, he already made a promise to his second uncle and seventh aunt to join one of the secret gatherings of Martial Intent Realm cultivators on the Observation Peak. It wasn't easy to gain entry to the current gathering as everyone had to have completed their third divine sense transformation in order to get the qualifications to enter.

As such, Shang Xia's expectations for the gathering were also pretty high.

After giving Shang Xia the case with the Spirit of Spring and Spirit of Winter, Shang Bo also took his leave. As the deputy patriarch of the Tongyou Institution, he had a lot of things to take care of now that Kou Chongxue was in the Beyond Heavens Pavilion and Ji Wenlong was consolidating his foundations. Right now, he had to oversee everything that happened in the battlefield between the two worlds and there were truly too many things he had to keep an eye on. He didn't really have much free time.

Before he left, he didn't forget to remind Shang Xia to head over to bring the Lightning Bird and the flock of Mutated Rain Swallows over to the Observations Peak when he was done with whatever he was doing.

Shang Xia promised to do just that and the moment Shang Bo left, he followed closely behind. He disappeared from the Talisman Hall and returned to the territory of the Shang Clan.

By the time he came back, Shang Xi and Shang Jian were already starting to make their preparations for the gathering. They didn't really leave the clan's territory while doing so.

The moment Shang Xia saw them, he asked, "Do we have any news of Uncle Yan Qi?"

Shang Quan shook his head but looked at Shang Jian for an answer.

"After sending out all our transmission talismans, Third Uncle told us to not bother about Yan Qi." Shang Jian muttered softly.

Shang Xia was slightly taken aback and he thought about the matter himself. Eventually, he nodded and changed the topic. "Second Uncle, Uncle Quan, how are our preparations for the gathering? Do we also know where and when it's going to be held?"

The news of the gathering had already spread to most of the Martial Intent Realm cultivators in the battlefield between the two worlds. The only pieces of information that couldn't be confirmed was the time and place.

"Yes. it will be held in exactly three days under the Yuxi Peak." Shang Jian replied.

"Yuxi Peak?!" Shang Xia's heart trembled slightly. "Didn't that place turn into some sort of forbidden zone?"

Shang Jian continued to explain, “The seal around the Yuxi Peak seems to be extremely solid, but the location the gathering will be held is quite far from the region. We won’t be disturbed by the chaotic qi coming from the Yuxi Peak no matter what happens.”

Shang Xia could somewhat make the connection that Shang Jian was one of the organizers of the gathering. As such, the details he was revealing were pretty solid.

“Unfortunately, the Ji Clan managed to seize the initiative this time. Ji Min would be the one hosting the gathering when the time comes.” Shang Jian threw out another bomb all of a sudden.

Reading deeper into the meaning behind his words, Shang Xia seemed to have discovered something interesting as he asked, “Second Uncle, does this mean that this sort of gathering will be held in the future as well?”

Shang Jian nodded in response. “We didn’t plan to hold the gathering because of a spur of the moment decision. Instead, all of us planned to do so in order to stabilize the situation. Our initial idea is to hold it regularly and for our four great clans to take turns being the host. The Ji Clan got to host this because Ji Wenlong entered the Martial Dipper Realm. We hope to use his reputation to suppress anyone who’s thinking of causing trouble. That is why Ji Min will be the one to host the gathering. In the future, we have to obtain the host position no matter what!”

Seeing the resolute expression on Shang Jian’s face, Shang Xia couldn’t help but laugh, “Second Uncle, even though the Ji Clan is the one hosting the gathering, we’re still part of the powers backing them. Don’t we have some sort of sneak peek into what’s to come?”

Raising both eyebrows slightly, Shang Jian snickered, “Of course we do. I’ll give you something juicy right now. Ge Qingzhu, who went into hiding recently, will definitely show up. Also, he’s going to bring a batch of the treasures he obtained to auction off.”

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As Shang Xia was talking to Shang Jian and the others, a different scene was playing out in the Formation Hall. Three rank three Formation Masters were gathered together in discussion.

“Haiz, little lass, you’re too stubborn this time!” Ma Mingzheng couldn’t help but grumble after hearing what happened back at the Talisman Hall outside Shang Xia’s secret chamber. “You’re making things difficult for Young Master Shang on purpose! Moreover, you did it right under Deputy Patriarch Shang’s nose! What’s more, you left behind a spying formation to eavesdrop on their conversation! Do you really think that Deputy Patriarch Shang and Head Zhang won’t be able to discover what you did?”

Chu Jia replied casually, “I didn’t think of hiding it from the two of them when I left the formation back there...”

“But you still did it!” Ma Mingzheng snapped angrily.

With a wide smile appearing on her face, Chu Jia turned to Ma Mingzheng and chuckled softly, “Alright, alright, I didn’t mean any disrespect in the first place. I was only planning to show them who’s boss...”

Glaring at her, Ma Mingzheng growled, “That’s what you mean by not showing any disrespect?!”

“Hehe, No matter what, our Formation Hall has been the one calling the shots regardless of who we work with. However we put it, we’re the ones doing the main bulk of the work. All of them are merely complementing our efforts. This time, because of a suggestion the Talisman Hall brought up, we’ll have to carry out large scale modifications to the formation core we already set up. If we go along and let them do as they wish now, everyone will follow in their footsteps in the future.” Chu Jia explained while giggling.

Grunting twice, Ma Mingzheng sneered, “You’re just afraid you won’t get to slack off in the future.”

“Hehe! You’re such a genius!” Seeing as everyone present knew her intentions anyway, she didn’t bother hiding it.

Ma Mingzheng could only shake his head helplessly.

Seeing his reaction, she couldn’t help but continue, “If there’s nothing else, I’ll head back to take a nap, alright?”

On the surface, it looked like she was asking for Ma Mingzheng’s permission to leave. However, she turned to leave after she spoke.

Ma Mingzheng snorted under his breath, “Aren’t you afraid that Talisman Master Shang will be able to complete the talismans in time? What if he actually makes 5 of them?”

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Chu Jia yawned and muttered something under her breath that no one could hear before waving her hands casually. Without bothering with anyone’s reaction, she strolled away.

Looking at her leaving figure, Ma Mingzheng could only shake his head and sigh bitterly.

Bai Luming, who had been silent all this while, finally broke the silence. “Brother Mingzheng, you don’t have to worry about her. Even though she shows a little... A larger than average attitude... She has never made a mistake. Neither will she fail to hit her deadlines.” Bai Luming observed Ma Mingzheng’s reaction carefully and saw that he wasn’t going to blow up in rage before he continued, “Ever since I joined the institution, I haven’t seen her drop the ball. She might get on your nerves and drag her feet whenever anything happens, she has always completed her task perfectly. She should know what she’s doing. Brother Mingzheng, you can rest assured.”

“Hmm...” Ma Mingzheng thought for a second before realizing what he was trying to say. “Are you telling me that the little lass has already come up with a way to finish the task?”

Bai Luming nodded. "If I'm not wrong, that should be the case. It doesn't matter if Young Master Shang manages to complete the talismans, she should have a way to deal with the problem."

Ma Mingzheng couldn't help but stroke his already short beard while revealing a contented smile on his face after hearing what he said.

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The Yuxi Peak could be seen in the distance as the Crimson Soul Tablet started to thump in his sea of consciousness. A huge swathe of crimson mist seemed to appear in front of him. From the aggressive thumping of the Crimson Soul Tablet, it seemed like it wanted to leap out from his mind.

"Little Xia!" The voice became louder in his mind and Shang Xia quickly snapped back to reality.

Shang Xi's face popped up beside him and she asked, "What's the matter? Why did your gaze turn so aggressive when you look at the Yuxi Peak? You didn't even hear me calling you earlier."

"It's nothing too much. The Yuxi Peak really transformed since the last time we came. I lost focus for a moment after seeing what happened to it." Shang Xia chuckled in response.

Rolling her eyes at him, Shang Xi continued, "I thought that you exhausted too much of your divine sense after crafting so many talismans."

One had to say that the reason she came up with from out of nowhere was much better than the one he came up with.

Shang Xia replied quickly, "It's alright. It won't affect us in any way."

It was Shang Jian at the side who spoke up before Shang Xi could say anything. "Little Xia, you can't be careless about things like that. I heard that the talismans you made were comparable to those crafted by Gong Hang and Fan Yuanhui. The two of them have been crafting talismans for a long time and they would be much more used to the consumption of divine sense. You're young and cannot afford to injure your divine sense. You cannot affect your future prospects at all costs!"

From the way they saw it, Shang Xia might be a genius in the way of talisman crafting, but there was no way he was better than Gong Hang and Fan Yuanhui.

They felt that he was using some sort of secret method to maintain his consumption to keep up with the two of them. That was why they were afraid that he would affect his future potential. If that was truly the case, it wouldn't be worth it in the slightest!

Shang Jian and Shang Xi couldn't be blamed for the way they were thinking. No one would expect Shang Xia to be some perverted existence whose divine sense had exceeded their expectations.

Actually, Shang Xi and Shang Jian made up their minds to head over to drag Shang Xia out of his secret chamber if he failed to return by the time they had to head over to the Yuxi Peak. In their eyes, the Talisman Hall took advantage of the time when Shang Ke wasn't present to exploit Shang Xia.

Luckily, or unluckily for them, Shang Bo had barely returned from his adventures and hadn't had the time to tell them about the Gale Thunderbolt Talisman. If they learned about it, who knew what

ideas they would come up with to go knocking on the Talisman Hall's door to help protect Shang Xia's interests.

Chapter 422: Formless Yarn

This time, the gathering would be held on a small hill that was 5 miles away from the foot of the Yuxi Peak.

The arrangements might seem a little too simple, but from what Shang Xia could tell, the key locations were manned by the organizers of the gathering. Even though the place wasn't as secure as any fortified city, it was good enough for what they were about to do.

That wasn't all. When Shang Xia released his divine sense earlier to take a look around, he could faintly feel a powerful aura surrounding them. He didn't know where it was coming from, but he knew it was somewhere close to where they were.

Clearly, there was a Martial Extermination Realm expert presiding over the event.

After thinking about it, Shang Xia realized that that was the way to go. For gatherings at that standard involving high-level Martial Intent Realm experts who were gathering resources to break through to the Martial Extermination Realm, there was no way for precautions not to be taken. Moreover, the four great clans had to be pulling the strings behind the exchange. For a huge event like that, there was no way it could be successfully carried out with the Tongyou Institution's approval.

Not to mention the fact that they were currently in the battlefield between the two worlds. The experts of the Azure Spiritual World were lurking about. Even though they were currently in a ceasefire, that didn't mean that the Tongyou Institution would let their guards down.

For such a massive event to take place at the foot of the Yuxi Peak, there was no way they could hide it successfully from the experts of the Azure Spiritual World.

If there wasn't a Martial Extermination Realm expert present to stabilize the situation, who knew what might happen? If those experts from the four great races of the Liao Continent or those freaks from the Changbai Holy Land discovered a chance and decided to send a huge attack over, the promising experts of the You Continent who had hopes of entering the Martial Extermination Realm in the future would be killed in one fell swoop. That would be the greatest joke that would be played in the history of the Tongyou Institution.

Before entering the venue, Shang Xia seemed a little distracted. He was trying to communicate with his Crimson Soul Tablet. He thought back to the time he just saw the Yuxi Peak and recalled the feeling when the tablet wanted to leap out from his sea of consciousness.

That feeling caused some fear to linger in Shang Xia's heart. If the Crimson Soul Tablet were to really charge out from his sea of consciousness...

That was something Shang Xia hoped he never had to see.

After a heart-stopping experience, a question formed in his mind: What in the world is on the Yuxi Peak to induce such a strong reaction from the Crimson Soul Tablet?

It had to be world origin, but for the Crimson Soul Tablet to react so strongly, it had to be an astronomical amount of world origin.

Shang Xia basically discovered the answer himself. But that begged the next question. What was he supposed to do? Was he going to have to get closer to the Yuxi Peak?

Shang Xi and Shang Jian, who noticed his abnormal reaction before, didn't know the true reason behind it. His absent-minded behavior only reinforced their assumption that he expanded too much of his divine sense when he crafted talismans. They couldn't help but feel that their decision to bring him over to the gathering was the right one.

As the time of the gathering drew closer, several figures started to gather around them.

Shang Xia's attention only returned to the gathering when they had all entered the venue but looking around, only a third of the seats present were taken. Everyone was still slowly streaming in from all different directions.

The number of cultivators who showed up was pretty impressive. Most of them hid their appearances and concealed their aura. Clearly, some of them didn't wish for their identities to be revealed.

"Oh? Are there really so many Martial Intent Realm cultivators who completed their third divine sense transformation in our You Continent?" Shang Xia gasped.

"The moment we stopped fighting in the battlefield between the two worlds, the news of this gathering had been spread around. The news reached those outside the battlefield, and there were even some cultivators who left the You Continent a long time and made their way over from all over the Azure Origin World." Shang Jian replied.

Even after hearing what Shang Jian said, Shang Xia couldn't help but look at the number of experts who were present. He used his divine sense to probe those present and muttered softly, "Second Uncle, I don't think only members of our You Continent are present, right?"

Shang Jian chuckled without answering the question directly. "It's the first time we're holding such a large-scale gathering. We're most afraid of it being a flop. Even though that's not really likely to happen, as a precaution, all four clans reached a silent agreement that the first few items we bring out have to be a hit. Anyway, just bid on whatever you want as long as they bring out any item you require. As long as the price is right, they'll probably agree."

Shang Xia was slightly taken aback. Was that the legendary back door?

From the way Shang Jian put it, that was what it sounded like!

After Shang Jian, Shang Xi, and Shang Xia entered the venue, it didn't take long for the venue to pretty much fill up. Seeing as the time had arrived, a thin barrier covered the venue. The moment it appeared, a small portion of cultivators who were present immediately became alert.

"Everyone, please relax." A voice rang from the center of the venue as a middle aged cultivator. His face was slightly yellowish in color, but other than that, there was nothing special about him. His voice covered the entire area the next moment. "This is just an ordinary formation we're using to hide this location. It will not affect anyone who wishes to leave. If you don't believe me, feel free to check."

Shang Xia recognized the person immediately. He was Ji Min of the Ji Clan, and he was also the person who was hosting the gathering.

His cultivation had already reached the large completion stage of the Martial Intent Realm. He might not be the strongest or have the highest cultivation realm among everyone who was present, but he was someone who could call the shots in the Ji Clan. His status alone was more than enough to qualify him to be the host of the gathering.

After all, everyone present knew that there was a Martial Dipper Realm ancestor standing behind Ji Min.

In fact, Ji Min didn't need to explain himself. Not too long after the formation was activated, many people could feel that they weren't restricted in any way. The peaceful atmosphere was quickly restored.

Ji Min nodded slightly before cupping his fists and greeting everyone who came. "I am glad everyone can make it today. I shall not waste any time and we'll get right into it! Please allow me to start things off."

After he spoke, he took out a formless object and placed it on the jade platform in front of him.

The moment it appeared, Shang Xia discovered that several experts recognized the treasure and had sucked in deep breaths.

"I believe some of you here recognize this." Ji Min paused for a second before he continued, "This is a rank four treasure, the Formless Yarn. I hope to trade it for a piece of rank four Seven Aperture Copper or Scale Gravel."

He swept his gaze across the venue and hoped for someone to speak up. Unfortunately, the silence descended on the lands.

"Haha! If you're staring off with something so precious, how are we supposed to proceed from here? The rest of our items will never be able to match up to it!" A sneer rang through the skies and brought about a wave of discussions.

Shang Jian grumbled softly, "Shit! We thought that we should start off with a bang. We forgot that this is a trade gathering, not an auction! Now that we brought out a rank four treasure, to start, many people might not be willing to show off their items."

Shang Xia understood what had happened. Even though the gathering was mainly for those gathering herbs to craft their rank four advancement medicine, there would only be several rank four treasures up for grabs. Most people would be dealing with rank three herbs or treasures.

Shang Xia's advancement medicine, the Four Seasons Samsara Wine, might require a lot of rank four treasures, but a large part of those he required at the moment were rank three ingredients.

As for other cultivators, most of them only required rank four herbs as the main ingredient. Most of the time, they would be looking for rank three stuff!

Every cultivator wanted to maintain their reputation. For Ji Min to throw out a rank four treasure at the very start, most people wouldn't be able to bring out anything that outshined it in the future. Those who wanted to trade for rank three herbs might be too embarrassed to continue.

Even if the gathering could continue as planned, the number of items that were put up for trade would be greatly reduced.

When the various organizers were cursing their lack of thought, a voice rang through the air. "I don't have any Seven Aperture Copper or Scale Gravel. However, I have a piece of Violet Crow Blood Rune Steel. Will you accept it?"

The Violet Crow Blood Rune Steel threw the venue into another round of chaos. After all, it was also a piece of rank four treasure.

Shang Xi's whisper entered Shang Xia's ears. "That should be someone from the Liu Clan..."

In order not to destroy the atmosphere entirely, the four clans had come to an agreement on how they should proceed.

Ji Min seemed to be slightly taken aback as he thought for a second before replying, "Fellow cultivator, the Violet Crow Blood Rune Steel might also be in the fourth rank and extremely valuable, but it's not something I need. I would still like to see if there is anyone with Seven Aperture Copper or Scale Gravel in the crowd."

The person who spoke paused for a second before he continued, "What if no one has it?"

Ji Min replied helplessly, "The Violet Crow Blood Rune Steel might not be what I need exactly, but I still have uses for it. If no one has the items I want, I will agree to your trade."

Ji Min looked around expectantly and asked, "Is there anyone who wishes to trade with me?"

Shang Xia noticed the silence that filled the air and knew that from how things were progressing, the Liu Clan was probably going to take home the Formless Yarn.

Shang Xi's voice rang in his mind once again. "I'm afraid the Violet Crow Blood Rune Steel is something the Ji Clan actually needs too. Now that Ji Wenlong has entered the Martial Dipper Realm, they're definitely thinking of crafting a new weapon for him."

"Are they planning to make a divine weapon?" Shang Xia asked.

Before Shang Jian could say anything, a foreign voice rang through the crowd. "I have some Scale Gravel with me. I wonder if it's enough to complete the trade?"

Chapter 423: Five Great Families?!

"I have some Scale Gravel. I wonder if it's enough to make the trade?" The sudden interruption affected the conversation between Shang Xia and his aunt. It also attracted many gazes from those seated around.

Ji Min's pupils shrank slightly and he quickly asked, "Oh? How much are you talking about?"

Pausing slightly, the reply eventually came. "I have six taels of it!"

"Is that it? The Formless Yarn I brought out should be able to trade for nine taels of Scale Gravel." Ji Min's expression sank.

"Eight taels." The cultivator who spoke earlier interrupted Ji Min again. Due to the large bamboo hat covering his face, no one was able to see his appearance.

“This... Even if you offer eight taels...” Ji Min seemed extremely interested nonetheless. He added, “How are you going to make up for the difference? Let me make this clear before you make any counteroffers. There’s no need to try using gold coins or silver essence to make up for it.”

The cultivator who wore the large bamboo hat waved his hand and sent a shadow flying towards Ji Min. “What do you think about this?”

Grabbing the item that flew his way, Ji Min realized that it was a sealed spiritual case. After opening it to confirm its contents, Ji Min sealed it properly before putting it away. “Alright, deal!”

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With the completion of the deal, Shang Xia saw that Shang Jian’s lips started moving quickly. He seemed to be communicating with some other people.

After the deal between Ji Min and the cultivator in the bamboo hat was complete, another cultivator went to the center platform. He had a face full of smiles and he greeted everyone by cupping his fists. “I’m no Ji Min. I don’t have the foundations of the Ji Clan behind me and I am definitely unable to bring out any rank four treasure. However, I still have several interesting items on hand. I wonder if it will interest any of you...”

Shang Xia looked at the cultivator who had a face full of smiles and was retrieving something from his sleeves and he turned to the side. “Second Uncle, is this also someone on our side?”

“Strictly speaking, it’s someone from the Yun Clan. He should be one of their guest elders and his family name is ‘Du’. It’s said that he married a branch family member of the Yun Clan.” Shang Jian explained,

Nodding slightly, Shang Xia turned back to look at the central platform. He saw the cultivator showing off some goods with a wide smile plastered on his face.

“Three Water Moon Pearls. These might be rank three treasures, but all three of them are of the same size. They are of comparable quality as well. It’s not difficult to see that they’re part of the same set.” Cultivator Du introduced, “Anyone who can see that probably knows how much they’re worth too. I won’t waste any more time. I wish to trade these three pearls for a set of rank three palm technique that can allow me to comprehend a martial intent!”

Surprisingly, the three Water Moon Pearls were extremely well received by those in the crowd.

Not long after he made the offer, someone in the crowd yelled, “Does it have to allow you to comprehend a martial intent? I have a palm technique of a pretty high standard, but no one has been able to comprehend a martial intent after learning it. Perhaps Cultivator Du will be successful after some research!”

Cultivator Du maintained the smile on his face but he shook his head apologetically.

Looking across the venue, Shang Xi’s voice entered his ears again. “Every single one of those pearls can be crafted into a low-grade weapon. With three of them in a full set, the strength they

possess can be compared to a high-grade weapon. It's more than enough to trade it for a rank three technique and it's no wonder everyone is interested in it."

Even Martial Extermination Realm experts wouldn't be wielding high-grade weapons as they wished. Looking at Shang Bo, the strongest Martial Extermination Realm expert in the institution at the moment, he barely obtained his customized weapon not too long ago!

Shang Jian added, "You can't put it that way. No matter how special they are, they're three separate items. To fuse them into a single artifact, who knows how many treasures will be required. Moreover, they won't be able to promise that the refinement process will succeed. If we consider all the factors, trading it for a complete set of rank three technique is barely acceptable."

Another person in the crowd spoke up once again. "I have a complete set of rank three palm technique. It's called the Floating Feather Palm! According to the records, there are two experts who comprehended the Cloud Sweeping Palm as their martial intent after learning the move. I'll use it to trade for your pearls. Do you accept?"

The moment the trade was brought up, everyone turned to Cultivator Du in anticipation.

However, Shang Xia gasped in shock with a reaction unlike the others. "Why does that person sound so familiar?"

"Hehe, can you recall who that is?" Shang Xi chuckled softly.

"I think... I think it's Wu Tianfang from the Protection Division from our institution!" Shang Xia gasped.

Shang Jian and Shang Xi nodded slightly in response. The two of them weren't surprised in the slightest.

However, they were quickly greeted with another question from Shang Xia. "Wait a second, didn't he trade my Jade Creek Sword in the previous gathering? Has he outgrown it in such a short period of time? If he wishes to obtain a better weapon, he should be looking for a sword anyway. Don't tell me he plans to turn the Water Moon Pearls into a sword?"

Shang Jian stared at Shang Xi for a second before he coughed slightly, "Well, there can only be one reason now can there? The institution is probably the ones who have their eyes on the pearls. Moreover, it won't be difficult for the institution to bring out a complete rank three palm technique."

Once the deal was done, Cultivator Du left the central platform with a face full of smiles.

The trade he made this time not only managed to greatly lower the expectations of those present from rank four treasures to rank three treasures but he also allowed the gathering to regain its original purpose. Very quickly, the atmosphere was pushed back to its peak.

According to their previous agreement, the four great clans along with the Zhao Family would bring out five treasures to get the ball rolling.

If those treasures weren't well received by the crowd, the five powers would make bids to ensure that the items were definitely sold to put up a front that the gathering was carried out successfully as it would allow the others who were present to feel slightly more reassured that they weren't wasting their time there.

Now that Cultivator Du had brought out something many people desired, it could be said that their mission was accomplished.

After Cultivator Du, another cultivator quickly stepped over to the central platform. The cultivator this time wasn't from one of the five powers, but they were at the large completion stage of the Martial Intent Realm nonetheless.

The second the cultivator appeared, Shang Xia could see Shang Jian's lips trembling once again. He seemed to be communicating with the rest of the organizers before heaving a sigh of relief.

Seeing the cultivator taking out his items, Shang Xia couldn't help but ask his second uncle, "How did the Zhao Family become a part of the organizers this time? Did the four great clans allow them to join so easily?"

The Tongyou City had always been run by the four great clans. However, now that Zhao Hengchun stepped into the Martial Extermination Realm it seemed as though the situation in the city had changed slightly. The four great clans seemed to be a thing of the past and they finally had enough qualifications to resemble the five great families of the You Continent before the collision of the worlds.

That might be the case on the surface, and leaving the matter of how he got his hands on his advancement formula aside, the Zhao Family wasn't going to rival any of the four great clans any time soon. After all, in terms of foundations or strength they were far too weak.

The situation at the moment was that the Tongyou City was controlled equally by the four great clans. Everything was pretty saturated and it was difficult to allow the rise of a fifth superpower.

It was incredible that the four great clans didn't go out of their way to suppress the Zhao Family. How could they take the initiative to give the Zhao Family a chance to sit on the same pedestal as the four of them?

Unless...

Shang Xia seemed to have thought of something when Shang Jian's voice rang in his mind. "Think about how our Shang Clan rose to become the fourth great clan in the Tongyou City nearly twenty years ago..."

Indeed...

"Even if that's the case, the Tongyou City doesn't have the resources to support the rise of another power. Unless the four great clans take a step back together... Or, the institution could make a huge contribution and force them to rise in power.." Before Shang Xia could even finish talking about it, he realized how impossible it was for either option to happen.

Another surprising thought filled his mind as he questioned unsteadily, "Is the Zhao Family going to migrate to the Changfeng City to take charge of things there?"

Shang Xia shook his head as he realized that was also not too likely.

The Tongyou Institution finally swept away all the power that was obstructing them in the Changfeng City. They had to exert their authority over it the best they could and there was no way they would allow any individual power to control it.

Since they were lacking in so many areas, they couldn't possibly construct another city in the You Continent too. Could the Tongyou Institution have plans of expansions?!

Shang Xia wasn't letting his imaginations run wild on purpose. However, it was a well established fact that Ji Wenlong had entered the Martial Dipper Realm. With two Martial Dipper Realm experts in charge of the Tongyou Institution, they definitely had the qualifications to expand.

Before his imagination could grow too crazy, Shang Xi spoke up. "Do you remember how half of our continent was swallowed during the collision of the worlds?"

With his eyes widening in shock, Shang Xia gasped, "This... Do you mean, here?! Is it really happening so quickly?"

Shang Xia gestured around the battlefield between the two worlds as he spoke. In that instant, a cloud affecting his judgment seemed to disappear. He seemed to make many connections and think of many things he hadn't thought about in the past.

With a cultivator not a part of the five powers going up to take center stage, it seemed as though the gathering had started for real. The other members they had arranged to go up no longer needed to do so as Shang Jian and the others came to an agreement to let things run their course.

Things seemed to progress normally when Shang Jian's voice entered Shang Xia's mind again. "Our original agreement with the others stands regardless. If you need to trade anything, quickly get up there and get it over with."

Chapter 424: A Drop of Summer Rain

Shang Jian wasn't hurrying Shang Xia for fun. After all, not too many treasures had appeared in the gathering and Shang Xia's chance of success would be the highest if he went up now.

If he continued to wait and the gathering reached the later stages, most cultivators would have obtained the treasures they desired. The chances of obtaining the items he wants would be greatly reduced.

Of course, that didn't apply if Shang Xia was going to bring out truly valuable treasures. As long as something was valuable enough, everyone would bid like crazy for it.

After thinking about it, Shang Xia got to his feet the moment the person on the central platform completed their deal. He caught the attention of many people as he made his way up.

The number of cultivators who joined the gathering had broken through the 50 people mark, and every one of them had completed their third divine sense transformation. Before the gathering started, many people had already disguised themselves, and around half of them were hiding their appearances and auras.

The other half were members of the institution. Deacons, instructors, and members of the new five great families of the You Continent felt no need to hide their presence.

For someone like Shang Xia, there was no point in hiding his identity anyway. He was like a star that was shining in the night sky at the moment. Regardless of his background, cultivation, or his

actual combat strength, no one could deny that he was one of the strongest Martial Intent Realm experts in the Azure Origin World at the moment. His reputation rose sharply in the past two years, and the fall of two Martial Extermination Realm experts from the Azure Spiritual World was rumored to be related to him. Even if he didn't do anything new, he would still be the center of attention anywhere he went.

No matter how prepared he was when he made his way up to the central platform, he still felt a little lightheaded.

Standing on the central platform, he swept his gaze across those present before opening a jade box carefully. He revealed the contents to everyone present.

“This is a rank four item. It's the Scarlet Gold Silk Brewer's...”

Shang Xia didn't even manage to complete his sentence when everyone in the venue broke out into hushed discussions. At the same time, several dozen divine senses extended to examine the treasure inside the box.

“It's a rank four treasure! Another rank four treasure appeared!”

“It's actually a rank four brewer's yeast! It's definitely a key to crafting a rank four advancement medicine!”

“Shit! We just started and two rank four treasures appeared! Looks like I didn't make this trip in vain.”

“Someone actually brought out something so precious to make a trade... I wonder what he wishes to get in return?”

“...”

The chaotic discussion filled the skies and the venue seemed to turn a little rowdy all of a sudden.

Clearly, without someone strong enough to suppress the entire crowd, situations like that were bound to happen.

The Martial Extermination Realm expert who was presiding over the gathering wasn't there to deal with situations like these. Perhaps he or she would make a move during a critical moment to suppress the masses, but they were there primarily to prevent the Azure Spiritual World from wreaking havoc. As such, Shang Xia could only stand on the central platform like a fool. With an expression of displeasure forming on his face, Shang Xia felt that he resembled a clown in the circus as everyone else was talking among themselves.

With his expression turning dark, Shang Xia coughed aggressively to catch their attention. “Ahem!”

His voice was low, but it was like a thunderbolt that blasted in the ears of those present. The jolt they felt to their divine sense caused their bodies to tremble involuntarily. 30 percent of the cultivators who were present felt their heads spinning as they shook their heads violently to get rid of the feeling. The rest who were a little strong turned to stare at Shang Xia in fright as a new sense of fear for him appeared in their hearts.

With a single action, Shang Xia forced the venue to return to its original quiet state as everyone looked at the young figure in the middle with a strange gaze.

Without a doubt, they discovered that every single one of them was unable to stand up to him despite it being a simple cough.

Luckily for them, Shang Xia had no evil intentions when he jolted their divine senses earlier. He managed to suppress dozens of them. If anyone carried out a sneak attack...

Shang Xia's gaze swept across the venue and he continued, "I wish to trade this for another rank four brewer's yeast, the Crimson Crystal Valley Brewer's Yeast, or the Spirit of Summer!"

Of the various herbs and treasures he required to craft his rank four advancement medicine, Shang Xia knew how precious all of them were. He needed 9 rank four treasures in total. 4 of them were the Spirit of the Four Seasons, and 4 of them were supplementary ingredients. The final one was his Crimson Crystal Valley Brewer's Yeast.

When he brought out the Scarlet Gold Silk Brewer's Yeast, he knew that he could either trade it for a brewer's yeast of the same level or one of the four spirits.

Herbs like the Nine Leaf Lotus might also be rank four herbs, but they paled in comparison to either the brewer's yeast or one of the spirits.

After naming his price, the atmosphere immediately sank into a freezing state. The discussions that broke out earlier when he brought out his treasure were nowhere to be heard and Shang Xia's expression sank and he couldn't help but mention, "What's the matter? Is there no one willing to make the trade?"

Someone in the crowd spoke up all of a sudden, "Young Master Shang, are you open to other trades?"

Shang Xia's gaze landed on a certain corner of the venue and he muttered, "I apologize. Today, I only need those two items. I have no need for other rank four herbs."

Shang Xia might have made his intentions clear, but there were many voices hoping he could change his mind.

When he was dealing with many voice transmissions that begged him to change his conditions, someone sent a voice transmission to Shang Jian directly. "Second Master Shang, why are you guys trying to get your hands on the Spirit of Summer? Are you planning to craft a divine weapon for your old patriarch?"

No one knew how the transmission took place, but the five organizers of the gathering seemed to have some sort of group call function. As long as one of them spoke, the other four would be able to hear them.

Shang Jian's expression changed drastically and he replied, "According to our agreement, you have to show some support. You can't allow his trade to fail."

"Second Master Shang, are you killing us? Where the hell are we supposed to find the Crimson Crystal Valley Brewer's Yeast or a Spirit of Summer?!" Someone else chimed in.

A snort left Shang Jian's lips. "Heh, I don't care. That's your problem. We had an agreement."

After a period of silence, someone else added, "We'll just make a secret agreement if push comes to shove. Tell him to say that he made a deal with a mysterious party and we'll return the brewer's yeast secretly after the gathering is over..."

"That's right!"

Everyone piped up in unison.

Shang Jian's expression sank as he gnashed his teeth together. "You... All of you are shameless!"

The only response he received was dry laughter from the other organizers.

Many people present were well versed with treasures. Even though the Spirit of the Four Seasons was rarely seen, most people knew that it could be used to craft divine weapons.

However, the Shang Clan didn't seem to be ready to craft a divine weapon yet. After all, Shang Bo hadn't entered the Martial Dipper Realm.

As they continued along that line of thought, a terrifying thought flashed through their minds. Was it possible for Shang Bo to be at the edge of a breakthrough? Or was the institution planning to let the You Continent birth its third Martial Dipper Realm expert soon and the Shang Clan was making their preparations for it?

The more they thought about it, the crazier they felt the Tongyou Institution was. They wondered if the Tongyou Institution really had the capabilities to produce two Martial Dipper Realm ancestors in succession.

When everyone was racking their brains on what Shang Xia's intention was for requesting a Spirit of the Four Seasons, someone yelled, "I have a Spirit of Summer!"

Shang Xia, who was slowly losing hope, was prepared to leave in defeat. He received a voice transmission from Shang Jian earlier telling him that none of the other four great families had the items he needed and to carry out their plan.

Who would have thought that someone would jump out at the last second?

Shang Xia, who had maintained his neutral expression all that while, couldn't help but reveal a trace of excitement. He tried his best to remain calm as he muttered, "Can I please take a look at it?"

A figure appeared in the corner of Shang Xia's eye before strolling towards him.

All of a sudden, another roar rang through the skies. "Hey! That's Ge Qingzhu!"

The moment the words left his lips, the entire venue turned to stare at the newcomer. A trace of shock could be seen in their eyes when they looked at him.

Cultivators who didn't know what was going on quickly made their inquiries and learned that Ge Qingzhu had finally emerged from hiding. They also learned that he found a pool full of Spiritual Lotuses during his adventures and it was something similar to a rank four treasure. From what they heard, he might have more than a single rank four treasure on him too!

Ever since he returned to the Observation Peak, the news of his gains started to spread like wildfire. Unfortunately, no one could find him no matter how hard they tried. Everyone thought that he was

under heavy protection by the institution. None of them expected him to show up during the gathering.

His first move in the gathering was to trade a Spirit of Summer for Shang Xia's Scarlet Gold Silk Brewer's Yeast, basically confirming the rumors that he managed to obtain several rank four treasures on his adventures!

Many gazes started to heat up when they saw Ge Qingzhu and Shang Xia was no exception.

In the rumors, Ge Qingzhu managed to obtain an entire pool of Spiritual Lotuses. Even if he didn't have any of the fourth rank, he wouldn't be lacking in rank three treasures.

Arriving before Shang Xia, Ge Qingzhu slid a jade bottle over.

"Can I open it?" Shang Xia asked.

He had experience with the Spirit of Autumn and knew that every one of them possessed their own intelligence. He was afraid that the spirit would run the moment he opened the bottle.

Nodding lightly, Ge Qingzhu explained, "There's a droplet of rain contained in there."

Opening the jade bottle with a special method, Shang Xia quickly discovered the traces of the Spirit of Summer contained within.

Nodding to indicate that he would proceed with the trade, he sent Ge Qingzhu a voice transmission. "Deacon Ge, do you have any Nine Leaf Lotus harvested in the Summer?"

Chapter 425: Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman!

"Deacon Ge, do you have any Nine Leaf Lotus harvested in the Summer?" Shang Xia asked casually.

Pausing for a second, Ge Qingzhu seemed slightly surprised by his question as he shook his head slightly before taking his leave.

Shang Xia stared at Ge Qingzhu's leaving figure and unknown thoughts filled his mind.

He might not have obtained the Crimson Crystal Valley Brewer's Yeast, but Shang Xia felt that it was a blessing to be able to obtain the last Spirit of the Four Season he required. At the very least, it wasn't a wasted trip.

When Shang Xia left the central platform, the gathering continued as per usual.

It might be due to the appearance of 2 rank four treasures since the start of the gathering, but the atmosphere became even more heated than before.

The gathering was far from over, but regardless if it was Shang Xia, Shang Jian, Shang Xi, or the other organizers, all of them could say that the gathering was a resounding success.

Without anything to worry about, Shang Jian and the others eventually went up to the central platform to trade for things they would need and made some interesting gains there.

As more and more interesting items appeared during the gathering, Shang Xia feasted his eyes on those treasures. Rank four treasures started popping out one by one, and they didn't seem as rare anymore. There were even times when Shang Xia couldn't help but make trades with those who were up there. He eventually ended up with three more items.

One of them was the Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman he had been pining for a long time now!

Even though the institution had the inheritance and method to craft the talismans, and Shang Xia went over to look for it the moment he entered the Talisman Hall, he had yet to get his hands on it. When he first entered the Talisman Hall, he was immediately bogged down by the task of crafting Formation Talismans.

In the two or so months that passed, there wasn't a need to mention crafting the Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman. Shang Xia hadn't even found the inheritance!

In the near future, Shang Xia would have to devote himself to crafting the Gale Thunderbolt Talismans. He knew that there was almost no chance for him to start looking into the Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman regardless and since someone was trading one during the gathering, he decided to get his hands on it.

After all, there were still several spatial artifacts in his possession that he had yet to open.

In order to obtain the Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman, Shang Xia not only used his last Spiritual Yin Knife Talisman. He also had to bring out his final piece of rank three Lightning Fire Jujube before he could get his hands on it.

Both the Spiritual Yin Knife Talisman and Lightning Fire Jujue were treasures that could kill other members of the Martial Intent Realm if used properly. The Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman could only be used to open up one spatial artifact, but even so, Shang Xia decided to make the trade. The only problem he had was deciding which spatial artifact to open.

Other than the talisman, Shang Xia also managed to obtain 5 pieces of rank three talisman jade.

Due to the fact that talisman jade was made from essence jade, they were much higher in quality than talisman paper of the same level. They could also preserve the rank three talisman contained in them for a longer time compared to talisman paper. Of course, the difficulty of crafting a talisman with talisman jade was proportionally more difficult.

...

When it came to the grand formation around the Observation Peak, any cultivators who paid a little more attention would know what the Tongyou Institution was doing. It was no secret they were trying to lay down a grand formation.

There were even some perceptive experts who knew that the Tongyou Institution wouldn't be able to come up with all the resources in a short period of time. They felt that the institution would definitely be trying to obtain resources through their gathering. Those smarter cultivators were trying to offer resources required by the institution and raising the prices to obtain a little more than they would otherwise,

In actuality, there were people who brought out rank three talisman paper for trade and the institution did indeed make a move. In the end, they paid a little more than the market price to obtain the talisman papers.

Naturally, Shang Xia wouldn't be stupid enough to join in the bidding to raise the price. In the end, the Tongyou Institution successfully obtained the batch of rank three talisman paper.

It was a pity the scattered cultivators trying to profit off the institution had no idea what the institution truly needed. When talisman jades appeared, the experts who were bidding on behalf of the institution pretended not to see them as that would be a massive waste of resources if they used it for the grand formation.

Shang Xia saw an opportunity and bid for those talisman jades with a fair price and managed to obtain them eventually.

...

The third item Shang Xia obtained was close to the end of the gathering.

Seeing as the gathering was about to come to an end, Shang Xia felt that there wouldn't be anything else that caught his eye and decided to bid his farewell. He wanted to take the time before people started to leave to head over to the Yuxi Peak to start a deeper investigation.

Who would have thought that before he could leave the venue, he would see someone rushing up to the central platform to open a sealed case.

“Three hundred years old Violet Ningpo Wigfort. I don't have a treasure in mind I wish to trade this for but I'll accept anything of use to me.”

Shang Xia stopped dead in his tracks and turned to stare at the person. The person who brought out the herb seemed to be trying his luck. Props to him as he might come across some surprising gains.

After all, it wasn't every day so many Martial Intent Realm experts who had completed their third divine sense transformation or higher were gathered together. No one present lacked treasures, but they might not possess treasures they could personally use. There would definitely be people looking to obtain precious herbs no matter what.

Shang Xia needed a piece of hundred year old Violet Ningpo Wigfort, and the one up for trade was three hundred years old!

There was no way Shang Xia could miss out on something like that.

However, it seemed as though there were many cultivators who were also interested in it and were starting to send the person secret voice transmissions.

Thinking for a second, Shang Xia took out a piece of rank one talisman paper and wrote something casually on it. He turned it into a paper crane that wobbled over to the center platform.

It didn't take long for it to return and when he opened it, there were only two words written on it. 'Too little'.

Instead of being disappointed, Shang Xia's gaze lit up.

The other party didn't reject him directly which meant that he was actually interested in Shang Xia's offer. He was merely trying to get a higher price for his herb.

Thinking for a short moment, Shang Xia added a few more words onto the talisman paper before sending it back to the platform.

When the talisman paper returned, there was only a single word left.

'Deal'.

When he obtained the herb, he was relieved of 2 pieces of essence jade and 3 rank two Lightning Fire Jujubes.

After leaving the venue, Shang Xia looked around him and when he was satisfied that there was no one observing him in secret, he started running. Making a huge detour around the gathering venue, he ran towards the foot of the Yuxi Peak.

The closer he got, the stronger the thumping he felt between his eyebrows.

Looking into his sea of consciousness, Shang Xia noticed a cloud of red mist surrounding the Crimson Soul Tablet. It was trembling non-stop as though it wanted to leap out of Shang Xia's body.

Luckily, he was prepared this time. He was able to forcefully suppress the Crimson Soul Tablet with his divine sense.

When he finally arrived at the foot of the Yuxi Peak, he saw a screen of multicolored gas ten feet away from him. Who would have thought that the Crimson Soul Tablet that was trembling violently earlier would regain its calm and stop moving completely?

According to what he learned from Shang Xi and the others, Shang Xia knew that the Yuxi Peak didn't stop anyone from entering. The problem came when they were trying to leave. After all, no one managed to step out of the Yuxi Peak after going in.

In his sea of consciousness, Shang Xia was observing the Crimson Soul Tablet closely. He discovered that the tablet was behaving as though it had met its old friend when it tried interacting with the multicolored mist surrounding the peak. That being said, they seemed to be carefully observing each other from whatever distance they were at.

Carefully taking a step forward, Shang Xia realized he fucked up. The Crimson Soul Tablet and the multicolored mist seemed to recognize each other as they tried to embrace each other.

The calm screen of multicolored mist seemed to lose all control as it rushed towards Shang Xia in an unstoppable wave.

Noticing the change, the Crimson Soul Tablet thumped violently as though a terrifying enemy was approaching.

That was its warning!

There wasn't a need to think about it as Shang Xia retreated as quickly as he could. He tried his best to open up the distance between himself and the mist.

The Yuxi Peak that was clouded in mysteries at the moment seemed to be a beast that had awakened as the multicolored mist started to emit a dense glow. Resplendent light shot out from every part of the mountain as it filled the space around it.

Shang Xia pushed himself to his limit as he escaped as quickly as he could. Before he finally turned around to run, he noticed a shocking change to the Yuxi Peak. The multicolored mist seemed to split itself into layers and the mountain became surrounded by layers of different colors - Dark Green, jet black, dirty yellow, ash-white...

At a certain distance from the Yuxi Peak, the mist that was racing after him finally started to dissipate. The Yuxi Peak seemed to return to its dormant state as the multicolored mist remade itself.

Feeling the sense of danger disappearing, Shang Xia finally stopped to look behind him.

His heart was still racing, but he seemed to discover several new colors in the multicolored mist that surrounded the Yuxi Peak.

Realizing that trouble was probably coming, he quickly concealed his aura to hide himself. He might be standing in his original position, but he seemed to resemble a motionless rock that was void of any vitality.

The sudden change to the Yuxi Peak would definitely alert every single Martial Extermination Realm expert who was keeping an eye on the area. The disturbance to the Yuxi Peak might have lasted for a few moments, but Shang Xia was sure that the Martial Extermination Realm experts were on their way.

Chapter 426: Essence Bone Ember

It seemed as though it wasn't time for him to explore the Yuxi Peak yet.

As he got further away from the Yuxi Peak, the Crimson Soul Tablet became extremely unresponsive as it remained motionless in his sea of consciousness.

When all was done and dusted, Shang Xia finally realized that he seemed to have forgotten something.

Feeling around his sleeves, he pulled out his Spirit Extermination Gourd and popped the cork.

A tiny sword slowly emerged as it pointed towards the Yuxi Peak. It trembled quietly, and Shang Xia sighed in his heart. "Indeed..."

Shang Xia had a sneaking suspicion that he would be back to the Yuxi Peak before long.

He also felt that the day he entered the Yuxi Peak would be the day he would step into the Martial Extermination Realm.

Concealing his aura, he continued to sneak further and further away.

Not too long after he left, the space around the Yuxi Peak trembled as a figure squeezed himself out from the void. He looked at the heaven and earth qi that was fluctuating around the Yuxi Peak before extending his divine sense to cover a huge radius around the mountain. It was too bad he failed to detect anything.

A cold snort left his lips as he turned to another spot in the void. "Old lady, why aren't you enjoying your life back at home? Why are you here?"

A small patch of cloud scattered as an old woman emerged from the void with a face full of smiles. "I have no choice. My granddaughter is extremely playful and said that she had to join some sort of gathering or something. This old lady only has one granddaughter you know? I'm afraid something bad might happen to her and decided to follow her in secret."

"Oh." The person who arrived continued, "Old Lady Yan, did you see what happened to the Yuxi Peak earlier?"

“I’m old, not blind. Of course I saw it.” Yan Su’er muttered.

A frown appeared on the face of the person who just arrived and asked, “Does that mean that you saw the reason behind the changes to the Yuxi Peak?”

Unfortunately, Yan Su’er shook his head and sighed, “I didn’t arrive so quickly as to see what happened.”

Clearly unwilling to believe her, the person who just arrived realized he couldn’t do anything if she didn’t wish to say more. Flying around the Yuxi Peak without entering the screen of multicolored mist, he discovered no abnormalities and decided to take his leave.

After seeing the person disappear, Yan Su’er stared at the Yuxi Peak with unknown thoughts running through her mind. After waiting for some time, she also disappeared.

The Yuxi Peak regained its original calm, but from afar, the giant structure seemed to be shrouded in some sort of mystery.

...

Shang Xia obviously wouldn’t know what happened to the Yuxi Peak after he left. When he returned to the Observation Peak, he didn’t head back to the Talisman Hall immediately.

Instead, he returned to his chamber in the Shang Clan’s territory and held the Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman in his hands tightly. He looked at the five spatial cases in front of him and felt a strong headache. He had no idea which to open first.

Of the five spatial cases, one came from the Martial Extermination Realm Sima Zhanxing. Two of them were direct disciples of the Changbai Holy Land, Chu Chen and Senior Brother Zhou. Like Shang Xia, they were at the grand completion stage of the Martial Intent Realm.

The last two were from Senior Brother Yue and Junior Brother Xiang from the Changbai Holy Land and even though they weren’t direct disciples, their cultivation level had already passed the third divine sense transformation and weren’t weak in any way.

According to logic, Shang Xia should be using the Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman on Sima Zhanxing’s spatial artifact.

After all, he was at the Martial Extermination Realm and his belongings should be much more valuable than those Martial Intent Realm cultivators.

However, when he thought back to the time they fought, Shang Xia recalled how Sima Zhanxing had the inner qi of a Martial Extermination Realm expert but his actual strength was a whole lot weaker than experts of the same level.

Even when using half his brain, Shang Xia could guess the reason behind it. As a cultivator from the Azure Origin World, Sima Zhanxing was definitely ostracized in the Azure Spiritual World. He might even be placed under strict supervision and the resources he could use to improve his cultivation were definitely severely limited.

Under such circumstances, he would probably have to use everything in his possession to raise his strength. How many treasures could be possibly left in his spatial artifact?

That was why Shang Xia was having a headache deciding which spatial artifact to open.

It wasn't easy to get his hands on the Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman and he wouldn't be able to craft them in the near future. He had to consider carefully which artifact to open.

After racking his brains, Shang Xia eventually decided to use it on Senior Brother Zhou's spatial case.

The reason was simple. When Shang Xia killed him previously, he heard that their team was tasked with searching for treasures through the battlefield between the two worlds. It was most likely for him to possess the most treasures.

That was also the reason Shang Xia didn't choose to open Chu Chen's spatial case. Back when the war just started, Chu Chen had been hunted down by Shang Xia and he probably didn't have a lot of time to look for treasures.

Senior Brother Zhou was different. Shang Xia only discovered their group when they were looking for the Lightning Fire Jujube Tree. He was searching for other treasures before that and he was probably a lot more loaded than Chu Chen.

With his thoughts in place, Shang Xia sent a trace of his inner qi into the Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman. As a thin glow covered the talisman, he slapped it on one of the cases on the tablet.

A ray of deep greenish-blue light emerged from the talisman before corroding the seal on the spatial case.

When the greenish-blue light surrounded the entire case, the restrictions on it were completely destroyed. As the glow faded, the Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman that Shang Xia stuck to the case earlier crumbled and scattered in the wind.

Casually brushing his hand across its surface, Shang Xia discovered that there was nothing to stop his divine sense from entering the case. Several items emerged from inside and clattered onto the ground below.

Luckily for him, his hands moved quickly. He grabbed a green-colored gourd before it could touch the ground.

He wasn't unfamiliar with the gourd at all. It was similar to what he obtained from a direct disciple from the White Deer Paradise, Li Tianshou! It was a piece of equipment used to collect extermination qi or store extermination origins!

Weighing the gourd in his hand, Shang Xia revealed a look of disappointment.

With his wealth of experience when it came to collecting extermination qi, he knew that pure heaven and earth qi in the form of extermination qi was extremely dense. A fully filled gourd would weigh more than a thousand catties.

Like the one Shang Xia had, there were two extermination origins contained within and there was also a portion of extermination qi from Windy Valley the Lightning Bird sought refuge in.

Every time he brought out his Spirit Extermination Gourd, he would prepare himself so as not to be caught off guard by the hefty object.

When Shang Xia showed off the extermination origins to Shang Ke previously, the Shang Clan Patriarch was finally willing to refine the Lingkong Formless Extermination Origin back in the clan.

In exchange, Shang Xia gave the Cloudy Gale Extermination Origin to the clan for Shang Jian's eventual refinement. Only then did his Spirit Extermination Gourd become a lot lighter than before.

Opening the gourd in his hand, he saw two strands of faint mist emerging from within. Shaking the gourd slightly, he forced the thin mist back into it. "Well, it's not exactly a waste."

Closing the gourd secretly, Shang Xia's expression was no longer as disappointed as it once was. He could tell that the thin extermination qi inside was of two different types. Of course, they were far from completion.

Normally, disciples would be like Senior Brother Zhou who went around collecting extermination qi and the like bit by bit to finally complete a single extermination origin. Not everyone was like Shang Xia.

Now that he obtained two strands of extermination qi, he didn't really know what to do with them. Even if he wanted to absorb extermination qi of the same type and complete the extermination origins, it would be hard for him to look for where to start. Of course, that didn't mean that they were completely useless.

As a qualified Talisman Master, Shang Xia knew a thing or two about crafting rank four talismans even though he hadn't reached that level.

According to the Zhu Family Talisman Scripture, the creation of rank four talismans would involve using extermination qi! Throughout the process, the Talisman Master wouldn't exhaust their extermination origins for obvious reasons. No one would choose to damage the foundation of their extermination origins to make talismans!

As such, stray strands of extermination qi were what rank four Talisman Masters used to craft rank four talismans!

After studying the process of rank four talisman crafting, Shang Xia even realized that precisely because extermination qi was used in the crafting process, all rank four Talisman Masters had to be in the Martial Extermination Realm!

Putting the strands of extermination qi aside, the gourd itself was also a treasure. If the gourd was something that could be mass produced, the holy lands would have long since distributed them to as many disciples as they could!

Since he was done examining the gourd, Shang Xia turned to look at the other items on the ground. When he saw a single several black jade bottle that had several seals on it, his eyes lit up.

Tearing the seal away carefully, he peered into the bottle only to see half of it filled with a grayish powder that was emitting a desolate aura.

"This... Are these ashes?!" Shang Xia carefully replaced the seal before sinking deep into contemplation.

All of a sudden, he recalled something Zhang Haogu told him some time ago about a special sort of rank four treasure called the Essence Bone Ember.

That was an ingredient that could only be obtained by grinding the bones of a powerful rank four beast who had died not too long ago. Before their inner qi fully dissipated, it would be gathered into their bones and Essence Bone Ember would be obtained if it was ground to power immediately.

Chapter 427: Test Test 1 2

Even though the other treasures other than the extermination qi collecting gourd and Essence Bone Ember were pretty valuable, they weren't very useful to Shang Xia at all.

There were even some items in there Shang Xia hadn't heard of. He suspected that those things were special products from the Azure Spiritual World, and he didn't know if he would be able to use them in the future.

After arranging the scattered belongings on the ground, Shang Xia immediately left the Shang Clan's territory on the Observation Peak and returned to the Talisman Hall.

The moment he returned, he received a piece of news that had something to do with the gathering he had just been to.

After Shang Xia left, two more rank four treasures appeared at the end and pushed the gathering of Martial Intent Realm experts to its climax.

Due to the fact that the items signified the end of the gathering, those who failed to get their hands on them would be left with regret. As such, the bids were raised aggressively by the experts present. Who would have thought that the two experts who took out their treasures raised their asking price the higher it went, in an attempt to get a little more benefits.

Surprisingly, but not really, the entire situation spiraled out of control. Those cultivators who were bidding on the items a moment ago cursed the sellers as a massive battle was about to break out.

Luckily, the five great families reacted quickly. With the help of the experts of the institution, they managed to control the situation.

With the experts of the five great families and more than a dozen experts of the institution taking charge, the gathering eventually came to a close. It might not be perfect, it was definitely a successful one.

Shang Xia was shocked to learn of what happened and he felt a wave of regret filling his heart.

He thought that nothing good would appear since the gathering was about to come to an end. He didn't think that there would be experts patient enough to save the best for last.

Moreover, from what he heard, the two experts who took out their rank four treasures at the end had nothing in mind to trade for. All they wanted was to gain the most of our selling their treasures.

He was also surprised by one more thing. No one mentioned anything about the Yuxi Peak, and it seemed as though the changes he caused happened so quickly that no one managed to catch on.

Also, the news of his return probably reached Ren Huan quickly. The fatty came to deliver 17 pieces of rank three talisman paper made from the Stormy Lightning Leaves.

"The institution has been up my ass for this and I'm delivering those talisman paper made from my portion of the leaves. Brother Shang, I'm afraid I will have to delay the creation of your talisman paper for some time..." Ren Huan apologized.

Shang Xia gasped in shock when he looked at the stack before him. "There's no need to worry about my talisman paper for the moment. Brother Ren, you're really efficient. You managed to make so many talisman papers in such a short amount of time."

Ren Huan waved his hand and muttered, "I wasn't really that fast. I started to craft the talisman paper right after I got my hands on the leaves. I was rushed a lot and if I had a little more time, I would be able to ensure that the talisman paper would be of better quality. Also, the success rate of creating those talisman papers would be raised when I work on your batch. With my experience this time, I should be able to complete 19 or 20 talisman papers with your portion of leaves."

"Brother Ren, you truly have impressive skills!" Shang Xia couldn't help but praise.

Ren Huan chuckled softly, but a trace of hesitation flashed across his eyes. "Brother Shang, are you confident in crafting 3 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans in 2 months?"

"How would I know if I don't try?" Shang Xia smiled in response.

With his eyes widening slightly, Ren Huan thought for a second before speaking, "I actually hope that you manage to finish those talismans."

His words might betray his actual belief in Shang Xia. He might think that it was impossible, but he truly hoped that Shang Xia could achieve what he was setting out to do.

Ren Huan wasn't the only one. Almost nobody in the Talisman Hall believed that Shang Xia would be able to craft those talismans in 2 short months.

There were even some people who came up with their own conspiracy theory that Shang Xia was using the resources of the Talisman Hall to improve his understanding in the way of talisman crafting.

When Shang Xia finally sent Ren Huan away, everyone in the Talisman Hall basically heard of his return. Regardless of their thoughts, they prepared everything that he required as they sent a ton of resources into his secret chamber.

No matter how pessimistic they were about Shang Xia's attempt, the Talisman Hall wouldn't skimp on the resources they provided. After all, Shang Xia was one of the 3 rank three Talisman Masters in the Talisman Hall and his status in the institution wasn't something to scoff at.

Shang Xia didn't allow himself to be affected by whatever other people thought and after he was ready, he sealed his secret chamber immediately. He had no time to waste as he started the crafting process.

The Formation Hall's request wasn't the only reason Shang Xia was in a rush to craft those talismans. He also wanted to test out his unique method of talisman crafting. He needed to see if it was effective even when crafting other types of talismans! With enough practice crafting those Formation Talismans, he knew how to get into his state of mind once the process started.

The only difference this time was that he was in no rush to start drawing on the talisman papers. According to the Zhu Family Talisman Scripture, he calculated everything he needed to do in his mind. He didn't miss out a single detail as he thought about every stroke and how long it would take. The position of the brush after, and how long he would need to pause at every step. Even the pressure he had to put into each brushstroke ran through his mind.

By the time he completed the entire process in his mind, half a month had already passed. The Formation Hall gave him a time limit of two months, and a quarter of that was gone just like that. His brush hadn't even touched a single piece of talisman paper since he started!

However, Shang Xia was in no rush at all. He even used three days to restore his state of mind.

Only on the nineteenth day did his brush finally touch the talisman paper.

On the second day of his first attempt, the talisman paper he was working on was vaporized in a storm of wind and lightning.

Shang Xia flicked his sleeves nonchalantly as he cleared the table of its contents. He wiped away every trace of ink that had spilled and restored the table to its original position before bringing out another piece of talisman paper.

His previous failure could be attributed to the sudden disharmony of the power of wind and lightning. It caused a huge explosion that caught him off guard.

If not for the fact that he had expected something to go wrong and prepared himself to suppress it with his inner qi without dodging, half the table might have been taken out in that explosion.

With the lesson from before, Shang Xia linked several restrictions around the secret chamber to the table he was working on. It covered some of the auxiliary equipment and resources he required and it ensured that nothing would be destroyed if he messed up again.

Unlike his first failure, he only failed on his second attempt on the third day. The reason behind it was the same as the first. The power of wind and lightning went off balance for a moment, causing a huge explosion.

Obviously, his second attempt was much closer to success than his first. In fact, he wasn't too far away from completing the Gale Thunderbolt Talisman.

However, failing close to the end like that caused the greatest amount of damage to a cultivator's divine sense. Moreover, it was also a blow to a Talisman Master's confidence.

Luckily, Shang Xia was prepared for it. He expected as much due to the difficulty in crafting the Gale Thunderbolt Talisman. The talisman could be said to be one of the most difficult rank three talismans and it wasn't really realistic to successfully craft one on his first few attempts.

Taking a day to restore his condition, Shang Xia sped through whatever he had learned in his mind several times. On the 25th day, he started his third attempt.

What Shang Xia didn't know was that there were 2 rank one Talisman Masters waiting for him outside his secret chamber at the moment.

Since two months ago, Shang Xia had left his secret chamber on the 25th day and he handed in his talismans personally.

Even though Shang Xia had no idea how the rules of the Talisman Hall worked, everyone else who wasn't a rank three Talisman Master broke out into full-scale panic whenever Shang Xia went to deliver his talismans. That was because according to the rules of the Talisman Hall, someone else would head over to collect the completed talismans after the Talisman Master left seclusion. Even rank two Talisman Masters enjoyed the privilege of dumping their creations to some other attendant when they were done so as not to eat into their rest time. As a rank three Talisman Master, Shang Xia was obviously entitled to such services!

In order not to be caught off guard, the Talisman Hall sent two rank one Talisman Masters over to Shang Xia's secret chamber on the 25th day of his seclusion. They were instructed to explain the rules to Shang Xia when he emerged, but they were destined for bad luck.

No one expected him to continue to remain in seclusion!

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"Why isn't Talisman Master Shang coming out? The 25th day mark should have passed two days ago..."

"Heh, haven't you heard? Teacher said that Talisman Master Shang boasted that he would be able to complete 3 new rank three talismans in 2 months! Who knows when he will emerge? He might even be too embarrassed to come out after wasting all the resources he has in there..."

"Keep quiet, but I heard from our teacher that Talisman Master Shang is young and arrogant. He might have been goaded into doing that by the Formation Hall..."

"Yeah, I heard the same thing. My teacher once received the guidance of Talisman Master Fan. When Talisman Master Fan crafted a new type of talisman, he used half a year to succeed. No one knows how many times he failed back then. He even had to look for Talisman Master Gong for some pointers before finally completing it. After that, he needed another half a year before he restored his condition to his peak."

"Hehe, did you hear the rumors going around? It's said that even if Talisman Master Shang manages to complete one proper talisman, it would be a blessing in disguise?"

"Wouldn't that mean that even Talisman Master Gong and Talisman Master Fan aren't too optimistic about him?"

As the two of them continued to talk behind Shang Xia's back, they would never expect that Shang Xia's third attempt would allow him to succeed! He ran into slight problems along the way, but he managed to overcome them to create his 5th type of rank three talisman, the Gale Thunderbolt Talisman!

Chapter 428: *Crow Noises*

After failing twice, Shang Xia managed to complete his first Gale Thunderbolt Talisman on the 27th day of his seclusion.

With the marvelous feeling of success filling his mind, he didn't hesitate to start his fourth attempt immediately.

This time, the crafting process went just as smoothly as his previous attempt. On the 30th day of the first month he entered seclusion, the power of wind and lightning swirled harmoniously on the surface of his talisman paper. With Shang Xia's brush completing the final rune, his second piece of Gale Thunderbolt Talisman was complete.

Crafting two Gale Thunderbolt Talismans in succession, Shang Xia felt a wave of exhaustion washing over him. At the same time, a sense of satisfaction filled his mind.

Making a quick calculation, Shang Xia realized that he had been in seclusion for an entire month. With 2 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans, he felt that he could squeeze out a break for 2 days. At the same time, he could hand those talismans over to Gong Hang and Fan Yuanhui so that they could lay down their worries. With those talismans, the Formation Hall could also start to make preparations to modify the grand formation.

Opening the entrance to his secret chamber, Shang Xia was greeted by a soft breeze and the absence of anyone else.

“This is weird. Didn’t Teacher Gong say that I won’t have to deliver the talismans myself this time? He said that he would get someone to pick up the talismans when I’m done. Don’t tell me Teacher Gong forgot all about it after tiring himself out while crafting talismans...” Shang Xia shook his head and muttered to himself before looking at the case in his hand that contained the talismans.

Bah, whatever, I’m too lazy to go over and pass them the talismans. I’ll just take a break in here and start when I’m ready again. I’ll hand over all the talismans after I’m done.

Shang Xia thought to himself and stretched his back before closing the entrance of his secret chamber again.

What Shang Xia didn’t know was that another scene was playing out outside Gong Hang’s secret chamber. Gong Hang, who had just emerged from his secret chamber with a weary expression on his face, was staring at the disciples who were sent to wait outside Shang Xia’s secret chamber.

“So... Are you telling me that Talisman Master Shang failed to craft the Gale Thunderbolt Talisman?” Gong Hang muttered powerlessly. Despite his soft voice, his words were like a thunderclap that rang in the ears of those disciples. Neither of them dared to raise their heads to look at him.

“Talisman Master Gong, we... We stood outside Talisman Master Shang’s secret chamber for 3 whole days and he didn’t emerge.” One of them explained.

The other quickly followed up, “We followed your instructions and went to wait for him on his 25th day of seclusion! Talisman Master Shang likes to emerge on the 25th day according to his past records and we were there to ensure he would see us the moment he emerged. We stood there for 2 more days in case he was facing some difficulties. Even if he is trying to craft a new type of talisman, he should be out by then! I’m afraid he’s too embarrassed to...”

“Shut up!” Gong Hang sighed and massaged his glabella. “Hmph, do you think you’re qualified to judge rank three Talisman Masters? Leave!”

Panic flashed across their faces and they gave a hasty bow before leaving.

“Talisman Master Gong doesn’t seem to be in a good mood...” One of the disciples sighed after leaving the Talisman Hall. He felt a great sense of relief now that he wasn’t standing in front of Gong Hang.

“Obviously! Talisman Master Gong is clearly stressed over the trouble caused by Talisman Master Shang! Heh, this time, our Talisman Hall is going to be ruthlessly stepped on by the Formation Hall.” The other disciple snapped.

“Then again, I left the Upper Division last year to join the Talisman Hall. Based on seniority, Shang Xia should be calling me his senior brother.” The first disciple who spoke earlier sneered as a strange light flashed through his eyes.

It didn’t take long for rumors of Shang Xia failing to craft a single Gale Thunderbolt Talisman in a month to spread through the Talisman Hall.

Naturally, the Formation Hall also heard about it.

Ma Mingzheng took the chance while Chu Jia was eating to bring up the matter.

With a soft grunt, she didn’t seem too affected by it. “Looks like he’s worthless despite his reputation. I thought that he had something to rely on after making his suggestions. At the very least, he should be able to make one complete talisman in a month. I even prepared myself for him to only complete 3 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans. Who would have thought that he wouldn’t dare to leave his secret chamber and act like a coward?”

Ma Mingzheng nodded and continued, “So... You’re confident of modifying the formation regardless?”

Chu Jia continued to pick at the delicacies laid out in front of her and she muttered, “I ran through the changes in my head...”

Ma Mingzheng continued to nod with his expressionless face. Perhaps that was what a true genius was like. In order to make the modifications, ordinary Formation Masters might have to carry out large scale experiments and call for a huge amount of assistance. Only a genius would be able to run through the genius in their minds.

On the other side, Bai Luming added unceremoniously, “Since he isn’t able to craft a single Gale Thunderbolt Talisman in one month, he won’t be able to make 3 of them in the following month. Actually, we won’t need to make the modifications at all. The only problem is that we wasted 2 months worth of time. What a waste of time! If it was up to me, we need to ruthlessly mock him when he emerges. We can take the chance to stomp on the Talisman Hall so that no one tries to mess with our Formation Hall in the future.”

The moment the words left his lips, he discovered that the atmosphere was a little off. He raised his head only to see Ma Mingzheng glowering at him. As for Chu Jia, she ignored him completely as she continued to fill her stomach.

“Our Tongyou Institution isn’t the Rose Party and it most definitely is not part of the Evil Remnants. Formation Master Bai, you’re a member of our Tongyou Institution now! We can compete among ourselves, but if we do what you just said, we’ll be

building a grudge with the Talisman Hall. As a rank three Formation Master, what you say will affect many people in the institution. In the future, you better keep yourself in check.”

Ma Mingzheng was extremely serious when he addressed Bai Luming and the latter could only stutter an agreement. At the same time, he glanced at Chu Jia before him and he felt beads of perspiration dripping down his forehead.

At the end of the day, he was a rank three Formation Master the institution accepted back in the Coral Forest. He wasn't the one in control of his life at the moment. As long as Chu Jia willed it, his life would be forfeit!

...

Even though Shang Xia completed 2 pieces of Gale Thunderbolt Talisman, his instincts and past experience told him that no matter how confident he was, he might fail in his future attempts when some unexpected situations occurred.

He might have recovered his divine sense to the point where he could immediately start on his 5th attempt but he still chose to take 2 more days to adjust his mental state. He also took the chance to consolidate the experience of his past successes.

On the 3rd day of the 2nd month, Shang Xia started again.

This time, everything went smoothly at the start. However, an unexpected change happened the next day. When Shang Xia's brush touched the talisman paper, a sudden burst of energy emerged. The talisman paper he was working on turned into dust as the power of wind and lightning clashed.

Fortunately, Shang Xia managed to discover the problem immediately. He wasn't the one who made a mistake this time! The problem lay in the talisman paper he was using. The paper wasn't consistent throughout, and there were small blemishes on certain spots.

Those blemishes didn't affect the quality of the talisman paper which caused Shang Xia to overlook them earlier. Even if he noticed them before he started, he might have thought that he could just avoid them while drawing his runes.

Unfortunately, that wasn't the case. Due to his unique way of talisman crafting, every single stroke had to run through his mind. He wouldn't be able to avoid those defects the moment he started the crafting process! He drew out the entire talisman in his mind before his brush even moved, and every time he drew a stroke, he would maintain a delicate balance between his inner qi and divine sense. As such, his failure was decided before his brush touched the paper for the first time.

Shang Xia wasn't delusional. Since he failed because of the talisman paper, he wouldn't be making the same mistake. Before his next attempt, he carefully inspected the paper to ensure he would be able to avoid any effects or blemishes when drawing his runes.

This lesson was a valuable one. Shang Xia knew that this experience would follow him throughout his life. When he was crafting talismans in the future, he would definitely stop to inspect his talisman paper before starting the process.

With so many precautions taken, Shang Xia's next attempt was exceedingly smooth. On the 7th day of the 2nd month, he completed his third Gale Thunderbolt Talisman.

According to the agreement he made with Chu Jia, the Formation Hall had to start the modification process now that he managed to produce 3 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans.

With 6 attempts under his belt, Shang Xia's understanding of the Gale Thunderbolt Talisman became a lot deeper and he became a lot more adept at crafting them.

Examining himself, Shang Xia discovered that his divine sense consumption wasn't as bad as he had thought. He decided to go all the way and push himself to his limit to see how many talismans he could complete before the 2nd month was up.

With his mind clear and hands ready, Shang Xia started again and completed his 4th Gale Thunderbolt Talisman on the 10th day of the 2nd month of his seclusion.

A sense of excitement filled his mind and riding on the high, he brought out another piece of talisman paper. Unfortunately, he felt a wave of lethargy assaulting his mind halfway through the process.

His fatigue was a contributing factor, but it wasn't the reason behind his failure. Due to a miscalculation, the power of wind and lightning escaped from the rune he was drawing causing him to scrap the talisman paper.

Now that he failed, Shang Xia wasn't stubborn enough to immediately start again. He took a day to restore himself to his peak condition while using the Thousand Mechanism Spirit Recovery Powder provided by the institution.

With the lesson he learned previously, Shang Xia started another attempt on the 13th day of the 2nd month. Keeping everything he learned in mind, he only used 2.5 days to finish the Gale Thunderbolt Talisman he was working on. He didn't run into a single obstacle along the way, and it was his smoothest attempt so far!

With almost half a month left till the deadline Chu Jia had given him, he was only lacking 2 pieces of Gale Thunderbolt Talismans from her original demand of 7.

Understanding that his task was basically complete as 7 pieces of Gale Thunderbolt Talisman was something Chu Jia had asked for in order to mess with him, Shang Xia felt a weight lifted off his shoulders. Taking a nice 3 day break to recover his divine sense and inner qi.

When he was ready again, he powered on for the last 12 days and managed to craft 3 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans. He might have failed twice, but it was a respectable success rate.

At the end of the 2nd month, Shang Xia dragged his weary body out of his secret chamber. Seeing Gong Hang standing outside, he didn't think too much about it and tossed 8 pieces of Gale Thunderbolt Talisman over.

"The Formation Hall asked for 7 pieces to start their modification process. Go ask if they can do anything with 8 talismans." Shang Xia sighed before returning to his secret chamber. Now that his job was done, all he wanted to do was to take a good nap.

Silence filled the Talisman Hall and the space outside his secret chamber as he made his way back inside to sleep. The Talisman Masters who were waiting for him felt their jaws dropping to the ground in fright and they failed to utter a single word.

Chapter 429: The Anger Begins

Not giving half a shit about the bomb he just threw, Shang Xia returned to his secret chamber to take a nap. Gong Hang and the other Talisman Masters who were gathered outside stared at each other in shock as they didn't know how to react.

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Only after a long time did Gong Hang release a soft sigh. He kept the 8 pieces of Gale Thunderbolt Talisman carefully in a sealed spirit case.

When he was done, one of the rank two Talisman Masters behind him muttered softly, "Teacher Gong, did he already produce a few pieces of Gale Thunderbolt Talismans? Maybe he brought them out earlier to make us think that..."

Glancing at him, Gong Hang didn't let him finish before he snapped, "Are you blind? Can't you tell the state of the ink on those talismans? The strokes on the talisman were made extremely recently. We can clearly feel the divine sense that was sealed into it. There is no way any of these were produced more than 2 months ago." Gong Hang paused for a second before grunting, "Don't let your suspicions cloud your judgment. For Talisman Master Shang to complete the Gale Thunderbolt Talisman is a blessing for our Talisman Hall!"

The rank two Talisman Master bowed respectfully, but he couldn't help but add, "No matter what, he probably had some experience with the talismans before this. Otherwise, it's impossible for him to craft 8 of them in 2 short months. The Gale Thunderbolt Talisman is one of the most difficult rank three talismans to craft. It's a little hard to believe he made eight of them from scratch..."

This time, Gong Hang didn't say anything to refute him. The rank two Talisman Master wasn't the only one who was doubting Shang Xia. Even Gong Hang had a trace of suspicion in his heart.

However, he merely paused for a moment before speaking up, "Even though your guess might be correct, what do you think of his talisman crafting abilities? He managed to craft 8 of them in 2 short months"

The disciple felt his lips trembling slightly while streaks of light flashed through his eyes. Eventually, he revealed a bitter smile. "I'm afraid he can already be considered to be at the peak of his craft even among rank three Talisman Masters."

Gong Hang tilted his head downwards slightly and seemed to be content with his disciple's response. "Not bad. At least you didn't let your jealousy cloud your judgment."

A crooked smile was all that was left on his disciple's face.

Turning to look at everyone else standing around Shang Xia's secret chamber, Gong Hang muttered, "Let's go. Talisman Master Shang managed to reduce a lot of pressure on us this time around. However, we still have a lot to do!"

Everyone present realized that the Talisman Hall was about to be thrown into a whole new round of changes the moment Shang Xia handed over 8 pieces of Gale Thunderbolt Talismans.

Before Shang Xia joined the Talisman Hall, Gong Hang and Fan Yuanhui were the only rank three Talisman Masters present. Regardless of whether it was experience or quality, Gong Hang was considered slightly better than Fan Yuanhui in all aspects.

With his years of service in the Talisman Hall, Gong Hang had provided pointers to many younger Talisman Masters. Even though they couldn't say that Gong Hang was the only voice of authority, there were many Talisman Masters and disciples who would follow anything he said.

Even when Shang Xia entered the Talisman Hall as a rank three Talisman Master, Gong Hang's position wasn't affected in the slightest.

Of course, Shang Xia didn't plan on wresting control over the Talisman Hall from Gong Hang and neither did Gong Hang try to suppress Shang Xia with his status.

At the end of the day, their skills were what spoke the loudest.

After Shang Xia completed 8 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans in 2 months, not a single soul dared to question his abilities as a rank three Talisman Master. Naturally, his prestige shot through the roof now that he had proved his abilities. Achieving something Gong Hang was unable to do, Shang Xia instantly became the number 1 Talisman Master among them.

Anyone who had a little insight could tell that Gong Hang had reached the peak of whatever he could achieve in the path of talisman creation and cultivation.

Fan Yuanhui was a little better as he had some room for improvement, but at the moment, he hadn't reached Gong Hang's level.

Compared to the two of them, Shang Xia's cultivation was publicly acknowledged to have reached the peak of the Martial Intent Realm. He was a mere step away from entering the Martial Extermination Realm and he was extremely likely to become a rank four Talisman Master in the future.

His future was a lot brighter than both Gong Hang and Fan Yuanhui, and as long as nothing went wrong, he would become the first rank four Talisman Master of the Tongyou Institution!

Simply put, Shang Xia was the future of the Talisman Hall!

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When Shang Xia tossed out 8 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans, the Talisman Hall wasn't the only ones who were shocked. The news traveled over to the Formation Hall like a terrifying hurricane and caught everyone by surprise like a thunderbolt on a sunny day.

When Ma Mingzheng and Bai Luming heard of it, their reactions were basically the same.

Initially, they felt that someone was playing a prank on them and they refused to believe it. Soon after, logic took over and they became serious. Finally, they shot a glance at each other before racing over to Chu Jia's place.

When they charged into her courtyard, they discovered her curled up into a ball on her soft chair. It seemed as though she didn't care about her image at all. However, her mind was sharp and despite looking like she wasn't fully awake, she pretty much guessed the reason behind their arrival. "Hoho! Don't tell me Talisman Master Shang actually busted his dantian and completed 3 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans?"

A look of excitement appeared on her face and she couldn't be bothered with them as she continued, "How much resources did the Talisman Hall throw away this time? What was his success rate? How many pieces of talisman paper did he waste?"

Ma Mingzheng and Bai Luming glanced at each other and raised an eyebrow each. Ma Mingzheng eventually broke the silence, “Weren’t you banking on the fact that he won’t be able to craft a single one?”

Rolling her eyes, she yawned lazily, “If he really failed to craft a single one, do you think the two of you will be bothered enough to come disturb me from my beauty sleep?” Getting up slowly, she decided to ‘comfort’ the two of them. “Alright, alright, there’s no need to be so worked up. It’s just 3 pieces of Gale Thunderbolt Talisman. I’ve already come up with a plan to start the modifications. We’ll just let them enjoy their success this time. Anyway, they won’t be able to change a thing. We’ll be the ones telling them what to do from now on. Hehe, alright, if there’s nothing else, I’m going back to sleep...”

Realizing that the strange look on their faces hadn’t faded, Chu Jia stopped herself mid-yawn and frowned, “What’s the matter? Did he actually manage to craft 5 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans?”

Sinking into contemplation, the talented Formation Master Chu nodded her head with praise. “Looks like the kid isn’t a good for nothing after all. I definitely underestimated him previously. Hehe, he’s worthy to be called Deputy Patriarch Shang’s grandson! Oh well, it doesn’t matter! The modifications I’m thinking of already took 5 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans into account. Looks like I won’t be able to continue sleeping today, hmp!”

Chu Jia slowly crawled into a seated position as she stretched her back. A helpless look was stuck to her face as she grumbled inwardly about starting work soon.

“It’s not 5 talismans...” Ma Mingzheng muttered.

Chu Jia’s movement froze and the air of laziness around her disappeared instantly. She turned her head violently to stare at him before quickly regaining her calm. She asked nonchalantly, “Don’t tell me he managed to finish 7 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans...”

If it was anyone else, they wouldn’t be able to detect the sudden fluctuation of heaven and earth qi when Chu Jia reacted earlier. However, Ma Mingzheng could be considered to be Chu Jia’s half-teacher. He knew exactly what she was feeling when she reacted earlier.

As someone who had been hailed a genius her whole life, practically everyone forgot about Chu Jia’s cultivation. She was also a hopeful candidate to step into the Martial Extermination Realm in the future and she should be known as a powerful expert and Formation Master. With Shang Xia’s current achievements, she was starting to feel the pressure of finally not being number 1.

Because that was the case, Ma Mingzheng felt that there was no need to hide his achievements from her any longer and he muttered, “No. He didn’t just finish 7. He made 8 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans.”

A deafening silence filled the courtyard and Bai Luming was starting to feel uncomfortable with the crushing pressure that was starting to descend on him. He wanted nothing more than to run away immediately.

He wasn’t the only one. Ma Mingzheng could also feel the change in the atmosphere. He sighed softly to himself. He knew that if not for the fact that Chu Jia was adamant about entering the grand completion stage of the Martial Intent Realm before breaking through, she would already have entered the Martial Extermination Realm. Back during the War of the Coral Forest, she actually had 2 chances to break through.

Looks like Shang Xia lit a fire at her ass this time.

“Haha... Hahahaha...” Chu Jia’s laughter filled the air suddenly. “Interesting! I didn’t think that he would be able to do something like that! Looks like I underestimated him!”

Footsteps could be heard the next moment as she started walking out of her courtyard. “Now, it’s our turn to be on the receiving end. I definitely didn’t expect him to finish 7 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans. I didn’t plan for it at all, but that doesn’t mean it will stop this grandaunt from modifying the formation!”

“This is really interesting! I haven’t been pushed so hard in a long time!” Chu Jia growled. The lazy air that had always been around her was nowhere to be seen, and she seemed to experience a heaven-shaking transformation. Waves of heaven and earth qi emerged from her and she seemed to be walking into a great battle.

She took several steps out of her courtyard before a frown formed on her face. She didn’t notice any movement behind her and she tilted her head to the side before muttering, “Teacher Ma, Bai Luming, aren’t you coming?”

“Little Chu...” Ma Mingzheng coughed lightly before signaling towards Bai Luming. “Actually, Mister Bai will tell you what happened.”

An apologetic light flashed in his eyes as he threw under the bus. Bai Luming’s eyes widened and he glared at Ma Mingzheng. He didn’t expect the old man to be so shameless.

“Bai Luming?” Chu Jia growled.

A sense of danger overwhelmed him as he quickly lowered his gaze. He was extremely helpless and he didn’t dare to hide anything from her at all. He could only whisper softly, “Actually... Actually, Talisman Master Shang said something when handed the talismans over... I’ll quote him directly. He said. ‘The Formation Hall asked for 7 pieces to start their modification process. Go ask if they can do anything with 8 talismans’.”

The moment the words left his lips, Chu Jia glared at him. Bai Luming was so afraid he took a step back in retreat.

“Is he trying to provoke me?!” Chu Jia squealed before turning away.

Ma Mingzheng didn’t know where to look, but he sure as hell didn’t dare to look at Chu Jia at the moment. He quickly pretended to think about something.

As for Bai Luming, he couldn’t help but grumble silently: “Weren’t you the one who provoked the Talisman Hall before this?”

Naturally, he wouldn’t dare to say his thoughts out loud. Even if someone beat him to death, he wouldn’t let those words come out of his lips.

“Amazing! Hmph, does he think making 8 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans will stump me? This grandaunt here isn’t so easily defeated! Hmph, hmph!” Chu Jia started laughing maniacally.

“Ahem, about that...” Ma Mingzheng knew that he couldn’t play stupid forever and he quickly tried to soothe the situation. “Little Chu, you thought of a plan with 7 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans. I believe you’ll be able to come up with an idea to incorporate 8 of them into the talisman too! Even if he manages to produce a ninth one, it won’t be a problem!”

Seeing the cloudy look on her face dissipating, Ma Mingzheng changed his tone slightly. “However, modifying the formation would take some time. We’re in a rush to deploy the formation and we might not have the time to think of how to fuse 8 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans into the grand formation.”

Since Ma Mingzheng had spoken, he wasn’t going to let Chu Jia interrupt him before he could finish. He quickly added, “Alright, we’ll stick to the plan of using 7 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans, Tell the Talisman Hall to send 7 of them over. Tell them we’re pressed for time and don’t have the ability to come up with a way to incorporate 8 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans into the grand formations on short notice.”

His actions clearly stated that the Formation Hall was going to admit defeat this time.

Chu Jia was naturally unwilling to accept such an outcome, but Ma Mingzheng was exceptionally serious this time. He knew that deploying the grand formation was more important than any ego battle at the moment.

No matter how hard she gnashed her teeth, Chu Jia knew that she had to admit defeat for now.

Chapter 430: Yang Fire Stone

At the border of the Yan Continent on the Azure Origin World, a ray of extermination origin tore through the skies as Shang Ke’s body tumbled through the air. He landed on a mountain and tried to steady himself. He looked extremely haggard and he looked around him before sucking in a long breath.

Suppressing the energy fluctuations around him, he yelled, “Fellow cultivators, you’ve been chasing me from the border of the Xu Continent! Are you really planning to leave me with no path of retreat?”

Two figures appeared ten thousand feet or so away and the taller and fatter one among them spoke up. “We don’t wish to kill you. As long as you hand over the Dragon Headed Wintersweet, we’ll leave you alone!”

Shang Ke rejected it resolutely. “Impossible! I obtained the Dragon Headed Wintersweet from the Lushan Paradise in the Yang Continent. If you need it, why don’t you go ask them for one?”

The other Martial Extermination Realm cultivator who was clad in robes that had clouds embroidered on it sneered, “If not for the fact that we came a little later, the Dragon Headed Wintersweet wouldn’t have fallen into your hands.”

Shang Ke raised his eyebrows in shock. “Looks like you two had your eyes on me for a while now. However, the person from the Lushan Paradise promised to keep this a secret. How did you learn about this and my whereabouts?”

The taller and fatter cultivator mocked Shang Ke ruthlessly seeing as victory was at hand. “As a northerner, your entry to the Yang Continent is eye-catching enough, much less when you’re a Martial Extermination Realm cultivator. The Lushan Paradise doesn't need to reveal your whereabouts. There has been tons of eyes on you the moment he appeared. Luckily, we came the earliest and the others were too afraid to interfere.”

“So it looks like the two of you aren’t nameless experts. I wonder if I can learn your names?”

The cloud robed cultivator snorted in response, “What’s the matter? Are you planning on taking revenge on us brothers after today?”

The words had just left his lips when the taller and fatter cultivator made a seal with his hand. Two giant palms made from heaven and earth qi appeared on either side of the mountain Shang Ke was standing on and they closed in rapidly in an attempt to turn Shang Ke into a human pancake.

“Hmph, you will have to be able to leave alive before thinking about revenge!”

When one of them made his move, the other soared higher into the air as a long banner appeared behind him. It started to store power while waiting for Shang Ke to reveal his weakness.

“Hehe, you’re an arrow at the end of your flight. How much strength do you even have to fight against us?” The cloud robed cultivator sneered. He discovered that Shang Ke was merely a first layer Martial Extermination Realm expert and after being chased for thousands and thousands of miles, he had probably exhausted himself. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have stopped in the middle of nowhere to start talking reason with them.

In his eyes, Shang Ke made a stupid decision. If he gave up the Dragon Headed Wintersweet initially, they might have allowed him to get away. However, letting him live was out of the question now that they wasted so much effort on him.

With victory at hand, the cloud robed cultivator stared at Shang Ke like he was looking at a dead man. However, a two colored light appeared from the mountain when the heaven and earth qi palms slammed shut.

“You... You’re at the second layer of the Martial Extermination Realm! You actually hid your cultivation!” The cloud robed cultivator yelled in shock as he swung his banner down at Shang Ke. Countless blades that were made from green wind-attributed qi emerged and shot downwards.

However, a long spear tore through the void at that instant and turned the skies above Shang Ke into mush. A huge portion of the wind blades that were falling were destroyed.

“You actually have an accomplice!” The cloud robed cultivator roared in fright as he retreated in terror. He didn’t forget to remind his brother to stop getting tangled up with Shang Ke now that an unknown expert had arrived.

Ripples formed in the air above Shang Ke and a middle-aged female cultivator who held a long spear in her hand emerged from the void.

It didn't come as a surprise that the person who arrived was Shang Pei who went to the Jing Continent after their last meeting.

The cloud robed cultivator shifted his gaze from Shang Ke to Shang Pei several times in succession before grunting in defeat, "We're leaving!"

It seemed as though he understood that they wouldn't be killing Shang Ke to take away his treasures now that his backup had arrived. As such, he made a resolute call to retreat.

Seeing the two Martial Extermination Realm experts who hadn't revealed their identities take their leave, Shang Ke finally heaved a sigh of relief.

With the immediate threat gone, he was finally able to catch his breath. Feeling a wave of weakness filling his body, he became a lot more pale than before.

Regardless if he was hiding his strength or not, being chased for thousands of miles tired him out.

While he was catching his breath, Shang Pei's voice came from the side. "Fifth Uncle, when did you manage to refine your second extermination origin?"

...

Shang Xia's first attempt at crafting Gale Thunderbolt Talismans could be considered a resounding success. He used 14 pieces of rank three talisman paper to make 8 Gale Thunderbolt Talismans. If he released the news of his success rate, the entire grade of rank three Talisman Masters might be thrown into an uproar.

Not to mention the fact that the Gale Thunderbolt Talismans was one of the most difficult rank three talismans to craft.

Shang Xia might not plan to spread the news himself, but one couldn't forget that Ren Huan was the one who delivered the talisman papers to Shang Xia. He gave Shang Xia 17 pieces of rank three talisman paper in total, and even if they used that as a benchmark to calculate Shang Xia's rate of success, it was still a shocking amount.

The outside world might know that Shang Xia had an extremely high success rate, but only Shang Xia himself knew the true reason behind it. One was his unique crafting method, but there were also many micro factors that allowed him to do so.

Of the other reasons, one of the most important ones was because of Ren Huan's talisman paper.

Due to the properties of the Stormy Lightning Leaf, the talisman paper Ren Huan made contained the properties of wind and lightning even before the crafting process started. It greatly reduced Shang Xia's burden of having to introduce them during the crafting process.

Of course, Shang Xia's cultivation also played a pretty big role. One couldn't forget about how he cultivated lightning attributed martial arts with a trace of heavenly lightning contained in his body.

The rest of the reasons didn't matter too much as luck pretty much made up the rest of his success.

Those were the true breakdown of Shang Xia's success, but no one could deny that his actions raised a huge commotion in the Tongyou Institution.

The Talisman Hall also managed to enjoy some benefits as a result of his actions. Their workload was greatly decreased due to the changes the Formation Hall had to make and some of them were truly grateful.

Obviously, the same couldn't be said for those in the Formation Hall. In order to incorporate the Gale Thunderbolt Talismans into the formation, all of them had started to work on overdrive. It was even said that the lazy but talented Chu Jia had even given up on her naps in order to work tirelessly on the reformation.

Everyone in the Talisman Hall sucked in a cold breath when they heard what was happening.

When the entire Observation Peak was bustling with activities, Shang Xia, who stunned the world with his feat, managed to free up half a month for himself. He spent the whole time in his secret chamber and finally managed to recover from the fatigue he felt.

The only reason he managed to recover so quickly was because of his strong divine sense. He had the Man and Heaven Synergy Chapter to assist him, greatly increasing his recovery rate.

If any other rank three Talisman Master was in his position, they might not be able to touch their brush for the next three months after pulling what Shang Xia did.

Emerging from his secret chamber, the fuss over his success rate that happened when he delivered the talismans had already blown over. Shang Xia went to look for Zhang Haogu quietly in order to obtain the inheritance for the Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman.

In the following half a month, Shang Xia immersed himself in his study of how to craft the Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman.

When he was clear about the principles behind the Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman, he changed directions suddenly and started to research his unique way of talisman crafting.

Just like that, another half a month passed before Shang Xia was ready to craft the Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman. Comparing it to the Gale Thunderbolt Talisman, Shang Xia estimated that the difference in difficulty of crafting both talismans was pretty wide. The Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman was much easier to create.

As Shang Xia planned to use the Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman for himself, he couldn't rely on the Talisman Hall for resources.

Luckily, he saved a piece of talisman paper from his first batch of Formation Talismans. Along with the talisman jades he obtained during the gathering, he was able to try his hand at crafting some Bamboo Void Breaking Talismans.

The only thing that was worth mentioning was the rank three talisman paper made from the Stormy Lightning Leaves the Talisman Hall provided. Because of his success, the Talisman Hall would naturally not bother him about them. Moreover, they wouldn't know if those talisman papers were destroyed during the crafting process. Those talisman papers, along with several auxiliary resources, went into Shang Xia's pockets just like that.

During his recovery period, Ren Huan also delivered the rest of the talisman paper that belonged to Shang Xia. There was a total of 18 rank three talisman paper made from the Stormy Lightning Leaves, bringing Shang Xia's total possession of rank three talisman paper made from those leaves up to 21.

For obvious reasons, Shang Xia didn't plan on using those talisman paper to craft Bamboo Void Breaking Talismans.

When Shang Xia prepared himself to start crafting talismans again, 1.5 months had already passed since he handed in those talismans. The modifications of the grand formation was going smoothly, but they only managed to complete half of it.

With nothing else to stop him, Shang Xia sealed his secret chamber and started his first attempt to craft a Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman. It came as no surprise when the first piece of talisman paper exploded in his face. Luckily, that was the low-grade rank three talisman paper he used to craft Formation Talismans.

Using his talisman jades, he finally completed a Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman after wasting one of them. With his success, the number of rank three talismans he could create increased to 6!

When he was done with his first piece of Bamboo Void Breaking Talisman, taking a break was the furthest thing on his mind. He couldn't wait to open Sima Zhangxing's spatial case.

He made up his mind when he was choosing between the cases the first time. After Senior Brother Zhou's case, he would open Sima Zhanxing's case before finally progressing to Chu Chen's spatial artifact.

With a burst of light, the restrictions around Sima Zhanxing's spatial case shattered.

The items contained within scattered to the ground before him and Shang Xia's gaze immediately landed on a pebble that was emitting a soft red glow.

"Hah? Is that a piece of Yang Fire Stone?!"