

The Heavens 441

Chapter 441: Hello Everyone, It's Me!

“Crash!” After the ice boulder crumbled, a frosty wind swept across Shang Xia’s body, causing him to shiver slightly.

After the world origin within the ice boulder was refined by his Crimson Soul Tablet, the Spirit of Winter that caused all sorts of trouble earlier lost its protection.

Shang Xia quickly weakened the Spirit of Winter before trapping it in the Spirit Extermination Gourd in his hands.

A ray of milky white radiance emerged from the opening of the Spirit Extermination Gourd all of a sudden as it tried to blind Shang Xia.

With a cold snort, Shang Xia opened his mouth to release a breath of hot air at the ray of freezing light. The milky light seemed to have met its greatest fear in life as it shrank by several times to become a snowflake that fell towards the land.

“It’s actually the Spirit of Winter. Hahaha! You can probably be named the Spirit of Snow.” Shang Xia chuckled to himself.

Reaching out slightly, he trapped the fleeing Spirit of Snow in space as it tried to struggle free in mid air.

After entering the Four Constellation Realm, Shang Xia gained the ability to manipulate space however he wished. His ability to control space was leagues ahead of what he managed to accomplish in the Martial Intent Realm. In the past, he was barely able to affect space. Now, he could control it according to his will.

Reaching for a spirit sealing bottle, Shang Xia casually popped the cap before shoving the Spirit of Snow into it. When he was done, he sealed the bottle casually.

Next, he brought out a spirit suppressing case and did the same to the maple leaf that contained the Falling Leaf Extermination Origin.

When Shang Xia killed his enemies in the past, he didn’t manage to gain a lot of treasures he could make use of. He would get lucky occasionally and receive something he required for his breakthrough. However, the number of spirit sealing bottles, spirit suppression cases, spirit restraining pouches, and items similar to those were plentiful.

Opening up a path in space to the fallen pavilion where he first encountered the Hundred Flowers Essence Extermination Origin, he kept the remaining extermination origin in his Spirit Extermination Gourd. Staring at the various herbs around, Shang Xia had a great battle with his sense of reason before finally suppressing his greed. Realizing that leaving those herbs would be for the best, he started to make his way down to the lake.

The ball in the middle of the lake seemed to have shrunken slightly, and Shang Xia didn’t store it like the other extermination origins. This time, he brought out a copper bowl that scooped up some water along with the ball of Mirroring Sun Extermination Origin.

Before Shang Xia tried to refine the Mirroring Sun Extermination Origin, it had always been living quietly under the lake. As such, Shang Xia figured that keeping it in the same water was a great way to keep it sealed.

With all four extermination origins collected, Shang Xia decided that it was time for some self evaluation. Comparing himself to Martial Extermination Realm experts of the Azure Origin World, Shang Xia discovered that he had two great advantages. He held an advantage over them in the sense that he was able to perfect his advancement medicine with the help of his Crimson Soul Tablet. The other was that he already gathered all 4 extermination origins when breaking through.

His speed of cultivation might be lowered in the foreseeable future as he had to refine all 4 extermination origins at once, but he wouldn't face a bottleneck before he reached the large completion stage. Also, he didn't need to waste his time looking for other extermination origins!

Since he had completed what he set out to do, Shang Xia found no reason to remain on the Yuxi Peak any longer.

Releasing his divine sense to observe the situation around him, Shang Xia discovered that his divine sense had also undergone some sort of transformation. The feeling he had was different from before.

Unfortunately, he couldn't examine the difference in his divine sense closely at the moment as he discovered an exchange that was taking place several miles away.

A ray of reddish-gold lightning emerged from his palm and it sliced open the space before him. Stepping through the opening he created, Shang Xia's figure disappeared instantly.

Several miles away from the Yuxi Peak, Ge Qingzhu and Zhang Haogu were facing Yan Su'er and a Martial Extermination Realm expert from the Changbai Holy Land.

"The two of you should have seen whatever you came here to see. How long do you plan on staying?" Ge Qingzhu asked in annoyance.

Because of the huge disturbance on the Yuxi Peak due to Shang Xia's breakthrough, almost everyone in the battlefield between the two worlds learned about the abnormal situation happening on the Yuxi Peak.

Every time a slight fluctuation appeared, Yan Su'er and the Martial Extermination Realm expert from the Changbai Holy Land would appear, causing Ge Qingzhu and Zhang Haogu endless annoyance. Shang Xia's breakthrough wasn't as short as it seemed anyway. He used several days to complete the 49 cycles of refinement, and the two experts from the Azure Spiritual World would come every day.

Yan Su'er's gaze didn't leave the Yuxi Peak as she chuckled happily, "Oh? Things are different this time. I'm afraid the little friend you're hiding on the Yuxi Peak succeeded. He should be coming out about now."

A flash of joy appeared in Ge Qingzhu's eyes, but he managed to hide from Yan Su'er and the Martial Extermination Realm expert from the Changbai Holy Land. Without a change in expression, he tried to change the topic. "Matriarch Yan's cultivation is profound indeed. I'm sure you have already entered the large completion stage of the Martial Extermination Realm. This Junior is a little curious. Why would the four great races of the Liao Continent and the Changbai Holy Land

allow you to remain in the battlefield between the two worlds? Why didn't they send you over to that place along with the rest? Won't they be missing out on an extremely strong expert this way?"

Yan Su'er smiled and didn't seem to realize that Ge Qingzhu was trying to shift the conversation. She sighed helplessly, "It's unfortunate for us, no doubt. But as the only worthless Martial Extermination Realm expert in my race, I have to stay behind. It's a shame..."

Pressing his lips together, Ge Qingzhu was too lazy to respond to her nonsensical remarks. If a large completion stage Martial Extermination Realm could be considered worthless, what was he, a first layer Martial Extermination Realm?

Zhang Haogu quickly stepped up and asked, "It's just a breakthrough to the Martial Extermination Realm. What's the big fuss? If Matriarch Yan is so concerned about the breakthrough, I'll personally bring them over for a meeting later. What's the point of coming over here every day?"

Before Yan Su'er could say anything, Wei Yunyang, the elder of the Changbai Holy Land who was beside her, spoke up. "There's no need for us to beat about the bush anyway. Our experts might not have entered the Yuxi Peak in the past, but we can guess what's inside. The person who is breaking through has to be using a new method if they can make use of the chaotic extermination qi in there to do so. It's difficult for us to see something so special and we're definitely not going to hole up somewhere and miss it."

At the very least, Ge Qingzhu had some respect for Yan Su'er. The same couldn't be said for the elder of the Changbai Holy Land. Turning to Wei Yunyang, Ge Qingzhu snorted coldly, "Heh, do you think you can learn how to break through just by observing the surroundings of the Yuxi Peak? The cultivation systems of our worlds are completely different. Even if we taught you our way to break through from the Martial Intent Realm to the Martial Extermination Realm, do you dare to teach your disciples?!"

Ge Qingzhu's words actually gave Wei Yunyang the confirmation he wanted, but Ge Qingzhu couldn't care less. After all, with the huge commotion Shang Xia caused, there wasn't a need to mention Martial Extermination Realm experts. Even some Martial Intent Realm disciples would be able to tell that Shang Xia's way of advancement was different from others.

Wei Yunyang continued, "Oh? I'll do it. Teach me your secrets to break through and I'll have a god at it. Are you sure it won't be of use to us?"

"Enough... You two..." Zhang Haogu interrupted them with a dry cough when all four of them discovered spatial fluctuations around them.

A look of joy appeared on Ge Qingzhu's face. "He's here!"

The words barely left his lips when a bolt of reddish-gold lightning emerged from the void.

Ge Qingzhu might not understand the full implications of what was happening, but he discovered that the other three wore serious looks on their faces.

As a frown made its way onto his face, he eventually discovered what he missed.

Space manipulation...

As the main lightning bolt disappeared, tiny arcs flickered through the air as it turned into a stable opening in the void.

The faces of all four Martial Extermination Realm experts changed instantly.

A newly advanced Martial Extermination Realm expert should be familiarizing himself with his newfound strength. It was possible to affect space with their attacks after entering the Martial Extermination Realm, but one would only be able to travel through space after a period of acclimatization.

From how a spatial passage was formed, none of them could believe they were looking at a newly advanced Martial Extermination Realm expert.

Regardless of whatever shock they were experiencing, it didn't take long for Shang Xia's figure to emerge from the spatial tunnel he created.

"It's you!" Yan Su'er felt something click in her mind after seeing Shang Xia. "That piece of Crimson Crystal Valley Brewer's Yeast went to you?"

Shang Xia looked at the four of them again and ensured that a battle wasn't going to break out before replying. "Many thanks for the help, Senior Yan." A smile appeared on his face as he spoke.

Yan Su'er glanced at Wei Yunyang for a second before snorting coldly, "There's no need for your cheap tricks here. You can't affect the relationship of our races with the Changbai Holy Land with a mere thanks. Anyway, it's just a rank four treasure or two. It's not like we made a loss trading it with you."

"I'm afraid you didn't refine a single extermination origin to step into the Martial Extermination Realm, right?" A foreign voice interrupted them all of a sudden.

Shang Xia's gaze landed on Wei Yunyang but he didn't reply immediately. Instead, he looked at Wei Yunyang from head to toe while sizing him up.

Who would have thought that Wei Yunyang's expression would turn ugly as Shang Xia examined him? He could feel a sense of pressure coming from the youngster and he felt his divine sense being suppressed.

He thought to himself: Was that really a newly advanced Martial Extermination Realm?!

Before Shang Xia could say anything, Ge Qingzhu coughed lightly and made the introductions.

Gasping lightly, Shang Xia responded, "Oh, it's an Inner Sect Elder of the Changbai Holy Land! Hehe, you're not the first Inner Sect Elder I've met."

Snorting coldly, Wei Yunyang turned his head away. He obviously knew what Shang Xia meant by that.

From what he learned, Huang Yunxiang and Qi Yunxiu's disappearance had something to do with the youngster before him.

Wait...

Thinking about how Shang Xia had a hand in their deaths when he was only in the Martial Intent Realm, Wei Yunyang's expression changed drastically. The Martial Intent Realm disciple was now a Martial Extermination Realm expert!

“Enough!” Yan Su’er tapped her staff lightly in the air and seemed to create a formless barrier around Wei Yunyang. It stopped Shang Xia’s divine sense suppression and allowed Wei Yunyang to heave a sigh of relief.

Shang Xia might be stronger than experts of the same level, but facing an old monster like Yan Su’er, he would lose in both experience and strength.

“Alright, now that we’ve met and cleared up some of our doubts, there’s no need for us to remain here. Congratulations on getting a unique Martial Extermination Realm expert in your ranks.” Yan Su’er muttered before turning to leave. She took a few steps in mid air and her body started to fade into the void.

Wei Yunyang’s cultivation level was far from Yan Su’er and he couldn’t mimic her actions. He retreated backwards while keeping an eye on all three of them. After retreating for a thousand feet, he turned around to tear a passage through space to leave.

Now that they had left, Shang Xia turned to Ge Qingzhu and Zhang Haogu as he cupped his fists in gratitude. “Many thanks for protecting this disciple during my breakthrough! Do you know how long I was on the Yuxi Peak for?”

Ge Qingzhu waved his hand casually in response. “Let’s not sweat the small stuff now. Tell me, how far can you extend your divine perception?”

Chapter 442: Secrets of the Institution

“How far can you extend your divine perception?” Ge Qingzhu asked impatiently now that Yan Su’er and Wei Yunyang were gone.

Who would have thought that Shang Xia would stare in the direction where they left with a strange look on his face?

After Yan Su’er and Wei Yunyang disappeared, a soft voice rang in Shang Xia’s mind. “Brat, this old lady’s granddaughter is similar to you in age. Her appearance is heavenly and you have definitely seen her before. There’s no need for me to praise her any more than that. Are you willing to take her as your wife? Hehe, if you are, I’ll go talk to your grandfather Shang Bo right now!”

Yan Su’er words nearly caused Shang Xia to cry out in fright.

Luckily, he didn’t lose his composure after hearing what she said. Turning back to Ge Qingzhu, Shang Xia gasped softly before extending his divine perception outwards. He instantly knew how far it stretched, and he replied, “Close to 8 miles. I just broke through and haven’t been able to make proper measurements.”

Widening his eyes in fright, Ge Qingzhu cried, “It’s no wonder you managed to locate us after your breakthrough. Then again, the range of your divine perception seems a little too large. After entering the Martial Extermination Realm, I can only detect a radius of 6 miles around myself. Even Instructor Liu thought I was pretty good. Haha, looks like my achievements are nothing compared to you.”

“Mister Ge, you’re exaggerating. You can’t say that!” Shang Xia quickly refuted.

Ordinarily, one's physical body and soul would undergo a transformation when they enter the Martial Extermination Realm. That would mean that their divine sense would improve greatly. When the transformation was complete, a Martial Extermination Realm expert's divine sense would be referred to as 'divine perception'!

According to the usual standards, a Martial Intent Realm cultivator's divine sense would be able to cover a hundred feet around themselves. After entering the Martial Extermination Realm, their divine perception would be able to envelop a 5 mile radius at the very least.

For experts like Ge Qingzhu to be able to cover 6 miles with their divine perception after breaking through was a testament to his deep foundations.

Unfortunately, comparison was the thief of joy. Compared to Shang Xia's divine perception that could reach up to 8 miles, Ge Qingzhu felt a little overwhelmed.

What Ge Qingzhu didn't know was that Shang Xia wasn't telling the truth. Shang Xia understood that his divine perception was probably a lot stronger than cultivators of the same level and he didn't wish to embarrass Ge Qingzhu who had broken through to the Martial Extermination Realm before him.

Because of the Man and Heaven Synergy Chapter Shang Xia comprehended, his divine sense in the Martial Intent Realm was already leagues ahead of cultivators of the same level. Now That he had advanced, his divine perception was able to cover a distance of ten miles.

...

Seeing as there were no other disturbances, Shang Xia returned to the Yuxi Peak with Ge Qingzhu and Zhang Haogu in tow. Along the way, Shang Xia mentioned the process of his breakthrough briefly and introduced the current state of the Yuxi Peak.

As they stood at the top of the mountain, Ge Qingzhu and Zhang Haogu finally revealed some of the institution's secrets to the youngster.

Now that he had entered the Martial Extermination Realm and truly entered the upper echelons of the institution, he gained the qualifications to learn some of the secrets the institution had been hiding.

Among the secrets he was told, one of them consisted of the reason behind the disappearance of the strong Martial Extermination Realm experts from the battlefield between the two worlds close to a year ago.

The institution seemed to have entered an alliance with the Changbai Holy land to fight other factions over a broken continent floating deep in space.

"Since they have yet to return, doesn't that mean that the operation is still ongoing?" Shang Xia muttered softly.

"Yeah." Zhang Haogu replied.

"Since that's the case, will they need further reinforcements?" Shang Xia asked.

Zhang Haogu understood Shang Xia's intentions immediately. "Do you wish to go?"

Before Shang Xia could reply, Ge Qingzhu chirped in from the side. “I’m afraid you won’t be able to head over even if you want to. Only Patriarch Kou and those old monsters in the Martial Dipper Realm will be able to force their way deep into space. If you wish to head there alone...”

Ge Qingzhu shook his head slowly at the side and decided to not speak any further.

Zhang Haogu took over and continued, “We need some experts to remain in the Tongyou City and the battlefield between the two worlds. The battlefield between the two worlds wouldn’t matter too much even if all of them left for the broken continent, but the Tongyou City is another story altogether. At the moment, our You Continent can be said to be an empty fort.

“That’s right. You might think that we’re safe because of the alliance we formed with the Changbai Holy Land, but you cannot forget that their foundations run deep. They have a lot more Martial Extermination Realm experts among them and they might play dirty to try to gain an upper hand. Now that you entered the Martial Extermination Realm, they will be forced to restrain themselves a little.” Ge Qingzhu added.

Shang Xia nodded and realized that his request to join the expedition didn’t seem too realistic. The two of them made sense and he could only agree helplessly.

After telling Shang Xia about the recent happenings, they shifted their attention to the Yuxi Peak.

“This is definitely a massive treasure trove, especially the flower garden. It is actually able to produce Hundred Flower Essence Extermination?Origin... Looks like the experts of the institution will be able to choose among more extermination origins now.” Zhang Haogu said while stroking his beard.

“After Shang Xia entered the Martial Extermination Realm, the chaotic extermination qi surrounding the Yuxi Peak disappeared. We need to lay down a formation if we wish to retain control over this area and someone has to be stationed to guard the place.” Ge Qingzhu muttered.

Shang Xia laughed when he heard their concerns. “Isn’t this an easy problem to solve? Don’t we have a Martial Extermination Realm Formation Master? Her achievements in the way of formations should increase greatly now that she advanced into the Martial Extermination Realm. She should be able to lay down a formation around the Yuxi Peak and remain here to protect the region.”

Unfortunately, Zhang Haogu shook his head while sighing, “Instructor Chu isn’t in the battlefield between the two worlds at the moment. She joined the expedition to the broken continent and left with the others a while ago.”

“Huh? Didn’t she just advance into the Martial Extermination Realm? Wasn’t she faster than me by a few months? How did she manage to catch them before they started the operation?” Shang Xia gasped.

“Haha, do you really think we’ll send all our experts beyond the heavens in one go? They went in batches. Luckily for her, the institution chose to wait for her to allow her

to be part of the first group to head for the broken continent. As a rank four Formation Master, she would be extremely useful in the initial stages of the operation. Everyone else went over in batches after and everyone who was supposed to be there had already left." Ge Qingzhu smiled.

Zhang Haogu waved his hand to cut their conversation short. "Alright, let's not rush the matter of laying down a formation around the Yuxi Peak. We might not lay down a formation now, but we still need someone to protect the region to prevent troublemakers from causing damage to our resources. The two of you can choose someone to stay behind while the other returns to the Observation Peak with me."

A crafty smile appeared on Ge Qingzhu's face and he turned to Shang Xia. "Why don't you remain here for now?"

"Why don't we start by telling me how long I spend on the Yuxi Peak for my breakthrough?" Shang Xia hesitated for a moment before asking.

"Was it 49 days or was it 50 days? We're not too sure about the exact time, but it's one or the other. Anyway, we're currently in the later half of the 845th year of the Divine Martial Calendar in the Azure Origin World. You have already completed your term in the Tongyou Institution and graduated from the Upper Division. As of right now, you're no longer a student in the institution." Ge Qingzhu explained.

"Has that much time passed?" Shang Xia gasped. "It didn't feel that long since I started my breakthrough..."

He might be expressing his doubt, but deep down, he knew that everything they were saying was true. It seemed as though every cycle he experienced after ingesting his Four Seasons Samsara Wine lasted an entire day.

Zhang Haogu added, "It's a common occurrence for you to forget the flow of time during your breakthrough. The moment you drink your advancement medicine, you will enter a mystical state of mind. There isn't a need to mention space and time. Even your memories might be affected."

"Huh?!" Shang Xia nearly jumped in fright as he couldn't believe what he was hearing.

Ge Qingzhu revealed a confused expression and it seemed as though it was also his first time hearing of something like that.

Due to Zhang Haogu's reputation as a knowledgeable senior, neither of them doubted his words. They were merely confused by what he said.

After thinking for a second, Shang Xia turned to Ge Qingzhu and asked, "Mister Ge, would you mind staying on the Yuxi Peak for a little bit more? This disciple wishes to return to the Shang Clan for now."

As he refined four extermination origins to enter the Four Constellation Realm, all Shang Xia had to do was to enter seclusion and slowly cultivate in order to grow stronger. Staying on the Yuxi Peak was the most ideal situation, but Shang Xia still wished to return to the Shang Clan to notify them

of his success. At the same time, he wanted to retrieve some resources that would aid in his cultivation.

With a grin appearing on his face, Ge Qingzhu replied, "Of course! Don't worry about it! The environment here is pretty good and I wouldn't mind staying for a little while more."

Bidding Ge Qingzhu farewell, Shang Xia got ready to return to the Observation Peak with Zhang Haogu.

Getting ready to start their journey, Shang Xia was feeling a little worried. After all, it was his first time flying through the air by using his extermination origin.

In the past, Shang Xia had been griping about the fact that he didn't possess a better movement technique than his Irregular Steps. Now that he thought about it, he was able to soar through the air with his extermination origins. There was no need to look for another movement technique.

As they started to make their way back, Zhang Haogu planned to slow down a little in order to wait for Shang Xia to familiarize himself with the feeling of flight.

He didn't expect for a weird light to appear under Shang Xia's feet before the youngster tore through the air at a terrifying speed.

Before he could express his shock, Shang Xia had already flown several miles ahead. Circulating his inner qi, he quickly gave chase.

Staring at the two of them who just left the Yuxi Peak, Ge Qingzhu's jaws were agape. He didn't know what to say but it didn't matter. He wouldn't have anyone to speak to regardless.

Slowly learning how to control his flight, Shang Xia managed to slow down slightly to allow Zhang Haogu to catch up. As the two of them returned to the Observation Peak together, he bade the instructor farewell before returning to the Shang Clan's territory on the Observation Peak.

Just as he landed, he saw two people staring at him with dumbfounded expressions on their faces.

Looking at the two of them, a look of joy flashed across Shang Xia's eyes. "Uncle Quan, you left seclusion! Did everything go smoothly?"

The two before him were naturally Shang Tai and Shang Quan, the managers of the Shang Clan on the Observation Peak.

Shang Xia's question seemed a little useless as he had long detected the change in Shang Quan before he arrived. The aura that came from Shang Quan was something that could only exist on Martial Intent Realm cultivators.

Shang Xia's joy and surprise dimmed in comparison to the two when they saw him landing before them.

"Little Xia, you managed to enter the Martial Extermination Realm!" The two of them yelled in unison. Looking at each other and then back at Shang Xia, the three of them burst out laughing.

Chapter 443: Ren Huan's Request

In the Shang Clan Manor on the Observation Peak.

Shang Xia wore a depressed expression as he left his secret chamber after finishing a usual day of cultivation.

Since the time he returned, he had been dealing with matters that popped up during his breakthrough on the Yuxi Peak. He was especially busy due to his role in the Talisman Hall. There were countless requests for him to craft a talisman for them, and those actually wouldn't be considered a serious problem as the Talisman Hall would be able to handle those on his behalf. The issue came when cultivators were seeking out Shang Xia through their connections with him either directly or indirectly. The Talisman Hall didn't know if they should reply on Shang Xia's behalf. There were even some who brought a large amount of gifts over for Shang Xia in order to request his services and that gave the Talisman Hall a huge headache.

However, Shang Xia had to admit that even he was moved by some of the gifts they had brought. His heart itched slightly and it was obvious the treasures they brought were of exceptional quality. If Shang Xia reacted that way, it wasn't hard to imagine how the other members of the Talisman Hall felt.

After careful consideration, Shang Xia decided that his personal cultivation came first. By telling everyone he needed to consolidate his foundations, he managed to reject a majority of those who came asking for talismans. He only accepted the request of those who had exceptionally good relationships with him or those who had brought an astounding amount of precious treasures.

Naturally, he promised to fulfill their request with the prerequisite that it wouldn't affect his cultivation.

With Shang Xia's fame like the sun in the midday skies, many cultivators didn't bother running over to the Talisman Hall to look for him after learning that he had returned. Instead, they ran directly to the Shang Clan's territory to look for him. Half of those who went to the Shang Clan's territory had actual requests they were hoping Shang Xia could fulfill, but a greater portion of them were merely trying to show their face around Shang Xia to form a connection with him.

As long as one wasn't stupid, one would know how great Shang Xia's potential was. His talent in talisman crafting could be said to be unparalleled when he was in the Martial Intent Realm, and now that he entered the Martial Extermination Realm, it wouldn't take long for him to be able to craft rank four talismans.

Other than the cultivators on the Observation Peak looking for Shang Xia, there were countless others who had their sights set on him now either openly or in the dark. He could only blame the huge commotion he caused during his breakthrough on the Yuxi Peak for that.

With the constant bombardment of visitors, Shang Xia eventually announced that he would no longer be receiving guests after seeing several groups. He quickly gave Shang Quan and Shang Tai his instruction to accept some requests for talismans from those who had better relations with him before going back into hiding.

It had been half a month since he had broken through, and he had been cultivating in the Shang Clan's territory ever since then. During his cultivation process, he discovered something that was slightly depressing. He had been trying to consolidate his foundation and he would try to refine the extermination origins he had from time to time. Unfortunately, he realized that he was making no headway at all while trying to refine them.

When cultivating in the Shang Clan's territory on the Observation Peak, Shang Xia discovered that the extermination origins refused to form a connection with his dantian no matter how hard he tried.

Eventually, he came to the conclusion that the refinement process of his extermination origins had something to do with the change in seasons and a burning desire to return to the Yuxi Peak appeared in his heart.

Setting a time to return to the Yuxi Peak, Shang Xia decided to make use of the rest of his time to solidify his foundations and deal with matters on the Observation Peak.

He didn't expect Ren Huan to pay him a visit on the third day after he made up his mind to return to the Yuxi Peak.

Running out to the main hall, Shang Xia welcomed the talisman paper master. "Brother Ren, what's up?"

An embarrassed expression was plastered on Ren Huan's face as he muttered sheepishly, "Talisman Master Shang, I am really sorry. I planned to try my hand at crafting talisman paper from the rank four rat skin you gave me back when you attempted your breakthrough on the Yuxi Peak... I thought that you would become a rank four talisman master the moment you advanced and wanted to give you a huge surprise when you got back. However, I seemed to have underestimated the difficulty of crafting rank four talisman paper."

After not seeing each other for a few months, the status between the two of them experienced a massive transformation. Shang Xia was no longer a Martial Intent Realm cultivator!

Now that he had become a Martial Extermination Realm expert, he had entered the ranks of experts in the Azure Origin World. He could be considered a powerful figure in both the Azure Spiritual World and Azure Origin World, and Ren Huan knew that he couldn't show the slightest disrespect.

Shang Xia felt a wave of disappointment filling his heart, but he chuckled magnanimously in response. "Brother Ren, it's alright. It's your first time crafting rank four talisman paper and it won't be easy to succeed immediately. Now that you have the experience..."

"Eh?" Ren Huan interrupted Shang Xia before he completed his sentence. "Actually, I didn't fail completely..."

"Huh?" A frown appeared on Shang Xia's face as he didn't know what to think anymore.

Rubbing his nose, Ren Huan spoke cautiously. "The hide of the giant rat you gave me in the past should produce 5 to 6 rank four talisman paper if I maximize its use. However, I wasn't careful enough and my technique wasn't good enough. I only managed to cut it into 4 parts and only made 2 rank four talisman papers from the 4 portions... I apologize for wasting such precious resources..."

Shang Xia's eyes widened in shock and he gasped, "It's it just a portion less? Your success rate in crafting rank four talisman paper doesn't seem to be much of a problem either. With the experience you have, you shouldn't face any problems when you try again in the future."

A bitter smile appeared on Ren Huan's face when he understood that Shang Xia wasn't going to blame him for wasting the rank four giant rat's skin and he heaved a silent sigh of relief. However,

he shook his head slightly as he knew that he wouldn't be given so many opportunities to craft rank four talisman paper anyway.

Just the auxiliary resources required to craft a rank four talisman paper would be difficult to obtain, much less the main component of rank four talisman paper. Like the rank four giant rat skin Shang Xia gave him... How many people would be able to deal with a rank four spiritual beast before skinning it?

It was possible for there to be resources to craft rank four talismans in the Talisman Hall, but no matter how talented Ren Huan was, he could be considered a new face to the Tongyou Institution. He wouldn't be able to get his hands on those resources easily.

Fortunately for him, he understood that there was a massive opportunity waiting for him that couldn't be controlled by the Talisman Hall. The opportunity he had was none other than Shang Xia, the new Martial Extermination Realm expert of the Tongyou Institution and someone who was destined to become a rank four Talisman Master!

With his connections, he was the most likely talisman paper maker to form a better relationship with Shang Xia.

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As long as Shang Xia gave the word, he would be able to gain a portion of resources used to craft rank four talisman paper.

The more he thought about it, the more he praised himself for making the request to Shang Xia back when they met in the battlefield between the two worlds. Asking Shang Xia to pull him into the institution seemed to be the greatest decision of his life!

It was true that he had his selfish reasons for asking Shang Xia to recommend him to the institution back then, but his ability to craft talisman paper couldn't be denied. Shang Xia understood that point as well and didn't mind helping him out.

Ren Huan's intention to look for Shang Xia couldn't be hidden from the latter. With a smile on his face, Shang Xia asked, "Brother Ren, do you have something else on your mind?"

"This... I wouldn't dare to hide my thoughts from Talisman Master Shang. Actually, I came here with a request." Ren Huan replied.

Turning slightly serious, a sincere expression appeared on Shang Xia's face as he continued, "Brother Ren, feel free to let me know what request you might have. I'll do my best to help you out."

"Talisman Master Shang, you probably know that the Talisman Hall itself has some rank four talisman paper..." Ren Huan started his explanation.

Shang Xia nodded with a smile on his face. "I believe so. Our Tongyou Institution has been established for more than 20 years now. We might not have produced a rank four Talisman Master, but we definitely managed to obtain rank four talisman paper from several sources out there. There are even some rank four talismans in storage in the institution. However, most of them have been used up over the years."

Pausing for a second, Shang Xia quickly continued, “Actually, before I attempted my breakthrough, Teacher Gong and Teacher Fan said that I can use as many resources in the Talisman Hall as I want after I complete my advancement to become a rank four Talisman Master.”

“Talisman Master Shang, you are the pride of our Talisman Hall...” Ren Huan muttered.

Shang Xia nearly burst out laughing. “Brother Ren, there’s no need to go through so many formalities and beat about the bush!”

“I... I was planning to request for a batch of resources to craft rank four talisman paper...” Ren Huan finally got to the point while chuckling awkwardly. Glancing at Shang Xia to gauge his reaction, Ren Huan quickly continued, “The Talisman Hall definitely gathered a batch of resources to craft rank four talisman paper to prepare for the birth of any rank four Talisman Masters. Even though I’m being a little selfish by asking you to allocate me a portion of resources, I truly hope that you can put in a word for me to receive some of it.”

A strange look appeared on Shang Xia’s face as he asked, “Brother Ren Huan, your skills in crafting talisman paper should be clear for all to see. How can you not be part of those who are allocated resources?”

A bitter smile appeared on Ren Huan’s face but he didn’t respond immediately.

Shang Xia turned slightly serious before making Ren Huan a promise. “Alright. I think I know what’s going on. There’s no need to worry, I’ll deal with it.”

Thanking Shang Xia, Ren Huan took his leave. Not too long after he left, Gong Hang and Fan Yuanhui came to pay Shang Xia a visit.

They knew that Shang Xia would be making his preparations to craft his first rank four talisman now that he completed his breakthrough and had been preparing all the resources he needed. Now that they had collected most of the items he required, they came to pay him a visit.

They brought him 7 pieces of rank four talisman paper, a bottle of rank four talisman ink, several strands of extermination qi, and a mid-grade brush.

Gong Hang quickly approached Shang Xia with an apologetic look on his face. “Our Talisman Hall was able to collect a lot more resources in the past but some of it had been used up because several Talisman Masters had overestimated themselves and tried to craft a rank four talisman. I was part of them and I regret wasting all those resources back then.”

Shang Xia was naturally unbothered by Gong Hang’s ‘waste’ of resources in the past. He couldn’t be happier that the institution was providing him with so many resources to craft his first rank four talisman. He chuckled in response, “Mister Gong, it’s alright. If I were in your shoes, I would probably do the same. I’m already thankful that the Talisman Hall is providing me with so many resources.”

Heaving a sigh of relief, Gong Hang continued, “Talisman Master Shang, everything else is up to you. You have to succeed!”

Shang Xia could hear their sincerity and understood how earnestly they wished for him to succeed. He replied solemnly, “Teacher Gong, Teacher Fan, rest assured that I will do my best.”

With the important matters out of the way, Shang Xia exchanged pointers regarding the dao of talismans with the two of them. He was especially interested in Gong Hang’s experience when he attempted to craft a rank four talisman in the past. Gong Hang wasn’t stingy either as he explained everything patiently.

When they were finally done, Shang Xia spoke about the matter regarding resource allocation to Ren Huan before the two of them left. It wasn’t too much to ask for anyway. Now that Ren Huan had managed to craft rank four talisman papers, he would definitely be a qualified talisman paper master in the future once he managed to raise his success rate.

Chapter 444: Urgent Report from the Taihang Mountains

When he was done dealing with everything on the Observation Peak, Shang Xia finally returned to the Yuxi Peak. He discovered that he regained the ability to continue refining his extermination origins, although the speed at which he was able to was as slow as a snail crawling a tree.

Even so, Shang Xia felt a lot more reassured now that he was able to continue the refinement process. After all, he couldn’t refine a single bit of his extermination origins back on the Observation Peak.

He wasn’t afraid that his cultivation would progress slowly. He was only afraid that he couldn’t improve anymore.

As the refinement process of his extermination origins continued, Shang Xia discovered that he was able to consolidate his foundations a lot quicker than before. Quickly getting into the rhythm of cultivation, Shang Xia’s life on the Yuxi Peak became a lot more structured than before.

Other than using a set period of time to cultivate and refine his extermination origins, Shang Xia poured a huge portion of his energy into understanding the crafting process of a rank four talisman.

Like the difference between a Martial Extermination Realm and a Martial Intent Realm, a rank four talisman was countless times harder to craft than a rank three talisman.

Even with Shang Xia’s unique way of talisman crafting, he would need to use a lot of effort to deduce each action and energy contained in each stroke. It would take a massive toll on his concentration and his inner qi as he ran through all the steps in his mind.

Way before Shang Xia started his breakthrough, the Tongyou Institution had already declared the Yuxi Peak to be a forbidden region. They forbade anyone from entering the mountain, but without the threat of the multicolored qi, there were people who started to try their luck. Fortunately, Ge Qingzhu was stationed on the Yuxi Peak, and during Shang Xia’s half-month absence, he personally dealt with several cultivators who refused to listen to the institution’s instructions to not approach the peak. Only then did people start to take the institution’s instructions seriously again.

That was also the reason behind Shang Xia’s peaceful days on the Yuxi Peak.

During one of his cultivation sessions, Shang Xia finally cleared his mind to think about his cultivation path in the Four Constellation Realm.

After a cultivator entered the Martial Extermination Realm, they would run into different opportunities and thus experience very different rates of refinement of their extermination origin. Every step forward was a challenge unless they were following a guide from someone who had done it before.

Shang Xia decided that the best way forward wasn't actually charging blindly. Planning out his cultivation path was secondary. The most pressing thing at hand was to inspect the changes in his dantian after his breakthrough.

Other than his stronger-than-usual divine perception, Shang Xia discovered that he could vaguely feel the presence of world origin through the extermination origin he controlled.

That seemed to be something other Martial Extermination Realm experts could also do, but the difference between himself and the others was that he could feel the resonance between his extermination origins and world origin to a much clearer degree.

Also, that brought about another point. After entering the Martial Extermination Realm, cultivators would be able to refine world origin directly through the void. World origin came from the source of the world and from a certain standpoint, one could say that extermination origins were merely manifestations of world origin.

In order to refine their extermination origin, Martial Extermination Realm cultivators would have to draw in world origin to smoothen the process.

Looking at it from another angle, Shang Xia understood that in order to increase one's cultivation at their current cultivation stage, they would have to absorb and refine world origin in their dantian while completing the transformation of their inner qi! From his experience in previous realms, he would have to obtain a corresponding secret art suitable for Martial Extermination Realm experts in order to do so. Only then would he be able to convert his Origin True Qi into Four Constellation Qi to enter the large completion stage of his current cultivation realm.

Cultivators in the Azure Origin World faced a huge problem when it came to training secret arts in the Martial Extermination Realm in order to convert their inner qi as most of them had refined different extermination origins. There wasn't a method that could be used by everyone and unless one used a similar advancement medicine and refined a similar extermination origin to seniors who had broken through in the past, they wouldn't be able to follow in their exact footsteps.

A fantastic example would be Shang Ke. When Shang Ke entered the Martial Extermination Realm back then, he used the same advancement medicine as Shang Bo. The extermination origin he refined was also similar to what Shang Bo used. As such, he was able to follow in Shang Bo's footsteps and cultivate the same way.

It explained how Shang Ke managed to enter the second layer of the Martial Extermination Realm so quickly. With Shang Bo's experience as a guide, Shang Ke didn't have to carry out his own experiments to improve. The problem finally appeared when Shang Ke entered the second layer of the Martial Extermination Realm. The Lingkong Formless Extermination Origin was extremely suited for him, but now that he refined it, his cultivation speed was bound to take a huge hit. He was still able to learn from Shang Bo, but his progress would be a lot slower than before.

In the future when Shang Ke refined his third and fourth extermination origins, the difference between himself and Shang Bo would only grow wider. His speed of cultivation using Shang Bo's

guide would definitely stagnate. It might even affect his chances of breaking through to the Martial Dipper Realm?in the future.

With that being said, Shang Ke didn't possess much hope of entering the Martial Dipper Realm?in the first place. He understood that he was almost at his limit after entering the Martial Extermination Realm.

With Shang Ke's example, Shang Xia understood that Martial Extermination Realm experts would usually develop their own secret art to ensure maximum compatibility.

Turning his attention back to himself, he realized that the difficulty of coming up with his unique way of training would be a lot higher than others.

Others might have a way of referencing seniors to gain a stroke of inspiration, but Shang Xia was practically going in blind.

There might have been people who thought of refining four extermination origins at once to enter the Martial Extermination Realm, but they didn't seem to succeed. Not a single record of them could be found, much less secret arts they created.

Shang Xia's return to the Yuxi Peak was driven by his need to refine his extermination origins, but at the same time, he wanted to ponder over the problem of his secret art in a quiet location.

Other than a secret art to hasten the transformation of his inner qi, he wouldn't be able to receive an inheritance like the Providence Spear Art this time. Rank four martial arts were practically developed by cultivators according to their fighting style.

After reminding himself of the problems he faced in the Four Constellation Realm, Shang Xia decided that there was no point hastening the refinement of his extermination origins. Focusing on the development of his secret art and martial arts was something he had to work on too.

Making a decision for one of his many problems, Shang Xia didn't stop there. Cultivation and talisman crafting weren't the only things he was focused on. Most of the time he had left was spent on comprehending his Man and Heaven Synergy Chapter that he had mostly forgotten back in the Martial Intent Realm.

After entering the Four Constellation Realm, his divine sense transformed into divine perception. Shang Xia's understanding of how his divine perception interacted with the world deepened and he discovered that there was more to learn.

Shang Xia had a feeling that a greater understanding of the Man and Heaven Synergy Chapter was a key in creating his own secret art and martial arts.

...

In the blink of an eye, Shang Xia spent more than a month on the Yuxi Peak.

He had solidified his foundations in the Four Constellation Realm and after a lot of research and thinking, he felt as though he knew how to proceed further in his path of cultivation.

Knowing how to proceed was one thing, actually reaching the end of that path was another. Shang Xia knew that he had a long way to go before he could come up with suitable secret and martial arts for himself.

That wasn't all. He also understood the crux of crafting several rank four talismans, and it could be said that Shang Xia's time on the Yuxi Peak was extremely fruitful.

It seemed as though the talismans he had been running through in his mind had something similar about all of them. It was precisely the similarity that allowed Shang Xia to save a bunch of time and energy.

Making up his mind to craft his first rank four talisman, a transmission talisman shot through the air from the direction of the Observation Peak. Scanning through its content, Shang Xia realized that he would no longer be able to cultivate peacefully on the Yuxi Peak.

Sighing helplessly to himself, Shang Xia could only notify Ge Qingzhu about his departure and request for him as a replacement.

...

Shang Xia didn't expect Ge Qingzhu to send a bunch of Formation Masters over in his stead. They started to survey the Yuxi Peak and it didn't take long for a message from Ge Qingzhu to arrive.

He learned that the institution was planning to lay down another formation around the Yuxi Peak to secure it. The plan had been in the works for some time now and they barely managed to complete their preparations when Shang Xia requested to leave.

With the arrival of the disciples from the Formation Hall and the peace treaty between the Tongyou Institution and the experts of the Azure Spiritual World in the battlefield between the two worlds, Ge Qingzhu didn't feel the need to personally return to the Yuxi Peak.

Seeing as it was safe to leave the Yuxi Peak in the hands of the Formation Hall, Shang Xia turned into a streak of light that tore through the air as he headed straight for the Observation Peak.

By the time he returned to the Shang Clan's territory on the Observation Peak, he discovered that Shang Quan and Shang Tai had been waiting for him for quite some time.

"What's going on?" Shang Xia suppressed his voice and asked cautiously.

"The clan sent a secret transmission over to us requesting for you to return to the Tongyou City at the quickest speed possible after receiving the report." Shang Quan explained.

While speaking, he handed over a scroll.

Reading over its contents, he turned it into dust after he was done.

"Who else knows about this?" Shang Xia asked.

Shang Quan's expression turned grave and he replied, "Shang Tai and myself are the only ones who know about this on the Observation Peak."

Nodding slightly, Shang Xia muttered, "I'll head back as quickly as I can. Uncle Quan, Uncle Tai, please tell everyone that I have entered seclusion and will not be disturbed by anyone."

After speaking, he flicked his wrist to reveal close to 20 pieces of rank three talismans. He stacked them on the table before him and those were the talismans he had promised to make before leaving for the Yuxi Peak.

Since he entered the Four Constellation Realm, Shang Xia's divine perception became much stronger than the divine sense he had in the Martial Intent Realm. He was able to craft talismans at a much quicker pace and his success rate reached a terrifying level. In order to draw inspiration from his unique talisman crafting method, Shang Xia made those talismans while thinking of the way to craft rank four talismans.

At his current level, he had crafted all 6 types of rank three talismans recorded in the Zhu Family Talisman Scripture at least once. There were 3 other talismans he learned about from the records of the Talisman Hall and he succeeded in crafting them too.

“Other than those I promised to make, you can keep the rest for yourselves.” Shang Xia smiled.

A wide smile appeared on Shang Quan and Shang Tai's faces when they looked at the talismans laid out before them. The rank three talismans he made seemed to contain a terrifying power. Anyone below the Martial Extermination Realm would be hard pressed to take the full blow of the energy contained within.

Bidding his uncles farewell, Shang Xia separately notified Zhang Haogu and Ge Qingzhu that he would be leaving for some time before rushing towards the spatial tunnel.

Throughout the process, he didn't alert anyone. As soon as he returned to the Tongyou Institution, he turned into a streak of light that flew back into the Shang Clan Manor.

As Shang Ke had stated that he would be in seclusion, the responsibility of taking care of the clan landed on Shang Xi. Unfortunately, she entered seclusion not long after and Shang Jian had to take her place.

“Second Uncle, what's the matter? Why did you summon me back urgently?” Shang Xia looked for Shang Jian directly without alarming any members of the Shang Clan the moment he returned.

Shang Jian was clearly shocked by Shang Xia's sudden appearance, but he quickly regained his cool. “Your Third Aunt sent an urgent message back from the Taihang Mountains. She said that you need to head there as soon as possible. She also said that it has something to do with what she told you previously.”

Chapter 445: Godly State

Shang Jian wanted to go through the formalities of congratulating Shang Xia for his successful breakthrough to the Martial Extermination Realm. However, Shang Xia surprised him by getting straight to the point the moment he returned.

After learning what had happened, Shang Xia heaved a sigh of relief.

Shang Jian couldn't get rid of the curiosity in his heart and he asked casually, “Why is your Third Aunt looking for you so urgently anyway?”

Shang Xia wasn't too sure either and he raised an eyebrow slightly while replying, “It might be related to the appearance of a secret region. She might have noticed signs of its reappearance, hence the rush.”

“Oh.” Shang Jian gasped before revealing an envious look. “Opportunities in secret regions tend to be amazing. If you run into any of them when exploring the secret region, make full use of it.”

“Oh? Second Uncle, do you have experience entering one?” Shang Xia asked.

A look of melancholy appeared on Shang Jian’s face and he sighed, “Back when I was wandering the world, I chanced upon a broken secret region. God knows how many people have already explored the place and all the good stuff had already been taken away. Luckily, I noticed a rank two sword inheritance carved on a cliff face covered in vines. There was also a corresponding rank two advancement formula beside it. At this moment, your cousins are practicing that sword inheritance.”

Shang Xia nodded slightly before asking, “Speaking of them, did they undergo a smooth breakthrough?”

A brilliant smile lit up Shang Jian’s face when he thought about the two of them. “The process was a little risky, but the two of them were pretty lucky. They managed to enter the Martial Intent Realm and complete their first divine sense transformation.”

“That’s great! Congratulations on their breakthrough. Now, our Shang Clan has two more Martial Intent Realm cultivators. We’re slowly growing stronger.” Shang Xia laughed.

Waving his hands casually, Shang Jian muttered, “The two of them are barely passable when compared to the true geniuses of the Tongyou Institution, much less yourself. There’s nothing much to celebrate.”

Shang Xia clearly didn’t know how to continue the conversation from that point and he forced a smile before changing the topic. “Oh right, Second Uncle, when do you plan on entering the Martial Extermination Realm?”

The expression on Shang Jian’s face turned serious and he sighed, “I’m thinking of holding it off for a little more. Your Grandpa Bo and Grandpa Ke aren’t in the clan right now and you’re planning to head down south to the Taiyang Mountains. There has to be someone managing the clan’s affairs.”

With a frown on his face, Shang Xia whispered in a low voice, “Second Uncle, you need to enter the Martial Extermination Realm as soon as possible.”

Staring at him in shock, Shang Jian became even more serious. “Little Xia, did you know something we don’t?”

“I can’t be sure, but you should prepare to enter the Martial Extermination Realm as soon as you can. You will be able to react to anything that might happen when we’re gone.” Shang Xia explained.

Without waiting for Shang Jian to respond, Shang Xia continued, “Aunt Xi is probably going to leave seclusion soon. The battlefield between the two worlds is pretty calm at the moment and there’s no point for her to remain on the Observation Peak. You should get her to manage the clan while you focus on breaking through.”

“Alright.” Shang Jian was a resolute person. Shang Xia’s reminder couldn’t be more obvious and he quickly made the decision. Slamming the side of his fist down on his open palm, he cried, “Alright, I’ll notify Shang Xi to return once she exits seclusion.”

When he was done, he wrote another message and sent out another transmission talisman towards the battlefield between the two worlds. He asked Shang Xia another question while sending out the talisman. “When do you plan to leave anyway?”

“Right now!”

Raising his head in shock, Shang Jian gasped, “Is it really that urgent?”

Shang Xia chuckled before explaining, “Third Aunt told me to make a trip down to Changfeng City before heading for the Taihang Mountains. I might remain there for some time before heading south.”

“Changfeng City? Isn’t that your territory?” Shang Jian thought out loud.

“What are you talking about? I don’t own Changfeng City!” Shang Xia wanted to explain, but he was quickly interrupted.

Shang Jian couldn’t help but ask, “Aren’t you in a hurry to head down south? Why do you need to stay in the city anyway?”

Without a change in expression, Shang Xia muttered, “Third Aunt wants me to visit Hai Min and Yuanyuan while I’m there.”

...

Shang Jian might be exaggerating slightly when he said that Changfeng City was Shang Xia’s territory, but he wasn’t exactly wrong. After all, Shang Xia wasn’t the temporary city lord there for nothing.

He might have locked himself up in the city lord manor back then to focus on crafting rank three talismans, but he made arrangements to leave behind a portion of men he trusted.

The power he left behind could be considered a part of the Shang Clan’s hidden strength, but it belonged to Shang Xia exclusively.

With his current status, Shang Xia was capable of setting up his own forces.

Currently, the person in charge of the Changfeng City was Bu Jingshuang. He might be stationed in the city, but he was considered a core part of the Tongyou Institution’s strength. He was definitely involved in the Tongyou Institution’s plans.

As the Changfeng City Lord position held too much of a strategic advantage, especially considering what Yang Hu pulled previously, Bu Jingshuang’s takeover of the position came as no surprise to the others.

...

When Shang Xia returned to the Changfeng City and met with Bu Jingshuang, he discovered that the old expert had already reached the second layer of the Martial Extermination Realm. Speaking

of Bu Jingshuang, Shang Xia had a lot of respect for the old expert. He was Kou Chongxue's sworn brother like Shang Lubing, but had infiltrated the Rose Party for more than 20 years.

Bu Jingshuang was similarly surprised to see Shang Xia. Seeing the strange light under Shang Xia's feet as he descended into the City Lord Manor, Bu Jingshuang revealed a complicated expression before sighing softly, "You... You already entered the Martial Extermination Realm?!"

"Mister Bu, you don't sound like you're congratulating me. Hehe, you're losing your demeanor as my senior..." Shang Xia chuckled.

"Demeanor your ass!" Bu Jingshuang snapped before shooting Shang Xia with another question. "Your extermination origin seems a little chaotic... Which extermination origin did you refine exactly?"

With a helpless smile, Shang Xia revealed the truth. "I refined the Four Seasons Extermination Origins to enter the Martial Extermination Realm...."

Widening his eyes in horror, he pointed at Shang Xia before snapping angrily, "You... You... Did no one try to stop you from doing that?! What the hell... Where were your Grandfather and Shang Ke when you made your preparations to break through?! Wasn't Kou Chongxue aware of the matter?! There are so many Martial Extermination Realm experts from the institution and no one attempted to stop you from acting so recklessly..."

"Didn't I succeed?" Shang Xia muttered under his breath.

"Yeah, you did, but what if you failed?!" Bu Jingshuang berated Shang Xia before finally changing his tune. "Well, this is incredible. You actually managed to succeed! Are you trying to create your own path of cultivation? Hm... Were they using you as a lab rat to see if it was possible?"

Shang Xia couldn't care less if they were making use of him. With the Crimson Soul Tablet, the risk of his breakthrough was minimized. However, he could tell that Bu Jingshuang was really concerned for him and he knew it would be rude for him to brush the man off however he liked. A smile reappeared on his face and he explained, "Rest assured I made adequate preparations before my attempt to break through. Both the clan and the institution provided me with life-saving treasures. Fortunately, my luck didn't let me down and I managed a smooth breakthrough."

Shooting Shang Xia a deep gaze, Bu Jingshuang sighed, "Alright, as long as you know what you're doing..." At the end of the day, he was a Martial Extermination Realm expert. It didn't take long for him to regain his composure. He eventually continued, "Damn kid, why did you come over to Changfeng City anyway?"

"Haha, I'm just passing by. I'll stay for a few days before heading down south to the Taihang Mountains." Shang Xia replied.

"Taihang?" Bu Jingshuang seemed to have thought of something. "Are you going to look for Third Sister Hai?"

"Yeah!" Shang Xia laughed.

Nodding slightly, Bu Jingshuang added, “The situation in the Taihang Mountains is extremely complex. There are all sorts of people gathered there. Thieves, bandits, wandering cultivators, criminals... They’re made up of people of the You, Ji, Bing, Yan, and even the Si Continent. There’s practically no orderly force in the Taihang Mountains. In fact, there’s only one rule there and that’s the survival of the fittest. The biggest fists win.”

Speaking up to that point, Bu Jingshuang paused for a moment before examining Shang Xia from head to toe. “I guess you won’t be bullied by anyone now that you’re in the Martial Extermination Realm. With the help of Third Sister Hai who has already established herself there, you should be fine. However, there’s one thing you should be concerned with...” He turned serious all of a sudden before adding, “Cultivation isn’t everything there. Most of the people there are extremely crafty. They’re no strangers to coming up with insidious plans to triumph over experts stronger than themselves. You cannot be careless, even for a moment!”

...

By the time Shang Xia left the City Lord Manor, he gained a much better understanding of the Taihang Mountains.

When he returned to a small courtyard in the north of the city, he noticed a little girl who was close to 6 years old skipping down the street.

A look of confusion flashed across Yuanyuan’s eyes before she recalled the person in front of her. “Tasty... Tasty Uncle!”

She couldn’t forget how Shang Xia brought her little snacks every time she saw him.

Chuckling under his breath, Shang Xia handed a bag of candied yam to the little girl. “You can’t call me Tasty Uncle anymore. You can call me ‘Uncle ‘in the future.’”

Holding the bag, Yuanyuan turned around and ran back into the courtyard happily. Shang Xia heard her cute little cries even before he stepped into the entrance. “Mommy, Tasty Uncle is back!”

Shang Xia couldn’t help but burst out laughing as he entered the courtyard he left close to 2 years ago.

Hai Min leaned on the doorframe beside the entrance as a gentle smile crossed her face. She looked at Shang Xia who had barely stepped into the entrance and said, “Are you finally coming back?”

“I’ll be here for a little while...” Shang Xia chuckled. The moment he entered the courtyard, a tranquil feeling filled his heart.

“When are you leaving?” Hai Min whispered.

“I’ll stay for 3 to 5 days this time!”

Nodding calmly, Hai Min turned to walk away. “I’ll start making dinner then.”

“... Alright.”

Their short conversation didn’t seem awkward in the slightest. Instead, a sense of harmony and peace was felt through the courtyard.

...

In the dead of night, the soft autumn rain drizzled softly on the lands. It paved the way for a beautiful morning that was about to come. As the first rays of light flooded the earth, a refreshing breeze blew through the lands.

After eating breakfast, Hai Yuanyuan ran out of the courtyard to play as Hai Min tidied up the courtyard.

Shang Xia looked at the elegant figure whose movements resembled butterflies dancing in the courtyard with a soft smile playing on his lips. "I saw you training Yuanyuan in the morning."

Turning to glance at him, Hai Min didn't stop what she was doing as a gentle smile formed on her face. "That's right."

"Have you thought of Yuanyuan's future?"

Pausing to tuck a stray strand of hair behind her ears, Hai Min whispered, "I'll just send her over to the Tongyou Institution when she's of age. She can learn from the teachers and instructors there."

Shang Xia thought for a second before bringing up an almost absurd suggestion. "Why don't you let her follow in my footsteps?"

A complicated light flashed through Hai Min's eyes as she turned to look at Shang Xia. She started to turn serious before a brilliant smile lit up her face. "Sure!"

Only after entering the Martial Extermination Realm would one dare to declare that they had pioneered their own path of cultivation in the Azure Origin World.

Settling the matter of Yuanyuan's cultivation in the future, Shang Xia returned to the quiet little room he used in the past.

Talisman brush, talisman paper, talisman ink...

With everything in place, Shang Xia felt that he was ready to craft his first rank four talisman, the Golden Sun Inferno Talisman! He felt a mysterious sensation washing over him as he seemed to fuse with the world around him. In that state, he felt invincible!

Chapter 446: Entering the Ji Continent

One of the nights when Shang Xia was crafting the Golden Sun Inferno Talisman...

Stars twinkled in the night sky, but a raging ball of fire appeared in the air at an unknown time. Scorching heat filled the lands.

Luckily, the City Lord Manor made preparations for something like that to happen. Utilizing the protection formation around the city, the ball of flame was trapped in a separate space so as to avoid causing serious damage to the city.

Even so, the giant ball of fire roused the curiosity of many. There were a lot of curious souls and there were even some who were captivated by its power.

Fortunately, the appearance of the giant fireball didn't last for long. After burning intensely for some time, it disappeared abruptly like it was never there. The night returned to normal.

Bu Jingshuang stood above the City Lord Manor with his hands clasped behind his back. He directed his gaze over to the north of the city as though he could see through Shang Xia's courtyard.

“Rank four talisman master... Hehe, he actually succeeded so quickly...” Bu Jingshuang muttered to himself. A complicated light flashed in his eyes. He was slightly surprised, but he also seemed delighted at Shang Xia’s progress.

...

Shang Xia placed down the mid-grade brush in his hand as a wave of lethargy washed over him.

“The Flying Goose Brush isn’t good enough to craft rank four talismans. The Falling Rose Brush provided by the institution is barely capable of withstanding the burden of a rank four talisman.” Shang Xia thought to himself as his gaze landed on the rank four talisman on the table. It was 7 by 4 inches long, and it was emitting a dazzling golden glow.

There was still a good portion of talisman ink left after he completed the Golden Sun Inferno Talisman. Shang Xia estimated that he would be able to make two more attempts with the ink he had left.

“I’m afraid it won’t be easy to craft another rank four talisman...” Shang Xia frowned as he looked at the equipment laid out before him. He felt a headache coming after realizing the equipment he had was barely withstanding the strain of crafting one Golden Sun Inferno Talisman.

Moreover, he used up quite a bit of resources trying to craft the talisman. Even though a large portion of it came from the Talisman Hall, Shang Xia knew that collecting more would pose a serious challenge.

The reason a rank four talisman was more difficult to craft than rank three talismans was because of the ingredients required. Collecting enough resources for a rank four talisman was an arduous process.

Naturally, the strain on the Talisman Master’s body was another huge factor. Shang Xia received assistance from many factors, but he exhausted a huge amount of energy on a single Golden Sun Inferno Talisman.

Fortunately, his divine perception was stronger than cultivators of the same level. He didn’t need to exhaust his extermination origin during the crafting process either as he had quite a bit of extermination qi stored in his Spirit Extermination Gourd.

The exhaustion he felt would recover in a short period of time and wouldn’t affect his foundations at all.

Initially, he didn’t intend to craft the Golden Sun Inferno Talisman during his time in the Changfeng City. He wanted to head off for the Taihang Mountains after paying Hai Min and Yuanyuan a short visit, but because of the sudden stroke of inspiration, he exhausted himself quite a bit. He had no choice but to stay in the city to recover.

On the second day after he crafted the Golden Sun Inferno Talisman, someone came over to pay him a visit.

The newcomer was called Shang Liao, and he was Shang Quan's son. Shang Liao and Shang Xia could be said to be members of the same generation.

During Shang Xia's stint as the Temporary Changfeng City Lord, Shang Quan came over once to make some dealings for the Shang Clan. He left Shang Liao in his place after he left and Shang Xia placed him to use. When Shang Xia left the city, Shang Liao became the manager of the Shang Clan's operations there.

The reason behind his visit was to give Shang Xia a detailed report of the Shang Clan's activity.

The two of them spent 2 whole hours in Shang Xia's study before Shang Liao took his leave. When he was gone, Shang Xia went to talk to Hai Min and Yuanyuan for some time before leaving for the City Lord Manor.

...

"The institution finally has its own rank four Talisman Master!" Bu Jingshuang laughed the moment Shang Xia arrived. "However, the disturbance you caused this time was massive! I'm afraid the news of your advancement will spread through the lands before long."

Shang Xia shook his head helplessly. "I had to do it. It's not every day I can enter that miraculous state. I still have to thank you for your assistance that day."

He didn't finish his preparations that day and he failed to lay down enough protection before starting his crafting process. If not for Bu Jingshuang's activation of the city's grand formation, he might have turned half the street into ash.

Bu Jingshuang nodded in understanding before replying, "It's alright. Anyway, you need to be careful now that you are a rank four Talisman Master. With your achievements, you might turn into a target other powers wish to eliminate before you grow too strong."

Shang Xia felt a chill running through his heart, but he understood that Bu Jingshuang wasn't trying to scare him. He nodded gratefully.

Every single Martial Extermination Realm posed a huge threat to opposing powers. It was especially so for someone as talented as Shang Xia. Now that his identity as a rank four Talisman Master was revealed to the world, there would definitely be factions hostile to the institution trying to kill Shang Xia before he grew into an even bigger threat.

With Bu Jingshuang's reminder, Shang Xia knew that he would have to start taking things more seriously.

Bu Jingshuang was also gratified that Shang Xia was planning to heed his warning. Regardless, he could tell that Shang Xia had something on his mind. "Is something up? Why are you looking for me again?"

Shang Xia hesitated for a moment before deciding to get to the point. "Mister Bu, you've experienced a lot. Do you know anyone who has the ability to craft Spatial Pouches?"

An unnatural expression could be seen on Bu Jingshuang's face the moment Shang Xia asked the question. He muttered, "Why do you think I would know someone like that?"

“I was asking randomly... I had close to 6 taels of Swallow Fur with me and I wish to craft a Spatial Pouch. However, I failed to find anyone who had the ability to do so. I was trying my luck...” Shang Xia added quickly.

Bu Jingshuang revealed a deep gaze and he paused for a second before finally speaking, “If you trust me, you can leave the Swallow Fur behind. You might get a Spatial Pouch after a year and a half or so...”

Shang Xia didn't hesitate to hand a case filled with Swallow Fur over to Bu Jingshuang. When he was done, he bid the man farewell.

...

Shang Xia's men were unable to keep tabs on Bu Jingshuang himself, but they kept an eye on the City Lord's Manor. They could tell that even though Bu Jingshuang's identity had been revealed, he was still keeping in contact with the Evil Remnants of the Rose Party.

Of course, Shang Xia wouldn't suspect that Bu Jingshuang was a traitor just because of that. After all, things were never as they seemed. He was merely shocked that the Rose Party would still be in contact with him.

The four great races of the Liao Continent had been in conflict with the institution for the past 20 odd years, but didn't they place down their grudge all of a sudden to form an alliance?

As such, Shang Xia didn't really think it was wrong for him to remain in contact with the Rose Party.

Also, Shang Xia wasn't too optimistic about the chances of crafting a Spatial Pouch. He was trying his luck by handing the resources over to Bu Jingshuang. However, he heard rumors from Bai Luming that the Rose Party managed to get their hands on a way to craft Spatial Pouches. They might even have a grandmaster craftsman among them. As such, Shang Xia felt that it was truly possible for his gamble to pay off.

Anyway, Shang Xia returned to his courtyard after leaving the City Lord's Manor. He took a two day break and during that time, he recorded everything he could remember of his experience when breaking through to the Martial Realm and the way he trained at that cultivation level. He also took charge of Yuanyuan's training now that he was back.

He might have recorded his experience, but he wasn't able to pass down his Chaos Essence Palm or Lightning Palm to the little kid. Without the institution's approval, Shang Xia wouldn't pass down those techniques easily.

Other than restoring his inner qi and teaching Yuanyuan, Shang Xia was also starting to ponder over how he should proceed with the development of his personalized martial arts.

After leaving the battlefield between the two worlds for the Tongyou Institution, Shang Xia discovered that he was only able to refine his Falling Leaf Extermination Origin. No matter how hard he tried, none of the other 3 extermination origins would react.

The sudden change shocked Shang Xia. However, he quickly came to a bold conclusion. Other than on the Yuxi Peak which experienced all four seasons in one spot, the You Continent was

experiencing Autumn at the moment. He had a feeling he would only be able to refine the extermination origin corresponding to the current season he was experiencing.

If that was actually the case, Shang Xia felt that he would need to develop a different martial art for each extermination origin in his body.

That was his guess, but he decided that it was too early to think so deeply into the matter. After all, it was some time before the Winter season would arrive for him to verify his guess.

Since he couldn't be sure of it, he decided to put off their creation. Of course, without it, Shang Xia could only refine his Falling Leaf Extermination Origin bit by bit.

Progressing slightly in his path of cultivation, Shang Xia discovered another problem. If he refined his Falling Leaf Extermination Origin at the moment, he might lose balance of his extermination origins and experience cultivation deviation.

At the end of the day, balance was key. Shang Xia knew he couldn't rush the creation of his martial art just to hasten the refinement of one extermination origin.

Whatever the case, Shang Xia didn't have the luxury of time to be trapped in the dilemma. Time passed quickly and after bidding farewell to Hai Min and Yuanyuan on the day he had decided to leave, he turned into a streak of light that flew in the direction of the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range. He headed straight for the border of the Ji Continent.

As Shang Pei didn't know if Shang Xia had entered the Martial Extermination Realm, she decided to estimate his speed based on his cultivation at the Martial Intent Realm.

Now that he had broken through successfully, his prolonged stay in the Changfeng City wasn't a problem.

After entering the border of the Ji Continent, Shang Xia decided to keep a low profile. The Tongyou Institution had a massive grudge against the White Deer Paradise and Shang Xia didn't wish to be hunted down by them. There was also the matter of the various great families of the Ji Continent. Slowing down his speed considerably, Shang Xia hid his presence by suppressing the light emitted from his extermination origins. He also chose to travel through the more deserted regions.

Since he wasn't traveling with speed as his priority, he was able to place his attention on his control over his extermination origins and how he could use them nimbly in flight.

Chapter 447: Peekaboo

Shang Xia After breaking through to the Four Constellation Realm, Shang Xia gave up on finding a movement technique as he could fly with his extermination origins.

He also learned that there were differences in speed among Martial Extermination Realm experts.

From what he knew, other than special flying techniques that could increase one's speed, the main factor that affected it was the type of extermination origin one refined and their actual cultivation base.

It was perfectly normal to use one's cultivation base to estimate their speed, but it became a problem when Shang Xia was the one in question. He managed to refine 4 extermination origins to enter the Four Constellation Realm, but his cultivation base obviously couldn't be regarded to be at the fourth layer at the moment.

Regardless, the speed at which he flew was reasonably fast.

He had seen Martial Extermination Realm experts flying through the air before. As such, he understood how quickly he flew. Experts in the first or second layer of the Martial Extermination Realm could only eat his dust if he were to compare his flying speed to theirs.

If he gave it his all, Shang Xia felt that he would be able to outrun even a third layer Martial Extermination Realm expert.

However, he discovered that he wouldn't be able to sustain his flight for a long time if he flew at a speed much faster than ordinary cultivators.

The faster he flew, the shorter he could sustain his flight.

His low endurance was probably due to the fact that he hadn't refined any of his 4 extermination origins completely.

One could argue that he was comparable to a first layer Martial Extermination Realm cultivator.

While Shang Xia made his way through the Ji Continent, he didn't know that his movements had already been noticed.

He might have been keeping a low profile ever since entering the Ji Continent, but the multicolored lights that flickered under his feet eventually caught someone's attention.

Back when Kou Chongxue blew a hole in the White Deer Paradise, their prestige in the Azure Origin World took a huge hit. Their reputation was one matter, but the world origin Kou Chongxue drained actually damaged their foundations. The deaths of Wei Zhongwen and the others only served to weaken them even further. They had no choice but to rein themselves in slightly.

Unlike the White Deer Paradise, the three great families of the Ji Continent didn't suffer as much. They feasted on the White Deer Paradise's misery and quickly increased their strength.

The 'Giant Deer' Liu Family and the Zhang Family of the 'Yi City' managed to gain the most benefits during the chaos.

That was because their territories were located closest to the border of the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range. After Kou Chongxue wreaked havoc in the White Deer Paradise, they called back the cultivators under their command bordering the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range.

The Liu and Zhang Families feasted on the remains. Eventually, the Liu Family took over a small portion of the land on the west while the Zhang Family took over a small portion of land on the east.

It wasn't hard to guess what the White Deer Paradise's intention was to give up control over the region near the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range. Even though the Liu and Zhang Families knew that the White Deer Paradise wanted them to form a buffer layer between the You Continent and themselves, they couldn't resist the temptation of more territories and resources.

Since they understood the White Deer Paradise's intention, they took their own precautions.

After splitting the territory, the two families quickly gathered a bunch of experts to cross the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range to keep tabs on the Tongyou Institution.

Initially, they sent an assortment of cultivators over with the exception of Martial Extermination Realm experts. However, following the institution's victory in the battlefield between the two worlds and the revelation of Ji Wenlong's breakthrough, they sent a Martial Extermination Realm expert each to guard the border.

Shang Xia didn't know of the exact situation in the Ji Continent, and he obviously wasn't expecting any Martial Extermination Realm experts to be near the border where he was.

When he entered the territory of the Ji Continent, he was discovered by the lower-level experts of the two families. With several secret transmissions, the 2 Martial Extermination Realm experts received the news.

"Hmph, a newly advanced Martial Extermination Realm cultivator. He has guts for trying to intrude on our territory." Liu Chuanyi, the Martial Extermination Realm from the Liu Family who was stationed to guard the border, snorted in contempt.

As those who had seen Shang Xia were not in the Martial Extermination Realm, they were unable to track him down no matter how fast they could run. They could only watch as the streak of light disappeared from their view.

Shang Xia had been extremely confident in his ability to hide his presence. However, he didn't expect there to be scouts hiding around the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range and the border of the Ji Continent! Naturally, he didn't think that danger was rapidly closing in on him.

"Hm... According to the reports from our disciples, the Martial Extermination Realm expert from the You Continent is pretty weird. His speed varies a lot while flying and his extermination origin seems to flicker unsteadily. It would change from time to time and none of them are certain of his actual cultivation level." Zhang Luoxing, the Martial Extermination Realm expert from the Zhang Family, muttered. A deep frown made its way onto his face. "Do you think he's bait sent by the Ji Continent?"

Liu Chuanyi sneered in response, "Not even the disciples of our families know that we're here, much less those from the You Continent. Anyway, won't we know if he's bait if we check it out ourselves?"

Liu Chuanyi was clearly confident that they would be able to take down the intruder easily.

After thinking for a second, Zhang Luoxing realized that Liu Chuanyi made sense. The possibility of it being a trap was slim to none. Moreover, they were currently in the Ji Continent. So what if they ran into a trap?!

Nodding in agreement, Zhang Luoxing grinned, "Alright, we'll go meet that Martial Extermination Realm cultivator from the You Continent!"

As Shang Xia was heading south the whole way, Shang Xia estimated that Winter would have arrived by the time he met up with Shang Pei in the Taihang Mountains.

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While making his merry way to the Taihang Mountains while convinced that he was hiding his tracks well, Shang Xia was rudely awakened when he sensed two strong auras ten miles away. By the time he reacted, the two of them were flying his way.

There was no way they were looking for him for a friendly chat.

The moment he detected them, his first instinct was to run. However, he decided on another approach and quickly suppressed his extermination origin with everything he could muster. He made it as dull as possible and lowered his speed the best he could. When he was done, he used his divine perception to lock on to the two of them. He discovered that they had stopped three miles away from him. They were probably waiting to see how he would react.”

The distance was definitely in range of a Martial Extermination Realm expert’s divine perception, and the two of them were basically announcing their arrival.

Shang Xia seemed to have gotten the message as he started to hide his aura while heading in the same direction. Naturally, he did it such that the two of them would still be able to detect him.

“Haha! He’s just a newbie who entered the Martial Extermination Realm. He thinks he can hide his aura from us! Looks like he’s not going to know what hit him.”

“That’s right! This is a great opportunity to take him down!”

Zhang Luoxing and Liu Chuanyi chuckled to each other. They seemed to have concluded that Shang Xia was of no threat to them.

Circulating their inner qi rapidly, the two of them rushed towards Shang Xia with a renewed vigor. They pinched him and true to their expectation, Shang Xia revealed a shocked expression the moment they appeared. He seemed to exert himself as he flew faster in an attempt to get away.

The ‘weakling’ from the You Continent before them revealed an anxious look as he ran away desperately. They would never expect that Shang Xia was merely flying at 30 percent of his maximum speed.

“Hah!” Looking at Shang Xia, the two of them were too lazy to mock him. They thought that they would be able to enjoy a good battle before taking him down. From the looks of it, it was going to be an easier battle than they thought. The excitement they had started to die down and Zhang Luoxing grunted with annoyance, “Since you’re already here, you can remain here forever.”

Even though Zhang Luoxing was a bit weaker than Liu Chuanyi, he was the first to make his move.

He sent a simple palm strike towards Shang Xia and the space around the young cultivator started to solidify.

As he tried his best to break through the spatial restriction, a giant palm condensed from frosty qi appeared in his way. It flew at him without any intention of slowing down.

Shang Xia’s first reaction was to evade the icy palm. Unfortunately, the space around him had been greatly restricted by Zhang Luoxing. Even though it wasn’t something that could trap him forever, Zhang Luoxing felt that it was enough to force him to take on his attack head-on.

At the crucial moment, Shang Xia fumbled slightly before revealing his Scarlet Star Spear. He provided all the resources required to both repair and increase the grade of his spear a long time ago. His Scarlet Star Spear had reached the rank of a high-grade weapon, and Shang Xia was using it for the first time in battle!

However, he unleashed his sixth move instead of a more powerful one when faced with the giant palm in front of him. His Flow Recompensation Spear shot straight at the threat coming his way.

Even though he was facing two Martial Extermination Realm experts, Shang Xia was merely using his rank three technique to fight the two of them. Moreover, he only used the sixth of his nine moves.

It came as no surprise. Shang Xia's spear slammed into the icy palm and he was forced to retreat tens of feet.

Zhang Luoxing didn't intend to seriously injure Shang Xia with his previous attack as he only wanted to stop Shang Xia from running away.

Who would have thought that his attack was so damn effective? Not only did he manage to stop Shang Xia from escaping, he even managed to force Shang Xia to use his spear art. From the looks of it, the Martial Extermination Realm expert from the You Continent who was standing before them hadn't developed his rank four martial arts!

The excitement that had died earlier reignited in Zhang Luoxing's heart and it came back even stronger. It seemed like the possibility of them slaying a Martial Extermination Realm expert was much higher than they had thought!

Chapter 448: Critical Hit!

It was extremely difficult to kill a Martial Extermination Realm under ordinary circumstances.

Even if they had freshly broken through, it would be a tall task to end their life.

Of course, that didn't seem to be the case considering how many Martial Extermination Realm experts died in Shang Xia's hands. Ever since he entered the battlefield between the two worlds for the first time, the deaths of at least 5 Martial Extermination Realm experts or existences at that level had something to do with him.

Obviously, there were other factors in play when they died. They might have fallen into a trap, or they might have been weakened by others. There were also times when his sneak attacks worked.

Whatever the case, none of them really died in a one on one battle.

Zhang Luoxing and Liu Chuanyi were considered seasoned experts in the Martial Extermination Realm. With their combined strength, it wouldn't be difficult for them to defeat the youngster before them. Even so, the two of them were extremely careful. They kept their distance while approaching Shang Xia and probing him constantly.

Throughout the entire process, Liu Chuanyi, the stronger of the two, didn't do a thing. Zhang Luoxing practically forced Shang Xia into a corner by himself.

Shang Xia was cursing them in his mind when he noticed how cautious they were acting. He had been slipping up constantly so that they would lower their guard against him, but it seemed as though they weren't taking the chance.

It was clear what their plan was at that point. They were trying to wear Shang Xia down before making the final move.

With another Icy Jade Palm, Zhang Luoxing obstructed Shang Xia's attempt to break through their encirclement. Feeling like the time was right, his figure started to blur as he was half a mile away from Shang Xia in an instant. He released a heavy punch that went straight for Shang Xia's chest.

Earlier, he used the Zhang Family's rank four martial arts, the Icy Jade Palm to stop Shang Xia from running away. Now, he changed it up slightly and unleashed his Icy Jade Fist.

Like the Shang Clan, the Zhang Family was a massive entity in the Ji Continent. They had their own techniques for experts in the Martial Extermination Realm and cultivators of the family would make small changes to the inheritance to suit their fighting style. The same situation applied to the Shang Clan where Shang Ke was following in Shang Bo's footsteps.

Even though Zhang Luoxing's attack seemed rather aggressive, he didn't actually plan on defeating Shang Xia with that punch. His main goal was to throw Shang Xia off balance and hopefully into Liu Chuanyi who was on the other side.

Liu Chuanyi was actually the key to taking down Shang Xia.

What Zhang Luoxing didn't realize was the crafty smile that appeared on Shang Xia's face when he made his move earlier.

Zhang Luoxing and Liu Changyi might be plotting against Shang Xia, but he also had a plan to deal with them. After all, Martial Extermination Realm experts were only hard to kill if they were hell-bent on running away. If the distance between them was tiny enough there was no way of escaping...

As Zhang Luoxing approached Shang Xia, the situation finally changed. Instead of trying to back away or defend himself, Shang Xia accelerated into Zhang Luoxing.

He might have been taken aback by Shang Xia's action, but Zhang Luoxing was a Martial Extermination Realm from a powerful family at the end of the day. He wasn't afraid to fight Shang Xia in a one-on-one battle.

Since his opponent had sent himself over, Zhang Luoxing didn't mind going all out. He sent out another punch right after the first with more than two times the power.

From afar, Shang Xia looked like a helpless bunny that was rushing straight into its death.

A cruel smile appeared on Zhang Luoxing's face. It seemed as though he wouldn't need Liu Changyi's help to seriously injure his opponent.

As his imagination were running wild, he saw something that made his blood turn cold. Widening his eyes in shock, his soul nearly left his body.

What the hell was he looking at?!

A four colored light surrounded Shang Xia's body in an instant and they spun around him in a mysterious cycle. The four colored lights seemed to contain the secrets of samsara.

"Four... Four colored extermination origin! How is that possible?! He's actually a fourth layer Martial Extermination Realm... He tricked us!" Zhang Luoxing roared as he

cursed Shang Xia and eighteen generations of his ancestors in his heart. A look of fear caused his face to twist unnaturally.

This asshole is scheming against us! He's playing the pig to eat the tiger!

Where the hell is Liu Chuanyi anyway?!

Zhang Luoxing was overwhelmed with rage and fear, but he couldn't utter a single word out of fright.

The Scarlet Star Spear tore through the air and with it destroyed the frozen space in front of him in an instant.

Turning into a streak of light, Shang Xia appeared several inches away from Zhang Luoxing in the blink of an eye.

Retracting his arm, Zhang Luoxing crossed it in front of his chest in a desperate attempt to protect himself before being swallowed by a sea of reddish-gold lightning.

“Preposterous! How dare you try to harm a cultivator from our Ji Continent?!” A roar came from behind Shang Xia and the space around him started to fluctuate wildly.

He discovered the sudden change when Shang Xia turned into the aggressor. However, he knew that he had to risk it all in order to save Zhang Luoxing.

None of them expected the prey they were cornering to be a monster in disguise. They couldn't believe their eyes, but the impossible had happened.

A multitude of considerations ran through Liu Changyi's mind as he made an attempt to stop Shang Xia. He regretted the fact that he didn't act earlier, and he even wondered if the relationship between the Liu and Zhang Families would be affected because of what was happening.

Excuses were forming in his mind as he thought about how to give the Zhang Family a proper explanation of what happened in case something truly went wrong.

Naturally, his considerations didn't slow him down as he struck at Shang Xia's back.

Unfortunately, he was a little too late.

After suffering a direct hit from Shang Xia's Chaos Essence Lightning Palm, Zhang Luoxing's figure drew a beautiful arc through the skies as he was blown away mercilessly.

Shang Xia didn't hesitate to leave after heavily injuring Zhang Luoxing. As Zhang Luoxing fell to the ground, the four colored light around Shang Xia's body expanded to a terrifying degree. He shot through the skies with a speed no slower than a third layer Martial Extermination Realm expert. In the blink of an eye, his figure entered the dense clouds and disappeared from view.

Liu Changyi couldn't be bothered with Shang Xia now that the youngster had made his escape. He flew over to grab Zhang Luoxing's falling figure.

With a burst of inner qi, Liu Changyi stopped the both of them from crashing into the ground. A huge region around him was blown to bits and a dust storm covered a ten mile radius of where he landed. No one knew how many towns were affected by the aftereffects, but Liu Changyi couldn't be bothered with them either.

The only thing he could care about at the moment was Zhang Luoxing's fate. Examining his comrade carefully, he heaved a sigh of relief when he discovered that Zhang Luoxing was still breathing.

Turning in the direction where Shang Xia fled, a trace of unease flashed in his eyes. No one knew what he was thinking about...

...

By the time Liu Changyi caught Zhang Luoxing, Shang Xia had already run more than a hundred miles out.

Using his divine perception to ensure that there was no one in pursuit, he finally started to calm down. Lowering his speed, he quickly restrained his aura and light emitted by his extermination origin again.

When he released his Chaos Essence Lightning Palm against Zhang Luoxing earlier, he knew that he wouldn't be able to kill the man.

Without considering the strong life force possessed by an expert at the Martial Extermination Realm, Zhang Luoxing was bound to have many life-saving means he had yet to use. If Shang Xia was truly able to threaten his life, Zhang Luoxing would have revealed them instead of trying to block the attack. Also, Shang Xia knew without a rank four martial art, he wouldn't be able to take them both on in a protracted battle.

At the end of the day, he could only use his cultivation to suppress his opponents. Also, Zhang Luoxing's heavy injuries weren't caused by Shang Xia's Chaos Essence Lightning Palm. When Shang Xia revealed four extermination origins earlier, Zhang Luoxing was so scared that he pulled back all his inner qi forcefully, suffering a serious backlash. Shang Xia's Chaos Essence Lightning Palm was only the icing on the cake.

His injuries weren't enough for him to die, but retracting his energy like that caused a great deal of damage to his foundations. He would be fortunate if he managed to maintain his current cultivation base. Even if he didn't regress, it would be almost impossible for him to grow stronger in the future.

That was also the reason behind Liu Changyi's panic earlier.

Regardless, everything that happened caused a huge grudge to form between Shang Xia and the Zhang Family. He might have even dragged the Liu Family into the picture.

Despite the enmity he formed, Shang Xia was regretting one thing and one thing only. He regretted not being able to kill Zhang Luoxing earlier. The two of them were the ones who made the first move. When Liu Changyi yelled earlier, Shang Xia wanted to rain expletives down on him.

He didn't think it was a problem when they attacked him. He only started screaming about hurting members of the Ji Continent when Shang Xia counterattacked.

There was no reason to remain passive when one's life was at stake. As the saying goes, 'When you kill, prepare to be killed'.

...

Thinking back to the battle with the two of them, Shang Xia actually wanted to thank them for their generous contributions. At the very least, he managed to see one of them in action. That was

valuable practical experience that was hard to come by. Now that he entered the Four Constellation Realm, he needed a way to familiarize himself with his strength through battle.

After fighting with Zhang Luoxing, Shang Xia felt a little more comfortable circulating his Four Constellation Qi in battle. It was a good start for him to come up with his unique martial art.

That wasn't all. He also managed to gain a better understanding of his own strength.

...

As he continued on his journey south, the weather started to turn chilly. His Falling Leaf Extermination Origin seemed to enter a state of slumber as his Freezing Soul Extermination Origin started to become a little more active.

He was satisfied by the changes in his body, but he remained curious about one thing. Ever since he injured Zhang Luoxing the other day, he expected the Zhang Family to send out a huge group of experts to hunt him down. However, his journey went exceedingly smoothly and he couldn't understand the reason behind it.

Well, he wasn't complaining. It made his life a lot easier as he went on his merry way. Eventually, an imposing mountain range appeared in his sights. He finally caught sight of the Taihang Mountains!

Chapter 449: ANSWER MY QUESTION

The Taihang Mountains spanned vertically through the world and it cut across the Ji, Bing, Yan, and Si Continents. There were rumors that the Taihang Mountains spanned ten thousand miles across the continents, but there had been no accurate measure of how large it truly was.

Shang Xia might not know how large the Taihang Mountains actually was, but he knew for a fact that it was several times longer and larger than the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range.

According to the location Shang Pei sent to the Shang Clan, she had established herself on one of the mountain peaks on the Sixth Pass of the Taihang Mountains.

There seemed to be eight huge ravines or valley-like structures that spanned the entire mountain range and they were referred to as the 'Eight Taihang Passes'.

Shang Xia flew for several more days before he finally arrived at a major crossing that led into the Sixth Pass. Landing on the ground below, Shang Xia followed the path described by Shang Pei and entered deep into the mountains.

The Taihang Mountains were pretty unique in a geographical sense and it was where all sorts of people from the four continents gathered. There were countless wandering cultivators, bandits, criminals, and hermits who populated the mountain range.

If Shang Xia were to fly through the Taihang Mountains recklessly, he might attract some unwanted attention to himself. He might even offend some weird factions.

To give a simple introduction to the Taihang Mountains, the deeper one went, the closer they would get to the crossroads of the four continents. That also meant that the situation got more dangerous and chaotic the deeper they were. The Sixth Pass where Shang Pei was, could be considered a pretty unsafe region.

A year ago after Shang Pei broke through to the Martial Extermination Realm, she received orders from the institution and the clan to establish herself in the Taihang Mountains.

According to their original plan, she only had to settle down in the Third or Fourth pass in the Taihang Mountains. Even though the situation there was pretty chaotic, it was reasonably close to the You Continent. The moment she ran into any danger, she would be able to escape to the You Continent or call for reinforcements.

After receiving the orders, Shang Pei immediately brought the remaining members of the Eighteen Horsemen of the You Continent to the Taihang Peak. The orders of the institution and clan were merely suggestions to her and she promptly rejected it. She quickly brought her members to the Sixth Pass to set up camp.

One of the reasons behind her disobedience was that she didn't wish to be restricted by the Clan and Tongyou Institution. The other was because the Sixth Pass was closer to the secret region she had talked to Shang Xia about.

After reaching where Shang Pei told him to go, Shang Xia quickly released the secret communication method she told him about.

From what she said, she would send a few of her men over to meet him. Despite her promise to him, no one arrived even after several hours.

A bad premonition filled Shang Xia's heart but he didn't hesitate for long. Since they weren't there to meet him, he decided to look for their stronghold himself.

Shang Xia quickly suppressed his aura until he looked like he was a cultivator at the large completion stage of the Martial Intent Realm. He felt that a large completion stage Martial Intent Realm wouldn't raise too many suspicions in the Taihang Mountains. After all, Martial Extermination Realm experts wouldn't take note of someone at that level. Experts who weren't at the Martial Extermination Realm wouldn't try messing with him for no reason either.

Unleashing his Irregular Steps, Shang Xia started running around the mountains. His speed might be a far cry from flight, but he understood the principle of keeping a low profile.

Extending his divine perception to the best of his abilities, he tried to look for the place called the Youyan Stronghold as described in Shang Pei's letter. He scanned everywhere carefully, unwilling to miss the slightest sign of the territory.

Unfortunately, the region contained in each pass was massive. Shang Xia would have to explore more than a thousand miles around him. If went around like a headless fly, god knew when he would be able to locate the Youyan Stronghold.

Shang Xia quickly realized the problem and when he was thinking about what he could do about it, he discovered a strange stronghold at the edge of his divine perception.

Quickly climbing a hill beside him, he leaped into the air in the direction of the stronghold.

Seeing someone rumbling through the air towards them, the stronghold guards acted quickly to raise the alarm. The entire stronghold broke out into a flurry of activity.

However, there were still several cultivators who emerged from their huts to yell at the guard.

“God damn! Why the hell are you sounding the alarm in the middle of the day...” The stronghold chief also emerged to curse at the guard and before could complete his sentence, he saw Shang Xia standing in front of him with the guard’s whistle in hand.

With his heart pounding in fear, the stronghold chief quickly changed his tone. He wasn’t a fool. He knew that anyone with the guts to barge into a fortified stronghold like theirs wasn’t someone he could mess with. Cupping his fists, he addressed Shang Xia. “Young hero, may I ask...”

Shang Xia appeared before him before he could react. A light with several colors flashed dangerously around Shang Xia as though it was ready to strike the stronghold chief down at any time.

With his eyes widening in fright, the stronghold chief felt the world crumbling around him. However, he managed to force himself to bow to the youngster standing in front of him. An ugly smile appeared on his face and he muttered, “I am Lu Sanbao of the Rocky Cliff Stronghold and I am the Yin Cave Master’s subordinate. Senior, is something the matter? If you have any requests, I’ll try my best to fulfill them.”

Hearing the bearded stronghold chief who was several times older than himself calling him ‘senior’, Shang Xia’s face twisted unnaturally. A wave of discomfort filled his heart.

Luckily, Shang Xia was urgently looking for news regarding the Youyan Stronghold. He was about to ask his question when he noticed what several other members of the stronghold were doing. His pupils constricted slightly and he snorted in contempt, “Hmph, how dare you play tricks with me?”

A frightening pressure descended on the Rocky Cliff stronghold the moment the words left his lips.

“Senior, please show mercy!” Lu Sanbao yelled as he was forced to his knees. He was a Martial Intent Realm who had completed his third divine sense transformation at the end of the day and he managed to force the words out of his mouth despite the terrifying pressure.

However, the same couldn’t be said for the others. Any cultivators who had yet to enter the Martial Intent Realm fell unconscious immediately. However, they weren’t the ones Shang Xia targeted specifically. Shang Xia’s divine perception was locked onto one of the Martial Intent Realm cultivators in a secret tunnel and another who was close to the back entrance of the stronghold. They had transmission talismans in their hands and their intentions were obvious.

“Is the Yin Cave Master your backer? Is he a Martial Extermination Realm cultivator?” Shang Xia’s voice drifted into Lu Sanbao’s ears and the pressure on him disappeared. Even so, he didn’t dare to get to his feet immediately. His clothes were completely drenched in his sweat.

Of course, Shang Xia’s question also revealed his identity as an outsider to the Taihang Mountains. Not like that mattered to Lu Sanbao anyway.

Looking around, Lu Sanbao could tell that everyone in the stronghold had been suppressed by the youngster’s powerful aura. They could be killed at any time, and Lu Sanbao was no exception.

Terror filled Lu Sanbao's heart when he realized how strong this newcomer was. Even the Yin Cave Master wouldn't be able to strike all the cultivators in the Rocky Cliff stronghold unconscious with a single snort.

"Ye... Yes... Senior, please spare my life! I don't know anything! I won't tell anyone about you either!" Lu Sanbao stammered before slamming his forehead into the ground.

Coughing lightly, Shang Xia sighed, "You don't have to worry about that now. All I want to know is if you have heard of the Youyan Stronghold. Also, have you heard of the Youyan Stronghold's leader, a Martial Extermination Realm female cultivator?"

Before Lu Sanbao could say a word, Shang Xia snorted coldly, "You should think twice before answering my question. If you can't satisfy me with your reply, Everyone here will die with you."

"I... I'll talk! I'll tell you everything!" Lu Sanbao panicked.

Glaring at Lu Sanbao, Shang Xia raised an eyebrow to signal for him to start talking.

Swallowing a mouthful of saliva, Lu Sanbao started, "I... I have not heard of the Youyan Stronghold before..."

Shang Xia's snort rang in his ears like a thunderbolt as a bone-chilling frost assaulted his body.

"Wait! Wait! I'm not done!" Lu Sanbao cried out desperately.

The pain in his body stopped abruptly and he wasted no time to continue, "Last autumn, I heard the Yin Cave Master saying something about a new female cultivator in the Sixth Pass. He said something like this. 'That woman who came recently dares to work with outsiders to steal the Glass Daisy Chrysanthemum from the Jingxiu Peak... Is she crazy?!'"

Glass Daisy Chrysanthemum?! Last Autumn?

Shang Xia narrowed his eyes but his tone didn't change. "Is that it?"

A strange light flickered in Lu Sanbao's eyes but he remained silent.

"Speak!" Shang Xia growled impatiently when he noticed Lu Sanbao's hesitation.

Shang Xia's growl caused Lu Sanbao's mental defense to crumble instantly. He sputtered, "That was a long time ago! However, I went to the Thousand Caves Peak to deliver some gifts to the Yin Cave Master and to pay my respects recently and saw him with several experts from the Jingxiu Peak. They seem to be gathered together to deal with that female cultivator. The only weird thing was that the Yin Cave Master said that he wouldn't join them in their effort to deal with her."

Shang Xia instantly understood why Shang Pei didn't send anyone to bring him over to the stronghold.

Seeing as Shang Xia wasn't responding, Lu Sanbao panicked and cried, "Senior, I told you everything I know! I didn't hide anything... I promise!"

"Do you really not know anything about the Youyan Stronghold? Not even a guess?" Shang Xia asked again.

“I have no idea. But...” Lu Sanbao paused for a second but he quickly added, “... But I know where the Jingxiu Peak is!”

A chuckle left Shang Xia’s lips all of a sudden. “Hehe, From what I can tell, you’re still pretty loyal to the Yin Cave Master...”

“Senior, The Yin Cave Master saved my life in the past. I can’t possibly betray him. I hope senior can...”

Shang Xia interrupted him before he could finish. “I’ll place a restriction in your body that seals your ability to move and talk for three days. You will still be conscious and no harm will befall you. I believe the Yin Cave Master will learn about this quickly, but he won’t be able to break my restriction anyway. After three days, you can go ahead and tell him whatever happened. If the situation permits, I am really interested in meeting him.”

Lu Sanbao realized things had gone south when Shang Xia started talking about the restriction. He wanted to beg for mercy when Shang Xia’s palm came crashing down.

He could tell that Shang Xia wasn’t moving extremely quickly, but no matter how hard he tried, he wasn’t able to dodge it. It smacked him directly in his forehead and a cooling sensation entered his sea of consciousness. He felt a sense of extreme clarity but the next moment, he discovered that he no longer had control over his limbs. His eyes were wide open, but he couldn’t speak. His other senses weren’t obstructed and he could still hear everything that was going on around him. He seemed to be able to feel a gentle breeze brushing against him...

Chapter 450: The Calm Before the Storm

Shang Xia had a sneaking suspicion that Shang Pei was in danger. With the explanation from Lu Sanbao, it seemed as though his worst fears had come true.

With credible news that the experts from the Jingxiu Peak were planning to band together to deal with Shang Pei, Shang Xia started to gather more information about them.

Once he learned enough, he flew straight for the Jingxiu Peak at his quickest speed.

This time, Shang Xia didn’t hold back. He didn’t plan on hiding his tracks as a four colored light flashed under his feet while he tore through the air.

Shang Xia learned about the powers that populated the region around the Rocky Cliff Village and the Jingxiu Peak and knew that no one would dare to stop a suspected fourth layer Martial Extermination Realm expert.

Traveling close to 700 miles without rest, Shang Xia released his divine perception in a tyrannical fashion. Just like he thought, no one tried countering it with their own.

Pushing himself to his limits earlier, Shang Xia gained some insights on how to fly more effectively. He discovered that he would be able to conserve two thirds of his strength if he managed to grasp the strange rhythm of his extermination origins cycling in his body.

Finally landing 300 miles away from the Jingxiu Peak, Shang Xia learned from Lu Sanbao that there was a place called the Lingfeng Stronghold nearby. It was one of the Jingxiu Peak’s external powers, and Shang Xia decided to start with them.

Restraining his aura, Shang Xia ensured that he was properly hidden before infiltrating the Linfeng Stronghold. Before anyone discovered his presence, he had already achieved his goal.

He appeared in a desolate piece of land some distance away from the stronghold as he held an unkempt-looking man by the collar.

Tossing him onto the ground casually, Shang Xia muttered, "I'll count to five. Tell me everything you know about the Jingxiu Peak. One... Two..."

"I... I'll tell you anything you want! Please don't kill me! Seven days ago, Duan Liufeng, the master of the Jingxiu Peak, gathered all the leaders of the strongholds under their command. My brother said that that old... I mean, he said that Duan Liufeng might be up to something big. He gathered the leaders of the strongholds so that they could form an alliance to protect the region..." The cultivator Shang Xia tossed to the ground earlier revealed.

"Your brother?" Shang Xia frowned.

"My brother is the chief of our Linfeng Stronghold... He... He's on the Jingxiu Peak at the moment."

Grunting softly, Shang Xia continued, "So... It's possible that Duan Liufeng isn't on the Jingxiu Peak at the moment, right?"

The cultivator felt beads of cold sweat dripping down his forehead as he was too afraid to respond.

Staring at the cultivator with a look of amusement, Shang Xia sneered, "So... You're not the chief of the Linfeng Stronghold. Didn't I drag you out from the village chief's residence? Interesting... No wonder the lady in there looks a little older than you."

The cultivator felt his body trembling like a leaf after hearing what Shang Xia said and the look of mockery in Shang Xia's eyes grew a little stronger.

However, Shang Xia's tone returned to normal when he addressed the cultivator again. "I plan on heading over to the Jingxiu Peak. From what I can tell, you might have a plan for me. What do you think?"

"Yes... Yes! Yes, I do!" The cultivator cried out helplessly.

...

When Shang Xia approached the Jingxiu Peak with the cultivator in tow, the situation in the Rocky Cliff Stronghold was discovered by members of other strongholds. As reports flew all around, the master of the Thousand Caves Peak, Yin Wanxiang, was alerted.

"Cave Master..." As one of his subordinates, Hu Guilin couldn't help but worry after seeing Yin Wanxiang standing before Lu Sanbao's body for an hour straight. "Will Chief Lu be..."

The cultivators who were struck unconscious by Shang Xia earlier started to wake up and they couldn't help but stare at Yin Wanxiang in hopes that he would be able to save their chief.

Yin Wanxiang was a middle aged man who had the typical looks of a strict parent. He had a slightly receding hairline and he hardly ever smiled.

“His methods are really impressive.” Yin Wanxiang sighed softly before turning to the others. “I can’t save him.”

Yin Wanxiang’s words caused a slight commotion, but he quickly followed up, “Well, Sanbao doesn’t seem to be in danger anyway. His movements and speech were sealed by that expert but his consciousness remains clear. The person who did this isn’t planning on killing him. The restrictions should be gone in 3 to 5 days.”

Collective sighs of relief filled the air after everyone heard what he said.

After Hu Guilin carried Lu Sanbao back into his room and placated the rest of the members of the stronghold, he returned to Yin Wanxiang’s side. “Cave Master, who could it possibly be? Did he come to threaten our Thousand Caves Peak?”

Thinking for a moment, Yin Wanxiang shook his head and muttered, “He seems like a passing expert. Moreover, it doesn’t look like he plans on offending us. After all, he didn’t kill Lu Sanbao and the other members of the stronghold. He probably sealed Lu Sanbao’s movements and ability to speak to prevent news of him leaking.”

Hu Guilin’s eyes widened in realization and he muttered, “A foreign cultivator? That’s why... The members of the Rocky Cliff Stronghold said that a figure descended from the skies before they were all knocked unconscious. They couldn’t even see the person’s appearance.” Thinking for a second, he continued, “Cave Master, is it possible to estimate the person’s strength?”

“Lu Sanbao isn’t the only Martial Intent Realm expert in the Rocky Cliff Stronghold. Even so, that person managed to knock all of them unconscious with the exception of Lu Sanbao. They couldn’t even release their transmission talismans in time. From the strength of his divine perception, ability to focus on different targets, and his intricate restriction, I might not be his match.” Yin Wanxiang estimated.

A look of fright flashed across Hu Guilin’s eyes. “Luckily, he didn’t have ill intentions for the Rocky Cliff Stronghold. Lu Sanbao should recover soon and he’ll be able to tell us what happened.”

Yin Wanxiang sighed softly as he turned his gaze to the depths of the Taihang Mountains. “We need to tell those outside to keep a close eye on the Sixth Pass. From his actions, that person looks to be out for revenge...”

.

“This... Should we remind the other powers in the Sixth Pass about the foreign expert?” Hu Guilin wondered.

Instead of replying immediately, Yin Wanxiang fell silent for a moment. Only after thinking about the various repercussions did he respond. “The Sixth Pass will probably descend into chaos soon. Since it’s pretty much unavoidable, we’ll just let the shitshow play out.”

Realizing his intentions, Hu Guilin cupped his fists before taking his leave.

...

Lin Zhixuan rushed down the Jingxiu Peak the moment he received his brother, Lin Zhishi's, urgent report. He looked at his brother's helpless expression and a frown appeared on his face. "Second Brother, why are you here? Didn't I tell you that you need to tighten the protection of our Linfeng Stronghold? Currently, the Sixth Pass is... Hey? Second Brother?"

Lin Zhixuan discovered the distracted look in his brother's eyes before he finished speaking and he quickly raised his guard.

A soft voice rang in his ears before he could try anything weird. "I was planning to learn more during our meeting. I didn't think that your brother is a little wuss who can't maintain his composure..."

"Who?!" Lin Zhixuan yelled while retreating at his top speed.

Unfortunately, a palm clapped down on Lin Zhixuan's shoulder. He felt an inexhaustible amount of qi pouring into his body, replacing his own. After scattering his inner qi, the foreign qi sealed up his dantian.

Shang Xia experimented with that exact ability of his qi a long time ago. Sealing someone like Lin Zhixuan didn't pose the slightest problem.

Standing dead in his tracks, he glared at his brother who had clearly led whatever monstrous existence to the Jingxiu Peak and growled, "How are things back at our Linfeng Stronghold? Is my wife alright?"

With an endless amount of guilt in his heart, Lin Zhishi didn't dare to meet his brother's gaze. He whispered in a voice comparable to a mosquito's buzz. "They're fine. This... This senior didn't intend to hurt anyone. He only brought me over to look for you..."

"Fortunately..." Lin Zhixuan heaved a sigh of relief after learning about the situation back at the Linfeng Stronghold. With the reassurance that everything was fine back at home, he didn't even turn his head to address Shang Xia. "Senior, you wouldn't need to deal with someone like me personally given your strength. I believe you're here for the Jingxiu Peak?"

"Looks like you're no fool. Are you willing to help me enter the mountain?" Shang Xia didn't beat about the bush either.

Sighing softly, Lin Zhixuan replied, "I apologize. I have promised the Jingxiu Peak Master to protect the Jingxiu Peak. I hope Senior can understand my decision."

"Hehe. You better think twice then. Your brother, your wife, and everything you care about in the Linfeng Stronghold will cease to exist the moment you make the wrong decision." Shang Xia chuckled softly.

A wave of pain flashed through Lin Zhixuan's face. However, he forced himself to close his eyes as he suppressed the pain in his heart. Finally reaching a state of tranquility, his silence gave Shang Xia his answer.

Who would have thought that Lin Zhishi would break down from the pressure at that moment? He lost control of his emotions as he crumbled to the ground. Tears gushed out his eyes and he cried miserably, “Your wife... Your wife is pregnant! You can’t let them die like that... You can’t!”

With his eyes snapping open, Lin Zhixuan looked at Lin Zhishi silently. Even though he didn’t utter a word following the revelation, Shang Xia could feel the violent fluctuations in his heart.

Shang Xia’s voice rang in his mind once again. “Fine. Since you promised Duan Liufeng to stand guard at the Jingxiu Peak, I won’t make things difficult for you. I don’t need you to help me infiltrate the mountain. Instead, give me detailed instructions about where Duan Liufeng went and his plans.”

Before Lin Zhifeng could say anything, Shang Xia’s tone turned chilly and he continued, “You better not tell me that you don’t know anything about his plans. Duan Liufeng wouldn’t put you in charge of the Jingxiu Peak if he didn’t trust you. This is your last chance to save the ones you love...”

“Brother...” Lin Zhishi felt so guilty that he couldn’t say anything else.

Releasing a long sigh, a helpless look flashed through Lin Zhixuan’s eyes. There was a trace of disappointment and frustration and he seemed to age ten years in an instant.

“There’s a mountain stream shrouded in dense clouds 800 miles south of the Jingxiu Peak. A new faction called the Youyan Stronghold established themselves there and the leader of the Youyan Stronghold seems to have formed a grudge with Master Duan. Because it’s difficult to locate the leader of the Youyan Stronghold, Master Duan isn’t able to do anything to them. Now, it’s said that the leader of the Youyan Stronghold is related to a huge opportunity that will descend on the Sixth Pass. As soon as Master Duan heard the news, he contacted several friends around the Taihang Mountains to barge into the Cloud Water Gorge. They plan on encircling and killing the leader of the Youyan Stronghold.”

“So that’s it...” Shang Xia finally understood what happened. The huge opportunity Shang Pei was related to was probably the secret region that would appear soon but Shang Xia had no idea why news of that would be leaked.

With the information he wanted, Shang Xia looked at Liu Zhixuan and Liu Zhishi before releasing his grip on the stronger of the two. “Alright. I won’t go back on my words. You can leave now.”

After releasing the two of them, Shang Xia started to move towards the Jingxiu Peak.

Lin Zhixuan’s heart sank when he saw where Shang Xia was going. “Senior, the Jingxiu Peak is protected by a grand formation and it won’t be easy to shatter it in a short period of time. If you’re here to save those in the Cloud Water Gorge, why don’t you head over there directly?”

No fool would be able to establish themselves as a leader of a stronghold in the Sixth Pass. Even Lu Sanbao could guess that Shang Xia had entered the Sixth Pass for a specific reason. Lin Zhixuan, who was a trusted aide of one of the stronger leaders, was naturally able to see through Shang Xia’s intention too.

His true intentions weren't to give Shang Xia advice. At the end of the day, he was still trying to protect the Jingxiu Peak.

Chuckling softly, Shang Xia replied without turning his head. "You're overestimating the strength of the protection formation around the Jingxiu Peak. Moreover, there's one less Martial Intent Realm cultivator now that you're here..."

Shang Xia's figure disappeared the next instant but he left behind a final warning that rang clearly in Lin Zhixuan's mind. "You should worry about your problems instead of the Jingxiu Peak."