

The Heavens 521

Chapter 521: Proclaiming Victory

With 2 Golden Sun Inferno Talismans, Shang Xia stopped Mister Ren for a moment. Shang Xia released a Four Seasons Palm at Elder Zhuang.

With that palm strike, he stopped Elder Zhuang from interfering with the battle between Elder Hu and Yun Jing. At the same time, he was sent flying in their direction.

If anyone else was in his position, they would be turned to mush by the shockwaves of the battle between 2 fourth layer Martial Extermination Realm experts. Even so, Elder Zhuang who was sent flying in the opposite direction felt a bad premonition filling his heart.

He suddenly realized that everything the foreign cultivator did might have been part of his master plan. It was possible he wanted to use the collision of their attacks to send himself into the other battlefield!

As he soared through the air, Shang Xia could feel two different auras pushing him away! That was what he was looking for in the first place!

He ignored the fact that his extermination origins were forced back into his body from the pressure and the fact that there were 8 different strands of extermination origins corroding his body. Gnashing his teeth, he retrieved his Abyssal Blade and released another move from his Twenty Four Solar Terms, Blaze Resolution! He was inspired by the 14th solar term and it forcefully carved out a region void of any foreign qi in the middle of such a high level battlefield.

Even though it only provided a temporary respite from the shockwaves of the battle, it was enough!

With nothing to stop him, Shang Xia tossed out another Divine Restraint Talisman.

Elder Hu had already been suppressed to the point he couldn't breathe under Yun Jing's terrifying offensive and he had been pushed to his limit a long time ago. He couldn't split apart his divine perception to care about anything else!

It was basically a forgone conclusion that Shang Xia's Divine Restraint Talisman would hit its target because of the state Elder Hu was in.

He might have felt a sense of danger approaching, but he couldn't pull back any part of his energy to deal with it. The moment he did, Yun Jing would immediately rain down blows on him. With her current strength, it would mean death!

He was in serious trouble whether he retracted his energy to deal with the threat that just appeared, he would die! If he didn't he would probably also die...

In an instant, the expert from the Manyu Continent was thrown into a massive dilemma. Eventually, he chose to ignore Shang Xia's Talisman.

Striking its target, Shang Xia's Divine Restraint Talisman activated immediately and froze Elder Hu's physical body and soul.

The extermination light around Yun Jing's body ripped apart his defenses in an instant and stabbed deep into all four of his limbs.

From afar, it seemed as though a massive spider made from heaven and earth qi appeared in the air before trapping Elder Hu. It even looked like it would devour his brain the next instant.

Because of his superior cultivation realm, Elder Hu managed to shatter the restraint the moment Yun Jing tore through his extermination origin defense earlier.

The Divine Restraint Talisman might be powerful, but its effects were greatly weakened against experts with exceptional cultivation.

It was a pity that getting rid of the restraints on him didn't stop his opponents' attacks. The very next instant, terrifying rays of light that resembled stabbed into his limbs.

"Argh!" The intense pain caused him to release a loud roar as a strong wave of inner qi emerged from his body to shatter the four colored extermination lights that turned him into a human skewer earlier. Four massive holes were left in his body.

A soft breeze emerged from nowhere the next moment and blade light fell against him in a torrential downpour. Every one of them contained a frightening power and before Elder Hu could react, they entered his wounds and went into his bloodstream.

The attack arrived silently and without any warning. It was a move Shang Xia had performed back in the Sixth Pass of the Taihang Mountains, Valley Rain!

"Preposterous! You're despicable!" Elder Hu was heavily injured by Yun Jing because of Shang Xia's talisman, and he had to take on Shang Xia's sneak attack the next moment. He could tell that the extermination qi that entered his body was going to be a pain in the ass to remove.

His wounds grew larger and larger and his injuries became worse at a speed visible to the naked eye. The flow of his inner qi was also disrupted by Shang Xia's Valley Rain and he seemed to be on the brink of losing control of his energy.

After everything that happened, assistance finally arrived.

Mister Ren finally dealt with the massive sea of flames created by 2 Golden Sun Inferno Talismans and Elder Zhuang managed to destroy any remnant energy in Shang Xia's Four Seasons Palm before heading over.

The two of them arrived beside Elder Hu one after another and they regrouped quickly. At the very least, they could rely on each other and wouldn't lose so easily.

With the battle progressing up to such a point, there was no stopping till the experts on one side were eliminated. Neither side would show mercy!

Yun Jing succeeded in her attack earlier and heavily injured Elder Hu, but she was similarly exhausted. Suppressing her injuries, Yun Jing forcefully circulated her extermination origins and sent two beams of light at Elder Zhuang and Mister Ren.

Shang Xia, who was injured by the shockwaves of the battle when he inserted himself into the battlefield earlier, was vomiting out mouthfuls of blood as he retrieved a green-colored talisman.

The moment he revealed the existence of another rank four talisman, Elder Hu nearly lost control of his inner qi and was a step away from entering cultivation deviation. Even Yun Jing couldn't believe her eyes as she nearly lost control of her attack.

Everyone present was actually terrified of Shang Xia and his talismans at that point in time.

There was no need to mention Elder Hu, Elder Zhuang, or Mister Ren. Even Yun Jing who was from the Tongyou Institution never experienced someone throwing out several rank four talismans in a single fight.

Rank four talismans were basically extinct in the Manyu Continent, but even in the Azure Origin World, they weren't cabbages that grew by the roadside.

From Kou Chongxue's explanation before they entered the Manyu Continent, the Azure Origin World was barely a little bit stronger!

Yun Jing realized that no matter how high her evaluations of Shang Xia were previously, she had still underestimated the kid. He basically turned the entire war around the moment he arrived! She knew that the number of rank four talismans he used was far from what she witnessed.

However, the members of the Manyu Continent soon realized that they had been played by Shang Xia. With close to 8 talismans flying at them, they knew that there was no way all of them were rank four talismans. At best, they were rank two or three talismans.

Even if Shang Xia had so many rank four talismans on him, he wouldn't be able to use them all at once! After all, he needed to activate them with his inner qi... The inner qi they consumed was no small amount!

Despite those being lower-leveled talismans, The countless wind blades, ice swords, fireballs, and lightning bolts that filled the air before descending on the experts of the Manyu Continent was like the straw that broke the camel's back.

Elder Hu, who had been forcefully holding on to wait for the others' assistance, couldn't circulate his inner qi any longer. As the mighty fourth layer Martial Extermination Realm expert, he would never expect to be slain by an enemy who pelted low-ranked talismans on him!

He could no longer use his extermination origins to protect himself and mustering everything he had, he struggled to stop the attacks raining down on him. Because of his lack of concentration, Shang Xia's extermination qi continued to wreak havoc in his body and it eventually arrived at his heart.

Blood poured out from every orifice of Elder Hu's body but a vicious look remained in his eyes. Even at the very last second when blood started to seep out from pores, he was still trying to glare at Shang Xia. He died a miserable death and Shang Xia paid a similarly large price for it.

After Elder Hu's death, Shang Xia used up so much inner qi that he was nearly unable to maintain his ability to fly. He relied solely on the ability of his Auspicious Cloud Cape to approach Elder Hu before beheading him with the Abyssal Blade. Gathering all the remnant Four Constellation Qi, he roared, "This asshole Hu is dead! What the hell are you guys still doing?!"

"Hu Wendao is dead and so is Zhang Tianji. Are you guys still planning to fight us?!" Yun Jing's roar also ripped through the air. And it spread hundreds of miles away.

Clearly, she knew the names of their enemies. Hu Wendao was the fourth layer Martial Extermination Realm expert of the Manyu Continent and Zhang Tianji was the third layer Martial Extermination Realm expert who was killed by Shang Xia the moment he appeared.

After yelling, Yun Jing's gaze was locked on Elder Zhuang and Mister Ren.

The scene of Shang Xia holding Hu Wendao's head struck a blow in Elder Zhuang and Mister Ren's hearts.

Looking at Shang Xia and Yun Jing who looked like they were about to fall over from exhaustion, they felt that they would be able to win the battle after dragging it out a little more. However, what if something went wrong?

What if the 2 of them could last a little longer and were merely putting up an act to fool them?

Even Hu Wendao was killed!

No one knew how much Elder Zhuang and Mister Ren tried to convince themselves, but their train of thought was broken by a cold chuckle from Yun Jing.

Her extermination origins continued to circle around her to prevent the 2 of them from approaching.

Shang Xia also snorted coldly as he retrieved a flask from his sleeves before taking a huge swig.

Before any of them could decide on what to do next, Shang Lubing's voice rang through the air from 20 miles away. He sounded pretty excited as he spoke. "Guo Feng, Yu Jiayu, and Li Chunlan have been slain by us too! Do you guys still wish to fight?!"

Shang Lubing's voice seemed to come from the east, and another yell quickly came from the south. Liu Qinglan might sound like she was trying to catch her breath, but her voice rang loud and clear in the ears of everyone present. "Wu Taikun is dead too! Do you guys still wish to fight?!"

The cries didn't stop there. From the west, Shang Ke's voice rumbled like thunder. "Xiao Wubai, Cai Lianshan, and Lan Xuanyang have fallen. Do you guys still wish to fight?!"

A powerless voice also arrived from a different direction. Even though he sounded like he was utterly exhausted, he couldn't hide the trace of delight he felt. "Haha... Hahaha! Fan Degong is also dead! Do you guys... Still wish to fight?!"

The person who spoke was definitely someone from the Tongyou Institution. From his voice, it wasn't hard to hear that he was heavily injured. He was heavily injured, but at least he was alive.

"The woman in the red dress is also dead! Do you guys still wish to fight?!" It seemed as though the woman in the red dress wasn't an extremely well-known cultivator from the Manyu Continent. However, a dead expert was a dead expert.

Every single one of their voices rang through the air. They might sound exhausted, but their words were like sledgehammers slamming into the hearts of those from the Manyu Continent.

Moreover, those from the Tongyou Institution had a strange sense of pride after calling out the names of the experts they had slain. It was as though they were ready to claim their victory the next moment.

Rumble...

A deep sound came from the distance as the earth started to tremble along with it. Formless barriers appeared in the air as it continued to expand, covering the territory owned by the Tongyou Institution. At the same time, enemies of the institution felt a sense of pressure descending upon them.

The protection formation of the Tongyou Institution had been reactivated and it was expanding at a rapid pace!

Elder Zhuang and Mister Ren understood that the war had concluded and after shooting each other a glance, they knew what they had to do. Turning in different directions, they fled without hesitation. They knew that they couldn't remain in the Tongyou Institution's protection formation for long.

Chapter 522: A Breath To Signify The Seasons

With the reactivation of the Tongyou Institution's protection formation, the assault on the Tongyou Institution by the experts of the Manyu Continent finally came to an end.

Be it Shang Xia or Yun Jing, they were completely exhausted. It was no exaggeration to say that they were arrows at the end of their flight.

Shang Xia transformed his Auspicious Cloud Cape into the Auspicious Cloud Boat and it became a soft cloud which he collapsed into. Waves of exhaustion washed over him and he became too lazy to lift a finger.

As the cloud slowly drifted around, Shang Xia fell into a deep sleep. He was able to do that, but Yun Jing couldn't do the same. She was a Deputy Patriarch of the institution and despite being more tired than Shang Xia, she still had to ensure that everyone from the institution entered the range of their protection formation.

The Tongyou Institution might have won by a landslide in terms of cultivators slain, but it couldn't be denied that they paid a huge price to do so.

All remaining experts of the Tongyou Institution quickly returned to the safety of the protection formation to recover.

The cloud Shang Xia was on was still swaying in the wind and everyone who returned noticed him. Even so, no one wanted to disturb him at that moment. Only when the cloud landed on a mountain peak not too far away did it turn into a sea of mist that surrounded the peak.

Shang Xia, who was in a deep sleep, didn't know what was happening around him. He might be out cold, but his extermination origins were working on their own. His Four Constellation Qi circulated through his body like how he would if he actively trained in his Four Seasons Samsara Art.

A week passed, then two...

Shang Xia, whose inner qi was nearly exhausted from the battles before started to recover.

As his Four Seasons Samsara Art allowed his inner qi to circulate even more smoothly through his body, the time required for every cycle was reduced bit by bit.

Even though he was asleep, Shang Xia seemed to enter a mystical state. The path his inner qi took as it cycled through his body appeared in his mind. Every time he 'reached out' to modify it a little, the path would change accordingly. Sometimes, his inner qi would circulate a little quicker but

sometimes it would slow down slightly. The amount of inner qi that could flow through his body would also change depending on what changes he made.

In such a strange state, Shang Xia managed to modify and perfect his Four Seasons Samsara Art. No one knew how long had passed, but Shang Xia achieved his goal. He could complete one cycle in 4 short hours!

The moment he achieved it, his extermination origins seemed to resonate with the world around him. They started to produce pure spiritual extermination that fused with his body at a frightening rate. Eventually, they condensed in his body as pure Four Constellation Qi that gathered in his dantian that strengthened his foundations.

Back when he exhausted himself, Shang Xia didn't know how long it would take for him to recover. Who would have thought that his cultivation would rise without him knowing it?

The refinement of his Four Seasons Samsara Art didn't stop there either as it continued to perfect itself. That strange phenomenon didn't happen out of the blue. Instead, it was based on Shang Xia's accumulations. All his thoughts and ideas about how he should have been improving his secret art allowed him to refine his secret art even further without his conscious control.

As the time it took for him to complete each cycle of inner qi circulation decreased, his efficiency of refining his extermination origins took a huge step forward. Shang Xia's cultivation also increased accordingly.

Since he was growing stronger even in his sleep, the fluctuations of heaven and earth qi around the mountain peak he was on started to grow stronger. In the initial stages, the fluctuations merely caused the flow of heaven and earth qi to hasten in the area surrounding the mountain peak. It eventually evolved into a strong breeze, and eventually, it became a frightening storm that whistled endlessly.

That wasn't all. As Shang Xia's refinement of his Four Seasons Extermination Origins deepened, every breath he took caused a huge amount of heaven and earth qi to enter his body. When he took his first breath, his vitality increased at a terrifying rate, and the area around him that became void of heaven and earth qi due to his current state turned barren. It was as though Autumn had come early.

All of a sudden, a huge change occurred. When Shang Xia sucked the air around him into his lungs, his surroundings changed. Every single sign of life around him faded away and Winter seemed to arrive.

As his inner qi continued to travel through his body, he exhaled the turbid qi left in his body. As it emerged, the frost that was starting to cover the mountain peak thawed and life force seemed to return to the world as Spring began.

As he continued to exhale dense heaven and earth qi, the life force in his surroundings grew abundant and a beautiful scene that could only be seen in the Summer appeared in his surroundings.

When he took his next breath, the cycle continued.

The mountain peak Shang Xia was on was finally noticed by someone. It was originally covered in dense mist but because of the huge heaven and earth qi fluctuations, the mist eventually dissipated. At the same time, all four seasons cycled continuously on the mountain peak and it eventually

spread down to the foot of the mountain. The progression of the four seasons eventually evolved into the Four Seasons Samsara Cycle.

Every breath Shang Xia took signified the cycle of the four seasons!

If Shang Xia's breath signified day and night, the mountain peak would experience a change in its daily cycle with every breath he took!

On the 49th day of his deep sleep, the mountain peak experienced 36 cycles of the four seasons. With a final exhale, Shang Xia finally woke up.

The instant he opened his eyes, the strange phenomenon that shrouded the mountain disappeared. All the clouds and mist that drifted about the mountain peak scattered and the heaven and earth that was rampaging about calmed down.

In an instant, the chaotic world up there returned to normal.

The next moment, Shang Xia, who had just woken up, closed his eyes again.

He was savoring the feeling he felt the past 49 days and he reflected on whatever had happened.

The Four Constellation Qi in his dantian was full to the point of bursting and he never felt so content before. His foundations grew incomparably solid in the time he was asleep and his divine perception had also reached new heights.

Everything seemed to progress perfectly and Shang Xia discovered that he would take less than 4 hours to complete a cycle of his inner qi. He finally stepped through the gates of creating a proper rank four secret art and he could leave behind an inheritance if he so desired.

With the achievement that signified he was capable of leaving behind an inheritance, Shang Xia felt that he had hit a significant milestone. Not to mention the fact that his secret art was extremely intricate. He felt that it would be possible to reduce the time even more such that it would only take 2 hours for one cycle.

The time it took for him to circulate his inner qi didn't affect the amount of Four Constellation Qi flowing through his body in the slightest! In fact, he could circulate even more of it!

With the reduction in time taken per cycle and the increase in inner qi he could circulate, his training efficiency didn't just double, it increased to a terrifying level!

Other than that, Shang Xia felt his heart trembling slightly when he looked at the extermination origins around him. He eventually retracted them into his body as he thought about what had happened.

When entering the Four Constellation Realm, Shang Xia made use of his advancement medicine to refine 30 percent of his extermination origins.

In the 2 years that passed, Shang Xia had been trying to improve his Four Seasons Samsara Art and he didn't focus too much on refining his extermination origins. He was far from completing 50 percent of the refinement process but from what he was observing, he seemed to have crossed that mark after waking up.

Back when he met Kou Chongxue in the Beyond Heavens Pavilion, the patriarch believed that he had already refined 50 percent of his extermination origins. In order not to embarrass the patriarch, Shang Xia didn't deny it as he hid the true extent of his refinement process.

Now, he has reached the level Kou Chongxue described back then! He refined 50 percent of his extermination origin, but it seemed as though his strength would take a huge leap forward!

He might have slept for 49 days, but everything that happened was fresh in his mind after he woke up.

Lying on the ground on the mountain peak, a thin layer of fog remained around his body. He used a little more than half a day to examine the changes in his body and when he finally opened his eyes again to look at the world around him, he saw a pair of shoes in his sights.

Slowly raising his head, Shang Xia raised his brows slightly. There was a strange look in his eyes when his gaze finally landed on her face.

“There’s a strange look in your eyes...” Chu Jia felt a little uncomfortable by the way Shang Xia was looking at her, but she couldn’t put her finger on what was making her feel that way. In the end, she decided to conclude that it had something to do with how Shang Xia just completed his cultivation session.

Casually placing his hands behind his head, Shang Xia stared at the pretty face that combined the great aesthetics of a mature, confident, and charming lady before muttering, “I didn’t think that Instructor Chu would be the one to come!”

The frown on Chu Jia’s face grew a little deeper. She pouted helplessly and complained, “You took a really good nap... Do you know how bad the situation became in the past month and a half?!”

Shang Xia yawned nonchalantly and chuckled, “There’s nothing for me to worry about with your protection formation active.”

Annoyance filled her heart when she saw the mischievous grin on Shang Xia’s face and she snarled, “Everyone has been working tirelessly for the past few weeks! Since you’re awake, you should take over and bear some of our burdens! Moreover, you should be the strongest expert present before Deputy Patriarch Yun Jing recovers...”

Chapter 523: Huge Losses

Anyone could guess Shang Xia’s strength with the disturbance he caused on the mountain peak he was on.

However, they could only guess how far Shang Xia’s cultivation had gone. They didn’t know how strong he actually was if he were to go all out in a fight.

After all the experts from the Tongyou Institution made their evaluations, all of them came to the same conclusion. They would sigh softly while staring at the mountain, “He’s definitely stronger than me!”

...

Shang Xia stared at Chu Jia with a strange look in his eyes. Hearing that there was a problem, he quickly restrained his lazy attitude. “Is Deputy Patriarch Yun’s injuries really serious?”

Thinking about it for a second, Chu Jia responded, “It’s serious, but her foundations aren’t damaged. The only problem is that she has to oversee everything here and prevent any disturbance from the other powers and she can’t take a break to recover properly.”

“Is my grandfather in the core region you were defending against that expert from the Manyu Continent back then?” Shang Xia asked another question.

Shaking her head, Chu Jia muttered, “I don’t know. Only Deputy Patriarch Yun knows where he is. However, she hasn’t said anything about him recently. No news is good news and he should be doing alright.”

Shang Xia nodded slightly and felt a weight lifted off his heart. He might be a little more reassured hearing that his grandfather was safe, but he had a sneaking suspicion that his grandfather wasn’t cultivating in seclusion in the range of the protection formation.

Yun Jing should be clear on the matter, but so should Kou Chongxue and Ji Wenlong.

Shang Xia asked another question. “How are the others right now? What about the statistics of the war that happened? Did anyone on our side die? From your description, things don’t seem to be going well...”

Chu Jia’s expression sank immediately. “If we count you, there are 14 Martial Extermination Realm experts on our side in total...”

“Wait, wait, wait! Slow down. Are you sure we have 14 Martial Extermination Realm experts on our side? When did our Tongyou Institution produce so many Martial Extermination Realm experts?” Shang Xia gasped.

Even though he knew that the institution deployed a huge number of Martial Extermination Realm experts to the Manyu Continent, the number he was hearing now had far exceeded his expectations. He suspected that the institution had hidden the breakthrough of several experts among them, but he never thought that Kou Chongxue would send so many of them to the Manyu Continent at the same time.

Facing Shang Xia’s question, Chu Jia understood his confusion. “I was also surprised when I heard about them. Even Senior Shang Ke was shocked at the revelation. From what he heard, Mister Lu Siyuan was said to have resigned from his post after the Tongyou Institution was established and after a few years of teaching. Stories have it that he went to wander the world after he left. Mister Fang Kewei is another expert who was said to have fallen in the outside world. Who knew that he had been brought to the Beyond Heavens Pavilion by Patriarch Kou a long time ago? He had been in hiding all this time and there are 2 other second layer Martial Extermination Realm experts and 1 who just entered the Martial Extermination Realm who joined us.”

“What about the other 3?” Shang Xia continued.

“There’s Ji Wenbin, a member of Deputy Patriarch Ji’s clan. According to the records, he died in the battlefield between the two worlds a long time ago. Liu Jikun is also present. He’s a part of the Liu Clan and it’s said that he’s a cousin or brother of the late Deputy Patriarch Liu Jitang. Back when Deputy Patriarch Liu Jitang lost his life in the Coral Forest, Liu Jikun didn’t appear to take his place. There’s another senior called Yun Shu. Even though she’s said to be a member of the Yun Clan, she was Deputy Patriarch Yun’s personal maidservant in the past.”

The 3 of them were obviously members of the great clans and they were possibly the hidden experts who would only take action in times of need.

Shang Xia rubbed his temples slowly and groaned, “5 Martial Extermination Realm experts... That’s basically the power of a great clan in our You Continent! For Patriarch Kou and the Deputy Patriarchs to keep them hidden... Hehe, all of them are really sinister old bastards... I mean... They have great foresight and planned well for the future...”

Shang Xia added another question even though he knew that the possibility of it happening wasn’t high. “Since the other great clans of the Tongyou City have hidden experts, does my Shang Clan possess any hidden Martial Extermination Realm expert?”

Resisting the urge to roll her eyes at the member of the Shang Clan who was asking her about matters regarding his own family, Chu Jia forced herself to reply to him in the calmest tone possible. “Nope!”

Shang Xia nodded his head as though he was confirming the information he had learned while giving off an ‘I knew it’ look. “Yeah... That makes sense. My Shang Clan rose to prominence after the Ji, Yun, and Liu Clans. Our foundations are a lot weaker than them and we obviously can’t be compared to any of them...”

Finally unable to control herself, Chu Jia chuckled sinisterly. “There’s Deputy Patriarch Shang Bo, Senior Shang Ke, and it’s said that your Shang Clan has an expert roaming the world who has already entered the Martial Extermination Realm. You, the great Young Master Shang of the Shang Clan, have also entered the Martial Extermination Realm. Oh right, there’s also Shang Jian who can break through at any time... Heh, your Shang Clan truly has ‘shallow’ foundations...”

“What the fuck? How are you so familiar with my Shang Clan?!” Shang Xia revealed an incredulous look before shaking his butt slightly. “Why are you spying on us? Are you plotting something?! What are your intentions?!”

Chu Jia didn’t know how far she could roll her eyes back and she snapped at him instantly, “Stop with your nonsense. Do you think I have the time to be messing around with you here?”

Shang Xia sighed helplessly in response, “Alright, alright, enough. Tell me about the number of dead or injured. I don’t think you came all the way here to chat with me, right?”

Staring at Shang Xia with a fiery gaze that made it seem like she wanted to punch his teeth out, Chu Jia thought to herself: What the hell?! You’re the one who was messing about! How is this my fault?!

As the most talented Formation Grandmaster of the Tongyou Institution, Chu Jia was extremely celebrated and she was the center of attention everywhere she went. Those around her would treat her with respect all the time and she never had to endure such treatment from anyone.

Finally thinking about how she was still Shang Xia’s senior at the end of the day, she decided not to lower herself to his level and she managed to suppress the anger burning in her heart. Adjusting her tone slightly, she explained, “During the war, we killed many Martial Extermination Realm experts from the Many Continent...”

She paused for a moment before glancing at Shang Xia. After all, the annoying little bugger standing in front of her was the key they used to win the war. With the terrifying number of rank four talismans he brought over...

Thinking back to the amount of talismans he used in the war, even Chu Jia felt her heart ache slightly. However, it quickly disappeared after she thought about how many lives he saved because of his wanton use of talismans. If he didn't do what he did, there might be even more casualties from the institution!

There was also a need to mention the fact that the other powers of the Azure Origin World and Azure Spiritual World had their eyes on the Manyu Continent at the moment. The Tongyou Institution seemed to be going against both sides from what they were doing and they were staking it all on their actions!

Other than the 2 Martial Dipper Realm ancestors who were waiting to pull them out in case things went south, it wasn't an exaggeration to say that the core of the Tongyou Institution had gathered in the Manyu Continent!

"... However, of the 14 Martial Extermination Realm experts we sent, 4 are dead and 4 are injured."

Even with Chu Jia's aloof personality, her expression darkened when she mentioned the institution's loss.

Widening his eyes in shock, Shang Xia yelled, "What?! 4 of us died?!"

Chu Jia nodded solemnly and explained, "That's right. Of the 4, one of them was Instructor Gu Shou of the Inner Division. Lu Siyuan, Yun Shu, and Ji Wenbin were the others killed. Of them, only Mister Lu Siyuan was a second layer Martial Extermination Realm expert, the others are all in the first layer."

Shang Xia only knew Gu Shou of those who died, but it was enough for him to feel an ache in his heart.

Chu Jia continued, "Other than the 4 of them, there are 4 others who received heavy injuries. They're Liu Zhidao of the Liu Clan, Chief Shang Lubing of the Contribution Division, Fang Kewei of the Beyond Heavens Pavilion, and your Grandpa Ke."

"How are my Grandpa Ke's injuries?" Shang Xia asked immediately.

"His injuries aren't the problem. However, he exhausted too much of his inner qi during the battle and his foundations were injured. I'm afraid he won't be able to grow stronger in the future."

Grunting softly, a look of regret appeared on Shang Xia's face. He regretted separating from Shang Ke back then. If the two of them remained together, Shang Ke definitely wouldn't have suffered such serious injuries.

Of course, deep down, Shang Xia knew that Shang Ke had used up most of his potential when entering the Martial Extermination Realm. There wasn't much hope of him progressing in the Martial Extermination Realm anyway, but hearing his state from Chu Jia caused him to be slightly

depressed. After all, having little hope of progressing was completely different from having his foundations damaged.

“Is there nothing we can do about it?” Shang Xia asked with reluctance.

To that, Chu Jia didn’t reply. She only shook her head silently.

If it was anyone else who suffered the same injuries, there might be a little hope for them. However, Shang Ke’s foundations weren’t strong in the first place! He was only able to enter the Martial Extermination Realm back then because of his luck. Now that he suffered greatly in the war, he could only hope to recover to whatever state he was in before.

Shang Xia fell silent for some time before finally speaking again. “Do we know who leaked out information to the members of the Manyu Continent?”

“We are only sure that there are greater powers behind their actions and have been instigating them to target us.” Chu Jia replied.

She might as well have not said anything as anyone with half a brain would know that was the case.

“Have we passed the news of this back to the Beyond Heavens Pavilion? What did Patriarch Kou say?” Shang Xia wondered out loud.

“He said that our actions might have been revealed because of the events back in the Cloud Water Gorge. He said that you should know what happened.” Chu Jia told him what Kou Chongxue said while staring at him intently in order to gauge his reaction.

After some time, Shang Xia sighed softly, “Yeah... It’s because of the Abyssal Firmament Fate Dipper...”

Chu Jia was no fool. She was a genius in her own right and that was how she managed to progress so far in the way of formations in the first place. She quickly connected the dots. “So... You obtained the Abyssal Firmament Fate Dipper and many people learned of it. Deputy Patriarch Shang also entered seclusion not too long after coming into the Manyu Continent and didn’t show his face often. Is that why they managed to guess that Deputy Patriarch Kou is planning to use the Abyssal Firmament Fate Dipper to enter the Martial Dipper Realm?”

Shang Xia nodded in response. “That is most likely the reason, but that’s not the whole explanation.”

Shang Xia recalled the conversation he had with Kou Chongxue about the fusion of the worlds back in the Beyond Heavens Pavilion.

Shang Xia didn’t wait for Chu Jia to continue asking and he added, “In order to prevent my grandfather from entering the Martial Dipper Realm, those people behind the scenes came up with a plan to wear the experts from the Manyu Continent and our Tongyou Institution out by instigating a war. They wish to reduce our strength and prevent us from obtaining any benefits from the Manyu Continent. They also wish to use the chance to warn Patriarch Kou not to mess with them. Hmph, their intentions should probably be to kill multiple birds with one stone!”

When he was done, Shang Xia fell back on his butt and remained lying on the fluffy cloud formed by his Auspicious Cloud Cape. His gaze turned a little hazy but countless thoughts flashed in his mind.

He might be thinking hard, but his image was completely different in Chu Jia's eyes. With an indifferent expression, she lashed out at him, "Are you really going to continue sleeping here?!"

With a listless look in his eyes, Shang Xia responded immediately, "What's our current situation right now?"

"The territory we've controlled for the past 2 years has been lost to the various powers that attacked us. If we don't do anything, all we have left will be this tiny region of land!" Chu Jia explained.

Shang Xia didn't move in the slightest and he muttered, "There's no point in telling me this. You should report this to Deputy Patriarch Yun."

"But... But Deputy Patriarch Yun said that there's no rush to counterattack! She said that we should only talk about taking back our territory after our experts recover." Chu Jia lamented.

"She's right." Shang Xia sighed.

"But... But after they recover, there won't be much left in the Manyu Continent for us!" Chu Jia complained.

"So what?" The light returned to Shang Xia's eyes and he growled, "Losing some land is better than us losing our Martial Extermination Realm experts! Moreover, who knows if those powers who came to occupy our land are prepared for us to launch an attack on them. We might fall into their trap if that happens."

Chu Jia frowned. "What if they're not satisfied with what they have and come knocking on our doorsteps?"

"Huh?" Shang Xia finally turned to stare at Chu Jia while waiting for her to continue.

Chapter 524: I Choose You, Spirit Extermination Gourd! Cower, you Cowards!

"What if they come knocking?!" Chu Jia asked. "In the past half a year or so, there would be cultivators with hidden appearances who would attack our protection formation from time to time! We know that they aren't members of the Manyu Continent! Because experts on our side need to recover, we can only ensure their attacks passively. However, my formation won't be able to last for long under their attacks. It won't take long for my formation to be destroyed. The moment it's gone, we'll be revealed to the world."

Shang Xia widened his eyes in shock. "So after all that, all you want me to do is to head out there and establish our Tongyou Institution's prestige by beating up a few of them?"

“We can’t let those assholes do whatever they want in front of our territory, right?” Chu Jia said as a matter of factly. “Deputy Patriarch Yun is recovering right now and you’re the strongest among us.”

Reminded of his strength once again, a trace of irritation filled Chu Jia’s heart and she pouted, “Moreover, you kicked up such a huge ruckus when you were asleep... You definitely experienced a huge increase in strength again. In order not to let anyone discover the phenomenon around the mountain peak, I used a great deal of effort to conceal you! If I didn’t I wouldn’t be afraid that the protection formation would be broken soon. Also, if you appear suddenly and kill your way out there, you’ll be able to catch all of them by surprise and teach them a good lesson!”

Shang Xia chuckled softly, “Is this something you came up with or did someone else instruct you to do so?”

“Hmph, hmph!” Chu Jia snapped, “What do you think?”

“Alright, I understand.” Shang Xia laughed softly before taking out a gourd from his sleeves. “Place this gourd above the eye of your formation and ensure that it remains at the highest point of the protection formation. Those little rats won’t dare to do anything once you do this.”

Retrieving the Spirit Extermination Gourd from Shang Xia, Chu Jia tossed it around in her hand and asked, “What does this contain anyway?”

She wanted to remove the cork from the gourd, but Shang Xia hastily grabbed it before sighing helplessly, “Forget it. I’ll head over with you to deploy the gourd.”

Tilting her head to the side to glance at Shang Xia, Chu Jia seemed a little suspicious of his actions. “Is your gourd really that amazing?”

Waving his hands casually, Shang Xia didn’t bother answering the question. “Let’s go look for Deputy Patriarch Yun first.”

As the two of them went to look for Yun Jing, they continued their random conversation.

”.

“The Manyu Continent is massive. It looks pretty sturdy right now and it’s still in one piece. How are we supposed to bring this back to the Azure Origin World?” Shang Xia asked. That was the part he didn’t understand.

Before entering the Manyu Continent, Shang Xia learned a little about it from Ji Wenlong and Kou Chongxue. He knew that the Manyu Continent was around half the size of the Azure Origin World and it was probably the size of 5 to 6 continents. Such a massive land mass would probably destroy the Azure Origin World even if it was split in half!

If the continent were to fall straight for the Azure Origin World, all the Martial Dipper Realm Ancestors working together might not be able to stop it!

Chu Jia chuckled after hearing his question. “Of course we’ll wait for the continent to shatter before doing anything.”

Shang Xia knew that Chu Jia was a Formation Grandmaster and was probably the Tongyou Institution's ace to deal with the shattered continent. As such, she would definitely know the Tongyou Institution's plan. Other than Shang Bo and Yun Jing, she might be the one who knew what was actually going on!

Her answer verified Shang Xia's guess.

"Waiting for it to shatter?" Shang Xia frowned. "From what I saw along my way to the Manyu Continent, it looks exceptionally solid. The heaven and earth qi here is pretty dense and when compared to our Azure Origin World, it doesn't look like a world on the brink of destruction!"

That wasn't Shang Xia bullshitting. When he descended into the Manyu Continent, he felt the density of heaven and earth qi. That was one of the reasons behind his sudden improvement in the 49 days he was asleep.

"It's a final sign before the destruction of their world." Chu Jia explained. "I believe you already noticed that the spatial barrier around the Manyu Continent is as thin as a sheet of paper. Even though their high-level cultivators here can still cultivate, they basically have no more resources left. Otherwise, why would you see Martial Extermination Realm experts primarily using low and mid-grade weapons? Back then during the war, we barely saw any one of them using rank talismans or recovery medicine! Not to mention the fact that most of those experts we dealt with are older than Deputy Patriarchs Shang and Yun..."

"Do you mean to say that all of the experts we faced could only cultivate slowly without any help? Did they have to rely on long term accumulations to reach their current level?" Shang Xia asked.

"The Manyu Continent only started producing a huge amount of heaven and earth qi in the past 3 to 5 years because they reached the final phase of destruction. They wouldn't be able to produce any high-level resources in such a short amount of time and because of their declining world, they failed to produce any powerful weapons and talismans..." Chu Jia explained.

"So that's what happened!" Shang Xia sighed. "It's a real pity..."

Chu Jia chuckled in response, "Otherwise, why do you think we were able to hold them off for so long before you arrived? They were so much stronger than us and they outnumbered us by a huge margin..."

Shang Xia thought about it for a second before throwing out another question, "How long before the Manyu Continent is destroyed?"

"I have no idea. However, Deputy Patriarch Yun has been asking me to speed up deploying my formation. There have been several huge delivery arrivals of resources

related to formation building and I think it won't be long before the Manyu Continent is destroyed.

Shang Xia wanted to continue down his line of questioning but he felt a strange fluctuation at the edge of his divine perception. He raised his head suddenly to stare in a certain direction.

By the time Chu Jia noticed what had happened, a sharp whistle tore through the air. A ball of light tore through the skies like a giant meteor and slammed heavily against the protection barrier.

Even so, Shang Xia stared at it without moving a muscle.

Chu Jia's eyes widened in fright and she yelled at him, "Hey, aren't you going to make a move?"

Unfortunately, Shang Xia remained where he stood as if he didn't hear her.

"Asshole!" Chu Jia cursed angrily and no one knew who she was scolding.

She muttered something under her breath and started to make some calculations before pointing at the skies above her.

The protection barrier lit up with a brilliant glow before streams of energy gathered where the barrier was struck. It continued to reinforce the weakened area.

"Rumble..." A heaven-shaking explosion filled the air and the region where the protection barrier was struck started to dim. Chu Jia, who was standing beside Shang Xia, felt the blood draining from her face.

Even so, she tried her best to control the protection formation as the attack didn't stop there. Flames burst forth outside the barrier and painted the skies red as they tried to incinerate the barrier.

When everything was happening, Chu Jia wanted nothing more than to beat the asshole who wasn't doing anything beside her to death. Unfortunately, she didn't have the energy to do anything with the pressure coming from the attack on the protection barrier.

As she cursed her teammate for being useless, Shang Xia, who had been standing there like a statue, finally moved.

"I found you." Shang Xia's figure blurred and even Chu Jia failed to see how he moved. He passed through the protection barrier and tore through the viscous lava that had appeared in place of the flames.

As Shang Xia only tore through a small region of the lava, Chu Jia's vision was still obstructed by whatever remained. All she could feel was Shang Xia rushing into the air with some sort of special skill.

Soon after, a dull blast ripped through the skies and a shockwave ensued.

"Who the hell are you?" An enraged cry came from above and it overshadowed the blast that was created earlier.

Because of the shockwave, Chu Jia who had to maintain her concentration on preventing the lava from eating through the protection barrier couldn't split off any more of her divine perception to

learn what was happening up there. The last thing she noticed was a ray of light shooting through the skies.

A miserable scream eventually came from the distance before the world returned to its original calm.

Chu Jia was anxious to learn what had happened, but she knew that she had to prevent any damage to the barrier.

As she maintained her connection to the barrier and rearranged the concentration of energy in it to lessen the impact of the lava striking it, she felt the temperature outside cooling down at a rapid pace. The pressure she felt was quickly alleviated and she found it easier to breathe.

In a split second, the lava started to harden and fall on the protection barrier. The chunks battering against the barrier didn't pose a threat and Chu Jia slowly withdrew her connection to the barrier. Raising her head, she saw Shang Xia standing outside the barrier with his hands clasped behind him.

"Who are you?" A disguised expert roared at Shang Xia outside the barrier.

"Who am I? I should be the one asking that question. Who the hell are you? Which faction do you belong to?" Shang Xia glanced at the void a distance away without a change in expression. His tone was placid, but it contained a majestic aura that caused it to be the only voice left.

"Youngster, you're really ruthless. You injured one of us the moment you made your move. Do you think you're Kou Chongxue? It's a pity you're not as strong as him. Aren't you afraid of offending us, causing us to join hands to eliminate your Tongyou Institution from the Manyu Continent..." Another voice came from the void.

A trace of mockery appeared in Shang Xia's eyes and he chuckled, "It's true that I'm weaker than Kou Chongxue. You seem really confident in yourself. Why don't you try saying that to Patriarch Kou yourself? As for eliminating us from the Manyu Continent... Hehe, I don't think you're not capable of doing so. I just think that you assholes don't have the guts to do it!"

"Brat, how dare you!"

"Brat, you should be from the Shang Clan... Are you that kid?!"

"You had the protection of Kou Chongxue and Ji Wenlong back in the Cloud Water Gorge. They're not here to help you now and even your Grandfather Shang Bo won't be able to help you!"

"..."

Yells came from the void and it seemed as though there were tons of people with their sights set on the Tongyou Institution.

A snort left Shang Xia's lips. "Alright. I'll hope you'll forgive my disrespect, but not really. All of you don't have the balls to reveal yourselves and you're hiding in the void to yap at me. Don't be stupid. You know that you can't do anything to us. Since that's the case, what's the point of wasting

your time? Are all of you so free that you can waste all your time waiting outside our protection formation? Did you already obtain all the benefits you can from the Manyu Continent?"

Those hiding in the void fell silent for a moment before someone finally broke the silence. He sounded pretty excited when he addressed Shang Xia. "Brat, so what if we're wasting our time? So what if we choose to target your Tongyou Institution? All of us still have to thank you guys for getting rid of the experts of the Manyu Continent for us. It's much easier for us to carry out our plans in the Manyu Continent now that they're gone."

"Ohhhhh so that's what you guys are here for..." Shang Xia nodded his head slightly.

Several chuckles came from the void and they seemed to be mocking the Tongyou Institution for helping get rid of the experts of the Manyu Continent at the expense of their own experts.

In the protection formation below, anger burned in Chu Jia's heart and she was enraged to the point her body started to shake.

She wasn't the only one. The Martial Extermination Realm experts of the institution were seething with rage after hearing what they had said. Those who were still injured felt their inner qi fluctuating unsteadily and some of those who suffered more serious injuries nearly suffered cultivation deviation.

"Since that's what you think..." Shang Xia sighed softly before retrieving the Spirit Extermination Gourd.

"What's the matter? Kid, are you really thinking of fighting us?" Ridicule came from somewhere in the void and the voice rang through the territory of the Tongyou Institution. "You attacked one of us and injured him because you caught him by surprise. We were too slow to react then but we reached an agreement now. If you dare to make another move, we'll join forces to slay you where you stand!"

Shang Xia didn't seem to hear him as he slowly popped the cork on his Spirit Extermination Gourd. A thin layer of extermination mist emerged.

"Hahaha! Brat, where did you steal this Spirit Extermination Gourd from? How many strands of extermination origins have you gathered? Are you planning to give them to us to beg for mercy?"

"Hahahahaha..."

Peals of laughter came from the void.

Shang Xia ignored their sarcastic comments and casually raised the gourd above his head before yelling, "Patriarch Kou, please show yourself!"

The laughter that came from the void stopped abruptly as extermination mist poured out from the gourd. A tiny jade sword emerged from the gourd and spun in the air above Shang Xia.

"Heh... Hahaha..."

The laughter that stopped returned with greater intensity. In fact, they seemed extremely ticked by the fact that Shang Xia brought out some tiny ass sword qi to scare them.

In the next instant, the jade sword spun around once and stood firmly in the air above Shang Xia. With a low hum, a horrifying sword intent filled the air and it seemed to contain the power to sunder the world.

“Haha... Huh?”

“Kou Chongxue’s Primary Yang Sword Intent!”

“Oh shit! Not good... The brat is going crazy!”

“Stop it! Hurry up and stop! This world can’t withstand the might of a Martial Dipper Realm expert! Are you planning to die with all of us?”

“Hey kid, we were kidding! Don’t take it seriously!”

“...”

Shang Xia controlled the gourd to float above his head and the jade sword continued to point in a different direction. Every time it was directed at a position in the void, a figure would be revealed. However, that Martial Extermination Realm expert would quickly conceal himself again.

“Do all of you really think that I’m playing with you now?” Shang Xia’s gaze swept across the space around him. No one dared to say a word as they hid their auras the best they could.

“Even though my Tongyou Institution doesn’t have the power to stand against all of you alone, I don’t give half a fuck about it. If we can’t gain anything from the Manyu Continent, neither can you!” Shang Xia’s gaze turned chilly and he no longer cared about what the hidden experts thought. He just said whatever he felt like. “From this point onwards, all of you will return everything you took from us. Even if you refined our treasures, spit them all back out. If any of you still have the guts to attack us within our territory, you should contact the Martial Dipper Realm Ancestor backing you up to start opening your spatial tunnel to save you from the impending disaster that will befall the Manyu Continent.”

Shang Xia no longer addressed the experts hidden in the void and the world fell silent. The entire region seemed to return to its original calm.

His figure no longer remained above the protection barrier after he spoke. Instead, the Spirit Extermination Gourd hovered in mid air as the jade sword continued to circulate in the air above.

Chapter 525: Shang Xia’s Cultivation Journey

Returning to where he stood previously, Shang Xia and Chu Jia made their way to visit Deputy Patriarch Yun. Along the way, the way Chu Jia looked at Shang Xia felt a little weird.

Unable to endure the way she was looking at him, he sighed softly, “Are you curious about something? Can you ask whatever you want to ask?”

“I heard that you refined four extermination origins simultaneously. Is it true?” Chu Jia asked right after Shang Xia spoke. She had obviously been holding in her curiosity for a long time. “What stage have you reached in your cultivation? Are you in the third layer of the Martial Extermination Realm or are you in the fourth layer?”

Shang Xia shook his head and sighed, “Strictly speaking, I should be considered a first layer Martial Extermination Realm cultivator.”

“Are you kidding?!” Chu Jia raised her head slightly and snorted with disdain. “Even if you want to act arrogantly in front of me, you need to restrain yourself! First layer of the Martial Extermination Realm... Hehe, do you think your grandaunt here believes that we have the same cultivation realm but a huge difference in combat strength?”

Chu Jia entered the Martial Extermination Realm several months earlier than Shang Xia, but she was still stuck at the first layer of the Martial Extermination Realm.

My dear Young Lady Chu, you’re thinking too much into it...

That was what Shang Xia wanted to say. However, he stopped the words from coming out his mouth and he quickly changed his tone. “Alright, alright, you can consider me as a third layer Martial Extermination Realm expert.”

Even though Shang Xia didn’t interact much with Chu Jia, he had a pretty good understanding of her personality. After looking past her arrogance and desire to win, he knew that she didn’t like people to go against whatever she said. As long as there was no point in arguing with her, it was best to just go with whatever she said.

“Hmph! That’s more like it.” Chu Jia looked at Shang Xia with a look like she expected as much. The next moment, she continued with a trace of jealousy in her voice, “Does refining four extermination origins at once make you so much stronger? How long has it been since you entered the Martial Extermination Realm? I thought that you were only able to kill so many of them because you caught them by surprise and you used rank four talismans like they were free... Also, I thought that those you killed were already exhausted from the prolonged battle with our experts. Who would have thought that you would heavily injure a third layer Martial Extermination Realm expert in a head-on clash earlier?”

The more she spoke, the greater the sense of dejection in her voice.

Both of them were considered geniuses of the Tongyou Institution. One of them was a Talisman Grandmaster and the other was a Formation Grandmaster. Originally, they were supposed to be stars shining at the same level.

From a certain perspective, Chu Jia was close to 10 years older than Shang Xia and she became an instructor of the institution a long time ago. She could be considered his senior and she felt that she was supposed to be superior to him.

If she wasn’t slightly superior in some way, wouldn’t the term ‘Dual Star of the Tongyou Institution’ be somewhat of an insult to her since she started cultivating before him?

That was also one of the reasons she had been ‘purposely’ making things difficult for him when he was crafting talismans back on the Observation Peak.

As the two of them strolled over to the core region, Shang Xia recognized it immediately. It was where Chu Jia had been defending during the war.

Stopping suddenly, Chu Jia raised her head to look at the Spirit Extermination Gourd in the air and muttered, “I really admired the way you chased those freaks who harbored bad intentions for us away. However, that would mean that we offended every one of them. Is it really worth it to offend the other powers who are also on the Manyu Continent at the moment?”

Shang Xia chuckled in response, “Do you think they won’t plot against us if I don’t threaten them? Who should we pin the deaths of our comrades on? Do you think we should blame those experts of the Manyu Continent for getting them killed?”

Chu Jia was at a loss for words and she didn’t know how to respond to Shang Xia’s question.

Before she could say anything else, Shang Xia had already entered the core region and he was making his way towards Yun Jing’s cultivation chambers.

After receiving Yun Jing’s approval, Shang Xia entered the chamber only to be greeted with a strange sight. The elegant and poised Deputy Patriarch of the Tongyou Institution was looking really haggard. From her fluctuating aura, Shang Xia could also feel that she wasn’t in her best state at the moment. Liu Qinglan was also in the room to make the report and Shang Xia could see the worry in her eyes.

After noting the situation, Shang Xia couldn’t help but ask despite Chu Jia’s reminder. “Deputy Patriarch Yun, you shouldn’t be dealing with all of these. You should be resting.”

Yun Jing nodded at Shang Xia and Chu Jia slightly with a smile on her face. She gestured for them to sit before replying to Shang Xia, “You’re right. I should be recuperating...”

Shang Xia nodded and didn’t speak of the matter any longer.

It seemed as though the two of them established some sort of understanding with each other with a single sentence.

Turning to Liu Qinglan, Yun Jung muttered, “I will hand the matter of taking care of our territory. I should be able to recover in 3 months to half a year.”

Liu Qinglan agreed and a solemn expression remained on her face as she replied, “Don’t worry about anything else and focus on recovering. Since Grandmaster Shang brought out that gourd, we shouldn’t be running into any problems in the short term.”

Chu Jia thought that Shang Xia’s wanton provocation would cause a huge backlash from the other powers and even those from the Manyu Continent, but from what Liu Qinglan was saying, it seemed as though she agreed with Shang Xia. Even Yun Jing was showing signs that she agreed with what Shang Xia did. Chu Jia sighed helplessly in her heart and chose not to speak of the matter.

Yun Jing finally turned to Shang Xia again before asking curiously, “What stage have you reached in your cultivation? You forced Zhuang Youwei back with a single palm and heavily injured Lu Sanyin earlier. Even I might not be able to do what you did and break his leg in a head-on clash.”

Shang Xia hadn't gotten the chance to reply, but Chu Jia's jaws had dropped at the side.

She thought that Shang Xia was incredible for reaching the third layer of the Martial Extermination Realm but from what she heard, she was still underestimating his strength.

Thinking about it for a moment, Shang Xia muttered, "I refined four extermination origins at once and it is difficult for me to gauge my own strength. According to the official classifications, my cultivation should be at the first layer of the Martial Extermination Realm."

Asshole! He's starting this all over again!

Chu Jia cursed inwardly. She thought that Shang Xia was messing around with her earlier, but with Liu Qinglan and Yun Jing present, he probably wasn't spouting nonsense.

But if that is the case, could it be?

Chu Jia wasn't the only one who had a hard time believing him. Liu Qinglan frowned in confusion. "Are you really at the first layer? I thought that you were hiding your true cultivation and aura. But your combat abilities... They're truly an eye-opener!"

Yun Jing sighed at the side, "Refining four extermination origins at once... If you're still considered a first layer Martial Extermination Realm cultivator, that would mean that you hadn't fully refined any one of your extermination origins."

Shang Xia nodded and acknowledged. "That is correct."

Yun Jing clearly understood Shang Xia's cultivation method a lot more than the other two.

Liu Qinglan also connected the dots and she mentioned, "Wouldn't that mean that you would have to refine any one of your extermination origins right now? Or... If you refine them all at once, will your cultivation immediately jump to the fourth layer Martial Extermination Realm? Would you be able to step into the large completion stage once you complete the refinement process?"

Only then was Chu Jia convinced that Shang Xia wasn't bullshitting her. She couldn't help but ask, "Can others replicate the way you cultivate?"

Shang Xia hadn't opened his mouth when Liu Qinglan replied in his stead. "I'm afraid that wouldn't be possible. Even if it was, the probability of it happening will be slim to none."

Glancing at Shang Xia from the corner of her eye, Liu Qinglan muttered, "Even without talking about the advancement formula, the cultivator would need to find 4 extermination origins ready to be refined at the same time. That alone would eliminate 90 percent of anyone trying to break through the same way. Even if they managed to gather 4 extermination origins, they would need to ensure that they are compatible."

"It is true that the way I entered the Martial Extermination Realm involved a lot of risks. There was an element of luck behind my breakthrough, and it won't be easy to replicate." Shang Xia finally added. After all, he was afraid he was the only one with enough knowledge of the Four Constellation Realm at the moment to try what he did.

Liu Qinglan might have deduced a little bit of how Shang Xia managed to break through, but nothing would beat him admitting it for himself.

Yun Jing nodded slightly before changing the topic. “Do you have any insights into your fourth martial intent?”

Liu Qinglan and Chu Jia turned to stare at Shang Xia with faces full of shock as soon as the question left Yun Jing’s lips. Even Shang Xia was taken by surprise.

“Why would you ask that suddenly?” Shang Xia asked.

Shang Xia was walking down the path of the blade in the Martial Extermination Realm and his Twenty Four Solar Terms was already starting to take form. When he entered the large completion stage in the future, his martial intention would definitely have something to do with the blade.

Yun Jing chuckled with amusement. “The palm strike you used to deal with Lu Sanyin earlier seems really special. Does it have a name?”

“Disciple called the strike the Four Seasons Palm. I developed it through a series of flukes in the past and looked into it a little more. I never thought of improving it to the point it would become my martial intent...” Shang Xi explained.

“Four Seasons Palm?” Yun Jing pressed. “What does it have to do with the four constellations?”

Sighing in his heart, Shang Xia finally understood what they meant by ‘with age comes wisdom’. Yun Jing went straight for the crux of his skill. “Disciple merely made a guess. I thought that all the four seasons represented the four constellations and the 4 main directions. I could see a trace of the four constellations in the elements of earth, water, fire, and wind...”

Shang Xia stopped speaking suddenly. He wasn’t trying to hide anything, but his understanding of the four constellations couldn’t be put into simpler terms. He would be going too far if he started talking about the Azure Dragon, White Tiger, Vermillion Bird, and Black Tortoise. They wouldn’t understand a thing anyway.

Liu Qinglan released a surprised gasp after hearing his explanation. “Since you refined the Four Seasons Extermination Origins back then, wouldn’t that mean that you would become the embodiment of the Four Constellations?”

Shang Xia sighed in his heart once again. He knew that they would be able to make the connection with the small hint he gave them. There was even a possibility they would deduce a lot of things from the information he gave him and their understanding of the four seasons would immediately reach a point he hadn’t comprehended.

Whatever the case, Shang Xia found no reason to hide anything from them. He chuckled softly, “Yeah. Back then, I didn’t know too much and decided to try it out. Luckily for me, my gamble succeeded.”

In front of others, Shang Xia had always attributed his success to luck so as not to make himself seem too arrogant.

Back when he wanted to refine all four extermination origins, only Kou Chongxue, Shang Bo, and other core members of the institution knew what he was up to. However, the commotion he created was too large back in the battlefield between the two worlds. The phenomenon that covered the mountain peak he fell asleep on in the Manyu Continent was also a dead giveaway. The peak he was

on experienced 36 seasonal cycles in 36 days and anyone from the institution who wasn't blind saw what happened. There was no point for him to hide anything.

Yun Jing added suddenly, "Anyway, I know that you're training in the way of the blade after entering the Martial Extermination Realm. I noticed your blade art during the war and discovered that it possesses extraordinary power. The profoundness of your blade art is extremely deep, but I would like to give you a piece of advice. If you give up on the way of the blade now and start to comprehend the principles behind that palm of yours, the path to comprehending your fourth martial intent will be much smoother in the future." After a short pause, she continued, "From what I can tell, the moment you complete your refinement of your extermination origins, you would be able to step into the grand completion stage of the Martial Extermination Origin with your Four Seasons Palm."

A trace of envy appeared in the eyes of Liu Qinglan and Chu Jia when they heard what he said.

Shang Xia was shocked and a frightening thought entered his mind. He wasn't willing to give up in the way of the blade and he asked, "Do you know if anyone managed to comprehend two martial intents when stepping into the grand completion stage of the Martial Extermination Realm?"

"Never heard of it." Yun Jing shook her head decisively in response.

Even though he guessed as much, Shang Xia was still a little disappointed after hearing her answer. He chuckled bitterly, "Disciple still thinks that I should focus on the way of the blade..."

Chapter 526: Shang Ke's Real Thoughts

After leaving Yun Jing's quarters, Shang Xia basically learned of his responsibilities in the coming future.

With Shang Bo cultivating in seclusion earnestly and Yun Jing being forced to enter seclusion to recover, the responsibility of dealing with the matters in the Tongyou Institution's territory landed on Liu Qinglan's shoulders.

Everyone might know that Shang Xia was the strongest person in the Tongyou Institution now that the two Deputy Patriarchs were absent, but he lacked the experience and seniority. In fact, he was probably the person with the least experience in dealing with administrative tasks among those present.

Of course, he still had his tasks to do. The duty he was allocated might be straightforward and easy to understand, but it was also extremely dangerous. He would have to leave the protection formation and regain control over the territory the Tongyou Institution lost!

He was basically acting as a hired thug. All he had to do was to ensure that there was no foreign presence in the territory they had lost due to the war. After making sure it was safe, that would signify the end of his job. He knew that Chu Jia already had plans to deal with the reclaimed territory.

When Shang Xia ran into Shang Ke again, the old man seemed to be in surprisingly high spirits. He didn't look like someone who had his path of cultivation cut off.

"This..." Shang Xia stared at Shang Ke with a trace of confusion in his eyes. He didn't know how to bring up the topic.

“I’m pretty much recovered!” Shang Ke chuckled happily. “I can guess what Yun Jing sent you to do. Right now, I should be in a good condition to assist you.”

Shang Xia felt a wave of guilt smashing against his heart after recalling what happened to his Fifth Grandpa. “I should have left you more talismans back then... Otherwise, you wouldn’t be...”

“Hahaha!” Shang Ke roared with laughter and interrupted him before he could finish speaking. Waving his hands casually, Shang Ke mentioned, “Brat, there’s no need for you to worry about me! Actually, this is a good thing for me.”

Seeing the strange look on Shang Xia’s face, Shang Ke calmed down a little and became slightly more serious. He sighed softly, “All these years, I have been pushing myself to the limit in order to keep up with your Grandpa Bo and to strengthen the clan.

“To make me stronger, your grandfather spared no expense and resources in my cultivation. Unfortunately, my talent is really lacking. Both my cultivation and combat abilities can’t be compared to others.”

“Back then, thoughts of giving up had always filled my mind. However, our clan was too weak. Those in your Uncle Shang Quan’s generation haven’t matured and have yet to start displaying their talent to their full extent. I could only force myself to take on the responsibilities of holding up our clan.”

Shang Xia frowned, “No matter what, don’t you feel like it’s a waste for your cultivation to be forced to stop at your current level?”

An enlightened smile appeared on Shang Ke’s face and he shook his head slightly. “In the past, I was holding your grandfather back. However, at the very least, I was the Patriarch of the Shang Clan. There wasn’t too much for us to be concerned about because we’re brothers at the end of the day. Now, even you youngsters have to start taking care of me. Hehe, doesn’t that make me seem useless?”

“You can’t say that! All these years, you’ve been...” Shang Xia yelped.

Gesturing for Shang Xia to stop speaking, Shang Ke said seriously, “Kid, our Shang Clan isn’t the Shang Clan of the past. With your Grandpa Bo, myself, your Third Aunt, Shang Pei, and yourself, our Shang Clan has 4 Martial Extermination Realm experts. In fact, we’re no weaker than the Zhu Family before the calamity. Moreover, your Second Uncle, Shang Jian, should have already succeeded in his breakthrough. It’s a shame he can only remain in the Tongyou City for now because of the state we’re in.”

A look of regret appeared on Shang Ke’s face and a trace of dejection filled his heart. “Shang Xia, your Grandpa Ke is tired. I’m also starting to feel a little afraid of all the intense battles. Rather than wasting everyone’s time fighting for a chance for me to grow stronger, it’s better than all hope is severed. It’s time for me, a senior of the Shang Clan, to start doing my part for all of you juniors.”

The dispirited look on his face disappeared after speaking up to that point. Feeling a lot more energized, he regained all the excitement he had when Shang Xia found him earlier. “Honestly speaking, I felt a lot more relaxed after learning that I wouldn’t be able to advance in the future. In

the past, I felt like I was walking on a tightrope that was on fire behind me. I had to keep walking forward no matter what, and I couldn't fall. Now, a huge portion of the stress I'm feeling has disappeared!"

Hearing how sincere Shang Ke was when he said all that, Shang Xia realized that he shouldn't push his Grandpa Ke anymore. Thinking back about it, he realized that Shang Ke wasn't an ambitious person in the first place. He had always been pretty chill and adaptable to most things thrown his way.

Because of the situation the Shang Clan was in, he had no choice but to share in Shang Bo's burden. He had no choice but to force himself to take on the challenges. Now that his path of cultivation was severed, it seemed as though he finally got what he wanted.

After casually chatting with each other for some time, Shang Xia seemed to have recalled something and he asked, "I didn't think that the Ji, Liu, and Yun Clans would have hidden Martial Extermination Realm experts. Did you know about this?"

Shang Ke shook his head in response. "I know of them, but I didn't think that they were still alive. Much less having entered the Martial Extermination Realm. Well, I didn't know about it but your Grandpa Bo definitely knew."

Shang Xia nodded slightly. "Is this the foundation of their existence as great clans that existed before the collision of our worlds?"

"You can say that. However, our Shang Clan doesn't lose to any of the three. It's just that..." Shang Ke muttered.

"It's just that?" Shang Xia pressed.

Pausing slightly, Shang Ke eventually sighed, "Ji Wenlong entered the Martial Dipper Realm recently. To enter the Beyond Heavens Pavilion, one has to be led by a Martial Dipper Realm Ancestor."

Shang Xia understood what he meant instantly. "That's right. The 3 of them, including Lu Siyuan and Fang Kewei were brought over to the Beyond Heavens Pavilion by Patriarch Kou a long time ago."

"We can ignore Lu Siyuan and Fang Kewei. However, the members of the other 3 clans aren't considered a part of our Tongyou Institution's forces. Why would Patriarch Kou bring them over?" Shang Ke thought out loud.

Shang Xia thought for a moment before replying, "Do you mean to say that the other 3 clans have some sort of secret agreement with Patriarch Kou? Of the 3 of them, only Liu Jikun is left, the other 2 died in the war..."

Shang Ke turned serious and he answered, "I'm not afraid that they have some sort of agreement with Patriarch Kou. I'm just worried about your grandpa!"

Seeing the look of confusion and shock on Shang Xia's face, Shang Ke continued, "You can't forget that the four great clans didn't exist back then. There were only 3 great clans. Our Shang Clan was merely a middle-ranked power after the calamity that struck us. However, your grandfather's cultivation skyrocketed in recent years. Of course, a part of the reason is because of his hard work

and his fortuitous encounters. However, we can't deny that Kou Chongxue's support was an integral part of how he grew stronger so quickly."

Shang Xia seemed to understand the meaning behind Shang Ke's words and he asked, "Are you saying that it's likely Patriarch Kou would make Grandpa Bo do some dangerous mission he can't reject because of all the assistance he was given?"

Shang Ke slapped Shang Xia's shoulders and sighed, "Personal favors are the hardest to repay. Kou Chongxue might not possess any malicious intent, but no one can be sure of that. Before Ji Wenlong entered the Martial Dipper Realm, Kou Chongxue was the only one who had the authority to communicate with the rest of the Azure Origin World and the Azure Spiritual World. All of us were nothing more than chess pieces in his eyes."

Shang Xia knew that Shang Ke was viewing Kou Chongxue from the clan's perspective and he had always been careful when dealing with the institution and the patriarch." Shang Xia seemed to understand where he was coming from.

Honestly speaking, Shang Xia also had a lot of doubts of why Kou Chongxue would assist Shang Bo in his cultivation.

Shang Ke wasn't teaching Shang Xia to bite the hand that feeds him. He was merely teaching Shang Xia to see things from the clan's perspective.

That wasn't the first time Shang Xia had heard such words coming from Shang Ke.

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As for the mission Shang Xia was given to reclaim the institution's territories, Shang Ke expected as much. He ran into Shang Xia and wanted to follow him out there, but he was eventually rejected by the kid.

Shang Ke understood that with Shang Xia's current strength, unless he was surrounded by multiple strong Martial Extermination Realm experts, no one in the Manyu Continent would be able to do a thing to him! If he followed Shang Xia, he would be dragging the kid down! In the event that they actually ran into danger, Shang Xia would have to protect the weaker Shang Ke from the enemy while making their escape. Understanding that he wouldn't be of much help, Shang Ke didn't insist on following Shang Xia out.

"Oh right, there's one more thing!" Shang Ke slapped his forehead and took out a bunch of items from his Embroidered Cloud Case. "This is a portion of loot we obtained from the cultivators who were slain. You had been cultivating all this time and I gathered your share for you. You should keep them."

Shang Xia glanced at the treasures in Shang Ke's hand and noticed that even though there were a lot of items, not many of them caught his eye. Casually picking some he could use, he left the rest for Shang Ke. "Grandpa Ke, there's no need for me to take the rest. Keep them and bring them back to the clan. Maybe other people might find a use for them."

Understanding that Shang Xia was basically a walking treasury at this point and the number of treasures the kid had was probably a horrifying amount, Shang Ke didn't insist. He knew that those treasures from the cultivators of the Manyu Continent couldn't move Shang Xia anyway and he kept them in his Embroidered Cloud Case. When he was done, he spoke. "Oh yeah, we'll just take

these as your contribution to the clan and repay you with resources to craft talismans. Anyway, it should be time. Come, come take a look at this.”

He gestured for Shang Xia to follow him before walking away.

A little confused, Shang Xia followed behind him while asking, “Did something happen?”

“Nothing much. The Beyond Heavens Pavilion should be sending another batch of experts here soon.” Shang Ke explained.

Shang Xia was surprised by the sudden revelation. “Didn’t they say that they would only be able to open the spatial tunnel once every half a year or so?”

Without turning back, Shang Ke replied, “How can Kou Chongxue and Ji Wenlong not respond after such a huge event happened here? Opening the spatial tunnel exhausts a huge amount of world origin and the 2 of them didn’t want others to notice them. That’s why they limited it to half a year. Because of the joint assault back then, it’s clear that our tracks have already been exposed. There’s no need to keep our actions a secret any longer.”

As they approached a region outside the barrier, Shang Xia saw several experts flying their way.

It was the first time Shang Xia was seeing a few of them as Fang Kewei, Liu Jikun, and several other experts arrived.

Unfortunately, Shang Lubing was nowhere to be seen. It was said that the old fox was so crafty that he offended too many people in the war and was surrounded and beaten near the end. He managed to keep his life, but he was severely injured. If not for Shang Xia and Yun Jing’s terrifying achievement of slaying Hu Wendao and Zhang Tianji and scaring the experts of the Manyu Continent away, Shang Lubing might be the next casualty of the institution. He was recovering somewhere in the institution’s territory and didn’t join them this time.

All of a sudden, Shang Xia felt a huge spatial fluctuation above them as it quickly approached.

In the blink of an eye, the heaven and earth qi in the surroundings scattered as the fluctuations came closer.

Raising her head, Liu Qinglan muttered, “They’re here.”

As soon as the words left her lips, a terrifying pressure descended as a circular entrance appeared in the air above the Tongyou Institution’s territory. Several figures emerged before the entrance closed and they quickly stabilized themselves in the air.

“Bu Jingshuang, Zhang Haogu, Qian Sitong, Yuan Zhen! Damn... Patriarch Kou really went all in with the Tongyou Institution’s foundations...” Shang Xia sighed inwardly when he saw who had arrived.

Chapter 527: A Scary Guess

Up till that point, Shang Xia gained a pretty in-depth understanding of the Tongyou Institution’s foundations. In fact, he knew about the number of Martial Extermination Realm experts in the You Continent.

When he saw the 4 of them appearing in the Manyu Continent, Shang Xia finally came to the conclusion that Kou Chongxue was probably risking it all to obtain benefits from the Manyu Continent.

Thinking back to the battlefield between the two worlds, Shang Xia was afraid that the only Martial Extermination Realm expert of the institution left was Ge Qingzhu.

Other than Deputy Patriarch Liu Zhiyuan in the Tongyou Institution, there was probably only Song You whose condition was unknown.

The Tongyou City wasn't much better. Ji Yu of the Ji Clan and Yun Yichen were the only 2 Martial Extermination Realm experts other than those from the Shang Clan. As for the Shang Clan, there was Shang Jian who might or might not have broken through. There was also Shang Pei who was in the Taihang Mountains.

There was also Zhao Hengchun from the Zhao Clan who seemed to disappear ever since the Tongyou Institution's expedition to the battlefield between the two worlds. No one knew if he was healing from his injuries or sent off by Kou Chongxue on a secret mission.

Along with the appearance of the 4 newcomers, a new batch of resources was delivered. A portion of them was medicine used to treat injuries and restore inner qi.

It was said that in order to craft the new batch of medicine, Grandmaster Ge Muchen had to personally take action.

Liu Qinglan received the resources before taking out the best of them for Yun Jing.

After the medicine was passed into Yun Jing's hands, Liu Qinglan received great news. Deputy Patriarch Yun estimated that she would be able to greatly reduce her recovery time because of the medicine. The experts of the Tongyou Institution who were too heavily injured would also be able to quickly restore their combat capabilities.

Of course, Liu Qinglan wouldn't wait for everyone to be fully recovered before starting the next phase of their plan. That was because the Tongyou Institution had Shang Xia's Spirit Extermination Gourd to threaten the experts of other factions. At the very least, no one would dare to make a move on the members of the Tongyou Institution as long as they were 200 miles away from the protection barrier.

Well, Shang Xia's mission wasn't to reclaim those regions where they were sure wouldn't be under threat. He was supposed to go even further to deal with troubles there.

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When Shang Xia first emerged from the Tongyou Institution's territory, he was extremely cautious. He was afraid that experts from the other factions had set up a trap for him.

Only after he arrived hundreds of miles away without any mishap did he start to relax. He realized he had underestimated the threat he made. No matter which power it was, their main goal was to split up the benefits of the Manyu Continent. They wouldn't waste more time messing with the Tongyou Institution after learning that the new madman Shang Xia was ready to blow up the entire continent.

In fact, their operation to wipe out the Tongyou Institution back then seriously delayed their progression of plans for the Manyu Continent.

Of course, from a certain perspective, one could say that they achieved their goal.

Regardless if they were trying to take advantage of the situation or if they wished to beat the Tongyou Institution when they were down, those factions who wanted to mess with the Tongyou Institution succeeded.

It was a pity Shang Xia had to appear at the last second to throw a wrench in their plans. The moment the jade sword emerged from the Spirit Extermination Gourd, everyone knew that they had miscalculated. If the Tongyou Institution went crazy and decided to drag everyone down with them, no one would benefit. As such, they chose to retreat.

Since there was no possibility they could take advantage of the Tongyou Institution any further, they found no reason to remain in the region. Shang Xia was being too careful.

Moreover, Shang Xia's divine perception was no joke. It could cover a massive range and it was extremely sensitive. It wouldn't be easy for anyone to conceal themselves to try to set up an ambush for him.

Originally, Shang Xia was curious about how they were going to draw the fragments of the Manyu Continent to the Azure Origin World after it was destroyed. Now that he had left the core region of the Tongyou Institution on Liu Qinglan's orders, he understood what they had been doing the whole time they were there. They had been laying down a massive formation that went deep into the ground.

With the core region as the center, the Tongyou Institution laid formations every 100 miles. It went deep into the earth below and it maintained a faint connection with the main formation back in the core region. Because they had been on the Manyu Continent for the past 2 years or so, they managed to progressively implement their mega large-scale formation. Currently, it spanned close to 1200 miles from the main core region of the Tongyou Institution.

According to Chu Jia's calculations, the moment the Manyu Continent shatters, the Tongyou Institution would be able to rely on their formation to hold a land mass with close to a 200 mile radius!

That should be how large the Tongyou institution was planning to expand for the moment in the Manyu Continent.

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Also, if they manage to bring back such a huge swathe of land to the Azure Origin World without losing much of it in the process, the You Continent would probably double in size! When that happened, the You Continent would be restored to around 40 to 50 percent of its original size!

One had to know that the current You Continent was actually really tiny. It was barely passable if they counted the Thousand Leaf Mountain Range into their calculations, but otherwise, the You Continent controlled by the Tongyou Institution was actually a mere blip on the map of the Azure Origin World.

Moving the entire land mass they had planned for back to the Azure Origin World with the least amount of loss would be the best-case scenario. However, reality had its way of dealing with people who only prepared for the ideal outcome.

At the end of the day, the Tongyou Institution could only blame their lack of preparation on the fact that they entered the Manyu Continent too late.

Chu Jia already made some estimations. She could tell that those holy lands with huge foundations who started their operations a long time ago would have already expanded their formations to cover 2500 to 3000 miles!

The larger the area they wanted to control, the weaker the connection between the formations used to hold the land mass together. Because of that, they would have to make up for the weak connection with a huge quantity of formations. If one formation wasn't enough, they would lay down a second one! If a second one didn't provide a satisfactory connection, they would just lay down a third! Because of that, they used a huge amount of resources. Even the powerful holy lands would have to pay a massive price to lay down so many formations.

The Tongyou Institution was considered a pauper in front of those massive existences that had existed for hundreds of years. Even if they learned about the Manyu Continent back then, they wouldn't have been able to throw so many resources at it.

Those holy lands might be powerful and rich, but it seemed as though a radius of 3000 miles was the limit. They weren't able to expand their control further than that.

Now that Shang Xia was strolling around the territory controlled by the Tongyou Institution, his true mission was revealed. He had to check the regions where the formations they laid down were located. If he ran into any other experts who had malicious intentions for the Tongyou Institution or those who wanted to destroy the formation, he was to deal with them immediately. He could choose to chase them away, or he could even kill them if things came down to it!

It was possible that the Martial Extermination Realm experts of the other factions would try to cause trouble in the Tongyou Institution's territory, but it was more likely for the experts of the Manyu Continent to be involved.

Shang Bo, Yun Jing, and Chu Jia were the only 3 members of the Tongyou Institution who knew where the formations were laid down before Shang Xia was given the information, but it wasn't difficult for others to find out where those formations were. As long as they paid a little attention, it was possible to notice some anomalies in the area that contained the formations.

Of course, experts of other factions would need a lot of time if they wished to do something like that.

As the sayings went, burying a mine was a lot easier than finding one.

That was also why Yun Jing wasn't in a rush to send the experts of the institution out to check on those formations. She dragged things out for more than a month before finally sending Shang Xia on a mission to inspect them.

As Shang Xia went around to check the formations, he had to take some precautions. He couldn't follow the map Chu Jia drew for him directly. If he did and was tracked by other experts, the location of all their formations would be revealed!

He eventually decided to visualize the location of the next formation he wanted to inspect in his mind before flying in its general direction. Along the way, he would stop at random places whenever he felt like it. Sometimes he would stop miles away from the actual formation. With his powerful divine perception that could cover tens of miles, there was no need for him to check out the formation with his eyes.

As long as the formation didn't look destroyed, Shang Xia wouldn't even bother flying over to the actual area where the formation was laid. That would ensure that anyone who had the ability to observe him in the dark wouldn't be able to locate the formations easily.

Nearly 300 miles away from the core region of the Tongyou Institution, Shang Xia hadn't found any formations that had been destroyed. However, that might be because those were located closer to the core region the Tongyou Institution controlled.

When Shang Xia arrived 500 miles away, he could see several large holes in the ground in random locations. They were close to where some formations were situated, but luckily, they didn't affect its operation.

Examining the holes, Shang Xia could tell that Martial Extermination Realm experts weren't behind the destruction. In fact, those holes didn't seem to be made by Martial Intent Realm experts either. They were most likely dug by some Martial Extremity Realm cultivator or something.

With his extermination origins swirling around his body, Shang Xia created a massive gale that flattened the earth. The soil and dirt that had been dug out returned to the pits and the region returned to its original state.

Finally arriving 600 miles away from the core region, Shang Xia's flying figure paused as he detected one of the formations deep in the ground damaged.

Extending his divine perception to its limit, everything within a 50 mile radius could be felt by Shang Xia. He didn't detect any high-level experts. Instead, he noticed several villages in his surroundings.

When he used his divine perception earlier, he didn't expect to find the culprit. Instead, he wanted to ensure that no one had their eyes on him before he went to where the destroyed formation lay. Satisfied that no one was spying on him, he quickly pushed a formation Chu Jia made in advance deep into the ground.

When he was done, he resumed his journey and started to fly around. It didn't take long to discover that those villages he noticed with his divine perception had been abandoned.

From the looks of it, not only did those villagers move away a long time ago, they even brought everything they could with them.

After traveling hundreds of miles out, Shang Xia finally cleared away a small portion of his doubts. However, there were still huge question marks that filled his mind. He wondered what would happen to the ordinary citizens of the Manyu Continent when it was destroyed.

Disregarding those high-level cultivators of the Manyu Continent, Shang Xia wanted to know what would happen to the millions or even billions of mortals on the Manyu Continent. Were they just going to wait for the apocalypse to happen?

Shang Xia didn't dare to let his thoughts wander any further than that. He refused to wonder if the Azure Origin World and the Azure Spiritual World were behind the destruction of the Manyu Continent.

Eventually, he thought about his grandfather Shang Bo and how he was trying to break through to the Martial Dipper Realm by borrowing the world origin that would emerge when the Manyu Continent was destroyed.

From the current looks of things, the Tongyou Institution chose a secluded region to take over. They might have also shifted the aboriginal mortals away from their villages in order to prevent them from getting caught up in the crossfire. From that, Shang Xia could tell the attitude of the Tongyou Institution. They didn't wish to kill wantonly and cause mass destruction, but they weren't exactly trying to turn the situation around either.

"Huh?" A sudden thought filled Shang Xia's mind the next instant.

Chapter 528: We'll Talk If You Beat Me

From the time Shang Xia had started cultivating, he had taken dozens, if not hundreds of lives. He couldn't be classified as a saint in any way.

However, the fate of the Manyu Continent was like a giant rock that weighed down his heart when he thought about their impending doom.

Because his state of mind had been negatively affected, Shang Xia increased his speed as he went to inspect the rest of the formations. He ran into several low-leveled cultivators along the way. Luckily for them, he just chased them away without taking their lives.

With the core region of the Tongyou Institution as the center, Shang Xia separated the outer region where the formations were located into 8 quadrants. He made his rounds around the 8 quadrants one by one and he would chase away any low-leveled cultivator he found digging into the ground.

One day when Shang Xia was inspecting the third quadrant, he felt the sudden appearance of a foreign divine perception. When he tried to look for the source, he discovered that he couldn't find anyone in the surrounding dozens of miles.

With a chill running through his heart, the light beneath Shang Xia's feet flashed and he appeared 40 miles away in an instant. He quickly approached the last place he noticed the appearance of the divine perception.

He stared at the massive rift in the ground below and he didn't need to use his divine perception to know that the formation that was located there had already been destroyed.

Expanding his divine perception to its maximum range, Shang Xia felt the appearance of the foreign presence once again. However, the expert seemed to have hidden his presence and it was a lot more difficult for Shang Xia to discover them.

If not for the fact that Shang Xia's divine perception was a lot stronger and more sensitive than others on the same level, he might have missed the person who came.

Instead of charging straight at the mysterious culprit, Shang Xia acted a little more naturally. He pretended to examine the area while slowly moving in their direction. Along the way, he tried to think of the culprit's identity.

From their reaction earlier when they first discovered Shang Xia's divine perception and ran, their cultivation level should be at the third layer Martial Extermination Realm or lower.

The only interesting thing was how the person destroyed the formation. From the looks of it, Shang Xia had a feeling they were likely to be an expert from the Manyu Continent.

However, with how close the destruction was, it seemed like they were doing it to catch Shang Xia's attention on purpose. He wondered if they were doing it on purpose to lure him into a trap.

Ignoring everything that happened, Shang Xia didn't really care that the formation was destroyed or that he might be walking head-first into a trap. Instead, he was more intrigued by the way the expert was concealing himself.

From what he learned from Shang Ke and Chu Jia, the experts of the Manyu Continent have extremely scarce resources and they wouldn't be able to bring out any powerful treasures. From that route of thinking alone, the person who arrived had probably used some sort of secret art to conceal their presence.

Well, that was what Shang Xia initially thought. The closer he got to the foreign aura, the more he felt that he was mistaken. The other party was using some sort of treasure to conceal their aura!

When Shang Xia was carefully approaching the other party, he didn't forget to scan the area carefully to avoid walking straight into an ambush.

As he continued to fly around the area, he discovered 5 deep craters in the ground that affected the formation laid by the Tongyou Institution.

The scene looked similar to several spots he had seen earlier. The formations were clearly better preserved the closer they were to the core region.

As Shang Xia got closer and closer, he discovered even more craters in the ground. Most of them looked like they were randomly blasted and there were some of them that were close to the formation underground. Too bad for them, they failed to discover several formations even though they were close to it.

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Back when Shang Xia traveled close to 900 miles away from the core region controlled by the Tongyou Institution, he discovered many traces where the ground had been dug up. A good portion of it seemed to have happened in the past month or so, and it didn't take a genius to realize that the craters on the ground appeared after the Tongyou Institution pulled back their influence due to the sudden assault. Only then did those foreign powers have the guts to rampantly destroy the lands.

Shang Xia was prepared for what he was about to see, but he didn't expect to run into a Martial Extermination Realm expert from the Manyu Continent this time.

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As he approached a 10 mile distance from where the expert was hiding, Shang Xia concealed himself once again with his divine perception. Ensuring that there weren't any traps, he retrieved his Abyssal Blade.

With lightning filling the skies, a crimson blade light tore through the void ten miles long and slashed directly at the aura Shang Xia detected.

That was the third move of his Twenty Four Solar Terms, Lightning Awakening!

There was no warning when he unleashed his move and even if the expert had been prepared to fight, he wouldn't expect Shang Xia to strike from 10 miles away.

Even though the distance would reduce the power behind his strike, the main point of Lightning Awakening was to catch his opponent by surprise anyway.

A sharp whistle tore through the skies as the expert who had been hiding no longer bothered concealing himself. A wave of energy emerged from his body and a three colored extermination light surrounded his weapon. He raised it to block Shang Xia's blade light and a huge explosion ensued. Shockwaves spread in all directions and leveled everything in their path. Even the earth sank by 3 inches because of the clash.

"Huh?" Shang Xia sped in the direction of the explosion and the closer he got, the clearer he could feel the other party's aura. It felt somewhat familiar and after seeing the person's face, Shang Xia was shocked to discover that it was someone he recognized.

Shang Xia's shock was nothing compared to his opponent. He was sent flying from Shang Xia's strike earlier and he was appalled after seeing Shang Xia's face.

As Shang Xia accelerated towards his opponent, he didn't stop swinging his Abyssal Blade. A terrifying tear appeared in mid air as a blade light that seemed to split the heavens came crashing down on his opponent.

Shang Xia didn't hesitate to unleash Spring Equinox as he made his way over.

As soon as Shang Xia's opponent saw the terrifying blade qi in the air, an unprecedented sense of solemnness filled his heart.

Extermination light surrounded his body as he poured his inner qi into his weapon without holding anything back. When Shang Xia's blade light approached, he accurately slashed its tip.

The blade light Shang Xia sent out was like a giant pencil that appeared in the void while his opponent's weapon acted like an eraser.

Shang Xia's blade light was eliminated bit by bit. Even though it was growing shorter, the void around the blade light fractured endlessly.

That wasn't all. Shang Xia's opponent had a weapon that was around 3 foot 5 inches. By the time Shang Xia's blade light was finally eliminated, his weapon became 5 inches shorter!

After releasing 2 attacks, Shang Xia's enthusiasm for battle shot through the roof. He got 3 miles closer to his target and by that time, they were only separated by a mere 5 miles. Shang Xia twisted his blade in the air again and got ready to fire off yet another attack.

"Hold it, stay your hand!" The person couldn't care about the damage to his weapon at the moment as he screamed for Shang Xia to stop. At the same time, he retracted his extermination origin protection around him to show his sincerity.

Shang Xia was slightly curious about the sudden change in situation and he extended his divine sense to search for any anomalies. Discovering that there was nothing out of the ordinary, Shang

Xia wouldn't let such a good opportunity go. He twisted his Abyssal Blade and slashed upwards to unleash his new move.

A flurry of snow-like blade light filled the skies and it was everywhere! Shang Xia seemed to unleash that attack extremely casually, and it was named 'Lesser Snow'. He gained inspiration from the 20th solar term for the attack and his opponent didn't expect him to continue the assault even after he retracted his defenses!

Anger burned in his heart but he could only raise his weapon helplessly to counter the attack.

In an instant, the surroundings were covered in a layer of snow-like blade light. Even though rays of brilliant light filled the skies, a gray shadow shot through the sea of light with a terrifying speed. It seemed as though it wanted to shatter the flurry of blade lights and obviously, Shang Xia was the gray shadow.

Back when he first arrived, Shang Xia was able to fight against third layer Martial Extermination Realm experts when he gave it his all. Unfortunately, he was only able to last for a short period in battle with them.

Now that he had refined 50 percent of his extermination origins and shortened the time required to complete a cycle of his inner qi circulation to 4 hours, he received a huge boost to his strength.

Since he woke up, Shang Xia had been itching to find someone to fight with him. He wanted to learn how strong he had become and to gain a better estimate of his strength.

Unfortunately, after Yun Jing went into seclusion to recover, there was no one in the Tongyou Institution's core region capable of fighting Shang Xia, much less pushing him to his limits.

Now that an expert from the Manyu Continent came knocking, Shang Xia wouldn't let go of the chance.

The reason why Shang Xia found the man familiar was because he took part in the previous assault on the Tongyou Institution. He was one of the 3 Martial Extermination Realm experts who joined hands to deal with Yun Jing!

During the final part of the battle, Shang Xia threw 2 Golden Sun Inferno Talismans at him and buried him in a sea of flames to buy some time. That was how he bought enough time to deal with the strongest expert the Manyu Continent sent, Hu Wendao.

Shang Xia recalled that the person in front of him was called 'Mister Ren' by the rest of his companions.

There had to be a reason for him to approach the Tongyou Institution and for him to intentionally reveal himself to Shang Xia earlier. However, Shang Xia couldn't care less. It was a great time to test out his strength and he would beat up Mister Ren before deciding to talk to him.

Chapter 529: Shocking Everyone

With the current situation he was in, Mister Ren didn't have the luxury of speaking. The continuous pressure his opponent was putting on him didn't even give him the chance to escape!

Moreover, he understood that with the commotion they were causing, those back in the core region of the Tongyou Institution definitely noticed their actions. If the battle were to drag on, the experts

of the Tongyou Institution would definitely head over to check things out. When that happened, he might even need to leave his sorry little life behind!

After thinking about it, he no longer cared that his weapon was damaged by Shang Xia earlier. Risking it all, he rose into the air and swung his weapon directly at Shang Xia's Abyssal Blade. When the weapons clashed, he felt as though a bolt of lightning had torn through his body and his figure trembled violently. He managed to block Shang Xia's Lesser Snow eventually and using the recoil from the blast, he turned to flee.

Shang Xia was clearly enjoying himself during the fight. Moreover, he hadn't unleashed the full power of his Abyssal Blade. There were no external factors or help at play and Shang Xia relied solely on his combat abilities to suppress Mister Ren, a third layer Martial Extermination Realm expert.

Mister Ren might have run away at the end, but there was no doubt about it, he was defeated by Shang Xia. That was about the extent of Shang Xia's strength if he wasn't going all out. To kill a third layer Martial Extermination Realm expert wasn't going to be easy without external help.

With the battle high finally over, Shang Xia recalled that Mister Ren seemed to want to speak to him earlier. Watching Mister Ren's leaving figure, Shang Xia yelled loudly, "Mister Ren, why are you in a rush to leave? Don't you have something to say to me?"

Even though he had already run more than 10 miles away, his extermination origins flickered unsteadily under his feet. He nearly fell to the ground below after losing control of his emotions.

What the fuck? I told you to stop but you wanted to fight anyway. Now that I wish to retreat, you wanna talk?!

Mister Ren didn't know if that was a ruse Shang Xia was using to get him to stop. In his mind, Shang Xia was a shameless prick who would attack a defenseless man. Who knew if the kid would rush over and continue fighting if he stopped?

Hmph, I might be alone right now, but even if I can't beat you, I can hide!

Mister Ren acted as though he didn't hear Shang Xia and he increased his speed slightly.

"If you miss this chance, there won't be a next one!" Shang Xia's voice traveled through the air and rang clearly in his mind.

With his expression changing slightly, Mister Ren slowed down considerably before stopping. He turned to stare at Shang Xia who was more than a dozen miles away by that point.

With a slight intention, the space around Shang Xia started to distort and he covered the distance between them in an instant.

That was an evasion art he comprehended not too long ago. He gained inspiration after traveling through so many spatial tunnels and after traveling in the void with the use of his Abyssal Void Shattering Talisman. The spatial tunnel that brought him from the Beyond Heavens Pavilion to the Manyu Continent also played a huge role in the development of that technique.

Even though it didn't allow him to travel freely in the void, he could twist the space around him to shorten the distance between himself and his target location.

Unfortunately, he could only move across short distances at the moment.

Well, Mister Ren didn't know how strong Shang Xia actually was, and the technique he used only served to increase the mystery shrouding him. As he was overwhelmed with fright, Mister Ren quickly retreated to increase the distance between them.

"You... How should I address you?" Mister Ren asked. Because of Shang Xia's age, Mister Ren had always been calling him 'that kid' or 'that brat'. However, with the strength Shang Xia displayed earlier, Mister Ren finally chose to address him properly and with respect.

"I am Shang Xia of the Tongyou Institution. Is something the matter for you to draw me over intentionally?" Shang Xia replied while cupping his fists at Mister Ren.

Hesitating slightly, Mister Ren eventually cupped his hands to return Shang Xia's greeting and replied, "My name is Ren Bainian and I have been alive for more than a hundred years. Back then, I made a move on your institution because I had no other choice. I would have to trouble little brother to help make the introductions and make a report that I wish to negotiate with you guys about something."

Shang Xia sneered in response. His reply was half out of curiosity, but he also had intentions of mocking Mister Ren. "If I didn't guess wrongly, both of us should be considered mortal enemies. Because of the war more than a month ago, both sides suffered heavy casualties. The enmity between us cannot be resolved by mere words. Don't tell me you wish to come over to try to repair the relationship between my Tongyou Institution and the Manyu Continent?"

Glancing at Shang Xia, Ren Bainian muttered, "I only hope you can help me to make a report to whoever is in charge."

"Heh." Shang Xia chuckled in response, "Are you looking down on this granddaddy over here? Why can't I be in charge?"

Staring at Shang Xia in fright, Ren Bainian was afraid that shameless brat would sneak attack him if he got on the kid's bad side and he quickly waved his hands and explained, "I didn't mean any disrespect! I'm here today to express my sincerity!"

"Sincerity?" Shang Xia didn't actually care about anything Ren Bainian said up to that point. He laughed coldly in response, "You say you're here to express your sincerity, but this granddaddy here can't see shit."

Understanding that Shang Xia was making things difficult for him on purpose, Ren Bainian sighed, "What will it take for you to be convinced?"

"Hehe, if you're really sincere, why don't you personally take a trip over to our core region?" Shang Xia smiled.

Ren Bainian's expression darkened the next moment. "So you're just messing with me!"

If he really listened to Shang Xia and headed over to the Tongyou Institution's core region, his fate would lie in their hands! They could do anything to him!

Shang Xia shrugged and spoke casually. "Since you're not willing to do that, just tell me what you want. This granddaddy here will hear you out. After all, I have some authority to make some decisions on my institution's behalf."

Shang Xia wasn't bullshitting. Even though Liu Qinglan was the person in charge of the Tongyou Institution when Yun Jing was recovering, Shang Xia's words would basically be the law as long as they didn't directly go against Liu Qinglan's intentions.

That was because a majority of the experts back in the core region of the Tongyou Institution still owed Shang Xia big time for saving their lives. They would most likely support him as long as he didn't make any stupid decisions.

Ren Bainian had his guesses, but he didn't know the real details behind everything. Hearing what Shang Xia said, he started to turn serious. "I wonder what is little brother's true identity?"

Shang Xia was finally starting to believe that Ren Bainian actually had something important to tell them after seeing how careful he was acting. He couldn't help but sigh, "Didn't I tell you? This granddaddy here is called Shang Xia. My grandfather is called Shang Bo. Does this make things a little clearer for you?"

Shang Xia decided that using Shang Bo's name would be the best method to convince the other party as the other methods involved too much explaining. It seemed as though he was right.

Ren Bainian immediately gasped in shock. "As it turns out, you're Mister Shang's grandson! Please forgive any disrespect I may have shown, Young Master Shang!"

"Alright, Mister Ren, can you get to it now?" Shang Xia snapped.

Instead of going off about what he wanted to tell Shang Xia, Ren Bainian spoke about something else. "Young Master Shang, you need to promise me something on behalf of your institution."

A frown formed on Shang Xia's face and he stared at Ren Bainian with a trace of annoyance in his eyes. "I'm starting to regret my decision to talk to you. What are you even talking about right now? Should we just continue fighting and wait for the experts of my institution to arrive? You can ask them to promise you whatever you want after they arrive."

While he was speaking, the Abyssal Blade reappeared in his hand.

Ren Bainian's eyelids started to jump crazily and he yelled, "Wait, wait, wait! This matter concerns those who are plotting against your Tongyou Institution in the dark!"

"Do you know who's behind it?" Shang Xia asked.

Ren Bainian nodded furiously in response.

From what Shang Xia could tell, there were only so many culprits capable of plotting against the Tongyou Institution. However, he found no harm in listening to Ren Bainian. "Alright, tell me who it is."

"Elder Zhuang is dead and members of his clan are being massacred without his protection. I'm afraid that it won't be long before the members of my clan follow in their footsteps. When that happens, they'll probably blame everything on me. I'm here today to find a way for my clansmen to survive. If you can promise that you'll

bring them away when the time comes, I'll be willing to lay down my life for you guys!"

The frown on Shang Xia's face grew deeper after hearing what he said. "Do you know what's going to happen next?"

"I do. The world origin will start to scatter and our continent will fall apart. Everything will return to the origin. Back when the last Martial Dipper Realm died after his lifespan had reached its end, all of us understood that the fate of our world had ended." Ren Bainian sighed.

Shang Xia became slightly more curious after the explanation. "Returning to the origin... That would mean that the Manyu Continent would fall apart. However, that doesn't mean that everyone will die. What do you mean by returning to the origin?"

Glancing at Shang Xia with a trace of shock in his eyes, Ren Bainian sighed, "Actually, I don't know either. All I hope for is for the mortals who are unable to cultivate in my clan to live on. From how things are progressing, I'm afraid those people won't give up. They might try to end us all."

Shang Xia glanced at him and asked, "Are you still unwilling to tell me about them?"

Ren Bainian fell silent when Shang Xia shot him a deep gaze before raising his hands slowly. "Senior, did you hear all that?"

Ren Bainian's expression changed drastically as he scanned his surroundings. No matter how hard he tried, he failed to notice another presence.

"You caused such a huge ruckus and I thought that I would need to use the Mist Dissipation Concealment Talisman to give the other party a decisive blow. Who would have thought that your opponent came here to surrender?" A voice entered their ears and only then did Ren Bainian determine where the newcomer was. As the dust cloud that was kicked up during their battle hadn't settled, the newcomer managed to use it as cover.

By the time the dust scattered, 2 people made their appearance.

Shang Xia decided to make the introductions. "This is Instructor Liu Qinglan of the Tongyou Institution and our current leader. The other is Mister Bu Jingshuang..."

When Shang Xia introduced Bu Jingshuang, he wanted to add that the old expert was Kou Chongxue's sworn brother. That thought merely spun once in his mind before it was thrown away.

Ren Bainian quickly greeted the two and Liu Qinglan swung her sleeves casually and said, "How many people are there in your clan?"

Widening his eyes in shock, he couldn't believe his ears. However, a look of joy quickly spread across his face and he replied truthfully. "There are a total of 810 people in my Ren Clan. I'm the only one in the Martial Extermination Realm and there are 5 others in the Martial Intent Realm. There are a total of 17 cultivators in the Martial Extremity Realm and there are 39 who just stepped through the gates of cultivation to enter the Martial Realm."

Liu Qinglan glanced at Bu Jingshuang and Shang Xia before nodding her head. “Alright. My Tongyou Institution will protect your Ren Clan. Bring them within 10 miles of our core region within 3 days.”

“Many thanks...” Ren Bainian thanked quickly.

“However...” Liu Qinglan didn’t allow him to finish before she interrupted him. “Your clansman might be under our protection, but you need to make an oath upon the martial dao. You need to swear to be loyal to our Tongyou Institution for the rest of your life!”

Ren Bainian fell silent for a moment before sighing softly, “That’s reasonable.”

With Liu Qinglan, Bu Jingshuang, and Shang Xia as his witnesses, Ren Bainian swore an oath on the martial dao before speaking again. “In the past, I joined the others to launch a sneak attack on your territory. There was someone behind it all, but you guys might not know who they are.”

Bu Jingshuang asked, “Aren’t there just the members of the Azure Origin World and Azure Spiritual World? Could there be another party?”

Turning deadly serious, Ren Bainian replied, “That’s right. It’s another faction! They don’t hail from the Azure Origin World, and neither do they come from the Azure Spiritual World!”

Soon after, he gave a short explanation of what was going on.

Chapter 530: Meeting Youshang Again

Shang Xia had always expected that the reason behind the sneak attack by the experts of the Manyu Continent was because news of Shang Bo trying to break through to the Martial Dipper Realm was leaked to the outside world. He thought that the experts of the Manyu Continent attacked them in a last-ditch effort to prevent their world from being destroyed by Shang Bo’s breakthrough.

That was also the reason Shang Xia sympathized with the experts of the Manyu Continent even though they were enemies.

After learning that the original residents of the Manyu Continent weren't going to be exterminated along with the destruction of the Manyu Continent, his feeling of guilt lessened slightly.

Now that Ren Bainian revealed even more information, Shang Xia started to get curious again. The cultivators of the Manyu Continent knew that their fates were sealed. Why would they waste their strength to eliminate the Tongyou Institution by launching a joint attack?

The members of the Tongyou Institution used to think that the mastermind behind their actions were from the Azure Origin World and Azure Spiritual World. They thought that those who wanted to get rid of the Tongyou Institution were from the various holy lands in the 2 worlds, but from what Ren Bainian was saying and the intelligence gathered by the Tongyou Institution, those holy lands were busy controlling their territory and accepting powers of the Manyu Continent under their banner.

The situation seemed to be in complete contrast to what the Tongyou Institution was doing. The territory controlled by the Tongyou Institution was barren!

It seemed as though the Tongyou Institution truly entered the Manyu Continent a lot later than others and was not privy to the secret behind the destruction of the Manyu Continent. That didn't seem to be the case for the other powers...

Moreover, from the time the factions of the Azure Origin World and Azure Spiritual World stepped into the Manyu Continent, they didn't face any resistance! That should be because the high-level cultivators of the Manyu Continent probably knew what would happen in the future. Their aversion to clashing with the various powers was proof of that!

The destruction of the Manyu Continent signified the destruction of the land mass alone. It didn't mean that all life would be eliminated!

Since that was the case, there was absolutely no reason for them to work together to attack the Tongyou Institution!

Unless... Unless there was an even deeper conspiracy behind their actions...

Now that Ren Bainian had chosen to give up and surrender to the Tongyou Institution to bring them the piece of news, he managed to uncover a little bit of the mystery that was going on.

There was another power in the Manyu Continent!

"Have you seen them before? Do you know how deep their foundations run?" Liu Qinglan asked.

Ren Bainian nodded slightly before shaking his head violently.

With a trace of displeasure in his heart, Shang Xia snapped, "Why are you nodding and shaking your head? What do you actually mean?!"

Ren Bainian was like a meek cat in front of Shang Xia after being beaten. A look of confusion could be seen on his face as he started to speak. "I don't know what method they used, but they were able to disguise themselves to look exactly like us. Their cultivation, dressing, and items they carried became exactly like ours. I wasn't able to accurately see through their veil of deception."

Liu Qinglan looked at Bi Jingshuang and saw the solemn look in each other's eyes.

Shang Xia continued to ask, "Then how are you able to be certain they're from a different power and come from outside the Manyu Continent?"

"As long as a Martial Extermination Realm cultivator doesn't fall in battle, they would be able to live for 200 years or so easily. In the past 100 years, there have been fewer Martial Extermination Realm experts appearing from our Manyu Continent. In the past 50 years, there were less than 10 experts who broke through to the Martial Extermination Realm among cultivators of our Manyu Continent. In the previous 10 years, when outsiders like yourself started to arrive, not a single Martial Extermination Realm expert was born." A look of despair appeared on Ren Bainian's face out of the blue. Even though he knew that the Manyu Continent was going to be destroyed, talking about it still made him feel bad. Shang Xia and the others fell silent after hearing what had happened to the Manyu Continent.

Such a massive continent was comparable to several continents of the Azure Origin World. For no one to enter the Martial Extermination Realm for 10 years made things seem truly desperate.

One had to know that because the Manyu Continent was about to face destruction, it underwent its final radiance and emitted a huge amount of heaven and earth qi in the past few years. The density of heaven and earth qi in the entire continent rose significantly and it should promote the growth and breakthrough of many cultivators. It didn't make sense that there were no Martial Extermination Realm experts born.

Ren Bainian sighed softly. Adjusting his mental state, he continued, "That is why in the years that passed, all of us Martial Extermination Realm cultivators became familiar with each other. However, those strange cultivators with similar features to us appeared out of nowhere!"

Ren Bainian glanced at Shang Xia from the corner of his eye as an indescribable feeling flashed through his eyes. "A huge portion of them looked really young and no matter how I look at it, they should have stepped into the Martial Extermination Realm in the past 20 to 30 years. Actually, their age is pretty similar to the foreign cultivators who entered our Manyu Continent. Since they looked almost like us and seemed to be members of the Manyu Continent, things started to get suspicious. If they really are members of the Manyu Continent, there's no way we wouldn't recognize them. Moreover, they couldn't have hidden from all of us for so many years. After all, there haven't been many breakthroughs to the Martial Extermination Realm in so many years..."

A thought flashed through Shang Xia's mind and he asked, "Could there be a hidden holy land thriving in a Mysterious World somewhere in your Manyu Continent?"

Ren Bainian shook his head and chuckled bitterly, "That's not possible. A holy land is sustained as they absorb world origin endlessly. Our Manyu Continent is on the brink of destruction and if a holy land in a Mysterious World still exists, the Manyu Continent would have devoured it."

That was the first time Shang Xia heard of anything like that. Thinking again, he felt that whatever Ren Bainian said was extremely possible.

As the saying goes, without the skin, there's nowhere for the hair to grow. Like the Azure Origin World, holy lands relied on world origin to sustain its Mysterious World. The Manyu Continent was about to be destroyed and there was no way a Mysterious World could still exist.

Looking at Liu Qinglan and Bu Jingshuang, Shang Xia realized that they weren't surprised by the news. Clearly, they knew about the theories behind the destruction of worlds.

Since they accepted Ren Bainian under their banner, he quickly gathered the members of his race to enter the area close to the core region of the Tongyou Institution. During the process, the Tongyou Institution sent several Martial Extermination Realm experts to escort the clan over.

According to the Tongyou Institution's original plan, they wanted to share in some of the profits during the destruction of the Manyu Continent. They didn't plan to interfere with the lives of the aboriginals at all.

That was also one of the main reasons they chose such a secluded region. It was basically void of any human presence. There were several villages in the surroundings, but to the experts of the Tongyou Institution, it was a matter of swatting their sleeves to chase those villagers away.

The reason they chose to do that was because they only gained intelligence of the Manyu Continent not too long ago. They didn't know the true secret behind the destruction of a world and they were also afraid that they would become an open target for the other powers in the Manyu Continent. They wanted to avoid conflict as much as possible. It didn't matter if they counted themselves as the power of the You Continent or just the Tongyou Institution. Nothing would change the fact that they had shallow foundations. It wasn't easy for them to support the war effort in the Manyu Continent with what they could produce back in the Azure Origin World. If they had to accept the aboriginal cultivators under their banner, they would have to give up a portion of their already scarce resources. Even if they disregarded that, assimilating the cultivators of the Manyu Continent back into the Azure Origin World would be a tall task and there might be several issues along the way.

However, the situation had changed. Because of the massive war that took place back then, 4 experts of the Tongyou Institution fell. It seriously affected their overall strength.

Kou Chongxue might have gathered 4 more experts on short notice, but the damage was done. The addition of a native Martial Extermination Realm expert who was at the third layer was going to be an extremely precious power boost to the institution.

There was also another reason Liu Qinglan accepted Ren Bainian's surrender other than the oath he swore on the martial dao. During their ambush on the Tongyou Institution, he had been working together with several others to try to suppress Yun Jing. He didn't actually injure anyone else from the Tongyou Institution. If he did, the other experts of the institution would probably rise up to refuse Liu Qinglan and Bu Jingshuang's decision.

As for Ren Bainian's clan members, they numbered less than 300. They wouldn't be able to cause great waves even if they entered the You Continent.

Ren Bainian's actions might be selfish as he wanted to save his clansmen, but his intentions allowed him to gain Shang Xia's respect.

...

It went without saying that a massive clan with a Martial Extermination Realm expert like Ren Bainian at its helm would be a famous existence in the Manyu Continent. There was no way his clan only consisted of 300 people or less. For a superpower like that, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that their clan manor could be comparable to a palace, and the number of servants they had was too numerous to count. To them, luxury was nothing!

Despite all that, almost 300 of them dropped everything and followed Ren Bainian to the Tongyou Institution's territory without a word of complaint. They even started building their houses in the area.

That point alone made the Ren Clan respectable in the eyes of the members of the Tongyou Institution.

...

During the time the Ren Clan was settling down, Shang Xia completed his inspection of the formations around the core region.

The other Martial Extermination Realm experts of the Tongyou Institution were also progressively sent out to maintain the territory containing their formations. They managed to progressively deepen their control over those regions and they were starting to discuss expanding a little more.

During the process, Liu Qinglan had also sent several experts out to infiltrate the Manyu Continent. They started to interact with experts there to gain a better understanding of the world they were in. Ren Bainian became an integral part of their operation as they went to assimilate themselves with the Manyu Continent.

When 2 months had passed, Yun Jing finally emerged from seclusion.

The moment they received the news, Liu Qinglan, Chu Jia, and Shang Xia rushed over to look for her. Liu Qinglan gave her a report of what happened in the time she spent in seclusion. She especially emphasized how Ren Bainian submitted to the Tongyou Institution and the information he brought with him. After hearing everything, Yun Jing nodded to express her approval.

When they spoke about their guess that a third faction was behind the attack on the Tongyou Institution, Yun Jing listened quietly without revealing too much shock.

Shang Xia was still too young if he wanted to catch an abnormal reaction from old foxes like Yun Jing.

“Looks like we were too conservative. We wanted to gain some benefits from the Manyu Continent without interacting too much with the other factions. However, it seems like those people won’t let us off easily.” Yun Jing said with indifference but Shang Xia didn’t know if he was mistaken, but he heard a trace of killing intent in her voice.

“Should we inform the rest about the mysterious third faction?” Liu Qinglan asked.

Glancing at her casually, Yun Jing muttered, “If our Tongyou Institution managed to gain information about the third faction, what makes you think the others won’t find out? They might even have guessed as much.”

“This...” Liu Qinglan hesitated slightly but decided not to comment any further.

Yun Jing turned to look at Chu Jia and asked, “You can continue to enlarge the scale of the formations, but focus on what we already have. Strengthen the connection between our existing formations. Our You Continent doesn’t have much land to begin with and it will be a little difficult to find a place to integrate the land mass we bring back. No matter what, our true goal lies in fighting for world origin when the Manyu Continent is destroyed.”

Chu Jia pressed her lips together and looked slightly uncomfortable as she replied, “We will need a lot more resources for that. I’m afraid we have already emptied out the Tongyou Institution’s accumulations in recent years.”

Yun Jing didn’t seem to care and she spoke casually. “That guy already sent Yuan Zhen and Qian Sitong over. They barely entered the Martial Extermination Realm and he’s obviously planning to risk it all. Do you think he will feel the pinch from the resources you require?”

Chu Jia hesitated slightly. “But... But... If we make even the slightest mistake during the shifting process, we’ll lose everything!”

Yun Jing didn't address her concerns immediately. Instead, she sighed, "After this is done, our Azure Origin World and the Azure Spiritual World will probably complete its fusion. I wonder what would happen when our world origins fuse. Will there be one that suppresses the other? Will the rest of our You Continent reappear and will we be able to pry into the secrets of the worlds?"

She might be thinking out loud, but her words caused waves to rise in Shang Xia's heart.

Before he could say anything, Yun Jing's gaze landed on him. "I need you to go look for someone..."

...

After several days, Shang Xia arrived at the location Yun Jing pointed out. He flew thousands of miles through the Manyu Continent before arriving on a snowy peak to look for the person Yun Jing instructed him to find.

When they finally met, Shang Xia stared at the person in shock. "Senior Youshang?! Why are you here?"