

## Three Realms 111

### Chapter 111: Senior Brother Xinghan

“Yu Jie, you would’ve wrecked the honored master’s affairs if I hadn’t come. You couldn’t even handle a small matter such as this, and almost caused the honored master’s hand picked disciple to lose her life. In my eyes, your title as one of the ten great disciples was really just to fill the numbers.”

This senior brother Xinghan didn’t seem as arrogant as Yu Jie, but his faintly spoken words of censure were enough to cause Yu Jie’s forehead to be covered in sweat.

“Senior brother Xinghan, I...” Yu Jie couldn’t express himself.

“Forget it.” Senior brother Xinghan waved his sleeves, and said to Long Juxue, “Junior sister Long, I am your foolish brother Chu Xinghan, the second disciple beneath Master Shuiyue. The events of today have caused a great fright to junior sister.”

Long Juxue was a weeping beauty like a pear blossom bathed in the rain, a look that caused those who saw her to not help but love her as she said sorrowfully, “If it wasn’t for senior brother Xinghan rushing here in time, I... I probably wouldn’t have been able to see the honored master again.”

Chu Xinghan nodded his head slightly, flicking a sideways glance at Yu Jie and saying nothing else.

Both of his feet stomped, as his entire being floated up in midair. A blue whirl of air blossomed beneath his feet like a lotus flower, slowly bringing him up into the air.

“You’re called Jiang Chen?” Chu Xinghan’s eyes were as deep as the Milky Way as he seized up Jiang Chen. He was different from Yu Jie. Arrogance was absent from his gaze as he looked at Jiang Chen — rather, traces of gravity were present instead.

“Indeed.”

Although this Chu Xinghan didn’t throw his weight around like Yu Jie, nor did he consider everyone beneath his notice, his simple gestures caused Jiang Chen to be in great discomfort, as if a violent beast had fixed its eyes on him.

“To think that a common practitioner could cause such a ruckus. You’re really not simple.” Chu Xinghan nodded his head. “If I wanted to kill you, your Goldwing Swordbirds wouldn’t be able to save you.”

Jiang Chen wanted to come back with a response, but said nothing after thinking for a while.

Chu Xinghan’s strength was indeed much greater than Yu Jie. They were likely not even on the same level.

If he had time to practice the “Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation” for three months, Jiang Chen might’ve had a thirty percent chance of standing up to Chu Xinghan. But right now, at this moment, he had nothing to rebutt against Chu Xinghan with.

However, Jiang Chen wasn’t a lamb being led to the slaughter. Although Chu Xinghan was very strong, Jiang Chen wouldn’t go down without a fight.

“How about this,” Chu Xinghan said after considering for a while. “If I use divine abilities to suppress you, I’ll inevitably gain a reputation of the strong bullying the weak. I’ll give you two options.”

Jiang Chen’s gaze was calm and aloof, and he didn’t open his mouth. He waited, accumulating his strength.

“The first choice, is that you return to the Purple Sun Sect with me. Your feud with junior sister Long will be decided upon by our high arbiter. This decision will result in a ninety percent chance of death for you, but you’ll also have a chance to live.”

“The second choice is that I kill you, right here and right now, and take your head back to the sect to fulfill my duties to the honored master.” Chu Xinghan’s aura pulsed slightly when he finished speaking.

Suddenly, a Milky Way seemed to arise around Chu Xinghan’s body. The profound and strong power and mysteries gave others a feeling of being too deep to be fathomable.

“With regards to the second choice, I trust that you don’t suspect I don’t have the power to?” Chu Xinghan’s tone had been quite calm and unhurried throughout all of this.

If it had been Yu Jie who’d proposed these two choices, Jiang Chen would have surely thumbed his nose at him.

But Chu Xinghan had a certain presence about him when he spoke these words. His strength of presence and power, forced Jiang Chen to consider him seriously.

“The first choice of returning to the sect with him looks like it’s a chance out of this, but is actually dragging out my feeble existence. I’ve traversed the wheel of life and reincarnated, how could I let others hold my fate in their hands and dictate my life or death? I might not be able to choose how I was born, but as a practitioner, I can at least decide how I’ll die.”

There wasn’t a single trace of hesitation in Jiang Chen’s mind. He might as well die fighting right now if they wanted him to bend his knee, surrender, and go docilely with them back to the Purple Sun Sect to receive his judgment. He would then suffer through crying shame and crowning humiliation, before finally being executed.

Dying in pitched battle was a glorious death.

Bending at the knee and begging for life might not result in his survival in the end.

When his thoughts traveled here, Jiang Chen smiled dashingly and a trace of a proud curve made its way to his lips. “Chu Xinghan, you’re different from Yu Jie. At least I see the bearing of a sect disciple on you. I respect you, but I choose none of these choices. Perhaps you can kill me, but I’ll also make you pay a hefty price.”

His tone rang out clearly.

Jiang Chen’s attitude seemed to be within Chu Xinghan’s expectations. The latter’s slightly miserable eyebrows abruptly lifted.

“Alright. If there wasn’t a grudge between us, I’d quite admire you. However, the profits of the master are above all. Jiang Chen, I won’t hold back once I start.”

As Chu Xinghan spoke, the Milky Way that wavered in and out of existence behind his back became even more resplendent.

Of course, it wasn't a real Milky Way, but an illusion formed by his personal aura. The bright Milky Way had countless stars dotted and sparkling in it like a silver sea. Each star was like a silver carp, bounding through the crystalline ripples.

This silver white light had been the terrifying strength that had slaughtered the Goldwing Swordbirds and several hundred Silverwing Swordbirds in but a second just now.

"Magnificent Xinghan, sword aura shooting to the clouds, go!"

Chu Xinghan flourished his sleeves and waved his right arm, a sword having appeared in his hand. With the glint of the sword as a guide, the Milky Way behind him abruptly roiled and churned, as the countless silvery white dots of light coalesced into a frightening silvery white sword aura, like innumerable shooting stars, as it moved towards Jiang Chen.

He had deployed an ultimate skill with his first move.

Yu Jie was watching from below and swallowed audibly twice. This level of divine ability and method was a level that he absolutely couldn't aspire to.

When a true qi practitioner such as Long Juxue watched this terrifying and glorious attack, her heart rippled with emotion, and the gaze she looked at Chu Xinghan with became gentle and warm.

She couldn't help but think, "I'd thought senior brother Yu Jie was strong before, but who would've thought that he is an utter buffoon in front of senior brother Xinghan. When I enter the sect, my worldview needs to be enhanced a bit. This Yu Jie isn't good enough to accomplish anything, but is more than enough to spoil things."

Unbeknownst to her, Long Juxue's inner heart had already settled on changing her backer. Yu Jie's performance was a huge joke when compared to senior brother Xinghan's.

Long Juxue was a proud young girl; she didn't want to find a good-for-nothing backer.

As for Jiang Chen in the midst of battle, he was suffering unspeakably. Chu Xinghan's strength was much more than he'd imagined.

The thousands of silvery white sword aura strands kept leaping at him like shooting stars. Even the highly defensive "Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation" found it hard to withstand the attack.

Pfft pfft pfft.

Several Goldwing Swordbirds on the outside exploded and died when they were grazed by the sword aura, with no exceptions at all.

The formation continuously tightened, protecting Jiang Chen at its core. These Goldwing Swordbirds, wild and savage as they were, were still loyal and steadfast, protecting Jiang Chen with their lives at this moment.

Strange emotions surged in Jiang Chen's heart. He really hadn't thought that these Goldwing Swordbirds would be fearless to this point merely because of an order from Mang Qi.

Jiang Chen had never been a heartless person. He wasn't the sort to hide and grasp at life while the Goldwing Swordbirds fended off disaster and fought for an additional moment for him.

He suddenly gave a long whistle as a resolute light shot out from his eyes. The whistle pierced through the clouds, and the rest of the million strong Swordbird army suddenly appeared in the skies above the Second Crossing. They once again filled the entire sky.

"Chu Xinghan, since you've forced me, then I'll self destruct along with you. Although you're strong, can you kill all of this million strong army? Even if you kill me, I'll still kill Long Juxue!"

Jiang Chen abruptly made up his mind and decided to self destruct along with his enemies.

Even if he was killed by Chu Xinghan, he'd still take Long Juxue down with him. If he died without killing Long Juxue, he'd still bring troubles to other people as well.

If he killed Long Juxue and eliminated this source of trouble, the Purple Sun Sect might not slaughter the rest of his family clan due to a consideration of face.

Chu Xinghan's mind was also agitated momentarily when he saw this scene. As strong as one was, he was still a bit shocked when millions of lives suddenly appeared in front of him.

"Yu Jie, protect junior sister Long. I'll finish this quickly."

Chu Xinghan was an exemplary disciple of the sect alright. He saw straight through Jiang Chen's intentions. Jiang Chen knew that he couldn't fight against Chu Xinghan, and so had changed his target to Long Juxue instead.

If it hadn't been for Master Shuiyue's orders, Chu Xinghan actually didn't want to kill Jiang Chen. However, this had to do with the honored master's affairs, and as unwilling as Chu Xinghan was, he couldn't hesitate at all.

"Jiang Chen, die!"

Chu Xinghan's brandished his longsword, and his aura grew even stronger. The resplendent Milky Way behind him wavered and shook with him, changing into the light of countless stars — as if meteorites were descending from the heavens.

The aura of this blow was actually three to four times stronger than the blow prior.

A newly practiced "Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation" had no hope of blocking such aura. Jiang Chen sighed tragically in his heart and knew that life or death would be decided in this moment.

Suddenly, Jiang Chen raised the bow in his hand.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, whoosh.

Four to five arrows shot out in close succession. All of them made unerringly for Long Juxue.

Jiang Chen held a mindset that he would die at this moment — he only hoped that he could kill Long Juxue. The million strong Swordbird army also dived down en masse.

Unafraid of death, unafraid of destruction.

Even Yu Jie felt the hair on his back rise in fright when he saw this scene. The attacks were so concentrated that even the scalps of spirit dao practitioners were numbed.

Not to mention that he, Yu Jie, had some grievous injuries.

Only Chu Xinghan was abnormally calm with a deep gaze in his eyes, as if the million strong Swordbird army was still insufficient to cause a great ripples of emotion within his heart.

Chu Xinghan was very calm indeed because he knew that Jiang Chen and the formation set up by the Goldwing Swordbirds would be unable to withstand this blow.

This was a blow that would make a clean sweep of things and end the battle.

The sky was murky over a dark earth, and the sun and moon without light. It was as if the sky and earth were groaning sadly from this battle, and the sun and moon were melancholic because of this battle.

Suddenly —

A beam of light shot through the clouds and sky that were covered up by the countless number of Swordbirds.

It was like a bolt of lightning had been emitted from the black clouds as it streaked across the sky.

Before the light faded, it happened to land amidst the Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation.

A bizarre scene occurred at this moment.

The light was as if a large sword of heaven and earth — cleaving a horizon out of thin air, and building a dam out of nothing — becoming a barrier in front of Chu Xinghan's attacks that were coming at Jiang Chen like tidewater.

The attacks raining towards him like a meteor shower seemed to ram into an invisible wall of air, and were swallowed whole.

The breezes were gentle, and the wind calmed in the next moment.

The beam of light had disappeared, and Chu Xinghan's devastating blow was as if a large stone had sunk into the great sea, swallowed without a trace.

This abrupt development shocked both Jiang Chen and Chu Xinghan.

"Who's there?" Chu Xinghan roared lowly as his deep gaze roved alertly in his surroundings, attempting to search out the person who had interfered flagrantly.

At the same time, Chu Xinghan was greatly astounded internally. Chu Xinghan had almost used his trump card with that blow just now.

Whether someone on the level of even his honored master Shuiyue could easily ward off a blow like that was an unknown factor.

A faint beam of light had emerged from somewhere and had completely swallowed his blow. This power was absolutely overwhelming.

Chapter 112: Jiang Chen is Under My Protection

If had been a direct confrontation, spirit qi would've flown out in every direction at the scene if Chu Xinghan's blow had been directly cancelled out. Any life within several hundred meters would've been affected, with likely nothing remaining alive.

However, for this bout of strength to so effortlessly swallow Chu Xinghan's blow without raising a single ripple, it was truly too frightening. It was like throwing a huge stone and having it disappear into thin air.

Even if a huge stone was thrown into the water, it would still create a few splashes and give rise to a few ripples.

However, this blow hadn't even kicked up a splash.

What did this mean? This meant that this abruptly interfering person was at least ten times stronger than Chu Xinghan!

Chu Xinghan had started training since he was eight and had met countless rivals and killed countless experts. On his path of training, he had met many strong opponents.

However, Chu Xinghan had never experienced such an overwhelming power even from his honored master Shuiyue. He even suspected that this power didn't come from one of the sects in the alliance of the sixteen kingdoms.

Jiang Chen's shock wasn't any less than that of Chu Xinghan's.

He was prepared to go down fighting just now, but who would've thought that this sudden development would cause the battle to yet again go in a different direction?

"Disciple of the Purple Sun Sect is it? All of you can go back now. Jiang Chen is under my protection."

A stately voice traveled out through the air. It seemed to be a bit aged and old, and brought with it an undefiable sense of oppression, making listeners have no choice but to obey what it said.

"Senior... who might you be?" Chu Xinghan wasn't an impetuous sort, as he cupped his hands, made the greeting of a junior to a senior, and asked respectfully.

"You don't need to ask about my name."

The stately voice seemed a bit unamused, "Go back and tell both Immortal Zixu and Shuiyue of the Purple Sun Sect that the grudge between Jiang Chen and Long Juxue will be settled by the two of them only. If anyone from the Purple Sun Sect makes a move against Jiang Chen, I wouldn't mind going for a stroll into the Purple Sun Sect one day."

Chu Xinghan was someone who knew when to advance and when to retreat. He knew that this great power wasn't someone that he could contend against at all. He nodded, "Many thanks to our senior for not bothering with us juniors. I will be sure to convey senior's words verbatim when I return."

Submitting docilely and honestly in the face of absolute power was the only way. Chu Xinghan wasn't foolish, he knew that the senior expert was letting him go because the senior couldn't be bothered in dirtying his hands.

If he didn't know when to stop and talked back offensively, the senior may destroy him with one finger.

In addition, to be honest, Chu Xinghan didn't feel any regret in resolving the matter this way, nor did he feel humiliated. Submitting before a stronger person was adapting his actions to the time.

Besides, his own intentions also didn't really want to kill Jiang Chen.

After all, the feud between Jiang Chen and Long Juxue had nothing to do with him. If he hadn't been here on the orders of his master, he wouldn't have even wanted to get involved.

Chu Xinghan's thoughts were different to those of Yu Jie's.

Yu Jie had wanted to curry favor with Long Juxue and lay the groundwork for fawning over the genius Long Juxue.

Chu Xinghan was a genius and had the reservation and pride of one. He felt that it was beneath his dignity to curry favor with Long Juxue. Even if she did rise to greater heights with future accomplishments, Chu Xinghan's personality wasn't one that would spur him to curry favor with others.

"Junior sister Long, your foolish brother has tried his best in the matters of today." Chu Xinghan said to Long Juxue as he returned to the ground.

Although Long Juxue felt that it was a pity, she also knew that Chu Xinghan had truly tried his best, given this situation. Who would've thought that an unparalleled expert would suddenly appear out of nowhere?

She was a smart person and knew that the only reason that they could leave this place alive was because the mysterious expert valued his status and didn't wish to bully the weak.

Otherwise, he could kill the three of them as easily as blowing away dust.

Although Yu Jie was a bit unreconciled with this conclusion, he didn't dare say anything else. He knew even more so than Long Juxue how frighteningly powerful a person who could easily dispel one of senior brother Chu Xinghan's full strength blow was.

"Let's go!" Chu Xinghan said lowly as he didn't dare tarry. He took Long Juxue with him and pushed off with his feet. A cloud of blue frost rippled out like a blue lotus as they flew into the sky and vanished into thin air.

Jiang Chen watched Chu Xinghan and the others leave. Although not resigned to this conclusion, he didn't say anything.

All sorts of bizarre turns had suffused the events of today. This battle hadn't been one of Jiang Chen's accomplishments either. He naturally knew that he didn't have the ability to make Chu Xinghan leave Long Juxue behind.

In addition, Jiang Chen was someone with moral integrity. He would be inviting insult if he wanted Long Juxue to stay at this moment. He would kill Long Juxue, but not by swaggering about with borrowed influence.

Sighing lightly, he cupped his hands and called out. "May I know senior's honored name? Jiang Chen will never forget the aid rendered today. Will the senior please leave your name behind? I hope to compensate you should the opportunity presents itself in the future."

However, Jiang Chen also knew that in the eyes of this kind of expert, the kind of compensation that he could offer as an ordinary practitioner probably had no allure whatsoever.

But Jiang Chen's words came from his heart and he felt that he had both the potential and foundation to do so.

"Compensation?" The voice in the air chuckled. "Alright Jiang Chen, this old fellow will remember your words from today. I hope there will be a day that you can offer me some compensation."

After these words had been said, the voice began to roll far away like thunder, vanishing in the distance.

"Honored senior, please hold your steps!" Jiang Chen wanted to say some more words.

But silence greeted him. There were no more responses.

Jiang Chen hadn't even seen his savior's face in the midst of all of this. He laughed wryly as he looked at the ravaged landscape with bodies strewn everywhere, sighing lightly in his heart.

Below the Second Crossing, the million strong army was still crouched on the ground. No one had dared moved a single finger until now. Even when just the effects of the great battle had spread to them, it still caused people to die in great swathes. Thus, no one had dared scream or moan in agony.

Jiang Chen felt worn out. He also felt extremely regretful that the head of this evil, Long Juxue, hadn't been killed. He looked at the great army again. They were all just along for the ride.

Jiang Chen naturally didn't have the heart to start a slaughter again.

Although Long Juxue hadn't died, the Soaring Dragon household was basically annihilated. The task of cleaning up the rest of this mess could be returned to the Eastern clan for their attentions.

Back at the Second Crossing, everyone surrounded Jiang Chen and peppered him with questions.

Jiang Chen had suffered in torment throughout his battle, but so had those standing on top of the mountain pass.

Jiang Chen spread out his hands. "The people of the Purple Sun Sect will likely be afraid to create more trouble. The only pity is that Long Juxue got away and will be a source of trouble in the future."

He waved at Princess Gouyu. "Your Eastern clan should be able to handle the task of cleaning up the aftermath by yourselves?"

Jiang Chen didn't have the slightest interest in the struggle for power between the royal family and the Long family. He hadn't gone against the Duke of Soaring Dragon because he supported the royal family, but rather because the Long family had gone too far in bullying others and wanted to end his Jiang family multiple times.

The battle of the Second Crossing had ended in the destruction of the Long family and the Jiang family's rise to fame.

However, the chaos of the Eastern Kingdom wouldn't be over as quickly. It was good thing that there was still Princess Gouyu and Eastern Lin as Crown Prince, so that the bloodlines of the royal family hadn't ended.

Princess Gouyu employed various methods afterwards to gather the armies of the dukes loyal to the royal family and exterminated the remnants of the Long family with swift and ruthless action.

Executing the heads, killing accomplices.

All the dukes that had been coerced by Long Zhaofeng wouldn't be prosecuted.

These were the rules set by Princess Gouyu.

She also clearly knew that if the fallout was too widespread, the chaos within the kingdom wouldn't end. Killing a few leaders, exterminating the Soaring Dragon manor, and revitalizing the authority of the royal family would do.

The current Eastern Kingdom couldn't afford anymore losses.

But of course, this process couldn't be concluded within a few days.

The Jiang family remained neutral throughout all of this and didn't participate.

The royal family actually placed the Duke of Jinshan and the Duke of Hubing, people who'd always been friendly with the Jiang family, into important positions at this time, making them the two powers that the royal family depended most heavily on in the rise of royal power again.

As for the Jiang family, whether Jiang Feng, the Duke of Jiang Han or Jiang Chen, who had shown extraordinary talents in the battle of the Second Crossing, they all kept an uncommonly low profile. They remained within the River Wave City, not venturing out of the house and stayed home all day.

At the battle of the Second Crossing, Jiang Chen had managed to retreat relatively unscathed after a few developments, but he felt deeply ashamed inside.

Although he hadn't submitted or compromised in front of Chu Xinghan, the feeling of not being in control of his own destiny and having his life and death being decided by others made Jiang Chen feel quite angry.

Back in the Jiang Han territory, the first thing that Jiang Chen did was to personally train the Goldwing Swordbirds and pass onto them the mysteries of the "Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation."

He also knew full well that to suddenly improve his strength by leaps and bounds within a short period of time was unrealistic.

But expectations could be held for the dao of formations. If several hundred Goldwing Swordbirds could comprehend seventy to eighty percent of the “Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation”, then they would become a great force to be reckoned with.

In addition, the variations of the “Eight Trigrams Assimilation Formation” were numerous. It could also be broken into countless smaller formations, reassembled into mid-sized formations, and reformed once again into a large formation.

The changes between large, middle, and small were at one’s will and desire. Once seventy to eighty percent of the essence of the formation had been grasped, the power of the formation would be eye-opening.

At the very least, he wouldn’t be at a loss when he met someone on the level of Chu Xinghan again.

Apart from Jiang Chen, all the others were making valiant efforts after experiencing disgrace. Jiang Chen’s eight personal guards had felt the shame of how a subject should die for his liege when his liege experienced humiliation.

Every person put forth their greatest effort as they trained without a thought for themselves.

Two months passed silently by. Jiang Chen’s level of training saw even greater progress as he took another step forward and made it to eleven meridians true qi.

As was common knowledge, entering the realm of an eleven meridians true qi master was almost reaching the limits of the true qi realm.

Within the martial dao arena of the alliance of the sixteen kingdoms, an eleven meridians true qi master would either successfully enter the spirit realm as he advanced, or roam the realm of true qi for the rest of his life.

As for ascending to the level of twelve meridians true qi, no one had ever heard of someone breaking through to this level, at least not in these common kingdoms.

Ever since the dawn of time, there had been no shortage of geniuses within the world of martial dao. They’d all explored the way of twelve meridians true qi, but all ended up missing the best timing to transform to the spirit realm in the end, with no exceptions. They were moody until the end of their days like a resplendent star slowly sinking to the earth.

Logically speaking, Jiang Chen should’ve been preparing for the transformation to spirit qi.

However, Jiang Chen had no intention of assailing the spirit realm. He had thoroughly assimilated into this world and pretty much established his martial dao foundations.

The next step was to absorb the memories of his past life and begin digging deeper in his exploration.

The so-called twelve meridians of the true qi realm was just a minor way of training.

There were many major ways of training in Jiang Chen’s memories, even divine ways of training.

His foundational skills were in great readiness at this moment, and it was time to break out of the cocoon and become a butterfly!

## Chapter 113: Master Shuiyue

'The Purple Sun Sect' — this name was a legendary existence to the alliance of the sixteen kingdoms.

The hidden sects were exceedingly mysterious in the eyes of the common kingdoms, and were holy places that others greatly yearned for. If a common practitioner could attract the attention of a hidden sect, then he would surely become an immortal, and those near him could ride his coattails to success as well.

There was no shortage of hidden sects within the alliance of the sixteen kingdoms. But there were four that were considered the strongest — and the Purple Sun Sect was one of them.

On this day, sunlight had just struck the hallowed grounds of the Purple Sun Sect.

A surface of water that was as smooth as a mirror presented a boundless sight. It shimmered as ripples moved across it, giving others a feeling of stately holiness.

This body of water was named the Shuiyue Lake. There were interconnecting islands within the lake, scattered all over like stars in the sky, or pieces on a chessboard. This was the place where the line of Shuiyue of the Purple Sun Sect resided.

Gentle light wreathed the Shuiyue Lake as an auspicious air circled the islands.

At this moment, within a jeweled hall somewhere deep within the depths of an island, was the Master Shuiyue's base of operations —

A plaque was hung over the great door, marking the entrance into the hall. The words "Shuiyue" were carved into it with a Chinese calligraphic style used for seals. It was majestic and grand, with an artistic feeling about it.

Within the hall, Chu Xinghan stood with his hands hanging by his side, while Yu Jie and Long Juxue both stood to the right of him. All of them had lowered their heads and were looking downwards. No one dared to make a sound.

A woman was sitting cross-legged on the lotus throne in front of them. She looked to be roughly thirty years old; her features were elegant, and an ethereal air could be found in her luxurious self bearing.

Except, when her eye of justice opened slightly, it was suffused with a power that both shocked and awed onlookers.

"Xinghan, go over the particulars of this matter from beginning to end once again, and leave nothing out. Yu Jie and Juxue, you two listen as well. You must fill in the gaps if senior brother Xinghan misses any parts."

The lady on top of the lotus throne was obviously Master Shuiyue.

Chu Xinghan nodded, as he went over everything in his mind once again. He then took in a deep breath, and carefully explained in detail all that had happened at the Second Crossing.

Chu Xinghan particularly conveyed the words of the mysterious expert — he conveyed those without leaving a single word out. He portrayed those in their entirety and didn't dare make the slightest mistake.

Once Chu Xinghan had finished, Master Shuiyue faintly raised her eyebrow, and looked at Yu Jie and Long Juxue, obviously looking for their affirmation.

“Honored master, senior brother Xinghan has been quite thorough. That was indeed how the mysterious expert spoke. That Jiang Chen was indeed wildly arrogant. He didn't give the line of Master Shuiyue any respect to begin with.” Yu Jie grit his teeth with anger directed towards Jiang Chen when he recalled that battle.

“Nonsense such as this doesn't need to be spoken.” Master Shuiyue snorted lightly. She was also quite dissatisfied with Yu Jie's incompetency in getting things done.

If Yu Jie had been able to take care of this matter decisively and cleanly, Chu Xinghan may not have needed to make a move, and perhaps even the mysterious expert wouldn't have been able to make it to the scene in time.

Of course, this was just a hypothesis.

When she considered the situation as a whole, Master Shuiyue was truly disappointed by Yu Jie's incompetency.

At the heart of it all, Master Shuiyue was a very biased person who shielded shortcomings and faults. She already knew of the feud between Jiang Chen and Long Juxue. With her biased personality, she would definitely strike out on Long Juxue's behalf.

Although Chu Xinghan had conveyed the mysterious expert's tone with seeming seriousness, but Master Shuiyue had been proud and alone all her life. Who had she ever feared?

How could she possibly turn a blind eye to the matters of her disciple just because of a few threatening words?

“Xue'er, strange phenomenon of the heavens and earth were triggered when you were born. What does this mean? It means that you are a gifted genius of martial dao. At the end of it all, the martial dao practitioners of our generation must cleanly sever the ties that hold us down. Therefore, if you don't gain vengeance for your family's grievance, it will surely leave behind a shadow in your heart and affect your future training. Your master will keep this issue of your vengeance within my heart.”

Long Juxue was accustomed to playing coy and knew that Master Shuiyue would coddle her. She sobbed slightly, lowly. “Xue'er has no family or patron now. I can now only look to my honored master to act on my behalf.”

Master Shuiyue had trained for more than half her life, and her reputation of being biased was renowned throughout the sects.

“Who is this Jiang Chen that he can compel a great Swordbird army to fight for him and be so fearless of death?”

Even someone as strong as Master Shuiyue could make neither heads nor tails of this matter. One had to know that it wasn't a matter of having great strength to compel spirit beasts and fowl to battle.

There were those who were adept at mobilizing spirit animals to battle within the sects, but each sect had their own unique methods.

Some leveraged written talismans, and others used secret incantations or other mysterious arts of control. Of course, there were those who used their divine abilities to dominate the spirit animals into becoming their own fighting strength.

But no matter which sect it was, those were secrets that wouldn't be passed on.

Even within the vast Purple Sun Sect there were almost none who possessed this power. The Purple Sun Sect was almost a completely blank piece of paper in the arena of compelling spirit animals to battle.

Therefore, Master Shuiyue was rather curious with regards to this Jiang Chen.

However, although she was curious, Master Shuiyue still placed a heavier emphasis on the genius who was Long Juxue. An innate constitution such as the azure phoenix constitution also numbered amongst the scant few when making a general observation of the history of the Purple Sun Sect.

What did it mean to be born with such a constitution?

This meant that one would be able to easily set foot into the spirit dao with almost no barriers. The path of training after entering the spirit dao would also be much smoother when compared with ordinary spirit dao practitioners, and their speed of improvement would also be much faster.

"Xinghan, your master is giving you a mission. Go investigate Jiang Chen's origins, but remember, do not make a move against Jiang Chen."

Master Shuiyue gave her orders to Chu Xinghan, but she was a biased person after all. She cared about both people. Although she favored Long Juxue even more, she couldn't possibly send Chu Xinghan to his death.

After all, of her disciples, Chu Xinghan was still one of the top three geniuses. Since the mysterious elder had spoken, it would absolutely be inappropriate if she sent her disciples to make a move against Jiang Chen.

There would be fewer reservations as long as they only investigated and didn't make a move.

"Xue'er." Master Shuiyue looked towards Long Juxue again. "Although this Jiang Chen knows some unorthodox ways, at the end of the day, his potential is still inferior to yours. Even if he's had a few fortuitous encounters, it's still nothing compared to the constitution that you were born with. You will surely leave him behind in eight to ten years."

The meaning of Master Shuiyue's words were veiled; what she actually wanted to tell Long Juxue was that "your master will eventually help you get your vengeance."

However, as a master, she couldn't send her other strong disciples to kill Jiang Chen, as this might very well attract fatal disasters for the other disciples.

Long Juxue was a smart person and she nodded, "Honored master, the grudge between Jiang Chen and your disciple is utterly irreconcilable. Your disciple will be receiving tutelage from the honored master starting today and will learn the honored master's divine abilities. It will then be as easy as killing a dog when I meet Jiang Chen in the future."

Master Shuiyue nodded in satisfaction. "You possess an innate constitution alright. Your potential and comprehension is top class. Xue'er, if you kill Jiang Chen through using the efforts of others, you will unavoidably leave behind a slight stain on your training. This stain may affect you when you are scaling to even higher levels in your path of martial dao in the future. You possess an innate constitution, and your master is far beneath you in terms of potential. There may even come a day in the future in which you claim the highest rank of power within the entire Purple Sun Sect, not to mention being the head of the line of Shuiyue."

Long Juxue thinned out her lips slightly and her beautiful head inclined a bit. "Xue'er will be certain to train diligently as to live up to honored master's great kindness, and obtain face for the line of Shuiyue."

One had to say, Long Juxue was quite skilled at fathoming the human heart. She could tell from Master Shuiyue's words that this honored master greatly valued the line of Shuiyue, and dearly wished to shine with pride and glory throughout the entire Purple Sun Sect.

Indeed, Master Shuiyue smiled with gratification when she heard those words. "That would be most excellent! I traveled hundreds of kilometers to be the first to arrive in the Eastern Kingdom to form the ties of master and disciple with you. This act is the one act that I am most proud of in my life. Xue'er, you will train with me from today onwards."

Yu Jie, who was listening below, couldn't help but feel a bit envious and jealous. One had to know that although he was one of the ten great disciples of the line of Shuiyue, there had been exceedingly few chances for him to receive the honored master's personal guidance. It had basically been up to him to train once the master had brought him in.

On the few occasions that he had received a few pointers from the master, Yue Jie had been so excited that he'd been unable to sleep for a few days.

The extraordinary prodigy Long Juxue was indeed different from the rest. The honored master wanted to keep Long Juxue by the master's side for personal tutelage. This was treatment that even senior brother Chu Xinghan hadn't enjoyed.

Chu Xinghan was expressionless as he didn't feel anything was inappropriate here.

A thousand things were waiting to be done within the Eastern Kingdom.

Unknowingly, a month had passed since the battle of the Second Crossing. The internal chaos had basically been settled thanks to Princess Gouyu's connections and charisma, as well as assistance from the other dukes.

Eastern Lu had fallen in the Long family rebellion, and his only son Eastern Lin had been saved by Jiang Chen. Eastern Lin naturally ascended to the throne, becoming the Eastern Kingdom's new king.

More clarity was also slowly imparted on the situation within the capital. Those vassals of the Duke of Soaring Dragon who deserved to be executed were executed, those who should be pruned were pruned, and those who should be marginalized were marginalized.

The Pill King Garden, for instance, a spirit medicine power that was a dependant of the duke, vanished utterly from the annals of the Eastern Kingdom. All of the members of the Pill King Garden were promptly executed and displayed publicly, with no exceptions granted.

As for the Hall of Healing, due to the fact that it had been at odds with the Duke of Soaring Dragon before, its position rose even higher with the incoming tide. They had been the foremost heavyweight of the kingdom in the market of spirit medicine to begin with. After this battle, their position once again rose even higher and further cemented their place as foremost heavyweight.

Morale was strong within the entire Hall of Healing and a sense of optimism permeated its halls.

However, the lord hallmaster Song Tianxing of the Hall of Healing couldn't find it within himself to be happy.

This was because the senior executives of the Hall had almost unanimously turned against their own side in the mess created by the Duke of Soaring Dragon and pointed their ire at the third hallmaster, Qiao Baishi. The direct consequences of such an act was Qiao Baishi's resignation letter.

There would be none of the three heaven-defying pills without Qiao Baishi. Without those three otherworldly pills, the orders that the Hall of Healing had accepted before would all be jokes in comparison.

Although they could cancel orders and return deposits, once a spirit medicine heavyweight like the Hall of Healing started returning deposits, this meant that they would face an unprecedented assault on their reputation and public perception.

Therefore, Song Tianxing couldn't be happy at all.

It looked like the royal family depended greatly on the Hall of Healing right now, but that was because the royal family had just weathered tremendous chaos and endured great losses. They needed the Hall's strength.

Speaking for themselves, if the Hall wanted to expand, they would still have to rely on spirit medicine and a variety of products.

Without Qiao Baishi's three spirit medicines, it would be almost impossible for the Hall of Healing to obtain greater expansion.

Song Tianxing regretted his actions deeply and what had transpired that night. Apart from a few of Qiao Baishi's diehard supporters, almost all the senior executives had condemned Qiao Baishi, and wanted to hand him over for the Duke of Soaring Dragon's ministrations.

Song Tianxing had also shown hesitation in that moment and hadn't firmly supported Qiao Baishi.

The act of placing one step wrong had resulted in all his steps being wrong.

Chapter 114: Self Satisfied Senior Executives of the Hall of Healing

Many of the senior executives of the Hall of Healing were excited by the royal family's high regard and were jubilant about sweeping away an opponent such as the Pill King Garden.

During a meeting between the senior executives, the fourth Hallmaster, Wang Li, spoke animatedly, "Lord Hallmaster, since the royal family has weathered a crisis, now is when they need us the most. Perhaps the position of our Hall will greatly increase once again. We should make use of this opportunity to expand our operations, and to open branches in every territory of the kingdom. Wherever there's a duke present, there should also be a branch of our Hall. In this regard, the Hall will both permeate and be deeply entangled throughout the entire country. Our income and status will all greatly increase."

Fourth Hallmaster Wang Li was a year or two younger than Qiao Baishi, and could be viewed as one of the future pillars of the Hall. His position had been similar to Qiao Baishi originally, and he'd even been in the running as a future Lord Hallmaster.

However, Qiao Baishi's astounding performances had continuously stifled Wang Li's ambitions, and gave him no room to give free rein to his abilities.

Now that Qiao Baishi was out of the picture, the position of Lord Hallmaster of the Hall of Healing was basically Wang Li's.

Therefore, Wang Li had become a bit jumped up lately — strutting around with the demeanor of the future leader a bit.

Many of the senior executives throughout the Hall completely bought Wang Li's act. They fawned over him, and curried favor with him both publicly and privately — giving off the air that they were gathering at his side.

Several of the elders added in their assenting remarks upon hearing Wang Li's words.

"Hallmaster Wang is correct, our Hall should take advantage of this opportunity to expand and widen our influence to all the territories. There is indeed a great need to construct branches in all the duchies."

"Hallmaster Wang looks far ahead, and aims high with both vision and ambition." The Blue surnamed female elder had always been on bad terms with Qiao Baishi. She'd also been one of the most outspoken ones against Qiao Baishi last time.

"Unlike some people who have no respect for the other senior executives when they have a bit of accomplishment, it's actually a fortuitous happening for the Hall that someone like that has left."

Elder Blue was filled with resentment. Although Qiao Baishi had already left, her mouth was still without virtue, as she alternated between taunting and jeering at Qiao Baishi.

Although Qiao Baishi was no longer present, he still had two loyal supporters within the Hall. Elder Blue was even including his friends in her hatred.

These words were naturally abusing one person, while pointing at someone else.

Even the Second Hallmaster, Yue Qun, stroked his beard and chuckled, "Lord Hallmaster, our Hall has fallen upon quite a spot of luck this time. We should make use of this opportunity to expand."

Song Tianxing's face had darkened continuously as he'd allowed the chatter to go on around him in.

He was in an incredibly bad mood, and was very disheartened.

He didn't find the superficiality of human relationships odd. He hadn't even found it strange that Qiao Baishi had been scoffed at and mocked by these people.

What was odd, was that these people didn't have the slightest bit of sensitivity towards the matter of politics, and kept saying that they wanted to expand.

Had the Hall of Healing really never had the chance to expand their operations during the past hundreds of years? Why hadn't they expanded?

It was because it was a taboo area!

How long had it been since the matter between the Duke of Soaring Dragon? Had these people all already forgotten?

How would the royal family allow any power to expand without limits, or let any influence penetrate every territory within the kingdom in the future?

These were the daydreams of an idiot, and it could be said that they were looking for death.

It wouldn't be allowed, even if the Hall of Healing didn't have the power to command troops within its hands. If an entity had too much influence, it would be sure to conflict with royal authority as time went on.

The Duke of Soaring Dragon was a prime example. It would be strange indeed if the Eastern clan allowed any power to expand without limits after the case of Long Zhaofeng.

The sad thing was that none of these people could see such simple logic. Their minds were filled with enthusiasm and only wished to expand.

Seeing that Song Tianxing wasn't saying anything, the second hallmaster Yue Qun laughed, "Boss, everyone is very gung ho. Why don't you say a few words as well?"

Song Tianxing had a belly full of frustrations as he swept his gaze around coldly with a thunderous looking face. "I can understand that all of you are in high spirits. I'll only speak of two matters today."

"First, I'd like to ask you all that, as the first duke beneath the heavens, why was the Duke of Soaring Dragon destroyed in the end?"

"Second, who can fill in the gaps after Qiao Baishi has left? Who amongst you has the ability to clean up the aftermath? I'll say this right here and now, that if anyone has the ability to fill in for Qiao Baishi, and can take care of the aftermath left in his wake, I'll make that person the next great Lord Hallmaster."

Song Tianxing spread out his hands after he spoke, "Why don't you discuss it amongst yourselves."

Upon seeing that Song Tianxing's reaction wasn't very pleased, the fervent atmosphere cooled down slightly.

Yue Qun squeezed out a smile and said, "It was a fluke that the Duke of Soaring Dragon was destroyed. Who would've thought that the million strong army would be subdued by the power of Jiang Chen alone?"

“Indeed. Perhaps the Duke of Soaring Dragon just didn’t have the makings of an emperor in this lifetime.”

“This situation truly is a bit bizarre. I thought that it would be the foregone conclusion for the Long family to conquer the kingdom. Who would’ve thought that the final outcome would be thus?”

“Haha, but this is a great thing for our Hall.”

The senior executives were all quite at ease when they discussed the matters of the Long family. The blustering and aggressive manner that had been present when they were pointing fingers at Qiao Baishi, and when they were clamoring to hand him over to Long Zhaofeng, was completely absent.

However, Song Tianxing’s brow grew even more furrowed when he heard this response.

He raised his eyebrows, and looked at the fourth Hallmaster Wang Li. “Number four, you take the floor. What understanding have you reached regarding the Duke of Soaring Dragon’s demise?”

Wang Li knew this was a test from the Lord Hallmaster, and didn’t dare easily dismiss the matter. He thought for a moment and then opened his mouth to say, “Both luck and reason played a role in the destruction of the Long family. On the other hand, this also demonstrates that with the Eastern family’s royal heritage of a few hundred years, their destiny is still stronger than the Long family’s. And, as the truth has illustrated, the Lord Hallmaster was correct in resolutely defending his stance. You possessed foresight in doing so.”

Wang Li conveniently kissed up to Song Tianxing as well. When everyone had wanted to hand over Qiao Baishi to Long Zhaofeng, and strike a compromise with the Long family, or even submit to them, in the end it had been Song Tianxing who’d prevailed over all dissenting views. He’d stoppered the mouths of those who wanted to bow down to the Long family after Elder Shun had spoken.

The truth had revealed that the action of not submitting to the Long family had been beyond wise and brilliant.

Otherwise, it would be an unknown whether or not the current Hall of Healing would be receiving the royal family’s favor.

After Wang Li had offered up this fulsome flattery, he naturally felt that he had responded quite aptly. However, Song Tianxing shook his head inwardly. This Wang Li didn’t measure up to Qiao Baishi alright — he paled far in comparison instead.

He had raised the first question to take these people down a peg or two, using the matter of the Long family to warn them not to always think of expanding.

Business could be expanded, but territory and influence could absolutely not be expanded.

It was a pity that no one grasped his intentions.

Suddenly, an elder sitting in a corner to the right raised his hand, “Lord Hallmaster, if I may say a word?”

The elder who had raised his hand was surnamed Ying, and was one of the few solid supporters that Qiao Baishi had left. He had been ostracized by the senior executives during this time, and was slowly being marginalized.

The others wore a faint smile upon seeing that he wished to speak. They had on looks of watching a good show, as if a funny joke was in front of them.

“Elder Ying, the lord hallmaster hasn’t asked you. What are you trying to do by being so falsely proactive?” Elder Blue’s words were laced with sarcasm.

“Elder Blue, if I recall correctly, you’re also an elder, and your ranking isn’t that much higher than mine. I hardly think that you have the right to point fingers and decide when I can or can’t speak. I don’t know what you’re puffed up with importance about?” Elder Ying flicked a glance at Elder Blue as his voice was full of contempt.

“You... you... I’m not lowering my status by arguing with you.” Elder Blue sat down huffily.

“Elder Ying, what valued opinions do you have? Please speak.”

Song Tianxing thought fondly of old friendships, and knew that Elder Ying was one of Qiao Baishi’s confidantes. His love for Qiao Baishi extended to his confidantes, and thus he also held a good view of Elder Ying.

“Lord Hallmaster, I’m more of a crude person, and so beg your pardon if I offend with my words.” It looked like Elder Ying had much on his mind that he wanted to say.

“Speak freely whatever is on your mind. We’re all colleagues here, what offense could possibly be given? This is all for the future of the Hall.” Song Tianxing set the tone.

“Alright, then I’ll speak frankly. I feel that a key issue still hasn’t been addressed in the midst of all this discussion to respond to the Lord Hallmaster’s question regarding the Duke of Soaring Dragon: Why did the Duke of Soaring Dragon collapse? Simple — his influence and power threatened his master!”

“The Long family has operated painstakingly these years, in order to have a finger in many pies. They had a foothold in many duchies. In this way, the Long family had a multitude of accomplices, and their influence was wide ranging. The final result was that their influence exceeded the royal family’s, and ignited this catastrophe.”

Elder Ying didn’t pause as he continued, “All of you said earlier that you wanted to make use of this opportunity to build branches of the Hall in all sorts of ducal territories. What I want to say, is that this kind of blind optimism is not only the wrong choice for the future of the Hall of Healing, but is courting death at the heart of it. This is pushing the Hall into the abyss of destruction.”

Song Tianxing’s eyes abruptly lit up when Elder Ying finished. The former had been very disappointed prior because no one had comprehended this point.

It would seem that Elder Ying was a wise person. The saying that things, and people, of the same kind came together, did indeed hold true. Elder Ying was close to Qiao Baishi. It would seem that he had true skill and genuine knowledge.

“If the Hall was to extend our fingers to every territory, then I believe that the day the royal family were to move against the Hall wouldn’t be too far off. The Long family is a lesson of a failed predecessor. Our Hall has a long and illustrious history, and many wise men have numbered amongst the generations of forefathers. Wouldn’t they have wanted to expand as well? To build a branch in every duchy? Why

haven't they done so? Because they're smart people. They knew that business was just business. They avoided stirring up unnecessary trouble, and didn't attempt to increase their influence to the point that it eclipsed the royal family's. This isn't expansion — this is seeking death!"

Elder Ying laughed coldly as he exhaled a long breath when he finished speaking. It was as if he had vented all the ill humor he had accumulated during this time in one go.

He sat down firmly, "This is what I wanted to say, pardon me if I've given offense."

It could be seen that Elder Ying had thought things through, and wasn't afraid of giving offense now. He was being marginalized anyway, why continue to take the blows lying down? He would say whatever he wanted, why would he have qualms of offending others?

One had to say, although he hadn't left any considerations of face in his words, they opened the ears of the deaf, and the eyes of the blind. Even if the senior executives present were isolating him, consciously or unconsciously, they all had to admit that these words had pointed out a core issue that they hadn't thought of.

Truly, the Duke of Soaring Dragon was an example of a failed predecessor.

However, the Fourth Hallmaster Wang Li had an angrily darkened face. The expansion idea had been his, and Elder Ying's words were undoubtedly a slap to his face.

"Elder Ying, your words are a bit of an exaggeration. You're raising an alarm just to scare people." Wang Li was a bit unhappy.

#### Chapter 115: The Danger Behind Self Satisfaction

Elder Ying had already taken a seat and had closed his eyes. He didn't intend to speak any further. When he heard Wang Li's interrogative words, his anger boiled again.

Elder Ying rolled his eyes, "What 'raising an alarm to scare people'? I don't think I've exaggerated anywhere."

Wang Li spoke loudly, "It's true that the Long family held the right to move troops, and that their influence threatened their masters. But our Hall is only conducting business. We seek only profit, not power. How can we be lumped in with the Long family business?"

"Hahaha..." Elder Ying laughed loudly. "Those of the Eastern clan need to be the ones to believe your words. It's not difficult for you to persuade me and the ardently fervorous of the Hall — however, it would be quite hard for you to persuade the royal family."

Elder Ying's words made a great deal of sense. After the events of the Long family, the royal family would surely be as if a bird startled by the merest twang of a bow string. They absolutely wouldn't allow a second Long family to appear.

"Our Hall has always had a good reputation, how could the royal family be unaware of that?" Wang Li said coldly.

"Our reputation has indeed been good. And that's because our Hall has never expanded to all the duchies, and hasn't extended our grasp too far. This was in turn due to the fact that our Hall knew our

place, and when to retreat and advance. We didn't expand blindly. If we expand blindly in the future, only the heavens will know what will become of our reputation. Besides, isn't it the pure whim of the person in charge that decides whether or not we're truly just doing business? If the person with control over the Hall of Healing had the slightest bit of ambition, and made a few moves in the dark... it might even be easier for them to form a power like the Long family than it was for the originals."

"Bullshit. You're making evil arbitrary assumptions. This is throwing dirt onto your own face, Elder Ying! Are you an elder of the Hall anymore?" Wang Li was infuriated.

Elder Blue also screamed shrilly, "Some people love to gain notoriety by making shocking statements — like master, like slave. You're all cut from the same cloth."

Elder Blue's crosshairs had once again been locked onto Qiao Baishi.

Elder Ying was enraged as he slammed his hand down onto the table. "You with the Blue surname, I've tolerated you for more than a day or two now. Old woman, you've finally laid things out clearly. What master, what slave?! You go around being bitterly sarcastic everyday, as if afraid that no one would know that your tongue is shaped like a viper's."

"Ying Wuyou, don't you put up a tough front with me! You're Qiao Baishi's slave alright. You've said so much only because you're jealous of the Fourth Hallmaster — jealous that he's the man of the hour — jealous that he replaced your master's position!" Elder Blue simply decided to lay it all out.

Ying Wuyou nodded his head savagely. "Alright, good. Very good. Since we've reached this point, let's see what your downfall is. If our future is dependent on sheer mediocrity like you, then the foundation of the Hall, built up over hundreds of years, will surely be destroyed within twenty years! Me, jealous? What is there to be jealous of from someone who can't even see the greater picture? You're right, I'm Qiao Baishi's friend, and his diehard supporter. This isn't because of personal relationships, but because I think highly of his character and admire his skills. Unlike you, who defends those who belong to your faction alone, and attack others who don't. You're a tuft of grass that's easily swayed by the wind. If the Lord Hallmaster had listened to you last time, and bowed down to the Long family, then you wouldn't even have the chance to be standing here today or to be flapping your lips."

Ying Wuyou turned to Song Tianxing and said resolutely, "Since these words have already been spoken, I shall speak clearly Lord Hallmaster. I also have an answer to your second question. Throughout this vast Hall, no one can fill in the missing gap made by Qiao Baishi. No one will be able to clean up the aftermath, unless Qiao Baishi returns! It's ludicrous that these people sit here and speak with confidence and composure, but are unaware that the Hall is facing a monumental crisis."

"Crisis? Ying Wuyou, stop being an alarmist and crying wolf! Will our Hall really fall to pieces without Qiao Baishi?" The Second Hallmaster Yue Qun was also displeased as he hectored.

Elder Blue jeered, "So the saying that one fan is enough to negate the criticism of ten is true. Ying Wuyou, you're truly one of Qiao Baishi's brainless fanboys. You really place a high importance on Qiao Baishi. Is it such that the Lord Hallmaster isn't as important as Qiao Baishi in your heart?"

One had to say that this woman had the gift of gab, and was quite skilled at driving a wedge between people.

However, as the Lord Hallmaster, how would Song Tianxing buy this act? He spoke with a darkened face, "Cut out the nonsense. Let's discuss the second question since Elder Ying has mentioned it."

Ying Wuyou smiled faintly, "Lord Hallmaster, I don't have much to discuss. I've already said that no one can replace Qiao Baishi. I feel that a weight has been taken off my shoulders now that I've said my piece. To be frank, I had planned on resigning after today. The future of the Hall has nothing to do with me anyways, but the Hall has cultivated me since I was young, and I have great affection for the Hall. I said those words not because of a personal grudge, but because I am truly thinking on behalf of the future of the Hall. Lord Hallmaster, you will be the one to decide how the Hall will proceed. However, I want to say that Wang Li isn't a qualified successor, and that a woman as narrow minded as Elder Blue, who depends on selling her coquettish charms and nepotism, is even more unsuitable to remain in the position of an elder. The more of these people there are, the narrower the future of the Hall's path will become."

Resignation? Another senior executive was leaving?

Apart from Wang Li's faction, there were still quite a few neutral factions within the Hall. They were greatly surprised when they heard that Ying Wuyou was also resigning, and also vaguely felt that this was inappropriate.

Why was it that people were leaving one after another during a time that the Hall was growing more prosperous everyday?

Could it be that there really was something wrong with the Hall?

"Resignation? Haha, why don't you say it's that you're no longer able to carry on within your position?" Elder Blue laughed coldly. "Without your master Qiao Baishi supporting you, you don't have any further place within the Hall, right? By raising a false alarm, you want to sow some confusion in the Hall before you depart, don't you?"

Ying Wuyou laughed coldly and his gaze was completely fearless, as he swept it in an open and honest way across everyone assembled. "Everyone, I, Ying Wuyou, have a clear conscience. It's a bit boring flapping my lips at this woman. I'll only say one final thing, and that that's with Qiao Baishi's departure, the three medicinal pills will also halt production. All the orders that we've received will be cancelled, and our Hall's reputation will also be heavily impacted. Under these circumstances, these people only think of how to expand our influence, without contemplating how to clean up such a mess. Are they the brainless ones, or am I just a worrywart?"

Ying Wuyou was about to leave, and had no reservations about anything. He'd put all his cards out on the table, and caused absolute silence to prevail.

Song Tianxing's most worrying concern had finally been raised by Ying Wuyou.

"What? You mean the Heavenly Karma Pill, Vast Ocean Pill, and One Buddha Powder? Does the Lord Hallmaster not know their recipes?"

"Qiao Baishi played this hand? This really is too..."

"No way? All those orders belong to the various influential powers of the kingdom. None of them are good targets to offend."

“Lord Hallmaster, is this true? This... isn’t this too ridiculous?”

Song Tianxing sighed lightly, “This is why I raised the second question. Qiao Baishi did indeed have exclusive knowledge of the three pill recipes. I didn’t have a hand in this either.”

Everyone in the Hall was stunned. They had always viewed Qiao Baishi as someone the Lord Hallmaster had groomed and mentored.

Since Qiao Baishi was in charge of refining these three pill recipes, then as someone behind the scenes, the Lord Hallmaster should have naturally known them as well.

This was a familiar, accustomed train of thought.

However, Ying Wuyou’s words had cruelly punctured their matter-of-factness and pierced their daydreams.

Even the Lord Hallmaster hadn’t grasped the three spirit medicines.

This was without a doubt, a thunderclap from a blue sky.

Those aforementioned expansions in territory and scale, had been built on the foundation of these three pill medicines. Without these three pill medicines, what difference was there between the Hall now and what it’d been like previously? On what basis, and with what income, did they have for expansion?

They were dumbfounded. Even Wang Li was a bit dumbfounded.

Yue Qun was also flabbergasted as he murmured to himself, “Lord Hallmaster, wasn’t this contract signed with the young duke of Jiang Han? As long as we continue our partnership with the young duke Jiang...”

Song Tianxing laughed wryly, “Continue our partnership with young duke Jiang? That’s easy to answer. Haven’t you seen that the Jiang family’s actions right now are quite strange? These actions are an obvious precursor to fading out of the Eastern Kingdom.”

“Indeed. I heard that the Eastern clan wanted to erect four new great dukes, and nominated the Jiang family as the first duke, but were respectfully declined by the Jiang family.”

“This Jiang family could destroy the Duke of Soaring Dragon — why would they pay any attention to the title of the first duke? Can it be that the Jiang family is harboring intentions of rebellion?”

Song Tianxing was in an emotional turmoil as he spread out his hands, “Stop chasing the wind and clutching at shadows. The Jiang family’s movements are to avoid following in the Long family’s footsteps, and to avoid alarming the sovereign with their influence. Besides, the Jiang family valued our Hall because of Qiao Baishi.”

Elder Blue felt a bit put out when she thought of Jiang Chen. He’d given her no face at all the first time he’d come to the Hall of the Healing.

Later on, Elder Blue had pinched her nose and suffered through things for the sake of cooperation.

When she heard Song Tianxing's words, she hurriedly said, "We signed a contract. If the Jiang family rips up the contract, then we can sue them for damages!"

Ying Wuyou snorted with cold laughter and felt that this Elder Blue was seriously idiotic. The Hall of Healing had begged Jiang Chen to sign the contract. Would there truly be anything within the contract that would give the Hall an opening to sue with?

When begging someone to sign a contract, would they dig a trap for themselves? Of course they'd be able to leave whenever they wanted to. Sue? Damages? This woman was more than typically stupid.

Yue Qun's old face was also struck dumb as he squeezed out a smile. "It looks like the crux of the matter lies with the young duke of Jiang Han. We'll have to curry some favor with the Jiang family."

Song Tianxing laughed dejectedly. Curry favor with the Jiang family? They'd have to give you the opportunity first. If the Jiang family had truly cared about this partnership, wouldn't they've sent a representative over sometime during the one month that had passed?

The Jiang family hadn't even sent a servant. This indicated that the Jiang family was no longer interested in this partnership at all.

"Lord Hallmaster, why don't we send someone to the Jiang Han territory?" Wang Li asked probingly.

"Send someone? Are you willing to go?" Song Tianxing asked.

Wang Li puffed his chest out. "Human effort can achieve anything. Although this mission is a bit difficult, I am willing to try for the future of the Hall."

Determination was good, and Song Tianxing didn't have the heart to deny him. He was just about to agree, when Ying Wuyou smiled faintly off on the side. "If the Fourth Hallmaster meets Qiao Baishi on this trip, how will you react?"

"Qiao Baishi?" Everyone was greatly startled. Qiao Baishi's movements had been uncertain after he'd left. Could it be that he'd flocked to the Jiang Han banner?

Even Song Tianxing was a bit surprised.

"Wuyou, you mean that Qiao Baishi is in Jiang Han territory?" Song Tianxing asked gravely.

"Indeed. He once told me, before he resigned, that if he were to leave the Hall, he would only seek out Jiang Chen, and wouldn't go anywhere else." Ying Wuyou sighed lightly.

"This..." Everyone was astounded and speechless.

If Qiao Baishi was in the Jiang Han territory, then this meant that he had strong relations with Jiang Chen. If the Hall sent anyone at this moment, then they would be inviting humiliation on themselves!

Chapter 116: The Mysterious Grandfather and Granddaughter Duo

Even Second Hallmaster Yue Qun was shocked senseless with this information.

"Qiao Baishi has such a solid relationship with Jiang Chen?"

Song Tianxing also hadn't expected this twist. He had trained Qiao Baishi from the start and knew of Qiao Baishi's feelings for the Hall.

That day when all of the senior executives were convening, almost everyone had wanted to hand over Qiao Baishi to the Long family. This had truly and deeply wounded Qiao Baishi's feelings and made him feel despair.

Except, Song Tianxing hadn't reckoned that Qiao Baishi would've thrown himself to the mercy of Jiang Chen, the son of a duke.

Elder Blue however, added fuel to the flames and mocked, "This was well within expectations. Qiao Baishi has long since been harboring thoughts of helping outsiders. I'm not surprised at all that he flocked to Jiang Chen's banner. I just wonder how many secrets of the Hall did he take with him?"

Song Tianxing was thoroughly enraged when he heard these words. "Elder Blue, I command you to shut up! Do you have the bearing of an elder at all? Must you be so diametrically opposed to someone who's already left? If you have the spare time to jeer at someone who's already left, why don't you spend it on contemplating how to prolong our cooperation with the Jiang family?"

"I..." Elder Blue had been admonished but didn't dare to retort a single word. The dignity of the Lord Hallmaster was present. Although he was normally peaceful and amiable, his presence was quite frightening when his temper was roused.

"I have no wish to listen to anymore useless blather. I still have those same words. Whoever can further our cooperation with the Jiang family will be the next Lord Hallmaster. All other words are empty hot air and I have no desire to listen to them."

Song Tianxing swept his gaze in a circle. "Which one of you is willing to make a trip to the Jiang Han territory?"

The person who'd originally put himself forward, Wang Li, involuntarily shrank back when Song Tianxing's gaze swept over him. He wanted to go, but knew that it would be a futile effort since Qiao Baishi was there. There would be no way that the partnership could be continued and he may even end up with a faceful of dust from Qiao Baishi's ridicule.

Elder Blue also ducked her reddened face and didn't dare to even respond when swept by Song Tianxing's gaze. She had even less of a right to speak.

It was an unknown factor if she'd even be able to make it back alive if she went to the Jiang Han territory.

"Number two, how about you make a trip?" Song Tianxing looked at Yue Qun.

Yue Qun's old face flushed as he scratched the back of his head. "Boss, I'm an old man unskilled at social maneuvering. Not to mention that I'm old and have no common language with youngsters. It would look odd no matter what if I went to find Jiang Chen. Would he even be willing to receive an old man like me?"

All the other senior executives hung their heads and cast their eyes downwards when Song Tianxing's gaze traveled by. No one stepped forward to volunteer.

Song Tianxing sighed lightly and shook his head. Now that things had gotten to this point, would he really have to make a personal trip ?

When he saw Ying Wuyou, Song Tianxing's eyes suddenly brightened. "Wuyou, why don't you make the trip to the Jiang Han territory on behalf of the Hall?"

"Lord Hallmaster, I've already decided to resign. Please look elsewhere to resolve this matter. Besides, I also think that with the Hall's current situation, the result would be the same even if the Lord Hallmaster himself made a personal trip. It's a foregone conclusion that you will return empty-handed."

Wuyou felt like he'd vented a breath of ill will when he saw the crowd of senior executives standing around with their heads down. He felt damn good inside. Weren't you guys great at adding insult to injury? Weren't you just ostracizing Qiao Baishi?

Without Qiao Baishi, you can't do anything at all.

Now what? Don't wear a long face everyone!

It wasn't that Ying Wuyou was delighting in the mishaps of others, but that he felt vindicated and pleased. Previously, these people had shown no mercy when attacking Qiao Baishi.

And look at things now. They weren't able to handle anything without begging for Qiao Baishi.

Yue Qun was still a bit unwilling to accept things. "Wuyou, do you think that the young duke Jiang Chen would really forgo a partnership with the Hall just because of Qiao Baishi? Qiao Baishi is alright, but does he really have so much charisma as to affect the the young duke Jiang's decisions?"

Ying Wuyou chuckled. "I don't know whether or not Qiao Baishi has that much charisma, but I know one thing. Every time something has happened to the Jiang family, Qiao Baishi was the first person they called upon. When the Duke of Jiang Han, Jiang Feng, was ambushed, Qiao Baishi was the one who was called to cure him. When the Jiang family was retreating, they concealed their tracks through Qiao Baishi's efforts. You tell me whether or not the Jiang family values Qiao Baishi?"

Yue Qun laughed wryly, "Well this is absurd. Do we really have to invite Qiao Baishi back?"

Yue Qun felt even his own face burn when he said this. When he had admonished Qiao Baishi, he hadn't left any face for the other party.

Inviting Qiao Baishi to return — only someone with as thick a face as him was able to say something like this.

The others didn't even have the courage to suggest this, particularly Elder Blue. When she heard these words, her thickly done up face changed to a pale white.

"Invite Qiao Baishi back? Will our Hall really die without him?" Elder Blue couldn't help but say.

"If you can, then why don't you go?" Yue Qun lost his temper.

Song Tianxing sighed. "Wuyou, you were just now speaking in anger when you wanted to resign. How about this, you make a trip to the Jiang family. If you can convince the Jiang family, then you'll directly be promoted to Third Hallmaster."

All the others couldn't do it if they went. Ying Wuyou was good friends with Qiao Baishi. They had a chance only if he went.

A light like that of a viper's shot out from Wang Li's eyes when he heard this.

"Lord Hallmaster, this isn't fair! A lowly ranked elder rising to the position of Third Hallmaster all of a sudden. This... this isn't fair. I can't accept it!"

Wang Li felt extremely upset as he raised a hue and cry.

Song Tianxing said coldly, "If you can succeed, I'll directly name you the next Lord Hallmaster. Can you do it?"

Wang Li grit his teeth and his two eyes became bloodshot. He wanted to agree, but knew very well that he didn't have the ability to.

Ying Wuyou spread out his hands. "Lord Hallmaster, y'all dont need to keep bickering over me. I will go to the Jiang Han territory, but to visit an old friend. The matters of the Hall have nothing to do with me. All of you... can do as you see fit."

Ying Wuyou placed his elder medallion lightly on the table after he'd finished speaking, and turned to float away. Ying Wuyou had seen through everything and knew that there was no place for him within the endless internal strife within the Hall.

As long as people like Yue Qun, Wang Li, and Elder blue were present, even if he could complete this mission, his future prospects would also be dim.

Therefore, as opposed to suffering humiliation and disgrace from them, he might as well leave freely and dashingly!

Song Tianxing's mouth moved slightly, but he said nothing. He suddenly felt completely listless and a supreme lack of interest. He waved his hands and only said, "Dismissed."

...

Elder Shun and the mysterious girl Huang'er were respectively sitting and standing within a secret chamber of the Hall. They had clearly heard all the happenings during the senior executives convention.

"This great building is about to collapse. Song Tianxing's personality and methods are all fine, but it's a pity that he lacks that pivotal bit of presence in a crucial moment." Elder Shun sighed lightly.

The young girl called Huang'er was wearing a pale green outfit as she stood by the window, idly toying with a few flowers and grass. Her clear eyes appeared to be quite serious and her whole being seemed like it was part of a painting.

"Elder Shun, haven't you not cared about the matters of the Hall before?"

Elder Shun chuckled, "Well, after all, as we've stayed here for quite a period of time, I've still paid some attention. It looks like we're going to leave now."

"Leave?" Huang'er started.

“Mm, leave.” Elder Shun nodded decisively. “Huang’er, what do you say to us heading for the Jiang Han territory, or going somewhere else?”

“Head for Jiang Han territory?” Huang’ers slender arms paused slightly as a trace of levity flashed across her goddess-like features. “Elder Shun, are you truly paying that much attention to that Jiang Chen?”

“Haha, Huang’er you’re correct. I like that Jiang Chen very much. If this wasn’t the case, why else would I have lent him a helping hand that day in the Second Crossing?”

Huang’er smiled faintly as she played with the flowers and grass, not saying anything.

“Huang’er, I have to say, a great power was concealed within Jiang Chen’s body during that battle of the Second Crossing. It was a great enough power that moved even an old man like me. The Swordbird army followed his commands to cover the skies and blot out the sun, triggering countless changes in the heavens. All those scenes were truly awe inspiring.”

“Furthermore, those three spirit dao disciples that the Purple Sun Sect sent out one after another — one died and one was injured. If it wasn’t for the last one being too strong, I likely wouldn’t even have needed to make a move. Jiang Chen refused to submit even under those circumstances. That refusal to admit defeat is quite up my alley.”

Elder Shun smiled as he spoke. He knew that there was no way that Huang’er would be interested in something like this. Except, they had spent so much time cooped up in a small place like the Eastern Kingdom that there were truly too few things that was worthy of being discussed.

At least there was that little bit of uniqueness about Jiang Chen that he could chatter on about.

The most important thing was that Elder Shun stubbornly felt that the divination signs that old man Qian Ji had seen were that Huang’er’s sickness would have the chance of finding a cure within the Eastern Kingdom. Elder Shun even more stubbornly felt that some hints of this chance seemed to be related to Jiang Chen.

Even if it was the slightest of hopes, it was enough to tempt Elder Shun.

After all, with his identity as the ordinary son of a duke, Jiang Chen’s recent string of heaven-defying performances had far outstripped the limits of his identity.

In the years that he’d spent in the Eastern Kingdom, Elder Shun had paid attention to everything, and the only thing that even vaguely surprised him was Jiang Chen’s performance.

Who else was there, apart from him?

Long Juxue? An azure phoenix constitution?

In Elder Shun’s eyes, a so-called innate constitution was just that. The level of a sect like the Purple Sun Sect couldn’t even provoke any acknowledgement from Elder Shun.

If it hadn’t been for Elder Shun valuing his identity, he could have turned Chu Xinghan and the others into dust with a flick of his fingers that day in front of the Second Crossing.

He hadn't done so because he valued his own being and didn't wish to engage in a dispute with his juniors. He also didn't want to give too many hints to Jiang Chen and allow Jiang Chen to feel like he had a patron behind him.

He wanted to further observe Jiang Chen and see just how much potential he possessed, and how he would develop with his every step.

If he really was a promising person, Elder Shun didn't mind continuing to keep an eye on him. If it was just a brief appearance like the morning dew, Elder Shun could extract himself from the situation at any time and ignore Jiang Chen, allowing him to live and die as he would.

These were Elder Shun's most truthful thoughts.

He wouldn't give up as long as there was a single trace of hope. But, if he discovered that this hope was false, then Elder Shun obviously wouldn't spend too much time on it.

After all, the affairs and people of the Eastern Kingdom were on a level too low for excess attention from Elder Shun.

If it wasn't for Huang'er's illness, Elder Shun probably would have never even set foot onto such a common kingdom in the next ten thousand years.

Chapter 117: Jiang Chen Comprehending Dao

Jiang Han territory, River Wave City.

Ever since the Jiang father and son pair had returned, the atmosphere of the entire Jiang Family had become quite fervent. All of the Jiang family sons and disciples were united in a display of celebration that had been never seen before. Never had they been more enthusiastic.

The battle of the Second Crossing had already been revised into countless versions and become a legendary story within the Jiang Han territory.

The same theme permeated through the multitude of versions, and that was that the young duke had displayed an invincible martial prowess and stemmed the tide by himself, engaging the million strong Long family army in a fierce battle in front of the Second Crossing!

He had killed Long Zhaofeng, annihilated the Long family accomplices, and terrorized the million strong army. He had turned back the tides of darkness by himself and had lent a supporting hand to the Eastern clan in their time of crisis.

Even the Duke of Jiang Han, Jiang Feng, had to admit that, at this moment, the reputation of his son far outstripped his in the Jiang Han territory by now.

Jiang Feng naturally wouldn't be jealous of something like this. Every father had great ambitions for his son, and the only person that every man could accept as being stronger than himself was his own son.

Being surpassed by his son was the pride and joy of every man.

Of the ten major tribes of the Jiang Han territory, the Redbud Tribe had been annihilated and was now under the sway of Jiang Tong's son, Jiang Yu.

The other nine tribes had completely submitted and would send someone over to the River Wave City every two or three days to express their stance, with every one of them being docilely obedient.

This was no wonder. If even the renowned Duke of Soaring Dragon had been annihilated with a flip of hand, would they, small tribes, dare to rise in mutiny?

The small thoughts and plots they had previously hatched were all quietly buried in the face of the truth.

The Jiang father and son pair were the earth and sky of the Jiang Han territory now!

Even if the duo wanted to raise troops, rebel, replace the Eastern clan, and rule over the entire kingdom, these people would still go with the flow and assent.

In their eyes, the royal family was currently in decline and had a million things to attend to. Even if Eastern Lin had ascended the throne, the royal family still wouldn't be able to rise again without more than ten years of recuperation and strength building.

The Jiang family, on the other hand, was like the sun at high noon and inspired great awe throughout the country. If they were to replace the Eastern clan now, it was more than highly likely that no duke or family would dare to resist or speak out otherwise.

However, it seemed that the Jiang father and son pair had no thoughts in this regard at all. They soundly rejected all of the various rewards and appointments from the Eastern royals, not to mention the idea of raising an army to march against the Eastern clan.

Jiang Chen had thrown the medallion of the dukedom back to Eastern Lu that day and had expressed words that the Jiang family was cutting off all relations with the royal family and would no longer listen to any of the Eastern clan's commands.

Even if Eastern Lin's ascension had been due to the efforts of the Jiang family, they still had no intention of accepting bequeathments of rewards.

The title of first duke beneath the heavens had also been rejected by the Jiang father and son pair.

It was a good thing that the Eastern clan also recognized that they had no power to change the Jiang family's attitude. They would have been overjoyed if the Jiang family was willing to accept their rewards. They also wouldn't dare force them to accept either if the Jiang family was unwilling to.

Jiang Feng was taking care of some matters in the manor one day when the Duke of Jinshan and the Duke of Hubing suddenly came to visit.

The Duke of Jinshan and the Duke of Hubing were Jiang Feng's best friends when he was the Duke of Jiang Han, and they had very deep and strong relationships. In the conflict against the Long family, these two families had loyally stayed at the Jiang family's side, even at all costs.

Although that had also been a function of the greater picture at that time, the relationships between the three families still ran deep.

"Heh heh, my two wise younger brothers have come to visit me. I, Jiang Feng, no longer hold any government post. Will my two wise younger brothers mind?" Jiang Feng joked.

“Brother Jiang, one is allowed to be carefree when not holding a government post. I rather admire your carefree days.” The Duke of Jinshan sighed.

The Duke of Hubing also laughed. “To be honest, the Duke of Jinshan and I only have our accomplishments today due to borrowing brother Jiang’s influence. We are ashamed, ashamed.”

“Haha, we’re all brothers here, don’t be an outsider. Come on inside.” Jiang Feng laughed uproariously and was still quite satisfied with these two best friends. He was quite happy for them.

The kingdom had undergone great turmoil and these two families had grasped this chance to recruit quite a few talents. Their strength had abruptly surged forward and each had made use of the Jiang family’s influence to become one of the new four great dukes.

“Brother Jiang, I’ve heard that the royal family has the inclination to bestow upon the Jiang family the title of first duke beneath the heavens. However, I don’t understand as to why brother Jiang has turned this down? We have all toiled away for the greater portion of our lives and have finally reached this point. This should be the time when we’re working together in tandem to make our fortunes.” The Duke of Jinshan asked.

The Duke of Hubing also nodded. “If anyone else sat in the position of first duke, I and the Duke of Jinshan would be the first to find this unacceptable. Who else is qualified to be the first duke apart from the Jiang family?”

Jiang Feng smiled faintly. “Two wise younger brothers, did Eastern Lin send you?”

The Duke of Jinshan and Hubing both smiled and nodded.

“Brother Jiang, what plans does the Jiang family have now? We hope you reveal a few hints for us. You also know that there’s a general feeling of insecurity within the kingdom since you haven’t spoken. No one is sure of anything.”

Jiang Feng smiled faintly, “My Jiang family will no longer involve ourselves in the power struggles of the Eastern Kingdom from henceforth on. You can go back and tell Eastern Lin that he can be at ease in being king. He doesn’t need to worry that the Jiang family will mimic the Long family. To speak with great impudence, if we had the intentions to, we needn’t have waited until now.”

The Duke of Jinshan nodded, “Brother Jiang indeed makes a great deal of sense. His Majesty isn’t worried about this.”

“Alright, your foolish brother has said all that needs to be said. From this moment on, us brothers will only talk about old times and not of the matters of court.”

“Haha, brother Jiang, no rush. We’ve been entrusted with yet another matter.”

“What is it?”

“This is what has happened. The Lord Hallmaster Song Tianxing of the Hall of Healing set out to host a banquet and treated us brothers a few days ago. He wants to bring some people to visit brother Jiang, but is afraid of disturbing you. Therefore, he’s asked us two to come ask if brother Jiang has the free time and desire to see them?”

The Duke of Jinshan actually hadn't wanted to do this favor, but unfortunately the Hall of Healing still had a great reputation and status. He hadn't wanted to offend them either.

Not to mention Song Tianxing had actually humbled himself quite a lot this time, feting them with food and wine, and also giving them presents and pills. This made them unable to deny this favor and brush his face aside.

"Song Tianxing?" Jiang Feng started slightly. "They probably wish to see Chen'er?"

The Duke of Jinshan hastened to nod his head. "Yes yes, they wish to visit wise nephew Jiang Chen and actually urged our two brats to come speak on their behalf. However, those two kids were quite devious and only concerned themselves with rejecting the request, causing us two old fellows to come here and ask brother Jiang with a thick skin."

Jiang Feng didn't say anything and set down the cup in his hand. "I'm not at liberty to decide Chen'er's matters for him. He's also been in closed door cultivation for half a month and probably won't emerge any time soon. The Hall of Healing entourage has probably already reached River Wave City?"

"Yes, they've all arrived and have taken up lodgings within the inns. They seem to be quite sincere. If wise nephew Jiang Chen is in closed door cultivation, it should be fine to have them wait for a while."

"Since this is the case, then let's have them wait. To be honest, I'm not too sure when Chen'er will emerge either." Jiang Feng spoke the truth.

The Duke of Jinshan and the Duke of Hubing both smiled and nodded. They had a sense of being unable to fully grasp the Jiang father and son pair. Although they had gone through life and death together, now that things had developed to this step, they discovered that many things were no longer as easy-going as before.

Although Jiang Feng was just a civilian now, and they were powerful, noble dukes, in front of Jiang Feng, it rather seemed that they were the ordinary people, and that he was the powerful, noble duke instead.

Having participated in the battle of the Second Crossing and witnessing Jiang Chen's miracles, even if dukes such as them, who had seen great happenings, wanted to chip away at Jiang Chen's eye popping performance, it would be impossible to do so.

Therefore, their current cautious reservation was a given.

...

The current Jiang Chen had already been behind closed doors for half a month. He had continuously explored and adjusted his method of training after breaking through to eleven meridians true qi previously.

"It's said that there are twelve meridians true qi. Why do all practitioners halt at eleven meridians true qi? Why is it that no one tries for spirit dao only after achieving twelve meridians?"

Jiang Chen had slowly felt a trace of a profound theory after half a month of exploration and comprehension.

This wasn't a matter of potential, but a problem with the laws of training within this world.

The so-called twelve meridians true qi was actually stopped at eleven meridians true qi. The missing meridian was like the last number that had gone flying away.

The missing “one” was all-inclusive and covered all the phenomena of the universe.

This “one” was the difference between a minor way and a major way.

In actuality, this “one” hadn’t gone missing for no reason. It was just that this “one” had transformed into infinite possibilities.

This meant that boundless possibilities and phenomena existed between the true qi realm and the spirit dao realm.

Some people laboriously pursued perfection with regards to this “one”, but could never find fulfillment.

Some people would suddenly comprehend this “one”, and break out of their cocoon, becoming a butterfly and ascending into the spirit dao.

This “one” was the bridge between the true qi realm and the spirit dao.

You were unable to see or touch this bridge.

If you could make it across, you would set foot into the infinite great dao and enjoy a lifespan of hundreds of thousands of years.

If you couldn’t make it across, at the end of the day, you would still be a mortal, having failed in escaping the abyss of the mundane.

“Laughable. Pitiful. The practitioners of this world all think that twelve meridians true qi is a realm. This is an error of knowledge and a true obstacle in martial learning. This is a problem that not even potential can resolve.”

If it hadn’t been for the memories of his past life and if Jiang Chen hadn’t been one of the leading authorities in research, he likely wouldn’t have comprehended this point either.

In actuality, once you comprehended the final “one”, that meant that you’d already entered “twelve meridians true qi” and had completed yourself to perfection. You had already set foot on the bridge.

This “one”, narrowly speaking, was indeed “twelve meridians true qi”. But speaking from the perspective of martial dao meaning, this was a bridge of martial dao – the separation between the heaven and earth that was the mortal and spirit realm.

The bridge was different to different people.

The bridge has ceaseless possibilities for different people.

Jiang Chen had a feeling of sudden enlightenment when he grasped this point. At the end of the day, the “one” was used to mould his inner self. It was a kind of settling of the mundane martial dao, a type of ascension for the common martial dao, and a farewell ceremony for pursuing a higher level of life.

To speak even more frankly, it was establishing the final foundation for entering spirit dao.

Finally, whether you were eleven meridians true qi or twelve meridians true qi, the process of transmuting true qi to spirit qi was to transmute all your true qi into one dantian, one spirit ocean.

This spirit ocean was the true goal of a true qi realm expert.

Therefore, those experts stubbornly searching for “twelve meridians true qi” would either fail in the end, or realize that they’ve lost their way and would turn back to assail the spirit dao.

This was because twelve meridians true qi was a false theory. It was a type of true meaning of martial dao, a type of inspiration from martial dao.

#### Chapter 118: Jiang Chen Emerges from Training

The air of depression that had been left behind from the great battle had been swept cleanly away.

What did the successes and failures of a single moment matter?

Experiencing life and death was a commonplace matter on the path of the martial dao. If one were to brood on momentary setbacks, how would one face the greater waves and winds in the future? How would one overcome the obstacles that would crop up in their travels?

Enlightenment on the path of martial dao happened to be the most ideal way to triumph over these random thoughts, as well as to sweep away internal demons. This was why half the path of martial dao lay in training, while the other half lay in meditation.

Meditation could help one understand theory, sweep away internal demons, and bring about various sorts of instantaneous enlightenment. This kind of instantaneous enlightenment was most likely a sort of comprehension of a martial arts technique, but could possibly be comprehending some form of knowledge.

After Jiang Chen had resolved his questions regarding “twelve meridians true qi”, his obstacles in knowledge of the true qi realm were all swept away.

This was to say, that he could singlemindedly assail the path of spirit dao now.

However, Jiang Chen was in no rush. With his familiarity with martial dao training, he knew that assailing spirit dao wasn’t the hard part. The difficulty in this laid in how wide and how far the path of spirit dao could be expanded.

If the martial dao and the human body were a patch of earth, then spirit dao and spirit power were the seedlings that grew on the human body.

The power of martial dao was ever changing and mutable.

Out of all three thousand great daos, and countless divine abilities, all of them could be relegated to elements and qi between heaven and earth.

Metal, wood, water, fire, and earth were the five basic, fundamental elements that were the building blocks of all matter.

Wind, thunder, light, and darkness were the derived elements.

In conclusion, there were nine major elements.

The number of elements that a spirit dao practitioner could hew out in his spirit ocean would determine the width of his spirit dao's path.

How far one could walk in the spirit dao realm would be the length of their spirit dao path.

How wide, and how far, could the path of the spirit dao be?

Much of this current world thought that this would entirely be decided by one's potential after entering the spirit realm.

The truth was that this wasn't this case.

The true determinant of how far and wide one's path of spirit dao was, was actually set before one entered the spirit realm, not after.

This was also the "one" that troubled the practitioners of this world.

This was also the boundless potential encompassed by the bridge between eleven meridians true qi and the spirit realm.

There were both innate factors, and acquired factors, when discussing martial dao potential.

It was a pity that the people of this world could only see the innate factor, and paid no heed to acquired factors.

Long Juxue for instance, enjoyed the attention and love of thousands, because of her innate constitution.

And yet, Princess Gouyu, with such a resolute heart for the martial dao, was still unable to attract the attention of a sect no matter how hard she tried.

"Ai, even the sects value potential so; they even make light of temperaments when selecting these talents. It's apparent that something is greatly amiss with the martial dao knowledge of this world."

Jiang Chen sighed lightly, but didn't have an excess of emotions.

Even if the martial dao knowledge of this world was greatly behind – even if there were various shackles in this world – he would just avoid being fettered by the rules of this world, and evade being assimilated by the shortcomings of this world.

He, Jiang Chen, would walk a path that no one had walked before. He would create a new, and heretofore unseen road, on the path of martial dao.

This road might even upend the rules of martial dao within this world several hundred, even thousands of years from now. It would be sure to become the new rules — the new signpost!

After he emerged from training, the morning light fell upon Jiang Chen. It added a few traces of sunshine to his being, and imbued him with vigor and vitality.

"Chen'er, you've emerged from training?"

“Father, are you used to such carefree days?” Jiang Chen chuckled.

“I’d love to be carefree, but unfortunately, mundane matters keep me entangled. The Duke of Jinshan and Duke of Hubing came to visit two days ago. They’re both old brothers of mine, and I’m going to accompany them around the city.”

“Oh, they’re here? The situation within the kingdom has just settled. As the new four great dukes, don’t they need to help shoulder the royal family’s burdens?”

Jiang Feng smiled wryly, “Aren’t they here on behalf of the royal family’s burdens?”

“They’re here to probe our Jiang family’s attitude?” Jiang Chen smiled. This wasn’t outside his expectations. With the Jiang family’s current reputation, it was normal for the royal family to be on pins and needles.

“Mm.” Jiang Feng nodded. “Chen’er, I’ve also been considering. Where should the future of our Jiang family lie?”

Jiang Chen had actually long since considered this question.

No matter what, they absolutely couldn’t tarry in the Eastern Kingdom. For one, given the political situation, the Jiang family would always weigh on the royal family’s hearts if they stayed.

The second reason that Jiang Chen had never voiced was the land with the spirit vein in the Redbud territory.

The bizarre occurrence that had appeared in the land with the spirit vein last time and all sorts of investigative reports gave Jiang Chen a sole conclusion. This place was sure to be an ill-omened land.

Therefore, there was no future for the Jiang family if they remained here.

Upon hearing his father’s questions, Jiang Chen thought momentarily and said, “Father, a man walks towards the highest reaches. The heavens are vast, why should our Jiang family worry that there is no place for us now that we’ve reached this point?”

Jiang Feng laughed heartily, “These words have never been more true. Remaining within the Eastern Kingdom truly provide much of a challenge anymore.”

Unless Eastern Lin vacated the throne, Jiang Feng really felt that there wasn’t much of a challenge to staying within the Eastern Kingdom.

“Right, Chen’er, there’s another matter. I’ve heard from the Duke of Jinshan that Song Tianxing has led an entourage of senior executives from the Hall of Healing to our River Wave City. They would like to call upon you. I haven’t made a decision for you with regards to this matter. These people are still in River Wave City, do you wish to see them?”

“The Hall of Healing?” A trace of a smirk was revealed at the corners of Jiang Chen’s lips. “They’ve finally come? Their reaction is truly slow, I thought they weren’t coming anymore. This matter isn’t important, let’s hang them out to dry for a while longer. Qiao Baishi is my disciple, they dared to bully my disciple, and almost handed him over to Long Zhaofeng. Wouldn’t you say these people are despicable? Shouldn’t I take them down a peg or two?”

“Eh? Qiao Baishi is your disciple?” Jiang Feng’s eyes widened.

Jiang Chen suddenly realized that he’d spoken too fast, he chuckled, and scratched his head, “Father, don’t go spreading this information, just keep it to yourself.”

“Hey, you brat, speak plainly to your old man!” Jiang Feng couldn’t help but call out when he saw Jiang Chen turn around and run off after saying those words.

Jiang Chen chuckled and vanished like the wind.

“This darned brat.” Jiang Feng was wreathed in smiles as he heckled. He truly couldn’t find anything at fault with his son.

Jiang Feng felt his chest full of contentment and accomplishment when he thought of his son.

...

“Honored master! Your disciple Qiao Baishi greets you.” Qiao Baishi was overjoyed to see Jiang Chen.

“Baishi, there’s no need to stand on ceremony. I trust that you’ve already heard that the senior executives of the Hall have arrived in River Wave City?” Jiang Chen asked when he saw Qiao Baishi.

“Yes, your disciple received word a while ago. Your disciple also had a matter to report to honored master a few days ago, but didn’t dare disturb the master behind closed door cultivation.”

“Oh? Is it with regards to the Hall of Healing?” Jiang Chen blinked.

“You could say that. I didn’t have that many good friends in the Hall previously. There was an elder called Ying Wuyou who was my staunchest supporter. He resigned a few days ago and came to me, seeking shelter. Your disciple didn’t dare promise him anything before asking honored master’s opinion. I’ve only let him live here, and will listen to honored master’s arrangements for him.”

Qiao Baishi’s posture was quite low, his words and actions were filled with respect for Jiang Chen.

Jiang Chen waved his hands, “Since he is your trusted confidante, it is fine for you to make the appropriate arrangements. You don’t need to ask me for such small matters.”

Pausing, Jiang Chen’s eyes suddenly shifted, “You said he’s an elder within the Hall of Healing?”

“Yes.” Qiao Baishi hurriedly explained. “But I know his character, and he’s definitely not here on behalf of the Hall.”

“Haha, I’m not suspecting that he’s here to instigate you to rebellion. I mean that since he’s an elder of the Hall, perhaps this person can be mentored.”

Jiang Chen smiled and said, “Look at the Hall of Healing. It’s filled with idiots like Elder Blue. I’m not at ease with cooperating with such idiots either.”

“What do you mean?” Qiao Baishi’s eyes lit up as he suddenly thought of something. “Does honored master mean that he wishes to support Ying Wuyou and control the Hall of Healing?”

“Baishi, this is my bottom line. If the Hall wishes to engage in a partnership, then we’ll start discussing on basis of this bottom line. If this is unacceptable, then they can go back to where they came from.”

Qiao Baishi greatly rejoiced upon hearing these words and bowed, “Honored master has expended much care and thought, your disciple is everlastingly grateful.”

Jiang Chen’s actions was actually also giving face to Qiao Baishi. To be honest, with Jiang Chen’s current thoughts, he had no desire to linger in the Eastern Kingdom and had no need to cooperate with the Hall of Healing.

He did so purely to give face to Qiao Baishi. In this way, not only would Qiao Baishi’s confidante gain power, but it could also lessen Qiao Baishi’s remorse for leaving the Hall of Healing.

Jiang Chen knew that the Hall of Healing had cultivated Qiao Baishi. If he dusted himself off and just left like this, Qiao Baishi would surely feel internal guilt and remorse.

However, if they steered the Hall onto the right path through Qiao Baishi’s efforts, then his conscience wouldn’t be plagued by too much guilt.

Qiao Baishi was a smart man and naturally understood Jiang Chen’s care and thought. A warm current flowed in his heart as he looked at Jiang Chen, full of even more admiration.

It was amazing that the honored master was so understanding and amenable to reason, and to be so worldly at such a young age.

This would truly help Qiao Baishi resolve his previous feelings for the Hall, and could also help the Hall avoid from taking a downhill path at the same time.

“Baishi, remember, you’re my disciple. It’s right and proper for me to think of you. You have full rein to take care of this matter. Remember, hold onto the bottom line. You must finely control who can’t be left and who must be marginalized. If you think something can’t be done, you can also use the power of the royal family appropriately. Princess Gouyu will surely give you this amount of face.”

Jiang Chen didn’t wish to get involved in the matters of the Hall of Healing. With Qiao Baishi’s competencies, he firmly believed that Qiao Baishi could take care of things.

Qiao Baishi was filled with happiness, “Your disciple... your disciple understands. Your disciple will now summon Ying Wuyou to pay his respects to the young duke.”

“That’s fine, but there’s no need for him to know the relationship of master and disciple between us. You only need to let him know that I will spare no effort in supporting you. That will be enough.”

Qiao Baishi brought Ying Wuyou soon after.

Ying Wuyou had also met Jiang Chen before, but the circumstances of today weren’t of those prior. Jiang Chen had been an ordinary young duke when they’d met previously, and he only had that one precious recipe from ancient times.

At this moment, the young duke’s reputation was undoubtedly like that of a thunderclap piercing the ear, a legendary existence. Ying Wuyou was cautious and reserved as he respectfully moved forward, “Ying Wuyou pays his respects to the young duke.”

Chapter 119: Terms of Negotiation

“Ying Wuyou. I’ve heard Baishi mention you before and know that you are a man with principles and strength of character. This is excellent. The Hall of Healing precisely lacks people like you.”

Jiang Chen nodded and spoke a few words of encouragement.

When he heard these words, Ying Wuyou felt the pressure on him ease slightly. It looked like young duke’s impression of him wasn’t that bad.

“There are no outsiders here so I’ll speak frankly. Baishi has already left the Hall and will be following me in the future. It’s impossible for him to return to the Hall. However, the future of the Hall still needs someone at the helm. I’ve discussed this with Baishi and we feel that your character and abilities are on par with the Fourth Hallmaster Wang Li. Therefore, we’d like to use you as a term of negotiation in our discussions with the Hall. You can discuss further with Baishi on what the details should be.”

“Me?” Ying Wuyou started and blurted out, “I came to seek shelter with brother Baishi and not to borrow your strength...”

“We know all of this.” Jiang Chen chuckled. “This is also the very reason as to why we’ve decided on you. If you’d come to borrow our influence, we wouldn’t have even considered you. If you can appropriately control the Hall, you will be rendering a great service to mankind and this will also be the best way to follow Qiao Baishi.”

Qiao Baishi also encouraged, “Wuyou, you and I are most intimate of friends. I am quite at ease with your competence and character. I also know that you’ve offended quite a lot of people with your departure this time. The journey back will be difficult. But be at ease, we hold the initiative! The senior executives of the Hall are due for a purging. Those who should be made an example of will be dealt with, and those who should leave will be forced out. If an agreement cannot be met, we’ll forgo cooperation with the Hall. I can at the very least guarantee you food at every meal if you follow me.”

“If they’re willing to cooperate, we will certainly borrow strength from all sides to help you effortlessly control the Hall. You and I were both cultivated by the Hall, and have certainly not expended less time and effort on the Hall than them. Wuyou, are you willing to shoulder this burden for me?”

Ying Wuyou didn’t express his stance. To be honest, he was tempted.

Following Qiao Baishi was a decision of his heart, but he truly did have a very deep connection to the Hall of Healing. If the lineup of the senior executives of the Hall could be adjusted and the useless trash washed out, then he could easily return to the Hall as the successor to the Lord Hallmaster. He could then control of the matters of the Hall. This was indeed a very strong temptation.

“Brother Baishi, I...”

“Don’t hem and haw. You have the ability, just tell me if you have the charisma.” Qiao Baishi was a decisive person.

A surge of strong emotion agitated Ying Wuyou’s heart and he nodded his head abruptly. “Alright, since the young duke and brother Baishi both think so highly of me, I, Ying Wuyou, will give it a try even if I end up on the executioner’s block. The Hall has given birth to me and nurtured me. I can’t bear to watch it be destroyed in the hands of these lowlifes.”

Ying Wuyou was also filled with a bellyful of resentment whenever he thought of Wang Li, Elder Blue, and the others.

....

In one of the large inns in River Wave City, the Hall of Healing had been quite generous and reserved a large yard.

Almost all the senior executives had arrived in the Jiang Han territory.

They had already stayed for a full five days within this inn. Over the past five days, they had obtained intelligence from all sorts of venues that said the young duke was truly in closed door cultivation.

However, they couldn't obtain any intelligence with regards to Qiao Baishi. It was as if Qiao Baishi was purposefully evading them.

On this morning, several senior executives were sitting dejectedly within a house drinking tea. A cloud of gloom hung over them and they were unable to find any energy within themselves.

Suddenly, a string of rushed footsteps sounded from the outside as one of the middle management members from the Hall hurriedly walked in.

"Lord Hallmaster, there's news, there's news! I've heard that the young duke has emerged from closed door training."

"What?" Song Tianxing was overjoyed as he surged to his feet. "Then, did we send over our calling card?"

"Yes, your subordinate did so personally. However, the young duke's household only accepted the calling card and didn't express anything else. It seems that we're to continue waiting."

Song Tianxing went, "I see" and sat down, contemplating something with a grave expression.

He had visited all the appropriate people during this period of time and treated all those that he should treat. He'd even mobilized the Duke of Jinshan and the Duke of Hubing.

Who else could carry a heavier weight than these two?

Princess Gouyu?

Song Tianxing knew that he didn't have enough sway to mobilize Princess Gouyu to speak on his behalf. Besides, Princess Gouyu was renowned for being not moved by entreaties.

There was basically no hope of getting her to speak on their behalf.

"Continue waiting. Report immediately to me if there's any news." Song Tianxing waved his hand.

Elder Blue couldn't help but roll her eyes. "Please, who does he think he is, putting on airs like this? Not to mention the fact that he isn't a young duke now. Even if he was a young duke, he shouldn't put on airs like this."

Song Tianxing's ferocious eyes glared, "Shut up! I've allowed you to come this time in order to give you a chance to adjust your attitude and apologize to both the young duke and Qiao Baishi. If you continue to speak irresponsibly, do you believe that I will force you out of the Hall right now?"

"I... " A flash of a humiliated expression appeared on Elder Blue's heavily made up face, but she still didn't dare talk back to Song Tianxing.

It was actually Yue Qun who chuckled and eased the situation, "Lord Hallmaster, be calm, hold your horses. At this moment, we need to be united internally as well ."

"Elder Blue, you adjust your mentality as well. Remember, even if you're very unwilling to, you still must docilely listen to the Lord Hallmaster. Apologize and offer presents where you must. Submit when you must. You're an elder. So what if you have to humble yourself for the future of the Hall?"

Elder Blue was still a bit emotional and finally said a few words after taking a while to recollect herself, "I understand."

It could be seen that she still did as she pleased in front of Yue Qun. To be honest, she had obtained her position of elder through Second Hallmaster Yue Qun's efforts.

She had once made her way to Yue Qun's yard everyday for three months straight. She served him day and night, employing all sorts of techniques in bed and subservient coquetry before finally obtaining her position after Yue Qun had had his fill of fun.

Therefore, it was rather normal if Elder Blue was a bit more unbridled in front of Yue Qun.

Just as an awkward moment prevailed, more footsteps came in from outside the door. An unfamiliar voice said, "The friends from the Hall of Healing are here right? I'm here on behalf of Mister Qiao Baishi to convey that we will be holding a banquet in the Rainflower Pavilion at the Jiang family's secondary residence. The banquet will be in honor of various old friends. We hope you will give face and attend."

"Qiao Baishi?" Song Tianxing took rapid action as he darted to the door and opened it.

However, there was only an invitation left on the doorstep as the messenger had already left.

Even so, it was as if Song Tianxing had discovered a precious treasure. He completely set aside the dignity of a Lord Hallmaster and picked up the invitation himself.

"It's Qiao Baishi's handwriting. Heh heh. It seems like Qiao Baishi still remembers old friendships. No one can be absent tomorrow, all of you must attend."

Song Tianxing passed the invitation onto Second Hallmaster Yue Qun. When Yue Qun had taken a look, he then passed it onto Fourth Hallmaster Wang Li as they all looked it over.

...

Song Tianxing and the others woke up early the next morning, cleaned themselves up properly, and prepared to set out. Before they left, Song Tianxing reminded them again and again, "All of you, remember, humble yourselves later. If anything goes wrong because of your attitudes this time, you'll be the sinners of the Hall."

Elder Blue had an aggrieved look on her face as she flung an angry glance at Yue Qun. The old fellow coughed dryly twice, rolled his eyes, and looked outside the door as if there was some fascinating landscape outside. He completely ignored her.

If it came down to the wire, there was no way that Yue Qun would provide back up for Elder Blue now. It didn't matter what injustices one suffered, this matter had to do with the future of the Hall.

The Rainflower Pavilion was a secondary residence of the Jiang family. The surroundings were elegant, secluded, and peaceful.

When the Hall of Healing entourage arrived, Qiao Baishi had already been waiting there for a while.

After exchanging a few pleasantries, the atmosphere was a bit awkward as everyone took their seats.

Song Tianxing looked around his surroundings and couldn't help but ask, "Baishi, where is the young duke?"

"The young duke has to take care of more pressing matters today. I'm the one holding this banquet today to treat my old friends. The saying goes that business deals can fall apart, but relationships shouldn't. Although I'm no longer in the Hall, I did once swear an oath to the Hall."

Ying Wuyou smiled off on the side, "Here, let me pour wine for you, Lord Hallmaster."

After three rounds of wine had been drunk, Qiao Baishi and Ying Wuyou were quite enthusiastic as they kept urging the others to drink more wine. What they never mentioned, however, was the affairs of the Hall.

Song Tianxing was anxious and it was finally Yue Qun who spoke up, "Baishi, ah, we were all quite saddened when you left last time. We've come to pay our respects to the young duke this time and also to apologize to you, and to express our regrets."

"Apologize?" Qiao Baishi chuckled. "It's all in the past, not to mention I'm quite fine here. You don't need to feel apologetic."

This answer was as if Yue Qun's strike had landed on cotton candy, making him at a loss of how to respond.

"Ahem... Baishi, ah, we've come to pay our respects to the young duke this time because we wished to discuss the partnership between us..."

"Partnership?" Qiao Baishi set his cup down lightly. "If I recall correctly, the young duke chose to cooperate with me originally. I've already left, what partnership are you talking about?"

Yue Qun had once again hit a wall and could only continuously drink wine in his loss for words. He threw a look at Song Tianxing. That look meant, I can't handle this, you'll have to do this boss.

Song Tianxing sighed, "Baishi, the Hall was at fault for how we treated you in the past. We've come with the utmost sincerity this time. What does the young duke think about the partnership? If there's any room for discussion, then anything can be discussed. If there's no room for discussion, then also let us know so we can die a straightforward death."

Song Tianxing's words were much more sophisticated. He'd seized on the point that Qiao Baishi still had feelings for the Hall, and the mention of the so-called straightforward death was undoubtedly to tug on Qiao Baishi's heartstrings.

However, Qiao Baishi and Ying Wuyou had already been mentally prepared before the negotiations and naturally wouldn't give up their bottom line with these words.

Qiao Baishi raised his cup, expressionless, "Lord Hallmaster, I salute you. Since you've brought up this matter, I won't put on an act any longer. I can make the decisions on this matter without the young duke having to make an appearance. However, I can speak on behalf of the young duke but I can't speak on behalf of your Hall of Healing."

"What... what do you mean?" Song Tianxing was a bit taken aback.

Qiao Baishi smiled faintly and remained calm and composed as he filled up Song Tianxing's cup again.

"My words are easy to understand. The young duke can consider working with the Hall of Healing, but it depends on who from the Hall of Healing he's working with."

The more clever of those present immediately seemed to understand something when Qiao Baishi delivered his words.

#### Chapter 120: The Unexpected News from Strong Oppression

"Baishi, if you've changed your mind, the doors to the Hall are absolutely open to you. Does this even need to be discussed? I can make a decision now so that you'll still be the Third Hallmaster if you come back!" Song Tianxing was jubilant.

Qiao Baishi couldn't help but laugh. He hadn't thought that his words would cause Song Tianxing to misunderstand him.

"Me, the Third Hallmaster?" Qiao Baishi shook his head with a rueful smile.

Off to the side, Elder Blue couldn't hold it in any longer, "Is the position of Third Hallmaster not enough? Do you wish to replace the Lord Hallmaster in one fell swoop?"

"You, shut up!" Song Tianxing and Ying Wuyou yelled almost in unison.

Qiao Baishi had long since grown immune to this woman as he chuckled. "I've already lost interest in the position of Hallmaster a long time ago. If the Lord Hallmaster wishes to listen to my terms, then I'll speak frankly."

"Go ahead." Song Tianxing was in a great mood when he heard that there were conditions that could be discussed. At the end of the day, wouldn't it just be an outrageously high price? Go ahead and name it! As long as the Hall of Healing could withstand it, they would endure it no matter how high it was.

"The terms actually aren't much of any terms at all. They're all in consideration of the future of the Hall. First, Ying Wuyou will return to the Hall as the Third Hallmaster and future successor. I will then hand over the three spirit medicines to him with full authority. None of you will be allowed to have a hand in them."

This was the most basic condition.

Song Tianxing hurriedly nodded, "There is absolutely no problem in this. When Wuyou wanted to leave, I also tried my hardest to keep him."

Qiao Baishi nodded, "The second condition is that the ranks of the senior executives of the Hall of Healing must be cleansed. Those who should leave must be expelled, and those who should be punished should be punished. Take Elder Blue for instance, I'm quite curious as to what basis she has to be on equal footing with the other elders? And as for Wang Li, he's too radical and is completely unsuited for the Hall of Healing. He must be expelled as well. In addition..."

Qiao Baishi listed six or seven names of senior executives in one go.

The faces of those called darkened whenever they heard their names.

The area of this blow was indeed quite large. After this adjustment, almost half of the senior executives of the Hall of Healing would be eliminated.

Those who would be raised up to fill their positions instead would naturally be Qiao Baishi's old friends and Ying Wuyou's people.

Song Tianxing didn't have any changes in expression as he listened. In actuality, great waves and billows were roiling in his heart. But as Lord Hallmaster, he'd long since gotten used to keeping a straight face even when Mt. Tai was collapsing in front of him.

Truth be told, he wasn't shocked or enraged, but rather secretly delighted.

It could be said that Qiao Baishi's suggestion struck many chords within Song Tianxing. He'd always been contemplating the issue of cleaning house for the senior executives.

But who should be made an example of first? This question was quite irritating.

Now that Qiao Baishi had raised the issue, he could be the villain. He, Song Tianxing, merely needed to go with the flow. With the two working in tandem, they could possibly wrap up this purge just like this.

Yue Qun's old face collapsed, "Qiao Baishi, are you kidding me? Are these your conditions? You're interfering with the internal affairs of the Hall of Healing."

"Indeed, you're someone who's already left. What right do you have to intervene with the private affairs of the Hall?" Fourth Hallmaster Wang Li was thoroughly enraged and couldn't control his temper.

Qiao Baishi smiled faintly, "I said earlier that we can conduct negotiations. I can speak on behalf of the young duke, but can't make decisions for your Hall of Healing. If you don't wish to discuss terms, you don't have to discuss them."

Wang Li put down his cup with a heavy thud. "How do we discuss this? This is a slap to the face! Take down me, Wang Li? Qiao Baishi, you dare speak of such an outrageous thing?"

"Lord Hallmaster, you told me to swallow insult and humiliation slightly, apologize, and offer gifts. All this I can do. But do you see, they want to take me down. How can I bear this insult?" Elder Blue also complained.

“Ludicrous! There’s no way we can continue these negotiations.” Yue Qun’s face darkened as well.

Song Tianxing’s cold, sharp gaze alighted on these three and he nodded his head slightly. “Good, very good. I’ve always suspected that there was an underground organization within the Hall, and that someone was creating a group for selfish purposes. I only suspected this before, but now it looks like the three of you have long since colluded together.”

“You... boss, what do you mean by this?” Yue Qun was the most senior out of all of them and couldn’t help but talk back.

“Don’t play the fool with me. Elder Blue slept with you for three months before she became an elder. This isn’t false now, is it?”

“Wang Li is your prodigy in name, but he’s actually your illegitimate child. Did you think that no one beneath the heavens would know this secret?”

Song Tianxing then swept his gaze over the faces of those who’d been called out. “Who amongst these isn’t someone that you’ve promoted? All of you have, step by step, nibbled away at the Hall! Did you really think that I had no idea?”

Song Tianxing used the situation as an excuse to finally erupt.

He also knew that this was his only chance and opportunity to make use of the situation. It was the best timing with which he could use to exterminate Yue Qun’s group of people.

Qiao Baishi laughed loudly and clapped his hands, “So it turns out that the Lord Hallmaster is able to penetrate deeply into all things. Yue Qun, you’ve posed as a person of high morals and arranged places in the senior executives for your illegitimate son and mistress to cause trouble. Don’t you have the slightest awareness, even now, of what you’ve done to the Hall all these years?”

Yue Qun’s old face seemed to age ten years all of a sudden!

Bam!

Wang Li viciously lifted his hands and flipped the banquet table, sending everything clattering to the floor with a crash.

“What a bullshit negotiation. No more talk now, we return to the capital!”

“Right, what kind of negotiation is this, this is a dinner in which treachery was planned! Our own boss didn’t protect his own people but struck out on behalf of outsiders. We should go back and have a good discussion on who should be in charge of the Hall.”

“You feel like leaving?” Qiao Baishi laughed coldly.

Like the tidewaters, countless elite soldiers surged out from the four corners of the Rainflower Pavilion.

With the four Sheng battalion brothers at the head and Jiang Chen’s eight personal guards, large amounts of elite soldiers surrounded the Rainflower Pavilion so that not even a drop of water would leak out.

The dagger was revealed when the map was unrolled. There was no suspense about what happened next.

The seven or eight people on the list were almost all detained without a fight. What came out of the blue was the fact that Second Hallmaster Yue Qun, who'd always appeared old and worthless, was actually an eleven meridians true qi master.

Except, even in that case, there was no place for him to deploy his martial arts when surrounded by a large army. He broke through a few times, but still couldn't shake himself free of the formation set up by Jiang Chen's eight guards. He finally found it hard to escape his destiny of being captured.

"Lord Hallmaster, desperate times call for desperate measures. I hope you don't mind that I've intervened in the internal affairs of the Hall. My feelings for the Hall are much deeper than these people." Qiao Baishi said with some penitence.

"Baishi, speak no further. I'm the one who should be apologizing. If it wasn't for me continuously having an indecisive standpoint as Lord Hallmaster, you wouldn't have left the Hall in the first place. I know you're set on leaving. I will raise Ying Wuyou and let him gradually control the Hall."

"As long as the Hall can prosper and develop, then I, Qiao Baishi, will have a clear conscience."

"Song Tianxing, Qiao Baishi, you despicable, petty villains! How dare you join hands and scheme against me!" A tied up Yue Qun roared from his disorderly position.

"Yue Qun, you formed a clique for your own selfish interests. How dare you rage and roar?" Ying Wuyou laughed coldly.

"Go to hell! Formed a clique for selfish interests? Song Tianxing, I only rue that I didn't make a move against you earlier! I regret this bitterly! But, don't you be too proud too early. Why do you think I've spent more than ten years kissing up to you in your Hall of Healing? Let me tell you something, I'm not a person from the Eastern Kingdom. For the past ten years, I've been a spy in the Hall of Healing. I've long since used various venues to convey the message of the Eastern Kingdom's internal conflict back to the Darkmoon Kingdom. It won't be long before the iron hooves of the Darkmoon Kingdom trample the mountains and rivers of the Eastern Kingdom! Hahahahaha!"

"Darkmoon Kingdom?" Song Tianxing and Qiao Baishi looked at each other as they both sucked in a breath.

The Darkmoon Kingdom was a kingdom contiguous to the southern part of the Eastern Kingdom. It was stronger than the Eastern Kingdom and had always eyed its neighbor covetously.

Unfortunately, Yue Qun's words were probably not random ravings grounded in nothing.

However, Qiao Baishi recovered his composure very quickly. "Darkmoon Kingdom is it? That's fine, we weren't able to find a suitable excuse to kill all of you earlier. Since you call yourself a spy from the Darkmoon Kingdom, then we've actually gained sufficient grounds to kill all of you."

"Kill me? Haha, do you think I'd be afraid? I am a citizen of the Darkmoon Kingdom and a ghost of the Darkmoon Kingdom if I die. I won't even crease my brow if I die for my country."

“You... old thing, are you crazy? Are you really a spy from Darkmoon Kingdom?” Even Elder Blue was frantic.

She was a born and bred citizen of the Eastern Kingdom and not some Darkmoon spy. She had originally slept with Yue Qun to climb up to her current position of elder.

She’d been captured now, but still may not be put to death. However, if she was associated with a spy, then she would be dead without a doubt.

Wang Li was also stunned and started cursing loudly. “Old man, you’ve really thrown me to the wolves. You said you would support me to the highest position and help me expand the branches of the Hall to all the territories within the kingdom. Was all of this a lie?”

“Ai, they weren’t really lies. You’re my son, how could I deceive you? Those words were built on the premise of the Eastern Kingdom not having internal strife. Without internal discord in the Eastern Kingdom, the Darkmoon Kingdom wouldn’t have a window of opportunity. I’d only be able to cultivate you and have you take control of the Hall. Who knew that even the best laid plans would fall to pieces in the face of reality.”

“Since this is the case, then what did you come to the Jiang Han territory for?” Wang Li cursed.

“Come to the Jiang Han territory?” Yue Qun grimaced in laughter. “For the pill medicine recipes of course. Even I’m jealous of those recipes. If I could bring that back to the Darkmoon Kingdom, then I’d be the greatest meritorious statesman in the Darkmoon Kingdom!”

Wang Li was completely dumfounded. He’d discovered that in this old fellow’s heart, his position as an illegitimate son was completely inferior to the position of the Darkmoon Kingdom.

Elder Blue wailed like ghosts and howled like wolves, “Lord Hallmaster, I was wrong. I will redeem myself with good service, please give me a chance. I... I know how to warm a bed, I’m also extremely skilled with techniques, and I’m well versed in pleasuring men with my mouth...”

This woman had gone completely crazy.

Qiao Baishi wouldn’t hear any of it and waved his hand, “Take them all away, I’m going to visit the young duke.”

Although he didn’t know whether or not Yue Qun’s words were true or false, but this piece of news was startling enough. If this was the case, then a sword was hovering over the Eastern Kingdom’s neck.

There was a sharp sword that could behead the Eastern Kingdom at any time!

...

“Yue Qun? Spy for the Darkmoon Kingdom?” Jiang Chen was also a bit shocked by Qiao Baishi’s report. He’d sent Qiao Baishi to the negotiations and didn’t even mind using a bit of brute force. He hadn’t thought though, that such dumbfounding news would be unearthed.

The Darkmoon Kingdom had always been at odds with the Eastern Kingdom. Over the past couple hundred of years, battles between the two were a common occurrence.

“Young duke, this matter is likely not false. The Long family caused internal strife and the royal family has been hollowed out as well. It’d be truly bizarre if the Darkmoon Kingdom didn’t take advantage of this opportunity to invade.”

Jiang Chen nodded, this matter forced him to treat it with all due consideration.

The Jiang family didn’t have any further relations with the Eastern Kingdom to begin with. However, once the Darkmoon Kingdom began their invasion, the Jiang family would be the first to be impacted, given their location in the southern frontier.

After all, the Darkmoon Kingdom was located to the southwest of the kingdom. Once an opening was created, the Jiang family was almost surely the first line of defense that would suffer an attack.

Just as he was hesitating, one of his men suddenly reported in. “Young duke, there’s an envoy outside the manor who says he’s an envoy from the Darkmoon Kingdom and seeks an audience.”

The Darkmoon Kingdom?

Jiang Chen and Qiao Baishi looked at each other. An envoy from the Darkmoon Kingdom had arrived when they were just discussing about them. This speed was simply a bit too fast, wasn’t it?