

Time 531

Chapter 531: Bad luck

"Welcome! My name is Ying Gui and this is the head of my guards Zou Qiang. I am very happy that you accepted the mission. Haha, I wasn't sure if someone would really accept it in time!"

Ying Gui didn't lose a single moment as he introduced both himself and the head of his guards with a passionate expression as he looked at Shun Long, while gesturing for him to enter his courtyard at the same time.

Although Ying Gui knew that protection missions like this were popular among the outer disciples of the Holy sect, what he had said was also true. He had to leave for Yanzhu city right away, and he wasn't certain if an outer disciple of the Holy sect would accept the mission in time.

If he wasn't lucky enough, he could only leave 3 days later with only the power of his normal guards.

Nodding his head, Shun Long looked at the smiling Ying Gui before he took out his golden-colored token that he had placed in his robes and showed it to him, as he introduced himself

"My name is Shun Long, and I am a disciple of the Holy sect."

After he finished his simple introduction, Shun Long stopped looking at Ying Gui and turned his gaze towards the giant Zou Qiang who was standing behind him and was staring at him with the same frown on his face.

Noticing that Shun Long hadn't entered his courtyard and was looking at his head of guards instead, Ying Gui turned around and stared at the man behind him before he asked with the same professional smile of a merchant that he always used

"Zou Qiang, is everything okay?"

Zou Qiang shook his head after hearing his boss' voice, before answering with a serious look

"No problem boss."

"Haha, that's good. Young master Shun Long, how about you enter my courtyard for a drink?"

Although Shun Long didn't have a problem having a drink with Yin Gui, he wasn't really in the mood to drink after seeing Zou Qiang's gaze. Despite having said that there was no problem, how could Shun Long not realize that this head of guards was clearly looking at him as if he was staring at an ant?

With just a glance, he quickly realized, that the reason behind this was his cultivation that was at the early rank 3 of the Nascent Soul.

Of course, Shun Long wouldn't hide his cultivation this time, since there was simply no reason to do so.

However, after seeing the frown that turned into a gaze of contempt and utter disregard from the peak rank 5 Nascent Soul cultivator behind Ying Gui a moment later, there was no way that he would simply accept Ying Gui's offer to drink together.

Thus, he shook his head before he responded with his usual cold voice

"No need. Let me know when you plan to leave for Yanzhu city instead."

Ying Gui immediately noticed the tense atmosphere between the 2 men, and after turning around to shoot a stern glance towards Zou Qiang, not understanding why his head of guards was trying to antagonize a disciple of the Holy sect, he looked at Shun Long with the same smile on his face before he replied

"I was simply waiting for young master Shun Long to join our group so we could leave. Since you are here, we can leave right away!"

Turning around, Ying Gui looked at Zou Qiang before he ordered seriously, his usual easy-going smile having already disappeared from his face

"Gather the guards in front of the inn. We are leaving for Yanzhu right away!"

What Ying Gui had said to Shun Long was the truth. He had been waiting for a disciple of the Holy sect to join them before they left for Yanzhu city. Since Shun Long had now joined his group, why would Ying Gui wait any longer? Especially since it was obvious that Shun Long wasn't willing to waste any time chatting.

Zou Qiang simply shook his head before he left his boss' courtyard and headed elsewhere inside the inn.

Even though his boss couldn't ascertain Shun Long's exact cultivation since he was just at the rank 1 of the Spirit realm and could only understand that the young man in front of him had simply entered the Nascent Soul, how could Zou Qiang not realize that this outer disciple of the Holy sect was merely an early rank 3 Nascent Soul stage cultivator?

Although he didn't know how someone like that had passed the Holy sect's test as even the weakest outer disciples had a cultivation at the peak of rank 3 in the Nascent Soul, Zou Qiang simply accepted his bad luck realizing that they would have no extra protection during this journey.

He and his team would simply have to face all any danger that showed up without any help.

If there was time, Zou Qiang would have told Ying Gui to simply send Shun Long back and wait for some other disciple of the Holy sect to accept the mission, but he knew that something like that wasn't possible for 2 reasons.

Firstly, today was already the third and final day that his boss was willing for anyone who accepted the mission to show up, and if no one eventually did, they would still leave the Holy sect by themselves. Thus, even if his boss actually rejected Shun Long's help, it would just be Zou Qiang and his team in the end.

As for the second reason, Zou Qiang already knew that the Holy sect would never accept anyone questioning the capabilities of its disciples. The only way for someone to reject the help of a disciple of the Holy sect would be to cancel the mission, but canceling the missions wasn't free.

To ask for the help of an outer disciple, Zou Qiang knew that his boss had to pay a certain fee to the Holy sect, and using that fee, the sect would reward the disciples who completed the mission.

But if Ying Gui really canceled the mission, he would still have to pay half of the fee. The only way to reject Shun Long, would be if another outer disciple of the Holy sect showed up for the same mission.

In that case, Ying Gui would be able to choose between the 2 disciples.

Shaking his head, the giant 2.5m tall giant cursed his bad luck of getting the weakest outer disciple of the Holy sect, as he went to gather his team.

10 minutes later, Shun Long who had already walked to the entrance of the 'Blue Heaven inn' saw 14 men walking behind Zou Qiang, as they all stared at him and Ying Gui who was standing next to him.

Chapter 532: Ying Gui's preparations

Nodding his head, Ying Gui looked at his team of guards that had quickly gathered in front of the inn's entrance, before turning his head to the side to look at Shun Long and saying humbly

"As young master Shun Long can see, I only have 15 guards. Normally, they would be more than enough to protect me and the items that I transport from any thieves, but this time things are slightly different. Hehe, I will explain everything to young master Shun Long after we leave the city."

Originally, Ying Gui was about to explain his situation to Shun Long before they left the 'Blue Heaven inn', but seeing that there were plenty of pedestrians who were looking at his 4 carriages with looks of curiosity, he decided against saying anything until they left the Holy city in case anyone ends up lusting over his merchandise.

Finishing his words, Ying Gui then jumped atop the first carriage, before he gestured for Shun Long to sit on the second one.

As for Zou Qiang, he didn't pay any attention to Shun Long or his boss, as he had the 14 men who were walking behind him to completely surround the carriages, while he himself walked in the front.

Shun Long noticed that all of the guards from Zou Qiang's team were between the early rank 1 and the peak of rank 3 in the Nascent Soul, with only Zou Qiang himself having reached the middle stages.

The guards had curious looks in their eyes as they inspected Shun Long as well, dumbfounded by his cultivation base that was only at the early rank 3 as well.

They had already heard from their boss that there was a chance for a disciple of the Holy sect to join them in their journey this time, and they were hoping that it would be someone at the early rank 6 of the Nascent Soul, or if they were unlucky, someone at the early or middle rank 5 in the Nascent Soul.

They couldn't believe that they were so unlucky to get someone who was even weaker than some of them, let alone their captain!

Ignoring the looks on the guards' faces, Shun Long took a look at the 4 carriages in front of him, and without declining Ying Gui's offer, he sat atop the second carriage.

At the same time, Shun Long also noticed, that every single carriage was being pulled by 4 massive magic beasts at the middle of rank 4 that resembled cows, while the carriages themselves were completely covered, each of them with a white piece of cloth that made it impossible to see what was inside them.

With just a glance, Shun Long instantly recognized the middle rank 4 magic beasts that were pulling the 4 carriages as 'Ironhide cows'.

He knew that these weren't normal cows, but instead, resilient magic beasts with very high natural defensive abilities. Their hide was as tough as iron and it could absorb the attacks of other middle rank 4 magic beasts without suffering too much damage.

Although the 'Ironhide cows' didn't have any offensive abilities, their ability to defend themselves was extremely strong, and they could even take on the attacks of some late-stage Spirit realm cultivators.

Just like Ying Gui had said, his guards were indeed strong enough to protect him from normal bandits. Even an early rank 6 Nascent Soul bandit wouldn't necessarily try to rob him with Zou Qiang on the front and 14 early-stage Nascent Soul guards protecting the rest of the carriages, making Shun Long curious as to why Ying Gui felt the need to ask for the help of a disciple from the Holy sect.

Closing his eyes, Shun Long then sent his soul sense past the white cloth below his feet, but a moment later he realized that he had failed to pass through it.

"As expected..."

He actually wasn't surprised by this as he had already expected the carriages to be filled with protective formations that blocked out any attempts of soul sense.

Otherwise, anyone could simply send his soul sense and see past the white cloth of the carriage to find out what was being transported.

The reason why Shun Long tried this in the first place, was simply to verify the importance that Ying Gui had placed on the merchandise that he was transporting this time.

Indeed, it seemed to be something beyond what he normally dealt with, otherwise he wouldn't be so cautious as to ask for the help of the Holy sect on top of all of the normal measures that he had taken.

An hour later, Ying Gui's caravan had already arrived at the gates of the Holy city before they passed right through it without any obstruction

After all, there was no need to pay a fee of any spirit stones to leave the city as one only had to pay when they entered.

As soon as they left the Holy city, Zou Qiang turned around and looked at his guards before he shouted

"From now on and until we reach Yanzhu city, be on full alert!"

"Yes, captain!"

Even Shun Long had to admit that Zou Qiang was a captain who was respected by his troops and had above-average leadership abilities.

Unfortunately, this didn't really increase his image in Shun Long's eyes.

Regardless of how good a captain he may be, intentionally offending someone who came to help him would only end up harming him in the end.

Not caring about the orders that Zou Qiang was giving as he arranged the rest of the guards, Ying Gui smiled brightly as he turned around and looked at Shun Long before he then said

"Young master Shun Long, let me explain why I asked for your help. Unfortunately, I couldn't explain this while we were still in the Holy city as there were too many people around us."

As he finished speaking, after checking and making sure that they had opened up a sizeable distance between themselves and the Holy city and that there were no other cultivators around them, Ying Gui raised the white sheet that was covering his own carriage revealing the scene inside.

As soon as Ying Gui lifted the sheet, Shun Long realized that what he was riding on wasn't a normal carriage, but instead a small prison.

And inside this very prison, a beast that resembled a dog, with pitch-black fur and orange eyes appeared in Shun Long's vision!

Chapter 533: Biting more than he could chew

This beast was even larger than the rank 4 'Ironhide cows' that were pulling the carriages, as it kept clawing with its front feet at the cell non-stop, trying to destroy the bars.

Its eyes were filled with endless killing intent, obviously unwilling to stay trapped in this place, while every single one of its attacks ended up slightly shaking the entire carriage.

However, it didn't matter how hard the beast clawed at the cell bars as the protective formations lit up every time they were attacked, completely absorbing the damage inflicted on them.

Even from a distance away, Shun Long could clearly sense that this magic beast had actually reached the peak of rank 5, as he asked in a voice that didn't hide his surprise

"A peak rank 5 'Solar hound'?"

"Young master Shun Long is truly knowledgeable! Indeed, this is a rare peak rank 5 'Solar hound'!"

Ying Gui's eyes instantly lit up when he saw that Shun Long had immediately recognized the magic beast, as he praised him with a truly sincere expression on his face.

Of course, 'Solar hounds' were extremely rare rank 5 magic beasts, whose rarity to find them was at the same level as a 'Silver-winged panther king'. However, the reason why Shun Long was shocked wasn't just due to how rare this magic beast was, but how did Ying Gui manage to get his hands on it in the first place.

After all, even the strongest person on his caravan, Zou Qiang, was only a peak rank 5 Nascent Soul stage cultivator.

Even with his entire team of guards as support, Zou Qiang wouldn't be able to fight against a 'Solar hound' who was still at the middle of rank 5, let alone a peak rank 5 one!

Hurriedly covering the carriage with the white sheet afraid that someone would see the peak rank 5 'Solar hound', Ying Gui first looked around to make sure that no one was watching them before he heaved out a sigh of relief. A self-mocking smile appeared on his face a moment later, and almost as if he had guessed Shun Long's thoughts he then explained

"As young master Shun Long can guess, it is impossible for me to hunt a peak rank 5 magic beast, especially one as powerful as the 'Solar hound'. Even if I asked Zou Qiang and the rest to risk their

lives for me, I still know that it would be impossible to achieve something like this, and that we would all end up dying in the end.

The truth is that these 4 magic beasts that we are transporting today don't belong to me, but to a relatively powerful family of Yanzhu city who purchased them from a large shop in the Holy city.

Of course, the person who gave me this mission didn't want to use the channels of his family lest their family's enemies found out about this and stopped them on the way, otherwise how could I ever get my hands on 4 peak rank 5 magic beasts?

I was simply asked to transport them from the Holy city to Yanzhu city.

Normally I would reject such a mission since I don't know what dangers await us and we are simply incapable of handling even a single peak rank 5 magic beast by ourselves, let alone 4 of them.

However, the reward for this mission was too big and we only have to transport them from the Holy city to Yanzhu city in the end, so I couldn't refuse."

Shun Long's eyes instantly turned serious when he heard this, as he realized that Ying Gui had probably bitten more than he could chew this time.

Without a moment to waste, Shun Long's eyes started to scan his surroundings to see if anyone from the Holy city was following after their caravan, but even after a full minute had passed, he noticed that there wasn't anyone coming after them.

And yet, this didn't make Shun Long feel at ease, but instead, it made him even more certain that something was going to happen.

Ying Gui had indeed been too greedy this time, and he didn't wait to think of the repercussions that his actions may cause to him and his guards.

A family that could afford to buy 4 peak rank 5 magic beasts, especially rare magic beasts like the 'Solar hound', it was certain that they must have at least a couple of early-stage Dao Kings backing them.

If that family was truly afraid of transporting the magic beasts that they had purchased from the Holy city using their own channels, it could only mean that their family's enemies were at least at the same level as them, if not even stronger.

Shun Long wasn't certain if Ying Gui hadn't realized this point or if he had simply been too blinded due to his greed for the reward that he had been promised, but from his last sentence, Shun Long assumed that it was the latter.

However, could such a huge transaction really go unnoticed?

Shun Long had already seen in the Holy city, that a single peak rank 5 magic beast was usually sold for 200.000 to 250.000 middle-grade spirit stones. As for rare magic beasts like the 'Solar hound', it wasn't impossible for their price to exceed the 300.000 middle-grade spirit stones mark.

Naturally, he also knew that it was impossible for the family that had assigned this mission to Ying Gui, to simply allow him to be robbed by their enemies Dao Kings.

If any Dao Kings from either side really meddled in this fight, Shun Long believed that the other family wouldn't stay still either and watch that scene unfold, thus this was most likely going to be a fight between Nascent Soul stage experts.

Unfortunately, neither Shun Long nor Ying Gui had any idea of the enemies forces that they would have to face, but if Ying Gui really believed that he could safely arrive in Yanzhu city and easily transport 4 peak rank 5 magic beasts to that family, Shun Long knew that was definitely going to be a fool's dream!

Chapter 534: Traveling to Yanzhu city

Naturally, it wasn't just Shun Long who had such thoughts in his mind, as Zou Qiang's expression had already turned ugly upon hearing Ying Gui mentioning the mission's details once again.

Even before they left the Holy city, this captain of the guards was always on full alert, not allowing anyone to get so much as within a few meters of the 4 carriages.

Aside from his boss and his subordinates, no one knew what they were transporting this time to Yanzhu city, and yet Zou Qiang still didn't feel safe.

As a veteran mercenary, he knew that his boss shouldn't have meddled in a transaction far above the level of what they could handle.

After all, even he, the head of the guards, was just a peak rank 5 Nascent Soul stage cultivator in the end. Although Zou Qiang was strong enough to defend himself against most dangers that he had faced so far, the reason behind him being still alive to this day while being a head of the guards, was that he was always prudent and never took risks that had a high risk of danger.

Zou Qiang clearly knew, that even a normal early rank 6 bandit would make him have to go all-out with the assistance of the rest of his guards just to fend him off.? In the end, peak rank 5 Nascent Soul stage cultivators like him were far too common in powerful families, which had made him always put his life first. If there was a mission that he deemed to danger to handle, he would usually reject it without a second thought.

And yet, Zou Qiang only had himself to blame this time, since he had agreed to Ying Gui's offer.

Even though he knew that the danger of this mission was probably going to be off the charts, he still agreed upon hearing the reward that Ying Gui had promised him.

Naturally, Ying Gui didn't fail to see Shun Long checking his surroundings after hearing the details of the mission, but he simply closed his eyes and hoped that Shun Long wouldn't abandon him after he had explained things.

After all, it wasn't rare for disciples of the Holy sect to do so if a mission exceeded the danger level that they had originally estimated.? Besides, it was common knowledge that the disciples of the Holy sect also didn't have to pay any fee if they gave up on a mission.

Thankfully for Ying Gui, Shun Long didn't decide to abandon him and head to Yanzhu city by himself. Although he was certain that he would be much safer if he left this sinking ship and went forward alone, Shun Long already knew that being in tense situations like this was the best way to train himself.

Even though he couldn't count on Little Silver who had now followed after Liu Mei, or Little Black who was still asleep inside the foggy space in the 'Stone of Time', from the beginning Shun Long wasn't planning on counting on anyone but himself during the sect's missions, especially since the 'Memory recording formation' was still active.

No matter what, he was already prepared for unexpected things to happen during the sect's missions. Besides, in terms of survivability alone, Shun Long believed that there were very few cultivators at the middle stages of the Nascent Soul who could compare with him.

Without paying any more attention to Ying Gui, Shun Long then closed his eyes as the carriages continued to move forward.

With the 'Ironhide cows' speed, the trip to Yanzhu city would take at least a week.

Ying Gui heaved a sigh of relief when he saw that Shun Long didn't choose to leave in the end, but there was still a worried expression on the fat merchant's face as he turned around and watched his carriages move forward.

After all, it would be a lie to say that Ying Gui himself wasn't worried about this journey, with or without Shun Long's presence along with his guards. He was the one who knew exactly what kind of family he was dealing with, making the pressure that he felt even more intense.

However, along with this pressure, a look of greed had also appeared deep in his eyes, as he looked forward to the reward he would obtain upon completing this mission.

As for the 2.5 meters(8.2ft) tall head of guards, Zou Qiang, he seemed like he didn't care in the slightest whether Shun Long stayed or left, as he kept walking forward, leading the way for the caravan to follow after him.

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5 days quickly passed, and although Zou Qiang's, Ying Gui's, and the 14 guards' nerves were stretched taut during the entirety of these 5 days and nights, not a single mishap happened throughout their journey.

At this point, both Ying Gui as well as his 14 guards, had all finally started to relax, knowing that they were less than a 2-day journey away from reaching their destination.

As soon as they reached Yanzhu city, it didn't matter if anyone found out about their caravan since they would be provided with protection from their employer no matter what happened.

And yet, not only was Shun Long not feeling relieved that nothing had happened in these last 5 days, but the look in his eyes was even more serious than before.

He understood that if they were going to be attacked, today was the most likely day for it to happen.

Their enemies wouldn't be dumb enough to wait until they reached Yanzhu city to do so.

It seemed that Zou Qiang had also realized this point as well, and after turning around and seeing that the expressions of his subordinates had started to soften, he then shouted in a serious voice that was filled with unconcealed anger

"Did we reach Yanzhu city yet? Why the hell are you idiots acting relaxed? If we are going to be ambushed, it's definitely going to happen today! Those fuckers won't wait for us to deliver the magic beasts before they make their move!"

The relaxed expressions instantly disappeared from the guards' faces as they realized that their captain was correct! Indeed, they had been feeling relaxed today after walking on a thin line for the past 5 days that had made their minds mentally exhausted.

Since they had been waiting to be attacked at any time during the past 5 days, only for nothing to end up happening in the end, it gave them a false sense of security that they were finally in the clear.

However, Zou Qiang's words quickly brought them back to the cruel reality of things. And yet, the guards didn't seem to despair as they also realized the hidden meaning behind their captain's words, making them feel invigorated and put aside their exhaustion as the 14 guards all shouted at the same time

"Yes, captain!"

Indeed, if they managed to pass the day safely, they would finally be clear of any danger.

Chapter 535: Flame Lion's canyon

Ying Gui also realized that Zou Qiang's words were actually correct, instantly causing the easy-going expression to disappear from his face, as it was quickly replaced with a serious one.

Of course, as a rank 1 Spirit realm cultivator and someone who didn't even know a single martial skill, there was no way that Ying Gui could do anything but rely on the strength of his guards, as well as the young man who had come to support him from the Holy sect.

Turning his head to look at Shun Long, he noticed that the look on his face was serious as well, but thankfully he didn't seem afraid like his guards, causing Ying Gui to relax a bit as well.

At the same time, Zou Qiang turned around, and ignoring both Shun Long and Ying Gui, he looked at his subordinates that were still in defensive positions to protect the carriages and said in a serious voice

"In approximately 4 hours we will reach the 'Flame Lion's' canyon. As long as we manage to cross the canyon safely, Yanzhu city will only be half a day's journey away!"

The guards all nodded with solemn expressions on their faces, as they kept staring at their surroundings vigilantly.

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Indeed, before the 4-hour mark was crossed, Shun Long who was still sitting on top of the second carriage saw a large canyon appearing in the distance in front of them, before Ying Gui's serious voice sounded a moment later as he explained seriously

"Young master Shun Long, we have almost reached the 'Flame Lion's' canyon. This is the most dangerous place that we have to cross to reach Yanzhu city, as there are many powerful magic beasts living inside the canyon.

Of course, even though there are also rumors of a rank 6 'Flame Lion' living inside the canyon, they are most likely just rumors in the end, as very few people claimed to have truly seen it.

The biggest danger in this canyon is actually the early rank 5 and middle rank 5 magic beasts that may attack us at any moment.

Although the guards will probably be able to handle 1 or 2 early rank 5 magic beasts without any problems, if a middle rank 5 magic beast ends up attacking us, I hope that you can join hands with Zou Qiang and protect me."

Shun Long thought seriously for a moment upon hearing Ying Gui's request before he eventually nodded his head.

After all, the point of the mission was to protect Ying Gui's caravan.

Although hunting down a middle rank 5 magic beast would be normally considered a D-rank faction mission and not a personal mission based on the Holy sect's rankings, as more than one rank 6 Nascent Soul stage cultivators were normally required to kill a middle rank 5 magic beast, Ying Gui didn't ask Shun Long to hunt the magic beast down if it appeared but simply protect him and his caravan.

Shun Long wasn't certain if he could hunt down a middle rank 5 magic beast by himself, but he was actually eager to fight one and test his current limits, after enhancing his 21 qi balls and breaking through to the early fifth stage of his 'Monarch's Eternal body' as well.

It was too bad that Zou Qiang's expression turned extremely ugly when he remembered that aside from being ambushed by their enemies, he would also have to be wary of the magic beasts inside the canyon, while a look of scorn had also appeared on his face at the same time when he saw Shun Long accepting Ying Gui's request to help him while he thought to himself in a mocking tone

"Let's see how you intend to help me if a middle rank 5 magic beast really attacks us with your cultivation at the early rank 3 of the Nascent Soul!"

As this thought appeared in his mind, Zou Qiang turned around and looked at the rest of his troops with a serious expression, certain that at least one-third of them would die if they were really unlucky enough to face a magic beast of that level.

At the same time, the look in Shun Long's eyes had turned more serious when he heard that a rank 6 'Flame Lion' was actually living inside the canyon, and that this was where the canyon took its name from.

Although Shun Long may not be afraid of middle rank 5 magic beasts, he knew that the 'Flame Lion' was a completely different level of magic beast!

Every single 'Flame Lion' would always reach at least the middle of rank 6 upon reaching adulthood, while the powerful ones may even reach the peak of rank 6!

That level had already exceeded even Little Silver's level, and even rank 9 Dao Kings may not be able to subdue such a magic beast!

Shun Long would never try to fight against such a terrifying magic beast with his cultivation at the early rank 3 of the Nascent Soul, especially when Little Black was still asleep.

Staring at the carriages that had almost reached the entrance of the canyon by now, he looked at the look on Ying Gui's face that was growing more solemn by the second before Shun Long actually heard a guard by his side asking

"Boss, is this the only path available to reach Yanzhu city?"

Although most of the guards had followed Zou Qiang for many years, some of them were still new and had to replace the position of the guards who had died in other missions. It was obvious that this guard was going to Yanzhu city for the first time as well.

Shun Long however was also curious about this, since he didn't know if there was no other way to get to their destination or if Ying Gui was simply following the shortest path to get there.

Shaking his head, the rank 1 Spirit realm merchant had a pained look on his face as he looked at the young guard whose cultivation was a full major stage above him, at the peak of rank 1 in the Nascent Soul, before he answered seriously

"Although the 'Flame Lion's' canyon is extremely dangerous to cross, for any merchant who wants to arrive in Yanzhu city quickly there is actually no other way but to pass through it.

We could take the long way around to reach Yanzhu city, but doing so would mean that our journey would be delayed by at least half a month!"

As Ying Gui finished his explanation half the guards looked at him with furious looks in their eyes, while at the same time, the carriages also started to enter the canyon's entrance one by one.

Chapter 536: Shocking power

Of course, it was natural that these guards would be angry at their boss, since he had chosen the most dangerous path to simply shave off some time, without caring about their lives in the slightest. However, only half the guards were furious, as the other half had followed Zou Qiang and Ying Gui for a long time and already knew about this.

Ying Gui simply shook his head when he saw the angry looks on the guards' faces while they started to whisper among themselves, as he then continued with a helpless tone

"With the things that we have to transport this time, I would have taken the safer path around the 'Flame Lion's' canyon if I could, since I cannot afford anything unexpected to happen.

Unfortunately, I was told that I had to reach Yanzhu city within 10 days, and if we take the long way around we will never make it in time."

Just as Ying Gui finished his explanation, Zou Qiang's angry voice sounded from the front as he roared to those guards

"You idiots knew the risks of the mission before you joined so you better shut your mouths! Stop complaining and pay attention to your surroundings, or you will only have yourselves to blame if you end inside the stomach of a magic beast!"

Although Zou Qiang was also indignant about this mission since there seemed to be hidden dangers in every corner, he wasn't going to risk his own safety by having the guards complain to their boss when they were in the most dangerous period of their mission.

If they were suddenly ambushed, as the strongest person here, he would end up taking the brunt of it.

At that moment, before the guards could react upon hearing Zou Qiang's angry voice, Shun Long's pupils instantly narrowed as he suddenly took a step forward and appeared next to Ying Gui who was still sitting on the first carriage.

With his right hand clenched, he quickly punched the air in front of him without holding back his strength, before a loud booming sound was heard in everyone's ears.

BOOOM

Zou Qiang, the 14 guards, and the startled Ying Gui, all turned their heads to stare at Shun Long at the same time, only to see that his punch seemed to have actually stopped a small metal arrow mid-air.

It was obvious that the arrow was heading directly towards Ying Gui's neck, causing the fat merchant to stand up in fear while his eyes had widened in disbelief.

At the same time, the force of the arrow had ended up forcing Shun Long to take 2 steps back in order to stabilize himself, as he almost fell down from the carriage.

Zou Qiang was the first one to come back to his senses and realize what was going on, as he immediately recollected himself and shouted in a voice that was mixed with both shock and anger

"Enemy attack! All of you, protect the boss!"

Naturally, the shock that Zou Qiang felt was from Shun Long being able to react and block the arrow that even he hadn't noticed, while his anger was actually directed towards himself as he failed to react in time and save his boss.

He knew that if Shun Long hadn't stepped in this time, Ying Gui would have definitely turned into a corpse with an arrow on his neck by now.

As the head of the guards, this was a mistake that Zou Qiang wasn't allowed to make.

"Ohh?"

Shun Long and the rest all heard a surprised voice coming from their right, but before they could all take their positions to protect Ying Gui, 3 consecutive sounds could be heard piercing through the air, one after the other.

Swoosh!

Swoosh!

Swoosh!

3 metal arrows instantly emerged from the same location as the first one that Shun Long had blocked, but unlike what everyone expected, the arrows didn't all head towards Ying Gui.

Instead, only the first arrow was directed towards him, while the second one was actually flying towards Zou Qiang!

As for the third arrow? It was flying towards the guard closest to Ying Gui below the first carriage.

Without any hesitation, Shun Long immediately circulated his 'Monarch's Hourglass', while his eyes instantly turned golden at the same time.

"Monarch's Domain!"

Shun Long's voice was cold as he activated his first 'Monarch's Domain' without holding back, before he punched the second arrow that was once again trying to take Ying Gui's life.

The moment that it entered inside the 'Monarch's Domain' the arrow's speed dropped dramatically but it didn't completely stop as it kept heading towards Ying Gui.

However, the closer it approached towards Shun Long, the more the arrow's speed was reduced, before Shun Long clenched his right hand and sent another punch forward.

The second arrow was blocked effortlessly not causing Shun Long to even take a single step back this time, as his eyes stared towards the origin of the arrow.

At the same time that Shun Long blocked the metal arrow, Zou Qiang removed the silver axe that was strapped on his back and slashed the incoming arrow that was flying towards his head.

At that moment however, a scene that neither Ying Gui, the 14 guards, or even Zou Qiang himself expected actually happened.

The silver axe did indeed manage to block the metal arrow, stopping it from piercing his head, but Zou Qiang was actually sent flying backwards from the overpowering force behind it, as he stumbled for more than 10 meters until he managed to regain his balance.

His arms started to tremble as pain coursed all over them, causing the peak rank 5 Nascent Soul head of the guards to look at the origin of the arrows with a gaze filled with disbelief as well as fear.

This wasn't the end however as Zou Qiang suddenly remembered that there was a third arrow that was fired off this time.

However, as soon as he turned his head to the side to look at his subordinate and order him to dodge out of the way, the sound of blood splattering was suddenly heard, as the guard's head exploded into a mist of blood.

Chapter 537: Su family

Zou Qiang and the remaining 13 guards stared at the headless corpse next to them with eyes filled with shock and disbelief, while a look of extreme fear had appeared on Ying Gui's face at the same time.

If even Zou Qiang himself could barely resist the attack of a single arrow, and if his own guard who was at the peak of rank 2 in the Nascent Soul couldn't even guard against it before dying in one shot, what kind of terrifying enemy were they facing?

Shun Long's gaze was also focused at the origin of the arrow while a serious look had also appeared on his face.

'Luckily', Ying Gui didn't have to wait for a long time to get an answer for the question in his mind, as 2 middle-aged men dressed in long black robes slowly appeared as they stood next to each other.

One of the men held a long black bow in his hands while a quiver filled with metal arrows was strapped on his back, while the other man was holding a crimson sword.

However, what made both Zou Qiang and his remaining 13 guards despair, was that the middle-aged man who was holding the crimson sword was a middle rank 6 Nascent Soul stage expert, while the man with the arrow was actually at the peak of rank 6 in the Nascent Soul!

Ying Gui's body trembled when his eyes fell on the small emblems on the 2 men's chest, as he suddenly asked in a high-pitched voice

"You... you are from the Su family??"

The 2 men inspected Zou Qiang and Shun Long for a few moments, while an amused expression had appeared on both of their faces barely a moment later as they turned their attention towards Ying Gui.

The middle-aged man with the black bow smiled warmly and nodded his head as he looked at Ying Gui before he asked in return

"Since you already know why bother asking? Tell me, do you want to take your own lives or should I do it for you?"

Although the man in front of him seemed to be smiling, the warm smile on his face looked no different than the cold smile of a demon in Ying Gui's eyes.

Even Zou Qiang started to fall into despair as he stealthily took a few steps backwards, opening up the distance between himself and the 2 monsters that had appeared in front of them.

There was no way that he could fight against even a middle rank 6 Nascent Soul stage cultivator, let alone one who had already reached the peak of rank 6.

Seeing the despair on Ying Gui's face after he revealed his identity made the middle-aged man with the black bow to smile even wider, as he took another step forward towards Ying Gui and asked mockingly

"Hehe, who gave you, a small rank 1 Spirit realm trash, the guts to meddle between the fight of our family and the Yao family? Did you really think that you could purchase 4 peak rank 5 magic beasts from the Holy city for the Yaos and avoid being discovered by us? Hehehe, idiot. How could we not notice it when the Yaos used more than 1 million middle-grade spirit stones from their treasury for this?"

Ying Gui's face that had already started to turn pale in front of the middle-aged man's imposing presence, ended up turning even paler as the blood was all drained from his face.

He had originally thought that even if this mission was leaked, the Su family wouldn't know the exact details of it.

It was only now that he realized, that they most likely had a spy among the higher echelons of the Yao family!

Otherwise, how could they know it when the Yao family took out a million middle-grade spirit stones from their treasury?

From the moment that he accepted this mission, he had already been noticed by the Su family!

After all, even for a family backed by Dao Kings like the Yao family, taking more than a million middle-grade spirit stones all at once from their treasury wasn't something that they could do at a whim, as it would definitely affect the family's financial ability to do anything else in the near future.

Without any hesitation, Ying Gui suddenly fell on his knees as he begged with a face filled with snot and tears

"I am sorry! Please! Please don't kill me! Take the 'Solar hound' and the other 3 peak rank 5 magic beasts if you want, but let me live. I don't want to die!"

More than half of the remaining 13 guards instantly fell on their knees as well when they saw Ying Gui doing so, as they too echoed out their pleas

"Please don't kill us! We were only following orders!"

"It was just the boss who spoke with Yao family."

At the same time, the guards threw looks of hatred towards Ying Gui, both for making them take on this dangerous mission, as well as for choosing to go through the 'Flame Lion's canyon' instead of taking the long way around.

After all, it was obvious that if they took the long way around, they wouldn't have met with these monsters who could so effortlessly kill them.

Although Ying Gui couldn't understand how terrifying these people were, his guards who were all at the Nascent Soul stage could clearly sense that these people were just steps away from entering the late-stages of the Nascent Soul!

Even if they were willing to give up their lives, it was impossible for the guards to fight even one of them, let alone 2!

The middle-aged man who was holding the red sword and had stayed silent for so long suddenly started to laugh mockingly before he said in a derisive tone as if he was looking at a group of idiots

"Hahaha! Let you live? You dared to meddle into our family's matters and now you want to ask for forgiveness? Keep dreaming fools! As for the magic beasts, hehehe, of course I'm going to take them all! Do you think that I need your permission?"

The middle-aged man then turned his gaze towards the guards who were pleading for mercy, and seeing that their thoughts were almost painted on their faces he didn't hesitate to mock them as he said

"Pathetic worms, do you regret entering the 'Flame Lion's canyon'? Too bad that it wouldn't have mattered whether you really entered it or not. Even if you decided to take the long way around to get to Yanzhu city, do you really think that you could escape so easily from our Su family?"

Chapter 538: A disciple of the Holy sect?

The guards all froze the moment they heard the middle-aged man's mocking words, while the despair in their faces became even more evident.

Since every way towards Yanzhu city was blocked by the Su family, didn't this mean that they were doomed to fail from the moment that they accepted the mission?

It wasn't just the 13 guards were feeling despair however, as Ying Gui and even the 2.5m(8.2ft) tall Zou Qiang abruptly froze when they heard this, as they finally realized that they were nothing more than insects that had stepped into a deadly spider's web.

However, Ying Gui couldn't just accept that he would die like this when he was less than 2 days away from reaching Yanzhu city!

Looking around him with a hopeful expression, his eyes suddenly fell on Shun Long's yellow robes, as he saw him still stare at the 2 middle-aged men who had appeared with a serious look on his face.

Unlike Zou Qiang however, he didn't seem to be terrified of them.

It was only at this moment that Ying Gui remembered which power Shun Long really came from.

In front of the Holy sect, what was a tiny Su family?

Knowing that he wasn't going to get spared from the men of the Su family today if he didn't do something to save himself, the fat merchant gritted his teeth and stood up, before he pointed at Shun Long's robes and asked the 2 men of the Su family in a threatening manner

"Do you see this? Don't tell me that you don't recognize the words on his robes! Young master Shun is a disciple of the Holy sect! Even if you come from the Su family do you really think that you can mess with a disciple of the Holy sect?"

I have personally asked for young master Shun to help me today, so killing me will mean fighting against the Holy sect itself! Do you think that you can afford to do something like that?"

Ying Gui then turned his attention towards Shun Long who was still standing a few meters next to him, before he said with the previous begging expression on his face

"Young master Shun, please make sure to save me. I don't care if everything else is lost but I don't want to die!"

It was only at this moment that Ying Gui truly regretted taking on this mission from the Yao family. The Su and the Yao family were much more dangerous than he had originally expected. He knew that his only hope of escaping alive from this place was to ask the yellow-robed young man in front of him to save him and scare off the men of the Su family with Shun Long's status!

It was too bad that Ying Gui's words not only failed to frighten the 2 men in black robes, but the middle-aged man with the crimson sword actually laughed mockingly as he looked at him, almost as if he was looking at an idiot, before his eyes inspected Shun Long with a smile on his face almost as if he was looking at his own toy.

Ying Gui couldn't understand why the man in front of him didn't seem afraid of Shun Long's status as an outer disciple of the Holy sect, but the middle-aged man didn't keep him waiting for long, as he spoke barely a moment later, his words echoing like thunder in Ying Gui's ears

"Hehe, a disciple of the Holy sect? So what? Do you really think that the status of a disciple of the Holy sect can really save you worms today, or are you counting on that kid's pitiful cultivation at the early rank 3 of the Nascent Soul to protect you? Hahahaha. Fool!"

Although the Holy sect may be the overlord of this region, do you really think that they will interfere every time someone fights against their disciples? How many missions has the Holy sect issued and how many times did its disciples have to fight with other families?

Naturally, if we were inside the Holy city, we wouldn't fight against a disciple of the Holy sect since their status there is the same as those descendants of the big families and clans, but here? Why would I care fool?"

The middle-aged man's words were like a bolt of thunder as it struck Ying Gui's mind making him tremble as if he was paralyzed, but the thing that kept reverberating in his mind over and over again, were the words 'pitiful cultivation at the early rank 3 of the Nascent Soul'!

Ying Gui had always thought that Shun Long was at least at the same level if not even stronger than Zou Qiang, but this middle-aged man said that he was just at the early rank 3 of the Nascent Soul instead?

Raising his eyes to look at the yellow-robed young man in front of him, Ying Gui didn't see him refute the words of the middle-aged man from the Su family, finally making his heart sink in despair.

At that moment however, the solemn voice of the middle-aged man who was holding the black bow in his hands resounded in Ying Gui's ears, stunning both him and the black-robed middle-aged man next to him

"Su Bao, I will take care of those worms while you take care of that brat. You better not look down on him however. Regardless of how low his cultivation is, he still managed to block 2 of my arrows that were at 80 percent strength and he is still standing!"

The middle-aged man named Su Bao looked at the man next to him with a disbelieving look on his face, as the black-robed man's words were like a bomb that had exploded in his head, before he immediately turned his attention towards Shun Long barely a moment later.

At this moment, Shun Long simply smiled as he noticed, that Su Bao's gaze was no longer a condescending one, but one that was actually dead-serious.

Chapter 539: Abandoned

Su Bao had originally thought that the arrows that the black-robed middle-aged man next to him had fired previously, were using at most around 20 percent of his strength. He had obviously never expected that the arrows that Shun Long had blocked were actually fired at almost full strength, and yet he was somehow still standing there unharmed.

After all, the cultivation of the middle-aged man with the black bow was already at the peak of rank 6 in the Nascent Soul! Even if he wasn't as strong as a normal peak rank 6 Nascent Soul disciple of the Holy sect, it shouldn't be possible for an early rank 3 Nascent Soul cultivator like Shun Long to take his attacks head-on, especially with his raw hands!

Although others may not know about it, Su Bao clearly knew, that the black bow that the middle-aged man next to him was holding was actually a peak rank 1 gold-grade weapon, while the metal arrows that he fired were all rank 2 silver-grade weapons.

Their lethality was able to harm even a body refinement cultivator who had reached the middle of the fifth stage in body refinement, let alone someone like Shun Long who was obviously still at the early fifth stage.

Even if Shun Long combined both his qi and the strength of his body refinement, he shouldn't be able to even block a single arrow at 40 percent strength, let alone 2 of them that were actually at 80 percent!

The shocks that he received one after the other made Su Bao stand rooted in place, as he turned his head to look at the middle-aged man next to him and asked coldly

"Su Dong, are you serious?"

Of course, the shock that Su Bao felt was only natural.

Even before they began their ambush, the 2 of them had already noticed that Shun Long was wearing the robes of an outer disciple of the Holy sect.

They hadn't expected that Ying Gui would actually ask for help from the Holy sect this time, nor that he would manage to find someone to help him in just the 3 days that he stayed in the Holy city.

Thankfully, after seeing that Shun Long was only an early rank 3 Nascent Soul stage cultivator who had only reached the early fifth stage in body refinement, Su Bai and the middle-aged man with the black bow, Su Dong, decided to continue with their ambush as planned.

Only if they had to fight against a disciple of the Holy sect who had reached the peak of rank 5 or the early rank 6 in the Nascent Soul, would they consider to back off from the fight and quickly return to the family and change their plans.

After all, it was common knowledge that the disciples of the Holy sect couldn't be compared with the normal cultivators who were living within the Holy sect's territory.

Even if Su Bao and Su Dong came from the Su family, they still wouldn't fight against an early rank 6 Nascent Soul disciple of the Holy sect unless they absolutely had to, since even with their combined strength they wouldn't be absolutely certain that they could come out on top.

As for Shun Long, although he wasn't even at the middle stages of the Nascent Soul, to be able to block Su Dong's arrows, his strength was definitely abnormal.

This made Su Bao uncertain of whether he should continue or not.

And yet, Su Dong didn't sit there and wait for him to react, as he started firing arrows from his quiver one by one, heading towards the guards who were either kneeling or they were still standing and staring at him.

"Ahhhhh!"

"Help!!!!"

The guards' cries instantly woke Su Bao from his stupor, as 2 heads suddenly exploded into a mist of blood almost at the same time.

Staring at the headless corpses, Zou Qiang no longer waited until his turn arrived, as he ran at full strength towards back towards the entrance of the 'Flame Lion's' canyon.

It was too bad that he couldn't escape from Su Dong's eyes, as the black-robed middle-aged man instantly narrowed his eyes when he saw him trying to escape, and after killing 3 more guards with his arrows he actually chased after him.

Naturally, the remaining 8 guards didn't care that Zou Qiang was being chased by the peak rank 6 Nascent Soul middle-aged man, and instead they actually rejoiced, as they headed deeper inside the 'Flame Lion's' canyon without any delay.

They weren't dumb enough to return back to the canyon's entrance since both Zou Qiang and that terrifying man named Su Dong were there, so heading deeper inside the canyon was their only chance to escape, leaving behind only Shun Long, Ying Gui, as well as the middle-aged man with the red sword Su Bao.

As for hoping that either Shun Long or their captain could win against those enemies? They'd rather cross this terrifying canyon all alone than base their chances on something like that!

Ying Gui wanted to escape inside the canyon as well after seeing his guards all do so, but unlike his guards who were all at the Nascent Soul stage, he remembered that his cultivation was only at the rank 1 of the Spirit realm.

Forget about an early rank 5 magic beast, even if a single rank 4 magic beast appeared in his way during this time, he would definitely end inside that beast's stomach. And unfortunately, Ying Gui clearly knew, that rank 4 magic beasts were more than common in the 'Flame Lion's' canyon.

Thus, the only thing he could do was slowly back away from the carriage, as he allowed Shun Long to fight with Su Bao!

His only hope now was that Shun Long could magically win this fight. Even if that seemed impossible, Ying Gui knew that there was nothing else that he could rely on.

His head of guards had already abandoned him and even his remaining 8 guards had done so as well. Right now even an average Spirit realm cultivator could probably take his life, let alone monsters from the Su family like Su Bao and Su Dong who clearly hated him for meddling in their business!

As for Su Bao, he didn't care about those small fries at all, as his eyes were only focused on Shun Long who was staring back at him, as well as the 4 carriages with the peak rank 5 magic beasts.

Chapter 540: Fighting Su Bao

Seeing that Su Bao's gaze was completely focused on him and the 4 carriages, Shun Long simply smiled before he waved his right hand, causing a black sword with countless mysterious runes and patterns on its surface to appear in front of him.

Since he was going to fight against a middle rank 6 Nascent Soul stage cultivator he wasn't planning on holding back this time.

As soon as the black sword appeared in his hand Shun Long injected his qi inside it without any hesitation, causing sparks of lightning to appear all over the sword's surface before they slowly gathered on its edge.

The moment that Su Bao's eyes landed on the black sword in Shun Long's hands his body suddenly started to tremble, as a look of disbelief appeared on his face.

For a moment, he couldn't believe what he was seeing, before an uncontrollable look of greed soon replaced his expression barely a moment later.

Although he wasn't part of some extremely powerful family, Su Bao wasn't someone who couldn't recognize a treasure when it was right in front of him!

He already knew that even the patriarch of his family only had a single peak rank 3 gold-grade weapon in his possession! Su Bao had once seen it and he immediately understood, that his rank 1 gold grade crimson sword simply couldn't be compared with the patriarch's weapon!

And yet, the energy fluctuations coming from the black sword in Shun Long's hands had already exceeded the Su patriarch's peak rank 3 gold grade weapon.

This could only mean one thing!

With a face filled with excitement, Su Bao didn't immediately attack Shun Long, as he first asked with a voice that could barely cover his heavy breathing

"Kid... is that a legendary star-rank weapon?"

Although Ying Gui was a distance away and he was still moving further back so he would avoid being harmed by their fight that was ready to erupt at any moment, his feet were instantly rooted on the spot when he heard the words 'star-rank weapon' while his gaze was glued to the black sword in Shun Long's hands.

After all, although he was just a small rank 1 Spirit realm merchant, since he frequently visited the Holy city, he had already heard about the legendary weapons above the gold grade.

He knew that they were called star-rank weapons and that even in the Holy city, they were extremely rare to appear and would only do so in the auctions of the highest level.

The value of these weapons was so high, that even the powerful Dao Emperors of the strongest families in the Holy city would instantly exit their seclusion to obtain them!

It was known that some of the strongest families in the Holy city were rumored to have star-rank weapons, and they all treated them as supreme treasures!

Thus, for Shun Long to really have a star-rank weapon, how could Ying Gui as a merchant not be interested in such a treasure?

Surprisingly, not only did Shun Long not deny this, but he actually nodded his head in confirmation before he said

"You are right. Not only is it a star-rank weapon but it's even a peak rank 1 star weapon!"

Naturally, how could Shun Long not noticed the greed in Su Bao's eyes?

Indeed the moment that he heard Shun Long's confirmation Su Bao no longer held back, as he stepped forward and exploded with his full strength, as he slashed the crimson sword in his hand towards Shun Long's chest.

Not only was he not feeling afraid to fight Shun Long who had a star-rank weapon in his possession, but even if Shun Long was even stronger than he currently was, Su Bao would still fight him going all-out!

Forget about the 4 peak rank 5 magic beasts, just this black sword alone was worth him risking his life to obtain it. Unfortunately for him, the moment that he stepped inside Shun Long's 'Monarch's Domain', he didn't notice that his speed was lowered by nearly 40 percent.

At the same time, after activating his second 'Monarch's Domain', Shun Long's body was instantly covered by a pale blue light, before he calmly took just a single step to the side. And yet, that single step was enough for him to avoid Su Bao's full-powered slash that only managed to touch the edge of his clothes.

Su Bao and even Ying Gui were both surprised when they saw how easily Shun Long avoided his lethal attack, but Su Bao didn't stop, as he continued to attack Shun Long without stop.

Every single one of his attacks were packed with his full strength. and could easily kill any normal early rank 6 Nascent Soul cultivator.

Although Su Bao wouldn't possibly admit it, he was actually feeling extremely anxious right now and was afraid that Su Dong would take care of that peak rank 5 Nascent Soul head of guards and return at any moment.

If that happened, Su Bao's dreams of obtaining Shun Long's black sword for himself would only remain a dream! There was no way that Su Dong would allow him to do something like that. A star-rank weapon wasn't something that a small middle rank 6 Nascent Soul cultivator like him could keep for himself.

Unfortunately for him, not a single one of his attacks landed on Shun Long's body, as even those that came from the trickiest angles were easily blocked by the terrifying black sword in his hands.

Of course, how could Shun Long be caught off-guard when he could easily see 5 seconds into the future and foresee every move that Su Bao was about to make?

"Brat, stop running like a coward! Do you not have balls to fight like a man?"

It was obvious that with every passing second Su Bao was only growing more and more agitated, afraid that Su Dong was going to return. Shun Long avoiding and only parrying his attacks without giving him a single opening only made him more furious, as he couldn't hold himself back from taunting Shun Long, hoping that he would take the initiative to attack himself.

Unfortunately, Shun Long's next words made the middle rank 6 Nascent Soul stage expert vomit blood from anger, while his eyes instantly turned red from the fury and humiliation as his words resounded in his and in Ying Gui's ears

"Attack you? I'm afraid that you won't be able to withstand even a single strike."