

Time 81

Chapter 81 - 81 The sect's true face

Shun Long was slightly taken aback by the dragon's sudden question. Thinking about it for a while, he nodded his head as he said

"For now, I have to return. I'm still not strong enough to even protect my parents, let alone establish a foothold for myself. I also don't know anything about the regions around the 'floating cloud sect'.

If it wasn't for the sect forcing the new outer disciples to participate in this 'sect examination', we wouldn't even have a clue about this Demonic Mountain region either.

So for the time being, it's more beneficial for me to stay there."

Little Black agreed with Shun Long's words. Even he had never heard of this 'floating cloud sect', so he had no idea where they were right now. Staying inside the sect and gathering more information was probably the best decision.

Shun Long then thought for a bit before saying

"We have to quickly return to the safe area first. From there, I will head towards the entrance in the outer region alone. I guess that many disciples must have already gathered there by now."

After Shun Long walked out of the cave, little Black came out from the 'Stone of Time', as he unfurled his black wings and flew towards the safe area.

While flying, little Black was also using his soul sense at the same time, to see if there were any humans anywhere near them.

However, they didn't find a single disciple from the 4 sects inside the inner region.

After all, only a few elite groups like Yong Ru's senior sister, or the son of the sect master from the 'Iron-hardened sect' would dare to enter deep in the inner region in the first place, and even they had probably left already after the sect exam was officially canceled.

One day later Shun Long who was flying on the black dragon's back had arrived near the 'safe area'. However, he had already noticed from the sky, that the place had already been completely deserted.

Landing near the safe area, Shun Long had little Black return inside the 'Stone of Time' before he continued on foot for the rest of the journey.

With little Black scanning the way with his soul sense, Shun Long didn't meet a single beast above the early rank 2 or any disciple from the 4 sects.

After 3 days, he had returned back to the outskirts of the Demonic Mountain region.

"I'm probably just a few hours away from the entrance"

Shun Long inferred as he then remembered what Yong Ru had told him while they were traveling together.

Searching inside the 'Stone of Time', Shun Long grabbed the beast core of an early rank 2 bat, that little Black had killed when they had hunted the rank 3 'red fanged flame bat' in its cave, and put it inside his pocket.

Then he proceeded to walk towards the Demonic Mountain region's entrance.

2 hours later, Shun Long had arrived in front of the entrance as he saw 4 huge rows of disciples queuing up in front of it.

The disciples were all split according to their sect uniforms, and it seemed that at the start of each line, there was an Elder from each sect, doing some sort of inspection.

Shun Long walked at the end of the 'floating cloud sect's' line as he stood behind a young man seemingly no older than 14 years old.

Although Shun Long was relatively certain of what was happening, he still decided to ask the kid in front of him

"Junior brother, do you know what's happening in the front? Why do we have to line up here?"

The young man looked at Shun Long who had just queued up behind him nervously, as he clutched something in his hand before he responded

"Ah.. actu- actually, I heard from a senior sister that there is some inspection going on. I think that they are checking for what we acquired from the outer region and also count our survival points."

The young man replied stutteringly when the voice of a young girl sounded from the front of the line as she was shouting pleadingly

"Please Elder! I need this rank 2 'water pearl' to advance into the earth grade. I beg you don't take this from me."

Shun Long looked at the young girl who seemed to be around 16 years old and was clutching a pink pearl in her hands, as her eyes had turned red from tears. She was begging on her knees in front of the bald Elder Zhu.

Elder Zhu however, looked at her coldly as he forcefully snatched the pink pearl from her hands before he said

"It is thanks to the sect that you could even come here. Not only that, but the sect has helped nurture you since you arrived and now you dare to deny when the sect is asking you for something? After all, I am not stealing this 'water pearl' from you, but I am giving you sect points in return. This is a fair trade you know."

Shun Long snorted inwardly as he heard the bald Elder Zhu's words and thought

"What a joke. The sect has helped nurture the disciples? Everyone has to work to get any sect points in the 'floating cloud city'. It's thanks to the sect that she managed to come here? Yes, she had to risk her life whether she agreed or not as the sect forced her. You are not stealing from her? A fair trade you say? She is clearly being forced to trade whether she agrees or not. So this is the true face of the 'floating cloud sect' then!?"

The line was slowly moving up and people who seemed to be hiding something or didn't offer something of value by themselves, were personally searched by Elder Zhu regardless if they were men or women. 3 hours later, the line had come close to its end and the person in front of Elder Zhu was now the young man who was in front of Shun Long.

Chapter 82 - 82 Not first place?

Elder Zhu looked at the young man who had hidden his hands behind his back and just smirked as he said

"Show me your hands"

The young man started sweating as he shook his head, but Elder Zhu just moved behind him as he pried open his hands and took a small beast core that this young man was holding.

"Tsk, just a middle rank 1 beast core? Come here."

As he heard Elder Zhu's voice, the young man took a step forward and Elder Zhu started his body search. After finding nothing else Elder Zhu was disappointed. He then looked at the young man and said in a generous tone

"You are lucky kid. I will give you 50 sect points for this beast core."

The young man however, shook his head at Elder Zhu.

Elder Zhu then frowned as he asked in a commanding voice

"What? Don't tell me that you don't want to exchange this small middle rank 1 beast core. Could it be that you want me to expel you from the sect then? If you keep refusing I will have no other choice."

The young man's face paled instantly as he heard about being expelled from the sect and hurriedly shook his head as he said

"Elder, i-it's not that. I-I have just heard from a senior sister from the 'Flying sword sect' that... the Elders of the 4 sects may not be fair to small disciples like me when they purchase our goods."

The young man spoke weakly, and Elder Zhu looked towards the group of the 'Flying sword sect' in anger before he turned his attention to the young man in front of him and said

"Who said that?? Ask your fellow disciples here if I have treated any of them unfairly."

As Elder Zhu finished speaking he turned his head to look at the nearly 40.000 disciples of the 'floating cloud sect' behind him, who then turned their heads away as if they didn't dare to make eye contact with him.

Shun Long's mouth was agape at Elder Zhu's shamelessness. His face was probably thicker than the 'floating cloud city's' walls, for him to be able to spout lies like that in broad daylight. A middle rank 1 beast core could easily be sold for 70 sect points in the 'Treasure Pavilion' and yet he was 'righteously' purchasing it for 50 points here.

Even Elder Lu Cheng and Grand Elder Lan Hong, felt their faces somewhat redden as they heard Elder Zhu's words.

The young man suspiciously handed his middle rank 1 beast core to Elder Zhu, who then transferred him 50 sect points in his sect jade.

As the young man had already lost his survival point long ago, he didn't get an extra 10 sect points from Elder Zhu.

After patting this young man's shoulder, Elder Lu looked at the last person in the line, Shun Long.

Shun Long shrugged in indifference as he took out a rank 2 early beast core, making everyone's eyes widen. Even the strongest people in this 'outer sect examination' belonging to the 'floating cloud sect' like the peak rank 3 earth grade Guan Hong, could at most kill an early rank 2 magic beast.

Although they couldn't sense Shun Long's cultivation as he had completely hidden it with the 'Monarch's Hourglass', most disciples thought that he must be a peak rank 3 earth grade expert who had hidden himself before the sect exam.

After all, magic beasts at the middle of rank 2 and higher, were strong enough to easily kill rank 4 earth grade experts, so an early rank 2 magic beast was the limit for these disciples.

Although some disciples at the peak of rank 3 in earth grade could team up to defeat a middle rank 2 magic beast, the possibilities of killing the beast were almost nil. After all defeating and killing a magic beast were 2 completely different things.

Most disciples looked at Shun Long in pity. Being forced to give the beast core of a middle rank 2 magic beast that he had worked hard to kill must have been heart-tearing for him.

Elder Zhu however, looked at Shun Long with shining eyes as he patted his shoulder and said

"Good job, This is how disciples of the sect should conduct themselves. Helping the sect is also helping yourself.

Right, give me your sect identifying jade now. I will give you 1000 sect points for this beast core, as well as count your survival points."

Shun Long handed his 'sect identifying jade' to Elder Zhu, who after grabbing it was stumped for a good while. Taking another look at Shun Long's face he asked seriously

"What is your name kid?"

"Shun Long"

"You did very well!" Elder Zhu then, turned his head to look at the rest of the 'floating cloud sect's' members as he said

"The first place in our 'floating cloud sect', belongs to Shun Long who has gathered 118 survival points."

Everyone from the 'floating cloud sect' who heard this were shocked, including Elder Lu Cheng and Grand Elder Lan Hong. The previous person in the first place had only gathered a bit more than 80 survival points.

Among the group of shocked disciples were Xiao Shitou and Lin Wu, who looked at Shun Long incredulously. Due to the huge transformation that had occurred in his body thanks to the 'Monarch's Eternal body', they only recognized him after Elder Zhu had called out his name.

Lei Xiang and her followers however, were the only ones who looked at Shun Long with eyes that were spitting fire when they remembered how Shun Long had robbed them of all their sect points back in the outer region.

Aside from Lei Xiang, one more person looked at Shun Long with hostility, the red haired Guan Hong. Before Shun Long arrived, Guan Hong was certain that he would obtain the 100 spirit stones that the sect would give to the first place winner along with a spatial ring when they returned. There

was also the 100.000 sect points that the person who got first would also obtain. Although second place would only get 100 sect points less, there was a huge drop in prestige between being first or second from the sect.

A mocking voice however, brought everyone from the 'floating cloud sect' back in reality as the Grand Elder from the 'Flying sword sect' Hui Zhong looked at Grand Elder Lan Hong and said

"Haha, congratulations Lan Hong. It looks like your 'floating cloud sect' managed to at least get the 4th place this time."

Chapter 83 - 83 Challenge

Shun Long was shocked to find out that he had only won the 4th place.

Based on his estimations, unless the 3 geniuses from the other 3 sects didn't head in the inner region at all and only hunted for sect points in the outer region, they shouldn't have been able to gather more points than him.

Lan Hong however, looked at Hui Zhong with a mix of both anger and disdain as he said

"You really have the face to speak? Old man, I definitely didn't expect you to be so shameless. You actually had the disciples of your sect hand their survival points to your grandson and you still think that your family has any face left?"

Hui Zhong wasn't angered at all by Grand Elder Lan Hong's insults. Instead he looked at him gloatingly as he said

"This is called strategy old Lan. What do you know? If you were smart enough, you would have done the same as well as the rest of us."

Shun Long finally understood what had happened.

"Master, these people are too shameless!" Little Black felt indignation for Shun Long.

Shun Long however simply shook his head as he responded to him

"Although you could call them unfair or shameless, the fault still lies with the 'floating cloud sect'. After all, for the other 3 sects to do the same thing under the 'floating cloud sect's' nose is truly shameful for them. However, I do feel that it's a pity that I can't get my hands on that rank 3 'Blood Vermilion fruit'."

The 'Blood Vermilion Fruit' would have really helped Shun Long advance in his cultivation by quite a bit.

Grand Elder Lan Hong looked at the group of the 'floating cloud sect' and said

"We will wait here for 2 more days. If no disciple shows up after these 2 days, we will assume that they have died inside and will return back to the 'floating cloud city'."

After hearing Lan Hong's command, the disciples set up camp outside the Demonic Mountain region.

However, it seemed as if Shun Long was really among the last people that had left the region. In the next 2 days, very few disciples actually showed up, and Grand Elder Lan Hong summoned everyone to return back to the 'floating cloud sect'.

"I expected less than 10.000 disciples to come back alive from this 'outer sect examination'. I guess they are lucky that we had to cancel it ahead of time, or there would definitely have been more than just 20.000 that died this time." Elder Zhu was chatting with Elder Lu as they were heading back to the 'floating cloud sect'.

Their return journey was just as peaceful as the first one and 7 days later, they had arrived outside the 'floating cloud city'.

The people inside the city were startled to see the huge group of new disciples returning back to the sect.

Usually, the 'outer sect examination' was extremely bloody and only half of the disciples that set out would return alive. However, this year should have been even bloodier as it was the 'joint sect exam' between the 4 sects. And yet, more than half of the disciples had returned back alive, and most importantly, ahead of time.

Not even a month had passed since the Grand Elder's group had set out. And yet they had already returned back to the sect. Something must have definitely happened.

The disciples inside the Demonic Mountain region that participated in the sect exam, had also asked the Grand Elder why they were called out prematurely, but the Elder simply didn't answer.

After entering the city, Elder Lu Cheng called for the disciples to disperse while he had Shun Long, Guan Hong, and a female disciple called Fen Liqing that was also at the peak of rank 3 in earth grade, to come to the administration building with him to obtain their rewards.

Following the Grand Elder and the other 2 Elders, Shun Long soon arrived in front of the huge 'Administration Building'. Inside, the disciples hurriedly bowed to the Grand Elder who directly asked to meet Administrator Feng.

A middle-aged man could be seen running from the distance, as he soon arrived in front of the Grand Elder and politely greeted

"Greetings to the Grand Elder."

The Grand Elder, Lan Hong nodded his head at Administrator Feng who looked at him puzzledly, obviously wondering why they had returned back to the sect so soon when he said

"Xiao Feng, give them the prizes for the top 3. First place is Shun Long, second place is Guan Hong and third place is Fen Liqing." Lan Hong said as he introduced the disciples to Administrator Feng one by one.

It seemed that neither Lu Cheng, nor Administrator Feng whom Shun Long had met in the past realized who he was.

Administrator Feng handed Shun Long and the rest a silver ring, that was identical to his own. This was a spatial ring that only people with status could have in the sect. After transferring the sect points to their sect jades, Administrator Feng also handed 100 spirit stones to Shun Long as he said in an envious tone

"Haa, 100 spirit stones is really not a small sum."

Shun Long nodded his head at Administrator Feng without really paying much attention to his words when Grand Elder Lan Hong suddenly ordered them to leave as he had some matters to discuss with Administrator Feng.

Not just Shun Long and the rest, the entire 3rd floor of the 'Administration Building' was quickly cleared from all the disciples. Only the Grand Elder, the Administrator and the 2 Elders were left inside.

As they left the building, Guan Hong turned his head at Shun Long and said

"I don't know where you came from or how you gathered so many sect points, but I have my eye on you now. You better not become a laughingstock and forfeit when I challenge you in the arena in the upcoming days."

Shun Long looked at Guan Hong inquiringly, but Guan Hong simply snorted and left. Fen Liqing also cupped her fists at Shun Long before she went on her own way.

Shun Long then, decided to rent a room in the most expensive pavilion inside the 'outer city', the 'Mystifying Fragrance pavilion'.

Chapter 84 - 84 Subduing the 'Heaven swallowing vine'

The 'Mystifying Fragrance Pavilion' wasn't only a restaurant, but disciples could also rent rooms to stay there if they had the required sect point.

The Pavilion had 6 floors overall. However, only the first 3 could be used to dine. The other 3 were reserved for the disciples who decided to stay there.

Walking towards the east of the city, Shun Long quickly arrived in front of the 'Mystifying Fragrance pavilion'. The pavilion was actually located just a 10 minute walk away from the arena as well.

Walking through the pavilion's golden gates, Shun Long was soon greeted by a male waiter who asked him to take his order.

Shun Long however shook his head as he said

"I am here to rent a room"

The waiter was startled. Rarely would anyone come to the 'Mystifying Fragrance pavilion' to rent a room. It wasn't that their rooms were of low quality. No, it was simply a difference in price.

A room in a random inn anywhere in the 'floating cloud city' would cost you anywhere from 4 to 8 sect points for a month's stay. The 'Mystifying Fragrance Pavilion' however, priced its rooms starting at 100 sect points for each month.

The waiter who looked like he seemed to be in his early twenties, looked at Shun Long as he nodded his head and said

"Each room in our pavilion's fourth floor costs 100 sect points for a month's stay. The fifth floor rooms are priced at 150 sect points a month while the rooms on the sixth floor cost 200 sect points.

Of course, the rooms on the sixth floor are much better than the rooms at the fifth or the fourth floor. Our pavilion had a rank 1 silver grade formation master personally inscribe runes to every

room on the sixth floor, making cultivation inside them to be much faster compared to any other place inside the outer sect."

"Oh?" Shun Long was intrigued as he then said

"I'm curious to see how good a room inscribed with the runes of a rank 1 silver grade formation master actually is"

As he finished speaking, Shun Long took out his 'sect identifying jade' and transferred 200 sect points to the waiter.

The waiter bowed as he led Shun Long towards the sixth floor. Someone who could pay 200 sect points to rent a room for one month definitely wasn't a nobody.

Arriving on the fourth floor, Shun Long only saw closed doors compared to the previous 3 floors where there were tables and chairs everywhere on the floor.

On the fifth floor, the number of rooms seemed to be less than those of the fourth floor, while when Shun Long arrived on the sixth floor, he only saw 6 doors.

The waiter looked at Shun Long and said

"Dear guest, you only have to put your 'sect identifying jade' on the door and it will recognize you as the owner of the room for the next one month."

Shun Long nodded his head as he pressed his sect jade on top of the door, and after a small buzzing noise sounded, the door opened to reveal a luxurious room inside.

Seeing that Shun Long had opened the door, the waiter bowed and left the floor.

Entering inside the room, Shun Long was stunned by its interior.

Although the qi inside the room wasn't as good as the inner region of the Demonic Mountain region, it was almost on par with the 'safe area' there.

The room had a big bed in the middle while from the wooden window on the wall, Shun Long could even see the arena that was close to the 'Mystifying Fragrance pavilion'.

There were even 2 special rooms inside, one specially made for formation masters while the other one was for alchemists.

The room for formation masters had a large hammer as well as a small knife along with some other stuff inside it, while the room for alchemists had a pinnacle rank 3 cauldron that was actually on par with Shun Long's own.

Ignoring everything else, Shun Long directly sat cross-legged on the bed as he sent his spiritual strength inside the 'Stone of Time'.

In the 9 days that Shun Long stayed outside of the Demonic Mountain region, he had already reached the peak of rank 8 in qi condensation and was just a step away from the 9th rank.

Since he wasn't in a secluded environment though, he hadn't dared to mess with the 'Heaven swallowing vine' these days, and had simply let little Black absorb the pure qi that the vine was emitting.

Now however, Shun Long sat down as his mind entered the 'Stone of Time'.

Sending his spiritual strength towards the 'Heaven swallowing vine', Shun Long noticed that the vine immediately turned to absorb his spiritual strength as if it was some sort of food.

This was the way for Shun Long to connect with the vine. Sending his spiritual strength to it, would let the vine become more familiar with Shun Long.

The 'Heaven swallowing vine' could absorb almost every kind of energy and turn them into pure qi.

And yet it felt like Shun Long was trying to fill a bottomless hole no matter how much spiritual strength he was sending in.

After a full hour, the vine finally stopped sapping his spiritual strength as it became completely docile to him. Even with Shun Long's strength though that was on par with a rank 3 alchemist's, after a full hour he was completely spent as he lied down on the bed.

Little Black laughed after seeing that the vine inside the 'Stone of Time' had now become completely obedient and said happily

"Congratulations master! This is a true 'heavenly treasure' that will surely raise our strength. It was truly a waste for that 'silver-winged roc' to hold on to such a priceless treasure. After absorbing some qi in these 9 days I can already feel that I am close to another breakthrough, and my strength will definitely reach the peak of rank 4 by then."

Shun Long smiled as he heard little Black's words and after sitting cross-legged for a couple of hours to recover his spent spiritual strength, he mumbled to himself

"Little Black, let's see the effects of the 'Heaven swallowing vine' now."

Chapter 85 - 85 The Heaven swallowing vine's effects

Little Black's eyes shone as he heard Shun Long's words, while Shun Long sent a mental order to the 'Heaven swallowing vine' to start absorbing the qi in the air around him.

Shun Long knew that the 'Heaven swallowing vine' had a lot of qi inside it that it had absorbed over the years, and every 30 years it would usually discharge it in the Demonic Mountain region. Now however that Shun Long had taken the vine from the central mountain and had formed a mental connection with it, he could choose when the vine would discharge this pure qi.

However, Shun Long didn't want to have the vine discharge its qi recklessly like that. If the 'silver-winged roc' could control the 'Heaven swallowing vine' and slowly absorb the qi for itself instead of having it discharge it all in the environment of the Demonic Mountain region, the roc would have long since broken through to the 5th rank.

Shun Long didn't touch the qi reserves that the vine had inside it. He decided that it was better to use that qi when he was about to break through the earth grade.

The 'Heaven swallowing vine' then started absorbing the qi around Shun Long.

During this time, Shun Long could feel that the vine was practically filtering the qi, condensing it more and more before it released it inside the 'Stone of Time'.

Shun Long activated the 'Monarch's Domain' as he started absorbing the pure qi that the vine was releasing.

As time went by, Shun Long absorbed more and more qi as he tried to create his 73rd ball of qi and enter the early rank 9 in qi condensation.

The more that Shun Long advanced in his cultivation, the harder it became to advance into the next level. However, with the 'Heaven swallowing vine', the qi he was absorbing was simply incomparable to before.

Soon, 12 hours had passed since Shun Long had started refining the qi that the 'Heaven swallowing vine' was incessantly producing when a small popping sound could be heard from his body as he was still circulating the 'Monarch's Hourglass'.

In just 6 hours he had entered the early rank 9 in qi condensation.

However, Shun Long didn't stop refining the qi even after his breakthrough. Instead, he started absorbing even more of it.

After 12 hours had passed since he had started cultivating, Shun Long had entered the middle rank 9 and yet his cultivation still didn't show any signs of stopping.

Almost a full day later Shun Long had finally created his 81st ball of qi, reaching the peak of qi condensation.

Only then did Shun Long stop absorbing any more qi from the 'Heaven swallowing vine'.

There was no way to create another ball of qi as the 'Monarch's Hourglass' above his head was already full.

However, after creating the 81st ball of qi, Shun Long noticed that there were inconsistencies in his previous balls of qi. The balls of qi he had created towards the latter parts of the qi condensation, were much purer and brighter than the earlier ones.

To reach the earth grade, Shun Long had to condense all his previous balls of qi into one.

However, the strength of his first ball of qi when he reached the earth grade would be dependent on the strength of his previous balls of qi before they were merged together.

Taking a deep breath, Shun Long started absorbing qi from the 'Heaven swallowing vine' once more.

He was ready to purify all of his previous balls of qi, bringing them at the same quality as the last one he had condensed.

As Shun Long had started purifying his qi balls one by one, the entire 'floating cloud sect's' upper echelons had another meeting inside the main hall of the inner city.

These meetings, where every high-ranked Elder of the sect was summoned, were supposed to be extremely rare and unless the sect was facing an extremely serious situation they would never happen. And yet, around 2 months ago, they had started their first meeting thanks to the 'mysterious expert' who had appeared in the 'Treasure Pavilion' and now, they started the second one.

The sect master Liu Jian was sitting on the main seat, while everyone's eyes had turned towards Grand Elder Lan Hong, the bald Elder Zhu and Elder Lu Cheng.

"Grand Elder, what happened for you to summon another sect meeting?"

"Grand Elder, weren't you supposed to be in the Demonic Mountain region? Did something happen there?"

"I heard that Grand Elder brought back more than 40.000 disciples this time from the 'outer sect examination'."

Discussions and questions were being thrown around the hall when Liu Jian raised his hand and said

"Silence"

The discussions immediately stopped as Liu Jian continued

"The Grand Elder must definitely have a good reason to summon everyone for a sect meeting."

Everyone looked at Lan Hong who then started explaining the situation at the Demonic Mountain region.

At the same time, the exact same situation was taking place in the other 3 sects as well. The representatives of the 4 sects that had been in the Demonic Mountain region this time, had been startled by the 'silver winged roc's' cry. If something had happened to the roc, then perhaps the sects would have a chance to head to the central mountain and get a hold of the treasure there.

After Lan Hong had explained everything, there was absolute silence in the main hall as everyone's eyes had turned to Liu Jian on the main seat.

Liu Jian wore a serious expression on his face as he said

"I will have to discuss this with Da Chao and the rest. This is a serious matter that requires a lot of thought. Even if something had happened to that 'silver winged roc' and caused it to be injured, there are still other middle rank 4 magic beasts inside the central region. And in case that the roc is actually alright, then stepping foot in that hell hole will mean death for us."

The Elders wore serious expressions as well, when they heard Liu Jian's words, who was ready to meet up with the other sect masters and discuss about what course of action they should take.

After all, a single 'floating cloud sect' couldn't swallow the entire Demonic Mountain region, no matter how big their appetite was.

Almost a month quickly went by while Shun Long was in seclusion and serious changes had occurred in the sect, when he finally opened his eyes.

Chapter 86 - 86 Sharing the pills

After one month, Shun Long had finally purified all of his 80 balls of qi, bringing them to the level of the 81st. This was the absolute peak of qi condensation.

His cultivation now was just a step from entering the earth grade, while his strength would probably easily destroy any peak rank 3 earth grade cultivator.

Although Shun Long was just a step away from reaching the earth grade, he was first planning to make a trip to the 'Treasure Pavilion' and purchase some ingredients, before attempting his breakthrough.

Just as Shun Long reached the third floor of the 'Mystifying Fragrance pavilion' however, the familiar silhouette of a fat young man dressed in green robes could be seen rushing at him before that person asked in a somewhat confused voice

"Bro-brother?"

Shun Long looked at this person and smiled as he nodded his head.

This familiar person was, fatty Fu and he was looking at Shun Long slightly dazed.

The last time that these 2 had met, was 2 months before the 'outer sect examination'. However, just before the sect examination had started, Shun Long had refined the rank 2 'inner destruction pill' and his body had changed from the inside out, bringing a huge transformation to his outer appearance.

Shocked, fatty Fu looked at him from close up and after making sure that he was truly Shun Long he said

"Brother, your face seems to have... changed?"

Shun Long nodded his head, as he smiled and walked towards an empty table. He gestured for fatty to sit as well before calling over a waiter and saying

"Bring us 2 jars of 'Mystifying Fragrance wine'. I'm also staying in a room on the 6th floor. Here are 4400 sect points, for the wine and for 2 months of payment for my room in advance."

The waiter bowed as he received the 4400 sect points and hurried to bring Shun Long's order, while fatty Fu was looking at Shun Long with a wide open mouth before he asked

"Brother, where did you find so many sect points?"

Shun Long smiled as he opened his jar of wine, before he started explaining to fatty Fu that he had gotten first place in the 'outer sect examination'.

Aside from some secrets that involved little Black, the central region, the 'Profound earth fruit', and of course the 'Heaven swallowing vine', Shun Long recounted most of his experiences inside the Demonic Mountain Region to fatty Fu.

Nevertheless, fatty Fu was still extremely shocked when he heard that Shun Long had taken first place in the sect on this 'outer sect examination'.

"Brother... I still can't believe that you managed to get first place when there were even peak rank 3 earth grade disciples participating. Lu Wen will definitely be happy when he finds out about this too. Right, have you been in seclusion since you returned from the Demonic Mountain region?"

Shun Long nodded his head at fatty Fu's sudden question, who then continued

"In that case, let me fill you in on some things that you probably are unaware of. First of all, Lu Wen is in seclusion after his grandfather gave him the 'golden eagle spirit nourishing pill' and if he successfully refines it, he will probably be on par with rank 3 bronze grade alchemists."

Fatty then took a sip from his wine before leaning towards the table and lowering his voice she continued speaking

"The next 2 things I'm going to tell you are extremely important. Firstly, I heard from my father that the 'floating cloud sect' is going to ally with the other 3 sects that were in the Demonic Mountain

region this time, and asking for the help of another very strong power, they want to probe the Demonic Mountain region. But since this mostly affects the upper echelons of the sect, it is useless for us to worry about it."

Shun Long nodded his head as fatty Fu continued

"Remember how I told you that you need to enter the top 100 ranks in the arena if you wish to have a chance to become an inner disciple? Well, my father said that in the next few months, a secret realm will open and that it's the chance of a lifetime for us. There will be many precious treasures inside, and even some Elders of the sect will enter along with the disciples. However although all of the inner disciples will be able to enter this secret realm, only the top 100 from the outer disciples will be allowed to enter."

As he finished speaking, fatty Fu took out 2 bottles of pills as he pushed them towards Shun Long and said

"These are half of the rank 2 'Congealing Qi pills' that my father has given me to reach the peak of the earth grade. Although half of them won't be enough to reach the peak of the earth grade, I hope that after refining them, you can reach at least the late stages of the earth grade brother. Then we can enter the secret realm together."

Fatty Fu saw that Shun Long didn't accept the 2 bottles of pills yet and said

"If you consider me your brother then you have to accept the pills no matter what."

Shun Long however, shook his head as he smiled and simply said

"Thank you brother"

He then pushed the bottle of pills back to fatty Fu as he said

"It's because I truly consider you my brother that I won't accept these."

Shun Long now clearly understood fatty's character even more than before.

This gesture from fatty couldn't be counted with money or with anything else.

This was genuine brotherhood.

Shun Long however, had the 'Heaven swallowing vine, as well as enough medicinal ingredients to refine pills. Thus he had to give a good reason why he couldn't accept the 'Congealing qi pills', one that Fu Li couldn't deny

"Don't misunderstand fatty, I will definitely do my best to enter the top 100 in the arena ranks in the next few months. The truth is however, that I am mainly a body refining cultivator, so pills that aren't specifically meant for body refiners can't help me advance. Don't worry, soon I will be able to concoct some rank 2 'Bone Tempering pills' or even some 'Marrow cleansing pills' for myself."

Fatty Fu was stunned when Shun Long continued

"I need to make a trip to the 'Treasure Pavilion' and purchase a few ingredients before entering seclusion once again."

Chapter 87 - 87 Meeting Liu Mei again

Fatty Fu then stood up as he quickly gulped down the rest of the wine in his jar before saying

"Great! I also wanted to see my Jinjing."

Shun Long looked at him questioningly when fatty suddenly cleared his throat and said

Cough

"What I meant was that it's better for me to accompany you and help you get a discount on the things that you want to purchase brother. This is what brothers are for, right?"

Shun Long snorted, before also cracking a smile seeing fatty's antics and said

"Okay then, let's go together. Also, who is that Jinjing of yours?"

As they walked towards the 'Treasure Pavilion' fatty Fu puffed out his chest as he heard Shun Long's question and responded proudly

"It's my beautiful fiancée. You have also seen her before, back in the 'Alchemist's Guild'."

Shun Long tried to think for a while, and as he recalled the time when he had visited the 'Alchemist's Guild', a crazy idea swept through his mind as he looked at fatty Fu and asked in a voice filled with disbelief

"Fatty.. you... don't tell me that your fiancée is Lan Jinjing from the 'Treasure Pavilion'."

Fatty Fu started laughing proudly as he said

"Of course, who do you think this young master is? Her Lan and my Fu family have had a great relationship for many years.

Actually, there are 5 main families that have the most power in the 'floating cloud sect'. My Fu family and the Lan family are among those 5. The other 3 are the Lu family which Lu Wen comes from, the Meng family, and lastly the most powerful one is the family of the sect master, the Liu family. Every family has many powerful experts and most of them are high-rank Elders inside the sect."

Just as fatty Fu finished speaking, they had already arrived outside of the 'Treasure Pavilion'.

As soon as they entered, the staff of the pavilion greeted fatty Fu respectfully as 'auctioneer Fu'.

Fu Li happily accepted everyone's greetings as he nodded while he took Shun Long deeper inside the 'Treasure Pavilion'.

After arriving on the second floor, fatty didn't stop as he continued straight towards the third.

The third floor of the 'Treasure Pavilion' was exclusive only for people with high status inside the sect. Of course, as the heir to the Fu family, fatty Fu had no problem going upstairs and bringing people with him. Shun Long could also enter by himself using the VIP card that he had received from Yin Xing, but since he wasn't wearing his black robes he simply followed fatty Fu.

Entering the third floor, Shun Long noticed that the items on display here were much better than the previous 2 floors.

There were even parts of rank 3 magic beasts that were for sale. Shun Long even saw the beast core of a rank 3 'red-scaled python' being sold for 37,000 sect points.

Fatty Fu looked at Shun Long and said

"The best things of the 'Treasure Pavilion' are always in this floor. There are even some things that you may not find in the auctions here."

Fatty Fu followed Shun Long as he looked for medicinal herbs.

Stopping in front of a certain counter, Shun Long was slightly taken aback as he looked at the price of a certain rank 3 medicinal herb

"Ohh, a rank 3 'purple fragrant grass'? I will take this stalk"

Shun Long said to the young man behind the counter whose eyes lit up as he heard him. Although the 'purple fragrant grass' was a rank 3 medicinal herb, the truth was that nobody wanted to purchase it. Hence, even though it was a rank 3 medicinal ingredient, the 'Treasure Pavilion' had priced it at only 1000 sect points.

The reason that nobody purchased the 'purple fragrant grass' was because it was practically useless for alchemy. It couldn't be used as the main ingredient to concoct pills, and it could only be used as a side ingredient to improve the pill's fragrance, hence why no one had bothered to buy it. Shun Long however, had some special plans for it as soon as he saw the grass.

Looking around the third floor, Shun Long also found some more medicinal ingredients that interested him, and after 2 hours, he had spent almost 15.000 sect points.

As Shun Long and fatty Fu were looking around the third floor, the door of one of the private rooms opened, and a pair of beautiful women attracted everyone's attention as they walked side by side.

Both women were around the same height as Shun Long and they seemed to be wearing the green robes of an inner sect disciple. Behind the 2 women was a handsome young man in green clothes around 19 years old, who seemed to be fawning over one of the 2 women.

Shun Long too had turned his attention towards them as well and surprisingly, both women were also looking towards him and fatty Fu.

Fatty Fu smiled brightly as he exclaimed happily

"Jinjing!"

These 2 were the most beautiful women in the 'floating cloud city', Lan Jinjing and Liu Mei.

Lan Jinjing was a bit annoyed as she looked at fatty Fu, but when she thought that he could take care of the guy pestering her senior sister, her eyes lit up as she told him

"Fu Li, come here."

Fatty Fu smiled brightly as he hurriedly grabbed Shun Long's and brought him along to introduce him.

"Brother, this is my fiance, Jinjing. Jinjing, this is my brother Shun. You and sister Liu have also briefly met him before at the 'Alchemist's Guild'. "

Lan Jinjing and Liu Mei were astonished to see fatty Fu bringing someone with him. As the young master of the Fu family, Fu Li didn't have that many people that he called friends and even fewer that he called brothers. Given his frank character, bringing someone along with him, and especially one that he called brother meant that he must have a really good relationship with this person.

Lan Jinjing and Liu Mei both scrutinized Shun Long with their gazes trying to see when they had met this handsome man before. Shun Long's and Liu Mei's gazes met and he was once again mesmerized by her beautiful black eyes and peerlessly beautiful face.

Liu Mei was also stunned for a second as her gaze was attracted by Shun Long's deep eyes when a sudden voice came from the young man behind her drawing everyone's attention as he said

"Fu Li stop spouting nonsense. How could just any stray dog know sister Mei."

Chapter 88 - 88 Liu Mei's troubles

Everyone's attention had turned to this young man who was looking at Shun Long with a hostile gaze. He had caught him looking at Liu Mei but what had frustrated him even more, was that Liu Mei seemed to be dazed for a second looking at him as well.

The cold and proud Liu Mei who had never showed him any special attention, had her gaze glued to another man.

Fatty Fu was the first to react as he looked at this man and in a voice full of anger he said

"Meng Shengyi, you pathetic bootlicker how dare you insult my brother?! Why is trash like you even following sister Liu and my Jinjing anyway?"

The young master of the Meng family was furious after hearing fatty Fu's insulting words, but before he could even respond to him, Liu Mei's cold voice sounded as she said

"Young master Meng, please don't call me sister Mei as if we are intimate together. You and I barely know each other."

Liu Mei was extremely annoyed by Meng Shengyi's words. Although he had occasionally pestered her privately calling her sister Mei even though she had expressed her dislike numerous times, calling her like that in public was almost hinting that they were closer than they really are. However, although Liu Mei disliked Meng Shengyi, she had her own personal problems as well.

Lan Jinjing however gave a thumbs up to fatty Fu secretly as she then said

"Senior sister, I had an appointment with Fu Li today can you please accompany me?"

Liu Mei nodded her head at Lan Jinjing as they followed behind Fu Li who was heading with Shun Long towards one of the private rooms in the back.

Meanwhile, Meng Shengyi was still like a statue in the middle of the third floor, as everyone watched him being left alone.

His face had turned scarlet, unknown if he was embarrassed or angry as he looked at Liu Mei's and Lan Jinjing's back thoughtfully before he turned to leave the floor while he thought to himself

"Liu Mei, you ungrateful bitch. I have been chasing you for over a year and yet you still refuse to acknowledge me even after all of my sincerity? Watch how I make you pay in the future!"

As Meng Shengyi left the third floor of the 'Treasure Pavilion', Fu Li and Shun Long along with the 2 girls had just entered in one of the private rooms near the back. As soon as the door closed, Lan Jinjing started laughing as she said

"Fu Li, good job. Although you can be considered a lazy pig most of the time and grandpa Fu is right to beat you, you really made me happy today seeing Meng Shengyi's bitter face like that."

Liu Mei was also smiling as she heard that while Fu Li had a serious expression on his face as he asked Lan Jinjing

"Meng Shengyi can be a real problem for sister Liu though. He has been trying to court her for such a long time, and his father has even asked for permission from the sect master. Although the sect master said that he will consider this matter, wasn't today equivalent of slapping Meng Shengyi in the face?"

Lan Jinjing seemed as if she wanted to say something, but she then looked warily at Shun Long before she threw a look at fatty Fu.

Fatty Fu understood her meaning as he said

"This is my brother Shun Long. Jinjing you don't have to look warily at him. You had also seen him when he had come in conflict inside the 'Alchemist's Guild' with that Bu Dui. Anyways, he is my brother, you don't have to worry about anything and can speak freely."

Lan Jinjing and Liu Mei turned to look at Shun Long in astonishment as they suddenly remembered that scene from 4 months ago in the 'Alchemist's Guild'.

Liu Mei then smiled as she looked at Shun Long and said

"So that's why you looked somewhat familiar."

Seeing Liu Mei's beautiful smile Shun Long felt his heart stirring for a few moments. However, despite her enchanting appearance and even though he had a relatively good opinion of her, Shun Long wasn't going to judge a woman simply based on her looks.

Lan Jinjing nodded her head and looked at fatty Fu as she said

"Since no one of us here have any connections with the Meng family I will speak freely. Although Meng Shengyi is an eyesore and has pestered senior sister a lot, we have put up with him since his Meng family has a good relationship with their Liu family. However, today he declared to senior sister, that he will bring his father and officially ask for senior sister's hand in marriage in a few months. Senior sister said that she doesn't intend to marry him and yet all he said was that it doesn't matter as they can learn to love each other in the future."

As soon as Lan Jinjing finished speaking, silence permeated the room for a while until Liu Mei looked at Lan Jinjing and said

"It's okay, I will return and speak to my father about this. I think that he will understand"

"But senior sister..."

"No need to worry, I understand what you want to say, but you also know the position that I am in."

Lan Jinjing nodded her head and didn't continue to speak.

Liu Mei looked at Shun Long's eyes and noticed that his eyes were also looking at hers with hints of curiosity as well as interest inside them.

Liu Mei blushed and bowed her head at him as she said

"I apologize if I have caused you any trouble."

Shun Long shook his head as he smiled at her while Fu Li responded happily

"No trouble Sister Liu, no trouble at all."

"Of course she didn't cause you any trouble Fu Li."

Lan Jinjing looked at Fu Li as she spoke matter-of-factly before hooking her arm around Liu Mei's.

After the 2 women bade their farewells and left hurriedly to find Liu Mei's father, Fu Li turned his head to look at Shun Long and asked

"Brother Shun, have you fallen for sister Liu?"

Chapter 89 - 89 Undercurrents in the 'floating cloud sect'

Shun Long smiled as he shook his head and said

"I don't know if I have fallen for her but I am definitely interested in her."

"Haha, but I think that sister Liu has definitely fallen for brother Shun. I saw how her gaze was locked at you the entire time we were speaking.

Haha, congratulations brother. I as your brother will definitely support you."

However, fatty Fu's expression turned serious as he remembered something and said

"However, brother if you really want to court sister Liu then it will definitely be very hard. Putting aside Meng Shengyi that piece of trash from the Meng family, sister Liu has many admirers even inside the inner sect. And although she definitely seemed to be interested in you, her opinion actually won't matter at all."

Shun Long looked at fatty Fu puzzledly, who then continued explaining

"Right now, if it's true that Meng Shengyi said that he will bring his father and propose to sister Liu's father, then he will definitely accept. Sister Liu's father is the sect master and his Liu family has always had good relations with the Meng family."

Shun Long then couldn't help but ask

"Even if they have good relations and even if her father is the sect master, is it worth to sacrifice his daughter's happiness if she doesn't want to marry someone? After all, since the Liu family is the strongest in the 'floating cloud sect', then the Meng family shouldn't be able to pressure the sect master into marrying his daughter"

Fatty Fu shook his head as he then said

"You are right brother. However, things aren't as simple as they seem. In reality, although sister Liu Mei's status in the sect is second to no one as the daughter of the sect master, there is a known rumor going around inside the powerful families of the sect.

It is said that sister Liu's elder brother hates her a lot, since a little more than a year ago, when his best friend, the third son of the 'Flying sword sect's' sect master came to ask for her hand in marriage, she directly refused him saying that she doesn't want to marry him and that she will be the one who will choose who she marries.

Ever since then, Liu Changpun, sister Liu's elder brother, has had very strained relationsh.i.p.s with the 'Flying sword sect'.

Since sister Liu's elder brother is the son of the sect master's first wife and he is also going to become the next sect master, his opinion is taken very seriously by the sect master. Because of his extraordinary talent, the sect master views him even more importantly than the sect itself.

Meanwhile, although sister Liu is the child that the sect master had with his second wife, her status in the sect is far below her elder brother's.

Lately, the Meng family is also said to have come very close to Liu Changpu as well, so if he really decides to intervene on Meng Shengyi's behalf, considering how much the sect master listens to him, there is a very high chance that the marriage will actually go through.

"Master, if you want this Liu girl, then you don't really need to care about anyone and what they think. If worse comes to worst then I can come out and destroy everyone here."

Shun Long smiled as he heard little Black's suggestion and said as he looked at Fu Li

"Fatty, do me a favor. I'm planning to enter seclusion so keep an eye on Liu Mei's situation and if something really happens, send someone to let me know. The truth is that I am really interested in her and I don't want someone else to get her."

"Hahaha that's the spirit. I was already going to keep an eye on the situation anyway. The truth is that my family as well as the Lu's and the Lan's don't want for sister Liu to get married to the Meng family so if something really happens, they will all definitely oppose it. This concerns the balance of power in the 'floating cloud sect' after all.

Rest assured. If something really ends up happening then I will send someone to let you know brother.

Also, since I have told my grandfather about you, he said that he wants to meet this brother of mine who has such an amazing talent, so when you are free you should come with me to the inner city."

Shun Long nodded his head as he said

"Thank you brother. For now, I still have to enter seclusion and increase my strength if I want to reach the top 100 in the arena and enter the secret realm, but you can tell your grandfather that I will definitely come and visit in the future."

After bidding farewell to fatty, Shun Long decided to directly return to the 'Mystifying Fragrance pavilion'.

As he entered his room, Shun Long sat down cross-legged on his bed and he seemed to have remembered something as he took a look inside the spatial ring that Administrator Feng had given to him as his reward.

The space inside this spatial ring wasn't big, barely 10 square meters big and as expected, a black dagger with small runes on its surface was inside it. It was obvious just from its aura that this dagger was a silver grade weapon.

"I guess that's the reward for entering the top 10, a weapon from a silver grade formation master. It's too bad that I am not proficient in any weapons so this dagger is useless to me for now."

After putting the dagger back in his spatial ring Shun Long planted everything that he had purchased today from the 'Treasure Pavilion' inside the 'Stone of Time' before he said

"Little Black, as I attempt to breakthrough to the earth grade this time, you should also try to breakthrough as well. The qi inside the 'Heaven swallowing vine' is more than enough for both of us."

As Shun Long finished speaking he sent a mental message to the vine, to release part of its stored qi inside the 'Stone of Time'. Activating the 'Monarch's Hourglass' Shun Long's body greedily absorbed the pure qi from the 'Heaven swallowing vine' as he started his breakthrough.

Chapter 90 - 90 Breakthrough to the earth grade

The 'Heaven swallowing vine' was constantly filling the 'Stone of Time' with its pure qi, while Shun Long was greedily absorbing as much as his body could handle.

At the same time, in the 'Monarch's Hourglass', the 81 balls of qi were being compressed again and again.

Shun Long's aim was to compress them all into one ball of qi that would contain even more power than the 81 balls combined.

Shun Long was surprised to find out that, the pure qi from the vine was even more potent than what he had originally estimated.

Little Black also listened to Shun Long as he too started to absorb the qi from the 'Heaven swallowing vine' around him.

After 3 hours, little Black had absorbed nearly one-third of the pure qi inside the 'Stone of Time', until he finally started his breakthrough to rank 4.

In reality little Black was close to breaking through even without the 'Heaven swallowing vine', however, it would have taken him at least 2 more months to reach that point.

Meanwhile, inside Shun Long's body, the 81 balls of qi had been compressed down to just 3. The energy inside these 3 balls of qi was so powerful that Shun Long was finding it hard to keep them under control as he tried to merge them into one.

Sweat had started dripping from his head as he had now reached the most crucial phase of his breakthrough.

His mind was entirely focused on merging the 3 balls of qi into one.

This process required absolute focus and every second felt like an eternity. Seconds turned to minutes and minutes slowly turned into hours.

Almost one full day had passed and inside the 'Stone of Time', above Shun Long's head, there weren't 3 white balls of qi in the 'Monarch's Hourglass' anymore. Instead only a small, silver-white ball was left in their place.

This was the ball of qi made with the help of the pure qi from the 'Heaven swallowing vine', as well as the 81 balls of qi of the qi condensation stage.

And yet, Shun Long didn't seem to have any intentions to stop, as his body started absorbing the qi around him even more greedily.

A day later, there seemed to be 2 identical silver-white balls of qi in the 'Monarch's Hourglass'.

Shun Long's cultivation was rising non-stop and 10 days later he had already reached the peak of rank 1 in earth grade.

And yet, although the qi inside the 'Stone of Time' had started to thin, Shun Long didn't stop cultivating and a few days later he had already reached the early rank 2.

Early rank 2... Middle rank 2... Peak rank 2... Early rank 3!

Half a month went by and Shun Long was now just a step away from the middle rank 3 in earth grade.

But what horrified Shun Long was the incredibly high requirements of the 'Monarch's Hourglass'. With every minor rank that he advanced, the 'Monarch's Hourglass' required more and more qi.

Finally, 5 days later another popping sound was heard from his body as his cultivation reached the middle rank 3.

Little Black who had long ago finished his breakthrough was staring at Shun Long with eyes shining brightly.

"Nearly a month has passed and master has already reached the middle rank 3 in earth grade. However, it seems like the qi from the 'Heaven swallowing vine' has almost all been sucked dry by master."

A few hours later, Shun Long's cultivation had already stabilized at the middle of rank 3 in earth grade as he opened his eyes.

However the moment that he opened his eyes, Shun Long felt a stinging pain while the 'Stone of Time' started rotating inside his spiritual space.

Shun Long almost felt as if needles were piercing his eyes and yet he couldn't even close them, while little Black could only look at him horrified without having any way to help him.

It took almost an hour for the pain to start subsiding and yet, there was still a numbing feeling in his eyes.

Turning his head to look at little Black inside the 'Stone of Time', Shun Long noticed that the black dragon was looking at him tongue-tied.

Little Black watched the entire process as Shun Long's eyes had turned into a golden color, while they were also emitting a faint blue light.

As Shun Long turned to look at little Black, a scene suddenly appeared in his mind where the black dragon stood in front of him and said

"Master! Your eyes- their color..."

Five seconds later, Shun Long's eyes had turned back to normal, only to notice that little Black was looking at him, repeating the exact same words after just a few seconds later

"Master! Your eyes- their color..."

Shun Long was stunned as a feeling of déjà vu overcame him before he felt something akin to a small explosion coming from his spiritual space.

It was at this moment that the 'Stone of Time' had stopped rotating, and it radiated a horrifying suppressive aura that made even Little Black who had just experienced a major breakthrough feel like he was just an ant.

Scene after scene flashed by Shun Long's eyes, as they had unknowingly turned back to that golden color again.

A bit more than an hour later, Shun Long woke up and sent his consciousness back to his body before he sat up from his bed.

Little Black who saw that he had finally woken up then asked

"Master, what happened to your eyes earlier? Are you okay?"

Although Shun Long's eyes had turned back to normal now, little Black wouldn't forget that they had changed colors earlier.

Shun Long was ecstatic as he thought of his new ability and explained to little Black

"Don't worry, I'm okay. I just didn't expect that the 'Stone of Time' would have such a gift for me as soon as I advanced to the earth grade."