

Worth 621

Chapter 621: The Solitary, Handsome Dragon!

Wang Baole bemoaned how unfair fate was. It left him sighing with exasperation and powerless with regret.

“Just think about it. I, Wang Baole, the Federation President, the Grand Supreme Elder of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. My whole life, I’ve worked hard. Everything I’ve achieved was through my own blood, sweat, and tears. I walked through fire, one step at a time, without anyone’s help, like a solitary, handsome dragon, struggling in the jaws of fate, before I got to where I am now!” Wang Baole stood at the entrance of his cave abode, hands behind his back and his face towards the sky, muttering to himself in a despairing voice.

His whole life flashed across his eyes. He remembered the deep sense of loneliness he had felt, in both body and spirit, while he had traveled this solitary path, alone.

“Li Wuchen, on the other hand, was born a Dao Disciple. He’ll be able to regain his past life’s memories once he awakens. He shall become the sole authority in the Vast Expanse Dao Palace!

“Fates is so unfair!

“Such is life. Such injustice!”

Wang Baole’s right fist shot out and slammed into the wall next to him. The cave abode shook while the mountain trembled. It was like he was trying to vent his frustrations.

This clearly wasn’t enough. Wang Baole was about to cry out once again in fury and sorrow and demand answers from heaven when Little Missy coughed in his head.

“Enough! You buy everything that you’ve just said? What’s up with you... am I not human? Is your senior brother not human? How about Li Xingwen? Or the Martian Colony’s Governor? Try saying that you haven’t a single soul helping you again!”

Wang Baole fell silent at Little Missy’s words. He knew no shame though. He coughed and didn’t reply to Little Missy. Instead, he tried to continue basking in the emotions he had stirred up. This might prove difficult for someone else, whose bluff had just been called, but it was a piece of cake for Wang Baole.

Soon, he was immersed in fury and sorrow. He sighed and muttered to himself, “A true prodigy should be someone like me, Wang Baole, who rose above the mundane!”

“Besides, Baldy Chen might be a Dao Disciple, but he hasn’t awakened yet. I, on the other hand, am already an adopted disciple with a bright future ahead of me. He’s no threat to me now. Even after he regains his memories, so what? He might be the Dao Disciple, but I’m a Dark Child. Besides, it’s not like we have some terrible grudge against each other.” At that thought, Wang Baole patted his tummy and stopped worrying.

The days passed swiftly. The construction of his own palace on the main island progressed smoothly under the Dao Palace cultivators’ steady, hard work. Its size and model was the same as the palaces

belonging to the other three Grand Supreme Elders. It looked enormous and extremely lavish. They were also building a huge statue of Wang Baole outside the grand palace.

It inspired awe and respect in all Dao Palace cultivators who passed by. There were also numerous array formations set up around the main body of the palace. They were connected to the main array formation in the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. As long as Wang Baole remained in his palace, and as long as the array formation remained activated, even a Soul Conduit realm cultivator could do him no harm!

The resources required for setting up the array formations and constructing the palace were clearly immense. After a Dao Palace disciple sent the key to the array formation to him, Wang Baole made a trip down to the palace to inspect it. He was pleased with what he saw.

He soon moved off of Green Fire Island and into the palace. Federation disciples began to visit him there. Things finally settled down after a week. The other disciples in the Dao Palace also finally began to get used to Wang Baole's new position.

Wang Baole had declared during the ceremony the Core Realm Pavilion and Nascent Art Chamber open to Federation cultivators at their respective perfected Foundation Establishment realm and perfected Core Formation realm. Many Federation disciples had begun using the facilities and attempting a breakthrough.

Zhuo Yifan had been the first to do so and was still in seclusion. Sect Lord Xu from the Galactic Dusk Sect had also been the first to enter the Nascent Art Chamber and try for a breakthrough in cultivation.

Wang Baole himself didn't immediately enter the Nascent Art Chamber. He had just reached the perfected Core Formation realm, after all, and his cultivation had not yet stabilized at its current level. What he had to do now was to perfect his divine powers and allow his cultivation to truly reach its full potential at its current level.

Time passed steadily, and things began to settle down. Wang Baole would receive the occasional report from a few Federation disciples, but he spent most of his time practicing the final level of his Lightning Immortal Transformation and the second level of his Thearch Armor inheritance.

Progress for the former was sluggish and even slower for the latter. Wang Baole knew that he couldn't rush things though. He continued trying to figure things out without worrying too much. In that way, a month passed. Zhuo Yifan finally emerged from his seclusion. He had attained a breakthrough and advanced from the Foundation Establishment realm to the Core Formation realm!

He had also acquired an inheritance from the Eye of Infinite Techniques. As soon as Zhuo Yifan emerged from his seclusion, Wang Baole immediately contacted Feng Qiuran. Like Kong Dao, Zhuo Yifan was made an acting elder.

Wang Baole then handed some battle credits to Zhuo Yifan—as a loan—to aid the latter in his future cultivation. The reason it was a loan and not a gift was because Wang Baole had read the high officials' autobiographies. He knew that friends should never simply give money to one another. Doing so the first time might inspire gratitude. The second time, your friend might think well of you. But after a few times, people would start taking it for granted.

In fact, if you wanted to render someone completely useless, the best way to do so would be to get this person used to getting things for nothing. He or she... would turn into utter trash.

At his current age, Wang Baole still couldn't quite understand such things. But he had a habit. Anything he didn't know, he would simply follow what had been written in those autobiographies. He had done this many times, and it hadn't failed him yet.

That wasn't the only good thing to have happened for the Federation. Sect Lord Xu of the Galactic Dusk Sect—one of the few who had founded the Spirit Inception Era in the early-stage Federation—finally attained a breakthrough after a period of seclusion in the Nascent Art Chamber. Perhaps he had already built a strong enough foundation, so he had achieved the Nascent Soul realm without a hitch!

His breakthrough was different from the breakthroughs of other Nascent Soul realm cultivators from the Dao Palace. His strong foundation seemed to have resulted in a stronger aftermath that sent a shockwave surging outwards. Even though he was only at the early-stage Nascent Soul realm, the power he exuded already rivaled that given off by Dao Palace cultivators at the mid-stage Nascent Soul realm.

Wang Baole had been shocked when he had witnessed the breakthrough. He recalled what had happened during Li Xingwen and Duan Muque's breakthroughs. His senses hadn't been as refined then, so he had only known that they were strong. Now, after some comparison and analysis, Wang Baole suddenly realized that he might have underestimated both Duan Muque and Li Xingwen.

Both of them were clearly more gifted than Sect Lord Xu. Their powers would clearly be greater than that of an ordinary Nascent Soul realm cultivator. Furthermore, they had two years to cement their cultivation. Wang Baole wasn't sure if he could win them in a fight the next time they met.

Wang Baole couldn't help but feel slightly threatened. Regardless, Sect Lord Xu's breakthrough was good news for the Federation faction in the Dao Palace. Wang Baole personally conferred the position of elder upon the Sect Lord. There were now two elders under Wang Baole.

He also had two acting elders and numerous other disciples on the verge of reaching the Core Formation realm. They needed but time for their faction to grow more powerful.

Wang Baole had already proposed to bring forward the arrival of the third batch of Federation Seedlings. This would further consolidate his faction's power. Feng Qiuran's support ensured that Mie Liezi, while unhappy, would have to agree to his proposal. Wang Baole had now become the thorn in his side.

After becoming the fourth Grand Supreme Elder, Wang Baole had begun thinking carefully about the future of his faction. He had discussed the matter with Sect Lord Xu. After the Sect Lord's promotion to elder, Wang Baole released three announcements in the capacity of Grand Supreme Elder!

The three announcements sent the entire sect into an uproar!

The first was to promote the expansion of the Spirit Internet. He encouraged folks to set up businesses, removed barriers of entry, and allowed Dao Palace disciples to set up their own stores on the Spirit Internet. This boosted the exchange of resources and allowed disciples to gain from trading on the Spirit Internet!

Jin Duoming had done something similar in the past but hadn't achieved many results. The main cause of his failure had been his lack of status. It had seemed like he had been making a great deal of noise over nothing much in particular. The impact hadn't been as great as Wang Baole's official announcement, made in the capacity of a Grand Supreme Elder.

Now, there was Wang Baole's endorsement backing it. There was now a chance for its sustainable development. Once the foundation and structure were set up, the Spirit Internet would become an inseparable part of the Dao Palace!

Chapter 622: A Familiar Face Returns!

With the real-time synchronization between the mission stone stele and the Spirit Internet in place, Wang Baole's second announcement was the creation of a new post—a mission administrator!

The administrator's job was to assist cultivators—who were either training outside the Dao Palace or unable to return directly to the Dao Palace due to other reasons—by collecting the items obtained from the mission from these cultivators, submitting them to the sect on the latter's behalf, and allocating the awarded battle credits to the latter. This would save a great amount of time for Dao Palace disciples. After all, the journey to and fro wasn't short.

This idea had been Sect Lord Xu's. It was akin to the courier services found in the Federation. Prior to Wang Baole becoming a Grand Supreme Elder, it would have been challenging trying to propose such a new post. After all, a great deal of trust and risk were involved.

Wang Baole's current status resolved all such problems. In addition, the new rules dictated that only Federation disciples could become administrators.

Of course, there were still many other details to be ironed out, including the issue of compensation should problems arise. There was no need for Wang Baole to worry about those though. Sect Lord Xu was there to sort everything out.

The first two announcements led to Wang Baole thinking of the third one, which was... to set up a Loans Pavilion... with his and the Federation government's credit as basis!

The Loans Pavilion would be open to all Dao Palace disciples. Personal credit ratings would be set up for everyone. In addition, different credit limits would also be given based on their ranks. Each loan given would earn interest!

The impact of the third announcement was akin to dropping numerous Anti-Spirit Bombs on the Vast Expanse Dao Palace, shocking every disciple and displaying Wang Baole's and the Federation's wealth at the same time!

The Loans Pavilion was backed by both Wang Baole himself as well as the Federation government. It meant that the credits placed with the pavilion were guaranteed security. Loans given out were also guaranteed to be collected back, with interest.

Wang Baole's level of cultivation might not be high enough to provide assurance, but his status and rank ensured that few would dare default on a loan. Everyone had come to know his character as they

witnessed his rise to the top. They knew how vicious and merciless he could get... Sun Hai had set a memorable example!

The consecutive issuances of these three announcements would completely transform the Dao Palace as well as countless lives. They were practical changes though. No one would wish to forgo them after getting used to the changes. It was difficult for most people to forgo convenience after having gotten used to it.

There were a few who realized what Wang Baole was trying to do and protested the new measures, but Wang Baole had both authority and Feng Qiuran's support on his side. The voices of dissent were gradually lost in the crowd. In addition, Wang Baole wasn't interested in gaining this small minority's approval. What he wanted was to achieve convenience for the majority.

"In fact, they can curse at me while they continue using those services!" That had been Wang Baole's exact words when Sect Lord Xu had voiced his concerns after Wang Baole had proposed the idea for the Loans Pavilion.

Those words had convinced the Sect Lord. He had bowed deeply and gone ahead to execute Wang Baole's plans.

Those three measures were implemented. As the Dao Palace began to undergo a steady transformation, and as some people grew lost amidst the changes, Mie Liezi started to panic.

Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran had joined forces during this period of time, and many things began to spiral out of his control. He was powerless against them. Without rhyme or reason, Daoist You Ran resumed his past neutral stance, abstaining from voting on all matters. Mie Liezi grew increasingly anxious while his displeasure towards Feng Qiuran and Wang Baole intensified.

He had seen the changes that had overtaken the sect. He had seen the convenience the Spirit Internet had given them, the dangers it brought along, as well as how it had chipped at his power. If he continued to allow things to unfold in this manner, he had a feeling that the Dao Palace would soon be assimilated with the Federation. Then, it wouldn't simply be difficult to tear them apart, it would be impossible to do so.

There was something else that Mie Liezi found unacceptable. In his heart, the Dao Palace reigned supreme, and outsiders who hadn't received the Dao Palace's acknowledgment were all beneath the Dao Palace!

With Wang Baole's rise in power and his series of new initiatives, the status of Federation disciples had risen greatly in the Dao Palace. Many Dao Palace cultivators had even grown accustomed to that. They subconsciously felt that everyone was now equal.

All this contributed to Mie Liezi's anxiety. However, he knew that with Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran joining forces, he had little chance of retaliating against them.

That was why he told himself to grit his teeth and shoulder on while waiting for his chance!

When his chance came, and he decided to strike, he would stir up a huge storm, summon chaos and destroy order, and overpower everything in his path!

With that thought in mind, Mie Liezi decided to retreat into seclusion. He would strengthen his cultivation and, at the same time, spend more time guiding his disciple, Dugu Lin, whom he had placed his hopes on. His desire was for Dugu Lin to reach his breakthrough as soon as possible.

As a result, control over the Dao Palace fell to Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran during this period of time. There was naturally no disagreement about the arrival of the third batch of Federation Seedlings. The proposal was passed smoothly. Their arrival would take place a month later.

By using his authority, Wang Baole hid from Feng Qiuran the fact that he had demanded the presence of two people in this third batch!

The first was the Martian Colony's Deputy Governor, the giant tree!

The second was... Li Wuchen!

The identification of new seedlings was under the Federation's internal purview. In addition, Feng Qiuran had no way of knowing that Wang Baole had accessed the Hyacinthus Tree's memories. As a result, she paid no attention to the incoming third batch of Federation Seedlings. It was this oversight that resulted in Li Wuchen's presence amongst the hundred Seedlings a month later. Feng Qiuran saw the slightly lost and nervous look in Li Wuchen's eyes as he stood in the array formation. Her breathing quickened instantly.

Wang Baole pretended that he didn't notice. Feng Qiuran had her suspicions but found no appropriate channel to voice them. She could only hide her doubts while staring past the crowd and at Li Wuchen, a myriad of emotions flashing across her eyes.

Li Wuchen had seen Feng Qiuran, but he didn't recognize her at all. On the other hand, he was quite familiar with Wang Baole, who was seated next to Feng Qiuran and surrounded by numerous cultivators. Wang Baole seemed to have done very well for himself.

A mixture of feelings and jealousy surged inside Li Wuchen almost instinctively. The Federation was aware of Wang Baole's newfound status. They had received news of it recently, and it had created quite a commotion.

He had only found out just before his arrival. Regardless, it had been just as shocking. He sighed, troubled. He had some conflicts with Wang Baole, and Wang Baole believed in an eye for an eye, so Li Wuchen believed he was going to be in for some hardship. He had developed feelings for one of Wang Baole's juniors whilst in the Ethereal Dao College. This increased the anxiety he was feeling now. He lowered his head and stole a glance at the crowd. His eyes landed on a young lady from the Ethereal Dao College. Hidden beneath the mix of feelings shining in his eyes was a certain softness.

Mei'er might be stressed because of Wang Baole. It doesn't matter if I suffer a little hardship as long as Mei'er is free from troubles. It'll be worth it! Li Wuchen kept his breathing controlled and prepared himself mentally. He stepped out of the array formation with the rest of the Federation Seedlings and greeted Wang Baole and Feng Qiuran with cupped fists.

What he didn't know was that he wasn't the most nervous person in the entire third batch of Seedlings. The person who was secretly trembling the most, and feeling the most nervous, was a middle-aged man standing nearby!

He was... the giant tree, also known by many as their Fellow Daoist Osmanthus.

His anxiety had reached a peak. He had asked around and found out that he hadn't originally been included in this third batch. Wang Baole had been the one who had demanded his presence.

That had terrified the giant tree. He wailed inwardly and raged sorrowfully. He hadn't expected this wretched Wang Baole, who had ruined his plans in the past, to rise up and become the Grand Supreme Elder of the Dao Palace within a mere few years!

There is no justice in this world! The giant tree and Li Wuchen raged inwardly, while troubled with their own worries. They greeted Wang Baole meekly while the latter simply grinned widely, his eyes occasionally landing on the both of them.

Feng Qiuran wasn't her usual self either. She forced out a few words then left in a hurry, intending to send a voice transmission to Li Xingwen via the teleportation array formation. She was going to ask him why he had allowed Li Wuchen to return.

Wang Baole watched as Feng Qiuran left. He said a few words as well before leaving and heading back to his palace. The third batch of Federation Seedlings was dispersed. Just as the other Federation cultivators began leading them away to get these new arrivals familiar with the place, Sect Lord Xu shouted out.

"Fellow Daoist Osmanthus, please wait a moment. The Grand Supreme Elder requests your presence in his palace."

The fretting giant tree, who had just released a sigh of relief and been lulled into a false sense of complacency, shook upon hearing that. He turned around slowly. He was silently screaming inside his head. He dared not reveal anything on his face though. He gritted his teeth and nodded.

"Fellow Daoist Osmanthus, we are old acquaintances... there is something I'm not sure if I should tell you." Sect Lord Xu looked at the other cultivator with regret.

"Please share your thoughts!" The cunning giant tree immediately lifted his head upon hearing that and gave the Sect Lord a deferential bow.

"Some people are destined for great things. If you could seize the opportunity presented to you, even past conflicts can be resolved and transformed into a chance for you to ascend to greater heights. Such things are not impossible!" Sect Lord Xu gave the giant tree a meaningful look as he spoke softly.

Chapter 623: Just One Step Away!

The giant tree listened quietly to Sect Lord Xu, the man who had once fought him for a chance at attaining a breakthrough on the moon. The gears in his head began to spin furiously as he continued to reveal nothing on his face, maintaining a polite, deferential appearance. He cupped his fists and bowed deeply.

"I thank Sect Lord Xu for your advice!"

Sect Lord Xu, who had risen to the Nascent Soul realm, eyed the giant tree with a deep, meaningful look. He didn't say more. He walked ahead, towards Wang Baole's palace.

The giant tree followed hastily. As the other new arrivals scattered, the giant tree followed Sect Lord Xu to the fourth grand palace on the main peak.

The heavy Spirit Qi in the air, the presence of dozens of Nascent Souls, the Soul Conduit realm presence exerted by Mie Liezi and the other two Grand Supreme Elders, and the array formation enveloping both heaven and earth—everything made the giant tree shake in his boots. His heart grew increasingly heavier.

It worsened when they arrived before the fourth palace, and the giant tree saw Wang Baole's towering statue in front of the palace. It was a shocking sight. He could feel power emanating from the palace itself. His breathing quickened. What made things worse was the look of deference and respect on Sect Lord Xu's face as he stood at the entrance and bowed deeply at the shut gates. This was someone who had reached the Nascent Soul realm and could easily crush him.

"Xu Yunkun greets the Grand Supreme Elder. I have brought Fellow Daoist Osmanthus, as you instructed."

A flood of emotions threatened to pull him under as he watched the scene unfold before him. He had prepared himself mentally, but seeing a Nascent Soul realm cultivator treating Wang Baole with such deference still made his breathing quicken uncontrollably. His heart raced. He lowered his head instinctively as he cupped his fists as well and said bitterly.

"Osmanthus Moon greets the Grand Supreme Elder."

The halls descended into silence after their greeting. A long moment passed. Then, Wang Baole's voice rang out, slow and calm.

"You may enter."

Sect Lord Xu knew that he shouldn't be present during this meeting. Upon hearing Wang Baole's words, he bowed again and left without sparing the giant tree a single glance.

The giant tree began panicking and sighing at the same time. He dragged his feet for some time before gritting his teeth and stepping towards the palace. He pushed the doors open. Wang Baole's figure, back turned towards him, appeared in his view as soon as he stepped inside.

"Osmanthus Moon greets the Grand Supreme Elder!" Sighing inwardly, the giant tree lowered his head deferentially, cupped his fists, and bowed deeply.

The grand hall of the palace was extremely lavish. Besides the enormous chair placed at the end of the hall, its two sides were lined with seven to eight chairs as well. Nine statues were positioned around the hall. They looked like guards and exuded the power of an array formation. It terrified the giant tree.

Wang Baole had his back towards the giant tree. He stood next to the chair at the end of the hall, gazing at a statue in front of him. He appeared not to have heard the giant tree's greeting. It was as if the statue in front of him contained a secret that required his detailed study.

Time passed slowly, and Wang Baole seemed to show no signs of turning around. He appeared to only have eyes for the statue. The silence was torture for the giant tree. He was wrought with anxiety. The palace's looming aura enveloped him, and his nervousness grew as he stood bitterly, waiting.

Everything was made worse by... the familiarity of the scene unfolding before him... When Wang Baole had first arrived on Mars, he had summoned him to his office. Then, he had done the same to Wang Baole, to take him down a notch.

This was Wang Baole repaying the favor. The giant tree was powerless to stop him and could only wait silently. The palace doors gradually slid shut, and silence descended. The heavy Spirit Qi in the air led to the formation of Spirit Fog in the hall.

In the fog, Wang Baole gave off an aura of mystery. The giant tree's unease grew. Fifteen minutes passed. As the giant tree's fear and anxiety reached their peak, Wang Baole's voice finally rang out raspily in the hall.

"Fellow Daoist Osmanthus..." Wang Baole rose slowly to his feet as he spoke.

"We meet again!"

Those words sounded familiar. The giant tree grimaced. His head remained lowered as he found himself at a loss for words.

"Fellow Daoist Osmanthus, do you know why I'm the fourth Grand Supreme Elder in the Vast Expanse Dao Palace?" Wang Baole had what seemed like a smile on his face. His eyes fell on the giant tree as he asked softly.

The giant tree fretted. He finally understood how Wang Baole must have felt during their first meeting on Mars. He had asked a similar question then. He knew Wang Baole wanted him to play along. He also knew that he wasn't in any position to refuse Wang Baole, so he braced himself and whispered.

"Why..."

"Why? You're asking me why?" Lightning flickered in Wang Baole's eyes, and electricity erupted outside his body. He stared at the giant tree as he said slowly.

"That is because I was just one step away from the Core Formation realm on the moon. One step away. Just one! With my level of cultivation and battle prowess, if I had reached the Core Formation realm then, I could've attained the Soul Conduit realm by now. I wouldn't be just the fourth Grand Supreme Elder!"

Wang Baole narrowed his eyes. His words rang across the hall, sending the entire palace shaking. An overpowering force weighed down on the giant tree, causing his knees to turn to jelly. He almost fell to his knees.

The giant tree grimaced. He was overly familiar with those four words. He had frightened Wang Baole with them in the past. If he had a choice, he would try and find some way to leave this place and return to Mars immediately.

This ancient greenish-bronze sword was simply too dangerous a place for him to be.

The sense of danger and unease hadn't passed. A stormy-faced Wang Baole walked to his seat and sat down slowly. He stared coldly at the giant tree and spoke again.

"I've been thinking. If I try eating some rare fruits now, would I be able to break through to the Nascent Soul realm... like that half of one fruit you swallowed back on the moon."

The giant tree's head buzzed when he heard that. He began heaving as he retreated subconsciously. An overpowering force erupted around him, immobilizing him and holding him in place.

The giant tree shook violently as terror surged inside him. This was why Wang Baole had him transferred to the Dao Palace!

He couldn't accept this, but his struggles were to no avail. Wang Baole wasn't the only one giving him immense pressure. His status and this palace had rendered the giant tree completely helpless. He still had his cunning though. Even though he was panicking, he could tell that something was going on here. If Wang Baole truly intended to eat him alive, there was no need for him to waste so much time talking. This gave the giant tree hope.

"Elder Wang... I..."

"I know what you want to say. I also know you can tell that I have no intentions of eating you at this moment. But Fellow Daoist Osmanthus, set aside your devious thoughts and guesses and just remember this one thing. You... owe me a fruit!" Wang Baole cut the giant tree off and said calmly. The unfathomable look in his eyes sent the giant tree shaking. He finally reached a realization after a long bout of silence.

Even though Wang Baole hadn't said anything explicitly, he could tell that Wang Baole had something he required the giant tree to help him carry out in the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. That was why he had been summoned here. The giant tree took a deep breath and bowed again.

This round, he was more serious and showed more respect.

"Your humble servant will do his best to fulfill your wishes!"

Wang Baole nodded. He liked talking to smart people. There was a reason why the giant tree had been able to get to where he was now. He hadn't summoned the giant tree for some fruit. He had summoned him... for the burial mound that he had found in the hexed area near the Worship Palace Pavilion!

Based on Zhao Yameng's analysis, there was a possibility that only pure wood-based entities could enter the burial mound. Wang Baole had begun considering potential candidates then. In his opinion, if the giant tree couldn't fulfill the requirements for entry, there was really no one else he could find for the job.

That was why he had asked for the giant tree to be included in the third batch of Federation Seedlings.

"Fellow Daoist Osmanthus, I have something for you. Do this one thing for me, and I'll not only forget everything that has happened between us, but I'll even give you a chance to attain the Nascent Soul realm!"

Wang Baole said softly, in a low voice. Amplified by the palace's array formation, it echoed and shook one to the core!

Chapter 624: A Divine Armament's Ancient Bones

The giant tree had no choice!

He was in no position to make a choice. He was like Wang Baole when he had just arrived on Mars. Wang Baole had been in no position to make a choice at that time either. He had been forced to take precautionary measures, to gradually gain influence and power and finally reach a balance in their relationship where he could guarantee his own safety and that of his self-interests.

When Wang Baole had first arrived on Mars, if he hadn't chosen to venture into the education sector to establish his name, if he hadn't chosen to create an impression in front of the Martian Colony Governor, if he hadn't chosen to fight to become the person in charge of the new zone, if he hadn't realized how important Zhao Yameng truly was to the Governor when he arrived at the Dao Palace, he wouldn't have grown to become so famous and he wouldn't have risen through the ranks so swiftly. He wouldn't have become such a threat to the giant tree. The chances of his premature and accidental death would have been greater.

Of course, the giant tree had also been wary of Duan Muque then. He hadn't been able to see through Duan Muque's intentions for sending Wang Baole to Mars. That had been why the giant tree had practiced patience and caution earlier on instead of acting recklessly. However, when he had finally made up his mind to act, Wang Baole had already shown incredible progress and established a formidable network that discouraged the giant tree from causing trouble for him.

A grudge remained between the two, but none had taken action to set the matter to rest. That was why Wang Baole had created such drama and then let him off so easily. The infiltration of the burial mound was his primary goal, and the giant tree's submission to his authority secondary.

Wang Baole didn't care if the giant tree readily accepted his authority. The high officials' autobiographies had written very clearly about this. There were no eternal loyalties in this world, and hence no eternal betrayals. He only needed to let the giant tree know the painful price of betraying him. It would be greater than he could bear. That knowledge alone would be enough.

This was true of anything going on in the world, including the affairs between a man and a woman. Wang Baole was keenly aware of that. He had no experience in the latter. As for the former, he acted according to what he believed in. That was why he led the giant tree out of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace and, using the teleportation array formation to the Worship Palace Pavilion, brought the latter to the Worship Palace Pavilion!

Any other person wouldn't have had the privilege to use this teleportation array formation. It didn't matter how many requests they submitted. Only those who had a leaf from the Hyacinthus Tree were allowed to activate the teleportation array formation.

These rules didn't bound Wang Baole though. As one of the four masters of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace, unless what he was about to do amounted to treason, there were few who could overrule his actions.

He wasn't concerned that he might fall prey to danger when out alone with the giant tree. His status allowed him to disregard most of the hexes while out in the region of the sword body. What were dangerous grounds to the giant tree was home to Wang Baole. Besides, Wang Baole was confident in his abilities.

He had slain a Nascent Soul. The giant tree might be strong... but he wasn't as powerful as Patriarch Black Wind or Elder Sun Hai!

Wang Baole had no intention of killing the giant tree. However, should the giant tree harbor ill intentions, Wang Baole wouldn't show mercy. He wouldn't try to conceal anything either. He would announce openly to the world so that everyone would know the giant tree's malicious intent!

Wang Baole was certain that the cunning and intelligent giant tree was well aware of the advantages and disadvantages of his current situation. That was indeed the case. The giant tree continued to remain nervous after Wang Baole had teleported them to the sword body. His attitude towards Wang Baole remained deferential.

"Did you see that?" They soon walked out of the Worship Palace Pavilion, and Wang Baole quickly led the giant tree down a familiar path. They appeared at the edge of the hexed area where the tomb was located. Wang Baole raised his finger and pointed.

The giant tree immediately went into high alert. He gathered his full concentration and looked over. There was no way he was going to drop his guard. He was quite sure that Wang Baole wasn't going to harm him, but any place that made Wang Baole act with such caution was going to be extremely dangerous.

The giant tree took a deep breath and surveyed the grounds carefully. He inspected the hex, then the tomb. He saw the burial mound and the cracks, as well as the green mist.

His senses seemed dulled by the hex. However, as soon as he saw the green mist, he felt a sense of resonance with the mist. His eyes flashed. Then, he saw the green wooden sword on the ground!

It was then that the giant tree finally realized why Wang Baole had chosen to bring him here. He wondered if he could indeed overcome the obstacles ahead of him.

Wang Baole didn't rush him. He waited for the giant tree to come to a decision. He sighed happily. This was why it was great working with smart people. He only needed to say one thing for them to work everything else out. There was no need for him to explain in detail.

A long moment later, a resolute light finally flashed across the giant tree's eyes. He cupped his fists and saluted Wang Baole.

"Elder Wang, please deactivate the hex. I need to inspect the tomb in detail before I can give you any answers."

Wang Baole nodded. With a wave of his hand, a door of light appeared at the edge of the hexed area. It opened, and the air inside rushed out. Along with the escaped air was the faint, almost imperceptible sound of breathing.

Wang Baole watched warily as a solemn-looking giant tree formed a series of hand seals, then suddenly snapped off one of his fingers and threw it forward. The broken finger transformed into a tiny man and dashed forward, charging straight at the open, shining door.

It sped through and shot into the green mist without hesitation. It circled the tomb, then grabbed the wooden sword on the ground and returned swiftly.

Nothing happened during the entire thing. No dangers befell the tiny man. It returned safely and transformed back into the giant tree's finger again. The giant tree handed the sword politely back to Wang Baole, then whispered.

"The green mist has a limited effect on me. I should be able to last thirty minutes inside. What would Elder Wang have me do?"

Wang Baole narrowed his eyes. He didn't take the sword. Instead, he asked, "Can you sense it?"

The giant tree hesitated but didn't dare to hide the truth from Wang Baole. Wang Baole might be younger than he was, but the giant tree was well acquainted with Wang Baole's mind and his methods. He had seen what the young man was capable of on both the moon and Mars. He knew the many powerful techniques the young man possessed, and the equally many ways he could kill someone.

He spoke truthfully.

"I can sense... the presence of a Divine Armament!" The giant tree shook as he said the last few words. The value of a Divine Armament to a cultivator was impossible to explain!

"Good. You can have this sword. Now... retrieve the Divine Armament for me!" Wang Baole nodded and said coolly. An unfathomable light shone in his eyes. He stared at the giant tree and waited for the latter to come to a decision.

The giant tree fell silent. He thought for a very long moment before finally gritting his teeth. He didn't refuse to do it, nor did he explain how difficult the task was going to be. This was a chance for him—to settle the grudge between him and Wang Baole and to finally achieve a breakthrough. He wasn't going to find the latter in the tomb. The chance... was going to be given by Wang Baole, who had said so earlier—the chance to rise to the Nascent Soul realm!

He had begun his path of cultivation many years ago. Because he had only managed to absorb half a fruit on the moon, his cultivation had remained stagnant at the perfected Core Formation realm. He hadn't been able to break through to the next level. He watched hungrily as Duan Muque, Li Xingwen, and even Xu Yunkun, achieved their breakthroughs, and he longed for his.

He might not have believed anyone else who told him that they could give him a shot at it, but this was Wang Baole, who had risen to become the Grand Supreme Elder of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. He believed Wang Baole!

Determination flashed in the giant tree's eyes. He dashed through the bright, shining door and approached the green mist under Wang Baole's cautious, hopeful eyes. His body contorted itself. He shrank, then snaked into one of the cracks on the tomb!

Wang Baole grew excited as he watched the giant tree slip in. He made preparations to leave at a moment's notice should things go south. He activated the Flame Snatch Thearch Armor as well. He wasn't an ungrateful person. If the giant tree did try his best to fulfill his request, Wang Baole would find some way for them to escape together should danger occur.

Time passed slowly. Before long, thirty minutes went by. A crease began to appear on Wang Baole's forehead, and he narrowed his eyes. It was then that an explosion suddenly erupted from inside the tomb!

The cracks on the tomb grew and spread outward as the thunderous booms persisted. Green mist continued to escape from the cracks. The sound of breathing suddenly became louder. Wang Baole shook, and his head began to buzz. It was then that the giant tree suddenly dashed out from one of the cracks!

His face was pale, and terror colored his eyes. In his hand... were the bones of a broken arm!

The broken arm gave off an immense aura that spoke of time and death. It exuded the power of a Divine Armament!

Chapter 625: Fusing the Arm!

Wang Baole's pupils contracted. His eyes saw only the broken arm.

There was a strong Divine Armament's aura exuding from the broken limb that threatened to rise to the heavens. The giant tree shook as he carried the broken arm. A howl like that of a furious beast erupted from the tomb behind him as he fled. Massive clouds of green mist were discharged into the air as the howl rang out.

The green mist transformed into a large hand that went after the giant tree. It seemed intent to drag the giant tree back into the tomb and keep him there with it forever!

The giant tree despaired as danger loomed over him. He could feel an incredible suction pulling at him. The threat of death blared in his head ceaselessly, like sirens. His only hope rested in Wang Baole. He could only hope that Wang Baole wouldn't leave him to die and that the latter wouldn't demand that he throw the broken arm over to him.

The latter meant that Wang Baole planned to only save the arm and not him. He would be left with no choice. He could hold on to the arm and hope that Wang Baole would save him along with the arm... but that meant that they would remain enemies in the end. His chances of survival after that were slim.

Just as the giant tree drowned in rage and despair, something unexpected happened. Wang Baole didn't ask him to throw the arm to him. Without any hesitation, he unleashed the devouring seed inside his body and directed its suction force at the giant tree. The sudden force combated the pull from the gigantic hand and gave the giant tree an additional burst of speed!

Wang Baole wasn't done yet. As soon as he unleashed his devouring seed, his Lightning Avatar also appeared. Both the avatar and Wang Baole dashed towards the giant tree.

They appeared at the giant tree's side instantly. As the gigantic green hand rushed towards them with an intent to wipe them out, Wang Baole gave the giant tree a huge push. The organs inside the giant tree shook violently under the tremendous force. However, the push also gave him another burst of speed. The distance between him and the gigantic hand widened yet again!

Next, Wang Baole's avatar grabbed the giant tree's arm and yanked him forward. He finally managed to escape death.

Everything happened just as the giant tree was despairing. However, as soon as the distance between the giant tree and the enormous hand grew, the latter came charging again. The sounds of heavy breathing continued to escape from the tomb. Wang Baole's eyes flashed. He switched places with his avatar instantly.

The avatar rushed towards the gigantic hand. Then, it exploded as soon as they collided. A thunderous boom erupted. Wang Baole's hands were a blur as he formed a series of hand seals and then pointed towards the hex over the tomb.

The shining door of light slid shut instantly. The gigantic hand, slowed down by the avatar's self-induced explosion, was trapped inside the hex. It roared inside its prison.

"Follow me!" There was no time to find out what was going to happen to the hand. Wang Baole raced off with a fierce look on his face. The giant tree was shocked. He couldn't believe that Wang Baole hadn't mentioned a single word about the broken arm. He had instead poured all his energy into saving the giant tree's life. The giant tree was also equally shocked at the danger he had just survived. He panted as he followed Wang Baole closely. With Wang Baole's help, they finally made their way back to the Worship Palace Pavilion.

They had unleashed their full speed, shooting through the air like bolts of lightning. The sounds of furious, and seemingly mindless breathing continued to follow them, affecting them. When they finally arrived at the Worship Palace Pavilion and stepped inside, the breathing in their ears also finally stopped. It was as if it had been cut off.

The two finally released a sigh of relief. The giant tree was about to speak when Wang Baole stopped him. They entered the teleportation array formation hurriedly. The light from the array formation shone around them. They disappeared and reappeared at the border between the sword body and the sword handle, faraway from the tomb. That was when they could truly let down their guard.

The giant tree's face was pale, and his heart was still racing fearfully. He had experienced death looming over him just moments ago. A slight oversight could have gotten him killed.

"What is this place?" The giant tree looked around and muttered.

Wang Baole bit back a sarcastic remark. How would he know? An idea stirred in his head. He pretended to look wise, then spoke coolly.

"There are things better left not knowing." Wang Baole gave the giant tree a meaningful look. His eyes fell on the broken arm in the giant tree's hands. He didn't ask for it, he simply looked quietly at the giant tree.

The giant tree fell silent. He was grateful for what Wang Baole had done for him. Even if he had harbored any ideas earlier on, they had since faded away. He lowered his head and presented the limb to Wang Baole.

Wang Baole could hardly contain his emotions as he stared at the arm. He took it from the giant tree, then inspected it in detail. His heart raced. The Divine Armament's aura emanating from this broken arm was incredibly rich. This was simply a broken right arm. Its skin had shriveled up and dried, and he could see bone peeking out from the joints. Its blood and flesh were long gone. It had become a mummified limb.

Whose arm is this? To think that a mere arm could give off the power of a Divine Armament... Are there any other body parts buried in that tomb... Wang Baole couldn't help but let his thoughts wander. However, he hadn't stepped into that place before. Wang Baole believed that the giant tree was the only one who might know something about that.

The giant tree wouldn't be able to tell him much since he lacked essential information... Wang Baole fell into deep thought. He decided not to question the giant tree now. He knew that it was important to pick the right time to ask the first question. This would determine the truthfulness of the giant tree's answers.

He decided not to act rashly. He was going to wait for the right moment in order to get the most honest answers. Wang Baole narrowed his eyes at that thought. He decided to stop thinking about the giant tree, who was still unsure where his loyalties lay. He continued to study the broken arm carefully. He activated his cultivation and allowed it to flow into the arm. The aura emanating from the arm immediately intensified as an incredible power stirred within the limb.

Wang Baole was shocked at its sudden waking. There was something he wasn't getting. He had tried to activate the arm with his cultivation before gaining any permission. Its incredible power made Wang Baole look like a child trying to wield a huge saber!

It was tiring. Wang Baole could feel the arm trying to fight him. It shook violently in his hand. His proficiency in Dharmic Armaments led him to a conclusion. Should he forcibly try to wield the arm, the power it emitted wouldn't distinguish between friend and foe. As it overpowered his enemies, it would also try to consume him.

Regardless, Wang Baole still hungered to possess it. A brief examination had shown that the power emanating from this broken arm was greater than all the Dharmic Armaments he owned. Even his black pike and his tri-colored flying sword paled vastly in comparison!

Only... the Federation's Divine Armament could compare. Of course, even the Federation's Divine Armament couldn't compare with Wang Baole's Dark Artifact.

Even so, that was still a Divine Armament!

How can I put it to use without damaging it... Wang Baole fretted. He thought about it for a while. Then, an idea appeared in his head. It was a crazy and bold idea.

It was like a weed. Once planted, it grew wildly. There was no killing it. The giant tree watched a myriad of emotions flash across Wang Baole's face. It was starting to make him nervous. Then, determination flashed in Wang Baole's eyes. He suddenly said, "Fellow Daoist Osmanthus, step back."

The giant tree immediately retreated nervously. Wang Baole took a deep breath and activated the Flame Snatch Thearch Armor. The meridians inside his body emerged, glistening red as they danced in the air and transformed into the horrifying looking Thearch Armor!

The red meridians formed a shell outside Wang Baole, which exuded a power that almost suffocated the giant tree. Tornadoes began to appear around them. The giant tree finally understood how powerful Wang Baole truly was. His breathing stopped, and he took a few steps back.

Wang Baole paid no attention to the giant tree. As soon as the armor materialized, Wang Baole wielded its left hand without hesitation and grabbed the broken arm. An intense light shone in his eyes as he laid the broken arm onto the right arm of his armor. He pressed down fiercely. It fused with his armor and became one with his armor's right arm. The broken arm had become his right arm!

This was the crazy idea that Wang Baole had thought of!

Chapter 626: A Dao Disciple's Tomb!

The fusion wasn't entirely smooth. It was brutal and forced, without any prior acknowledgment or permission obtained. The process was far from effortless. However, based on Wang Baole's understanding of Dharmic Armaments, he knew how difficult it was to acquire a Dharmic Armament's acknowledgment of one's ownership. The broken arm would be equally challenging.

It was likely that no one except its original master could have gotten it to submit readily. Wang Baole wasn't looking for a willing submission though. He only needed to be able to wield it.

What he had found problematic was the potential expenditure in energy as well as the backlash from wielding the arm. That was why he had decided to fuse it with his Flame Snatch Thearch Armor, so using the arm would expend the armor's power instead. Similarly, the backlash would fall on the armor as well.

This meant that Wang Baole wasn't only able to wield the arm, he was also able to minimize any damage or injury to himself. This idea of his, and his way of achieving it, succeeded.

It might not be a perfect fusion, but Wang Baole was nevertheless pleased with the results. He realized that the meridians and white strands residing within his Flame Snatch Thearch Armor had rapidly wormed their way into the arm. It looked like a natural extension of the armor. This tightly bound connection also meant that he could feel a consciousness resting inside the broken arm, deep in slumber.

It was likely the Artifact Spirit. Due to reasons yet known, it remained asleep and unaware of the Flame Snatch Thearch Armor's invasion.

As long as this consciousness is around, I won't be able to fully master and own this arm... There's no rush though. Let's wait until I break through the Core Formation realm to the Nascent Soul realm. We'll

see if I can exorcise it then, Wang Baole thought. He lowered his head, staring at the right arm attached to his Thearch Armor and smiling.

He had the Flame Snatch Thearch Armor on, and its shell was formed from blood-colored meridians, save the right arm. The right arm was shriveled up but full, looking extremely creepy! Wang Baole sucked in a deep breath. He ignored the giant tree, who appeared to be shocked by his fusion with the arm. Instead, he activated his cultivation and the Flame Snatch Thearch Armor completely. The armor was bathed in a blood-red light instantly.

An aura of violence erupted in the air. Waves of energy that surpassed Wang Baole's cultivation were unleashed and surged outwards. Wang Baole's eyes flashed. He steered the entirety of the Flame Snatch Thearch Armor's Spirit Qi into its right arm while evading the slumbering consciousness inside. With the aid of the armor's meridians and the white bone strands... the armor's right arm began to tremble. In the next moment... Wang Baole began to experience a sensation, as if the armor's right arm had become his own.

A thought surfaced in his mind. The giant tree watched in disbelief as the Flame Snatch Thearch Armor's right hand tightened into a fist!

An incredible power burst forth from Wang Baole's person, which transformed the skies. The winds howled, the clouds rolled, and the seas of fire around them began to resonate with the sudden unleashing of power.

The immense power of this aura made Wang Baole's breathing stutter. The power came not from Wang Baole himself but from his armor's right arm. Wang Baole calmed down quickly enough, his eyes flashing with joy. It was unfortunate that he wasn't able to fully master the arm, but he wasn't particularly bothered.

Who cares as long as I can wield it? Besides, it's now in my possession. Where can it run off to? Wang Baole observed the effects of the arm's power on his surroundings excitedly. He basked in the incredible power unleashed by his right hand. This was a power that could wipe out everything in its path once unleashed!

Wang Baole was overcome with excitement. He believed that should he face Sun Hai in a battle again, their fight wouldn't require so much effort on his part. He only needed to give him a slight punch... to destroy him and end the fight!

Wang Baole didn't test the power of his punch. However, the mere tightening of his fist had unleashed such power that it transformed the sky and land around him. The giant tree stood a distance away, trembling uncontrollably. His cultivation had been suppressed by the display of strength. His head buzzed. It was as if Wang Baole had the ability to destroy both his body and soul with a single punch from his right fist.

His sense of awe and fear towards Wang Baole intensified. As he stood trembling, Wang Baole's eyes suddenly flashed. Wang Baole turned towards the giant tree and said suddenly, in a cold voice, "Show me what else you took from the tomb."

The giant tree's mind went numb when he heard what Wang Baole said. Anxiety and doubt exploded in his mind as a sense of danger stronger than what he had felt earlier loomed over him. He pulled out all

his storage bags without hesitation. He even loosened his clothing to prove that he wasn't hiding anything on him as he spoke frantically.

"Elder, I'm not hiding anything on me. All my storage bags are here. You can inspect them. You may punish me as you see fit if you find anything hidden in those bags!"

An expressionless Wang Baole raised his left hand and made a grab through the air, causing the storage bags to fly towards him. He inspected them one by one and confirmed that the giant tree hadn't taken anything else from the tomb secretly. He didn't reveal anything on his face though. He gave the giant tree a long look, then unleashed the power from his right arm again. The giant tree trembled. Then, Wang Baole said slowly, "Tell me everything you saw in that tomb!"

The giant tree shook with awe. Terrified that Wang Baole wouldn't believe his words, he immediately started telling Wang Baole everything.

"Elder, there is an underground palace beneath the tomb. The green mist was too thick, however, and I wasn't able to get near the palace. The furthest I was able to venture was where the broken arm was found, and it was the only thing I was able to take with me. I really do not know what else lies within the palace."

"I had the idea of infiltrating the place and recording everything that I've seen with the voice transmission ring, but the device couldn't be activated..." At that point, the giant tree became worried that Wang Baole wouldn't believe him. Frantically, he began to search through his memories in greater detail. After a moment, he seemed to recall something and continued hurriedly.

"There's another thing. I saw a stone stele inside as well. The mist was too thick, and I couldn't read what was written on it clearly. I could only see three words—Dao Disciple Chen... The only reason I was able to decipher that was because the third batch of Seedlings had to learn the Vast Expanse Dao Palace's spoken and written languages before our arrival," the giant tree explained hastily. He had spoken the truth and had withheld nothing from Wang Baole. Having finished speaking, he stood there, filled with fear and anxiety as he observed Wang Baole.

Wang Baole froze when he heard the giant tree mention "Dao Disciple Chen". His pupils contracted suddenly, and his head started buzzing. It was as if he had just been struck by lightning. Fortunately, he was hidden safely inside his armor, away from the giant tree's eyes. Else, with the giant tree's intelligence, the giant tree might begin to suspect something.

The giant tree might remain unaware, but Wang Baole had been shocked by what the former had told him. The giant tree knew nothing about the three words he had seen, but Wang Baole had immediately thought of something when he had heard those words.

"Dao Disciple Wuchen..." Wang Baole muttered to himself secretly. He stared at his armor's right hand with incredulity. He couldn't believe it.

Damn it... did I just raid the tomb of Li Wuchen's past self?

The realization horrified Wang Baole. It continued to plague his thoughts and loom at the back of his mind as he led the giant tree away and back towards the Vast Expanse Dao Palace.

Does this arm belong to Li Wuchen's past self? If that's really the case, how powerful exactly was Li Wuchen in his past life... Wang Baole fretted. It seemed like he had just dug his own grave. There was already tension between him and Li Wuchen, and with what he had just done, the grudge between them... had just ballooned.

He couldn't just give up the arm though. Wang Baole was caught in a dilemma, as he couldn't simply kill Li Wuchen either. First of all, Feng Qiuran knew who Li Wuchen was. Secondly, they hadn't yet reached the point where he had to kill Li Wuchen. Besides, even if they were to truly battle it out, Li Wuchen was a Dao Disciple in his past life. Wang Baole believed Li Wuchen would have some trick up his sleeve that he could use to save his own life.

Perhaps Li Wuchen himself wouldn't know that he had these tricks until he regained his memories of his past life, but that was also what made him a terrifying opponent.

This entire thing is just trouble. I have to think of a way to guarantee my own safety so that Li Wuchen can't do anything to me even after he regains his memories...

Wang Baole kept sighing inwardly. He wasn't in the mood to bother with the giant tree. He fell into contemplative silence as they rushed back to the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. The giant tree followed closely behind, sighing secretly as well. He was being troubled by similar worries. The Dao Palace was too dangerous a place for him, so he had to find a way to make it safer for him to remain, and ensure that Wang Baole wouldn't simply off him once he'd outlived his usefulness.

He thought for a while and suddenly recalled the scandals he had heard back on Mars, between Wang Baole and the Head Senator's daughter, Li Wan'er. An idea flashed in his head, and he started to speak with great care.

"Elder, during the two years you spent in the Vast Expanse Dao Palace, I've managed to get myself a goddaughter. She especially idolizes you. Perhaps it might be possible for you to send for her the next time the Federation sends someone over. She could follow you around and take care of your every need?"

Chapter 627: An Idea!

"What tricks are you playing?" Wang Baole froze, then snorted as he turned and glared at the giant tree.

"Are you trying to tempt me with women? I'm the Grand Supreme Elder of the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. How can I... hmm?" Wang Baole frowned. He was about to unleash righteous fury on the giant tree and reprimand him when he suddenly paused, blinked, and fell into a deep, contemplative silence.

The giant tree observed Wang Baole's intense reaction and secretly sighed. He seemed to have overstepped his boundaries. He had acted too hastily and exposed his intentions.

Wang Baole isn't a simple person to deal with... the giant tree thought to himself. He realized he should have used another approach to gain Wang Baole's favor. Wang Baole had managed to hone both his wit and means, and it was as if the giant tree was dealing with someone his own age.

While the giant tree was deep in his own thoughts, Wang Baole's breathing gradually quickened. His eyes began to burn with a fierce light as the gears in his head started to spin furiously. The giant tree's words had given him an idea!

If I have a goddaughter too, who then becomes Li Wuchen's Dao partner, Li Wuchen would have to treat me with respect and call me his father-in-law whenever he sees me...

Even if he regains his memories and becomes the Dao Disciple, he'll have to treat me with respect when he sees me... Wang Baole became excited at that thought. His safety would be guaranteed if he managed to get this done. Regardless of how amazing Li Wuchen became, Wang Baole would always be his senior.

This was a fact!

Wang Baole's breathing quickened. His emotions were shown on his face and caught by the giant tree, causing the giant tree to freeze. He was beginning to suspect something was going on when Wang Baole suddenly burst out into laughter. He patted the giant tree on the shoulder heavily, eyes filled with approval.

"Fellow Daoist Osmanthus, you are indeed experienced and observant. Good, good, I have high hopes for you!" Wang Baole laughed out loud. With his hands behind his back, he walked away in obvious high spirits, leaving the giant tree behind blinking at him. The giant tree's suspicions began to grow. He pondered for a while and wondered if Wang Baole was trying to hint at something...

Wang Baole ignored the giant tree, who was making wild guesses behind him. He continued walking while perfecting his plans in his head. The more he thought about it, the more reasonable he found his idea. In his excitement, he began to run through potential candidates to be his goddaughter. This first person he thought of was Li Yi.

No way. She has big breasts but no brains. If I claim her as my goddaughter and matchmake her with Li Wuchen, it wouldn't matter if I were her biological father, she would definitely coerce Li Wuchen into getting rid of me!

Wang Baole shook his head. He thought for a bit and then remembered the hot-tempered girl from the Plume Manifestation Connate Sect, the one with a towering, muscular build and a straightforward character. She seemed like a great match for Li Wuchen.

She won't do either. Li Wuchen's aesthetics seem to skew towards the conventional. If I try to force them together... that'll probably make him dislike me more. Wang Baole's head began to throb. He really wasn't skilled at such politicking. He glanced sideways, his eyes flashing as they fell on the giant tree.

This old fellow seems full of devious ideas. I should get him to do this. He should be able to do a great job. Wang Baole smiled at that thought. He looked at the giant tree and said in a friendly tone.

"Fellow Daoist Osmanthus."

The giant tree had been deep in thought while watching Wang Baole carefully the entire time. A thought flashed across his mind when he saw the smile on Wang Baole's face. His breathing paused, and he quickly cupped his fists.

“Calling me ‘Fellow Daoist’ is simply too much. I’m not worthy of such a title. Elder, please just call me ‘Little Osmanthus’.”

Wang Baole was pleased with the giant tree’s attitude. The giant tree really wasn’t so bad after all. He did what he was told and knew his boundaries, which caused Wang Baole to smile again, gently.

“Okay. Little Osmanthus, I have a task for you.”

“Your wish is my command!” The giant tree trembled, then replied solemnly and with the utmost respect.

“It’s really a small matter. I have a friend who’s in the third batch of Federation cultivators. You should’ve heard of him, he’s the disciple of the Ethereal Dao College’s Grand Supreme Elder, Li Wuchen.” Wang Baole spoke very slowly. He was watching the giant tree casually as he spoke.

The giant tree dared not guess wildly, and the expression on his face remained unchanged. He wasn’t going to ask any questions or ponder the relationship between Wang Baole and Li Wuchen. He only knew one thing, and that was, if he wanted to ensure his safety, he had to ask no questions and make no wild assumptions. He simply had to carry out Wang Baole’s instructions.

“I’ve known Junior Brother Li Wuchen for some time, and he’s been without a partner for many years. I can’t bear to see him so lonely. Why don’t you make some arrangements and get him to know more female disciples... Do you know what I’m getting at?” According to the high officials’ autobiographies, there was no need to explicitly verbalize everything. This was a test of a subordinate’s capabilities as well as a way to protect oneself.

This was what Wang Baole was doing presently as he spoke to the giant tree.

The giant tree was the deputy governor of the Martian Colony. He might not be a native human from the Federation, but he had served many years in his office. He was also very intelligent and fully aware of how things worked in the Federation. After hearing what Wang Baole had said, and putting some thought to it, he immediately understood what Wang Baole was trying to say. He cupped his fists and agreed to do as Wang Baole had said.

“Elder, your sincere concern for Li Wuchen touches my heart. I am newly arrived in the Dao Palace and am unfamiliar with Li Wuchen and his preferences. I may have to trouble you on many occasions, so I seek your approval and forgiveness.”

Wang Baole’s eyes flashed when he heard what the giant tree had said. The explicit meaning of the giant tree’s words wasn’t important, it was the implicit meaning that mattered. The giant tree was telling Wang Baole clearly that he knew what Wang Baole was trying to do and would keep a close eye on Li Wuchen, reporting on his every move and which female disciple the latter was intimate with.

“A safe and stable environment is very important for cultivators of my rank. Do not disturb my cultivation too frequently,” Wang Baole said casually, then turned and left.

The giant tree agreed. He had already translated what Wang Baole had just said in his head. What Wang Baole meant was... he should keep a close eye on Li Wuchen. There was no need to worry about disturbing Wang Baole. In fact, he better make sure he got the job done, else, the giant tree was going to be the one suffering from an unsafe and unstable cultivation environment.

The pair traveled speedily for two weeks and finally reached the Vast Expanse Dao Palace. The giant tree immediately started carrying out Wang Baole's wishes upon their return. He had mapped out a detailed plan during their trip back. He had a Grand Supreme Elder's backing, which made things easier for him.

His level of cultivation ensured that he was the most powerful cultivator in the Federation faction after Wang Baole and Sect Lord Xu. The Vast Expanse Dao Palace had done their homework on the giant tree as well. He wasn't human and didn't possess a body made of flesh and blood. He had originally been a tree that had then risen to become a cultivator, and he possessed many strange qualities.

In the upcoming days, Wang Baole set aside this matter and began his cultivation. He wanted to familiarize himself with the Dao Disciple's right hand that had just been fused with his Flame Snatch Thearch Armor. He tried using it multiple times in order to test the limits of the arm's power as well as his ability to withstand its power.

After multiple attempts, Wang Baole concluded that he could unleash the arm's power three times. Each attack was both a terrifying and exhilarating experience. Each attack was imbued with the power... to utterly destroy Sun Hai!

Wang Baole's mastery of the final level of the Lightning Immortal Transformation, Lightning Immortal Point, had increased as well. In addition, the fusion of the broken arm and his Thearch Armor also gave him quite a bit of inspiration. He pulled out the two corpses of the Spirit Immortal realm Star Fang Beasts that he had recovered from the Star Fang Beasts' resident star and tried fusing the corpses with his armor. The fusion failed.

Maybe I only succeeded the first time because the broken arm is a Divine Armament? Wang Baole thought. Despite his unwillingness to do so, he had no choice but to give up. He made use of his elder's status to search for some information on the refinement of puppets. He obtained some information, but he still needed to do more research and experimentation in order to succeed.

The most important thing Wang Baole was left with now was to prepare for his breakthrough from the perfected Core Formation realm to the Nascent Soul realm!

Wang Baole's rights as a Grand Supreme Elder allowed him to access many records regarding the many ways one might ascend to the Nascent Soul realm, as well as the many different types of Nascent Souls in existence. There were more than three hundred types of Nascent Souls. They were all different in minute ways, and one's decision to settle on one type of Nascent Soul would determine his or her future.

Wang Baole studied up on the various types while trying to determine which type he was to pick. He also tried asking Little Missy, and she threw out a few options. Then, she said with the voice of the experienced, that as long as Wang Baole successfully formed one of those dozen Nascent Souls, that she would have a way of bringing up the quality of his Nascent Soul. This would greatly aid Wang Baole's future!

Chapter 628: Zhou Mei!

The Lightning Immortal Soul, Five Elemental Soul, Heavenly Dream Soul, Nine Earthly Soul... Wang Baole's head began to throb. His head was filled with the dozen types of Nascent Souls Little Missy had told him. He had also found the way to breakthrough in the Vast Expanse Dao Palace's records. He frowned slightly.

There were simply too many varieties of Nascent Souls. The Nascent Soul realm was a vast gulf that separated the levels of cultivation. Transforming one's core into a soul was akin to forming a second life, and this would dramatically transform a cultivator's life.

Teleportation was one of those changes that the cultivator would experience. The formation of a Nascent Soul made one into a child of the heavens and earth, and the cultivator would be able to meld with the nomological laws and wield them.

A Nascent Soul also had the power to control the lands. Some primitive civilizations called Nascent Souls ancient demons. That itself proved how powerful a Nascent Soul realm cultivator was.

A Nascent Soul's power was related to the type of soul. There were countless cultivation civilizations in the universe and as many different types of Nascent Souls. Li Xingwen's was a Dao Soul, and his enlightenment-based divine power contributed partially to that. Duan Muque chose to cultivate a Five Elemental Soul, and its essence was irrevocably tied to the Federation's fortunes. This might seem bizarre and mysterious, but what it essentially meant was that his Nascent Soul was the manifestation of his ideals and will.

Wang Baole had asked Sect Lord Xu about his Nascent Soul, and he had chosen the Violent Soul, one that centered on violence and death. The Nascent Souls that everyone in the Federation and Dao Palace had were nearly all different.

There might be similarities amongst their Nascent Souls, but minute differences did exist. It was impossible to say which type of Nascent Soul was better, as there was only one way to determine the potential of a Nascent Soul, and that was... its quality!

That was what determined the extent to which one's Nascent Soul could meld with the nomological laws, and that would determine one's battle prowess and future. The Dao Palace records also mentioned something else, which was the extremely rare Five Type Nascent Soul that had been found scattered across countless civilizations. They were considered legends. The Vast Expanse Dao Palace of the past had the opportunity to cultivate one such Nascent Soul, but the ways of its cultivation had been lost. The current Vast Expanse Dao Palace no longer held the secrets to the formation of such a Nascent Soul.

Wang Baole had asked Little Missy about that, but Little Missy only replied and told him not to be overly ambitious and long for something that was beyond his reach. Wang Baole had his own unique understanding of what Little Missy had told him.

I bet it's most likely because she doesn't know much about it. Or maybe she's afraid to tell me? Wang Baole blinked. He had realized some time ago that every time Little Missy had given him a target that seemed unachievable, he would somehow achieve it without much of a problem...

"Little Missy, that legendary Nascent Soul that can't be achieved—what exactly is it?" Wang Baole couldn't help being tempted when he thought about it, so he tried asking again.

“...” Little Missy seemed to be thinking the same thing as well and didn’t answer Wang Baole’s question immediately. She hadn’t heard of many successful accounts of people attaining the legendary Five Type Nascent Soul. It wasn’t merely legendary and seemed almost impossible!

She still seemed a bit uneasy. She seemed to have mentioned that it was impossible. It should be fine, just saying that...

“If he manages to make the impossible possible again, I’ll call him granddaddy!” Little Missy snorted secretly. She continued consoling herself before she was suddenly caught by the urge to slap herself. It might not have been as bad if she hadn’t just said that, but now that she had...

Exhaustion suddenly overcame Little Missy at that thought. She decided not to think about it anymore.

Time passed steadily, and another month went by. While Wang Baole continued his cultivation and his study of Nascent Souls, the giant tree did his best to complete the assignment that Wang Baole had given him. He did quite a good job. He identified all the female disciples he could find and then began creating numerous opportunities for Li Wuchen and these female disciples to fall in love.

The giant tree didn’t realize how talented he was in this area. The heavens rewarded those who toiled diligently. Under his watchful eyes and careful planning, the giant tree finally discovered something!

He verified his observations repeatedly and then rushed over to Wang Baole’s and reported his findings.

“Esteemed Elder, your humble servant spent a month and was finally able to complete the mission you assigned. I’ve found a female disciple Li Wuchen’s romantically interested in.” The giant tree immediately cupped his fists and bowed deeply when he saw Wang Baole. Both his attitude and the look in his eyes spoke of great deference.

Wang Baole perked up, but he kept his thoughts to himself and simply nodded slightly.

The giant tree saw Wang Baole’s reaction and immediately pulled out a jade slip and presented it to Wang Baole, whispering.

“I realized that Li Wuchen has a relationship with a perfected True Breath realm cultivator, Zhou Mei, that is out of the ordinary, so I did a background check on Zhou Mei. She’s one of the cultivators in the third batch. Even though her level of cultivation isn’t very high, she’s one of the more powerful cultivators to have emerged from the Ethereal Dao College these last few years. That was why she was selected by the Ethereal Dao College for transfer to the Dao Palace!”

“This jade slip contains Zhou Mei’s records for your inspection, Elder.” The giant tree lowered his head after his report and kept quiet. He had found out the relationship between Zhou Mei and Wang Baole. However, if Wang Baole wasn’t going to mention that, he wasn’t going to point it out either. He was simply going to do his duty as instructed.

He didn’t dare, nor did he wish to ask Wang Baole about other related matters. He had investigated those matters clearly as well, but that was because he didn’t permit himself to make any mistakes or commit any oversight in the event Wang Baole questioned him about them.

This was something he had learned from his subordinates when he had been the Deputy Governor on the Martian Colony. One should carry out the orders given to him or her dutifully while thinking three

steps ahead. It might seem that he had only completed the task according to what had been instructed, but in reality, he had also familiarized himself with all the details related to his mission. He had performed checks on related matters that had been beyond the scope of his duty and had prepared for the possibility of having to answer any questions on the spot. He would have been able to answer them readily.

The giant tree had done his best while carrying out Wang Baole's instructions.

His head remained lowered. Meanwhile, Wang Baole had frozen on the spot. He was familiar with the name Zhou Mei, but he couldn't recall why at the moment, so he took the jade slip and began browsing its contents.

"She's from Mars... a graduate from the Dao Mountain Mist Academy?" Wang Baole's eyes widened when he read that. His thoughts cleared up as he finally realized why he had found the name familiar. The image of a chubby young girl surfaced in his mind.

Wang Baole blinked and continued reading. The report in the jade slip was very detailed, including information on Zhou Mei's family as well as what she had been up to after she graduated. She had chosen to enter the Ethereal Dao College and completed her studies on the Upper Academy Island. During her time there, she had chosen to enter the Dharmic Armament Pavilion!

Everything made Wang Baole slightly confused. He could vaguely remember his time at the Dao Mountain Mist Academy. The faces of his students flashed across his mind, and soon, the expression on Wang Baole's face softened. He couldn't hold back a smile.

The giant tree noticed the smile on Wang Baole's face. Wang Baole must have remembered Zhou Mei had once been his student. He said quietly, "Elder, based on my observations, Zhou Mei and Li Wuchen seem to be in love with each other... I've asked other cultivators from the Ethereal Dao College discreetly and received concrete evidence of that. There's indeed something going on between them, and it seems to be developing further during their time together in the Vast Expanse Dao Palace." The giant tree stopped speaking at that point. He lowered his head and awaited instructions from Wang Baole.

Wang Baole fell silent. He might have chosen to give Li Wuchen a hand if the other person involved wasn't his own student and were someone he didn't know. He would've tried to aid the development of this romance while not going against his own principles.

But Zhou Mei, his student, was now implicated in the matter, so Wang Baole wasn't going to act rashly. He needed to speak to Zhou Mei personally and understand what was going on before he could make a decision.

If Zhou Mei wasn't a willing party in this relationship, Wang Baole would stop whatever plan he had in mind and find some other way to keep Li Wuchen under control. Besides, he might have overestimated the problem at hand. Perhaps when Li Wuchen finally regained his memories, Wang Baole would have already reached the Planet realm.

At that thought, Wang Baole's attitude changed. He smiled as he said, "Little Osmanthus, bring my disciple Zhou Mei over here. My memory may be failing me since I didn't recognize her at first. Maybe she's easily embarrassed and doesn't dare come see me." Upon saying that, Wang Baole suddenly

realized something. Maybe Zhou Mei did feel something for Li Wuchen, which was why she didn't dare pay a visit to Wang Baole. After all, she was aware of the tension between himself and Li Wuchen.

The Fire Spirit Academy and Dao Mountain Mist Academy had been fiercely competitive and hostile towards each other, and Zhou Mei herself had been one of the participants. Wang Baole wondered how the pair had gotten together in the first place.

Chapter 629: A Marital Arrangement!

Upon hearing Wang Baole's instructions, the giant tree took his leave and went searching for Zhou Mei. He explained the situation briefly to the young woman, who was clearly nervous. She looked like a child who had just done something wrong.

The giant tree knew the teacher-student relationship between Wang Baole and Zhou Mei, so he stood patiently at one side and didn't rush her. After a long moment, Zhou Mei finally took a deep breath. There was determination in her eyes as she followed the giant tree to Wang Baole's palace.

When she entered the palace and saw Wang Baole sitting at the end of the hall, the anxiety in Zhou Mei's heart surged. It was intermingled with excitement and respect as she bowed and greeted Wang Baole.

"Zhou Mei, your humble disciple, greets the dean."

Wang Baole studied the young woman before him. Zhou Mei had clearly matured. Her cultivation had improved, and as a result, the muscular body that she had gotten from practicing Wang Baole's Heaven Devouring Skill had slimmed down considerably. Regardless, her physical strength was clearly greater than others at the same cultivation realm.

This was a result of the cultivation technique that Wang Baole had taught them. Zhou Mei wasn't the only one who had benefited from it. His original batch of students were now allocated to various departments in the Federation, and their physical strength was greater than others at the same cultivation realm. Wang Baole's growing fame and reputation meant that his students' respect towards him had grown stronger instead of weaker all these years.

Zhou Mei was no exception. She greeted Wang Baole excitedly and had addressed him as dean, which brought back many memories. He sighed and raised his right hand, and with a wave of his hand, a sudden gentle force lifted her to her feet.

"It's been quite a few years since we last saw each other. You've grown. This is my oversight. I wouldn't have known that you were here in the Dao Palace if I hadn't seen your name." Wang Baole stared at Zhou Mei and sighed. He was experiencing a strange sensation. He wasn't that old himself, but now, seeing his student before him, he suddenly felt old.

Perhaps I've really grown old? Wang Baole instinctively patted his tummy. It had grown quite chubby.

"The dean is the Grand Supreme Elder of the Dao Palace and busy with administrative matters. Your humble disciple understands that. In truth, your humble disciple is too ashamed to face the dean," Zhou Mei bit her lips and whispered.

The feeling she had towards Wang Baole was rather special. Their relationship felt like one between a parent and child, yet it wasn't exactly that. He was the teacher who had taught her. Without Wang Baole, Zhou Mei wouldn't have gotten to where she was now. She would have remained meek and timid like she had been. Wang Baole had changed her fate and the fates of her schoolmates.

Wang Baole had been the one who had taught them confidence and the power of unity. Wang Baole himself wasn't aware of how his swift progression had united the students he had taught then. They identified themselves as Wang Baole's faction, forming a new force across the various departments in the Federation.

Their faction was still newly formed, but one could imagine the influence it was going to have in the future as they developed further in their careers!

Their seniors had also formed a strong foundation in the Federation, and Mars was a clear indication of their strong presence!

That was why Zhou Mei had chosen to enter the Ethereal Dao College after graduating from the Dao Mountain Mist Academy. However, the fates were mysterious. She hadn't realized then that she might one day fall in love with Li Wuchen, her senior and past enemy.

That was why she had been too ashamed to pay a visit to Wang Baole!

Wang Baole stared at Zhou Mei thoughtfully. He didn't immediately mention Li Wuchen and started by asking Zhou Mei about the other students and how they were doing. Zhou Mei slowly relaxed and stopped being so nervous. Then, with a smiling face, he asked gently.

"Zhou Mei, this thing between you and Li Wuchen..." Wang Baole left his sentence hanging while staring seriously into Zhou Mei's eyes.

Zhou Mei immediately became nervous under Wang Baole's gaze, and as she listened to Wang Baole's hidden question in his words, shock and fear colored her face. Her voice began to tremble, and she started stammering.

"Dean, I... about this matter..."

Wang Baole's face grew dark as Zhou Mei grew nervous and began to stammer. He thought the worst and said suddenly.

"Did Li Wuchen try to make things difficult for you after you entered the Ethereal Dao College? Did he do anything despicable? That must be it. This Li Wuchen, how dare he!" Wang Baole smacked the handle of his seat. He unleashed a fearsome aura, then yelled at the giant tree, who had been standing in a corner.

"Fellow Daoist Osmanthus, go get Li Wuchen for me!"

"No, that's not it!" Zhou Mei's face turned pale before the giant tree could say anything. She stumbled forward hurriedly, tears filling her eyes as her face was colored with concern and fear. It was clear that she was worried. Wang Baole could see that. He sighed, then waved his hand and got the giant tree to stay put. Then, he rubbed his forehead and looked at Zhou Mei, who had lowered her head.

A long moment later, Wang Baole spoke again.

“Zhou Mei, tell me, are you really in love with Li Wuchen? Are you very certain you want to become Dao partners with him?”

“Stop trying to hide the truth from me. If you are, then you are. If you aren’t, then you aren’t.” Wang Baole’s voice lost its fierce quality. It was as if he had become the dean of the Dao Mountain Mist Academy again.

Zhou Mei blushed and lowered her head in thought. Then, she replied meekly.

“Yes!”

Wang Baole fell silent, then shook his head and smiled. Since both of them were willing parties in this romance, there was no need for him to continue observing them. They would eventually become partners in the future.

His interference would simply make the relationship official sooner. As a Dao Disciple, if Li Wuchen became Dao partners with someone from the Federation, this would further cement the alliance between the Federation and the Dao Palace.

Of course, what was most important was that both of them truly held feelings for each other, as it would be meaningless if one party was unwilling to commit.

At that thought, Wang Baole observed Zhou Mei for a while longer and concluded that she did indeed have feelings for Li Wuchen. He had come to a decision and said suddenly, “Fellow Daoist Osmanthus, please have Li Wuchen brought here.”

Zhou Mei still seemed worried, but Wang Baole’s polite tone made her sigh with relief. She kept her head down and stood there quietly. Her heart raced. She was a smart woman, and she knew what her dean was trying to do.

This was the first time Wang Baole was playing matchmaker, and it was a refreshing experience. He smiled and teased Zhou Mei, then began chatting about Jin Duozhi. He was surprised to find out that Jin Duozhi hadn’t returned to the Trilunaris Corporation after graduation but had joined the military on the lunar base.

The two of them chatted for a while before the efficient giant tree led Li Wuchen to Wang Baole’s palace. Li Wuchen hadn’t wanted to go, but the giant tree had told him that Zhou Mei was there, so Li Wuchen could only sigh secretly and follow the giant tree.

As soon as he entered the halls, he saw Wang Baole sitting at the end, chatting merrily with Zhou Mei. The sight filled his heart with a myriad of emotions. He knew that Zhou Mei was Wang Baole’s disciple, and he also knew that they couldn’t hide their relationship from Wang Baole.

Embarrassment and awareness of their past conflict made Li Wuchen nervous and fraught with anxiety. Right after Li Wuchen had entered the halls, before he could extend his greetings, the expression on Wang Baole’s face immediately turned icy cold. He said coolly, “Li Wuchen, what you have between you and Zhou Mei ends today. I don’t wish for you to bother my disciple in the future. If you do so, I’ll kill you!” As soon as Wang Baole said that, shock flashed across Zhou Mei’s face.

“Dean, you...”

Li Wuchen froze. His breathing grew heavy, and his face turned pale. Then, he saw the look on Zhou Mei's face and heard what she had tried to say. It was as if he was suddenly infused with power. He ignored his nervousness and his anxiety and marched forward with determination and hostility in his eyes.

"Elder Wang, this is between Mei'er and me. You might have been her teacher, but that doesn't give you the right to stop..."

"I can guarantee your advancement to the perfected Core Formation realm within a year. I can even guarantee your entry into the Nascent Art Chamber so that you can have a chance at attaining the Nascent Soul realm!"

"However, if you don't agree to do as I say, I can make life difficult for you even if you belong to the Dao Palace. You'll die in the sword body. Li Wuchen, you know what you must do. Think it through and give me your answer." Wang Baole's voice was cold, and violence filled the air. The entire palace was weighed down by a certain heaviness. Then, he raised his right hand and pointed at Zhou Mei. A spell flared into being and sealed Zhou Mei's lips. She couldn't speak and could only worry silently.

Li Wuchen's face grew paler, and the fury in his eyes intensified. He glared at Wang Baole unblinkingly and forced his answer out without hesitation.

"Wang Baole, my answer is... no!"

Wang Baole rolled his eyes. He had to admit that he had been overly dramatic, but he had no choice, as that was how the television dramas playing in the Federation all unfolded. He believed there must be a reason for that. He listened to Li Wuchen's answer and eyed him seriously. He came to a conclusion. He smacked the handle of his seat, then rose to his feet. As he spoke, his voice rang out, heavy with authority.

"No? So be it. I'll make the decision for the both of you right now. Your union will be held inside this palace. You will become Dao partners, inseparable in both life and death!"

"Li Wuchen, do you consent?"

Chapter 630: First Appearance!

Li Wuchen was dazed by Wang Baole's words. His eyes widened as he stared at Wang Baole in confusion, then looked at Zhou Mei. He realized that Zhou Mei was still imprisoned by a seal, so she had no way of replying to him.

Li Wuchen didn't recover from his shock for quite some time. Wang Baole stared at Li Wuchen's stunned look calmly and casually said, "I had this friend. He was a terrible person who committed an act of disloyalty to his partner. The next day, he died."

Li Wuchen gulped as soon as Wang Baole said that. It wasn't that he wasn't agreeable to the proposal, his earlier agitated reactions should have proven that, but everything had happened too quickly. He hadn't yet recovered from his shock and confusion. Now that things had unfolded in this manner, Li

Wuchen wasn't going to hesitate any longer. He cupped his fists and bowed deeply towards Wang Baole.

"Yes, your humble disciple does!"

Wang Baole was extremely pleased with Li Wuchen addressing himself as his disciple. He lifted his right hand and pointed at Zhou Mei, freeing her from the seal. He asked her gently, "Mei'er, are you agreeable to that?"

Zhou Mei blushed and lowered her head. Her voice was soft but clear.

"As the Dean commands."

Wang Baole shook his head and smiled. He might have something to gain out of this successful matchmaking, but the happiness he felt from helping his disciple tie the knot was definitely greater than the satisfaction he got from the former.

"Fine, you can return. Wait for my news. As your senior, I will take care of the entire ceremony for you." Wang Baole smiled and, with a wave of his hand, indicated that they could leave.

Li Wuchen finally understood what was going to happen and was overcome with excitement. He looked at Zhou Mei. The latter blushed and gazed back at him. The pair gazed at each other and saw their joy mirrored in each other's eyes.

"Thank you, Grand Supreme Elder!" Li Wuchen took a deep breath and bowed deeply. He did so with unprecedented happiness and respect. He had been won over and was beyond grateful to Wang Baole.

Zhou Mei took her leave as well, leaving together with him. Wang Baole sighed as he gazed at their retreating backs.

*Li Wuchen might be kinda a pain in the a**, but he's got a good heart. I hope they will remain partners and share their lives forever.* Wang Baole smiled, then indicated to the giant tree that he could leave as well.

There were no other people left in the halls except him. That was when Wang Baole sat down again. He began thinking about the union between Li Wuchen and Zhou Mei. The first thought he had was of Feng Qiuran's reaction to this matter.

Feng Qiuran is in no position to interfere... That is, unless she reveals Li Wuchen's true identity. Wang Baole realized then that this marriage was definitely going to take place. He pulled out his voice transmission and began making preparations. He also made use of the teleportation array formation and sought Li Xingwen's views on the matter.

The Federation treated Wang Baole's message with the utmost importance and discussed the matter repeatedly. Li Xingwen even contacted Zhou Mei's parents!

The Federation also sent over their plans detailing the next steps to take to assimilate the Federation with the Dao Palace to Wang Baole. The Federation was going to permit the Dao Palace to send thirty Dao Palace cultivators to the Federation for a cultural exchange. The level of cultivation for this first batch had to be below the Nascent Soul realm, and Li Wuchen was to lead the party. The Federation

also hoped that the Dao Palace would bring a seed from the Hyacinthus Tree with them. It would be planted in the Federation and be seen as proof of their strong alliance.

After receiving the plans from the Federation, Wang Baole approached Sect Lord Xu, the giant tree, as well as Zhao Yameng to discuss this matter. Zhao Yameng didn't know whether to laugh or weep at Wang Baole's playing matchmaker, and she didn't comment much about it in the end.

The four of them discussed the Federation's proposal and gave their own opinions on the matter. Wang Baole also presented his own idea.

"Perhaps in the initial phase, we could first set up an alliance called the Dao Commonwealth. There will be two Great Holy Lands. The first is Earth, and it will be called the Federation Holy Land. The second is the ancient greenish-bronze sword, and it will be called the Vast Expanse Holy Land. The other stars would still be known as regions, and their jurisdiction would fall under the Dao Commonwealth."

The proposal was still in its infancy. It was simply an idea that Wang Baole had formed with his experience as Grand Supreme Elder. After discussion with the others, they finally decided to send this proposal back to the Federation. The Federation's think tank would then determine its feasibility.

It wasn't possible to send voice transmissions between the Federation and the Dao Palace, so they could only exchange messages by sending communication jade slips via the teleportation array formation. That was why communications took seven days.

The proposed Dao Commonwealth caught the Federation's attention. The Federation had similar ideas, but they weren't yet ready to form a commonwealth. That was why the idea had remained as an idea for further discussion. As for the wedding between Li Wuchen and Zhou Mei, both Li Xingwen and Duan Muque had given their go ahead!

News of the first wedding of Dao partners from the Federation and the Dao Palace respectively slowly spread throughout the Dao Palace in the following days. Feng Qiuran was surprised and stunned when she heard the news, but after some hesitation, she finally chose to acknowledge the union.

Her silent permission meant there were no longer any obstacles preventing the union from taking place. Sect Lord Xu was aware that the wedding would serve as further motivation to strengthen the alliance between the Federation and the Dao Palace. Furthermore, Zhou Mei was Wang Baole's student. That was why he decided to participate in the preparations as well.

Another week passed. The wedding—held in the Dao Palace, witnessed by all Federation cultivators present in the Dao Palace and many other cultivators, with the Dao Palace congregation led by Feng Qiuran—finally took place!

This was an important day for Li Wuchen and Zhou Mei, as well as a day worth remembering for both the Federation and the Dao Palace. Feng Qiuran was overcome with emotions. She knew who Li Wuchen was and had sent him to the Federation for his safety. Now, she was witnessing his wedding with her own eyes. She could tell that Wang Baole had done the matchmaking for the couple, but she thought things through. That was why she was here now, standing together with Wang Baole as witnesses for the young couple!

Dao Disciple Wuchen, I wish you a happier life than your previous. Feng Qiuran gazed past the crowd at Li Wuchen, who was dressed in red and holding Zhou Mei's hand, his eyes bright with unconcealed excitement and happiness. She watched them walk towards her and Wang Baole, stop, and greet both of them. She couldn't help but feel slightly lost.

Memories of the last great battle surfaced in her mind—the battle where the ancient sword had fled from a fallen Vast Expanse Star Domain while pursued by the Never-Ending Clan, which changed the ancient sword's flight trajectory.

The Dao Palace might have won that battle, but they had done so at a terrible price. The Dao Palace at the sword body had fallen to complete ruins. The elders had been severely injured and had all fallen into deep slumber. As the Dao Disciple, Wuchen had fought relentlessly and fearlessly, to the point of being grievously injured and on the verge of death. In order to heal himself, he had no choice but to reincarnate and use the powers of rebirth in order to heal himself completely and recover his vitality.

These memories resurfaced and overlaid with the present scene of the cheering and joyous crowd. Feng Qiuran couldn't help her momentary sense of loss, which persisted until Li Wuchen and Zhou Mei approached to greet her.

Li Wuchen appeared slightly nervous, and Zhou Mei was quite anxious as well. The crowd seemed to have sensed Feng Qiuran's strange behavior, and they all stared at her.

While they had noticed the look on Feng Qiuran's face, they couldn't discern her thoughts. Only Wang Baole guessed what she must be feeling from the lost look on her face. He coughed and nudged Feng Qiuran. Then, his hands reached out, and he pulled both Li Wuchen and Zhou Mei to their feet.

"I wish you both happiness."

Feng Qiuran finally pulled herself together under Wang Baole's slight nudge. A smile lit up on her face as she gazed at the newly wedded couple before her and said softly.

"I wish you both a long life together."

The Dao Palace cultivators around them finally burst out into loud cheering after hearing Wang Baole's and Feng Qiuran's blessings. The Federation disciples echoed the cheers. Li Wuchen finally released a sigh of relief. He had no idea his relationship with Feng Qiuran, but he knew that Feng Qiuran had been the one who had given him to his master.

The respect Li Wuchen held for Feng Qiuran was equal to the respect he held for Li Xingwen. His heart burst with anticipation and hope for his future as he received Feng Qiuran's blessings. He grabbed Zhou Mei's hand and held it tightly in his own.

No one in the crowd knew though, that as the wedding was in progress, Daoist You Ran, who hadn't participated in the event and had been sitting in his great hall during the entire ceremony, suddenly opened his eyes. A blue fire flickered in his eyes.

"Finally... the repairs are completed!"

He muttered, then burst out into laughter as he got to his feet. He lifted his head and stared in the direction of the sword body. At that exact same moment, a loud explosion erupted from within the sword body. The deafening boom rose to the skies and shook the heavens and earth.

The Sea of Fire started boiling, and numerous hexed areas began to cave in, causing hordes of monsters to flee. As waves of fires surged and ebbed, a strange-looking battleship—with a triangular structure formed by three disks, whose edges touched slightly—began to rise from the sea!

The battleship was like a leviathan, a gargantuan beast seeming to stretch outwards without end. One could hardly see where it ended while standing on it. It rose into the air, the Sea of Fire raging around it and burning everything to ashes!

The three disks that formed the battleship were each the size of the moon. They were like three separate worlds that spun and shone brightly. An air of mystery surrounded them. The battleship's black outer surface was lined with numerous runes, and waves of overwhelming power surged outwards as the battleship ascended into the sky.

It emerged from the Sea of Fire, and immediately sped towards the borders separating the sword body and the sword handle!

Hexes exploded and disintegrated into dust as soon as they collided with the battleship. Mountains shattered. The battleship was enveloped in an incredible power that destroyed everything in its path!