

Doctor 1041

Chapter 1041: Brother Fang Says You're Not a Good Person!

In the past, when disciples from Bitao Martial Academy crossed Soul Severing Valley, they not only had to face the natural forces of the valley but also endured incessant attacks from Spirit Beasts. It was considered very fortunate if any disciple escaped injury after stumbling their way through.

This time, however, their crossing through Soul Severing Valley was unexpectedly smooth, and, incredibly, they encountered no attacks from any Spirit Beasts.

This should have been a cause for celebration, but aside from Yang Lin, the mood among the other eight members of the Bitao Martial Academy team was far from good.

Fang Bai's importance to Bitao Martial Academy was undeniable, and now that he was missing and his fate unknown, a shadow had been cast over the trip to Purple Flame City by Ge Feng and others. Even if the academy's team could achieve better results at this sect conference than ever before, it could not compensate for the loss of Fang Bai.

The team moved forward in silence amidst the fierce storm and blizzard, even their Swiftwind Horses appeared to sense their masters' foul moods and became much more docile.

Yang Lin sneakily glanced at Liu Qingqing, swallowed hard a few times, and a glint of greed flashed in his eyes.

Yang Lin had previously been infatuated with Gao Shuxian, believing her to be the most beautiful woman in the world. But ever since Liu Qingqing joined Bitao Martial Academy, she quickly outshone Gao Shuxian. Many of the male disciples who previously admired Gao Shuxian shifted their attention to Liu Qingqing, and even Yang Lin's interest in Gao Shuxian dwindled significantly.

Yang Lin had always harbored a longing for Liu Qingqing, the new top beauty of the academy, who possessed an Innate Spiritual Root, fair skin, a beautiful face, and a fine figure.

However, when Yang Lin previously tried to get close to Liu Qingqing, he discovered that in her eyes, there was only Fang Bai. She maintained a respectful but distant attitude toward other academy brothers and sisters, which made Yang Lin both jealous and resentful of Fang Bai.

Now that Fang Bai had been attacked and likely perished in Soul Severing Valley, Yang Lin felt a secret joy. He had already begun to plan how to get closer to Liu Qingqing and how to replace Fang Bai in her heart.

Yang Lin thought to himself that although he did not have an Innate Spiritual Root, he still stood out among the younger generation of male disciples in Bitao Martial Academy. Moreover, being a disciple of the Inner Court with Liu Qingqing, who had the advantage of proximity, he held great hope of capturing Liu Qingqing's heart.

At dusk, Ge Feng and the other nine members crossed the three hundred li of Soul Severing Valley amid the wild storm and appeared outside the valley mouth.

Here the fierce winds had much abated, the snow became sparse, and the temperature quickly rose. Although the weather could still be considered severe by ordinary standards, ordinary Martial Artists could withstand it.

Without the blizzard or fears of Spirit Beast attacks, Shen Yulin and the others finally could relax their tense nerves. No longer needing to stay highly vigilant, they breathed a sigh of relief, and their faces showed signs of relaxation.

Liu Qingqing's expression was wooden, her pretty face inscrutable with neither joy nor sorrow visible, only her clear, bright eyes alternately reflecting sadness, distress, anger, and hatred.

Seeing Liu Qingqing like this, Ge Feng knew hatred filled her heart. Unless the identities of the four attackers in Soul Severing Valley could be discovered and they were slain, the bright smile of a young girl might never again grace her face.

"Sigh..."

Ge Feng turned back toward the direction of Soul Severing Valley, unable to help shaking his head and sighing again.

The mid-grade Creation Pill that Fang Bai had given to Ge Feng had directly spurred another enhancement of Ge Feng's strength, along with decades of extra lifespan. Therefore, Ge Feng was immensely grateful to Fang Bai. Now, Fang Bai's demise filled him with regret and grief.

Until now, Ge Feng still couldn't believe that Fang Bai, who had limitless potential on the Martial Dao path, had fallen like a shooting star.

"Junior Sister Liu, about Brother Fang's... Senior Brother Fang's death, I'm also very sad. It's just... death cannot bring back the dead, you shouldn't be too sad..."

Yang Lin deliberately slowed down his pace, waiting for Liu Qingqing to catch up on her Swiftwind Horse, and then rode beside her, consoling her with a sorrowful face.

Liu Qingqing looked straight ahead, not even glancing at Yang Lin, as if she was treating him like air.

Yang Lin thought of himself as a charming man, otherwise Gao Shuxian wouldn't have taken a fancy to him, flirting ambiguously with him. Unexpectedly, he had been outright ignored by Liu Qingqing, which made him feel extremely embarrassed and furious.

"Cough... cough cough..."

Yang Lin coughed a few times to hide his embarrassment, smiled again, and said, "Junior Sister Liu, excessive grief not only affects your health but also your cultivation, so you should restrain your sorrow... Don't worry, although Senior Brother Fang is no longer with us, there are still me... and many other disciples of the Martial Academy who care about you. From now on in the Martial Academy, no matter what difficulties you face, I will do my best to help you. As a fellow disciple of the Inner Court, let's not be strangers..."

Liu Qingqing turned her head, giving Yang Lin a glance without any expression.

"Junior Sister Liu..."

Seeing Liu Qingqing look at him, Yang Lin felt joy in his heart, thinking this was a good sign. Just as he was about to speak, Liu Qingqing interrupted him.

"Brother Fang said you are not a good person, so I don't want to deal with you, nor do I want you to talk to me. I'm really not in the mood right now, and if you keep bothering me, I won't be nice! I'm serious!"

After Liu Qingqing coldly finished her statement, she gave Yang Lin a glance filled with killing intent, and spurred her Swiftwind Horse, chasing after Ge Feng while leaving Yang Lin in stunned silence.

"Hmph, that ungrateful wench, just because she has an Innate Spiritual Root? What's there to be proud of? Fang Bai, that little bastard, also had an Innate Spiritual Root, and he fell here too?"

Watching Liu Qingqing's receding figure, Yang Lin's eyes revealed a shade of resentment. He spat on the ground and followed the group with an ugly expression.

"Junior Brother Yang, all the people of the Bitao Martial Academy know that Junior Sister Liu liked Junior Brother Fang. Now that Junior Brother Fang's fate is uncertain, you are trying to take advantage of the situation... heh, Junior Brother Yang, that's a bit unkind!"

Long Xing moved closer to Yang Lin, speaking in a low voice with a hint of mockery in his smile.

Among the thousands of disciples at the Bitao Martial Academy, there were quite a few single male disciples, and Long Xing was one of them. He also had a liking for Liu Qingqing and seeing Yang Lin being snubbed by her made him very happy, unable to resist teasing Yang Lin.

"I... I was just trying to console Junior Sister Liu because she was sad. Heh heh, Senior Brother Long is joking..."

If it had been any other disciple teasing him like this, Yang Lin would have found a time to teach him a lesson, but Long Xing was the top warrior in the Core Disciples' strength ranking of the Bitao Martial Academy, far surpassing Yang Lin in ability. Thus, Yang Lin could only hold resentment in his heart while maintaining a smile on his face.

Chapter 1042: Brother Fang, Is It Really You?

Long Xing teased Yang Lin a few times, then left him with a contemptuous smile, striding away.

Huang Miao and Fang Bai got along well, so seeing that Fang Bai's life and death were unknown, not only did Yang Lin show no sorrow, he even took the opportunity to set his sights on Liu Qingqing, which greatly infuriated her.

She glared fiercely at Yang Lin, her gaze carrying a warning.

Even Shen Yulin felt some disdain for Yang Lin's behavior, looking at him with contempt.

The other disciples of the Bitao Martial Academy also felt that Yang Lin's actions were too much and not befitting of a gentleman.

Even Ge Feng felt dissatisfied with Yang Lin.

Yang Lin also realized that he seemed to have incurred everyone's wrath, and not daring to flirt with Liu Qingqing any longer, he hung his head, following dutifully behind the group. However, in his heart, he hated everyone accompanying him.

"One day, when I've greatly increased my strength, I'll trample all of you underfoot, ruthlessly torment you, and vent my anger! As for Liu Qingqing, isn't she acting all high and mighty? By that time, I'll make her throw herself into my arms willingly, crying and begging to become my cultivation partner!"

Yang Lin clenched his fists tightly, thinking this to himself.

Having passed through the harsh natural environment of the Blizzard Mountain Range, the land before them flattened out. Further ahead lay a smooth path.

"Qingqing, let's go! Those four Desolate Level Martial Artists that appeared in the Soul Severing Valley clearly came for Fang Bai. With him being taken by them, the odds are grim!"

Seeing Liu Qingqing frequently looking back as if still hoping for something, Ge Feng sighed and spoke to her kindly.

Liu Qingqing shook her head, saying, "Elder Ge, I have this feeling that Brother Fang isn't in trouble. And... it's like he's always been close by..."

Ever since Liu Qingqing started cultivating the martial arts techniques taught by Fang Bai, she felt that somehow she had established a sort of psychic connection with him. When Fang Bai suddenly disappeared in Soul Severing Valley, she was initially anxious, worried, and devastated. However, after calming down, she sensed that Fang Bai seemed to guard them closely, never having left.

Ge Feng thought that Liu Qingqing was speaking out of excessive grief and managed a wry smile, "Qingqing, you need to calm down and be strong..."

Liu Qingqing also gave a wry smile and said, "Elder Ge, I am calm and haven't lost my reason to grief. I truly feel that Brother Fang is still alive, and not far from us..."

"Alas..."

Confronted with Liu Qingqing's "persistence," Ge Feng felt helpless and sighed again, thinking he would wait until they reached Purple Flame City to properly counsel and comfort her.

Due to Liu Qingqing, the Bitao Martial Academy's team wasn't traveling quickly. By dusk, they had only left Soul Severing Valley by more than five hundred li, and now on the horizon ahead, a small expanse of virgin forest appeared, with the road beneath their feet extending straight into it.

"It's getting late. Let's rest in that hilly area tonight and continue our journey early tomorrow. By this time tomorrow, we should have reached Purple Flame City."

Ge Feng spoke loudly.

They had previously traversed Soul Severing Valley, braved strong winds, and faced heavy snow, which had drained much of their Essence Energy. After traveling several hundred li without rest, they were all

somewhat weary. Upon hearing Ge Feng's words, they drove their Swiftwind Horses towards the hills at the edge of the virgin forest.

Liu Qingqing, however, seemed to sense something, her emotions suddenly becoming agitated. She dismounted from her Swiftwind Horse, leaped onto the tallest hill, and stood there, gazing intently into the nearby forest.

Shen Yulin and the others felt strange, unable to understand what Junior Sister Liu was doing. From her demeanor, she seemed very excited and agitated. Could it be that the sorrow and shadows brought to her by Fang Bai's demise had passed so quickly?

"Brother Fang, is it really you? Is it really you?..."

Liu Qingqing stood at the top of the hill, gazing towards the forest, her hands clasped in front of her chest, murmuring to herself, tears starting to form in her eyes.

Shen Yulin and the others stopped paying attention to Liu Qingqing. They busied themselves by tying their Swiftwind Horses to large rocks, then picked a suitable spot to sit cross-legged and recuperate, striving to recover their strength to its peak as soon as possible.

"Qingqing, you should also sit down and rest for a while! We'll reach Purple Flame City tomorrow, and during the Martial Dao competition of the Sect's grand meeting, we'll need you to fight. You..."

After sitting down cross-legged, Ge Feng spoke softly, attempting to persuade Liu Qingqing.

He had brought nine disciples this time and had already lost the most promising of them, Fang Bai. If Liu Qingqing couldn't adjust her state before reaching Purple Flame City, it would be difficult to ensure victory if she faced a formidable opponent in the Martial Dao competition.

Ge Feng urged her twice in succession but saw no response from Liu Qingqing, which made him somewhat displeased. Suddenly, he sensed that Liu Qingqing's aura became violent and chaotic, and her body started to tremble uncontrollably.

Surprised, Elder Ge stood up and looked in the direction of Liu Qingqing's gaze, and like her, his emotions became agitated, and his body started shaking uncontrollably.

"I just knew it... I just knew it..."

Liu Qingqing murmured, then suddenly clamped a hand over her mouth, and tears started falling like beads off a broken string.

At this moment, her tears were not of sadness and pain, but of joy.

Fang Bai was not dead!

Dressed in a green shirt, Fang Bai was walking briskly from the distant primal forest, the corners of his mouth bearing that smile Liu Qingqing was endlessly infatuated with.

Fearing she was dreaming or that her vision was blurry, Liu Qingqing continuously wiped away the tears that had overflowed from her eyes, straining to keep her eyes wide open to see Fang Bai.

As Fang Bai drew nearer, Liu Qingqing could clearly sense the familiar Martial Artist Aura emanating from him, affirming that the living Fang Bai was indeed approaching her.

"Brother Fang!"

When there was still a hundred meters between them, Liu Qingqing saw Fang Bai walking towards her with open arms, so she cheered and, like a joyous little bird, charged towards Fang Bai with tears and laughter.

The smile on Fang Bai's face grew broader, and with a slight sway of his figure, he covered the hundred-meter distance between them, appearing right in front of Liu Qingqing.

Liu Qingqing felt a blur before her eyes and, before she had time to react, the next moment she was already plunging into a broad, warm, and solid chest.

"Brother Fang... Is it really you? Is it really you?"

Lifting her head, Liu Qingqing looked up at Fang Bai's face through tear-streaked eyes, her voice trembling as she asked again.

"Qingqing, it's me... I'm okay! Don't cry, such a beautiful girl shouldn't mar her looks with tears!"

Fang Bai chuckled and reached out to wipe away Liu Qingqing's tears, then affectionately pinched her blushing cheek.

Chapter 1043: The Mystery of Fang Bai's Disappearance

"Whimper..."

Liu Qingqing's head buried deeply into Fang Bai's chest as she cried her heart out, her slender arms clutching tightly around him as if she feared Fang Bai would disappear again the moment she let go.

"It's Senior Brother Fang! It really is Senior Brother Fang!"

"How... how is this possible?"

"Junior Sister Liu was right, Senior Brother Fang is really fine!"

"Kidnapped by four Desolate Level Martial Artists, I thought Junior Brother Fang was surely doomed!"

"This is unbelievable!"

...

As Liu Qingqing flung herself into Fang Bai's arms, those like Huang Miao who were meditating cross-legged also saw Fang Bai. Some were dumbfounded, others surprised, many delighted, and some disbelieving.

Huang Miao, who was on good terms with Fang Bai, Shen Yulin, who had a great impression of Fang Bai, and those like Long Xing and Yun Yan who wanted to befriend him, all hurried towards Fang Bai.

Ge Feng was also full of excitement. Stroking his beard, he stood there smiling, waiting for Fang Bai to come over and speak.

As for Yang Gang and Hua Hua, both were Personal Transmission Disciples and ranked higher than Fang Bai in the Bitao Martial Academy; thus, they stood with Elder Ge, also waiting.

"This little bastard... he really has the devil's own luck!"

Yang Lin had also seen Fang Bai and felt a deep disappointment at Fang Bai's "return from the dead." His dream of taking advantage of Fang Bai's absence to win Liu Qingqing's heart had now shattered.

Seeing several fellow Inner Court Disciples and Core Disciples go to greet Fang Bai, and with Elder Ge and two Personal Transmission Disciples dismounting their horses to wait, Yang Lin thought that as an Inner Court Disciple, he should also go over and offer a few words of "consolation." So he reluctantly followed Huang Miao and the others towards Fang Bai.

After crying into Fang Bai's arms for a while, Liu Qingqing stopped with the gentle comfort of Fang Bai's voice. She noticed Fang Bai's chest clothing was wet with her tears and saw that Huang Miao and others were already standing close by, causing her face to turn crimson. Like a startled little rabbit, she quickly hid behind Fang Bai.

"Junior Brother Fang, you suddenly disappeared in the Soul Severing Valley, causing everyone great worry. What exactly happened at that time? How come you're here?"

Huang Miao was full of curiosity and couldn't help asking.

"That... is a long story! Let's talk slowly on the way after we meet Elder Ge..."

Fang Bai smiled and exchanged a few words with Huang Miao, Shen Yulin, and the others, and then walked together towards Ge Feng.

Regarding Yang Lin, who stood behind everyone else, Fang Bai treated him as if he was air, not bothering to pay him any attention.

Yang Lin, after Fang Bai's disappearance, had tried to "hit on" Liu Qingqing. Now seeing Fang Bai again, he inevitably felt somewhat guilty, and harboring resentment for Fang Bai's once having seriously hurt him, he didn't step forward to speak.

"I always said that such a peerless talent couldn't possibly fall so easily. It's so good that Fang Bai is fine! Haha... it's really too good!"

Seeing Fang Bai, completely unharmed, approaching him and feeling Fang Bai's Martial Artist Aura up close, surrounded by Liu Qingqing, Huang Miao, and the others, Ge Feng couldn't believe it at first. But once he was certain it was true, he became extremely excited, his nose tingled, and he nearly shed tears.

Fang Bai was brought out by Ge Feng, and had something gone awry during the journey, Ge Feng's own conscience wouldn't have been clear, and upon their return to Bitao Martial Academy, he would have inevitably faced complaints from the entire Martial Academy. Now, seeing Fang Bai completely unharmed, Ge Feng's worry was lifted, and he felt much lighter and his mood brightened up considerably.

"Elder Ge, I'm back."

Fang Bai walked up to Ge Feng and stood still, cupping his fists and bowing in greeting.

"Good ... good that you're back ... good ...,"

Ge Feng raised his hands, gesturing as if to steady Fang Bai, and then looked him up and down for a while, a look of relief spreading across his face.

Although Ge Feng was curious about what Fang Bai had experienced during his disappearance, he refrained from asking questions for the moment. He knew that if Fang Bai wished to speak, he would certainly not hide anything. If Fang Bai did not wish to disclose details, asking would be pointless.

"Let's go, let's rest first. Tomorrow morning, we set off for Purple Flame City!"

With a grand gesture, Ge Feng led Fang Bai and the others towards the hillock where they had rested before.

Fang Bai's return swept away the shadow that had been looming over the hearts of Ge Feng and the others; smiles appeared on almost everyone's faces.

That very night, the ten of them gathered around a large campfire, pulled out the food they carried with them to eat, and then Fang Bai began recounting his experiences in Soul Severing Valley.

According to Fang Bai, he encountered a sudden attack by two Desolate Level Martial Artists in Soul Severing Valley. Panicked, he left his Swiftwind Horse to evade the attack, and due to the ferocious snowstorm, he lost his way and contact with Ge Feng and the rest of the group after leaving the formation.

Later, Fang Bai was captured by the two Desolate Level Martial Artists. Instead of killing him on the spot, they took him out of Soul Severing Valley, although Fang Bai had no idea where they intended to bring him.

Fang Bai thought he was certainly going to die, but unexpectedly, when they passed through a primordial forest that lay ahead, he encountered a Nameless Martial Artist. It seemed that the Nameless Martial Artist bore a grudge against the two Desolate Level Martial Artists; without a word upon meeting them, he struck and killed both abductors, sparing Fang Bai's life.

"That's about what happened ...,"

Fang Bai concluded, "The Nameless Martial Artist appeared to be over one hundred years old, with white hair and beard, and an air of immortal elegance. I do not know what cultivation realm he was at, but he was certainly very powerful. With only a few punches and kicks, he killed the two Desolate Level Martial Artists who had abducted me."

Ge Feng had personally witnessed Fang Bai being attacked by two Desolate Level Martial Artists and then disappearing. Although he hadn't seen what happened after that, Fang Bai's escape from the hands of two Desolate Level Martial Artists without any external intervention seemed impossible. Therefore, Ge Feng did not doubt Fang Bai's story of the Nameless Martial Artist.

However, Ge Feng was secretly taken aback by the ease with which the Nameless Martial Artist had killed two low-rank Desolate Level Martial Artists. Ge Feng, now a high-rank Desolate Level Martial Artist himself, could have beaten two low-rank Desolate Level Martial Artists, but killing them within a few moves was something he couldn't do. Only a powerful figure with cultivation at Desolate Level Perfection, like Ren Jingbo, could possess such capability.

What puzzled Ge Feng was why such a high-ranking Martial Artist at the level of Desolate Level Perfection—a caliber equivalent to that of a Sect Master of a fourth-ranked Sect—would be in this location, killing two low-rank Desolate Level Martial Artists. Could there be an irreconcilable, deep-seated hatred between them?

"No matter what, it's good that you're safe. To come across that senior Master was also your fortune,"

Since it was baffling, Ge Feng decided not to dwell on it any longer, and said to Fang Bai with a cheerful smile.

After resting on the hillock for one night, everyone regained their peak condition by the next morning, mounted their Swiftwind Horses, and continued on their way.

The primordial forest lying ahead was not extensive in size, and it harbored no fierce Spirit Beasts. As Fang Bai and the others rode along the broad path through it, they did not need to be on high alert.

Chapter 1044: Why Is It Them?

Laughing and chatting, they had traveled several tens of li when, just as they were about to exit the primitive forest, Ge Feng suddenly had a premonition and looked up ahead abruptly.

He saw four corpses hanging from ropes tied to four towering ancient trees on either side of the road ahead.

The four corpses, dressed in identical snow-white garments, had their heads and faces completely concealed, leaving only two eye holes visible—it was clear they hadn't wanted to be recognized in life.

Each of the bodies had suffered several serious injuries, especially around the heart area, which had been pierced by four long swords. The blood had dyed a large portion of their clothes red, indicating that those thrusts were the critical blows that had ended their lives.

"It's them!"

As Ge Feng rode his horse under the four ancient trees, he looked up at the four hanging bodies, observed them closely for a moment, and then suddenly exclaimed out loud.

"These four people are the Desolate Level Martial Artists who attacked us in Soul Severing Valley! I recognize their clothes and the weapons in their hands! There's no mistake!"

Seeing that Huang Miao and others all had puzzled looks on their faces, Ge Feng raised his hand, pointing towards the hanging corpses, and loudly explained.

Huang Miao and the others all looked up at the four bodies hanging in the air, shock evident in their eyes.

Four Desolate Level Martial Artists, how formidable their strength, yet here they lay dead. Thinking back to what Fang Bai had said about the Nameless Martial Artist last night, everyone on the scene wondered if these four had been killed by that same Nameless Martial Artist's hand.

"That Nameless Martial Artist only killed the two who abducted me; the other two weren't there at the time. Their deaths must have occurred after I had left, and then their bodies were hung up here together."

Fang Bai spoke with an expression of disbelief, muttering to himself.

Ge Feng sighed, "These four Desolate Level Martial Artists seem to have been killed within just a few moves. Whoever had the ability to do this has surpassed the realm of Desolate Level Martial Artists..."

Shen Yulin and the others exchanged glances, involuntarily inhaling a cold breath as fear flashed in their eyes.

Surpassing the realm of Desolate Level Martial Artists, didn't that mean the one who killed these four was at least a Vast Level Martial Artist?

To Shen Yulin and the others, Desolate Level Martial Artists were already revered figures, and Vast Level Martial Artists were like beings perched upon the clouds, unattainably high.

But within the borders of Thousand Lakes Country, aside from a handful of Individual Cultivation Martial Artists, only the third-grade Sect, Purple Flame Sect, had Vast Level Martial Artists. They didn't know whether the Nameless Martial Artist who had unintentionally saved Fang Bai's life was from Thousand Lakes Country or a foreign land.

And what about the identities of these four slain Desolate Level Martial Artists? What connection did they have with Fang Bai to ambush him in Soul Severing Valley?

"Yang Gang, Long Xing, go bring down those four bodies! I want to see just who dared to make a move against a disciple of Bitao Martial Academy!"

With a severe look on his face, Ge Feng spoke in a deep voice.

Ge Feng had already asked Fang Bai and knew that Fang Bai had no powerful enemies, so the appearance of these four Desolate Level Martial Artists surely had some unknown conspiracy behind it. If this matter was not thoroughly investigated, future hidden dangers might still arise.

The corpses of the four Desolate Level Martial Artists were suspended four to five zhang above the ground, a height that presented no difficulty for the Direct Disciple Yang Gang and the Core Disciple Long Xing.

They replied with a nod, leaped straight up from the backs of their Swiftwind Horses, soared into the sky, and upon reaching the height where the bodies were hung, each used their palm as a knife and wielded four True Yuan cuts that severed the ropes. Then they each grabbed a corpse with both hands, gently descended to the ground, and placed the bodies before Ge Feng.

Ge Feng said, "Remove the cloths from their heads, let's see who they all are!"

Yang Gang and Long Xing bent over, gently tugged, and at the same time, a strand of True Yuan burst from between their fingers. The veils hiding the faces of the four fallen Desolate Level Martial Artists instantly shattered, revealing their true appearances.

All eyes fell simultaneously upon the faces of the four fallen Desolate Level Martial Artists. Following that, everyone except Fang Bai was dumbstruck with shock, their faces filled with horror as if they had seen something frightful.

"How... How is this possible? Why would it be them?"

After a moment of deadly silence, Ge Feng's trembling voice rose. Anyone paying attention would notice that Ge Feng was trying hard to control his emotions. The pain in his expression, the uncontrollable twitching at the corners of his mouth, and his somewhat ferocious and distorted features—all indicated that his emotions were on the verge of collapse.

It was no wonder that Ge Feng reacted so vehemently, for among the four corpses of Desolate Level Martial Artists lying on the ground, three were known to him, with only one he had not previously met.

What pained Ge Feng most were two of the Desolate Level Martial Artists who not only came from Bitao Martial Academy but were also highly respected members of the Martial Academy's hierarchy.

One was Elder Lei Li who managed the Classics Hall, and the other was one of the eight Stewards, Zhuang Zhi.

Both Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi were figures of great importance within Bitao Martial Academy. Nobody would have expected them to appear here and to have died at the hands of the Nameless Martial Artist mentioned by Fang Bai.

At this moment, what Ge Feng thought was not how Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi had died, but why Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi, as high-level members of the Martial Academy, would attempt to assassinate Fang Bai, the Academy's greatest hope for rising power!

The other two fallen Desolate Level powerhouses were, one, Leng Han from Fiery Sect whom they had encountered not long ago, and the other, a Steward from another fourth-grade Sect known to Ge Feng.

"Damn it all!"

Ge Feng looked up to the sky and let out a low roar as if to vent the grief and indignation in his heart.

Although he often did not see eye to eye with Lei Li, Ge Feng rarely quarreled with him, and they never broke face. He had thought Lei Li, despite his many faults, wouldn't do something that would harm the Martial Academy, but he never would have expected Lei Li to join with Zhuang Zhi and outsiders in an attempt on Fang Bai's life. This was a serious taboo, touching the psychological bottom line of all disciples who put the interests of the Martial Academy first, including Ge Feng himself.

Even if Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi had not died this time, if Ge Feng had found out that they were the masterminds behind it, he would definitely have fought them to the death.

"I can't understand it. Why would Elder Lei and Steward Zhuang want to kill Junior Brother Fang? This doesn't seem like personal revenge!"

Shen Yulin was the first to snap out of her shock and bewilderment. She looked towards the emotionally agitated Ge Feng and asked cautiously.

Ge Feng took a deep breath, glanced at Fang Bai, who also looked baffled and after a moment of thought, said gravely, "There are two possibilities: First, Elder Lei and Steward Zhuang could have been coerced and instigated by someone, received great benefits, and thus helped others to deal with Fang Bai. The second possibility is that Elder Lei and Steward Zhuang are not truly from Bitao Martial

Academy but are undercover agents planted by other Sects or powers. Their assault on Fang Bai was an attempt to kill this Martial Dao Genius in his cradle!"

Chapter 1045: The Traitor

Many Sects within the True Martial Realm vie for limited cultivation resources and higher-rank Martial Arts Techniques or to suppress opponents and strengthen themselves, using various means and schemes.

Some Sects detect their rivals and place their own people within them or bribe the rival Sect's Disciples to act as insiders, monitoring every move and even stealing important Cultivation Resources and Martial Arts Techniques.

Ge Feng, after calming down, carefully concluded that either Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi had been bought by the Fiery Sect, or they were spies planted in Bitao Martial Academy by the Fiery Sect.

If it were the latter, it would be terrifying.

Because both Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi had been in Bitao Martial Academy for decades and had risen to high-ranking positions in the Academy, gaining access to many of its secrets.

Especially Lei Li, who had been in charge of Classic Hall, where Martial Arts Techniques were stored, for ten years, if he wasn't loyal to Bitao Martial Academy or was a spy planted by the Fiery Sect, the Martial Arts Techniques in the Classics Hall might have long been leaked to the Fiery Sect.

This way, the Fiery Sect could anticipate and counter all their moves, no wonder Bitao Martial Academy was always at a disadvantage in every conflict with the Fiery Sect.

"Ever since Fang Bai entered the academy, I noticed that Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi were not very friendly towards him; unfortunately, I didn't think much about it then. Their joint attempt with Fiery Sect Elder Leng Han and Cloud Feather Sect Steward Chang Feng to assassinate Fang Bai must be condemned, which likely confirms they are spies for the Fiery Sect or Cloud Feather Sect! They conspired to kill Fang Bai because they feared he would become a threat to their Sects. Hmph, good riddance! Good riddance indeed!"

Ge Feng clenched his fists, his face stern, his eyes seemingly spitting fire.

He not only hated Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi for their long-term infiltration in Bitao Martial Academy but also despised the Fiery Sect and Cloud Feather Sect for daring to openly participate in the assassination of Fang Bai, which was a blatant provocation to Bitao Martial Academy.

However, Ge Feng felt relieved and vindicated because Fang Bai had emerged unscathed from the assassination attempt, while the four Desolate Level Martial Artists involved—Lei Li, Zhuang Zhi, Leng Han, and Chang Feng—all perished.

"Speaking of which, we should be thankful to that Nameless Martial Artist; otherwise, Fang Bai might not have escaped this disaster, and Bitao Martial Academy would continue to be kept in the dark about the spies, Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi, lurking within."

Ge Feng finally sighed.

"Unfortunately, that Nameless Martial Artist came without a trace and left without a trace before I could express my gratitude. Surprisingly, he killed all four assailants... There must have been some deep-seated grudge between them; otherwise, they wouldn't have resorted to murder! I was just lucky to have met such a noble person at a time of crisis!"

Fang Bai said this aloud, but he chuckled internally, thinking that the Nameless Martial Artist was as distant as the horizon yet as close as before his eyes, none other than himself. He had killed Lei Li and the others because they had attempted to kill him and crossed his bottom line.

After being attacked in Soul Severing Valley, Fang Bai immediately used his movement technique to lead the four Desolate Level Martial Artists to a hidden place outside Soul Severing Valley and killed them, then he hung their bodies in this primitive forest and patiently waited for Ge Feng and others to arrive before emerging and fabricating a lie about being helped by a Nameless Martial Artist.

The true identities of the four Desolate Level Martial Artists were already known to Fang Bai after he had killed them. He had anticipated the involvement of Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi in the ambush against him and was not surprised, only that he did not recognize the other two.

But for Fang Bai, it didn't matter who they were; anyone who crossed his bottom line or sought to harm him would face his fierce and merciless retaliation.

Lei Li and the other three Desolate Level Martial Artists, although formidable when they joined forces, were up against Fang Bai, who possessed the Cultivation Level of an early Vast Level.

Moreover, Fang Bai had the ability to challenge those of higher realms, a capacity not possessed by ordinary Martial Artists, making him invincible across the Vast Level Realm.

Even when facing early Cosmic Level powerhouses, Fang Bai, giving his all, still had the strength to fight.

Thus, although Lei Li and the other three were formidable, in Fang Bai's eyes, they were no different from four mere ants.

After luring Lei Li and his group out from Soul Severing Valley, Fang Bai effortlessly killed all four with an overwhelming, crushing superiority.

Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi never imagined that Fang Bai, who had already demonstrated impressive abilities at Bitao Martial Academy, would unleash strength surpassing that of Desolate Level Martial Artists during their combined assault. They didn't even have time to plead for mercy before they perished under Fang Bai's fierce offensive.

Naturally, Fang Bai did not inform Ge Feng and others about killing the four Desolate Level Martial Artists, to avoid causing a sensation.

Ge Feng's gaze swept over the bodies of Lei Li and the others. Suddenly, he moved, crouching beside their bodies and searching them. He found two Martial Arts Techniques Classics written on thin beast skins.

"Damn it! Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi, these beasts, were indeed spies from other Sects!"

After carefully examining the two Desolate Level Martial Arts Techniques, Ge Feng became furious, bitterly saying, "These two Desolate Level Martial Arts Techniques are treasures left by the founding master of Bitao Martial Academy, only available to elders and high-ranking officials of the academy for Cultivation. I can't believe they copied and took them out. It seems they were planning to give them to the Sects behind them."

Ge Feng sighed in relief and added, "Fortunately, those four were killed by that Nameless Martial Artist. Otherwise, these two highest order Martial Arts Techniques of our Bitao Martial Academy would have quietly entered the classics halls of other Sects, the consequences of which are unimaginable!"

Then, Ge Feng also found some Elixirs and Essence Stones on the bodies of the four Desolate Level Martial Artists, planning to take them back to be stored in the Elixir Hall of Bitao Martial Academy.

"They must have cultivated some secret technique that concealed their Martial Artist Aura, which is why I did not sense their presence during the attack in Soul Severing Valley. Otherwise, I would have known their identities then. Heh, it seems they had a meticulous plan before launching the attack, but the appearance of that Nameless Martial Artist disrupted their plan, something they probably didn't anticipate."

Ge Feng, while detesting Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi for being spies from other Sects within Bitao Martial Academy, was relieved that the two confidential Martial Arts Techniques were recovered. He pondered the fact that the four Desolate Level Martial Artists had teamed up to kill Fang Bai and lamented that the journey on the path of Martial Dao for talented Martial Artists from weaker Sects was destined to be full of difficulties and obstacles, unlike the smooth sailing of talented disciples from stronger, larger Sects.

Chapter 1046: Purple Flame City

Colluding with other Sect powerhouses to assassinate Fang Bai, secretly harboring the most confidential Martial Arts Techniques stolen from Bitao Martial Academy... These two actions alone are enough to prove that Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi, both high-ranking members of Bitao Martial Academy, are internal traitors planted by other Sects.

Only traitors would have the audacity to commit acts that so severely harm the interests of Bitao Martial Academy.

The evidence that Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi were traitors was irrefutable; Ge Feng and the others believed they deserved to die. There were those who spat in disdain and those who cursed, all consumed by outrage.

Yang Lin also feigned a look of righteous indignation, joining a few Bitao Martial Academy disciples nearby in cursing Lei Li and Zhuang Zhi. He glanced at Fang Bai, thinking to himself, "Surviving an attack by four Desolate Level Martial Artists... this brat has a huge stroke of luck!"

Moments later, Ge Feng directed Yang Lin and the others to bury the corpses of Lei Li and his associates by the roadside. Then, mounting his horse, he continued on the journey.

"The involvement of the higher-ups from Fiery Sect and Cloud Feather Sect in this attempt on Fang Bai's life is an affront to our Bitao Martial Academy, utterly detestable!"

On the road, Ge Feng spoke aloud to the nine disciples accompanying him, "Although our Bitao Martial Academy may be weaker, we will not be slaughtered at will! Once the Sect conference concludes and we return to the Academy, I will report this incident to the headmaster and demand an explanation from Fiery Sect and Cloud Feather Sect!"

His words were spoken with fervor, but in his heart, he knew full well that in terms of overall strength, neither the Fiery Sect nor the Cloud Feather Sect was weaker than Bitao Martial Academy. Even if Bitao Martial Academy sought redress armed with solid evidence, at most the two parties would engage in a war of words. They would not truly come to blows and fight to the death.

After all, it had become the norm in the True Martial Realm for major Sects to engage in overt and covert struggles for their own interests, utilizing endless tactics. And those involved in these power struggles always maintained a delicate balance, avoiding outright warfare unless a Sect's very survival was at stake. Otherwise, a fight that left both sides severely weakened would benefit no one and present an opportunity for other Sects to exploit.

After finishing his declaration, Ge Feng gave Fang Bai a meaningful look, wondering if he would harbor resentment if Bitao Martial Academy failed to obtain justice for him. It seemed that upon returning, he and the other Martial Academy seniors would have to take good care to appease him.

Half a day later, Ge Feng and his companions could see the outline of the walls of Purple Flame City in the distance.

As the capital of Thousand Lakes Country, Purple Flame City was vast, with a large population and formidable, sturdy walls. From afar, the city looked like a mountain range stretching across the horizon, exuding a majestic aura.

People from all corners of the land were entering and exiting through the city's grand gateways. Commoners mostly traveled on foot, while Martial Artists, like Fang Bai and his group, often rode Swiftwind Horses.

Outside the city walls, there were many temporary stalls; commoners peddled everyday items, while Martial Artists offered Cultivation Resources for sale.

Fang Bai and his party were still a distance from the city gate when they could faintly hear the clamor of shouting and hustling, a bustling and lively scene enveloping them as they approached.

"Though Thousand Lakes Country has a ruler, the real power lies with Purple Flame Sect. As a third-tier Sect, Purple Flame Sect may not be considered powerful in the entire True Martial Realm, but in Thousand Lakes Country, it is the strongest. For a fourth-tier Sect like our Bitao Martial Academy, we must pay homage to Purple Flame Sect, offering up a portion of our Cultivation Resources every year; otherwise, we face all sorts of suppression from Purple Flame Sect, even the threat of annihilation..."

Ge Feng mused that Fang Bai and Liu Qingqing were both visiting Purple Flame City for the first time, so he began to introduce them to some aspects of the city.

"In the Thousand Lakes Country, there are twenty or thirty fourth-grade sects, and each one dreams of surpassing the Purple Flame Sect one day. However, small sects lack both cultivation resources as well as the ability to recruit disciples with extraordinary talent, so overtaking the Purple Flame Sect is easier said than done."

Having said this, Ge Feng looked at Fang Bai and Liu Qingqing with satisfaction. "May the ancestors bless us; our Bitao Martial Academy now has you two and Gao Shuxian—three disciples with Innate Spiritual Roots. Perhaps we may fulfill our wish to become a third-grade sect in the future! Fang Bai, Qingqing, you must strive hard to live up to the expectations of all the academy's disciples!"

Fang Bai and Liu Qingqing nodded in unison.

Upon reaching the south gate of Purple Flame City, Ge Feng and the others paid a low-grade Essence Stone as a city entry fee to the guards and were then permitted to enter the city.

"The guards at the city gates are soldiers under the king's command, and they hand over the collected Essence Stones to the king. To put it plainly, the king is a Puppet of the Purple Flame Sect, and thus, a significant portion of those Essence Stones ends up in the hands of the Purple Flame Sect. Just the income from the city entry fee is a considerable amount of cultivation resources for the Purple Flame Sect, enabling them to cultivate even more Martial Dao experts. Unlike our fourth-grade sect, we often worry about the lack of cultivation resources!"

After passing through the city gate, Ge Feng sighed with a tone full of envy.

Ge Feng led Fang Bai and ten others, riding on Swiftwind Horses, through bustling streets before finally arriving at a grand and beautifully decorated complex of buildings.

Purple Flame City was a city mingled with mountains and rivers, and this complex was situated right at the heart of Purple Flame City, with an excellent location by the mountain and water, occupying a full quarter of the entire city.

The complex was also surrounded by high walls, isolating it from the outside world and forbidding entry to outsiders, almost like a city within a city.

It was said that this city within a city, known as "Vermilion Bird City," was the headquarters of the Purple Flame Sect, and tens of thousands of Purple Flame Sect disciples lived there.

Following Ge Feng and others, Fang Bai came to the south gate of Vermilion Bird City, where they revealed their identities to the guarding disciples of the Purple Flame Sect. Then, with a disciple leading the way, they settled into a clean and tranquil courtyard.

This courtyard had precisely ten rooms, one for each person in Fang Bai's party.

What left Fang Bai speechless was that they had traveled thousands of miles to attend the sect conference, and the hosting Purple Flame Sect, despite being wealthy and powerful, not only did not extend a warm reception from higher-ups but also did not provide free accommodation. They had to pay a hefty sum of Essence Stones themselves.

What a stingy approach for a grand third-grade sect—truly a blow to the prestigious sect's image.

Later, Fang Bai learned from Ge Feng that the courtyard where they were staying was built by the Purple Flame Sect specifically for sects participating in the sect conference. There were dozens more such courtyards nearby. All disciples from sects taking part in the sect conference had to stay in these courtyards upon arrival in Purple Flame City and were required to pay Essence Stones for food and lodging, or they would lose the qualification to participate in the conference.

Although the Purple Flame Sect's approach seemed overly domineering, causing grumbling among the participating disciples from various sects, none of the sects wanted to offend the Purple Flame Sect and had no choice but to begrudgingly tolerate it.

Chapter 1047: Three-Foot Ding Furnace

"Heh, the Purple Flame Sect really spares no effort in obtaining more cultivation resources, even at the cost of tarnishing the prestige of a third-grade strong sect!"

Whenever the topic arose, Ge Feng couldn't help but mock, but would finally sigh, "That's the benefit of being a powerful sect! I'm stronger than you, so I can be domineering. What can you do about it?"

Shen Yulin, Huang Miao, and others remained silent after hearing Ge Feng's words.

In the Martial Dao World, it's the law of the jungle, an eternally unbreakable truth.

Only the strong are respected, can do as they please, and dominate everything.

For a fourth-grade sect like Bitao Martial Academy, only by surpassing the overall strength of the Purple Flame Sect could they escape from being oppressed and manipulated at will.

However, although Bitao Martial Academy now had three disciples with Innate Spiritual Roots and some talented students, the lack of cultivation resources was a major obstacle hindering these disciples' progress. Therefore, surpassing the Purple Flame Sect was still a long way off.

"The sect conference officially begins in two days, and during these two days, you all can wander around Purple Flame City to broaden your horizons. But remember, Purple Flame City is a place full of hidden dragons and crouching tigers; don't cause trouble easily. Do you understand?"

After a short rest in their quarters, Ge Feng gathered Fang Bai and the others to carefully instruct them, then added, "I am going to the west city's Martial Artists Trading Market to exchange some urgently needed cultivation resources for our sect. Anyone who wants to come with me just speak up, and I'll take you there. Those who want to explore other places in the city, don't come back too late at night, lest I worry! Did you remember?"

Nine disciples nodded their heads; some decided to join Ge Feng to the Trading Market, while others planned to wander around the city in small groups, gradually disbursing.

Liu Qingqing originally wanted to stay with Fang Bai, but was pulled away by Shen Yulin and Huang Miao for a street outing.

Soon, the large courtyard was left with only Fang Bai.

Fang Bai left the courtyard, departed from Vermilion Bird City, and went to a secluded, unpopulated place. He first changed his clothes, then manipulated his vitality and facial muscles, altering his appearance, making himself a bit shorter.

When he reappeared among people, he presented as a middle-aged martial artist wearing a black robe, with pale skin and a lean figure.

After asking a passerby for the exact location of the Martial Artists Trading Market, Fang Bai hurried towards it.

Arriving at Vermilion Bird Street in the west of the city, he saw in the distance two large gates at the end of the street. Each gate depicted a Fire System Divine Beast, Vermilion Bird, with a large golden sign hanging above, inscribed with the glittering golden words "Purple Flame City Martial Artists Trading Market", and signed not by the ruler of Thousand Lakes Country, but by the current Sect Master of Purple Flame Sect, Li Zheng.

This clearly showed that the Purple Flame Sect was the true overlord of Thousand Lakes Country.

To enter or trade in the market, martial artists had to pay an "entrance fee" of ten Essence Stones at the gates and receive a numbered special waist tag to gain entry.

"This Martial Artists Trading Market, with tens of thousands of martial artists trading here daily, earns a substantial income just from the entrance fees alone!"

Fang Bai, wearing his waist tag, entered the bustling Martial Artists Trading Market, and couldn't help but silently curse at the Purple Flame Sect a few times.

Inside the vast trading market, tens of thousands of martial artists wandered around, wearing a variety of clothes, including disciples from the major sects of Thousand Lakes Country, numerous individual cultivation martial artists without sect affiliations, and even foreign martial artists. As long as they spotted the cultivation resources they needed, they would stop to haggle and see if they could strike a deal.

To raise or lower the price, both sides of the trade shouted and argued fervently, their faces flushed with the heat of debate, yet they seemed tireless.

In the trading space, wisps of Essence Energy filled the air, released from the Spiritual Medicine, Elixirs, and other Cultivation Resources.

Fang Bai's Divine Sense Diffusion scanned through the trading market, roughly understanding some of the situation here.

Most of the tens of thousands of Martial Artists here were Heaven Level Martial Artists, with only a small portion being Desolate Level Martial Artists, and no Vast Level Martial Artists in existence.

The Cultivation Resources that the Martial Artists were trading were mostly low-grade and low-quality, with not much able to catch Fang Bai's interest.

"Ah? This furnace is quite good, I can buy it to make Elixirs."

As he passed a stall, Fang Bai's gaze swept over a furnace, and he couldn't help but be drawn to it.

The furnace was three feet tall, and at first glance, it was entirely black but on closer inspection, it faintly glowed red, giving it a very ancient feel.

The body of the furnace was engraved with Array Runes that ordinary Martial Artists would find difficult to understand, and it seemed to contain some mysterious power.

However, this mysterious power could only be sensed by a Martial Artist like Fang Bai with a Chaos True Body and extremely keen senses; if not for him, it might have remained buried.

The Martial Artists in the trading market, although many were discerning, couldn't tell what material the furnace that Fang Bai was interested in was made of, thinking it was nothing special or rare.

They did not know that the furnace, essential for many Pharmacists who often made Elixirs, was forged from rare Fire Essence Iron as the main material, along with other components, reaching the level of a high-grade Spiritual Artifact, difficult to exchange with ordinary Cultivation Resources.

In fact, even the stall owner who displayed the furnace did not realize that the ancient furnace he had acquired by chance could be so precious.

Fang Bai looked at the price of the furnace, 20,000 low-grade Fire Elemental Stones and twenty bottles of low-grade Gathering Yuan Pills, the exchange rate was not expensive, and just so, Fang Bai had some low-grade Fire Elemental Stones and a few low-grade Gathering Yuan Pills in his Spatial Ring, enough to exchange for the furnace.

"Brother, I quite like this furnace, can you make it a bit cheaper?"

Fang Bai picked up the furnace and examined it, casually asking the stall owner as if he was indifferent.

The stall owner was a Heaven Level Perfection Martial Artist, who appeared to be over ten years older than Fang Bai after his disguise, short and skinny with a pair of goat beards, exuding a sleazy and cunning appearance.

Judging by the stall owner's attire, he seemed to be a Loose Cultivator without affiliations to any Sect.

"Young brother, I obtained this furnace with great difficulty from a dangerous place, the price can't be reduced!"

The stall owner stated earnestly.

"I came in a hurry and didn't bring that many Essence Stones and Elixirs... How about this, I'll exchange a 500-year-old Tears of Crystal plant for this furnace, what do you think?"

Fang Bai, aware of the furnace's value and that the stall owner's price was indeed not expensive, decided not to haggle further and chose to use a Tears of Crystal plant for the exchange.

Chapter 1048: Exchange

Fang Bai had acquired dozens of 500-year-old mid-grade Tears of Crystal during a mountain training exercise for disciples at the Bitao Martial Academy. Taking out one to trade for a cauldron equivalent to a high-grade Spiritual Artifact was absolutely worth it.

As Fang Bai spoke, he did not intentionally lower his voice, and many martial artists around him heard him mention the "mid-grade Spiritual Medicine," casting greedy and envious looks toward him.

Although countless Spiritual Medicines were traded daily in the Martial Artists Trading Market, most were low-grade. Mid-grade Spiritual Medicines were a rare and expensive category, generally prompting Sect Disciples or Individual Cultivation Martial Artists to offer high prices for purchase or trade.

The stall owner was well-traveled and knowledgeable. He was especially excited when he heard about the "500-year-old medicinal age" of the Tears of Crystal.

"Deal, young man! Give me your Tears of Crystal, and take this cauldron!"

Seeing several powerful martial artists approaching, the stall owner, fearing his deal would be snatched away, hurriedly circled his stall, grabbed Fang Bai, stuffed the three-foot-tall cauldron into his hands, and then urged Fang Bai to produce the Tears of Crystal.

Indeed, the stall owner had obtained the cauldron from a perilous place, but despite studying it for a long time, he couldn't discern any special features. He had considered discarding it, but reluctant to do so, he brought it to the Martial Artists Trading Market hoping to trade it away.

The cauldron had been on display at the stall for some time, but no one had taken any interest in it. The stall owner had almost forgotten its existence, yet Fang Bai had taken interest in it, willing to trade a 500-year-old mid-grade Spiritual Medicine for it, delighting the stall owner beyond measure.

The stall owner was a Heaven Level Martial Artist, and he only needed low-grade Essence Stones and low-grade Elixirs for cultivation. A 500-year-old mid-grade Spiritual Medicine could be traded in this market for tens of thousands of low-grade Essence Stones or dozens of low-grade Elixirs, and so the stall owner thought he had made a huge profit by trading a useless cauldron for a valuable piece of Spiritual Medicine.

Seeing the stall owner's anxious look, Fang Bai couldn't help but laugh silently; with a flip of his hand, a 500-year-old mid-grade Tears of Crystal appeared in his hand.

"Here you go, take it!"

Fang Bai tossed the Tears of Crystal to the stall owner, then gently tapped the cauldron a few times, a satisfied expression spreading across his face.

At this moment, a few martial artists who had come up close surrounded Fang Bai, all inquiring if he had more mid-grade Spiritual Medicine and indicating their willingness to pay a high price for it.

"Do you think mid-grade Spiritual Medicines are like wildflowers, growing everywhere? It's not easy to obtain one, let alone more. Right, young man?"

The stall owner, perhaps feeling guilty for taking such a big advantage of Fang Bai, saw Fang Bai being surrounded and stepped forward to help.

"Second You, just because you struck it rich doesn't mean we can't inquire? Maybe this young man has other treasures on him."

A martial artist with a strength comparable to the stall owner glared and said discontentedly.

Another fat martial artist surrounding Fang Bai slapped his shoulder affectionately, speaking warmly, "Young man, besides the Tears of Crystal, do you have any other treasures? If so, why not show us? As long as we like what you have, we'll definitely offer you a satisfying exchange price—whether Essence Stones or Spirit Pills, it's up to you!"

This fat martial artist had a cultivation level of Heaven Level Perfection, whereas Fang Bai's cultivation realm was suppressed at the advanced Heaven Level, which was why the fat martial artist dared to be so friendly and familiar.

If the fat martial artist knew that Fang Bai's true power allowed him to defeat any Vast Level Martial Artist effortlessly, then even with several more guts, he wouldn't dare touch Fang Bai.

In the world of Martial Dao, the strong are revered, and the weak are despised; the hierarchy is rigid. When the weak encounter the strong, they must address themselves as juniors and behave respectfully, or else, even if they are severely taught a lesson, no one will pity or sympathize with them.

Fortunately, the chubby martial artist met Fang Bai. If it had been a strong person with a bad temper, he might have been sent flying with a single punch.

"You want a medium grade Spiritual Medicine? I have it!"

Fang Bai glanced at the chubby martial artist, smiled, and said, "I only need medium grade Essence Stones and medium grade Elixirs. Do you have any? Or perhaps you have something else that I might find appealing?"

The chubby martial artist was stunned, then burst into laughter, patting Fang Bai on the shoulder, "Young brother, you really know how to joke! A Heaven Level High Rank Martial Artist like you, why would you need medium grade Essence Stones or Elixirs? For a martial artist like you, the Essence Energy from medium grade Essence Stones is too strong, and the medicinal power of medium grade Elixirs too fierce; using them in cultivation could damage your meridians and blood vessels."

Fang Bai seriously said, "I'm not joking! The Martial Arts Techniques I cultivate are quite special and require the assistance of medium grade Essence Stones and Elixirs!"

Seeing that Fang Bai did not seem to be lying, the chubby martial artist scratched his head, looking troubled, "Well... as for Essence Stones and Elixirs, I do have some of lower quality, but truly none of medium grade... Young brother, are you serious about having medium grade Spiritual Medicine on you? You're not deceiving me, are you?"

Including the stall owner, a group of martial artists, upon hearing this, also stared intently at Fang Bai, waiting to see how he would respond.

Fang Bai just smiled enigmatically, leaving everyone in suspense.

"Young brother, my name is Second You, because I'm the second oldest at home, so here in Purple Flame City, everyone who knows me calls me Second You... hehe, young brother, you can call me that too. By the way, may I know your distinguished full name?"

The stall owner who had previously traded with Fang Bai, managed to squeeze through the crowd and got close to Fang Bai again, cheerfully introducing himself.

"Brother You, please. My family name is... Bai, with a single given name, Fang."

Fang Bai knew what Second You was up to; he thought that Fang Bai still had medium grade Spiritual Medicine and wanted to get closer to trade for it. Fang Bai couldn't help but secretly laugh, and he didn't reveal his real name, just making one up on the spot.

"So, young brother Bai Fang... here at my stall, I have a few treasures, none inferior to that furnace. Take another look; you might find something else you like."

Second You eagerly picked up several items from his stall to show to Fang Bai.

"You got a medium grade Spiritual Medicine and still aren't satisfied?"

"It's better to share the joy with everyone than enjoy it alone; give us a chance too!"

"You don't have any good items here anymore, do you?"

...

Seeing that Second You still wanted to take advantage of Fang Bai, the other martial artists were somewhat dissatisfied, and they all spoke up.

These martial artists saw how Fang Bai had just traded one medium grade Tears of Crystal with Second You for an old, useless furnace and considered Fang Bai an easy mark; they also wanted to benefit from him.

Chapter 1049: Change of Attitude

"Little brother, why not come and take a look at my stall?"

"I've got plenty of good stuff here too!"

"Second You is deceiving you, but we definitely won't!"

"Take a look, have a glance; my stall is no ordinary place! Elixirs, Spiritual Medicines, Spirit Cores, Spiritual Artifacts... all kinds of cultivation resources, all kinds of treasures are available. The prices are fair and reasonable, no deceit to the young or old!"

...

Some of the martial artists operating stalls near Second You also threw olive branches toward Fang Bai, not forgetting to badmouth Second You in the process.

Second You said angrily, "In all the fairness of heaven and earth, the trade between this Little Brother Bai and me was willingly conducted. How could that be called deceiving him? Little Brother Bai, am I right?"

Fang Bai nodded with a smile and said, "That's correct, I really like Brother You's cauldron. It was me who actively suggested exchanging it for the Tears of Crystal."

"Did you all hear that? Little Brother Bai said I didn't deceive him! I didn't deceive him!"

As soon as Fang Bai's words fell, Second You was already shouting loudly, as if he had suffered a great injustice.

The surrounding martial artists looked at the cauldron in front of Fang Bai and then at his smiling face. They thought that if what he exchanged for was a Spiritual Artifact, his happiness would be justified. However, that cauldron was clearly nothing more than an old, ordinary cauldron without the slightest ripple of Essence Energy, and yet he acted as if he had gotten a treasure. It seemed like he was a foolish man who had been swindled yet helped count the money.

Seeing a group of martial artists surrounding him, clamoring and refusing to leave, Fang Bai couldn't help but smile wryly. He thought this was not a solution; his primary goal in coming to the Martial Artists Trading Market was to acquire the urgently needed cultivation resources, not to chat idly with them.

Fang Bai had a special physique. Whether in terms of physical strength or the toughness of his meridians, he far surpassed ordinary martial artists. Thus, he could utilize cultivation resources of any quality.

However, Fang Bai's current realm and cultivation level were equivalent to a Vast Level Expert in this world, and low-quality cultivation resources were no longer of much help to him. At the very least, he needed resources of medium quality or higher, and the higher the quality, the better.

Currently, Fang Bai's Essence Stones and Elixirs were not enough for one session of secluded cultivation. Although he still had some Spiritual Medicines, which could be refined into Elixirs, they were not enough to resolve an urgent need.

Therefore, another reason Fang Bai came to the Martial Artists Trading Market was to set up a stall to refine Elixirs and craft artifacts for others, charging a fee for his services. This was the simplest and most expedient way to earn cultivation resources, making a handsome profit.

In the Martial Dao World, Alchemists and Artifact Refiners were martial artists who never lacked cultivation resources. It was no empty talk to say that they had wealth that could rival countries.

In his past life, Fang Bai had come from the Three Thousand Great Worlds to the Immortal Realm, experiencing endless years, and naturally understood this principle.

Although setting up a stall here might lead to encounters with sect disciples like Ge Feng from Bitao Martial Academy, Fang Bai was not worried. He had not only changed his appearance but had also concealed his original Martial Artist Aura. Even if Ge Feng stood right in front of him, he would not be able to detect any clues.

"Brothers and sisters, I, Bai Fang, greet you all here with respect."

Fang Bai cleared his throat and cupped his fists in salute to the martial artists gathered around him, then spoke loudly, "I am a loose cultivator with no sect affiliation. In addition to being a martial artist, I also hold the roles of alchemist and artifact refiner..."

Upon saying this and seeing the surrounding martial artists staring dumbfounded, he anticipated their reaction and continued with a smile, "Currently, I find myself lacking cultivation resources. Therefore, I wish to find a stall in this market to refine elixirs and artifacts for others to earn some cultivation resources. As I am new here, I'm unfamiliar with the local customs, so I would like to ask my fellow brothers and sisters for help on how to proceed! There will certainly be benefits for you!"

"I, Second You, have been running a business here in the Martial Artists Trading Market for decades; no one understands the rules here better than I do! Little Brother Bai... ah no, Senior Bai, I can tell you what to do!"

As Second You shouted the loudest among the martial artists, his attitude towards Fang Bai quickly shifted from "Little Brother Bai" to "Senior Bai," and "you" turned into "you," demonstrating utmost respect in his demeanor.

Although Fang Bai currently revealed a cultivation level inferior to that of Second You, Second You saw promise in him, given that Fang Bai was both an alchemist and artifact refiner. Second You reasoned that it was never wrong to address someone in advance as "Senior," as it could also curry favor with Fang Bai. Why not, if it brought no harm?

After Second You finished speaking, the other martial artists came to their senses and clamored to help Fang Bai, cursing themselves for being slower than Second You.

Upon hearing Fang Bai declare himself an alchemist and artifact refiner, everyone present, including Second You, radically shifted their attitude, now mixing deference with a hint of obsequiousness.

Fang Bai realized it was his status as an alchemist and artifact refiner that had awed Second You and the other martial artists.

In the Martial Dao World, whether one was an alchemist or an artifact refiner, they were regarded as respected and esteemed individuals. Even a low-ranking artifact refiner commanded respect from martial artists. Even a rank-three major sect like Purple Flame Sect would treat such individuals as honored guests.

After all, both alchemists and artifact refiners were at least dual attribute innate spirit root martial artists with infinite potential on the Martial Dao, and an immeasurable future ahead of them.

Furthermore, elixirs were an indispensable part of a martial artist's cultivation, and spiritual artifacts could enhance a martial artist's offensive and defensive capabilities in battle. Consequently, whether they were sect disciples or individual cultivation martial artists, all would need the services of alchemists and artifact refiners, and nobody would want to offend them lightly.

Although Purple Flame City had several alchemists and artifact refiners, one who held both roles was exceptionally rare.

Thus, when Fang Bai revealed that he was both an alchemist and an artifact refiner, he instantly stunned Second You and the martial artists, prompting a significant shift in their attitude towards him.

In the Martial Artists Trading Market, no one dared to pretend to be an alchemist or artifact refiner to deceive others, unless they were tired of living and willing to risk their lives.

Moreover, as Fang Bai announced his dual roles, he simultaneously released three types of essence energy around him: Golden Essence Energy, Fire Primordial Qi, and Wood Element Qi. Golden Essence

Energy and Fire Primordial Qi were fundamental for becoming an artifact refiner, while Fire Primordial Qi and Wood Element Qi were essential for an alchemist.

Second You and the other martial artists didn't see Fang Bai as someone with a death wish and, sensing the three distinct types of essence energy emanating from him, they believed his claims without a doubt.

"In that case, I'll trouble you, Brother You."

Fang Bai reached out and patted Second You on the shoulder, smiling amiably.

If Fang Bai had made this shoulder-patting gesture just moments before, Second You would have considered it disrespectful to a senior. However, now Second You felt immensely honored, his cheeks flushing with excitement.

"Senior Bai, please follow me. I'll first take you to the Inspectorate to rent a stall... cough, we'll talk while we walk."

Second You threw a smug look at the other martial artists and then led the way attentively in front of Fang Bai, heading towards the nearby Inspectorate.

Chapter 1050: No Joking Allowed

Second You led Fang Bai at a brisk pace, introducing him to various aspects of the Martial Artists Trading Market along the way, which gave Fang Bai a good understanding of it.

According to Second You, this largest Martial Artists Trading Market in Thousand Lakes Country had been established by the Purple Flame Sect for tens of thousands of years. The Inspectorate was an inspection and management body set up here by the Purple Flame Sect, where martial artists wanting to conduct transactions could pay a fee and rent a stall.

The responsibility of the Inspectorate was to maintain the market's order and protect the interests of the martial artists trading there.

Members of the Inspectorate all came from the disciples of the Purple Flame Sect, composed of one elder with mid-Vast Level cultivation and ten disciples with mid-Desolate Level and twenty with early Desolate Level cultivation from the Sect's internal and External Courtyard.

Such a force was strong enough to easily eradicate a fourth-rank sect, so the martial artists engaged in transactions within the market all followed the rules; they dared not engage in forced buying or selling, lest they receive strict punishment from the martial artists of the Inspectorate.

Soon, the well-acquainted Second You had brought Fang Bai to the Inspectorate at the heart of the trading market. They paid a thousand low-grade Essence Stones and rented a stall for ten days.

The reason for renting for ten days was that Fang Bai had estimated they might need to stay in Purple Flame City for around ten days before and after the sect's grand assembly.

The stall Fang Bai rented was in a remote location, tucked away in a corner of the market, rarely passed by any martial artists. When Second You suggested exchanging the stall for a better one, Fang Bai politely declined.

For Fang Bai, it was like the saying, "A good wine needs no bush." As long as he could build a reputation, martial artists would soon seek him out.

And that thousand low-grade Essence Stone rental fee was also paid by Second You on Fang Bai's behalf, to which Fang Bai did not comment.

Fang Bai understood Second You's intentions; one was to curry favor with him, the other was feeling guilty for taking advantage of him during their earlier transaction, considering it a form of compensation.

A thousand low-grade Essence Stones should be nothing for a power like Second You at Heaven Level Perfection. Since he had paid on Fang Bai's behalf, Fang Bai accepted his kind gesture with a smile.

The two arrived at the stall in the northwest corner of the market. Second You looked around and sighed with a wry smile, "This place is exceptionally secluded, almost no martial artists pass by here... Senior Bai, why don't we go and find a better spot?"

"No need."

Fang Bai waved his hand, smiling at Second You, "This spot is great. Thank you, Second You!"

Second You, flattered, said, "It's the least I can do... Senior Bai, you're too kind!"

Fang Bai surveyed his stall and found that there was a small house behind it where he could store things or conduct alchemy and artifact refining without worrying about being observed by others.

Second You suddenly clapped his hands, "Oh right, Senior Bai, you should set up a large sign in front of your stall to attract customers! Especially since your location is a bit secluded, a sign is even more important. Hmm... let me take care of that for you. What should the sign say?"

Second You, eager to please Fang Bai, willingly took on the role of errand runner, even neglecting his own stall business.

In truth, Second You was a clever man. There were no valuable items on his stall, so their loss was not a concern. However, if he could establish a good relationship with Fang Bai, who was both an Alchemist and an Artifact Refiner, the future benefits could be plentiful.

Fang Bai had lived for ten thousand years in his past life; what kind of person hadn't he seen? He knew Second You's intentions and simply smiled, thinking to himself that since he was new in town, it would be good to have someone run errands for him, and he could just give Second You a little something in return when the time came.

"Alchemy and Artifact Refining, best in the city; fair prices, serious inquiries only... Yes, that will do for the wording!"

Fang Bai contemplated before speaking.

Second You was taken aback and then chuckled awkwardly, "Senior Bai, are you really going to write that?"

Second You knew that if Fang Bai put up a signboard claiming he was "the best in the city," it would mean he had offended all of Purple Flame City's Alchemists and Artifact Refiners unless he truly had the skill, otherwise, his ending would be very grim indeed.

In Second You's mind, the Alchemists and Artifact Refiners of this world were almost all over sixty years old, with strength at least at the Desolate Level Realm, while Fang Bai, even after altering his appearance, seemed only to be around forty, and his strength was merely at High Rank Heaven Level. His level of Alchemy and Artifact Refining surely couldn't compare to the other Alchemists and Artifact Refiners in Purple Flame City.

Second You thought Senior Bai was probably just boasting to inflate his worth.

Although Purple Flame City's Alchemists and Pharmacists also liked to boast in order to attract business, there was a limit to boasting, and going too far posed risks.

"Yes, write it just like that!"

Fang Bai could guess what was going on in Second You's mind, but he didn't bother to explain, thinking that once the business started coming in, he would let the facts speak for themselves. By then, Second You would understand whether he had been boasting.

Seeing Fang Bai's resolute attitude, Second You sighed helplessly and walked away with a wry smile.

Fang Bai entered the small room behind his stall, placed the ancient cauldron he had just exchanged with Second You on the ground, then sat down cross-legged to meditate and patiently waited for Second You to return.

A short while later, Second You dragged a signboard nearly twenty feet high back to the front of the stall. After setting it up, he saw Fang Bai come out from the room and said as if to claim credit, "Senior Bai, the signboard is ready. What do you think? Is it to your satisfaction?"

Fang Bai glanced at the signboard, which was about twenty feet tall and six feet wide, with the words "Alchemy and Artifact Refining, the best in the city; fair prices, serious inquiries only" written in sixteen

large characters. Each stroke was like a knife or sword, powerful and vigorous, and a fierce and combative aura surged towards him.

Fang Bai knew that the person who wrote this must be a Martial Artist of no small strength, and he nodded with a smile, asking Second You, "Brother You, this sign must have cost you a lot of Cultivation Resources, right?"

In this world, when Martial Artists conducted trades, they used various Cultivation Resources rather than the gold, silver, and jewels valued by ordinary folks, hence Fang Bai's question.

Second You replied, "These characters were written by a Martial Artist at the initial stage of Desolate Level in the market, one thousand pieces of low-grade Essence Stones per character. Many stands in the market have signs written by him!"

Fang Bai uttered an "Oh," thinking to himself that Martial Artists really would do anything to earn Cultivation Resources. A thousand low-grade Essence Stones for a single character was indeed not cheap.

And Second You, trying to please him, was willing to pay the cost.

"Senior Bai, in this Martial Artists Trading Market, there are two Alchemists and two Artifact Refiners. They have been operating here for many years, have extensive connections, and have relationships with many Sects and factions. Now that you have also entered this business, it is inevitable that you will compete with them. If they come to provoke you, try to keep a low profile... I don't mean anything by it; it's just that since you are new here and have no backing, I'm worried you might be bullied..."

Second You was only halfway through his advice when he stopped, thinking to himself if Senior Bai couldn't even understand his words, then he would be truly foolish.