

Doctor 1081

Chapter 1081: The Affected Second You

Fang Bai left the Purple Flame Sect Headquarters alone and headed straight out of town.

All the way, although Fang Bai didn't look back, his Divine Sense Diffusion allowed him to know that from the moment he stepped out of the gates of the Purple Flame Sect Headquarters, he had been marked.

The trackers were two Martial Artists, dressed in ordinary civilian clothes. However, based on the Martial Artist Aura they emitted, Fang Bai easily deduced that they were two Vast Level Junior Rank stewards from the Purple Flame Sect.

In the eyes of the higher-ups of the Purple Flame Sect, Fang Bai was merely a Heaven Level High Rank Core Disciple of a Fourth Rank Sect. Sending two stewards who were Vast Level Experts to track him had the feeling of "using a sledgehammer to crack a nut."

However, the primary target of the Purple Flame Sect was not Fang Bai but "Bai Fang" behind him.

According to Yang Lin, a Core Disciple of the Bitao Martial Academy, Bai Fang, who was both a Mid Grade Alchemist and a Mid Grade Artifact Refiner, had not only intended to teach Fang Bai the Art of Alchemy but had also agreed to refine pills and artifacts for the Bitao Martial Academy. This threatened the vital interests of the Purple Flame Sect and was viewed as a dangerous individual by Zu Tiangang.

For such a character, if they couldn't be won over, they had to be eliminated.

Since the Purple Flame Sect Disciples couldn't locate Bai Fang, they had no choice but to start with Fang Bai. They dispatched many Sect Disciples, laying down Heaven's Net, and implemented continuous strict surveillance on Fang Bai. Wherever he went, it was difficult to escape their watchful eyes.

The mission of those two Purple Flame Sect stewards was to track Fang Bai, find Bai Fang's hiding place, and then send out a message to summon all the Vast Level Experts to surround and eliminate Bai Fang and Fang Bai together.

Although the plans of the Purple Flame Sect were well-crafted, they had no idea that Bai Fang was actually Fang Bai and that his power far exceeded their imagination. Their so-called Heaven's Net was nothing more than a joke in Fang Bai's eyes, easily pierced through.

The two stewards of the Purple Flame Sect, deeming Fang Bai weak and not requiring excessive caution, kept a not-so-distant gap and wore relaxed expressions, thinking it was an easy task.

Fang Bai sneered inwardly. Shortly after leaving the city gate, he began to circulate his True Yuan, accelerating swiftly.

Seeing this, the two Purple Flame Sect stewards quickly sped up to follow.

A few dozen miles from the city gate, in front of a forest, Fang Bai's figure flickered and he vanished into the woods, his aura disappearing as well.

The two Purple Flame Sect stewards, unable to see Fang Bai's figure or sense his aura, were shocked and immediately propelled their True Yuan, rushing frantically into the forest, but there was no trace of Fang Bai.

"How... how is this possible?"

The two stewards looked at each other, faces filled with disbelief, and then frustration.

While blaming themselves for their carelessness, they also couldn't fathom how Fang Bai suddenly erupted with such astonishing power.

The speed of Fang Bai's movement technique as he disappeared into the forest far exceeded the imagination of the two stewards; it was something that a Heaven Level Martial Artist could not achieve, and even they, as Vast Level Junior Rank Experts, felt inferior.

What surprised them even more was that Fang Bai's aura suddenly vanished upon entering the woods, making him completely undetectable to them—clearly, he had cultivated some extremely powerful secret technique for concealing his aura.

The two stewards reluctantly searched within a several dozen-mile radius, but ultimately, they could not find any trace of Fang Bai and had to return disappointedly.

Unbeknownst to them, as soon as they had rushed into the forest, Fang Bai had already left them far behind, then changed his appearance and returned to Purple Flame City.

Bai Fang returned to Purple Flame City with a completely new identity as a Loose Cultivator who, on the surface, appeared to be in his forties and possessed a Desolate Level Perfection realm.

This trip was for Second You.

Last night, Bai Fang had caused a great disturbance at the Purple Flame Sect Headquarter and afterwards heard that Second You had been captured by a Sect Disciple. They had interrogated him about Bai Fang's whereabouts. Though eventually released, he had been so tortured by the Sect Disciples that he was covered in wounds and nearly perished. Thankfully, several of his friends had rescued him and he was currently recuperating at his residence in Purple Flame City.

Bai Fang was a man of deep loyalty and affection. In the past, as Bai Fang in the Martial Artists Trading Market, Second You had often helped him with Alchemy and Artifact Refining. Now that Second You had been implicated because of him, he decided to check on him.

Second You's residence was not far from the Martial Artists Trading Market, in a somewhat dilapidated but very quiet courtyard.

Bai Fang noted that there were no Sect Disciples monitoring the surroundings of the courtyard. Clearly, the Purple Flame Sect assumed that Second You and Bai Fang were mere acquaintances who would not visit here and thus paid no further attention.

The gate of the courtyard was slightly ajar, and after Bai Fang lightly knocked a few times, a Female Martial Artist, also around her forties and quite fair-looking, came to open the door.

This Female Martial Artist was a Heaven Level High Rank Martial Artist, a minor realm weaker than Second You, and had a whiff of Second You's aura. Bai Fang guessed immediately that she must be Second You's Martial Dao partner.

Once male and female Martial Artists became Martial Dao partners, they often cultivated together, and traces of each other's aura would linger on them to some extent.

"Who are you...?"

The Female Martial Artist looked at Bai Fang puzzledly, her expression tinged with sadness and wariness as she frowned and asked.

"I'm a friend of Second You."

Having already sensed Second You's faint aura from the stone house on the left, Bai Fang casually responded and then walked past the Female Martial Artist, quickly heading towards that stone house.

"A friend of Second You? Why haven't I seen you before?"

The Female Martial Artist glanced at Bai Fang's retreating back, furrowed her brows, and then closed the courtyard door, following him.

Inside the stone house, a distinctive medicinal fragrance of Elixirs permeated the air. Second You was lying flat on a crude bed, facing upwards; the tattered clothes revealed his body covered in horrifying deep wounds marked by dried blood.

The wounds on Second You had been inflicted by a whip made from Spirit Beast Skin, which contained a potent toxin with a strong corrosive effect, making the wounds difficult to heal.

Bai Fang's gaze swiftly swept over Second You's body, and he knew that these external injuries were relatively minor. The main issue was that his body's meridians appeared to be severely damaged by the impact of a powerful True Yuan, causing numerous ruptures. Had Bai Fang not arrived, even if Second

You's injuries healed in the future, he would not be able to circulate True Yuan or cultivate Martial Arts ever again, making him no different from an ordinary person.

For a Martial Artist, this was a fate worse than death.

Although the Purple Flame Sect had not killed Second You, they had left him in a state of agony that was perhaps even more unbearable than death.

Bai Fang clenched his fists tightly, a cold glint flashing in his eyes. An unintentional slip of Killing Qi instantly filled the entire stone house.

With his immense strength, just a whisper of Killing Qi was enough to cause the Female Martial Artist standing behind him to have her blood roil violently, spewing out a mouthful of fresh blood and slowly collapsing to the ground, incapacitated.

Chapter 1082: Can Be Destroyed in a Snap

"Please, don't hurt Second You... please..."

The female martial artist saw Fang Bai's overwhelming killing aura and believed he was going to harm Second You. Helpless and collapsing to the ground, unable to protect You Qing, she could only cry out in sorrow to beg for mercy.

Lying in bed, Second You heard the voice and slowly turned his head. In a daze, he saw a tall and upright figure standing by the bed, looking at him with clear, spirited eyes, seemingly familiar.

"You..."

The wisp of killing aura released by Fang Bai did not affect Second You on the bed. He struggled to raise his hand, pointing at Fang Bai with a hoarse voice, "You are..."

"Second You, I'm Bai Fang. You... have suffered..."

Fang Bai sat down on a chair by Second You's bed, and his emotions quickly calmed down, with the killing aura in the room dissipating shortly after.

The female martial artist felt relieved, struggling to stand up. Although she sensed from Fang Bai's tone that he was not an enemy of Second You, she still approached the bed, warily fixing her gaze on Fang Bai.

"Bai... Senior Bai..."

Hearing the name "Bai Fang," Second You's dim eyes brightened, and he found the strength to sit up, supported by his arms.

"People from the Purple Flame Sect are searching for me everywhere, so I changed my appearance to come here. Second You, lie down first, let me check your injuries..."

Fang Bai persuaded Second You to lie back down, then picked up one of his hands. His divine sense circulated through his meridians, briefly assessing the extent of the injury.

"The people from the Purple Flame Sect did not kill you but destroyed your meridians. They wanted you to slowly die in agony! What cruel methods!"

Fang Bai hummed lightly, addressing Second You.

As if resigned to his fate, Second You's face showed little grief or anger. He said, "In Purple Flame City, the Purple Flame Sect rules everything. If they want me dead, what chances do I have to survive? If I must die, so be it. My life isn't worth much anyway..."

"Second You, don't talk nonsense! You won't die! Rest assured, even if you become disabled, I will never leave you. I will stay by your side!"

The female martial artist said sharply, her face already covered in tears.

Fang Bai glanced at her, thinking to himself that this was indeed a loyal and devoted woman. It was fortunate for You Qing to have such a woman as his martial Dao partner.

"Third Mother, I know you care for me and wouldn't despise me. But..."

Second You looked affectionately at the woman called "Third Mother," forcing a smile, and in a gentle voice said, "But you must understand, a martial artist who has trained hard for decades only to become disabled overnight would find living a hundred times more painful than dying! I... I can't get over that threshold!"

His gaze then turned back to Fang Bai, pleadingly he said: "Senior Bai, this is Hua Third Mother, my martial Dao partner. Third Mother is kind-hearted and a good person. If I die, please, for the sake of our friendship, look after her. Then even in death, I will be eternally grateful!"

Fang Bai's lips twitched slightly, but he remained silent.

Since he had come, how could he let Second You die?

It wasn't Fang Bai boasting, but with his current abilities, as long as Second You's Qi Sea wasn't completely destroyed or his meridians entirely severed, he had a way to heal him.

"No! No matter what, I won't allow you to die! Your injuries can definitely be healed! Second You, I warn you... if you really die, I will follow you in death immediately!"

Hua Sanniang's tears fell like rain as she sobbed, her tone resolute and determined.

Clearly, she was a woman of strong character and unwavering loyalty, ready to follow her partner in life or death.

Suddenly, it seemed Hua Sanniang remembered something, her gaze shifted to Fang Bai, and with an emotional tremor in her voice, she asked, "You... Are you Senior Bai?"

After Second You was injured and carried home by friends, Hua Sanniang learned from his intermittent recounting that he was implicated because of a "Senior Bai," who was also a mid-grade Alchemist and Artifact Refiner, capable of contending with the Elder of Tribute from the Purple Flame Sect, Hong Qitian.

In the True Martial Realm, every Martial Artist undergoes trials that include life-and-death challenges, hence they don't regard life and death critically. Although Second You's injury was due to Senior Bai, Hua Sanniang believed it was his fated tribulation and bore no resentment toward Senior Bai.

Hua Sanniang's sudden excitement arose because she realized that the Senior Bai before her wasn't only powerful but also a mid-grade Alchemist. Since he had diagnosed Second You's injuries, perhaps he could heal him.

Fang Bai seemed to know what Hua Sanniang wanted to say and nodded with a smile, "Yes, I am Bai Fang. Hua Sanniang, right? Rest assured, since Second You was injured because of me, I've come to treat him."

"Thank you, Senior Bai! Thank you, Senior Bai!"

Seeing Fang Bai exuding confidence, Hua Sanniang was overjoyed and then quietly asked, "Can Second You's strength... be restored to its original state?"

Lying on the bed, Second You sighed and interjected, "Don't talk about fully restoring, even half would be enough! At least I can continue to cultivate Martial Dao. If I can't continue to cultivate, it truly feels worse than death..."

After Second You spoke, he and Hua Sanniang turned their anxious, hopeful gazes toward Fang Bai.

"Restoring to the original state is a minor issue."

Fang Bai placed a finger on Second You's right hand meridian, quietly transferring a strand of Chaos Origin Energy into his body, then left four bottles of elixirs on the bedside table. To Second You, he said, "You will soon fall into a deep sleep, and it might take two or three hours before you wake up. By then, the severed meridians in your body should mostly be reconnected."

Pointing to the four bottles of elixirs, he added, "Here are two bottles of Gathering Yuan Pills and two bottles of Creation Pills, all mid-grade elixirs, which I give to both of you. Once Second You wakes up, each of you should take them. Second You might try to break through to the Desolate Level Realm. Hua Sanniang advancing to the Heaven Level Perfection Realm should be no problem."

For Martial Artists like Second You and Hua Sanniang at the Heaven Level, two bottles of mid-grade Gathering Yuan Pills and two bottles of mid-grade Creation Pills were highly sought-after, greatly assisting in their cultivation progression and potentially boosting their power significantly.

Previously, Second You and Hua Sanniang had also wished to exchange for Gathering Yuan Pills and Creation Pills to advance their cultivation levels but sadly never had enough cultivation resources to fulfill this wish. Now Fang Bai casually giving them four bottles made the couple feel as if they were dreaming, staring blankly at the bottles on the table, unable to snap out of it for a while.

"In the next few days, I will go back to the Martial Artists Trading Market to continue helping people refine pills and artifacts, earning some cultivation resources. Second You, if your injuries heal, you can continue to assist me. As for the Purple Flame Sect, don't fear them; I can obliterate them with a flick of my fingers!"

After saying this, Fang Bai let out a hearty laugh, stood up, and strode away from Second You's residence.

Chapter 1083: Brother Fang is Mine

After Fang Bai left, Second You soon fell into a deep sleep. When he woke up three two-hour periods later, his internal and external injuries had miraculously healed.

In his excitement, Second You and Hua Sanniang together consumed the four bottles of mid-grade Elixirs that Fang Bai had left behind, then went into closed-door cultivation. By dusk of the same day, both had successfully advanced to the next minor realm in their Cultivation Level.

The advancement might seem minor, but without Fang Bai's mid-grade Elixirs, even ten years of hard cultivation might not have guaranteed their success.

Not long after Second You and Hua Sanniang emerged from seclusion, Hei Tan and Tie Hai, who were on good terms with them, came over to visit. They were astonished to see that Second You, who had been

gravely injured and hovering at death's door, was not only full of vigor but had also greatly increased his strength.

Upon learning that it was Senior Bai who had come to treat Second You's injuries and also helped him and Hua Sanniang increase their strength, Hei Tan and Tie Hai were full of admiration and envy.

"Brother Hei Tan, Brother Tie Hai, keep an eye on the Martial Artists Trading Market these days. If you see Senior Bai appear, come and notify me immediately, and I'll go help Senior Bai manage his stall," Second You said solemnly.

"Weren't you captured by the Purple Flame Sect because you were involved with Senior Bai before? And you still dare to associate with Senior Bai?" Hei Tan and Tie Hai hurriedly advised.

"Yeah, what if the Purple Flame Sect discovers you again? That could be deadly!"

Unfazed, Second You laughed heartily, "Senior Bai conferred upon me a great favor of rebirth. How could I, Second You, not repay him? Moreover, Senior Bai told me before he left that although the Purple Flame Sect is strong, he could eradicate them with a snap of his fingers!"

"Did Senior Bai really say that? He talks big... Could he be a Cosmic Level Expert?" Hei Tan scratched his head and murmured.

"Even if he isn't a Cosmic Level Expert, he must have a backer stronger than the Purple Flame Sect!" Tie Hai's eyes brightened as he spoke.

"Exactly! Senior Bai is no fool. He made an enemy of Hong Qitian and offended the Purple Flame Sect. He wouldn't dare appear in Purple Flame City if he didn't have some support!" Hei Tan suddenly slapped his thigh and said to Second You, "When Senior Bai appears, we'll come with you to help! With Senior Bai being both a mid-grade Pill Master and Artifact Refiner, following him can ensure boundless prospects on the path of Martial Dao."

Seeing the two getting more and more excited, Second You said sternly, "Danger also means opportunity. Since you two aren't afraid of death, let's all four go together to help Senior Bai when the time comes."

The four walked out of the stone house and into the courtyard for a casual chat.

"I have a premonition that the Purple Flame Sect, which has dominated Thousand Lakes Country for thousands of years, might be in for a fall this time!" Second You looked up at the cloud-filled sky, murmuring to himself, his eyes shining brighter.

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After leaving Second You's residence, Fang Bai changed back into his own appearance and the attire of a Bitao Martial Academy disciple at a secluded and unpopulated spot in Purple Flame City before he boldly returned to his residence.

With spies from the Purple Flame Sect all over Purple Flame City, Fang Bai was soon noticed by several Purple Flame Sect Disciples, who followed him all the way back to the Purple Flame Sect Headquarters.

"Hmm? Why has she come here?" While still far from his residence, Fang Bai sensed a familiar Martial Artist Aura.

Entering the courtyard, Fang Bai's eyes first landed on Zhuge Lian, dressed in purple robes with a graceful figure.

At that moment, Zhuge Lian was whispering something to Shen Yulin, Huang Miao, and several other female disciples of Bitao Martial Academy, all of whom seemed to be enjoying their conversation with smiles all around.

Ge Feng stood by, accompanying with a smile and occasionally chiming in with a few words.

Liu Qingqing stood behind Ge Feng, silent and occasionally casting a glance at Zhuge Lian, her expression slightly odd.

The other disciples of Bitao Martial Academy stood at a distance, each wearing a different expression on their face.

Zhuge Lian's appearance was beautiful and ethereal, outshining Shen Yulin, Huang Miao, Yun Yan, and Hua Hua, who were also quite attractive. However, they all paled in comparison to her, except for Liu Qingqing, who could compete with her in beauty.

"Brother Fang!"

Zhuge Lian, a personal transmission disciple from the Xuannv Sect with a cultivation level of Desolate Level Perfection, was the strongest among everyone present. Thus, she was the first to know of Fang Bai's return. As she turned her head and saw Fang Bai, she immediately called out joyously and walked up to him with a smile.

Normally, it would be Liu Qingqing who would call him "Brother Fang Bai" and approach him, but now Zhuge Lian had taken the lead.

Shen Yulin and Huang Miao instinctively looked at Liu Qingqing, seeing her lips curl and her face full of gloom, they couldn't help but exchange wry smiles.

"Zhuge Lian, how did you get here?"

Fang Bai looked at the beaming Zhuge Lian standing before him and asked with a touch of confusion.

Fang Bai and Zhuge Lian had nearly had a conflict with Zu Yu on the main street of Purple Flame City. Now with Zu Yu's appearance ruined, the Purple Flame Sect would definitely suspect them. It was unexpected for Zhuge Lian to leave her abode to seek out Fang Bai instead of staying put to avoid suspicion.

It seems this girl really fears neither heaven nor earth!

"You helped me a lot, naturally, I came to thank you! Also, I've said before, you can call me Xiao Lian or Alian. Calling me by my full name feels so distant! We are friends, aren't we?"

Zhuge Lian spoke softly with smiling eyes, clearly in a great mood.

Fang Bai patted his forehead and said with a wry smile of helplessness, "Alright, I'll call you Xiao Lian from now on. But there's no need for thanks! Xiao Lian, you don't realize how many eyes are watching us right now, you really shouldn't have come!"

Zhuge Lian, naively straightforward and on her first outside practice, hadn't thought this through. Upon hearing this, she paused, seemed to understand, and then stuck out her tongue, lowering her voice even more, "I forgot walls have ears! Could anyone have heard what I just said?"

Fang Bai shook his head and said, "I've formed an Essence Energy Shield around us, we're currently isolated from the outside, so no one will be able to hear our conversation. I'm going to remove the Essence Energy Shield now, let's not mention Zu Yu anymore, let's talk about something else, okay?"

Fang Bai knew that after the incident last night, both this courtyard and the living quarters of the Xuannv Sect disciples would be under close surveillance by the Purple Flame Sect, who had Vast Level Experts capable of easily overhearing conversations from hundreds of meters away.

Therefore, as soon as he saw Zhuge Lian, worried she might say something inappropriate, he quietly released his Essence Energy to envelop both himself and Zhuge Lian, shutting them off from the outside world. This ensured that their conversation remained private.

"Okay, no more talking about that guy Zu Yu. Let's talk about something else."

Zhuge Lian nodded.

Fang Bai then dispelled the released Essence Energy and walked over with Zhuge Lian to where Ge Feng and others were standing.

"Brother Fang, you're back?"

Liu Qingqing greeted Fang Bai with a smile, then stood on his other side, closer to him than Zhuge Lian, and cast a not-so-friendly glance at Zhuge Lian, as if to warn her, asserting that "Brother Fang is mine."

Chapter 1084: News of an Old Friend

Through conversation, Fang Bai learned that Zhuge Lian was visiting under the guise of an "old friend."

Although Zhuge Lian was only seventeen or eighteen years old, she was a personal transmission disciple of the Xuannv Sect, a third-rank power. In terms of realm and status, she was on par with Ren Jingbo, the dean of the Bitao Martial Academy. Therefore, in her presence, Ge Feng had to maintain a degree of respect.

Before Fang Bai returned, Ge Feng had personally chatted with Zhuge Lian for a while and knew that she valued Fang Bai highly, which secretly pleased him.

The Xuannv Sect, to which Zhuge Lian belonged, was a third-rank power capable of standing shoulder to shoulder with the Purple Flame Sect. If through the relationship between Fang Bai and Zhuge Lian, the Bitao Martial Academy could forge good ties with the Xuannv Sect, it would mean finding a strong backer for the academy.

In such a case, sects like the Fiery Sect would think twice before clashing with the Bitao Martial Academy.

And the Purple Flame Sect would have to weigh their options more carefully before suppressing the Bitao Martial Academy.

Not only Ge Feng, but even Shen Yulin, Huang Miao, and other disciples of Bitao Martial Academy shared this thought, hoping that the academy could seize this opportunity to draw closer to the Xuannv Sect, which would bring multiple benefits.

Yang Lin stood at the back of the crowd, his eyes on the ground, as cold sweat continuously formed on his back.

He never imagined that Fang Bai would be acquainted with a disciple from the Xuannv Sect. Seeing the expressions and demeanor between Zhuge Lian and Fang Bai when they met, he knew their relationship was good. While feeling envious, jealous, and resentful, his fear intensified, worried that his act of betrayal to the Purple Flame Sect might be exposed.

According to the rules of Bitao Martial Academy, Yang Lin's actions were punishable by death.

Ge Feng and others were curious about how Fang Bai and Zhuge Lian had met. When asked, Fang Bai exchanged glances with Zhuge Lian and casually concocted that they had met during a past training and had faced several dangerous challenges together, forming a deep friendship in battle.

Their meeting at the Purple Flame Sect was also unexpected.

Zhuge Lian knew that Fang Bai came from the Secular World and that they had met because of her father who fell in the Secular World. Hearing Fang Bai lie, she did not expose him but instead smiled and cooperated with him in the deceit.

Regarding the relationship between Fang Bai and Zhuge Lian, Ge Feng and the others did not dwell too deeply.

In their view, Zhuge Lian was a personal transmission disciple of a third-rank sect with Desolate Level Perfection strength, just a step away from advancing to the Vast Level Realm. Her status was equivalent to a Sect Master of a fourth-rank sect.

While Fang Bai was merely a core disciple of a fourth-rank sect, his cultivation level was only at the upper realm of Heaven Rank, with a long way to go before reaching the Desolate Level Realm.

In terms of both status and strength, Fang Bai and Zhuge Lian had a huge gap and were not on the same level. Moreover, some sect disciples had to follow the arrangements of their sect's higher-ups when choosing Martial Dao partners, having no say in the matter, so it was unlikely that Fang Bai and Zhuge Lian could have a deeper relationship.

However, Liu Qingqing, who was sensitive and meticulous, paid special attention to Zhuge Lian. Seeing that her gaze, like her own, mostly rested on Fang Bai and that her expressions showed admiration, she knew this girl of similar age to herself must also like Brother Fang.

Since there was a martial contest early the next morning among the great sects, crucial for the resource distribution in Thousand Lakes Country for the next five years, it was vitally important for all the great sects. Thus, Zhuge Lian did not stay long and took her leave soon to allow the Bitao Martial Academy disciples to rest and cultivate in peace.

"Zu Yu's face was ruined, the matter of your marriage alliance with a Purple Flame Sect disciple should no longer be raised, right?"

As Fang Bai escorted Zhuge Lian out of the courtyard, he created an Essence Energy Shield to isolate the inside from the outside to prevent their voices from being heard by the Purple Flame Sect disciples and spoke to Zhuge Lian.

Zhuge Lian said, "It shouldn't be for a while. After all, aside from Zu Yu, there are no other disciples in the Purple Flame Sect who match me. However...though the matter of my marriage alliance with Zu Yu has been called off, the marriage alliance between the two sects will still continue, just with someone else. I heard that Elder Han is discussing with the Ancestor Master of the Purple Flame Sect about arranging an alliance marriage for one of our Xuannv Sect's external courtyard disciples, Linghu Qianjiao, with a core disciple from the Purple Flame Sect..."

Fang Bai's head buzzed when he heard the name "Linghu Qianjiao," suddenly recalling that back in the Secular World, Linghu Hongyan had mentioned she was a disciple of the Xuannv Sect in the True Martial Realm. When Linghu Hongyan returned to the True Martial Realm via a Teleportation Array, both Linghu Qianjiao and Linghu Baimei had gone with her.

If Linghu Qianjiao was at the Xuannv Sect, then her master Linghu Hongyang and her sister Linghu Baimei must also be there, right?

After arriving in the True Martial Realm of the Minor World, this was the first time Fang Bai had received news of someone from the Secular World. Overwhelmed with emotion, he suddenly reached out and grabbed Zhuge Lian's shoulders, urgently asking, "Where is Linghu Qianjiao now?"

Zhuge Lian was startled by Fang Bai suddenly seizing her shoulders and complained, "Brother Fang, you're hurting me!"

Seeing her furrowed brows and pained expression, Fang Bai quickly let go and apologized, "I'm sorry, Xiao Lian, I got too excited..."

"Do you know Junior Sister Linghu?"

Zhuge Lian, rubbing her slightly painful shoulders and tilting her head, asked.

Fang Bai nodded and said, "She's a friend from the Secular World. Oh, she also has a sister named Linghu Baimei; are they both in your sect?"

Zhuge Lian replied, "Yes. The two sisters are currently External Courtyard Disciples with a cultivation level of Desolate Level beginner stage."

"Are they both okay?"

Fang Bai asked again.

In the Martial Dao World of the True Martial Realm, where the law of the survival of the fittest and malicious hearts prevail, a slight carelessness could lead to disaster; Fang Bai sincerely hoped that every acquaintance from the Secular World who came to the Minor World was living well.

"This..."

Zhuge Lian hesitated for a moment, then sighed lightly, "They are a bit disobedient, disliked by the higher-ups, so... their lives are not exactly good..."

Fang Bai's expression changed slightly, his eyes emitting a chilling coldness as he sternly said, "Xiao Lian, tell me honestly, how are they not living well? Have they been mistreated?"

Zhuge Lian, sensing the explosive aura from Fang Bai and the sky-high killing intent forming an oppressive force—even though it was not directed at her—still felt a shudder of imminent death.

She had never experienced such a feeling even when facing the furious Xuannv Sect Master.

"Brother Fang's power is even stronger than the Sect Master! Has his true strength already reached the Cosmic Level Realm?"

Zhuge Lian stared at Fang Bai dumbfounded, her face filled with disbelief.

When she first met Fang Bai, Zhuge Lian had felt that he was unfathomably strong, likely a Vast Level Expert. Only now did she realize she had greatly underestimated him.

"Should I really tell Brother Fang?"

Zhuge Lian was torn, her expression filled with worry.

Chapter 1085: I'm a Bit Scared

Xuannv Sect, despite being a third-grade sect with numerous Vast Level Experts, could not bear the fury of a Cosmic Level Expert.

If Fang Bai learned that the Linghu Sisters were imprisoned in Xuannv Sect, the consequences of his wrathful onslaught would be unimaginable.

Zhuge Lian shuddered at the vision of Xuannv Sect flowing with rivers of blood and strewn with death and injury that emerged before her eyes.

Seeing Zhuge Lian's hesitation, Fang Bai became even more certain that the Linghu Sisters were mistreated in Xuannv Sect. He took a deep breath and fixed his gaze on Zhuge Lian, his voice solemn, "Xiao Lian, if you still consider me a friend, then tell me the current plight of the Linghu Sisters."

Zhuge Lian felt there was something terrifying in Fang Bai's eyes at that moment and didn't dare meet his gaze, saying, "Brother Fang, don't be agitated. The Linghu Sisters aren't being mistreated, they are just... temporarily imprisoned..."

"Why imprison them?"

Fang Bai's gaze grew colder.

For Fang Bai, imprisonment meant being deprived of personal freedom, a kind of psychological abuse that was sometimes harder to bear than physical abuse.

"It's because the Sect Leader wants them to marry excellent disciples from other sects, but they'd rather die than comply. In a fit of anger, the Sect Leader imprisoned them, saying they would only regain their freedom once they changed their minds. In reality, they are just confined to a small valley without cultivation resources for the time being and are not suffering from any other hardships."

Zhuge Lian glanced at Fang Bai as she spoke, then said mournfully, "Brother Fang, please don't look at me like that. I'm... a little scared..."

Fang Bai, who was concerned for the Linghu Sisters, felt slightly relieved upon hearing they hadn't suffered much, and his gaze softened a bit. He sighed, "Xiao Lian, the Linghu Sisters and I were both mentors and friends in the Secular World. Hearing about their situation made me act impulsively, and I lost my composure. Don't hold it against me!"

Zhuge Lian shook her head, "I'm not blaming you."

But she thought to herself, "The moment Brother Fang heard that the two Junior Sister Linghus were imprisoned, he became very unstable, ready to kill. Their relationship with him might not be as simple as mentor and friend, right? Could the Linghu Sisters' refusal to marry disciples from other sects be because they harbor feelings for Brother Fang?"

How could Fang Bai know what Zhuge Lian was thinking? He said, "Xiao Lian, take me to Xuannv Sect. I want to meet your Sect Leader. I must ask her why she is forcing the Linghu Sisters to do something against their will. Isn't your Sect Leader a woman too? Why must women make life difficult for other women?"

Zhuge Lian was startled and hurriedly said, "Brother Fang, no! I can't take you there! If you can't control yourself and end up killing many Xuannv Sect disciples, I'll become the eternal sinner of Xuannv Sect!"

Fang Bai said, "As long as your Sect Leader agrees to release the Linghu Sisters and apologizes to them, I naturally won't resort to violence. Otherwise..."

Fang Bai's eyes showed a cold gleam, and his overbearing aura surfaced as he said firmly, "I will certainly not be courteous!"

Zhuge Lian replied anxiously, "But... but our Sect Leader is a very proud person, and she likely can't remove her dignity enough to apologize to the two Junior Sister Linghus... Brother Fang, how about this? After your Thousand Lakes Country's Sect Conference ends, I'll return to Xuannv Sect first and persuade the Sect Leader to release the Linghu Sisters, to treat them well in the future, and not to let them suffer any more grievances... would that be acceptable?"

Fang Bai had wanted to create a big scene at Xuannv Sect to vent his anger for the Linghu Sisters. Seeing Zhuge Lian almost in tears and considering that the Linghu Sisters held their master, Linghu Hongyan, in high respect, and recognizing that Linghu Hongyan was also a disciple of Xuannv Sect, he realized that they might not want him to turn Xuannv Sect upside down. He replied, "Alright, Xiao Lian, I agree. However, when you return to Xuannv Sect, I will follow along to see the Linghu Sisters and ensure they are unharmed before I can be at ease."

Zhuge Lian thought for a moment and nodded, "As long as Brother Fang doesn't stir up trouble at the Xuannv Sect or attack its disciples, I will listen to everything you say."

Fang Bai thought to himself that he must hasten to speak with Elder Han upon his return and then persuade the Sect Master together with Elder Han once he was back at the Xuannv Sect.

What worried Zhuge Lian, however, was that the Sect Master was known for her staunch and extreme personality. She couldn't help wondering if the Sect Master would agree to release the imprisoned Linghu Sisters; otherwise, it would be a disaster for the Xuannv Sect.

Moments later, Zhuge Lian left with a heavy heart.

Watching Zhuge Lian leave, Fang Bai, too, returned to his residence with concerns of his own.

Relative to Zhuge Lian's heavy worries, Fang Bai was more excited.

Relieved to know that the Linghu Sisters hadn't suffered, Fang Bai settled down and was no longer in a rush to go to them immediately.

His excitement stemmed from the thought that he would soon meet the sisters and share long-overdue conversations, possibly learning more news about friends from the Secular World.

"Who would have thought they'd both become Desolate Level Martial Artists, they've made quick progress!"

Thinking of the Linghu Sisters' advancement to Desolate Level Martial Artists, he knew they must have diligently practiced martial arts and underwent rigorous cultivation to reach their current realm, which filled him with gratification; a smile played on his lips.

However, his expression suddenly turned cold as he thought of the sisters being imprisoned by the Xuannv Sect Master for refusing an arranged marriage. Anger welled up inside him, and he thought to himself, "If I meet the Linghu Sisters and find out they have been mistreated, even if Zhuge Lian pleads their case, don't blame me for being heartless! While a Third-grade Sect might dominate a small country like Thousand Lakes Country, I could annihilate it without breaking a sweat!"

After sending Zhuge Lian off and returning, Ge Feng beckoned the other disciples to return to their rooms for rest and with a beaming smile, inquired about Zhuge Lian. He also reminded Fang Bai to maintain a good relationship with her.

Fang Bai naturally understood what Ge Feng was thinking; he hoped that through Zhuge Lian, Bitao Martial Academy could forge a close connection with the Xuannv Sect.

On the surface, Fang Bai agreed, but he didn't take it seriously in his heart.

Fang Bai was already preparing to act soon, planning for the Bitao Martial Academy to replace the Purple Flame Sect and become the new ruler of Thousand Lakes Country. By that time, what would he care for the Xuannv Sect?

For Fang Bai, who was capable of contesting Cosmic Level Experts, turning things upside down single-handedly in Thousand Lakes Country, the largest domain of a Third-grade Sect, was not difficult.

Early the next day, disciples from all the major Sects gathered on the vast Practice Battle Arena of the Purple Flame Sect for the Sect tournament.

After a night of restorative cultivation, every Sect Disciple was brimming with energy and in peak condition, each full of confidence in achieving a good ranking.

As the morning sun began to rise, the high-ranking officials of the Purple Flame Sect and leaders from the various Sects ascended the gigantic Stone Platform at the center of the Practice Battle Arena. They took their seats in stone chairs at the northern end of the platform.

As judges, they would ensure the fairness and integrity of the tournament.

Chapter 1086: Everything Depends on Me

As the Sect Master of the most powerful sect in Thousand Lakes Country, Zu Tiangang naturally took the seat in the middle at the north end of the stone platform.

In the eyes of the martial artists present, the stone chair where Zu Tiangang sat was the most esteemed seat in the entire Thousand Lakes Country. Whoever could sit there symbolized that their sect was the number one power in Thousand Lakes Country.

The Purple Flame Sect had firmly occupied that seat for thousands of years. Although other sects within the borders of Thousand Lakes Country all wanted to replace it, none had succeeded.

To Zu Tiangang's left, a row of stone chairs was occupied by the leaders of some sects who were invited to observe the Sect Convention in Thousand Lakes Country and had good relations with the Purple Flame Sect.

These invited sects came from countries neighboring Thousand Lakes Country and had intricate connections with the Purple Flame Sect. Among them, Xuannv Sect possessed the most formidable overall strength.

Hence, Elder Han Xingyu, the leader of the Xuannv Sect group, was arranged to sit on the stone chair next to Zu Tiangang, as a sign of respect for her.

On a row of stone chairs to Zu Tiangang's right sat the leaders of more than twenty sects participating in the Sect Convention in Thousand Lakes Country. Their seating order was based on the rankings attained in the previous martial competition.

For instance, Bitao Martial Academy, which had ranked fifteenth in the previous martial competition, meant that Ge Feng, representing Bitao Martial Academy, could only sit on the fifteenth stone chair on the right side.

The competition of the Sect Convention was not in an elimination format but rather by challenges.

For example, if Bitao Martial Academy felt confident in defeating the Flying Star Sect ranked tenth, they could directly issue a challenge to Flying Star Sect. If the nine disciples of Bitao Martial Academy managed to defeat the nine disciples of Flying Star Sect, then Ge Feng would currently be able to take the seat of Flying Star Sect's leading elder.

In Thousand Lakes Country, the Purple Flame Sect was the only third-grade sect, and their overall strength far exceeded that of other sects. Therefore, during the Sect Conventions, few sects dared to actively challenge the Purple Flame Sect for fear of courting disaster. The Purple Flame Sect often defended their supremacy effortlessly.

At this moment, whether on or off the platform, the majority of sect leaders and disciples were both nervous and excited.

They were nervous about which rank their own sect would achieve in this year's martial competition segment.

They were excited because the Sect Convention was a grand event among martial artists in Thousand Lakes Country, and they were fortunate enough to participate and compete against the elite disciples from various sects, making their trip worthwhile.

The nine disciples of Bitao Martial Academy sat on the west side below the stone platform, next to their old rival, the Fiery Sect. However, this time, the focus of both groups of disciples was on the stone platform, with no interest in competing against each other.

Fang Bai sat among the disciples of Bitao Martial Academy, his gaze drifting over the high-ranking members of various sects on the stone platform, a faint smile playing on his lips. He looked relaxed and unflustered, as if the upcoming martial competition of the Sect Convention had nothing to do with him.

A few disciples from the Xuannv Sect were arranged to sit on the east side of the stone platform, a huge stone platform separating them from Fang Bai. Fang Bai had wanted to learn more about the Xuannv Sect and the Linghu sisters from her, but seeing this arrangement, he had to give up for the time being.

"Brother Fang, I'm feeling a bit nervous!" Liu Qingqing suddenly whispered.

After all, she was just a seventeen or eighteen-year-old girl, participating in such a martial event for the first time. She also knew that in a short while, she would join Fang Bai and eight other fellow disciples to represent Bitao Martial Academy in battle, and the amount of cultivation resources Bitao Martial Academy would receive over the next five years depended on their performance. Thus, her heart was pounding with nervousness.

Fang Bai smiled and said, "Don't be nervous; I've got everything under control."

His smile was incredibly infectious, filled with a calming power that eased Liu Qingqing's heightened nerves as she watched his face brighten.

The Sect Conference of Thousand Lakes Country had been held for thousands of years, and everyone was well-versed in the rules of the martial competition. So, as soon as all the Sect Disciples gathered, Zu Tiangang made no unnecessary speeches and directly announced the start of the competition.

According to the rules, the first challenge would be initiated by the last-ranked Fourth Grade Sect, Heaven Dao Sect.

The Heaven Dao Sect Disciples had clearly come prepared. From the leading Elder to the nine Disciples, each was spirited and confident. They challenged Huangsha Tower, significantly higher-ranked and in the twentieth position.

Nine Disciples from each side fought one another: Inner Court Disciples against Inner Court Disciples, Core Disciples against Core Disciples, and Direct Disciples against Direct Disciples.

In nine confrontations, Heaven Dao Sect unexpectedly triumphed in six, losing three, and definitively defeated Huangsha Tower to claim the twentieth spot.

The defeated Huangsha Tower temporarily lost its ranking. The leading Elder, his face marked by frustration, left his seat and descended from the stone platform with the nine Disciples. They sat together with gloomy faces, awaiting the next round of challenges where they could then challenge other Sects, or else they would have to settle for the last place.

The Heaven Dao Sect Disciples watched as their Sect Elder took the seat initially belonging to Huangsha Tower. They hooted and hollered excitedly, drawing looks from other Sect Disciples—some envious, some jealous, some disdainful.

Next, more than ten lower-ranked Sects successively challenged those ranked higher. During this process, the major Sects revealed no astonishingly brilliant Disciples, and the rankings saw no significant changes.

Several Disciples from Purple Flame Sect sat undisturbed in their seats, their gaze towards other Sect Disciples filled with scorn and disdain.

In their view, the abilities of those Fourth Grade Sect Disciples were far too weak to be considered on their level, unworthy of being their opponents.

They believed that the current Sect Conference would unfold like the previous ones, with no Sect daring to challenge Purple Flame Sect, which would continue to firmly hold its dominance in Thousand Lakes Country, unshakable by anyone.

"Is something troubling you, Elder Han?"

Zu Tiangang noticed that Elder Han Xingyu of Xuannv Sect, sitting beside him, had furrowed brows and seemed distracted, deep in thought, and asked with a smile.

"Oh... It's nothing..."

Han Xingyu forced a smile, glanced over at the group of Disciples from Bitao Martial Academy, then sat upright, focusing back on the ongoing duel between two Martial Artists on the stone platform.

In fact, since appearing on the stone platform, most of Han Xingyu's attention was on the Bitao Martial Academy Disciples.

Han Xingyu was watching Fang Bai.

Yesterday, after Zhuge Lian returned from meeting with Fang Bai, he immediately sought out Han Xingyu and informed him about the matter between Fang Bai and the Linghu sisters.

When Han Xingyu heard that Fang Bai could be a Cosmic Level Expert, his initial reaction was disbelief.

According to Zhuge Lian, Fang Bai was only about twenty years old—such a young Cosmic Level Expert was unheard of and unseen in the True Martial Realm.

Furthermore, even if Fang Bai were a Cosmic Level Expert, how could a mere Fourth Grade Sect like Bitao Martial Academy retain such a Great Buddha?

Chapter 1087: Sudden Inspiration

Elder Han Xingyu initially did not believe Fang Bai could be a Cosmic Level Expert until Zhuge Lian, in desperation, swore a poisonous oath. It was then that she started to take it seriously.

If what Zhuge Lian said was true, it would represent an unprecedented crisis for the Xuannv Sect. If mishandled, the sect could collapse.

In the True Martial Realm, only high-ranking members of second-rank powerful sects or a very few Individual Cultivation Martial Artists possessed cultivation at the Cosmic Level Realm.

The higher the cultivation realm of a martial artist, the greater the gap in strength between different realms.

For example, an early-stage Vast Level Martial Artist could contend with five Desolate Level Perfection Martial Artists, while an early-stage Cosmic Level Martial Artist could take on ten Vast Level Perfection experts.

And for a third-rank sect like the Xuannv Sect, only the Sect Leader was a Vast Level Perfection Expert.

This meant that if Fang Bai was indeed an early-stage Cosmic Level Expert as Zhuge Lian claimed, and if the Xuannv Sect refused to release the imprisoned Linghu sisters, once Fang Bai came knocking, the Xuannv Sect would surely face a bloodbath and pay a heavy price.

Elder Han Xingyu had watched Zhuge Lian grow up and was very familiar with her character. She knew that on such a critical matter concerning the life and death of the Xuannv Sect, Zhuge Lian would never dare to lie.

Therefore, after pondering for a while, Elder Han Xingyu immediately dispatched two accompanying disciples to return to the Xuannv Sect to report the matter and request the Sect Master's decision.

Meanwhile, Elder Han Xingyu and the other disciples, including Zhuge Lian, remained at the Purple Flame Sect, observing the situation quietly.

Now, when the disciples from all the major sects gathered in the Purple Flame Sect's Practice Battle Arena, Elder Han Xingyu paid special attention to Fang Bai, who was among the Bitao Martial Academy disciples.

Before this, Elder Han Xingyu did not know Fang Bai and had no interest in a core disciple from a fourth-rank sect.

However, last night, after Zhuge Lian described Fang Bai's appearance and stature, Elder Han Xingyu recognized him at a glance today.

As a Heaven Level Martial Artist, Fang Bai was among the most ordinary of the hundreds of disciples present in the Practice Battle Arena. It would be impossible for an expert at Elder Han Xingyu's level to pay special attention to him.

Yet, if someone took a closer look at Fang Bai, they would discover some traits that set him apart from the others.

And at this moment, that was exactly what Elder Han Xingyu did.

After observing Fang Bai for a moment, she noticed that this young martial artist, who was only about twenty years old, possessed a composure far beyond his peers. The ethereal quality about him was more befitting of the treasured scion cultivated by a first-rank great sect.

While Elder Han Xingyu could sense from Fang Bai an aura matching that of a Heaven Level Martial Artist, consistent with his status as a core disciple in the Bitao Martial Academy, she was one hundred percent certain that Fang Bai was not as straightforward as he appeared to be. She thought to herself that Fang Bai must have cultivated some secret technique to conceal his aura, making it impossible for others to probe his true strength.

"Could this Fang Bai be a disciple from a first-rank sect out for experience, who joined the Bitao Martial Academy to temper his mind? Or, could there be a connection between Bitao Martial Academy and a first-rank sect?"

A sudden thought struck Elder Han Xingyu.

Of these two possibilities, Elder Han Xingyu was more inclined toward the former.

Because in the legends, some disciples from the great Sects would intentionally hide their identities, join lower-tier Sects, and start from the position of the most junior disciples to temper their minds. Enduring a thousand hardships and countless trials, they would strengthen their minds step by step. Together with the improvement of their Cultivation Level, they would eventually achieve great success in the Martial Dao.

If Bitao Martial Academy was connected to a first-rate Sect, then Thousand Lakes Country would have probably long ceased to have anything to do with the Purple Flame Sect, and the dominance would absolutely belong to Bitao Martial Academy.

Han Xingyu sized up Fang Bai for a moment, and suddenly noticed that Fang Bai was also looking at her, his face bearing a profound and enigmatic smile.

Only then did Han Xingyu suddenly become aware that staring at someone who might have Cosmic Level Cultivation was an offense. If Fang Bai had a bad temper and got angry because of it, she would definitely be in a situation she couldn't handle.

Don't think that just because Han Xingyu is a mid-tier Vast Level expert, capable of sweeping through a fourth-rate Sect all by herself, that she would be anything in front of a Cosmic Level Expert. She would have to be honest and respectful, otherwise, if the other party wanted to deal with her, it would be no different from squashing an ant.

Han Xingyu looked into Fang Bai's eyes, but felt as if his eyes were like black holes in a starry sky, whirlpools in the abyss. The moment their gazes crossed, she felt like she was about to be sucked in, which shocked her greatly. She hurriedly shifted her gaze elsewhere, and a layer of cold sweat had already formed on her body.

"This Fang Bai is so frightening! In the past, I was fortunate enough to meet a Steward from a second-rate Sect; even though he was a beginner level Cosmic Level Expert, he never made me feel this way!" Han Xingyu secretly took a deep breath, vowing in her heart not to look at Fang Bai again.

At this time, Han Xingyu was absolutely certain that Fang Bai had the strength of a Cosmic Level Expert just as Zhuge Lian had said. Otherwise, he wouldn't be able to exert such tremendous pressure on her.

Thinking of the Linghu sisters' situation, Han Xingyu became anxious; she wished she could immediately return to the Xuannv Sect and personally persuade the Sect Master to release the Linghu sisters from imprisonment, so as not to bring disaster upon the Xuannv Sect because of this.

"Elder Han... are you really okay?" Seeing Han Xingyu's unusual expression and her restless demeanor, Zu Tiangang grew more puzzled and frowned as he asked.

"This... I've suddenly thought of some urgent matters... Sect Master Zu, I plan on returning to the Xuannv Sect immediately after this martial contest concludes, and I can't stay here any longer." Han Xingyu had originally intended to discuss with Zu Tiangang about deepening the relationship between

their two Sects after the martial Sect convention of Thousand Lakes Country concluded, but where could she find the mood for that now?

Han Xingyu had heard from Zhuge Lian last night that Fang Bai once had a conflict with the Purple Flame Sect. At the time, she didn't take it to heart, but now that she realized Fang Bai's true strength, she wondered if Fang Bai would harbor even more resentment towards the Xuannv Sect, considering the close relationship between the Xuannv Sect and the Purple Flame Sect?

Han Xingyu had decided that when she returned to the Xuannv Sect, her first order of business would be to persuade the Sect Master to quickly release the Linghu sisters from their imprisonment, and the second matter would be to urge the Sect Master to distance themselves from the Purple Flame Sect as much as possible, in order to avoid incurring Fang Bai's wrath for guilt by association.

Seeing Han Xingyu anxious to return to the Xuannv Sect and not ready to discuss anything else, Zu Tiangang felt displeased and said with a serious voice while twisting his beard, "If Elder Han has urgent matters, you can leave after the martial contest ends tomorrow. However, about our two Sects' plans for a marriage alliance..."

"We'll talk about the marriage alliance later." As soon as Zu Tiangang brought up the marriage alliance, Han Xingyu immediately thought of another thing that Zhuge Lian had told her the night before, so she interrupted him.

Last night, Zhuge Lian had told Han Xingyu about how she had met Fang Bai and asked him to disrupt her arranged marriage with Zu Yu in order to save their Sect from crisis. From this, Han Xingyu learned that Zhuge Lian and Fang Bai had a significant relationship and wondered whether Fang Bai had any feelings for Zhuge Lian—why else would he take action on Zhuge Lian's behalf against Zu Yu?

If Fang Bai truly had feelings for Zhuge Lian, then Zu Tiangang bringing up the matter of the marriage alliance could make Fang Bai even more displeased. And if Fang Bai decided to take matters into his own hands to claim her as his Martial Dao partner by force, even if the Xuannv Sect and the Purple Flame Sect joined forces, they would be utterly unable to stop him.

Chapter 1088: Fang Bai's Provocation

"Fang Bai is such a genius—if he could form a Martial Dao partnership with Zhuge Lian, that would indeed be an excellent choice! But I wonder if the Sect Master would agree."

Thinking of the Sect Master's stubborn, unyielding character, Han Xingyu couldn't help but show a worried expression, again worried about the fate of the Xuannv Sect. He completely failed to notice the anger on Zu Tiangang's face, his eyes emitting a cold light.

Zu Tiangang had yet to finish his sentence when Han Xingyu waved him off, naturally infuriating him. Zu Tiangang thought, even if the Sect Master of the Xuannv Sect was here, she wouldn't be so rude. You, Han Xingyu, are merely an Elder, yet you show no respect to me, a Sect Master—outrageous!

If it weren't for the longstanding friendly relations between the Purple Flame Sect and the Xuannv Sect, Zu Tiangang might have exploded on the spot and driven the disrespectful Han Xingyu away.

Han Xingyu and Zu Tiangang each harbored their thoughts, sitting in stone chairs but not paying attention to the martial arts contest of the Sect Disciples on the stone platform.

In order to defeat their opponents and achieve better rankings, the Sect Disciples exerted their full strength during the contests, and the victor was often quickly decided.

Since the Sect convention dictated that no contestant should intentionally inflict severe harm on an opponent, those defeated mostly sustained minor injuries and, after taking some Elixir and resting overnight, were ready to fight again the next day.

The martial arts contest proceeded rapidly, and by that afternoon, it was Bitao Martial Academy's turn to challenge.

In the last contest, Bitao Martial Academy was ranked fifteen, and this time, before attending the grand assembly of Sects, the seniors of Bitao Martial Academy, considering their strength, decided to challenge Tiger Roar Manor, which was ranked thirteenth.

This decision was made because Fang Bai, Liu Qingqing, and Huang Miao had shown rapid improvement, which greatly boosted the confidence of the senior members of Bitao Martial Academy.

If the disciples of Bitao Martial Academy lived up to expectations and defeated Tiger Roar Manor, Bitao Martial Academy would advance two places in the rankings, surpassing their old rival, the Fiery Sect,

thereby posing a threat to them and gaining the upper hand in the competition for cultivation resources in the neighboring areas.

Ge Feng and others had come to Purple Flame City with this goal in mind.

Just as Ge Feng stood up, ready to announce the challenge to Tiger Roar Manor, Fang Bai, who was sitting below the stone platform, also stood up, his face bearing a stern expression, and slowly walked onto the stone platform.

"Fang Bai, what are you..."

Ge Feng turned his head and saw Fang Bai, caught by surprise.

"The Purple Flame Sect has occupied the position of the most powerful sect in Thousand Lakes Country for thousands of years. It's time for them to come down. From today, Bitao Martial Academy will take their place."

Fang Bai spoke calmly and unhurriedly.

As soon as he had spoken, there was an uproar both on and off the platform—an almost all-encompassing belief that this disciple from Bitao Martial Academy had lost his mind.

Sitting below the stone platform, Zhuge Lian and Han Xingyu on the platform exchanged glances, both with complex expressions and heavy hearts.

Both of them knew that Fang Bai had grudges with Elder of Tribute Hong Qitian from the Purple Flame Sect, but they didn't expect Fang Bai to direct his anger toward the entire Purple Flame Sect and seek to pull them down from their leading position in Thousand Lakes Country.

While others thought Fang Bai was boasting, the two of them knew he had the power to do it.

Since Hong Qitian had a feud with Fang Bai, Fang Bai had inflicted such a punishment on the Purple Flame Sect. Now, if the Xuannv Sect kept his two friends imprisoned and the Sect Master refused to release them, what measures would Fang Bai take against the Xuannv Sect?

Zhuge Lian and Han Xingyu didn't dare to think about it. They just hoped that upon receiving the message, the Sect Master would capitulate, release the Linghu sisters from imprisonment, and perhaps with Zhuge Lian's mediation, the Xuannv Sect might avoid a disaster.

"Insolent boy, how audacious!"

"Provoking our Purple Flame Sect, are they tired of living?"

"Get off the stage quickly!"

"Elder Ge, what a fine disciple your Bitao Martial Academy has taught!"

"Just a core disciple, yet daring to harbor such thoughts, it seems the Bitao Martial Academy harbors no small ambition! Heh heh..."

The disciples of the Purple Flame Sect glared at Fang Bai angrily, scolding loudly. Some were rubbing their fists and wiping their palms, waiting only for the Sect Master's command to rush onto the Stone Platform and kill Fang Bai on the spot.

Some disciples from sects on good terms with the Purple Flame Sect also mocked coldly, exhibiting an attitude of shared enmity.

Other sect disciples remained silent, waiting to watch the drama unfold, thinking that although this disciple from the Bitao Martial Academy was brave, he was way out of his league. Publicly challenging the Purple Flame Sect like this would likely lead to a tragic death.

Unexpectedly, Zu Tiangang just sat in his stone chair without moving and did not let his disciples take action to teach Fang Bai a lesson. He just coldly watched Fang Bai, his expression becoming even uglier.

Zu Tiangang actually wanted to smack Fang Bai to death, but this disciple from Bitao Martial Academy, named Fang Bai, had close connections with a man lurking in the shadows, Bai Fang, whom Zu Tiangang rather dreaded. Zu feared that if he killed Fang Bai now, Bai Fang, in a fury, might crazily retaliate against the Purple Flame Sect disciples.

A man who was both an intermediate Alchemist and Artifact Refiner and had once severely injured Elder Hong Qitian, an Elder of Tribute of the Purple Flame Sect, would truly be a headache for Zu Tiangang if provoked.

However, Fang Bai openly challenging the Purple Flame Sect under the watchful eyes of all, if not taught a lesson, would undermine the sect's authority and damage its reputation.

"Ignorant boy, spouting madness, truly detestable! However, this Sect Master is magnanimous and will not stoop to your level. Leave the platform quickly!"

Zu Tiangang suppressed the anger in his heart and said to Fang Bai.

The martial artists at the scene did not expect Zu Tiangang to let Fang Bai go just like that, and they were shocked, even Elder Ge found it hard to believe.

"Fang Bai, you should step down now..."

Elder Ge, worried Fang Bai might utter more alarming statements, hastily gave him a look.

"Elder Ge, overtaking the Purple Flame Sect has always been Bitao Martial Academy's dream, hasn't it? The rise of Bitao Martial Academy begins today!"

Fang Bai stood tall and spoke loudly.

"You... you this... ah..."

Seeing Fang Bai's words becoming increasingly outrageous and noticing Zu Tiangang's face turning darker, the murderous intent of the Purple Flame Sect disciples teeming, Elder Ge was so anxious that he stomped his feet continuously, shouting loudly, "Long Xing, Yang Gang, come up here, take Fang Bai down!"

Long Xing and Yang Gang responded simultaneously, leaping onto the Stone Platform to pull Fang Bai.

Just as their fingers touched Fang Bai's shoulders, they felt a great force, like a sudden surge of waves, sweeping them off and throwing them down from the Stone Platform. They staggered back several steps before they could steady themselves.

Yang Gang and Long Xing, the former being the second highest ranking personal transmission disciple and the latter the top core disciple of the Bitao Martial Academy, were seen as more powerful than Fang Bai by other martial artists. Yet, despite their joint effort, not only did they fail to shake Fang Bai, but they were also repelled, causing a stir among the martial artists present.

Chapter 1089: Then Fight!

Nearly a thousand eyes, filled with shock, were fixed on Fang Bai. All martial artists now knew that this Bitao Martial Academy core disciple, standing tall and proud on the stone platform, was far from as simple as he appeared on the surface.

Among them, the most astonished was Ge Feng.

Back when Fang Bai participated in the battle for core disciple promotion at Bitao Martial Academy, he revealed extraordinary strength. At that time, Ge Feng guessed that Fang Bai might be hiding some of his true power and believed that he could contend with the academy's personal transmission disciples.

But now, Ge Feng realized he had made a grave mistake. Without even making a move, Fang Bai had sent personal transmission disciple Yang Gang and core disciple Long Xing flying. This level of strength was something only a Desolate Level powerhouse possessed.

Could it be that Fang Bai's cultivation level had already reached the Desolate Level Realm?

Considering this, Ge Feng felt a mix of sorrow and joy.

The joy was that a twenty-year-old Desolate Level martial artist was an extremely rare existence even in third-grade sects. If cultivated with full effort, Fang Bai truly might have the potential to lead Bitao Martial Academy to its rise, becoming a force capable of competing with the Purple Flame Sect.

The sorrow was that the more outstanding Fang Bai performed, the more anxious the Purple Flame Sect would become. They would try all means to eliminate the threat in its infancy.

Ge Feng suspected that the Purple Flame Sect wouldn't deal with Fang Bai openly, but they would definitely take action in secret. The journey back to Bitao Martial Academy after the conclusion of this sect convention would be the most dangerous.

Ge Feng suddenly looked toward Zhuge Lian below the stone platform, thinking that if Fang Bai could persuade this Xuannv Sect disciple to ask Han Xingyu to step in, and issue a warning to the Purple Flame Sect in the name of Xuannv Sect, perhaps they wouldn't dare kill Fang Bai.

However, the Xuannv Sect and the Purple Flame Sect had always had a good relationship. Even if Fang Bai could persuade Zhuge Lian, it seemed unlikely that Han Xingyu, as an elder of Xuannv Sect, would agree, considering the interests of her own sect.

What to do?

In the blink of an eye, Ge Feng's thoughts raced, and he worried about Fang Bai's life.

What Ge Feng did not know was that his worries were completely unnecessary.

"Elder Ge, it's our turn to issue challenges now, right?"

Under the gaze of all the martial artists present, Fang Bai asked Ge Feng.

"Uh..."

Ge Feng's mind was in turmoil, a jumble of thoughts, and he nodded absentmindedly.

"Then we can challenge any sect, right?"

Fang Bai asked again.

"Uh..."

Ge Feng nodded again, but when he saw the trace of a smile on the corner of Fang Bai's mouth, he suddenly snapped back to reality, sensing something amiss. Hurriedly, he said, "The sect we are challenging is the Tiger Roar Sect..."

"The Tiger Roar Sect is too weak; it's not interesting to challenge them!"

Fang Bai looked down at the Purple Flame Sect disciples below the stone platform and, with a provocative gaze, said, "If we are to challenge, let's choose the strongest!"

"This guy is a madman! He wants to lead Bitao Martial Academy down the path to doom!"

Seeing Fang Bai repeatedly provoking the Purple Flame Sect, the martial artists present couldn't help but silently mourn the future fate of Bitao Martial Academy.

"Fang Bai has always been reserved and low-key, never provoking anyone. What's gotten into him today? It's over... it's all over..."

Ge Feng stared blankly at Fang Bai, while sensing a strong killing intent emanating from Zu Tiangang. He knew that the Sect Master of a third-rank sect had been enraged and immediately felt engulfed by despair.

A third-rank Sect Master, a Vast Level Perfection mighty figure—should he make a move, Fang Bai would have no chance of survival.

Ge Feng's face turned pale. He gritted his teeth, moved closer to Fang Bai's side, and positioned himself between Zu Tiangang and Fang Bai.

Ge Feng knew he could not stop a strike from Zu Tiangang, but he couldn't bear to see Fang Bai killed. So, he gathered his True Yuan, remained on full alert, and prepared to risk his life in a desperate attempt to block the attack for Fang Bai.

"Fang Bai, if Zu Tiangang makes a move, I'll block for you," he said. "Then you must rush to the Xuannv Sect and beg Zhuge Lian to save your life! Whether she agrees or not, it's up to your destiny!"

Ge Feng conveyed this message to Fang Bai using Thread Condensation Sound Transmission.

Ge Feng was offering his life selflessly and sincerely, which touched Fang Bai slightly. He smiled faintly and said, "Elder Ge, you worry too much! Go back and sit in your stone chair. Just watch as I fight the Purple Flame Sect Disciple! Once I defeat the disciple of the Purple Flame Sect, you will be able to sit in that central stone chair and bask in the glory!"

"Glory my ass! You're getting me killed here!"

Ge Feng's facial muscles twitched a few times as he inwardly gave a bitter smile.

Killing intent enveloped Zu Tiangang, his eyes sharp as swords. Although filled with rage, he remained motionless.

The more arrogant Fang Bai appeared, the more wary Zu Tiangang felt. He dared not act rashly, believing Fang Bai must have something to rely on.

Zu Tiangang learned from Zu Yu that Bai Fang had a close relationship with Zhuge Lian, who was a disciple of the Xuannv Sect. Recalling Han Xingyu's reluctance to discuss the marriage alliance between the two sects, and her unusual expression, Zu Tiangang was shrouded in an ominous premonition.

"Could it be that the Xuannv Sect plans for Zhuge Lian to marry Fang Bai from the Bitao Martial Academy?"

Zu Tiangang's heart skipped a beat as he thought about the possibility more and more.

Although Fang Bai hailed from a fourth-rank Sect and was a martial Dao genius from the Bitao Martial Academy with a Dual Attribute Innate Spiritual Root, he also had the favor of Bai Fang, a mid-tier Alchemist and Artifact Refiner, and was likely to inherit his legacy. His potential seemed boundless, and it was plausible that Xuannv Sect might choose Zhuge Lian to marry him.

The Xuannv Sect was capable of standing shoulder to shoulder with the Purple Flame Sect as a third-rank Sect. Should Fang Bai successfully marry Zhuge Lian, he would essentially have a protective talisman. Then, the Purple Flame Sect would have to weigh their actions heavily if they wished to kill Fang Bai.

With the protection of Xuannv Sect, along with the full support and training from both Bai Fang and the Bitao Martial Academy, Fang Bai would undoubtedly pose a significant threat to the Purple Flame Sect in the future. It wasn't implausible to think he could even topple the sect from its position as the strongest sect in the Thousand Lakes Country.

Up to now, Zu Tiangang had no idea that Fang Bai and Bai Fang were the same person.

Now, as Fang Bai claimed to challenge the Purple Flame Sect, Zu Tiangang saw it as nothing more than posturing under the Xuannv Sect's protection. Therefore, he decided to disregard it.

Zu Tiangang had no interest in knowing what Zu Tiangang was thinking. He beckoned to the Purple Flame Sect Disciples sitting under the Stone Platform, continuing to provoke a challenge with a loud voice: "Now, on behalf of the Bitao Martial Academy, I issue a challenge to the Purple Flame Sect. Which disciple dares to come forward for a fight?"

Fang Bai's repeated provocations were met with silence from Zu Tiangang, and each member of the Purple Flame Sect, though fuming inside, did not dare to step forward and accept the challenge.

"Sect Master, this damn disciple from the Bitao Martial Academy is insufferable! Since he has initiated the challenge, let our Sect Disciples fight him and show him the renowned reputation of the Purple Flame Sect is no fallacy!" an Elder of the Purple Flame Sect finally couldn't bear it any longer and stood up to speak.

"Let there be a fight!"

The other high-ranking officials of the Purple Flame Sect also expressed similar sentiments.

These elders were well aware of Fang Bai's connections with Zhuge Lian and Bai Fang, harboring the same reservations as Zu Tiangang. However, they were truly infuriated by Fang Bai's arrogance and pomposity. Amidst the eyes of disciples from various powerful Sects, they pondered over how they could salvage their honor if they did not teach Fang Bai a lesson.

Zu Tiangang narrowed his eyes slightly, his gaze falling upon Fang Bai. Suddenly, he slapped the armrest of his stone chair and bellowed, "Then fight!"

Chapter 1090: Great Rebellion

The suppressed anger of the Purple Flame Sect disciples erupted like a volcano as Zu Tiangang declared, "Then let's fight."

Each of them, brimming with True Yuan, soared in their desire to fight, their Killing Qi immense, longing to rush to the Stone Platform and harshly teach Fang Bai a lesson, preserving the dignity and glory of the Purple Flame Sect, the premier sect of Thousand Lakes Country.

There were hundreds, even thousands, of Purple Flame Sect disciples at the scene, all elite among the tens of thousands in the sect. Their collective Killing Qi and anger created an oppressive force that enveloped the area, causing disciples of other sects to tremble.

A third rank sect, formidable as the clouds, silent until aroused, and astounding when angered.

"Bitao Martial Academy, it's over..."

Aside from a few individuals, this was the prevailing thought among the martial artists present.

Fang Bai's provocation had enraged the Purple Flame Sect, and it was foreseeable that not only Fang Bai himself would face grim consequences, but also the Bitao Martial Academy could suffer severe retaliatory attacks from the Purple Flame Sect, possibly leading to its destruction or reduced to a lesser, insignificant sect.

Atop the Stone Platform, Ge Feng's face was ashen, his heart filled with despair.

Below the Stone Platform, Shen Yulin and other Bitao Martial Academy disciples were pale, their expressions terrified.

They had all realized the horrendous consequences of Fang Bai's provocation against the Purple Flame Sect, knowing that it was unlikely that the ten of them would survive to return to the Bitao Martial Academy.

Liu Qingqing was originally nervous as well, but when she saw Fang Bai, who was calm and smiling on the Stone Platform, she quickly regained her composure.

Liu Qingqing knew Fang Bai would not take risks without certainty; he had repeatedly provoked the Purple Flame Sect because he surely had confidence and was prepared for all possible outcomes.

Liu Qingqing nearly blindly worshiped and trusted Fang Bai, a loyal follower ready to stand by him even if he caused an upheaval that would provoke divine wrath, ready to oppose divinity and die without regrets.

"Fang Bai, if you want to die, die alone, don't drag us down with you! Sect Master Zu, it's Fang Bai who provoked you, not us! If you must kill, kill him and spare us!"

Yang Lin suddenly screamed desperately, his usually handsome face twisted and distorted with fear, which made him appear despicable.

Yang Lin's outcry drew the attention of disciples from various major sects around, many of whom regarded him with contempt.

As a fellow sect member, Yang Lin shouldn't have spoken such undermining words at a critical moment of life and death, showing his true, despicably low character.

"Yang Lin, you... you deserve to die!"

Ge Feng pointed at Yang Lin, his body trembling slightly with anger.

"It's Fang Bai who deserves to die! It's Fang Bai!"

At this moment, Yang Lin fearlessly yelled back at Ge Feng like a madman, pointing at Fang Bai and shouting, "This bastard Fang Bai, arrogant and overbearing, presumptuous beyond his abilities, provoking the Purple Flame Sect, he's leading us all to a dead end! Elder Ge, I know you value Fang Bai, but do you still want to defend him now? Fine, if you want to die with him, please do so! I don't want to die! I want to live a good life!"

"Yang Lin, you're insane!"

"Disrespecting Elder Ge, you'll face the academy's punishment!"

"What you are saying is utterly disgraceful!"

Among the Bitao Martial Academy disciples, Shen Yulin, Huang Miao, and Liu Qingqing angrily rebuked him, furious.

However, while the other several disciples despised Yang Lin's character, they were also dissatisfied with Fang Bai's act of provoking the Purple Flame Sect; therefore, they remained silent.

"Elder Ge is right, you disciples of Bitao Martial Academy, betraying and backstabbing, truly deserve to die!"

Zu Tiangang suddenly said ominously from the side.

As soon as these words came out, Yang Lin felt like he was struck by lightning, looked at Zu Tiangang on the Stone Platform in disbelief, his body trembling like chaff, his face instantly losing all color.

"Sect Master Zu, what do you mean by that?"

Ge Feng glanced at Yang Lin, filled with confusion, then turned to Zu Tiangang and asked with a frown.

"This person is called Yang Lin, right?"

Zu Tiangang looked at Yang Lin coldly, ignoring his pleading gaze, and slowly said, "This person ran to our Purple Flame Sect last night, saying that Fang Bai, a disciple from your Bitao Martial Academy, and a martial artist named Bai Fang have a close relationship. Elder Ge, do you know if this is true or false?"

Ge Feng's face suddenly changed dramatically, he abruptly turned his head to look at Yang Lin, his eyes filled with boundless anger and a thick Killing Qi.

The matter of Fang Bai being acquainted with Senior Bai had been emphasized more than once by Ge Feng to the martial academy disciples around him. He had insisted that they keep it a secret at all costs and not reveal it, especially to the disciples of Purple Flame Sect, to avoid bringing deadly trouble to Fang Bai and causing problems for the Bitao Martial Academy.

However, what Ge Feng never expected was that his worst fear had come to pass—Yang Lin, this person, had secretly divulged the secret of Fang Bai's acquaintance with Senior Bai to the Purple Flame Sect. He was literally putting Fang Bai in mortal danger!

Yang Lin's actions amounted to a betrayal of the Sect, a crime unforgivable!

With flames of anger surging in his chest, Ge Feng pointed at Yang Lin and shouted fiercely, "Beast, you deserve to be punished for your crimes! Yulin, clean up the house!"

Before his words had even faded, Yang Lin below the Stone Platform had already let out a strange cry, using all his strength to execute his movement technique and flee into the distance.

Shen Yulin's beautiful eyes grew cold, she let out a cold snort, her body lightly swayed, and she chased after Yang Lin.

Yang Lin was just an Inner Court disciple with intermediate Heaven Level Cultivation, while Shen Yulin was a Personal Transmission disciple with Heaven Level Perfection. The gap between their small realms doomed Yang Lin to certain death.

Yang Lin had fled about a hundred meters when he felt a gust of wind behind his head, a strong and fierce True Essence Force attacked him, causing him to panic.

"I'll fight you!"

Yang Lin shouted loudly, turning around to throw a punch at Shen Yulin, not bothering to defend at all, fully employing a life-risking fighting style.

However, the difference in strength between him and Shen Yulin was too vast; wanting to risk his life in battle was completely wishful thinking.

Shen Yulin twisted her waist slightly to dodge Yang Lin's punch, and at the same time, her figure surged forward rapidly. Her right palm turned into the shape of a blade, lightly slicing at Yang Lin's throat.

Crack—

A soft sound echoed, and Yang Lin's throat bone shattered, receiving a fatal blow.

Yang Lin's eyes bulged out, his mouth half-open, his ferocious and twisted expression solidified on his face, a "heh-heh" sound emerged from his throat, then his body slowly collapsed to the ground, convulsing a few times before he finally expired.

Fang Bai witnessed Yang Lin's execution with no ripple in his expression.

On the way to the Purple Flame Sect earlier, Fang Bai could feel Yang Lin's hostility towards him, but he hadn't expected him to betray them to the Purple Flame Sect. Such behavior was despicable; if he had stayed in the Bitao Martial Academy, he would only have been a future calamity, and his death was not to be regretted.

Shen Yulin struck down Yang Lin with one move, not even looking at his corpse. She used her movement technique to quickly return among the disciples of Bitao Martial Academy, saluting the Stone Platform and saying, "Reporting to Elder Ge, disciple has successfully executed the command and eliminated Yang Lin!"

Ge Feng nodded, his gaze shifting to Fang Bai, he opened his mouth, wanting to say something but unsure what to say, and finally, it ended with a heavy sigh.