

Doctor 1281

Chapter 1281: Fire Primordial Qi Storm

Pushing open the two large doors of the Manor Master Hall, the first thing that catches the eye is a Spirit Stone Bed, several zhang in size.

The Spirit Stone Bed is built from thousands of high-grade Fire Spirit Stones, and it is surrounded by several hundred high-grade Fire-attribute Spiritual Medicines, with dense and pure Fire Primordial Qi enveloping the entire bed.

The vast and empty Manor Master Hall, due to the dense Fire Primordial Qi, is extremely hot. Fortunately, everyone present either practices Fire System Cultivation or possesses an innate Fire Spirit Root, hence they are not afraid of the high temperature inside the hall; on the contrary, they feel indescribably comfortable.

"Manor Huang, is this your son?"

Fang Bai walked to the front of the Spirit Stone Bed, his gaze falling on the young man lying on it.

The young man looked to be just over thirty, lying face up on the Spirit Stone Bed, his body skinny as kindling, his face pale as paper, seeming lifeless at first glance, but upon careful sensing, one could detect a faint breath still lingering in him.

However, that breath was extremely weak, like a candle flame in the wind, possibly extinguishing at any moment.

"Yes, this is my son, Yuan Qi."

Huang Canghai nodded, glanced at his beloved son on the Spirit Stone Bed, his eyes showing a sorrowful expression, and he spoke with a heavy tone: "Please, Brother Fang, apply your exquisite skills and treat Yuan Qi."

Sun Guangyi, Li Jingren, and Xia Chenyu watched Yuan Qi, who hovered on the brink of death on the Spirit Stone Bed, and secretly sighed. They didn't expect that in just over two months of experience

outside, Yuan Qi had weakened to such an extent. If they had returned a few days later, they might not have been able to see even the last of Yuan Qi.

"I have the Blood Bodhi, and I can refine the Nine Revolutions Rebirth Pill, but... Your son's situation is really not good. Taking more Nine Revolutions Rebirth Pills won't have any effect on him..."

Fang Bai glanced a few times at Huang Yuanqi on the Spirit Stone Bed, and slowly said.

"I know."

Huang Canghai, who had been accompanying his son day and night and used his True Yuan to extend his son's life, was well aware of his son's condition. Therefore, upon hearing Fang Bai's words, he didn't react much, but sighed: "If Brother Fang cannot treat Yuan Qi, then within these two or three days, Yuan Qi might lose all life force..."

As he said this, his voice choked up, his eyes focused on his son's face that had thinned to the bone, and his eyes reddened.

Elder Shi, Sun Guangyi, Li Jingren and other high ranks of Golden Crow Manor heard Fang Bai's words, thinking he was helpless about Huang Yuanqi's injury, each of them shook their heads and sighed, their expressions somber.

Among those present, no one understood Fang Bai better than Xia Chenyu. She saw Fang Bai's calm demeanor and knew for sure he had a way, silently relieved, she asked: "Fang Bai, you have a way to heal Senior Brother Huang, right?"

Fang Bai flashed a smile, said: "Those who know me, Chenyu does. In the parlor, I have already discussed everything with Manor Huang, if I can't heal the injuries of Manor Huang's beloved son, then how could I take that half of the Essence Stone Vein?"

Huang Canghai immediately got excited again, his voice trembling: "Apart from the Nine Revolutions Rebirth Pill, what other methods do you have to treat Yuan Qi's injury, Brother Fang?"

Fang Bai stroked his chin, pointing to the Spirit Stone Bed and said: "Around this Spirit Stone Bed, gather more Essence Stones... The higher the grade, the better. Then you all temporarily exit the Manor Master Hall, and leave everything here to me!"

Huang Canghai didn't say anything, only glanced at Elder Shi and others, and they understood his intention, hence they withdrew from the Manor Master Hall together.

Although Fang Bai gestured for Xia Chenyu to stay, she was afraid of disturbing him, thus she also withdrew along with Elder Shi and the others.

After all others had left the Manor Master Hall, Huang Canghai took out several thousand high-quality Essence Stones from the Spatial Ring he wore on his finger, and arranged them around the Spirit Stone Bed as per Fang Bai's instructions.

These Essence Stones were of superior quality among the high-grade ones. Once arranged, the Fire Primordial Qi inside the Manor Master Hall grew denser, and the temperature rose accordingly.

Fang Bai slightly moved some of the Essence Stones around the Spirit Stone Bed, then carved out intricate and mysterious runes among them. After observing his work for a moment, he murmured, "This small Gathering Essence Formation should be sufficient..."

As he spoke, he casually released a strand of Fire Primordial Qi, which landed on one of the rune-engraved Essence Stones and seemed to activate some kind of formation. Immediately, the swirling Fire Primordial Qi inside the entire Manor Master Hall began to rotate rapidly around the Spirit Stone Bed, quickly forming a small vortex of Fire Primordial Qi Storm.

The rapidly spinning Fire Primordial Qi Storm generated a strong centripetal force, causing the Fire Primordial Qi within several miles to rush into the Manor Master Hall.

The incessant influx of Fire Primordial Qi made the Qi within the hall doubly rich, and the temperature also increased significantly, making even Huang Canghai, who had cultivated Fire-type Martial Arts from a young age to the Universe Level perfection, feel a hard-to-bear heat.

"Is this a Gathering Essence Array? Impressive..."

Huang Canghai circulated his True Yuan to counter the increasingly scorching temperature around him, and he watched Fang Bai, who stood calmly at the edge of the Fire Primordial Qi Storm, greatly astonished.

Huang Canghai had seen some Array Masters set up Gathering Essence Formations before, but none of them could gather Essence Energy as effectively as Fang Bai's.

What truly shocked Huang Canghai was Fang Bai's strength.

At this moment inside the Manor Master Hall, even Huang Canghai had to circulate his True Yuan to withstand the relentless heat assaulting his body, whereas Fang Bai seemed perfectly at ease, a testament to his strength being at least a notch above Huang Canghai's.

If previously Huang Canghai had regarded Fang Bai as his equal, from this moment on, he began to feel a profound reverence towards him.

"Manor Huang, I am going to heal your son now. You should leave as well!"

As Huang Canghai was lost in thought, Fang Bai's voice suddenly reached his ears.

Huang Canghai felt a chill in his heart, dared not to speak, and swiftly turned around and darted out of the Manor Master Hall, closing the doors behind him.

The intense heat from the hall had already spread outside. Once Huang Canghai darted out, he saw Shi Cheng and the others had already retreated a hundred meters away, their faces filled with astonishment.

"Manor Huang, what is happening inside?"

Seeing Huang Canghai approach, Shi Cheng couldn't help but ask, gesturing towards the Manor Master Hall.

Huang Canghai waved his hand, his voice filled with emotion: "I thought Yuan Qi's severe injuries were beyond hope, but now it seems that a miracle might happen..."

Under the puzzled gazes of Shi Cheng and the others, Huang Canghai sighed deeply and continued: "From now on, no one is allowed within a hundred feet of the Manor Master Hall, on pain of death! Elder Shi, Elder Lei, Elder Yu, Elder Feng, please guard the surroundings of the hall."

"Understood."

Shi Cheng and the other four Great Elders responded in unison, their figures shooting out in different directions, vanishing from sight in the blink of an eye.

Chapter 1282: We're Even

Just a few months ago, Huang Canghai still hoped that his beloved son, Huang Yuanqi, could recover from his injuries and regain his peak strength.

But now, he no longer has other extravagant hopes; he only wishes that his son's life can be saved.

Only by preserving a life can one slowly find a way to solve the problem of lost strength.

But if life itself is lost, then everything disappears like smoke in the wind, with nothing left to discuss.

Fang Bai is the sole hope for preserving his son's life, which is why Huang Canghai does not wish for any mistakes to occur during Fang Bai's treatment period.

Therefore, after having Shi Cheng and the other three Great Elders guard the surroundings of the Manor Master Hall, Huang Canghai was still not at ease. He ordered Sun Guangyi, Li Jingren, and the other eight Stewards to stand guard at even more distant locations to avoid any defensive oversights that might lead to irrevocable losses.

Since the news of the Essence Stone Vein discovery at Eternal Death Zone was released, Golden Crow Manor has entered a period of frequent troubles, with unidentified Martial Artists often lurking around the manor. No one could guarantee they wouldn't sneak into Golden Crow Manor and cause chaos.

Fang Bai needs an extremely quiet environment to heal Huang Yuanqi's injuries. Should anyone break in and disturb them, the consequences might be unimaginable.

Huang Canghai's decision to have the four Great Elders and several Stewards guard the periphery of the Manor Master Hall was also in anticipation of preventing unforeseen issues.

After the high-ranking officials such as Shi Cheng left, only Huang Canghai and Xia Chenyu remained in front of the Manor Master Hall.

"Chenyu..."

Huang Canghai turned to his side and looked at Xia Chenyu with a complex expression, then pointed towards a small pavilion not far away and spoke softly, "Shall we have a talk over there?"

"Hmm."

Xia Chenyu seemed to understand what Huang Canghai wanted to ask her, nodded her head, and followed him toward the small pavilion.

"Have you decided to leave Golden Crow Manor?"

The two sat opposite each other in the small pavilion, and Huang Canghai asked straightforwardly.

Huang Canghai learned from Sun Guangyi that Xia Chenyu and Fang Bai were Martial Dao partners. Fang Bai had come to Golden Crow Manor to repay the favor owed by Xia Chenyu and then to take her away.

Upon first hearing this, Huang Canghai's immediate reaction was that since Xia Chenyu was a disciple heavily nurtured by the Golden Crow Manor and would be a pillar of the future, he absolutely could not allow Fang Bai to take her away.

However, after meeting Fang Bai, Huang Canghai realized that if Golden Crow Manor tried to forcefully keep Xia Chenyu, they might pay an unbearable price.

Although Fang Bai was just an Individual Cultivation Martial Artist, he was the most formidable one Huang Canghai had seen in his life.

This formidability referred not only to his Cultivation Level but also to the various abilities possessed by Fang Bai.

Be it Alchemy, Beast Taming, or Formations, Fang Bai not only dabbled in these but seemed to be quite skilled in them as well, which was a rare existence among the countless Martial Artists in the True Martial Realm.

High-grade Pill Masters, Array Masters, and Beast Tamers in the True Martial Realm all have extraordinary influence and are figures that almost all Sects and Individual Cultivation Martial Artists seek to court and please.

Someone like Fang Bai, who possesses multiple abilities and is a Universe Level perfection powerhouse, can indeed say that just by giving a call to arms, he could gather thousands of Martial Artists to serve and be driven by him within a short period.

If Golden Crow Manor dared to forcefully keep Xia Chenyu, Fang Bai, in a fit of anger, might summon many Sects and Loose Cultivators to hold Golden Crow Manor accountable.

Already under immense pressure due to the Essence Stone Vein, Golden Crow Manor, once caught in a conflict on two fronts, would likely be unable to turn the tide.

Huang Canghai dared not stake the future and fate of Golden Crow Manor on a gamble, so after weighing the gains and losses, he decided to let go of Xia Chenyu in exchange for Fang Bai's support and assistance.

In the long run, forming a good relationship with Fang Bai would bring only advantages and no disadvantages to Golden Crow Manor.

Even in the short term, Fang Bai's promise to save his beloved son Huang Yuanqi, to vow to help Li Jingren regenerate his severed arm, and to join forces with Golden Crow Manor to seize the Essence Stone Vein—Huang Canghai felt that giving up Xia Chenyu in exchange for these benefits and getting through a major crisis was very worthwhile.

Huang Canghai's chat with Xia Chenyu was not to retain her but rather to learn more about Fang Bai through her.

"The moment I met Fang Bai, I decided to follow him and leave," Xia Chenyu said seriously in response to Huang Canghai's inquiry.

"The grace of saving and sheltering me by Golden Crow Manor will be reciprocated by Chenyu in the future," Huang Canghai waved his hand and said, "I know that Fang Bai was willing to help Golden Crow Manor this time largely because of you. If Golden Crow Manor can safely get through this crisis, we will be even."

After a pause, he continued, "Fang Bai, this young man, has a talent that I have only seen once in my life. He is now a Universe Level perfection powerhouse. Unless something unexpected happens, he will definitely be able to advance to the Innate Realm in the future and become one of the top powerhouses. Chenyu, remembering that you were once a disciple of Golden Crow Palace, I ask for nothing else, only hoping that if Golden Crow Manor ever finds itself in trouble, you can persuade Fang Bai to lend a hand."

As Huang Canghai said this, he clasped his hands and bowed deeply to Xia Chenyu.

A Universe Level perfection powerhouse and head of a prominent clan bowing to Xia Chenyu, a mere beginning Cosmic Level Martial Artist—if others saw this, they would surely be shocked.

Xia Chenyu understood that Huang Canghai showed respect because of her close relationship with Fang Bai, and hurriedly returned the gesture, "Manor Master, there's no need for such formalities. If Golden Crow Manor ever faces difficulties in the future, as long as Fang Bai and I can help, we certainly will!"

That was exactly what Huang Canghai wanted to hear from Xia Chenyu. Hearing this, his heart leaped with joy, "No matter where you are in the future, the gates of Golden Crow Manor will always be open for you. Also, if you and Brother Fang have time, remember to visit the manor frequently. If you

encounter difficulties, you can also seek help from the manor. The tens of thousands of disciples here are your support."

"Thank you, Manor Master."

Though Xia Chenyu knew Huang Canghai was just being polite, she still showed gratitude.

After that, Huang Canghai indirectly inquired about some matters regarding Fang Bai. Xia Chenyu gave half truths and half fabrications, naturally not missing the chance to praise Fang Bai, making Fang Bai appear even more impressive in Huang Canghai's eyes, feeling that collaborating with Fang Bai was an absolute win.

"Chenyu, I and several other high-ranking members of the manor are here to guard, you should go back and rest first!" Huang Canghai said to Xia Chenyu after chatting for a while in the pavilion.

In Huang Canghai's view, given that his beloved son was critically wounded and near death, even if Fang Bai could cure him, it wouldn't be a quick matter, so there was no need for Xia Chenyu to stay.

Xia Chenyu shook her head, "No need, Fang Bai will be out soon."

"What?"

Huang Canghai was stunned for a moment, thinking he had heard wrong, and asked, "What did you say?"

Xia Chenyu pointed towards the Manor Master Hall and smiled, "I said Fang Bai will be out very soon."

"Impossible?"

Huang Canghai shook his head in disbelief, thinking that it was only a few hundred breaths' time since they left the Manor Master Hall; even if Fang Bai had miraculous abilities, it wouldn't be possible to cure Huang Yuanqi in such a short time.

Chapter 1283: Where is the treasure vault of Golden Crow Manor?

Just as Huang Canghai voiced his skepticism, the grand doors of the Manor Master Hall creaked open and were slowly pushed apart by someone.

Clad in white, purer than snow, Fang Bai, with his hands clasped behind his back, leisurely walked out from the Manor Master Hall.

His relaxed and serene demeanor indicated that the short period of seclusion for healing had not depleted much of his vitality and spirit.

"I just knew he could heal Senior Brother Huang's injuries... He must always be this formidable..."

Muttering to herself, Xia Chenyu's beautiful eyes blinked softly, her gaze full of tender infatuation as she looked at Fang Bai, the hint of a smile at the corner of her mouth quickly spreading across her charming face.

Born with enchanting beauty, Xia Chenyu, with every frown and smile, naturally exuded an inherent allure. Even Huang Canghai, who had lived over a century and had cultivated to a realm of complete equanimity, felt his heart skip a beat at the sight of her smiling, quickly averting his eyes.

Xia Chenyu and Fang Bai shared a tacit understanding, sensing each other's presence. As Fang Bai was about to finish the healing session inside the Manor Master Hall, she already knew, so seeing Fang Bai come out only brought her joy without any surprise.

On the contrary, Huang Canghai looked stupefied, thinking he was seeing an illusion, and blinked furiously before daring to confirm that the young man in white was indeed Fang Bai.

According to Huang Canghai's original estimation, Fang Bai would need at least three to five days, or even over ten days, to heal his son. Yet unexpectedly, Fang Bai had left the Manor Master Hall in just a few hundred breaths' time.

From the expression on Fang Bai's face, Huang Canghai knew his son's life was certainly out of danger, and the heavy weight in his heart was temporarily lifted.

The only thing that made Huang Canghai anxious was whether his son's strength could return to its peak after recovering from his injuries.

After all, for a martial artist, regression in strength instead of advancement is a very painful matter. Huang Canghai feared his son would find it difficult to cope with this blow upon awakening.

"Brother Fang..."

Seeing Fang Bai heading towards the pavilion, Huang Canghai hurriedly strode forward to greet him. As they drew closer, he blurted out, "My son... How is Yuan Qi?"

Fang Bai said, "It's fine. Your son should wake up by tomorrow morning."

This outcome was far beyond Huang Canghai's expectations. Suppressing his excitement, he asked again, "Then... Yuan Qi's cultivation level..."

Fang Bai said, "Your son's Qi Sea was severely damaged and his meridians were almost completely ruptured. It's impossible for his cultivation level to fully recover in a short period... It will take at least three to five months!"

Huang Canghai felt somewhat disappointed upon hearing the first part of Fang Bai's explanation.

In Huang Canghai's mind, the "short period" Fang Bai referred to could be ten or eight years, or even longer. By that time, even if his son's cultivation could be restored, he would have missed the golden period for martial artists' practice. Future progress in the Martial Dao would be increasingly difficult.

However, upon hearing Fang Bai's last words, Huang Canghai's eyes suddenly widened in shock. Staring at Fang Bai's smiling face, once he was sure that Fang Bai was not joking, an impulse to laugh out loud surged within him, yet his eyes were filled with warmth.

Looking at Huang Canghai, whose old tears were streaming down his face, Fang Bai joked with a smile, "Manor Huang, curing your son took a great deal of effort on my part. Considering that, could you possibly give me an extra ten or twenty percent of the Essence Stone Vein?"

Huang Canghai's expression stiffened, and he wiped his eyes, then let out a loud laugh looking up to the sky, before pointing towards the Manor Master Hall and asking, "Can I go in now and take a look?"

Fang Bai saw him changing the subject and couldn't help but smile secretly, playfully shaking his head as he said: "Your son is currently at the critical juncture of nearly awakening. If he is startled in the slightest, all previous efforts could be wasted. Therefore, Manor Huang, it would be best for you to personally stand guard here tonight to prevent any mishaps."

Huang Canghai took it seriously and said in a solemn and serious tone, "Very well, from this moment on, I will personally stand guard in front of the Manor Master Hall. As for Brother Fang... Chenyu, Brother Fang will be left in your care. How you wish to arrange for his accommodations is up to you. Take this manor master token; when the over ten thousand disciples of Golden Crow Manor see it, they should obey you as if they were taking orders from me personally."

As he spoke, Huang Canghai flicked a palm-sized token carved from Fire Elemental Stone to Xia Chenyu, then walked over to the front of the Manor Master Hall and sat down cross-legged right in front of the hall's doors.

With Huang Canghai guarding the Manor Master Hall, unless there were Universe Level masters with perfect cultivation, or even stronger experts sneaking into Golden Crow Manor, no martial artist would dare to approach the Manor Master Hall.

"Chenyu, let's go."

Fang Bai didn't linger, and took Xia Chenyu's small hand to leave.

Just now, inside the Manor Master Hall, Fang Bai had used a wisp of Chaos Origin Energy to rekindle the nearly extinguished life force of Huang Yuanqi. Then, that wisp of Chaos Origin Energy traveled through Huang Yuanqi's body on its own, repairing his damaged Qi Sea and connecting his severed meridians.

By tomorrow morning, Huang Yuanqi's injuries would be seventy to eighty percent healed, and then he would wake up naturally. Thus, there was no further need for Fang Bai to remain there.

And Huang Canghai had not inquired about how Fang Bai had healed Huang Yuanqi, nor did Fang Bai tell him.

Which martial artist in the world doesn't have some unique skills of their own? Similarly, it wouldn't be easy for anyone to divulge such secrets.

"Where do you want to go?"

Xia Chenyu walked side by side with Fang Bai, her watery eyes tenderly gazing at him as she smiled and shook the Fire Elemental Stone token in her hand, saying, "With this, we can go anywhere we want in Golden Crow Manor without anyone stopping us."

Fang Bai said with a grin, "Do you know where the treasure vault of Golden Crow Manor is? Shall we go take a look? Eh, Golden Crow Manor, after all, is a prestigious institution with nearly ten thousand years of heritage, there must be plenty of good things in the treasure vault. We might even 'borrow' some things on the way out..."

"..."

Xia Chenyu was momentarily stunned, listening to Fang Bai murmuring to himself, and couldn't help but laugh lightly, "If we really do that, Manor Huang will surely fight us to the death."

Fang Bai responded, "You have a point! With over ten thousand disciples of Golden Crow Manor, it would indeed be troublesome if they really came after us... Forget it, let's go check out Eternal Death Zone instead. Half of the Essence Stone Vein beneath it belongs to me; I can't let others take it away."

Xia Chenyu, who also enjoyed lively excitement, nodded in agreement, "If you want to go, I'll accompany you. I'm also curious to see what that thousand-mile Flame Elemental Stone Vein looks like!"

The two of them set off without further ado. Holding the token given by Huang Canghai, they faced no obstruction along the way, and quickly left Golden Crow Manor. They then took two Swiftwind Horses from the stables outside the manor and rode them at lightning speed towards the Eternal Death Zone, a thousand miles away.

As for Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu's departure, Huang Canghai was naturally aware of it, but he wasn't worried that Fang Bai, taking Xia Chenyu with him, would leave and not return.

Huang Canghai was certain that Fang Bai wouldn't willingly give up his share of half the Essence Stone Vein beneath Eternal Death Zone, and at this moment, he could only hope to secure his share by joining forces with Golden Crow Manor.

Chapter 1284: Don't Look at Me That Way

On the brink of the Eternal Death Zone, a hundred thousand Martial Artists have gathered.

Like a swarm of ants, these Martial Artists have formed hundreds and thousands of alliances, scattered across a hundred li radius.

These alliances, small with a few dozen people and large as several hundreds, each hold their ground, glaring covetously and confronting nearly ten thousand disciples of the Golden Crow Manor who are several li away.

The goal of these hundred thousand Martial Artists is the entry to the Essence Stone Vein guarded by the disciples of the Golden Crow Manor.

That entrance to the Essence Stone Vein is the only pathway within a thousand li radius that leads deep underground to the Essence Stone Mine, where one can find amazingly abundant Fire Elemental Stones.

Since the discovery of the Essence Stone Vein in the Eternal Death Zone, many Martial Artists have tried to dig from other places underground, hoping to avoid the Golden Crow Manor's disciples and create a new pathway to mine the Essence Stones; however, due to the exceptionally hard soil, all attempts have ended in failure.

Therefore, all Martial Artists have set their sights on the only entrance guarded by the Golden Crow Manor's disciples, attempting to defeat them and carve up the Essence Stone Vein.

However, although the disciples of Golden Crow Manor are absolutely outnumbered, each one of them is elite and possesses an unwavering dedication to protecting the Manor's interests, suggesting that if a full-blown conflict erupts, even if the Martial Artists Alliance could win with their numerical advantage, it would be a pyrrhic victory with heavy casualties.

Moreover, within the Martial Artists Alliance, every individual has their own agenda, lack strong will to fight, and neither the determination nor the courage for a life-and-death battle. Once the situation turns against them, these temporary alliances could quickly collapse.

The Martial Artists Alliance, numerous but disparate, and the Golden Crow Manor, individually powerful, possess their respective strengths and weaknesses, which is why both sides have been wary and at a stalemate until now.

Although there have been occasional conflicts and casualties among the standoff parties, they haven't completely fallen out.

Nearly ten thousand disciples of the Golden Crow Manor, bound by strict manor rules, guard the entrance area, each maintaining a severe and disciplined demeanor.

In contrast, on the side of Martial Artists Alliance, where Individual Cultivation Martial Artists are in majority, there are no rules to speak of, and conflicts often erupt due to language disagreements or other reasons.

When Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu arrived on the edge of Eternal Death Zone, what they saw was a chaotic scene, resembling a bustling market.

"It really is chaotic here!"

"Too many Loose Cultivators, it would be strange if it weren't chaotic!"

"There are probably about a hundred thousand Martial Artists gathered here."

"It's probably more than a hundred thousand now. And along our way here, we still saw a continuous stream of Martial Artists rushing this way!"

"Hundreds of thousands of Martial Artists all here for the Essence Stone Vein... If the two sides begin to fight, won't it turn into a mountain of corpses and a river of blood? Just thinking about it is terrifying!"

"It won't! Though it sounds like a lot, these hundreds of thousands of Martial Artists are just a disorderly mob. They don't have the determination and courage to stake it all in a do-or-die battle!"

"You mean... the eventual victor of this struggle over the Essence Stone Vein will be the Golden Crow Manor?"

"With me here, the victory will definitely be Golden Crow Manor's; without me, that's hard to say."

"..."

"Chenyu, don't look at me like that, I'm just speaking the truth..."

...

Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu walked side by side among thousands of members of the Martial Artists Alliance, looking around at the noisy and chaotic scene and couldn't help but exchange glances and shake their heads repeatedly.

No wonder some Sects in the True Martial Realm looked down on Individual Cultivation Martial Artists. Take this alliance mainly formed by Individual Cultivation Martial Artists for example, even though the total number already exceeds a hundred thousand, if they cannot achieve tacit understanding and work together, they cannot unleash significant power.

This is also the reason why the members of the Martial Artists Alliance, vastly outnumbering the disciples of Golden Crow Manor, have been in a standoff for many days, unable to breakthrough the defense line established by the disciples of Golden Crow Manor.

"Seeing such a disorganized group, I feel even more reassured!"

Fang Bai said with a grin.

Previously, Fang Bai thought it would be troublesome to drive away the more than one hundred thousand Martial Artists gathered at the edge of the Eternal Death Zone, but now he felt that with just a slight manipulation, he could easily cause these hundreds of thousands of Martial Artists to self-destruct without attacking.

While Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu were observing the Martial Artists around them, many Martial Artists were also sizing up the two of them.

The current Cultivation Levels of Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu, one at the Cosmic Level beginner and the other at Cosmic Level perfection, were nothing significant among the tens of thousands of Martial Artists present.

In the eyes of the weaker Martial Artists, Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu, both handsome and beautiful with extraordinary demeanor, had nothing particularly special besides that.

However, in the eyes of some Universe Level Experts, Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu were both Martial Dao Geniuses with Innate Spiritual Roots, and they could tell that these two young Martial Artists in their early twenties were not as simple as they seemed on the surface.

Especially Fang Bai, who gave a feeling of profound unpredictability, with his real strength impossible to precisely discern by anyone.

This made the Universe Level Experts surprised and also more interested in Fang Bai.

On the way to the Eternal Death Zone, to avoid unnecessary trouble, Xia Chenyu changed out of the Golden Crow Manor disciple uniform and wore a red dress, while Fang Bai was still dressed in a white robe, so in the eyes of other Martial Artists, they both seemed to be Loose Cultivators without any Sect affiliation.

Because of this, some Universe Level Experts harbored a desire to attract Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu to join their Sects and Prominent Clans or to take them as disciples to pass on their legacy.

"Please stop for a moment!"

While passing through a forest, a group of Martial Artists at the edge of the forest parted, and a purple-robed elder stepped forward, blocking the path of Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu.

"Are you two here for the Essence Stone Vein too?"

The purple-robed elder looked at Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu with a smile, asking in a friendly manner.

"Yes."

Fang Bai responded with a smile: "We heard that a large Essence Stone Vein was discovered here, so we came to join the excitement, hoping to gain some benefits from it."

"Exactly, this Essence Stone Vein is remarkably rich, coveted by countless Martial Artists, and everyone wants a share. However..."

The purple-robed elder said, pausing with a smile and nodding towards the tens of thousands of Martial Artists around, spoke with a grave expression: "As you see, there are tens of thousands of Martial Artists gathered here, including some Universe Level Experts far stronger than you. It won't be easy for you to get a share. But there's a way – if you two join our 'Eight Desolations Alliance', with the collective effort of hundreds of our allies, we may have a chance to secure a portion of the Essence Stone Vein and then distribute it..."

The purple-robed elder was a Loose Cultivator and also the leader of the 'Eight Desolations Alliance', possessing Universe Level intermediate Cultivation.

When Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu appeared, the purple-robed elder saw their extraordinary talents as Martial Dao Geniuses, moved to recruit them first, then planned to persuade them to become his disciples.

Chapter 1285: Come and Meet Your Doom!

The purple-robed elder's wishful thinking was doomed to be unfulfilled.

Because it wasn't just him who had his eyes on Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu; there were many other strong figures from the Martial Artists Alliance.

Following the purple-robed elder, more than a dozen Universe Level Experts with similar cultivation levels approached, each with honeyed words, trying to persuade Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu to join their alliances.

"Have you no shame?"

Seeing others vying for the two Martial Dao geniuses, Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu, the purple-robed elder's friendly smile immediately disappeared, replaced by a face full of rage, he gritted his teeth and said: "There's an order to everything, these two youths were spotted by me, Wu Tongtian, first, you have no part in this!"

"Just because you saw them first, they're yours? What kind of logic is that?"

"Exactly! Two Innate Spirit Root Martial Artists, and you, Wu Tongtian, think you can monopolize them? No way!"

"Wu Tongtian, don't be too eager to show your hospitality, what if these two young people don't fancy you?"

"Haha, well said! If the two of them refuse to join your Eight Desolations Alliance, let's see if you, Wu Tongtian, lose face!"

"Alright, let's not all rush to fight over this, let's ask the two young people first!"

"That's right! Let's see which alliance they wish to join!"

"Let them decide for themselves!"

...

With their Innate Spiritual Roots, Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu became the coveted targets of all the Universe Level Experts present. In order to pull them into their alliances, these experts argued without regard for their status, almost coming to blows over them.

Innate Spirit Root Martial Artists are born with exceptional Martial Dao talent. As long as one is willing to invest enough Cultivation Resources and impart Martial Arts Techniques, they hold the potential to reach the pinnacle of the Martial Dao in this world and become top-tier experts.

Even the least exceptional Innate Spirit Root Martial Artists will not achieve little on the path of Martial Dao. Either they will become leaders or high-ranking individuals in prominent Sects and Clans, or they will become renowned and respected loose cultivator experts in their own right.

Therefore, for any Sect, Clan, or loose cultivator expert, an Innate Spirit Root Martial Artist holds tremendous allure.

If an Innate Spirit Root Martial Artist joins a Sect or Clan, they are destined to become its pillar of strength.

Should an Innate Spirit Root Martial Artist become the disciple of an Individual Cultivation Martial Artist, they have the potential to surpass their master.

Some powerful Sects and Clans dispatch a large number of disciples every year to gain experience in various regions of the True Martial Realm and also to seek out Martial Artists with Innate Spiritual Roots. Once discovered, they will do everything in their power to recruit them into their Sect or Clan.

Some mighty Individual Cultivation Martial Artists also roam the lands of the True Martial Realm year-round, searching for Innate Spirit Root Martial Artists to pass on their cultivation techniques and Martial Arts.

However, Innate Spirit Root Martial Artists are an extremely rare occurrence, hard to come by even among millions of Martial Artists.

It is exactly for this reason that the appearance of Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu as loose cultivator Martial Artists caused quite a stir among the Universe Level Experts present.

Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu, looking at the eager gazes cast their way from all around, exchanged a glance and found it amusing.

In Fang Bai's opinion, his mind harbored countless Martial Arts Techniques from his previous life, and he was confident in finding the necessary Cultivation Resources. No Sect or Clan in this world could assist him on his Martial Dao journey.

As for Xia Chenyu, with Fang Bai acting as her "Mentor" and imparting his teachings, she had no regard for the allure of any sects or individual cultivation martial artists.

Amid the boisterous clamoring of a group of Universe Level experts surrounding them and tossing out various enticing offers for allegiance, both Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu showed smiles, unmoved.

"This kid looks somehow familiar..."

At the periphery of the crowd, a tall and thin martial artist gazed at Fang Bai for a few moments, muttering to himself, and then suddenly felt a stirring within his heart. He quickly drew a beast skin parchment from his space ring and spread it out.

On the beast skin was a portrait of a person. The tall and thin martial artist looked from the portrait to Fang Bai, comparing carefully, and then his eyes suddenly brightened as he pointed at Fang Bai and shouted excitedly: "It's Fang Bai! He is Fang Bai! The Tianji Sect has offered a bounty of ten million high-quality Essence Stones for his head!"

As his voice carried, the Universe Level Martial Artists who had been surrounding Fang Bai were taken aback, while the martial artists watching from the outside burst into an uproar.

"So it's you, Fang Bai!"

One of the Universe Level experts surrounding Fang Bai, who was none other than one of the Tianji Sect Elders, Mao Zhen, had been too preoccupied competing with other Universe Level experts to recruit talent and hadn't recognized that the young martial artist in front of him was the very murderer the sect wanted to kill on sight. When he heard someone shout the name "Fang Bai" and recalled the portrait of Fang Bai he had seen in the sect, suddenly everything clicked.

"Come and meet your end!"

Mao Zhen, recalling how he had just debased himself persuading someone who turned out to be the sect's arch-enemy, was overcome with both shame and rage. With a thunderous shout, he unleashed his divine might and struck out towards Fang Bai with a palm.

At the same time, on a nearby hill where over a hundred Tianji Sect disciples were gathered, the name "Fang Bai" caused them to flash looks of ferocity. They each brought out their spiritual artifacts and sped towards the commotion.

These Tianji Sect disciples, led by Mao Zhen and including four stewards, several direct disciples, several core disciples, and nearly a hundred inner court disciples, may not have been numerous, but their collective strength ranked them among the top tier within the nearly a thousand-member Martial Artists Alliance, not to be underestimated.

The disciples of the Tianji Sect also came for the Essence Stone Mine, never expecting to encounter Fang Bai here.

The ten-million-Essence Stone bounty on Fang Bai was personally issued by the Sect Master of the Tianji Sect, Xuan Tianji. Whoever could kill Fang Bai stood a chance to claim this reward, and the disciples of the Tianji Sect were no exception.

Therefore, upon seeing Fang Bai, the hundred-plus Tianji Sect disciples became as excited as if they were injected with chicken blood, howling and swinging their spiritual artifacts as they charged down the hill towards Fang Bai.

At this moment, in the eyes of these Tianji Sect disciples, Fang Bai was fish on the chopping board, awaiting their butchery.

Meanwhile, the other Universe Level experts surrounding Fang Bai, upon hearing the name "Fang Bai," were merely stunned for a moment before regaining their composure.

"Mao Zhen, hold your hand!"

"This place is not your Tianji Sect's territory!"

"If you want to kill Fang Bai, first see if we from the 'Eight Desolations Alliance' agree!"

"Fang Bai, have no fear, if you are willing to join the 'United Heart Alliance', we will protect you!"

"We from the 'Benevolence and Righteousness Alliance' are willing to provide you with shelter!"

As Mao Zhen made his move against Fang Bai, five Universe Level experts intervened to stop him, among them was Wu Tongtian, the master in the purple robe and the impromptu leader of the "Eight Desolations Alliance".

For Wu Tongtian and the other four Universe Level Martial Artists, the value of Fang Bai, a Martial Dao genius, far exceeded ten million high-quality Essence Stones. Their intervention was aimed at gaining the favor of Fang Bai and the young female martial artist with the Innate Spiritual Root beside him, in hopes of improving the chance to recruit them into their alliance.

As for the other Universe Level experts, they chose not to support either side, stepping back to watch from a distance.

Chapter 1286: Provoke Me, Fang Bai, And You'll Pay!

"Boom..."

The earth trembled, and dust soared into the air.

The profound True Yuan unleashed by Mao Zhen with a single palm strike, before it even hit Fang Bai, was intercepted by the True Yuan from five other martial artists of equal high rank.

The True Yuan attacks issued by the six high-ranking Universe Level experts almost at the same time, clashing from different directions, created shock waves like raging waves spreading outwards. Within a dozen yards around the epicenter, all grass, wood, and stones were swept clean, leaving a large flat open space with Fang Bai at the center.

The thunderous noise that erupted when the True Yuan collided caused hundreds of martial artists around to feel slightly dizzy, with temporary deafness in their ears.

The destructive power of the True Yuan shock wave was incredibly shocking; the dozens of martial artists closest to the impact were blasted backward like leaves in the wind, spewing mist of blood in mid-air, evidently severely injured.

For a few more severely affected, their internal organs ruptured from the shock, and they had already passed out while still hurling through the air.

Even the Universe Level experts who stood by Fang Bai's side, merely watching, had to retreat dozens of yards away to avoid the brunt of the shock wave's force.

With Wu Tongtian and other five Universe Level experts stepping in to protect Fang Bai, the aggressive move from Tianji Sect's elder Mao Zhen was easily neutralized, leaving Fang Bai unscathed.

In fact, from the moment Mao Zhen made his move against Fang Bai, to the moment Wu Tongtian and the other five Universe Level experts intervened, Fang Bai stood still without moving, his facial expression remaining unchanged.

His composure made those observing from a distance admire him and feel inferior.

Even Xia Chenyu, who stood beside Fang Bai and only possessed an early Cosmic Level cultivation, only turned slightly pale, yet her demeanor remained calm.

However, some attentive martial artists watching from afar noticed that the moment Mao Zhen launched his attack at Fang Bai, Xia Chenyu immediately drew close to Fang Bai, tightly grasping his left hand until Mao Zhen's assault was repelled, then she let go of his palm.

From this, those attentive martial artists deduced that the relationship between these two young martial artists was certainly very intimate, for them to subconsciously make such affectionate gestures in a dangerous situation.

"Fang Bai is the sworn enemy of our Tianji Sect! By protecting him, you are making an enemy of Tianji Sect!"

Mao Zhen's attempt to kill Fang Bai with a single palm strike failed, leaving him with an extremely ugly expression. He glared at Wu Tongtian and other five Universe Level experts who protected Fang Bai and said with resentment.

At this moment, over a hundred Tianji Sect disciples had rushed from a nearby hill to behind Mao Zhen, each with a face filled with indignation and an aura of violence, waiting only for Mao Zhen's command to swarm and attack Wu Tongtian and the other five Universe Level experts.

Wu Tongtian and the other five, each being the leaders of their respective alliances, seeing the Tianji Sect disciples wanting to bully by numbers, showed no weakness. After a call to action, nearly a thousand martial artists quickly gathered behind them.

As such, a standoff occurred between Tianji Sect and the five major martial artist alliances, with thousands of martial artists on both sides holding Spiritual Artifacts, their weapons drawn and bows taut, on the verge of erupting into conflict.

"So what if it's Tianji Sect? I've decided to take care of Fang Bai's affairs! If Tianji Sect wants to move against him, ask me if I agree first!"

Wu Tongtian looked coldly at Mao Zhen and the Tianji Sect disciples behind him, speaking with disdain.

"That's right! Others might fear Tianji Sect, but we surely don't!"

"A contest of numbers? Who's afraid of whom!"

"Heh, I'm a loose cultivator, once this affair here is settled, I'll be out of reach, let Tianji Sect chase me around the world if they dare!"

"I, the United Heart Alliance, will ensure Fang Bai's safety!"

"If you want Fang Bai, then we of the Benevolence and Righteousness Alliance will take the girl beside him!"

"Let's not rush to divide people yet. Who knows, maybe they both are willing to join our 'Benevolence and Righteousness Alliance'?"

...

Wu Tongtian and the other four initially united in their shared enmity against the Tianji Sect, and then started to quarrel over the allegiance of Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu.

On the other side, Mao Zhen felt ignored, his eyes blazing with anger, grinding his teeth with a 'click click' sound.

Mao Zhen had thought that by invoking the name of the Tianji Sect, he could intimidate Wu Tongtian and the others into retreat, but it turned out they were fearless and adamantly determined to protect Fang Bai.

However, Mao Zhen also understood that although the Tianji Sect was a first-class major sect with disciples all over the True Martial Realm, it would not be easy to hunt down loose cultivators like Wu Tongtian, who possess high-rank Universe Level cultivation.

What's more, Mao Zhen was wary that if the Tianji Sect issued a kill order against Wu Tongtian and others, forcing them into a corner, they could lash out in desperation and potentially attack Tianji Sect disciples all over, causing the sect to suffer unbearable casualties.

While Individual Cultivation Martial Artists might not have the backing of a sect's power, they can still be formidable upon reaching a certain strength level. Therefore, even the mightiest of sects are reluctant to thoroughly provoke a powerful loose cultivator, to avoid unnecessary trouble for the sect.

Wu Tongtian and his group were confident about this, and that's why they dared to openly challenge the Tianji Sect.

Fang Bai stood with his arms crossed, watching Mao Zhen leading the Tianji Sect disciples in a confrontation with Wu Tongtian and the Martial Artists Alliance, wearing a smile on his face, appearing completely at ease as if the matter did not concern him at all.

In Fang Bai's eyes, Mao Zhen and the other Tianji Sect disciples were no different from ants and posed no threat whatsoever.

And as for why Wu Tongtian and the others were protecting Fang Bai, his intentions were clear as day to Fang Bai.

Nevertheless, considering that Wu Tongtian and his group held no ill will towards him, Fang Bai decided that when he employs his own methods to deal with these Martial Artists Alliance members in secret, he would spare Wu Tongtian and his group.

As for the Tianji Sect disciples, they would not be so lucky.

In particular, Mao Zhen, an Elder of the Tianji Sect, had already made it onto Fang Bai's list of those marked for death.

Fang Bai had already killed several Tianji Sect disciples, including a high-ranking Steward, turning both sides into mortal enemies locked in a life-or-death struggle; he did not mind taking out Mao Zhen too, to send a stronger shockwave through the Tianji Sect.

Fang Bai wanted the Tianji Sect to understand: What does it matter if you're a first-rate sect? So what if you have many powerful members? Cross me, Fang Bai, and you'll regret it!

If Fang Bai were willing, it wouldn't be impossible for him to annihilate the entire Tianji Sect by himself.

"Let's go!"

Seeing that Mao Zhen dared not continue attacking him, and with Wu Tongtian and others locked in endless dispute, Fang Bai felt it was getting boring, turned his head to Xia Chenyu and said something, and then the two of them stepped forward and continued on their way.

"Fang Bai, where are you going? We haven't finished our discussion yet..."

Upon seeing Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu about to leave, Wu Tongtian, no longer quarreling with others, hastily questioned Fang Bai.

He was just glaring at Mao Zhen and others with fierce eyes, but now his face was full of smiles, completely different from before.

The other Universe Level Experts, seeing this, also gathered around once more, persisting in persuading Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu, completely ignoring Mao Zhen and the other Tianji Sect disciples.

Mao Zhen took a deep breath, forced himself to calm down, turned his head, and said something to the few Tianji Sect disciples behind him using the Thread Condensation Sound Transmission Technique.

The Tianji Sect disciples caught his drift and quickly left the scene, soon disappearing into the twilight in the distance.

Chapter 1287: Young and Reckless?

Mao Zhen's Thread Condensation Sound Transmission Technique was undetectable to other martial artists, but Fang Bai's Divine Sense was not deceived.

Fang Bai's Divine Sense, like the wind and flowing water, pervaded everywhere, easily intercepting Mao Zhen's sound transmission and learning of his intentions.

The Tianji Sect disciples that Mao Zhen had sent away were either gathering nearby sect members or hiding around, ready to assassinate Fang Bai the moment he was out of Wu Tongtian and the others' sight.

In Mao Zhen's eyes, Fang Bai, who possessed an Innate Spiritual Root, would have boundless achievements in Martial Dao in the future. Since the Tianji Sect had already become mortal enemies with him, Fang Bai's existence was a significant hidden threat. If they did not eliminate him early, the troubles would be endless.

Originally, Mao Zhen thought that with his own strength, killing Fang Bai would be easy, but Wu Tongtian and the others' interference thwarted his plans, leaving him furious and helpless.

What Mao Zhen was most concerned about was that once Fang Bai joined Wu Tongtian and the others in the Martial Artists Alliance and received their protection, it would be much more difficult for him to kill Fang Bai.

Seeing Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu leaving and Wu Tongtian and others catching up to continue persuading them, Mao Zhen stood still with clenched fists, his face grim as he watched the situation there, growing involuntarily nervous.

Although Mao Zhen did not want to see Fang Bai join any Martial Artists Alliance, he knew it was somewhat unlikely, thinking that both Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu were loose cultivators who presumably came for the Essence Stone Vein. If they didn't join one of the alliances, it would be somewhat foolish.

Even for a loose cultivator like Wu Tongtian, a high-rank Universe Level powerhouse, not joining any Martial Artists Alliance and choosing to fight alone would mean having no chance of gaining any benefits from the scramble for the Essence Stone Vein—and could even result in being jointly killed by martial artists from other alliances.

"That kid... he actually refused Wu Tongtian and their recruitment? How is that possible?"

Mao Zhen, who had been closely watching Fang Bai's movements, suddenly heard Fang Bai say to Wu Tongtian and others, "I'm not interested." Then he saw Fang Bai take the hand of his female companion and walk past Wu Tongtian and the rest, leaving Mao Zhen dumbfounded, followed by a surge of excitement.

Mao Zhen had never expected Fang Bai to actually refuse Wu Tongtian and the others' recruitment, and moreover so decisively, as if he did not care at all about potentially angering them.

"Has the kid gone mad? Hehe, good that he refused! Without anyone to protect him, even nine lives wouldn't be enough for him!"

Mao Zhen's fists tightened again, and he waited until Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu had walked far enough before slowly following them.

Mao Zhen felt that if he tried to attack Fang Bai himself again at this moment, Wu Tongtian and others might not continue to protect Fang Bai, but just in case, he decided to wait until they were out of sight before making a move.

"He actually refused our invitation?"

"Such arrogance indeed!"

"Is this the folly of youth?"

"That old geezer Mao Zhen is following them, that kid might be in mortal danger!"

"It would be such a pity for two such young possessors of Innate Spiritual Roots to fall into Mao Zhen's hands!"

"Ungrateful, not worrying about his life or death anymore!"

...

Fang Bai's refusal had indeed surprised Wu Tongtian and the others, leading to expressions of regret, disappointment, and annoyance.

Because of Fang Bai's refusal, out of the five Martial Artists Alliances that initially wanted to protect and recruit Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu, four decided to no longer concern themselves with Fang Bai's fate.

Only Wu Tongtian, the Alliance Leader of the Eight Desolations Alliance, truly cherished talent and couldn't bear to give up just like that. He figured that if he helped Fang Bai withstand Mao Zhen once again, with Fang Bai's gratitude, there was still the possibility of him and his female companion joining the Eight Desolations Alliance.

"You few, follow me!"

Wu Tongtian called upon four strong members of the Eight Desolations Alliance with slightly lesser strength than himself to tail Mao Zhen.

With Wu Tongtian's strength, even if he couldn't defeat Mao Zhen, he had more than enough ability to prevent him from injuring Fang Bai. The reason he brought along four strong members of the alliance was just to be safe.

The four strong members that Wu Tongtian brought along, two were Universe Level middle-rank warriors, and two were Universe Level lower-rank warriors. With their combined efforts, even if Mao Zhen had other support, they would not be afraid.

Mao Zhen secretly tracking his own position, with Wu Tongtian bringing people to follow Mao Zhen; all of these scenes were within the envelopment of Fang Bai's Divine Sense.

Towards Mao Zhen, Fang Bai already harbored murderous intent and wouldn't let him go.

As for Wu Tongtian, Fang Bai could see that he was sincerely trying to help him.

Fang Bai was never stingy toward those who were kind-hearted and friendly to him; he almost instantly decided to give Wu Tongtian an opportunity in this struggle for the Essence Stone Vein, as a way to let good deeds be rewarded.

The location where tens of thousands of Martial Artists Alliance had gathered, and the entrance of the Essence Stone Mine guarded by nearly ten thousand elite disciples of Golden Crow Manor, was separated by several miles of wilderness, serving as a buffer zone between the stand-off parties.

Once a warrior from one side entered this buffer zone, the other side would also send a warrior to intercept.

When Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu came to the edge of the buffer zone belonging to the Martial Artists Alliance side, Mao Zhen launched another attack on Fang Bai, but as expected, he was again blocked by Wu Tongtian.

Mao Zhen, in a fit of rage, engaged in a great battle with Wu Tongtian. However, as their strengths were matched, they couldn't determine a victor in a short time.

"Fang Bai, what are you trying to do? Those are all disciples of Golden Crow Manor on the other side; don't go over there! Otherwise, be careful with your life!"

Seeing that Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu did not stop but continued to walk forward, entering the buffer zone, Wu Tongtian thought they intended to make a move on the Essence Stone Mine entrance guarded by the elite disciples of Golden Crow Manor. He urgently warned them loudly.

During this period of confrontation at the edge of the Eternal Death Zone, there had been several conflicts between the two sides' warriors, with casualties on both sides. Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu's rash crossing would surely lead to sniper attacks by the Golden Crow Manor disciples, and it was likely that Fang Bai and his company would not escape unscathed.

Wu Tongtian didn't want to see Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu fall victim to a senseless death. He intended to pull them back but was tightly entangled by Mao Zhen.

"If I could use the hands of the Golden Crow Manor disciples to get rid of Fang Bai, that would be perfect! Haha, Wu Tongtian, you want to recruit Fang Bai and his partner, but I'm afraid your wishful thinking is going to fail!"

Mao Zhen laughed triumphantly, as the gloominess that clouded his heart just moments before was now swept away, feeling indescribably refreshed.

As he spoke, his attacks became fiercer, leaving Wu Tongtian no room to watch over Fang Bai and his partner, requiring his full attention to respond.

The numerous warriors of the Martial Artists Alliance watched, wide-eyed, as Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu ventured deeper into the buffer zone; some sighed in pity, others indulged in schadenfreude, but no one dared to risk starting a fight with the Golden Crow Manor disciples by rushing over to stop them.

"If those people knew we were in cahoots with Golden Crow Manor, I wonder what their feelings would be!"

Fang Bai said with a chuckle to Xia Chenyu as they walked.

Chapter 1288: Utter Defeat

When Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu crossed the middle line of the buffer zone, several disciples from Golden Crow Manor shot towards them like lightning, with Spiritual Artifacts tightly clenched in their hands, their fighting spirit surging like they were facing a formidable enemy.

The middle line of the buffer zone was regarded by the disciples of Golden Crow Manor as an inviolable red line; anyone crossing it would be seen by the disciples as an act of aggression, and they would immediately launch a counterattack.

In recent days, nearly every day someone from the Martial Artists Alliance would enter the buffer zone, roaming near the middle line, looking for opportunities to attack the defensive line guarded by the disciples of Golden Crow Manor, leading to multiple conflicts between the two sides.

However, the scale of the conflicts was relatively small, mostly involving groups of three to five or a dozen people in skirmishes, and no matter who won or lost, it didn't change the current situation.

"Senior Brother Huang, it's me!"

Upon seeing the several disciples from Golden Crow Manor in front of her, Xia Chenyu showed a smile and crisply addressed the middle-aged martial artist in the center.

The middle-aged martial artist was around fifty years old with a high-rank Cosmic Level cultivation and was a core disciple of Golden Crow Manor, also one of the elite disciples assigned to guard the entrance to the Essence Stone Vein.

"Junior Sister Xia? Why is it you? Weren't you out training with Steward Sun, Steward Li, and the others? When did you come back?"

The middle-aged martial artist referred to as "Senior Brother Huang" was taken aback upon seeing Xia Chenyu, but quickly relaxed and strode towards Xia Chenyu, asking with delight.

The other male disciples of Golden Crow Manor followed behind Senior Brother Huang, crowding around Xia Chenyu, jostling to exchange pleasantries with her, all smiles, their enthusiasm boundless.

Among the younger generation of female disciples in Golden Crow Manor, Xia Chenyu, possessing an Innate Spiritual Root and being of exceptional beauty, a graceful and peerless demeanor, and a charm that touched hearts with every frown and smile, was undoubtedly the most outstanding one.

The vast majority of Golden Crow Manor's male disciples had a favorable impression of this freshly inducted junior sister from the External Courtyard, and not a few among them aspired to become her martial companion.

Therefore, as long as Xia Chenyu was in Golden Crow Manor, there would be male disciples seeking various excuses to show great attentiveness, hoping to gain favor with the junior sister.

Among Xia Chenyu's many admirers was also the son of Manor Master Huang Canghai, Huang Yuanqi.

Huang Yuanqi, son of the current Manor Master and first among the direct disciples, did not possess an Innate Spiritual Root. However, his talent was also very high. Coupled with being not much older than Xia Chenyu and having a compatible appearance, many martial artists of Golden Crow Manor speculated that Huang Yuanqi would eventually win Xia Chenyu's heart.

Even Huang Canghai himself felt it would be fitting for his son and Xia Chenyu to become martial companions, and he had even met with Xia Chenyu alone, intending to play matchmaker for the two.

But what no disciple of Golden Crow Manor had anticipated was that Xia Chenyu would firmly reject the Manor Master's matchmaking, declaring that she already had a martial companion and afterwards kept her distance from Huang Yuanqi with respect.

After this news spread, many Golden Crow Manor disciples lamented and sighed.

Huang Yuanqi genuinely liked Xia Chenyu and was greatly shaken by her rejection, even becoming despondent for a period.

However, later on, Huang Yuanqi heard from several high-ranking members of the manor in private that Xia Chenyu, still having an untouched Primordial Yin Physique and maintaining a Perfect Body, and her so-called "martial companion" had never appeared, leading Huang Yuanqi to conclude that Xia Chenyu's claim of having a martial companion was nothing but a lie!

As to why Xia Chenyu lied, Huang Yuanqi didn't bother to delve into it. He gathered his spirits again, shamelessly and perseveringly resumed his amorous pursuit of Xia Chenyu.

Huang Yuanqi was not like some of the unprincipled male martial artists in the True Martial Realm who, when they wanted to become Martial Dao companions with a female martial artist they fancied, would shamelessly pester them, disregard their status, and stop at nothing, even resorting to violence and threats to forcefully possess them.

Huang Yuanqi simply visited Xia Chenyu's cultivation place every now and then, bringing some resources necessary for her cultivation, and then after expressing his care and concern, he would use discussing martial arts techniques as an excuse to stay longer and chat with Xia Chenyu.

Xia Chenyu was not an ignorant woman. On the contrary, she had seen her fair share of this in the Secular World and knew exactly how to deal with it, which was to never give Huang Yuanqi any chance to get close.

After every rejection by Xia Chenyu when Huang Yuanqi expressed his love, he would silently recite "True sincerity can even move metal and stone" in his heart, firmly believing that one day he would win over Junior Sister Xia.

Previously, Huang Yuanqi went on an adventure seeking rare cultivation resources to please Xia Chenyu, but unexpectedly suffered severe injuries and returned to the Golden Crow Manor in a coma.

Feeling somewhat guilty about Huang Yuanqi's injury, Xia Chenyu volunteered to follow Steward Sun and Steward Li to look for a Nine Revolutions Rebirth Pill, hoping to heal Huang Yuanqi's wounds. Little did she expect to encounter Fang Bai in the Forest of Myriad Medicines, a surprise that delighted her immensely.

Considering Fang Bai's strength matched that of Manor Master Huang Canghai and his confidence in healing Huang Yuanqi, Xia Chenyu felt honored and extremely proud. More than once, she wanted to loudly tell the higher-ups of the Golden Crow Manor: This is my Martial Dao companion!

The Senior Brother Huang before Xia Chenyu was named Huang He, a cousin of Huang Yuanqi, who was slightly less talented than the two and currently a core disciple of the Golden Crow Manor.

"Mm, Senior Brother Huang, I just got back not long ago... This is Fang Bai..."

Xia Chenyu briefly mentioned her adventure with the two stewards and introduced Fang Bai, highlighting how Fang Bai had saved the lives of all members of the Golden Crow Manor team during their adventure and had come to the Golden Crow Manor to treat Huang Yuanqi.

The more Huang He listened, the more shocked he became, and his gaze toward Fang Bai gradually filled with respect and awe.

Despite Fang Bai's youth, in Xia Chenyu's narration, he was a formidable figure on par with Manor Master Huang Canghai. Huang He dared not disrespect nor cease to fear him.

Huang He understood Xia Chenyu's character; she would not and could not deceive him about such matters.

And Huang He himself had been discreetly probing Fang Bai, concluding that this young martial artist was like the unfathomable ocean depths, elusive and profound.

Especially that composed and leisurely demeanor of Fang Bai's, Huang He had also sensed a similar air from Manor Master Huang Canghai.

"This junior, core disciple Huang He of Golden Crow Manor, pays respects to Senior Fang..."

Huang He hurriedly clasped his hands together, bowing deeply to Fang Bai.

His expression had initially carried some of the arrogance characteristic of a core disciple of Golden Crow Manor, but at this moment, it was completely gone.

As he paid his respects to Fang Bai, Huang He's mind worked swiftly, trying to discern what exactly the relationship was between this Senior Fang and Junior Sister Xia.

Seeing the two of them standing shoulder to shoulder, like a luminescent pearl beside jade, complementing each other, and occasionally exchanging glances that betrayed an intimacy far beyond mere friends, a sudden realization dawned on Huang He, and he couldn't help but mourn for his cousin Huang Yuanqi who was still in a coma.

With such an exceptional talent posing an overwhelming advantage, his cousin competing for Junior Sister Xia would undoubtedly end in total defeat.

Chapter 1289: Worrying Heart

Huang He was thinking something in his heart that Fang Bai naturally didn't know, nor did he bother to guess.

Though Huang He possessed high-rank Cosmic Level strength and was a standout among the younger generation of disciples at Golden Crow Manor, in Fang Bai's eyes, he was nothing more than an insignificant stranger.

Therefore, when Huang He showed his respect with a humble bow, Fang Bai merely nodded, too lazy to even speak.

Huang He was a man of great pride, yet also a smart one. Despite Fang Bai's lukewarm attitude towards him, he dared not show any displeasure.

Huang He knew that Fang Bai, with his remarkable power at such a young age, had the right to be proud. If it were himself, he would probably act even more arrogantly than Fang Bai.

As a Core Disciple of Golden Crow Manor, when Huang He encountered martial artists weaker than himself, he would not even give them a second glance.

Now that Fang Bai merely nodded at him, he already felt somewhat flattered and honored, let alone dare to show any dissatisfaction.

The other Golden Crow Manor disciples who walked over with Huang He also heard the words Xia Chenyu had said. They looked at Fang Bai with fear and awe, even more nervous and restrained than Huang He, and also uneasy.

These Golden Crow Manor disciples were nearly all admirers of Xia Chenyu. They were thrilled to see her just moments before, clamoring to come forward to exchange pleasantries and curry favor.

However, when they faintly guessed the relationship between Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu, despite feeling a shared sentiment, they began to worry and fear.

Xia Chenyu had previously mentioned she had a Martial Dao partner, which the disciples of Golden Crow Manor did not believe. But now, it seemed very likely that this Senior Fang in front of them was the Martial Dao partner Xia Chenyu had mentioned.

Senior Fang, though young, was a powerful person on par with their own Manor Master. For them to have so eagerly sought Xia Chenyu's favor in his presence was utterly foolish. If Senior Fang had a smaller measure of tolerance or a more narrow mind, he might have taken action on the spot to severely chastise them.

However, as it seemed now, Senior Fang didn't look angry at all, which secretly relieved the several disciples of Golden Crow Manor. They decided to inform their fellow disciples back at the manor who

were eyeing Xia Chenyu, warning them to stop pursuing Junior Sister Xia in order to avoid bringing disaster upon themselves.

Xia Chenyu, naturally intelligent, saw the changing expressions and the awe mixed with fear in the eyes of Huang He and the others, and she roughly guessed the reason, which made her inwardly laugh.

"Senior Brother Huang, let's go check over there!"

After exchanging pleasantries with Huang He and the others for a while, Xia Chenyu raised her hand and pointed towards the entrance of the Essence Stone Vein in the distance.

Though they were still several kilometers away from the entrance to the Essence Stone Vein, the strong Fire Primordial Qi emanating from the entrance made Xia Chenyu, who had an Innate Fire Spirit Root, feel unspeakably comfortable throughout her body.

If one could pass through that entrance and enter the Essence Stone Mine below ground, to be enveloped in even denser Fire Primordial Qi, it's imaginable how much it would benefit a Fire System Martial Artist like Xia Chenyu.

Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu had come to the Eternal Death Zone for this very Essence Stone Mine.

According to the agreement between Fang Bai and the senior ranks of Golden Crow Manor, after jointly expelling the tens of thousands of martial artists from the Martial Artists Alliance, Fang Bai would own half of the entire Essence Stone Vein.

And Fang Bai had told Xia Chenyu that his cultivation resources were also hers, as there were no distinctions between them. Therefore, Xia Chenyu considered herself half-owner of this Essence Stone Vein and came with Fang Bai to inspect it.

"This... Junior Sister Xia, the Manor Master has ordered that no disciples other than the senior ranks of the manor may enter the underground Essence Stone Mine without his permission," Huang He said, turning his head in the direction Xia Chenyu was pointing, his face showing difficulty.

Xia Chenyu gave a charming smile, her slender hand flipping over to reveal a jade token in her palm.

"Manor Master's token is here. Senior Brother Huang, may we pass?"

Xia Chenyu extended the jade token towards Huang He, asking in a gentle voice.

Engraved on the Manor Master's token was a Golden Crow bathing in flames, its wings outstretched as if it was about to burst through the walls and fly off, emanating a powerful aura so strong it could incite panic and palpitations, imposing an invisible pressure.

Huang He, as a Core Disciple of Golden Crow Manor, was naturally familiar with the Manor Master's token, and recognized its authenticity with just one glance.

Whoever holds the Manor Master's token is as if the Manor Master himself is present; all disciples of the Golden Crow Manor, upon seeing this token, must obey the holder's commands without objection.

However, the Manor Master's token has always been under the control of successive Manor Masters and was never given away lightly. It was unexpected to find it in Xia Chenyu's hands, which showed that not only did the Manor Master greatly trust her, but he also held her in high regard. Otherwise, he would never entrust such an important token to her for use.

"With the Manor Master's token here, we naturally dare not hinder Junior Sister Xia. Please, Junior Sister Xia,"

Huang He and several Golden Crow Manor disciples solemnly and respectfully bowed to the Manor Master's token in Xia Chenyu's hand, and then stepped aside.

Xia Chenyu exchanged a smile with Fang Bai and stepped forward.

"Junior Sister Xia, Senior Fang is not a disciple of our Golden Crow Manor, allowing him near the entrance to the Essence Stone Vein may be inadvisable..."

Huang He saw that Fang Bai was also approaching the Essence Stone Vein entrance with Xia Chenyu and frowned, ready to intervene.

Although Huang He was wary of Fang Bai's formidable strength, the interests of the Manor outweighed everything else. While he could let Xia Chenyu pass, Fang Bai was an outsider after all, and with his overwhelming power, letting him near the Essence Stone Vein entrance could lead to complications should any unexpected events arise.

Despite Fang Bai having a Cultivation Level that allowed him to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the Manor Master, and having been a guest at the Golden Crow Manor in the past, Huang He could trust Xia Chenyu holding the Manor Master's token, but he couldn't fully trust Fang Bai, the outsider.

"Before we came here, the higher-ups of the Manor had already agreed with Senior Fang to jointly drive away the hundreds of thousands of Martial Artists coveting the Essence Stone Vein. Afterwards, half of this Essence Stone Vein will belong to Senior Fang. If Senior Brother Huang does not believe it, you can ask Elder Shi Cheng and Elder Lei Hu when they arrive later,"

Without looking back, Xia Chenyu left these words for Huang He and continued forward with Fang Bai without halting her steps.

The two weren't in a hurry, strolling side by side leisurely ahead, occasionally pointing here and there, discussing the peculiarities of the Eternal Death Zone.

"...Jointly driving away hundreds of thousands of Martial Artists... half of the Essence Stone Vein given to Senior Fang..."

Huang He watched their retreating figures, Xia Chenyu's words echoing repeatedly in his ears, standing dumbfounded on the spot, speechless for a long time.

"Senior Brother Huang... Senior Brother Huang... What should we do?"

Seeing Huang He in a daze, several Golden Crow Manor disciples couldn't help but ask out loud.

Huang He came back to his senses, twisted his beard thoughtfully, and then said, "Let's go back too. Let us see what Elder Yu and the other Stewards have to say."

Chapter 1290: Friend or Martial Dao Companion?

"What's the deal with Fang Bai and his martial companion?"

"They seem to be quite familiar with the disciples of Golden Crow Manor!"

"Could they also be disciples of Golden Crow Manor?"

"Impossible! Although Golden Crow Manor is a first-rate sect, it can't cultivate such outstanding disciples!"

"But why aren't the disciples of Golden Crow Manor stopping them?"

"Who knows! It's really strange!"

...

On the side of the Martial Artists Alliance, many people were paying attention to Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu. Seeing that the two passed the middle line of the buffer zone without being attacked by the Golden Crow Manor disciples, who instead made way and accompanied them towards the entrance of the Essence Stone Vein, everyone felt extremely curious and discussed fervently.

The battling elders of Tianji Sect, Mao Zhen, and the leader of the Eight Desolations Alliance, Wu Tongtian, at the edge of the buffer zone, also noticed the situation. As the two collided with fists and palms, they used the rebounding force to retreat dozens of feet from each other, then, as if by a tacit agreement, they did not continue to attack one another.

"What are those two kids up to? Could they really have some relation to Golden Crow Manor?"

Wu Tongtian watched the retreating figures of Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu, his brows deeply furrowed, and he muttered to himself thoughtfully.

The Martial Artists Alliance and Golden Crow Manor were in a hostile relationship, and in recent days, the martial artists from both sides were at daggers drawn. Any encounter in the buffer zone was bound to lead to a conflict.

However, at this moment, Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu effortlessly entered the area controlled by the Golden Crow Manor disciples, who did not stop them at all. This was enough to prove that there was an extraordinary relationship between them.

Many martial artists from the side of the Martial Artists Alliance vaguely guessed that even if Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu were not disciples of Golden Crow Manor, they definitely had an extremely close relationship with them.

Thinking of how he was the most active in trying to win over Fang Bai just a while ago, even not hesitating to fallout with Tianji Sect over it, Wu Tongtian couldn't help but feel as if he had slapped his own face, accompanied by a bit of bitter laughter.

Huang He and a few other Golden Crow Manor disciples followed Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu to a tall fortress built at the entrance of the Essence Stone Vein, where they met Elder Yu of Golden Crow Manor and two stewards, Zhang and Yang.

Elder Yu, named Yu Huang, was a crane-haired and youthful-looking fat old man over a hundred years old, possessing a high-rank Universe Level cultivation.

The two stewards were named Zhang Zhijing and Yang Yue, both over seventy years old and a couple in the martial path, holding middle-rank Universe Level cultivations.

Originally, the guardians of the Essence Stone Vein entrance from the higher ranks of Golden Crow Manor included the Great Elders Shi Cheng and Yu Huang, as well as Zhang Zhijing, Yang Yue, and two other stewards. Previously, Shi Cheng had returned to Golden Crow Manor with two stewards to call for reinforcements, leaving Elder Yu and stewards Zhang and Yang to confront the Martial Artists Alliance.

The six high-rank officials guarding the Essence Stone Vein had left half of their number, and when the Martial Artists Alliance got wind of this, they saw it as a rare opportunity. They launched an offensive, hoping to break through the defense of the Golden Crow Manor disciples and seize the entrance to the underground Essence Stone Mine.

But who would have thought that Elder Yu Huang, who stayed behind, knew some Beast Taming Art? From some mountain rocks and trees near the edge of Eternal Death Zone, he summoned a large number of fire-based Spirit Beasts such as Red Refining Snakes, Fire-tailed Scorpions, and Blazing Eagles to thwart the attack from the Martial Artists Alliance.

In terms of numbers, although the Martial Artists Alliance held an absolute advantage, the Spirit Beasts summoned by Yu Huang were also not few. Even though the strength of those Spirit Beasts was only comparable to human Cosmic Level realm, they still caused great trouble to the Martial Artists Alliance, who initiated the attack.

In the chaos of battle, while a few martial artists managed to reach the entrance of the Essence Stone Vein, they were blocked by the fortress built by the Golden Crow Manor disciples.

Originally, that fortress had been hurriedly built by the Golden Crow Manor disciples, only five or six zhang (1 zhang = 3.33 meters) tall. This height, most of the rushing martial artists could easily leap over.

However, unbeknownst to them, one of the four Great Elders of Golden Crow Manor, Feng Donglai, was knowledgeable in Formation arts. He had set up a defensive Formation at the start of the fortress construction. Although the rank of this Formation was low, it effectively made up for the defensive shortcomings left by the departure of Shi Cheng and others, preventing the martial artists who reached the fortress from breaking through in a short period of time.

It was precisely because of this that Shi Cheng and others dared to leave confidently, returning to Golden Crow Manor to seek reinforcements.

When Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu crossed the middle line of the buffer zone, Elder Yu Huang of Golden Crow Manor and the two stewards Zhang and Yang, who stood atop the fort, all saw them and thought it was someone from the Martial Artists Alliance coming to probe and harass again, so they assigned Huang He and several other Golden Crow Manor disciples to intercept them.

"Is that... Chenyu?"

Seeing that Huang He and the others not only did not intercept the two from the Martial Artists Alliance, but actually brought them back with them, Yu Huang and the others felt puzzled, until Huang He and the group approached, and they could clearly see Xia Chenyu's face.

Xia Chenyu was the most talented among the younger generation of disciples in Golden Crow Manor, and the manor's higher-ups, including Manor Master Huang Canghai, often summoned her to impart martial arts techniques, so Yu Huang and the others all recognized her.

"That's right, it is Chenyu!"

"Hmm, she must have returned from her experience. This means that Steward Sun and Steward Li must have come back with her. That's wonderful, our Golden Crow Manor has gained two more powerful allies!"

"But why would Chenyu come here? Didn't the manor's disciples tell her about the dangers of this place?"

"She even came from the side of the Martial Artists Alliance... She's really brave! If someone discovered her identity, could she manage to survive?"

"Who is that young man with Chenyu?"

"They seem rather close... Chenyu mentioned before that she already had a martial dao partner, could it be... that young man is the one?"

"Maybe just a friend?"

"Let's wait and see..."

...

Elder Yu Huang and the others, standing on the fort, were quietly discussing Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu as they walked over at a leisurely pace.

Fang Bai and the others quickly arrived under the fort, and Huang He took a few steps forward, cupped his hands in respect towards Yu Huang on top of the fort, and loudly said: "Elder Yu, Junior Sister Xia has arrived. Junior Sister Xia carries the Manor Master's token, saying she wants to visit the Essence Stone Vein. I have already inspected the token and confirmed its authenticity."

Elder Yu Huang raised an eyebrow, exchanged a glance with the two stewards Zhang and Yang beside him, and then extended a hand towards Xia Chenyu, saying: "Chenyu, may I have a look at the Manor Master's token? It's not that we don't trust you, but recently, the Martial Artists Alliance has been coveting this Essence Stone Vein, resorting to all kinds of trickery, and we cannot afford any negligence!"

Xia Chenyu naturally did not mind, and with a slight smile, she flicked her wrist, sending the Manor Master's token flying towards Yu Huang like a bolt of lightning.

"That's right, it is the Manor Master's token!"

After catching the Manor Master's token, Yu Huang carefully inspected it, then passed it to the two stewards Zhang and Yang to check as well; all three of them confirmed it beyond doubt.

"Chenyu, this person beside you is..."

Although Yu Huang trusted Xia Chenyu, he was prepared to question Fang Bai, who accompanied Xia Chenyu, very thoroughly.

After all, the Essence Stone Vein has a strong attraction for any Sect, prominent clans, or individual cultivation martial artists, and even if Fang Bai was Xia Chenyu's martial dao partner, he could still possibly betray Xia Chenyu for the sake of the Essence Stone Vein and become an enemy of Golden Crow Manor.

Before figuring out Fang Bai's identity and origin, Yu Huang was not prepared to let Fang Bai enter the fort.

