

Doctor 1341

Chapter 1341: Yuezhi Inn

Money can make even ghosts push millstones.

For martial artists, what truly motivates them to "push millstones" are cultivation resources.

In Fang Bai's mind, since the martial artists in Spirit Lake City hailed from various regions of the True Martial Realm, there might be someone among them with insider information about the Huaxia Sect's existence.

When Fang Bai offered superior-grade elixirs as a reward, he specifically emphasized that they were of the highest quality. This created an enormous uproar among the martial artists in Spirit Lake City once the reward was announced.

Superior-grade elixirs are the "standard" cultivation resource for Innate Realm experts at the peak of perfection. They are rare and precious treasures highly sought after by regular Innate Realm experts and dreamlike cultivation treasures for those below the Innate Realm.

Thus, within just half a day of Fang Bai issuing the reward, thousands of martial artists had flooded into the inn where Fang Bai, Li Chenzhou, and Xia Chenyu were staying to verify the authenticity of the proclamation.

After Li Chenzhou unleashed the aura of an Innate Realm expert who had achieved perfection, no martial artist doubted the truth of the matter anymore. They scattered from the inn and employed their own methods, rushing to gather any information about the Huaxia Sect, hoping to claim the reward before anyone else.

"If we want to find the Huaxia Sect quickly in this vast Shenwu Continent, this is without a doubt the most effective method. Far better than the three of us blindly searching around!"

Once the martial artists had dispersed, Fang Bai smiled and said to Li Chenzhou and Xia Chenyu.

The inn where Fang Bai and his companions were staying was the "Yuezhi Inn" located in the central area of Spirit Lake City.

"Yuezhi Inn" was the largest and most luxurious inn in Spirit Lake City, bar none.

It was called large because the inn occupied one-eighth of Spirit Lake City's entire area.

It was called luxurious because the entire inn was constructed using an immense amount of Essence Stones. Every guest room was an independent courtyard, surrounded by plentiful superior-grade spiritual medicine. Within the courtyards were mini Gathering Essence Arrays, and at the entrances stood young, beautiful female martial artists with considerable strength, ready to obey guests' orders at any time...

Martial artists staying at the "Yuezhi Inn" were constantly bathed in dense Heaven and Earth Origin Energy, allowing them to cultivate at any time while enjoying the ability to command the female martial artists. Such an experience was unparalleled.

Of course, staying in such a luxurious and imposing inn came at a steep price.

A single night's stay cost one thousand superior-grade Essence Stones or resources of equivalent value.

A daily fee of one thousand superior-grade Essence Stones was no small amount. Even the disciples of prominent sects and clans could hardly afford to stay long. Lesser sects, clans, or martial artists with modest cultivation levels stood no chance.

The "Yuezhi Inn" primarily catered to high-ranking members of top-tier sects and powerful individual martial artists.

It could be said that those who stayed at the "Yuezhi Inn" were all exceptional figures of great strength and impressive status.

Rumor had it that the inn's mysterious owner was an Innate expert at the peak of perfection, but whether they were male or female remained unknown.

Though the inn generated astronomical profits daily, enticing countless martial artists, the presence of an Innate expert behind the scenes was enough to deter any potential threats.

Indeed, Fang Bai's reward proved highly effective.

Later that afternoon, a loose cultivator passing through Spirit Lake City during his wanderings across the True Martial Realm brought news about the Huaxia Sect.

"I have not personally visited the Huaxia Sect but have heard rumors about it... A few months ago, prominent sects like the Lieyang Sect joined forces to annex the newly founded Huaxia Sect, only to be defeated by the combined assault formation of the Huaxia Sect's Sect Master Fang Yun, along with Tang Wenrou, Ye Wumei, Qin Yaorao, and other high-ranking members. That battle made the Huaxia Sect famous, making it the leading third-tier sect in that area... I merely overheard these stories, so I can't confirm their truth."

The loose cultivator who brought the news was a mid-level Universe Realm expert. Such martial artists would be considered seniors by most martial artists in the True Martial Realm. Yet, standing before Fang Bai and Li Chenzhou, he felt immense pressure, continuously wiping sweat from his forehead as he cautiously relayed the information he had heard about the Huaxia Sect.

"It's a relief that Wen Rou and the others are fine!"

"Haha, Brother Fang, now that we've received reassurance about the Huaxia Sect's safety, you can finally put your mind at ease, right?"

"Yes, as long as they're safe, that's all that matters."

Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu, hearing the loose cultivator accurately name Fang Yun, Tang Wenrou, Ye Wumei, and others, believed that the information was genuine. Excitement and relief washed over them.

"Take these two bottles of superior-grade elixirs... One is your rightful reward, and the other is my gift to you!"

Fang Bai retrieved two bottles of superior-grade elixirs and tossed them to the loose cultivator, who was trembling with excitement. Fang Bai couldn't help but laugh as he patted him on the shoulder and said, "After you leave here, disseminate this piece of information for me: if someone knows the exact location of the Huaxia Sect and accompanies us there, I'll reward them with ten bottles of superior-grade elixirs, ten thousand superior-grade Essence Stones, and even create a superior-grade spiritual artifact for them!"

He paused and added, "Of course, if anyone provides other credible information about the Huaxia Sect, I'll also consider appropriate rewards."

"Senior... Are you serious... really serious?"

Upon hearing this, the loose cultivator felt his mind reel and stammered awkwardly.

Ten bottles of superior-grade elixirs, ten thousand superior-grade Essence Stones, and a superior-grade spiritual artifact—any single one of these rewards could drive martial artists of his level into a frenzy, let alone all three combined. Even Innate experts would envy such prizes.

Fang Bai spared no expense in his eagerness to locate the Huaxia Sect. The loose cultivator knew that once he spread the news, countless martial artists would lose their minds and scour the world for information about the Huaxia Sect.

Yet, what others might view as treasures beyond measure were no more than trifles to Fang Bai at this moment.

During his journey through the Eternal Death Zone, Fang Bai amassed an unimaginable bounty of Essence Stones, spiritual medicine, and other cultivation resources. Some were stored in his space ring, while others were deposited at the Golden Crow Manor, with the underground Essence Stone Vein guarded by the disciples of Golden Crow Manor. Fang Bai could retrieve them whenever he needed.

To ensure the safety of these cultivation resources, Fang Bai had set up various formations before leaving Golden Crow Manor. Without encountering a Foundation Establishment expert above the Innate Realm, no martial artist in the True Martial Realm could hope to break through the defensive formations he had devised, which far exceeded the imagination of this world's martial artists.

"Rest assured, Senior. As soon as I leave here, I will disseminate your message immediately! By tomorrow morning, your words will have spread throughout Spirit Lake City."

After receiving confirmation from Fang Bai, the loose cultivator bowed deeply to Fang Bai and Li Chenzhou, then left the inn with uncontainable joy.

He knew that by tomorrow morning, once Fang Bai's message spread throughout Spirit Lake City, the city's countless martial artists would erupt like boiling water and plunge into complete chaos.

Chapter 1342: Fairy Zu

"Fairy Zu, three special guests checked into the inn yesterday."

The evening Fang Bai and his two companions stayed at the "Yuezhi Inn," in the inn's farthest and most secluded ancient stone chamber, a man and a woman were conversing through a bead curtain.

Outside the curtain stood an elderly man who appeared to be over sixty years old.

Inside the curtain was a woman who looked about thirty years old.

The elderly man had a slightly plump figure, dressed in a purple robe, with a round face, small eyes, and ruddy complexion, exuding the appearance of a shrewd businessman.

The woman had a graceful figure, wearing a pink gauzy dress. Her almond-shaped eyes, peach-blossom cheeks, skin like fresh cream, and alluring demeanor were brimming with an irresistible charm, captivating to the eye.

"Oh? What makes them special?"

Upon hearing the words of the elderly man in the purple robe, the woman in the pink dress casually parted her cherry-like lips to ask.

Her soft, velvety voice carried a hint of languidness that, unintentionally, touched people's hearts, dragging their thoughts toward inappropriate mental images.

The elderly man in the purple robe stared at the graceful silhouette lightly visible beyond the bead curtain, his mind lingering on the enchanting beauty of the pink-dress woman. Momentarily entranced, greed and lust flickered in his gaze. His throat grew dry, and his Adam's apple moved conspicuously.

"Hmph!"

Just as the elderly man in the purple robe was lost in thought, a sudden snort reverberated through the chamber. Immediately, scorching heat filled the entire stone room.

The elderly man felt as if he had been thrust into an inferno, his flesh searing painfully. He suddenly remembered the ruthless methods of the woman in the pink dress beyond the curtain and was overwhelmed with terror. Without hesitation, he knelt down and begged in a trembling voice, "Fairy Zu, spare me!"

"You dare covet my body?"

From beyond the curtain, the pink-dressed woman let out a faint, mocking laugh and said disdainfully, "If you weren't still of some use to me, your life would already have been forfeit! You know my methods well."

"I understand! I understand! I won't dare again!"

Despite the scorching heat that filled the chamber, the elderly man in the purple robe felt cold dread, his body drenched in sweat as though he'd been plunged into an ice cellar.

He understood clearly that although he was an Innate Expert at the pinnacle of cultivation in the True Martial Realm, the cultivation level of the pink-dressed woman beyond the curtain was far superior to his own. If she wanted to end his life, it would be effortless.

"Stand up and continue talking."

The woman in the pink dress resumed her normal tone, and the oppressive heat in the stone chamber dissipated immediately.

"Yes."

Relieved to have narrowly escaped death, the elderly man in the purple robe wiped the sweat from his forehead and shakily rose to his feet, replying humbly, "The three guests who checked into our inn all possess Innate Fire Spiritual Roots."

"Three Innate Fire Spiritual Roots? Are you certain you haven't made a mistake?"

The pink-dressed woman immediately sat up straighter, her voice now tinged with excitement.

The elderly man in the purple robe responded confidently, "I observed the three for a long time; there can be no mistake!"

The woman in the pink dress nodded slightly and said, "This world has very few Martial Artists with Innate Spiritual Roots—it's like finding a needle in a haystack. To encounter three at once checking into our inn is unprecedented."

"Fairy Zu must truly be blessed with great fortune!"

The elderly man in the purple robe, thick-skinned despite her earlier warning, now wearing a flattering expression, shamelessly praised her.

The pink-dressed woman dismissed him irritably, "Enough with the sweet talk! Describe the circumstances of those three guests in detail."

"Yes."

Composing himself, the elderly man in the purple robe reported solemnly, "Among the three, one is an Innate Expert in his forties, at the peak of cultivation. Another is a young man in his twenties, also an Innate Expert at the pinnacle. The last one, a young woman in her twenties, is at the Cosmic Level and its perfection. The two younger ones—man and woman—appear quite close and likely to be Martial Dao partners."

"A young Innate Expert at the pinnacle in his twenties? That's impossible!"

The pink-dressed woman shook her head in disbelief. "This True Martial Realm has such meager Heaven and Earth Origin Energy and resources of inferior quality. Even a Martial Dao Genius with an Innate Spiritual Root couldn't possibly reach pinnacle Innate cultivation by their twenties!"

"Yet the young man is indeed a pinnacle Innate Expert!"

The elderly man in the purple robe wanted to argue but refrained, too fearful of the pink-dressed woman's wrath.

"If I could collect the blood essence of forty-nine Innate Spiritual Root Martial Artists and refine it into a superior-grade High Rank Elixir... its potency would be unmatched. With such an elixir for cultivation, I may restore my strength and reclaim my peak..."

The woman in the pink dress murmured to herself before dismissing the elderly man with a wave of her hand. Internally, she decided, "Three Martial Artists with Innate Spiritual Roots—it's worth handling this matter personally!"

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As the scattered Martial Artist who delivered news to Fang Bai predicted, the next morning, after he followed Fang Bai's instructions to spread the extravagant bounty that was over tenfold higher than before, nearly every Martial Artist in Spirit Lake City descended into madness.

One month.

The bounty gave a month's deadline.

In other words, anyone able to uncover the precise location of the Huaxia Sect within a month and lead Fang Bai to it could claim this reward—so great it would make any Martial Artist in the True Martial Realm salivate.

The lavish reward demonstrated that Fang Bai undoubtedly had far more cultivation resources of equal value.

Since the discovery of possible Martial Artist Relics beneath Linghu Lake, numerous powerful figures from Innate Sects had quietly gathered in Spirit Lake City. Naturally, Fang Bai's bounty drew their attention as well.

At one point, over a dozen High Rank Innate Experts joined forces in an attempt to ambush and kill Fang Bai's trio, hoping to seize their cultivation resources. The result was shocking: in a single night, the dozen High Rank Innate Experts lay dead in the streets.

This outcome stunned Spirit Lake City and completely quelled the reckless intentions of other Martial Artists hovering on the brink of action.

A dozen High Rank Innate Experts, whose collective power nearly rivaled an entire Innate Sect, wiped out by Fang Bai's trio overnight—who would dare gamble their life to provoke them now?

After that, the area around Fang Bai's group's accommodations grew far quieter, as Martial Artists refrained from approaching or offering information prematurely until they were certain their findings were correct, lest they incur the wrath of the trio.

Thus, for a time, Fang Bai, Li Chenzhou, and Xia Chenyu enjoyed relative peace near their lodgings.

However, neither Fang Bai, Li Chenzhou, nor Xia Chenyu focused on cultivation during this respite. Instead, they spent their days wandering the city. Occasionally, they visited Spirit Lake City's Martial Artists Trading Market, hoping to discover some treasures.

Fang Bai planned that if no news of the Huaxia Sect surfaced within a month, he would move to another major city in Shenwu Continent and issue another bounty. Sooner or later, the Huaxia Sect would be found.

Still, before leaving Spirit Lake City, Fang Bai intended to visit Linghu Lake outside the city with Li Chenzhou and Xia Chenyu.

Regarding the rumored Martial Artist Relics at the lake bottom, Fang Bai was already determined to investigate—if such relics were indeed present, it might turn out to be another great opportunity.

Chapter 1343: This Woman is Very Dangerous!

On this day, Fang Bai and his two companions were leisurely wandering the Martial Artists Trading Market in the center of Spirit Lake City. With Fang Bai's perceptive "eyes of wisdom," they had managed to uncover quite a number of treasures.

"Fang Bai, what's wrong?"

On their way back to the Yuezhi Inn, Xia Chenyu noticed Fang Bai's brows furrow occasionally and couldn't help but ask.

Having spent a long time with Fang Bai, Xia Chenyu understood him deeply. Just one look at his expression was enough to tell that something was on his mind.

Li Chenzhou, hearing this, also turned his head towards Fang Bai.

"Someone is following us..."

Using the Thread Condensation Sound Transmission Technique, Fang Bai conveyed to Xia Chenyu and Li Chenzhou, "The opponent is incredibly strong. Even if the three of us joined forces, we might not be their match! Remember, do not transmit sound to me; do not look around aimlessly. Act as if nothing has happened and proceed forward calmly to avoid alerting the snake in the grass..."

Xia Chenyu, a natural at acting, maintained her composure upon receiving the transmission, walking ahead as if nothing had occurred, as though completely unbothered.

Li Chenzhou's previously relaxed demeanor instantly became tense.

As soon as Fang Bai transmitted his message, Li Chenzhou released his Divine Sense to probe the surroundings, attempting to discern the identity of their pursuer. However, his efforts yielded nothing.

Li Chenzhou knew Fang Bai would never speak without purpose. If Fang Bai said someone was tailing them, then there definitely was.

What shocked Li Chenzhou was that Fang Bai could sense the pursuer while he himself couldn't feel a thing—proof that Fang Bai's strength had already left his own far behind.

Even more astonishing was Fang Bai's assertion that the pursuer's cultivation level was so immense that even their combined efforts would be insufficient—a revelation that left Li Chenzhou pondering what terrifying realm the pursuer must have achieved.

Who was this person shadowing the three of them, and for what purpose?

Brimming with questions yet suppressing the urge to glance around, Li Chenzhou quickened his stride, following Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu steadily toward the Yuezhi Inn.

Turning at the street corner up ahead, they spotted a disheveled woman in a pink dress with the cultivation level of a Cosmic Stage beginner rushing toward them in panic. As she neared Fang Bai's group, her foot seemed to catch on something, causing her to stagger forward and almost fall to the ground.

"Ah!"

The pink-dressed woman's face turned pale as she let out a startled cry.

Not far behind her, several extravagantly dressed male martial artists with Universe-level beginner cultivation, boorish and arrogant in manner, strode after her with purposeful urgency—their target clearly being the pink-dressed woman about to tumble.

As fate would have it, the woman's fall was directed straight toward none other than Fang Bai, who stood at the forefront.

On one side were several unseemly yet powerful male martial artists, laughing frivolously and seemingly without a shred of decency.

On the other side was a slender, elegant, seemingly frail female martial artist whose cultivation level was far inferior to her pursuers.

The scene effortlessly evoked visions of "overbearing Universe-level warriors bullying a helpless female martial artist in broad daylight."

The woman in the pink dress, though over thirty years old, exuded a fascinations more alluring than the naïve charm of a young girl. Her disheveled clothing and fearful, helpless expression stirred intense protective instincts and sympathy among the martial artists gathered nearby.

However, those Universe-level pursuers wore matching attire, suggesting they belonged to the same sect. Observing their age—around thirty to forty—made some martial artists reconsider stepping forward heroically to intervene.

A thirty- or forty-year-old Universe-level expert—something even a first-rate sect might struggle to nurture—hinted at the possibility of these men being disciples of the legendary Innate Sect.

And the Innate Sect was not an entity one trifled with lightly.

Anyone without powerful backing who dared provoke an Innate Sect would undoubtedly find themselves without refuge, no matter how far across the ends of the earth they fled.

Though stepping forward to help might earn applause from the surrounding martial artists and gratitude from the pink-dressed woman, the cost of one's life was too steep a price, deterring all potential saviors.

As the pink-dressed woman teetered on the brink of falling and the Universe-level pursuers closed in, those torn between anger and hesitation could only curse inwardly, silently condemning the men for their shameless bullying of the weak.

"Watch out!"

Being a fellow woman, Xia Chenyu naturally felt indignation and pity for the plight of the pink-dressed woman. As she saw the woman about to fall, she let out a small exclamation, ready to step forward and assist—only for Fang Bai to act first.

Fang Bai's right foot moved as his figure slid forward more than ten feet. His extended hands met the woman's, helping her to straighten her body as she avoided crashing to the ground.

"Are you... alright?"

Fang Bai's gaze landed on the pink-dressed woman's still-terrified face, his first impression forming into two words: "stunning beauty."

Though her figure and features were slightly less perfect than Xia Chenyu's, the mature and alluring charm that radiated from her brows and eyes was enough to make even Xia Chenyu pale in comparison.

Among Fang Bai's companions and confidantes, the only woman whose natural seductiveness could rival this was Linghu Baimi.

This woman is dangerous!

Even as the breathtaking impression swept over Fang Bai, an instinctive feeling of caution immediately followed.

This was an intuition unique to Fang Bai, gifted with the Chaos True Body.

Fang Bai understood clearly that the stalker he had sensed earlier was none other than this pitiful-looking, seemingly harmless woman before him.

Although the woman had skillfully suppressed her cultivation level and concealed her martial aura to the point of being undetectable, Fang Bai's extraordinary sensitivity left her unable to fully escape his perception.

"Strange. This woman clearly isn't a Foundation Establishment expert, yet she carries traces of a Foundation Establishment aura. Could she have been a Foundation Establishment expert before, only to suffer some calamity that caused her cultivation to fall so drastically?"

As Fang Bai pondered this, he let out a quiet sigh of relief.

The pink-dressed woman had radiated slight hostility while tailing them earlier. Although her strength eclipsed the combined efforts of their trio, Fang Bai felt reassured knowing that she wasn't a true Foundation Establishment expert—he would still be able to handle her.

"I'm fine."

The pink-dressed woman, unaware that Fang Bai had already seen through her act, patted her chest and feigned a deeply relieved expression. Raising her head, her sparkling gaze fixated on Fang Bai's face as she gratefully said, "Thank you so much... young man!"

"Heh... No need to be polite!"

Fang Bai's eyes met hers, his heart skipping a beat before his lashes subtly lowered. Internally, he scoffed, "Trying to use a charm technique on me? With your cultivation, you're nowhere near enough!"

"Hmm? My charm technique actually didn't work on this fellow? Hehe... interesting!"

The pink-dressed woman, surprised that Fang Bai was unaffected by her mesmerizing gaze, flashed a trace of amusement—a piqued curiosity sparked by this unexpected resistance.

Chapter 1344: The Vixen in Xia Chenyu's Eyes

Previously, the woman in the pink dress did not believe that Fang Bai, at just over twenty years of age, had already advanced to the Innate Perfection realm.

But now, seeing Fang Bai with her own eyes, she realized that her subordinate hadn't lied.

Fang Bai's cultivation level was not only at the Innate Perfection realm, but it also carried a mysterious power that even the woman in the pink dress couldn't fathom.

"This young martial artist is definitely not as simple as he appears; he definitely has many secrets on him!"

The woman in the pink dress thought to herself.

Fang Bai was the first Innate Martial Artist that she couldn't see through after she came to this lower dimension's tricentennial Minor World, which, besides surprising her, also left her overjoyed like she had found a treasure.

An Innate Martial Artist whom she, a former Foundation Establishment Expert, couldn't fathom must either have extraordinary potential, beyond ordinary Innate Spiritual Root, or possess extremely powerful treasures.

Fang Bai embodied the Chaos True Body with seven major spiritual roots, but at the moment, he only revealed the Innate Fire Spirit Root.

With her cultivation level, the girl in the pink dress could only discern that Fang Bai had an Innate Fire Spirit Root, with no knowledge of the other six Innate Spiritual Roots coexisting in him.

Therefore, the woman in the pink dress was certain that Fang Bai had treasures on him, which made his strength seem shrouded in clouds and fog, making it impossible to see clearly.

The woman in the pink dress planned to find a chance to subdue Fang Bai and then take him back to force him to hand over the treasures on him.

As for Fang Bai, the woman in the pink dress didn't plan on letting him go either.

The woman in the pink dress had been a disciple of a sect in the tricentennial Major World. When she was pursued, she fled into a teleportation array in panic, unintentionally activating the formation and arriving at the True Martial Realm, one of the tricentennial Minor Worlds.

Due to severe injuries, her cultivation level fell from Foundation Establishment to Half-Step Foundation Establishment, which was a huge blow to her, nearly causing her to collapse.

Though her cultivation level fell, her Half-Step Foundation Establishment strength was still far superior to Innate Perfected Experts, enabling her to sweep across the True Martial Realm.

To return to the Foundation Establishment realm, the woman in the pink dress employed various means to subdue a group of True Martial Realm experts, including Innate Perfected Experts, to search and collect high-rank cultivation resources for her.

However, in martial arts, one sails against the current; if one does not advance, one retreats.

Once a martial artist's cultivation level declines, it's extremely difficult to recover, as the Heaven and Earth Origin Energy and cultivation resources in the True Martial Realm are insufficient to restore her to her original state.

The woman in the pink dress had been in the True Martial Realm for over thirty years and constantly thought about regaining her peak power, but the slow progress over thirty years almost drove her to despair, making her anxious.

One must know that although Foundation Establishment experts have great power, their lifespan is only about three to five hundred years. If they cannot advance to the Foundation Establishment realm by that age, there would be little hope.

Though the woman in the pink dress appeared only to be thirty-something, she was actually ten times older, and with her lifespan dwindling, she grew increasingly anxious.

The sect in the tricentennial Major World to which she belonged categorized her as part of the demonic path, despised by righteous individuals.

Demon Dao cultivators naturally cultivated evil techniques.

To speed up her cultivation, the woman in the pink dress risked the world's condemnation by trying to collect the essence blood of forty-nine Innate Spiritual Root martial artists to refine an elixir for consumption.

However, Innate Spiritual Root martial artists are extremely rare, with only one in tens of thousands appearing. Finding forty-nine of them is easier said than done.

In the thirty years since she accidentally entered the tricentennial Minor World, she had only collected the essence blood of just over ten Innate Spiritual Root martial artists, far from the forty-nine required to refine the elixir.

Obtaining the essence blood of those over ten Innate Spiritual Root martial artists wasn't easy for her because several of them were sect disciples of the Innate Sect in the True Martial Realm, resulting in several fierce battles with those Innate Sects.

In terms of individual combat strength, the woman in the pink dress far surpassed the sect masters of those Innate Sects, being unmatched.

However, those Innate Sects have tens of thousands of disciples, with a considerable number of Innate Experts. Their combined efforts certainly caused her a lot of trouble.

No one would have guessed that the owner behind the largest and most luxurious "Yuezhi Inn" in Spirit Lake City would actually be this woman in the pink dress.

Her primary purpose in establishing "Yuezhi Inn" was to gather Innate Spiritual Root martial artists from the True Martial Realm. Any Innate Spiritual Root martial artist staying at "Yuezhi Inn" would metaphorically enter the tiger's mouth, making it hard to leave Spirit Lake City alive.

Now, the fact that these three people in front of her were all Innate Spiritual Roots was truly beyond her expectations, filling her with joy.

"Get out of the way, get out of the way! This woman is the one I fancy, anyone in the way better scram, or don't blame me for being impolite!"

Fang Bai helped up the woman in the pink dress and had just exchanged a few words when they were interrupted by angry shouting and cursing as a few sleazy male martial artists approached.

The woman in the pink dress seemed startled, her face turned pale, her body trembled slightly, and as she watched the sleazy men approach menacingly, she twirled around and hid behind Fang Bai.

"Young brother, save me! These bad people find me attractive and want to harm me!"

The woman in the pink dress, like a frightened white rabbit, gently tugged Fang Bai's clothes with her hands, softly pleading.

Whether intentional or not, she almost pressed her body against Fang Bai's back, and her rosy, soft lips nearly brushed his ear, with her sweet, warm breath wafting into his ear as she spoke.

Such a posture appeared overly intimate to others. Xia Chenyu, standing aside, couldn't help but frown slightly, with traces of hostility in her eyes.

Xia Chenyu felt that the woman in the pink dress was like an enchantingly coquettish vixen.

She suddenly sought Fang Bai's protection, possibly intending to create a false impression of being pursued, as a means to draw close to Fang Bai.

A young martial artist full of vigor and strength encounters an elegant and charming yet delicate woman being bullied, and the woman pleads for his help in a soft voice.

In normal circumstances, this might lead to a clichéd "hero saves the damsel" scenario, followed by the beauty offering herself to the hero as gratitude for saving her life, and so on...

As Xia Chenyu considered this, she found it somewhat amusing.

Although Fang Bai was young, he was experienced and wise, with Fiery Eyes that could see through the woman's small tricks. How could she fool him?

Moreover, the female confidantes by Fang Bai's side, including Xia Chenyu herself, had figures, appearances, and temperaments no worse than that of the woman in the pink dress, if not better. Why would Fang Bai be interested in her?

Xia Chenyu didn't know what the woman in the pink dress wanted by approaching Fang Bai, but she knew that it would surely be in vain.

But in the next moment, Fang Bai's actions left Xia Chenyu stunned and disbelieving.

According to Xia Chenyu's expectation, Fang Bai should have turned coldly towards the woman in the pink dress and promptly exposed her ploy with a sneer.

However, Fang Bai opened his arms to shield the woman in the pink dress behind him, turning his head to smile at her righteously, "Sister, fear not! With me here, no one dares to bully you!"

Chapter 1345: Zu Hanjiao

Fang Bai's reaction not only took Xia Chenyu by surprise, but also made Li Chenzhou pause for a brief moment.

However, Li Chenzhou, being a top expert in the True Martial Realm who had weathered countless storms, remained composed in the face of Fang Bai's extraordinary action, abstaining from any rash response.

There's always a reason behind strange behavior.

Li Chenzhou felt that Fang Bai's actions were utterly different from his usual demeanor and conduct, concluding that Fang Bai must have his own agenda. Thus, he chose to observe quietly from the sidelines.

"Audacious fiend! Under broad daylight, you dare to bully a defenseless lady? I shall put an end to your villainy for the sake of the people today!"

Fang Bai comforted the lady in the pink dress with a few words, then abruptly turned around. Amid his furious denunciation, he raised his hand and struck out a powerful punch toward the several Universe Level experts who had pursued them.

The lady in the pink dress hadn't anticipated Fang Bai to be so domineering, acting without hesitation. The moment she saw his punch carry immense force that even a perfected Innate Martial Artist would not dare to underestimate, her expression changed slightly, and a hint of regret flashed in her gaze.

Those Universe Level Martial Artists were subordinates the lady in the pink dress had recruited within the True Martial Realm. Due to their competency, they had become her trusted aides. Losing them at Fang Bai's hands would come as a significant blow.

Though Fang Bai's punch wasn't fatal to the Universe Level experts, it was sufficient to cause grievous injuries that would be difficult to recover from, even if their wounds healed. Their strength would unlikely ever return to peak condition.

In other words, Fang Bai's punch effectively crippled the trusted aides under the lady in the pink dress.

The lady in the pink dress had orchestrated this scene with her subordinates, aiming to win Fang Bai's trust and extract the secrets he carried.

According to her plan, her subordinates would pursue them but back away resentfully after Fang Bai projected an aura of authority and dominance with some customary bravado.

Yet unexpectedly, Fang Bai overturned her script entirely, launching such a brazen punch outright.

With the lady in the pink dress's level of power, if she intervened, it would be trivial to defuse Fang Bai's punch.

But doing so would render all her preceding acts futile.

If she refrained, she would have to watch as her trusted aides suffered devastating injuries and were crippled.

"A few Universe Level experts—if they're ruined, then so be it!"

After a moment of deliberation, the lady in the pink dress chose to abandon her subordinates, deciding to disregard their fate.

As Fang Bai's punch landed, a sweeping turbulence surged down the broad street.

The Martial Artists who had been spectating on both sides of the street, many of whom failed to evade in time, felt the shockwave hurl them around like fallen leaves in a gale or stray duckweed amidst waves, their bodies swaying and struggling to maintain their footing.

Meanwhile, the Universe Level Martial Artists facing Fang Bai's punch couldn't even muster a response before they were hurled high into the air by the raging shockwave. Crushed and twisted by its overpowering pressure, their muscles snapped, bones shattered, and blood sprayed ferociously. Before even hitting the ground, they fainted with their lives hanging by mere threads.

As the turbulence receded and the True Yuan dissipated, a brief silence fell upon the wide street, shattered only moments later by Fang Bai.

"Tch!"

Fang Bai let out a mocking laugh, gazing down at the fainted Universe Level experts with disdain etched across his face, and scoffed, "If this is the extent of your skill, you dare humiliate others in the street? I'm embarrassed on your behalf! Forget me—any Martial Artist idling around on this street could beat you until your teeth scatter!"

He raised his voice sufficiently loud for nearly all the surrounding Martial Artists to hear, prompting varied reactions—some felt ashamed, others nodded in agreement, while others couldn't resist cheering aloud.

Though Fang Bai was usually low-key, his current demeanor was overwhelmingly ostentatious, bordering on arrogance.

Witnessing his attitude, Xia Chenyu's eyes curved in a hint of amusement as she quietly delighted in the spectacle.

She glanced toward Li Chenzhou, their gazes meeting with shared understanding, and their lips curled into knowing smiles.

Both Xia Chenyu and Li Chenzhou were well-acquainted with Fang Bai, and they recognized that his current behavior indicated he had concocted some mischievous scheme to teach someone a lesson.

The likely target of Fang Bai's amusement was unmistakable—the pink-dressed lady who had suddenly appeared.

"I just knew it. With Fang Bai's cleverness, there's no way he wouldn't notice that scheming fox deliberately approaching him... Hah, damned fox, brace yourself for calamity!"

With a glance of sympathy, Xia Chenyu gazed at the pitiable lady in the pink dress who stood behind Fang Bai. She thought to herself that no matter what crafty intentions this fox harbored, she was doomed to fail.

The lady in the pink dress swept her gaze across her subdued and fainted subordinates, a fleeting glint flashing in her eyes.

She stepped forward from behind Fang Bai, coming to stand before him, and gracefully bowed, her voice trembling as she said, "If not for your timely assistance, little brother, I, Hanjiao, would have fallen victim to those villains' harassment. Hanjiao offers her gratitude!"

"So, your name is Hanjiao... Hmm, a fine name indeed!"

Fang Bai grinned wide, exposing his bright white teeth, and waved casually, saying, "No need to be formal, sister! To help the oppressed and act righteously is the Martial Artist way. Otherwise, we fail the honor of bearing this title! Oh, as for those scoundrels attempting to harm you, I've knocked them unconscious. Sister, you'd best leave now!"

"My surname is Zu, given name Hanjiao... Little brother, simply call me by my name. To call me sister... that would be excessive for Hanjiao's modest status!"

She sighed sorrowfully, her eyes tinged with red as she lamented, "You ask me to leave, little brother, but the ones I have provoked are members of the 'Soul Summoning Hall.' Even if I flee to the ends of the earth, I fear escaping their pursuit is an impossible dream."

When she spoke the name "Soul Summoning Hall," she lowered her head slightly, her lips curving into a faint trace of pride and conceit—clearly, her ties to the so-called "Soul Summoning Hall" ran deep.

"Little brother, you have a kind heart, and Hanjiao does not wish to involve you. Please... leave Spirit Lake City quickly. If the 'Soul Summoning Hall' sets their sights on you, it will spell immense trouble. As for me... mine is but a cheap life, unworthy of lamentation even should I perish!"

When Zu Hanjiao lifted her head again, her tear-filled eyes glistened, poised to spill over.

Such words painted a vivid image of a woman faced with ruthless pursuers from an overpowering faction, yet placing others' welfare ahead of her own—stirring a natural desire to pity and protect within the hearts of those who listened.

"The 'Soul Summoning Hall'? What kind of nonsense is that? Never heard of it!"

"Sounds like some insignificant sect!"

"Why fret over them?"

"Lady, come with me. From now on, Yan Chongtian shall protect you! I'd like to see just who dares challenge someone under my protection!"

"Yan Chongtian? Heaven above, it's really him!"

"The renowned first among all Individual Cultivation Innate Martial Artists—Yan Chongtian—stands before us?"

"I didn't expect Yan Chongtian to look so young! He appears no older than forty!"

"He certainly rivals the legendary Li Chenzhou in prominence!"

"But he still falls short of Li Chenzhou in his prime. Remember, Li Chenzhou reached the perfected Innate realm before age thirty-five and thereafter emerged undefeated against all opponents below the Innate realm across the True Martial Realm!"

"Hah, Yan Chongtian, despite his strength, remains a loner. If confronted by a sufficient number of powerful enemies, he might not even be able to save himself, let alone shield Lady Zu! Lady Zu, you'd be better off joining us. Our Jade Bamboo Mountain can offer you sanctuary and an abundance of cultivation resources!"

An Innate Martial Artist from "Jade Bamboo Mountain" cast a provocative glance toward Yan Chongtian and interjected sharply.

Chapter 1346: Scorn and Provocation

Ordinary martial artists in the True Martial Realm might not understand what "Yan Chongtian" and "Jade Bamboo Mountain" truly represent.

However, some Innate Experts present today were aware that Yan Chongtian was the pinnacle of individual cultivation martial artists in the past century—a figure revered and admired by countless loose cultivators.

As for Jade Bamboo Mountain, it ranked among the most powerful Innate Sects in the True Martial Realm, serving as a benchmark for many other sects striving to surpass it.

Yet, Yan Chongtian was known for his elusive movements, like a Divine Dragon appearing only in fleeting glimpses—a rarity few could track.

The location of Jade Bamboo Mountain itself was equally shrouded in secrecy, with very few able to uncover its whereabouts.

Thus, upon hearing the name of Yan Chongtian, a legendary powerhouse almost mythical in reputation, alongside Jade Bamboo Mountain, an overwhelmingly strong sect instilling awe and trepidation, the Innate Experts present all revealed expressions of shock.

Some Innate Experts even cast envious and jealous glances toward the woman in the pink dress, Zu Hanjiao.

They envied her for drawing the interest of both Yan Chongtian—this unparalleled loose cultivator—and Jade Bamboo Mountain, a top-tier sect, who had both willingly offered her protection.

They were jealous because Zu Hanjiao's cultivation level was merely at the Cosmic Level Initial Stage—what virtue or ability did she possess to earn the favor of both Yan Chongtian and Jade Bamboo Mountain?

What these envious Innate Experts didn't know was that, while neither Yan Chongtian nor the higher-ups from Jade Bamboo Mountain could discern Zu Hanjiao's true cultivation, they had seen enough to recognize her as an Innate Spirit Root Martial Artist.

In this world, encountering an Innate Spirit Root Martial Artist was akin to finding treasure—it was exceedingly rare. Thus, any such cultivator instantly became sought after by powerful loose cultivators and major sects.

What drew Yan Chongtian to Zu Hanjiao wasn't just her innate spiritual root; her alluring figure, extraordinary beauty, and captivating aura also played a role.

Yan Chongtian reasoned that, at a little over forty years of age himself, and Zu Hanjiao being just slightly past thirty, the two would make an ideal Martial Dao couple—cultivating together to mutual benefit. It seemed perfect to him.

Meanwhile, the high-ranking figure from Jade Bamboo Mountain only had eyes for Zu Hanjiao's innate spiritual root.

With her exceptional talent paired with Jade Bamboo Mountain's comprehensive training, her future Martial Dao achievements would be limitless, and she would undoubtedly rise to become a pillar of the sect.

"Hmph! Who says I, Yan Chongtian, am inferior to Li Chenzhou?"

With a snort of disdain, a burly man with a wild beard stepped forward from the crowd, his gaze sweeping over the gathered martial artists as he declared arrogantly, "These past years, I have been spreading the word, searching for Li Chenzhou to challenge him in battle and determine who is truly superior! Yet, that Li Chenzhou has turned into a cowardly turtle, refusing to show himself. Heh, I suspect he's scared!"

The burly man wore a fitted black combat outfit, his square face framed by sharp features. His tiger-like eyes and broad mouth exuded an aura of inherent authority, intimidating those around him without any deliberate effort. The martial artist aura emanating from him pressed down on those nearby, giving them the sensation of facing an imposing mountain, leaving them under significant pressure.

The surrounding Innate Martial Artists listened to the man's claim of being Yan Chongtian. Combined with the rumors they had heard over time about him, they determined that his words likely rang true—this was, without a doubt, Yan Chongtian.

Yan Chongtian possessed an Innate Golden Spirit Root and had reached the Innate Perfection Realm by the age of forty, securing his place among the pinnacle of True Martial Realm experts.

Back when Li Chenzhou's name resounded across the True Martial Realm, Yan Chongtian had only just begun to emerge, and his radiance was completely overshadowed by Li Chenzhou.

However, over a decade ago, when Li Chenzhou became trapped in the underground Essence Stone vein within the Eternal Death Zone, Yan Chongtian stumbled upon a miraculous opportunity, propelling him to soar above the rest, reaching the peak of the martial world.

Although Yan Chongtian's fame matched that of Li Chenzhou, the two had never crossed paths. Yet, in the eyes of some Innate Experts, Yan Chongtian still fell short when compared to Li Chenzhou—a notion that infuriated the proud Yan Chongtian.

Ever since ascending to the state of Innate Perfection Realm, Yan Chongtian had harbored a burning desire to surpass Li Chenzhou's reputation, eagerly yearning to fight him and prove his worth.

Years of traveling across the True Martial Realm, spreading news of his intention to duel Li Chenzhou, had been in vain. Yan Chongtian hoped to draw him out, but he hadn't anticipated that Li Chenzhou would remain trapped in the underground Essence Stone vein within the Eternal Death Zone, totally unaware of the challenge.

Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu exchanged amused glances with Li Chenzhou, unsure whether Li Chenzhou would be angered by Yan Chongtian's insults, calling him a cowardly turtle.

After all, martial artists—especially those of Li Chenzhou's caliber—were known for their unyielding pride and rebellious streak. They would never tolerate humiliation without responding.

Yan Chongtian's direct criticism of Li Chenzhou, belittling him as a cowardly turtle, amounted to stark provocation and profound disrespect.

The pink-dressed woman wisely chose to remain silent at this moment. Her enchanting eyes briefly swept over Yan Chongtian, and the corners of her lips subtly tugged into a faint expression.

Paying close attention to Zu Hanjiao, Fang Bai sharply caught a trace of scorn and ridicule in her fleeting smile.

Fang Bai could reasonably guess that Zu Hanjiao's contempt was aimed at Yan Chongtian—mocking him for overestimating himself, thinking he could protect her.

Even Fang Bai silently regarded Yan Chongtian with disdain, concluding that the burly man had overreached himself.

Through Fang Bai's discerning eyes, he could tell that Yan Chongtian's strength was slightly inferior to that of Li Chenzhou.

As for the pink-dressed woman, Zu Hanjiao, although her cultivation had fallen from the Foundation Establishment Realm, Fang Bai recognized that even if he joined forces with Li Chenzhou and Yan Chongtian—without resorting to trump cards like the Blood-Drinking Mad Blade or the Houyi Bow—they still might not stand a chance against her.

"Brother Fang, Chenyu, let's go!"

Much to Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu's surprise, Li Chenzhou, who they expected to be enraged, instead seemed unaffected, calmly uttering these words before striding forward with a composed demeanor, heading toward the direction of Yuezhi Inn.

"Brother Li's self-restraint has truly improved a lot."

"Hmm. After enduring that life-and-death trial, Brother Li seems to have gained profound insight into many matters."

Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu exchanged smiles as they watched Li Chenzhou's departing figure.

What Fang Bai referred to as the "life-and-death trial" was the harrowing experience Li Chenzhou endured while trapped in the underground Essence Stone vein of the Eternal Death Zone.

Had this situation occurred over a decade ago, facing Yan Chongtian's provocation, Li Chenzhou would have long since lost his patience and retaliated with force to settle the score.

But after surviving the life-and-death trial, Li Chenzhou now viewed many things with greater detachment, determined to start afresh, choosing not to dwell on past grievances and vendettas.

So, when faced with Yan Chongtian's provocations, Li Chenzhou opted to yield and retreat.

"Step back, and the sea and sky open wide."

This was a phrase Li Chenzhou once heard from Fang Bai, and he felt it brimmed with wisdom.

At times, Li Chenzhou reflected that, had he chosen to take a step back during his entanglement with the Ruoshui Palace Master, things might have taken a different turn, and the conflict needn't have escalated to the point of physical confrontation.

"Hey! Wait for me!"

Seeing Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu following Li Chenzhou and leaving her behind, Zu Hanjiao showed a slight hint of frustration in her expression and quickly hurried after them.

Chapter 1347: Li Chenzhou at Your Service

"Shameless woman!"

When Xia Chenyu saw Zu Hanjiao earlier claiming she didn't want to implicate Fang Bai, yet now chasing after him once he'd truly left, her conviction deepened that this woman had ulterior motives for approaching Fang Bai.

"Let her follow us."

Just as Xia Chenyu was about to turn back to block Zu Hanjiao and mock her with biting ridicule to drive her away, Fang Bai's untimely voice rang out.

Xia Chenyu could ignore others' words, but Fang Bai's commands were never disobeyed. She pursed her lips, cast Zu Hanjiao a hostile glare, and grudgingly stepped aside.

"I... I just feel safer staying with you all... but rest assured, once we leave Spirit Lake City and reach somewhere safe, I'll separate from you and won't keep following, so as not to trouble you."

Zu Hanjiao chased up to Fang Bai, glanced at the cold-faced Xia Chenyu, and then lowered her head, nervously twisting the corner of her clothes, and said pitifully.

Her delicate and meek demeanor could evoke protective instincts in many, but what it earned was several contemptuous eye-rolls from Xia Chenyu.

"You woman, can't you see the three of them clearly don't want to travel with you? Why must you insist on seeking their protection? I, Yan Chongtian, a dignified Innate Perfection expert, am I not capable of protecting you?"

Yan Chongtian strode forward, discontented, and addressed Zu Hanjiao.

"Our Jade Bamboo Mountain is a prestigious Innate Sect, filled with formidable warriors. Are we not stronger than those three? If you're seeking refuge, joining us would be the most fitting choice!"

The senior members of Jade Bamboo Mountain stepped forward to continue their persuasion.

Innate Spirit Root Martial Artists are rare and sought-after, so both Yan Chongtian and the seniors of Jade Bamboo Mountain hoped to bring Zu Hanjiao into their fold.

However, Zu Hanjiao seemed to have her heart set solely on Fang Bai and paid no heed to Yan Chongtian and the senior members' attempts to win her over.

Seeing their efforts repeatedly rebuffed, Yan Chongtian and the senior members felt deeply frustrated, and at the same time began harboring resentment toward Fang Bai.

Yan Chongtian grew especially bitter and attributed Zu Hanjiao's determination to follow Fang Bai to her being captivated by his youthful attractiveness.

"I am Yan Chongtian, a Loose Cultivator. May I ask for your esteemed names?"

Yan Chongtian clasped his fists toward Fang Bai and Li Chenzhou, his deep voice sounding subdued as he inquired.

As he spoke, he widened his eyes and carefully scrutinized Fang Bai and Li Chenzhou. His previously dismissive expression gradually grew serious.

Fang Bai and Li Chenzhou had not intentionally suppressed their cultivation levels, so Yan Chongtian realized upon first glance that both were Innate Perfection experts.

Having long considered himself the foremost Innate Perfection expert of the True Martial Realm, Yan Chongtian initially felt surprised by Fang Bai's youthfulness but hadn't thought much of the duo.

After all, even among Innate Perfection experts, there existed significant disparities in strength.

Yan Chongtian presumed that, given his age advantage over Fang Bai and Li Chenzhou, along with his extensive experience and battle-hardened skills, his strength would certainly surpass theirs.

Yet now, as he carefully observed Fang Bai and Li Chenzhou, he realized just how ridiculously mistaken he was.

Yan Chongtian, who had always believed he'd reached the pinnacle of the Martial Dao in this world, now felt humbled as he stood before Fang Bai and Li Chenzhou. A sense of "even the most skilled are surpassed" washed over him.

This realization alone proved that Fang Bai and Li Chenzhou's strength surpassed his own.

"My name is Fang Bai."

Fang Bai wasn't the type to be arrogant or boastful. Since Yan Chongtian had introduced himself, he casually gave his own name in response.

"I am Li Chenzhou."

Li Chenzhou, wearing a faintly mischievous smile, deliberately enunciated his name word by word.

The moment the name "Li Chenzhou" was spoken, a stunned silence fell over the Innate Martial Artists present, save for Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu.

"You... You are Li Chenzhou?"

Yan Chongtian's eyes widened further, pointing at Li Chenzhou in astonishment as he blurted out.

Li Chenzhou gave a sly, almost mocking smile and said, "Precisely."

"You... This... I..."

Yan Chongtian stammered wildly, unable to form coherent sentences, his face flushing with shame as he recalled the insulting, provocative remarks he'd made about Li Chenzhou earlier.

Before meeting Li Chenzhou in person, Yan Chongtian had been supremely confident, believing a duel between them would undoubtedly result in his victory.

Yet now, knowing the man before him was truly Li Chenzhou, Yan Chongtian felt no confidence at all in defeating him.

If at this moment Li Chenzhou were to challenge Yan Chongtian, he wasn't certain he'd even have the courage to accept the duel.

Especially with Fang Bai, another enigmatic, overwhelmingly strong expert whose true power was unfathomable, standing by Li Chenzhou's side.

If Fang Bai and Li Chenzhou joined forces, Yan Chongtian thought he'd be lucky enough to escape with his life.

Fortunately, after revealing their names, Fang Bai and Li Chenzhou said nothing more. They simply left alongside Xia Chenyu.

Zu Hanjiao trailed slightly behind, lowering her head as she followed the trio away.

"Phew..."

Watching the backs of the four figures recede into the distance, Yan Chongtian exhaled heavily, only then realizing a sheen of cold sweat had gathered on his back.

The senior members of Jade Cloud Mountain felt a bitter disappointment seeing Zu Hanjiao ultimately follow Fang Bai and the others away.

However, being seasoned and shrewd men, they noticed even Yan Chongtian, a formidable expert, held reservations about dealing with Li Chenzhou and Fang Bai. They dared not chase after Zu Hanjiao.

Other Martial Artists, finding no further drama to witness, dispersed quietly amidst their own murmured conversations.

Fang Bai and company returned to the Yuezhi Inn, where a disagreement arose over how to arrange accommodations for Zu Hanjiao.

"I and Miss Zu are both women. Let her share a room with me."

This was Xia Chenyu's stance.

She suggested Zu Hanjiao stay with her primarily to keep an eye on her, ensuring she couldn't seduce Fang Bai.

Though Xia Chenyu believed Fang Bai possessed unyielding resolve and wouldn't be easily swayed by another woman's charms.

Still, Fang Bai was, after all, a young man in his early twenties, with vitality and fervor coursing through him. It wouldn't hurt to be cautious given Zu Hanjiao's persistent allure.

According to Xia Chenyu's knowledge, so far, Fang Bai hadn't crossed moral boundaries with any of the women close to him, nor had he consummated any romantic relationships. How could she allow Zu Hanjiao, this sudden newcomer, to take such liberties?

"Let Miss Zu stay in the room next to mine—this will allow me to protect her better."

This was Fang Bai's stance.

Given Zu Hanjiao's explanation about provoking the "Soul Summoning Hall," a notorious powerhouse teeming with experts, Fang Bai, whose strength surpassed even Li Chenzhou, felt he was best suited to protect Zu Hanjiao.

Judging by Zu Hanjiao's attitude, she was clearly eager to stay near Fang Bai, but Xia Chenyu vehemently opposed this idea.

"How about we let Miss Zu stay next to me instead? Brother Fang, while my strength may not match yours, it's still quite formidable, wouldn't you say?"

Finally, Li Chenzhou spoke up.

Finding Zu Hanjiao's abrupt appearance and unclear identity suspicious, Li Chenzhou shared Xia Chenyu's concerns and leaned toward her proposal.

In the end, it was Xia Chenyu who arranged accommodations for Zu Hanjiao, booking her a room next to Li Chenzhou, deliberately keeping her far away from Fang Bai.

Under this arrangement, if Zu Hanjiao wished to approach Fang Bai, she'd have to pass through both Li Chenzhou's and Xia Chenyu's quarters. There was no chance for her to be alone with Fang Bai.

Chapter 1348: What Purpose?

Zu Hanjiao seemed to be aware that she wasn't very welcome by Xia Chenyu and Li Chenzhou, so in the following two days, she stayed honestly in her place, being unusually low-key.

This made Fang Bai feel somewhat embarrassed. During this time, accompanied by Xia Chenyu and Li Chenzhou, he went to Zu Hanjiao's guest room and sat for a while, talking with her for a few sentences.

The next evening, Fang Bai had Xia Chenyu keep Zu Hanjiao company in the guest room, while he and Li Chenzhou went out for a trip. As for where they went and what they did, both of them were secretive and tight-lipped.

However, Xia Chenyu could still discern some unusual information from Li Chenzhou's expression, making it hard for her to calm down and focus on cultivating in the middle of the night, ultimately running over to Fang Bai's room next door to inquire.

"Fang Bai, I always feel like there was something important concealed from me when you and Brother Li went out this evening. I don't care, if you don't tell me the truth today, I will stay here and not leave."

Upon entering Fang Bai's room, Xia Chenyu sat down by Fang Bai's bed and said sulkily.

"In the dead of night, a beautiful girl like you comes to my room and sits on my bed. This is really testing my willpower!"

Fang Bai sat down beside Xia Chenyu, wrapped his arm around her slender waist, and said with a sly smile.

"Don't change the topic, talk about the serious stuff!"

Xia Chenyu twisted her delicate body, opened Fang Bai's mischievous hand, and with a stern face, showed a determined stance of getting to the bottom of things.

"The reason for not telling you is that I'm afraid you'll worry. But if you truly want to know, I can tell you, but you have to listen to me. Understand?"

Fang Bai placed his hands on Xia Chenyu's fragrant shoulders, his gaze fixed intently on her exquisite and lovely face, asking solemnly.

"What on earth is it?"

Seeing Fang Bai's unprecedented seriousness, Xia Chenyu suddenly felt a little flustered, grasped Fang Bai's hand in reverse, and asked nervously.

"This matter... is related to Zu Hanjiao."

When Fang Bai mentioned the name "Zu Hanjiao," a cold gleam flashed in his eyes.

Every courtyard guest room in "Yuezhi Inn" was equipped with a Gathering Essence Array, allowing guests to be bathed in the rich Heaven and Earth Origin Energy at all times.

The Gathering Essence Array not only allowed the absorption of Heaven and Earth Origin Energy but also isolated the guest room from the outside, so those outside couldn't hear the activity inside, protecting the guests' privacy from being leaked.

However, Fang Bai knew that this isolation effect of the Gathering Essence Array was not very effective against Innate experts like them.

Therefore, after checking into "Yuezhi Inn," Fang Bai set up an inner array within his courtyard room, so that even a Foundation Establishment Expert stronger than an Innate Expert wouldn't be able to spy on the activities inside Fang Bai's guest room.

Fang Bai knew that Zu Hanjiao was definitely trying to eavesdrop on the movements on his side, but with Zu Hanjiao's current strength, her Divine Sense couldn't penetrate the inner array he set up.

With this confidence and assurance, Fang Bai dared to mention Zu Hanjiao within the guest room with Xia Chenyu.

"It's related to Zu Hanjiao? What exactly is it?"

Xia Chenyu became more eager to know, guessing it wasn't anything good.

Fang Bai took a deep breath, before saying seriously, "If my guess is correct, then Zu Hanjiao was once a Foundation Establishment Expert."

A tremor ran through Xia Chenyu's heart, her eyes widened suddenly, and her lips parted slightly, as if she'd heard something incredible.

"A Foundation Establishment Expert... How is that possible? Zu Hanjiao looks to be merely in her early thirties..."

After coming to her senses, Xia Chenyu murmured to herself, unable to believe it.

When Xia Chenyu was first introduced to the Martial Dao by Fang Bai, he had mentioned Foundation Establishment Experts, explaining that they were at a cultivation level above the Innate realm, a whole new starting point in a martial artist's journey to a higher realm.

Successfully establishing a Foundation is equivalent to laying a solid foundation, which is crucial for what level a martial artist's future path in the Martial Dao could achieve.

Even someone as seemingly omnipotent in Xia Chenyu's eyes as Fang Bai was still far from achieving Foundation Establishment at this moment.

So, hearing that Zu Hanjiao had once been a Foundation Establishment Expert, Xia Chenyu was incredibly shocked.

According to Fang Bai, although Zu Hanjiao had fallen from the Foundation Establishment realm, she still couldn't be countered by an Innate expert.

Yet Xia Chenyu was puzzled that if Zu Hanjiao had such strength, she could just directly make a move if she had any designs on Fang Bai, so why pretend to be weak to get close to him?

What exactly was her purpose in spending such effort? Xia Chenyu couldn't figure it out, but Fang Bai vaguely guessed something, though he did not tell her to avoid making her worry.

"Chenyu, do you really think that woman is only in her early thirties? Let me tell you, her true age is over a hundred."

Fang Bai said to Xia Chenyu, "Foundation Establishment Experts have a lifespan of several hundred years. That woman probably succeeded in establishing her Foundation when she was over thirty, thus her appearance was maintained at that age. Only when her lifespan is about to run out will she rapidly age and appear decrepit."

Xia Chenyu clicked her tongue and said, "Being over a hundred and still looking so young... so that's what eternal youth, an unaging face means? It's really enviable!"

Fang Bai said disdainfully, "What's impressive about that? If you cultivate with me, perhaps your lifespan in the future could be a thousand years or even ten thousand years!"

Xia Chenyu chuckled and said, "Who in the world can live up to a thousand or ten thousand years? Wouldn't that make them immortal spirits?"

Fang Bai once again hugged Xia Chenyu's waist, turning his head to give her a hard kiss on her pretty face, chuckling, "You already are an enchanting spirit of sorts who mesmerizes people to the point of death!"

"Then let me mesmerize you first!"

Xia Chenyu suddenly hooked her arms around Fang Bai's neck, pressing her petal-like soft lips forcefully against Fang Bai's lips.

After a long while, their lips parted, Xia Chenyu released her hands, her chest heaving slightly, breathing softly, her cheeks flushing with a blush, her beautiful eyes flowing with emotion, obviously somewhat moved.

"Truly fragrant..."

Fang Bai licked his lips, looking as if he hadn't had enough.

"Then let's continue!"

Xia Chenyu reached out again, wanting to hook Fang Bai's neck.

From the previous passionate kiss, Xia Chenyu was certainly a bit moved, and Fang Bai felt his body heating up as well, knowing that if they kept getting intimate like this, it might lead to unintended consequences. So he hurriedly said, "Let's talk about the serious business... where were we?"

Xia Chenyu pouted and said, "You were talking about how Zu Hanjiao was once a Foundation Establishment Expert. What's next?"

Fang Bai nodded and said, "Although Zu Hanjiao is no longer a Foundation Establishment Expert, her strength is still far beyond mine. Even if the three of us teamed up, we wouldn't be her match. Chenyu, you're surely wondering, given Zu Hanjiao's evident strength, why she would go through such a performance to get close to me, right?"

"Yeah, I just can't figure out the reason."

Xia Chenyu frowned and said.

Chapter 1349: How Dare to Have Improper Thoughts?

Half an hour later, Xia Chenyu walked out of Fang Bai's room and returned to her own residence.

At the same time, Zu Hanjiao, who lived next door to Li Chenzhou, withdrew her Divine Sense, her expression complex and unreadable.

"That guest room where Fang Bai resides actually has a formation within a formation, even my Divine Sense couldn't penetrate it... What a Fang Bai!"

Zu Hanjiao muttered to herself, her gaze growing brighter.

Zu Hanjiao originally planned to subdue Fang Bai, Li Chenzhou, and Xia Chenyu, using their essence blood to refine Elixirs to enhance the medicinal effects.

However, upon realizing that Fang Bai harbored more and more secrets, she adjusted her plan slightly, deciding to spare Fang Bai's life temporarily after subduing the three, and coercing him to reveal all his secrets.

The inability to eavesdrop on what Fang Bai and Xia Chenyu discussed in the room left Zu Hanjiao deeply vexed.

Additionally, in the past two days, Fang Bai and Li Chenzhou had left Spirit Lake City multiple times, their actions shrouded in mystery. Zu Hanjiao had covertly instructed her subordinates to follow them, yet unexpectedly, her subordinates were shaken off by the duo, leaving her clueless about their activities.

"Never mind, within a thousand miles of Spirit Lake City's surrounding area, everything is under my control. Even if those three sprout wings, they won't escape from my grasp!"

Zu Hanjiao comforted herself.

By early afternoon, Fang Bai gathered Li Chenzhou, Xia Chenyu, and even Zu Hanjiao to the largest Martial Artists Trading Market in Spirit Lake City's central region, stating that he wanted to exchange for some treasures.

"Miss Zu, don't worry. Over the past two days, I've turned about in Spirit Lake City and didn't find any 'Soul Summoning Hall' disciples. They must have already left."

Fang Bai saw Zu Hanjiao wearing an expression of nervousness and fear. He sneered inwardly but maintained a polite smile on his face.

"Really? That's wonderful! These past two days, I've been living in constant dread!"

Zu Hanjiao patted her chest and exhaled a long sigh of relief, her cautious and fearful demeanor replaced by joy and excitement.

Every expression and movement of Zu Hanjiao was utterly natural, devoid of any signs of pretense. If Fang Bai had not possessed extraordinary insight, having already discerned her ulterior motives when she approached the trio initially, he might truly have been deceived by her.

The four arrived at the Martial Artists Trading Market in the central region of Spirit Lake City. Right before Zu Hanjiao's eyes, Fang Bai took out a large amount of Cultivation Resources he had obtained from the Eternal Death Zone from his Space Ring, exchanging them for equally valuable Spiritual Medicine and special materials for crafting Spiritual Artifacts.

Fang Bai's extravagant transactions, coupled with the rare High-Rank Cultivation Resources he presented, caused quite a stir within the trading market.

Zu Hanjiao intentionally glanced at the Space Ring Fang Bai wore on his finger, knowing that it undoubtedly contained more rare High-Rank Cultivation Resources. Greed flashed across her eyes.

However, she concealed it seamlessly, ensuring no one noticed her odd expression.

While Fang Bai was busy exchanging Cultivation Resources, Li Chenzhou and Xia Chenyu pretended to browse other stalls for suitable resources and gradually distanced themselves from Fang Bai. They walked farther and farther away until their whereabouts could no longer be seen.

Fang Bai, too, seemed oblivious to their departure.

Zu Hanjiao's primary focus now rested on Fang Bai. As for Li Chenzhou and Xia Chenyu, she had her subordinates keeping a close watch on them, ensuring that any movements they made would reach her ears promptly.

As dusk approached, Fang Bai finally concluded his exchanges and scanned his surroundings before muttering with a frown, "Where are Brother Li and Chenyu?"

Zu Hanjiao replied, "I saw them leaving earlier. Maybe they went to check out other stalls. Shall we go look for them?"

Fang Bai said, "This Martial Artists Trading Market is vast, with thousands of stalls. We'd likely not find them in a short time... Never mind, let's leave first."

"This..."

Zu Hanjiao hesitated, finding Fang Bai's behavior puzzling. His close relationship with Xia Chenyu meant they were nearly inseparable while traveling. For his attitude to differ so much from usual, was he playing some trick on her?

But Fang Bai's next words caused Zu Hanjiao's heart to race wildly, leaving other thoughts behind.

"Miss Zu, how about we take a walk outside Spirit Lake City together?"

Under Zu Hanjiao's puzzled gaze, Fang Bai lowered his voice and said, "It's like this, a while ago, I discovered a Martial Artist Remnant outside Spirit Lake City. Though protected by a formation, I have some knowledge of formations and managed to break it. Upon entering, I found the Martial Artist Remnant to be left by someone claiming to be a Foundation Establishment Expert..."

"Where is this Martial Artist Remnant?"

Before Fang Bai could finish speaking, the restless Zu Hanjiao could no longer restrain herself and interrupted him.

After asking, Zu Hanjiao felt she had acted too rashly and quickly explained, "I've heard before that the strength of a Foundation Establishment Expert far surpasses that of an Innate Perfection Expert. If the remnant you found truly belongs to a Foundation Establishment Expert, the benefits could be limitless. You might even advance to the Foundation Establishment realm through it..."

"Indeed."

Fang Bai nodded slightly and said, "If Miss Zu is unwilling to go, I'll first escort you back to Yuezhi Inn and then head there myself."

"Why would you bring me along? Are you not afraid I might harbor selfish intentions or leak the news?"

Zu Hanjiao blinked and casually asked.

Fang Bai chuckled lightly, "I've always had a keen eye for judging character. From the first time I saw Miss Zu, I felt she was trustworthy. If you truly hold selfish intentions or divulge the secret, then I'd merely have been blind."

Zu Hanjiao pressed her lips into a smile, "What if your judgment is wrong? A Foundation Establishment Expert's remnant could drive any Martial Artist into a frenzy!"

"And what if I'm wrong?"

Fang Bai patted his chest with confidence and said proudly, "With my strength and Brother Li's assistance, who would dare covet the remnant? Least of all you, Miss Zu, a mere Cosmic Level Martial Artist."

Zu Hanjiao sighed softly, "Indeed, as appealing as a Foundation Establishment Expert's remnant may be, I, a lowly Cosmic Level Expert, wouldn't dare harbor undue ambitions. I was merely asking out of curiosity."

Fang Bai boomed with confidence, "We've crossed paths and can now call ourselves friends. If I obtain Cultivation Resources from the Foundation Establishment Expert's remnant, I'll share some with you."

Zu Hanjiao replied with boundless happiness, but a hint of mockery flashed deep within her eyes.

"Can you tell me where the Foundation Establishment Expert's remnant is?"

As they exited the Martial Artists Trading Market and stepped outside Spirit Lake City, Zu Hanjiao feigned curiosity and asked.

Fang Bai pointed toward the direction of Linghu Lake and said, "It's just outside the city, beside Linghu Lake. Follow me, and we'll arrive soon!"

Along the way, Fang Bai led at the front while Zu Hanjiao followed closely behind.

Staring at Fang Bai's back, Zu Hanjiao's eyes narrowed slightly, the killing intent within her heart roiling intensely.

Chapter 1350: Meeting Wu De at Linghu Lake

Linghu Lake lies nestled within the mountain ranges a hundred miles south of Spirit Lake City.

At this moment, the day nears twilight. The lingering rays of the setting sun pass through the cracks between the mountains, spilling over the rippling lake surface, reflecting dazzling scales of light, as if golden dragons were rolling in the water.

Ever since a Martial Artist discovered treasures in Linghu Lake and rumors spread about Martial Artist Remnants at its depths, every day Martial Artists from across the True Martial Realm gather at Linghu Lake, hoping to strike it lucky.

As the sky gradually darkens, the surrounding scenery blurs. From the deep forests in the distant mountains come the chilling roars and howls of Spirit Beasts, yet numerous Martial Artists still linger around the lake, unwilling to leave.

The frequent sound of "plop" and "splash" breaks the silence—those are the Martial Artists diving into the lake.

Standing by the shore at this time, under the dim light, one can see the surface teeming with heads—some descending into the depths, others emerging from underwater, and a few climbing ashore dejectedly, shaking their heads with sighs before walking away.

The Martial Artist Remnants beneath Linghu Lake have stirred the hearts of countless warriors in the True Martial Realm. Though it remains uncertain whether the remnants truly exist, many are willing to spend vast amounts of time and energy on the faintest chance of fortune.

On a large rock by the northern shore of Linghu Lake stood Li Chenzhou and Xia Chenyu, hands clasped behind their backs.

After leaving the Martial Artists Trading Market in the central area of Spirit Lake City, Li Chenzhou had carried Xia Chenyu on Essence Energy wings, skillfully shaking off several pursuers, and arrived here. They had been standing by the lake for some time now.

They had come to wait for Fang Bai—this was part of a pre-arranged escape plan.

In this plan, Fang Bai would act as bait to entangle Zu Hanjiao, while Li Chenzhou and Xia Chenyu would divert Zu Hanjiao's subordinates, preventing them from coordinating efficiently.

Among Zu Hanjiao's subordinates, the strongest were two Innate Perfection experts, while the rest were ordinary Innate Experts.

Li Chenzhou had already reached the pinnacle of the True Martial Realm over a decade ago and was among the elite at the Innate Perfection stage.

After being awakened and healed by Fang Bai in the Essence Stone Vein beneath the Eternal Death Zone, not only had Li Chenzhou's strength not declined, but it had even surpassed his previous peak, becoming greater than ever.

It could be said that among today's Innate Perfection experts in the True Martial Realm, aside from Fang Bai, no one could stand against Li Chenzhou.

As for Zu Hanjiao, though she had fallen from the Foundation Establishment stage, her strength still far exceeded the Innate Perfection level and could be classified as "Half-Step Foundation Establishment."

Even though she had declined to a Half-Step Foundation Establishment Expert, Zu Hanjiao had once been a true Foundation Establishment Expert, possessing Foundation Establishment Martial Arts Techniques and exceptionally rich combat experience. Her strength far surpassed that of experts at Li Chenzhou's level.

As for Fang Bai, while he possessed a stunning ability to challenge higher realms, this capability was gradually diminishing as his Martial Dao Realm advanced.

Fang Bai, who once had been able to leap an entire major realm to fight opponents, now found this increasingly challenging. Facing the Half-Step Foundation Establishment Expert Zu Hanjiao, he even felt some difficulty.

Thus, over the past two days, Fang Bai made certain arrangements, not aiming to kill Zu Hanjiao outright but merely to trap her for a time, providing the trio with a safe window to escape.

"Brother Li, do you think Fang Bai will be okay? I can't help but feel uneasy..."

Xia Chenyu gazed at the fluctuating figures of Martial Artists in the lake, worry etched across her brows.

In contrast, Li Chenzhou appeared much calmer.

"Though Zu Hanjiao's strength is formidable, Brother Fang's life-saving methods are numerous. Don't worry—even if Brother Fang cannot defeat Zu Hanjiao, escaping will not be a problem for him."

Li Chenzhou reassured her in a low voice.

"Yes, Fang Bai did say the formation he set up is quite powerful, capable of trapping Zu Hanjiao for a long time... Hopefully, that's the case."

Though Xia Chenyu said this, her brows remained furrowed. Turning her gaze toward the northern mountains, she silently prayed in her heart.

The spot where they stood was relatively secluded, with no Martial Artists within several hundred meters. Moreover, they spoke in hushed tones, ensuring that no one else could overhear them.

"Chenyu! Is it really you?"

Just then, a figure flew in from afar. In a matter of breaths, they landed before Xia Chenyu, calling out with surprise and delight.

Xia Chenyu focused her gaze, and upon clearly seeing the person's face, her beautiful eyes widened, pointing a trembling finger. "Taoist Priest... Taoist Priest Wu?"

"It's me! It's me! I am Wu De!"

The man nodded repeatedly, exclaiming with excitement, "It's been almost two years since we parted, and at last, we meet again! If Ruhua and the others knew you were here, they'd definitely be overjoyed!"

The man standing before Xia Chenyu was short and plump, round as a ball, wearing a wrinkled and ill-fitting Taoist robe. With broken eyebrows, squinty eyes, a red nose, and a disheveled, lecherous appearance, who else could it be but Wu De?

A confidant Fang Bai had made in the secular world, Wu De was not only familiar with all Fang Bai's female companions but also knew them very well.

Similarly, the women from the secular world, such as Xia Chenyu, were all old acquaintances of Wu De.

Their unexpected meeting on the bank of Linghu Lake was filled with both astonishment and joy.

"Taoist Priest Wu, aside from Ruhua, do you know where the others are?"

Hearing Wu De mention "Ruhua and the others" indicated he had met more secular-world companions than just her and Dongfang Ruhua. Xia Chenyu couldn't help becoming even more excited, her voice trembling as she spoke.

"Haha, I know plenty!"

Wu De said proudly, "Have you heard of the Huaxia Sect? It was jointly established by a group of people from the secular world. It has now become a second-tier sect in the True Martial Realm! The first Sect Master of the Huaxia Sect is my Brother Fang's elder sister, Fang Yun. The elders and stewards include many others..."

Wu De rattled off names, including his own as well as Tang Wenrou, Qin Wumei, Ye Yaorao, Su Linglong, Dongfang Ruhua, Linghu Qianjiao, Linghu Baimei, Zhuge Lian, Ghost Hand, Niu Ben, and Xiong Yingxiong.

These individuals were either Fang Bai's confidantes or his disciples and friends. Not only had they founded the sect, but many had become founding elders or stewards of the sect.

According to Wu De, the Huaxia Sect now had over ten thousand disciples, with several hundred of them from the secular world forming the sect's elite core, providing steadfast support for its rise.

Xia Chenyu and Fang Bai had traversed from the Tiansheng Continent to the Shenwu Continent precisely to find the Huaxia Sect. Now, upon hearing from Wu De that the great majority of their secular-world friends and loved ones were already at Huaxia Sect, she couldn't contain her elation.

If not for Fang Bai's instructions to Li Chenzhou and Xia Chenyu to remain here and wait, she would have already darted to Fang Bai's formation location to share the good news with him.

"By the way, Sister Chenyu, have you come across any news related to my Brother Fang? My main purpose for leaving the Huaxia Sect this time was to find out about Brother Fang."

Wu De suddenly asked.

