

Doctor 1671

Chapter 1671: Together With You

In the secular world, when Shi Xiaolian was only eleven or twelve years old, being so intimate with Fang Bai was irrelevant.

But now, she was a fifteen or sixteen-year-old girl in her blossoming youth, at the verge of awakening to love. With years of longing for Fang Bai day and night, as she hugged Fang Bai's arm at this moment, she felt a peculiar sensation.

Although her cheeks were a bit flushed, with a rosy hue rising on her pink skin, Shi Xiaolian was reluctant to let go. She clung to Fang Bai, nestled by his side, her beautiful eyes fixed unwaveringly on him.

Fang Bai reached out and gently pinched Shi Xiaolian's cheek, smiling, "I'm happy too! Oh, Alian, I have good news for you; I've already found quite a few relatives and friends from the secular world, and I'll take you to meet them soon."

"Really? That's wonderful!"

Shi Xiaolian jumped up excitedly.

In the secular world, because her grandfather passed away, leaving her alone, Shi Xiaolian found Fang Bai and stayed at his home since then, forming close relationships with Fang Bai's family and friends as close as family.

Later, arriving at the Minor World, people from the secular world, being in another realm without close kin, deepened their bonds further.

However, after arriving at the Great World, the secular people scattered far and wide, leading to an unpleasant feeling of isolation.

When Shi Xiaolian first arrived at the Great World, she secretly cried a few times. Luckily, she encountered Huo Zhenying later and joined the Yunhai Sect, where the sect protected and cared for her, restoring smiles on her face.

Yet, sometimes Shi Xiaolian would wake up in the middle of the night with tears soaking her pillows, a situation that has happened countless times.

Knowing Fang Bai had found some secular relatives and friends and thinking about the hope for reunion, Shi Xiaolian was naturally delighted.

“Oh, right, Master, let me introduce you: This is my big brother, his name is Fang Bai... Big brother, this is my master, Elder Huo of the Yunhai Sect, her name is Huo Zhenying...”

Shi Xiaolian introduced Fang Bai and Huo Zhenying to each other.

“A hero emerges from a young age. Brother Fang is so young yet possesses the strength to slay a Thunder Tribulation level one expert, truly remarkable!”

Originally, in Huo Zhenying’s eyes, Fang Bai was just an exceptionally talented junior, but now she regarded Fang Bai as an equal, calling him “Brother.”

This is the benefit brought by strength.

Fang Bai smiled humbly and said, “If it weren’t for Han Dongweng’s carelessness and underestimation, I would have had quite the trouble killing him.”

Huo Zhenying replied, “That might be... Yet your strength still amazes me.”

After exchanging a few pleasantries, when the topic turned to Han Dongweng and Yang Heng from the Blue Sea Sect, Huo Zhenying couldn’t help but worry for Fang Bai, saying, “Han Dongweng is an Elder of the Blue Sea Sect, and Yang Heng is an outstanding disciple among the young members. You killed them, and this matter will quickly reach the Blue Sea Sect, as they won’t let it rest!”

At Danxia Manor, there were quite a few experts coveting Fang Bai's cultivation resources, and besides Han Dongweng and his apprentice, a few Thunder Tribulation experts and Soul Severing Perfection experts pursued Fang Bai here.

However, after Fang Bai killed Han Dongweng and his apprentice, those chasing experts were intimidated by Fang Bai's immense power, with some leaving quietly and others watching from afar, not daring to approach.

The process of Fang Bai slaying Han Dongweng and his apprentice was witnessed by numerous experts, thus it is foreseeable that soon this news will reach the Blue Sea Sect, compelling them to mobilize and hunt down Fang Bai, putting him in great trouble.

To prevent the leakage of this information, Fang Bai would have to silence all the witnesses, which Huo Zhenying deemed impossible.

Even for Fang Bai, or for a Thunder Tribulation level two expert, it's out of reach.

"In my opinion, Brother Fang should leave immediately, the farther away from the Blue Sea Sect, the better! With your strength, Brother Fang, if you hide far away, it will be difficult for the Blue Sea Sect to chase you down!"

Huo Zhenying advised kindly.

Before Fang Bai could respond, Shi Xiaolian was already anxious, hugging Fang Bai's arm, "I just got to see big brother, how could I let him go? If he must go, then I want to go with him!"

Huo Zhenying didn't expect her disciple to be so attached to Fang Bai and willing to abandon the sect she had stayed in for several years just to follow him.

Huo Zhenying sighed, "Silly girl, you should understand the power of the Blue Sea Sect. Their Supreme Elder is a Thunder Tribulation level three expert! You wouldn't want your big brother to be in danger, would you?"

Shi Xiaolian, having stayed in the Yunhai Sect for years, naturally understood what a Thunder Tribulation level three expert meant. Her face turned pale, anxiously saying, “Then... what should we do? Anyway, I don’t want big brother to leave...”

Pausing, she suddenly remembered something and grabbed Huo Zhenying’s sleeve, saying, “Right, Master, our sect’s Supreme Elder is also a Thunder Tribulation level three expert, right? We can have big brother stay at Yunhai Sect, then see if those Blue Sea Sect people dare to cause trouble!”

Huo Zhenying smiled bitterly, “Child, things aren’t as simple as you think...”

Turning to Fang Bai, she said, “Brother Fang, it’s not that I don’t want you to come to Yunhai Sect, just...”

Fang Bai smiled and said, “Elder Huo, I understand your dilemma. Since I dared to create this situation, I fear nothing from the Blue Sea Sect!”

Fang Bai knew he’d developed a mortal enmity with the Blue Sea Sect. If Yunhai Sect dared to shelter and protect him, it would mean going to the brink with the Blue Sea Sect.

For one Fang Bai, risking comprehensive conflict with the Blue Sea Sect—even if Huo Zhenying was willing, the other higher-ups of Yunhai Sect wouldn’t be.

After all, if the two great sects clashed on a large scale, it entailed a huge risk, possibly leading to the annihilation of one sect.

Thus Fang Bai never intended for Yunhai Sect to become involved from the beginning.

“If the Blue Sea Sect people don’t come, so be it, but if they do, the more that come, the more I will kill!”

Fang Bai’s eyes glinted coldly, his killing intent overflowing.

“Big brother, whatever happens, I will be with you!”

Shi Xiaolian stood by Fang Bai, her face determined.

Fang Bai patted her head and said, "If you follow me, you'll just be a little burden! Once I deal with the Blue Sea Sect issues, I will come to find you!"

"I won't!"

Shi Xiaolian shook her head resolutely, stubbornly saying, "I've finally seen you, and I never want to be separated again! Big brother, if you... don't let me go with you, then... I'll cry!"

As she spoke, her eyes were already red, with tears about to fall.

Fang Bai chuckled helplessly, "You little girl... really..."

Huo Zhenying lightly scolded, "Xiao Lian, stop messing around!"

"I'm not messing around! I just want to be with Brother Fang!"

Shi Xiaolian raised her sharp chin, trying hard not to let her tears fall.

Chapter 1672: Dilemma

This was the first time Shi Xiaolian called Fang Bai "Brother Fang." She remembered that all the female confidants around Fang Bai used to call him that.

Shi Xiaolian knew that Fang Bai always saw her as a little sister. In the past, she didn't think much of it, but as she grew older and her feelings blossomed, she wanted to shed the image of the "little sister."

That "Brother Fang" just now was uttered by Shi Xiaolian with great courage. After she said it, she sneaked a glance at Fang Bai. Seeing no reaction from him, she was relieved and secretly delighted at heart.

Shi Xiaolian wished to be one of those female confidants beside Fang Bai, like Su Linglong and Xia Chenyu. Saying “Brother Fang” this time felt like she had successfully taken the first step.

Huo Zhenying knew that although Shi Xiaolian was young, she had a very stubborn personality. Once she decided to be with Fang Bai, no one could stop her.

Huo Zhenying was very worried that Shi Xiaolian would just follow Fang Bai and leave.

Since Shi Xiaolian entered the Yunhai Sect, including himself, the senior members of Yunhai Sect had invested countless resources and effort to nurture her. If she left now, all that the Yunhai Sect had invested would be in vain.

What worried Huo Zhenying more was that if Shi Xiaolian insisted on leaving, the senior members of the sect would not let her go easily. With Shi Xiaolian’s stubborn and persistent nature, she was capable of doing anything.

If something happened to Shi Xiaolian, the Yunhai Sect would deeply regret it, and Fang Bai would not let it go easily.

Although Yunhai Sect had six Thunder Tribulation Realm experts—one at the third level, one at the second, and four at the first—who were not afraid of Fang Bai, Fang Bai’s ability to kill a first-level Thunder Tribulation expert showed that his strength should not be underestimated.

If something happened to Shi Xiaolian and Fang Bai was determined to seek revenge, it would be a significant problem for the Yunhai Sect.

Of course, Huo Zhenying did not want this to happen, so he was preparing to persuade Shi Xiaolian to abandon her idea of leaving the Yunhai Sect.

At the same time, he would also appeal to Fang Bai with emotion and reason, striving to have Fang Bai persuade Shi Xiaolian as well.

In Huo Zhenying's view, Shi Xiaolian staying in Yunhai Sect and Fang Bai going away to avoid the pursuit of the Blue Sea Sect was the safest plan.

After a while, when the Blue Sea Sect relaxed its pursuit of Fang Bai, or when Fang Bai and Shi Xiaolian's strength grew so strong that they were not afraid of the Blue Sea Sect, they could be reunited.

However, Huo Zhenying's idea was completely wishful thinking. When he proposed it, neither Fang Bai nor Shi Xiaolian agreed.

Fang Bai only wanted Shi Xiaolian to stay in the Yunhai Sect temporarily, planning to take her back to the Nine Heavens Immortal Emperor Palace later to reunite with those secular friends and relatives.

Shi Xiaolian's attitude was even more determined. Wherever Fang Bai went, she would follow, and no one could separate them.

But considering the teacher-student relationship with Huo Zhenying, Shi Xiaolian most hoped that Fang Bai would return to Yunhai Sect with her.

She believed that with the protection of Yunhai Sect, Fang Bai would not have to worry about the pursuit of the Blue Sea Sect.

From the perspective of sect interests, Huo Zhenying naturally did not want Fang Bai, who already had a deep enmity with the Blue Sea Sect, to go to the Yunhai Sect. But seeing Shi Xiaolian's stance, only if Fang Bai went to the Yunhai Sect would she return; otherwise, he might not be able to take her away.

Huo Zhenying felt very helpless and smiled bitterly at Fang Bai, saying, "Brother Fang, you should be very clear about what kind of result will come if Xiao Lian follows you. If you care about Xiao Lian, please try to persuade her."

Fang Bai could feel that Shi Xiaolian had a deep attachment to him. If he forcibly left her at the Yunhai Sect, she would be heartbroken, but taking her away now also seemed inappropriate. After thinking it over, he said to Huo Zhenying, "Alian and I will stay at your Yunhai Sect for a while!"

Huo Zhenying was taken aback, then awkwardly said, "This..."

Fang Bai going to the Yunhai Sect would undoubtedly drag the Yunhai Sect into the conflict between Fang Bai and the Blue Sea Sect, damaging Yunhai Sect's interests. This was something Huo Zhenying did not wish to see, and the senior members of Yunhai Sect might, for various reasons, refuse Fang Bai entry.

But Huo Zhenying also understood that if he directly refused Fang Bai's request, not only would it displease Fang Bai, but it would also alienate Shi Xiaolian from the Yunhai Sect. For a moment, he did not know what to do.

Fang Bai seemed to know what Huo Zhenying was worried about and said with a smile, "Don't worry. I am just accompanying Alian to stay at your sect temporarily. If the Blue Sea Sect comes, I will leave immediately and definitely not burden your sect."

Huo Zhenying smiled bitterly, "If you leave, Xiao Lian will still follow you! At that time, I won't be able to persuade her, and I'm afraid the senior members of the sect won't let her leave, and there might be a conflict because of this..."

At this point, he glanced at Shi Xiaolian and sighed, "Xiao Lian, you really make it difficult for me!"

Shi Xiaolian called out "Master," then bit her lip gently and remained silent.

Fang Bai smiled and said, "We'll talk about this later. I believe there will definitely be a perfect result by then."

Huo Zhenying thought over and over and could not come up with a good solution, so he nodded and said, "In that case, let's be on our way!"

Immediately, Huo Zhenying led the way, and Fang Bai, with Shi Xiaolian, followed flying on the enlarged blade of the Blood-Drinking Mad Blade, heading towards the Yunhai Sect.

During the flight, Huo Zhenying occasionally turned his head to look at Fang Bai and Shi Xiaolian, feeling a bit sour. He thought to himself that little girl Xiao Lian, who used to cling to him like a shadow when she first entered Yunhai Sect, now seemed to have eyes only for Fang Bai after encountering him. He, as the master, became the extra person.

“A grown woman cannot be kept at home! She forgets her master once she has a lover!”

Huo Zhenying sighed emotionally in his heart.

Huo Zhenying was not a fool; he could see that Shi Xiaolian’s attachment to Fang Bai was not a sibling emotion but clearly the kind of entangled romantic love between lovers.

“Brother Fang, do you know our Yunhai Sect?”

“I’ve heard of it for the first time.”

“Let me tell you, Yunhai Sect is the second strongest sect within a hundred thousand miles, second only to the Blue Sea Sect. Yunhai Sect has tens of thousands of disciples, and the strongest is the Supreme Elder, a third-level Thunder Tribulation expert...”

“Alian, you’re telling the secrets of Yunhai Sect to an outsider like me; aren’t you afraid your master will scold you?”

“I’m not afraid; Brother Fang, you are not an outsider. Besides, Master is cold on the outside but warm on the inside, very protective of me, and won’t scold me!”

“I’d like to hear about some interesting things you encountered when you first entered the Three Thousand Worlds...”

“Alright.”

...

During the journey, Fang Bai and Shi Xiaolian talked about some things that happened to them after entering the Three Thousand Worlds, occasionally letting out knowing laughs.

Shi Xiaolian felt that this moment was the happiest and most joyful since she came to the Three Thousand Worlds.

Standing on the enlarged blade of the Blood-Drinking Mad Blade, she gently leaned her body against Fang Bai, a smile on her lips, hoping that they would never reach the Yunhai Sect.

Chapter 1673: The Emissary from Danxia Manor

The Yunhai Sect is located in the central region of the Tian'ao Realm. The sect's territory is surrounded by lush peaks and abundant spiritual energy, making it a rare cultivation holy land.

Yunhai Sect has tens of thousands of disciples scattered across eighty-one mountain peaks. Each peak is adorned with exquisite pavilions and residences, and the entire mountain is lined with a variety of artificially cultivated mystical herbs, with delightful fragrances, chirping birds, and buzzing insects, creating an idyllic paradise.

This morning, the Yunhai Sect welcomed a special guest.

The guest was from Danxia Manor. If Fang Bai, Huo Zhenying, and Shi Xiaolian were present, they would recognize him at a glance as Zhuang Ling, the Steward of Danxia Manor.

"I wonder what brings Steward Zhuang to our sect today?"

Although Zhuang Ling was only a steward and his cultivation level was merely at Soul Severing Perfection, due to Danxia Manor's special status in the Heaven Fiend Realm, Yunhai Sect's Sect Master Lan Peiyu personally received him.

In Lan Peiyu's eyes, Danxia Manor housed a Thunder Tribulation third realm expert, who was also one of the few Royal Grade Pill Masters in the Heaven Fiend Realm. Becoming friends with Danxia Manor was beneficial and harmless to the Yunhai Sect; it was quite necessary.

However, Danxia Manor and Yunhai Sect only maintained business dealings without a deep relationship. The sudden visit of Steward Zhuang from Danxia Manor was puzzling.

Zhuang Ling smiled slightly and said to Lan Peiyu, who was seated at the head, "Congratulations, Sect Master Lan. Your esteemed sect is about to receive a joyous occasion."

Lan Peiyu frowned and asked curiously, "Oh? From where does this joy arise?"

The other high-ranking members of Yunhai Sect present exchanged glances, all filled with curiosity.

Zhuang Ling said, "Our Manor Lord He has a son named Lin Feng, who just turned thirty this year and is currently at the initial stage of the Soul Severing realm. Having heard of your sect's disciple Shi Xiaolian, known for her extraordinary talent and peerless beauty, he wishes to propose a martial alliance with her. Manor Lord He specially sent me to speak on his behalf, hoping that Sect Master Lan would fulfill this beautiful matter."

"This..."

Upon hearing this, Lan Peiyu exchanged a glance with the other high-ranking members of Yunhai Sect in attendance, frowning even more.

"I have heard of your Manor Lord's son, He Linfeng. I know of his Innate Spiritual Root; he is elegant and outstanding, a phoenix among men. However... How could He Linfeng, who has never met our sect's disciple Shi Xiaolian, think of forming a martial alliance with her?"

Lan Peiyu pondered slightly and asked curiously.

Usually, the proposal of a martial alliance comes after the meeting of two martial artists, where mutual admiration could lead to such a proposal.

For a powerful faction like Danxia Manor, the marriage of the Manor Lord's son should be considered with utmost caution. Such a sudden proposal seems rather hasty.

Zhuang Ling gave a serene smile and said, "Sect Master Lan may not be aware, but Shi Xiaolian, along with her master, recently attended an auction in Danxia City. It was there that our Manor Lord's son saw her, became enamored by her celestial beauty at first sight, and has never been able to forget her since..."

Huo Zhenying leading Shi Xiaolian and several junior disciples out for training was known to Lan Peiyu. Their appearance at Danxia Manor was normal, after all, it is a large city gathering millions of martial artists and many Pill Masters. Disciples from major sects usually visit there during their training.

The auction, which could attract Huo Zhenying's participation, must have featured Royal Grade Spirit Pills. Unexpectedly, that girl Shi Xiaolian caught the attention of the Manor Lord's son of Danxia Manor.

Lan Peiyu isn't opposed to disciples' romantic pursuits, but Shi Xiaolian holds a special status in Yunhai Sect, so Lan Peiyu considers matters related to her more thoroughly.

Shi Xiaolian is a rare Innate Spiritual Root in Yunhai Sect over the centuries, possessing extraordinary aptitude and high Wuxing. She comprehends Martial Arts Techniques effortlessly, endearing herself to all high-ranking members of Yunhai Sect.

Even the Supreme Elder of Yunhai Sect believes that with Shi Xiaolian's aptitude and Wuxing, coupled with the sect's abundant cultivation resources, she can hope to reach the Soul Severing realm within ten years, and perhaps break through to the Thunder Tribulation realm in twenty years.

If Shi Xiaolian could conquer the Thunder Tribulation realm before the age of forty, she would become the youngest Thunder Tribulation expert in the history of Yunhai Sect and the Heaven Fiend Realm, with unlimited potential.

Such a martial prodigy, how could Lan Peiyu easily let her go?

Lan Peiyu even considers passing the position of Sect Master to Shi Xiaolian in the future, allowing her to lead Yunhai Sect forward to greater glory.

Actually, even if Shi Xiaolian forms a martial alliance with someone, it wouldn't hinder her from succeeding as Sect Master in the future.

However, Lan Peiyu is concerned that if Shi Xiaolian forms a martial alliance with another man, should their affection deepen, they might choose to live in seclusion, living as an immortal couple in some hidden place, which would be a great loss for Yunhai Sect.

Thus, unless absolutely necessary, Lan Peiyu is not willing to let Shi Xiaolian form a martial alliance with another man, or leave Yunhai Sect.

This is also the consensus among all high-ranking members of Yunhai Sect.

Therefore, upon hearing Zhuang Ling's proposal, all Yunhai Sect high-ranking members, including Lan Peiyu, instinctively felt resistant.

Yet, Lan Peiyu couldn't think of a good reason to refuse Zhuang Ling.

Moreover, He Linfeng, as Manor Lord He's son, is an outstanding individual among the junior disciples, reaching the initial stage of Soul Severing realm at just over thirty, a rare martial prodigy, indeed a pride of heaven.

If He Linfeng matches with Shi Xiaolian, and if personal interests aren't considered, Lan Peiyu feels they are indeed a heavenly match.

"Why? Does Sect Master Lan feel that the son of our Manor Lord is unworthy of your sect's Shi Xiaolian?"

Seeing Lan Peiyu remaining silent with a frown after he spoke, the smile on Zhuang Ling's face faded slightly, and his tone carried a hint of accusation.

In terms of overall strength, Danxia Manor may not surpass Yunhai Sect, but with multiple Pill Masters, it has a vast network and numerous friends. If a conflict arises, the martial artists aiding Danxia Manor would far exceed those supporting Yunhai Sect.

For many sects, offending Yunhai Sect may not matter, but offending Danxia Manor means losing access to their spirit pills, impacting cultivation progress, which is no small loss.

Therefore, in the Heaven Fiend Realm, unless they are sworn enemies, no one willingly provokes Danxia Manor.

As the Steward of Danxia Manor, Zhuang Ling naturally knows this advantage, so he speaks confidently, not fearing to anger Lan Peiyu.

Zhuang Ling even believes that for the Manor Lord's son to fancy Shi Xiaolian is both Shi Xiaolian's and Yunhai Sect's fortune.

If Yunhai Sect could ally with Danxia Manor through marriage, their disciples' cultivation spirit pills would receive priority supplies, an advantage that the high-ranking members of Yunhai Sect wouldn't overlook, thus making refusal unreasonable.

Based on the foregoing, Zhuang Ling is confident about the marriage alliance between the two parties.

Chapter 1674: He Is Not an Outsider

Zhuang Ling could easily think of what Lan Peiyu had already thought of, so even though Zhuang Ling's tone was somewhat unfriendly, she wasn't angry and said with a smile, "What is Steward Zhuang saying? Your manor's He Linfeng is indeed a perfect match for our Sect's disciple Shi Xiaolian. How about this, once Shi Xiaolian returns, I will consult her opinion before giving your manor a reply. Is that acceptable?"

Zhuang Ling replied sourly, "As long as Sect Master Lan agrees, how can a junior disciple dare to have an opinion?"

Lan Peiyu smiled wryly, "Steward Zhuang might not know, Shi Xiaolian may be young, but she is extremely strong-willed. Forcing her would only have the opposite effect. Therefore, this matter needs to be discussed with her slowly, and cannot be rushed."

Zhuang Ling assumed Lan Peiyu was making excuses, his tone growing increasingly cold as he snorted, "Sect Master Lan's words seem to lack sincerity... How about this, you discuss it first, and please provide me with a deadline, so our Danxia Manor can send someone to inquire about the result at that time."

He stood up, muttering to himself, "I heard that the Blue Sea Sect also has several outstanding female disciples. I'll take a trip there to see."

Though he spoke softly, Lan Peiyu and others heard his words clearly, like thunderous sound.

Lan Peiyu felt a tightness in her chest and quickly exchanged glances with the Sect's high-ranking officials on either side, all seeing a hint of worry in each other's eyes.

In recent years, the Yunhai Sect and the Blue Sea Sect have increasingly clashed over sect interests, and competition has grown more intense. Though it hasn't yet reached a breaking point, both sects' high-ranking members understand that this day will come sooner or later.

Therefore, both sects are secretly forming alliances and seeking support to prepare for future conflicts.

Originally, the strengths of the Yunhai Sect and Blue Sea Sect were evenly matched, and neither could suppress the other.

However, if either side formed a marriage alliance with the transcendent power of Danxia Manor, it would create a coalition able to gain an overwhelming advantage over other rival sects.

Hence, a marriage alliance between Danxia Manor and the Blue Sea Sect was something the Yunhai Sect was unwilling to see.

"Steward Zhuang, please stay."

Seeing Zhuang Ling about to leave, Lan Peiyu hastily called out to stop him.

Zhuang Ling curled a corner of his mouth into a smirk of triumph, clasped his hands behind his back, and said without looking back, "Does Sect Master Lan have something to say? I have urgent matters to attend to!"

Lan Peiyu knew what he meant by "urgent matters" was indeed the intention to seek marriage alliances with the Blue Sea Sect, and couldn't let him leave. "Steward Zhuang, we can discuss this. How about this: I'll first agree on behalf of Shi Xiaolian to the marriage alliance with your manor. Once Shi Xiaolian returns from her training, I'll send someone to bring her to your manor to meet He Linfeng. If the two young people get along well, then the marriage alliance can be concluded. How about it?"

Zhuang Ling's expression softened a bit, nodding, "That... could work. Then I'll return to report. I believe the Manor Master will be delighted upon hearing this news."

Lan Peiyu feigned happiness, while inwardly sighing and wondering how Shi Xiaolian would react upon hearing this, as she had agreed without consulting Shi Xiaolian first.

What if she firmly refused, what then?

Ah well, when the time comes, she would lower herself to persuade her, offering some benefits, hoping that Shi Xiaolian would agree for the sake of the sect's greater good.

For now, Zhuang Ling took his leave, preparing to report back, and Lan Peiyu asked Elder Hai from the Sect to escort him out.

Just as Zhuang Ling and Elder Hai stepped out of the Sect Master Hall, a disciple stationed at the mountain's base flew down to report loudly, "Sect Master, Huo Zhenying is here with her direct disciple Shi Xiaolian, seeking a meeting with you."

Upon hearing the name "Shi Xiaolian," Zhuang Ling's eyebrows raised, and he smiled at Elder Hai at his side, "Haha, it seems Shi Xiaolian's return is quite timely! I won't rush off; I'll stay and listen to your Sect Master's inquiry with Shi Xiaolian in person."

Lan Peiyu did not expect Huo Zhenying and Shi Xiaolian to arrive back at such a moment, she couldn't help but smile wryly and shake her head, contemplating before saying, "Let Elder Huo and Shi Xiaolian in! Steward Zhuang hasn't left yet, right? Invite him in as well!"

While speaking, Zhuang Ling was already striding back, seated himself back where he was before, and fixed his eyes on the entrance, seemingly waiting for Huo Zhenying and Shi Xiaolian to enter.

A dozen breaths later, three Martial Artist auras approached from outside the Sect Master Hall, prompting Lan Peiyu to ask, "Elder Huo, have you brought an outsider?"

Huo Zhenying, though outside, had her voice carry inside, "To report to the Sect Master, he is no outsider. He is Shi Xiaolian's Martial Dao companion, with the surname Fang and given name Bai."

Hearing the words "Shi Xiaolian's Martial Dao companion," Lan Peiyu was initially stunned, then felt a jolt in her heart, involuntarily glancing at Zhuang Ling.

Zhuang Ling's eyes narrowed slightly, a sharp glint shooting out, and his expression turned unfriendly.

The other high-ranking Yunhai Sect members inside the hall exchanged puzzled looks.

"Shi Xiaolian went out for training, so how did she suddenly return with a Martial Dao companion? Normally, this wouldn't be an issue, but with Zhuang Ling present and the sect master having promised the marriage alliance with Danxia Manor, this is a thorny situation to handle now. Mishandling it could mean big trouble!"

All the Yunhai Sect high-ranking members thought this in their hearts.

Lan Peiyu withdrew her gaze from Zhuang Ling, took a deep breath, and said in a solemn tone, "Elder Huo, you all may enter!"

Footsteps sounded outside the Sect Master Hall, and the three silhouettes quickly appeared at the entrance.

The people inside the hall turned their gaze to these figures, unable to hide their surprise.

Huo Zhenying was an Elder of the Yunhai Sect and a powerful practitioner of the first stage of Heavenly Tribulation, so she should have been leading the way.

Yet, the scene Lan Peiyu and others observed was the trio walking side by side, none in the lead.

The two walking beside Huo Zhenying included a striking young man in white robes, and the other was the Shi Xiaolian whom Lan Peiyu and Zhuang Ling had just been discussing.

Zhuang Ling had once seen Shi Xiaolian at a Danxia Manor auction, so he recognized her immediately. Seeing her hand in hand with the young man in white, walking shoulder to shoulder, a cold glint flashed in his eyes.

The ideal Martial Dao companion for the Manor Master's son, how could she be so intimate with another man?

Shi Xiaolian was infuriating! The young man in white was even more detestable!

Lan Peiyu sensed the murderous intent emanating from Zhuang Ling towards the young man in white and deliberately coughed as a reminder. She thought, even though Zhuang Ling held an ultra-worldly status, he couldn't act openly in the Sect Master Hall, as it would disregard the presence of the high-ranking members of the Yunhai Sect.

"Elder Huo, please have a seat. Shi Xiaolian, come here, I have some questions for you."

As the trio walked into the great hall, Lan Peiyu solemnly addressed them.

Chapter 1675: Cleansing the Sect

Huo Zhenying entered the Sect Master Hall and felt a heavy atmosphere. Then he saw Zhuang Ling sitting at the high seat, and couldn't help but show a look of surprise, not knowing what business the Steward of Danxia Manor had at this sect.

Out of politeness, Huo Zhenying nodded and smiled at Zhuang Ling, then sat in a chair to the side, looking thoughtfully at Sect Master Lan Peiyu.

Before returning to Yunhai Sect, Shi Xiaolian had finally mustered the courage to hold Fang Bai's hand, unwilling to let go for even a moment. But now with commands from the Sect Master, she had no choice but to obey, pouting as she released Fang Bai's hand and stepped forward lightly.

"Sect Master..."

"Xiao Lian, He Linfeng, the son of the Manor Master of Danxia Manor, wishes to form a Martial Dao partnership with you. What do you think?"

With Zhuang Ling present, Lan Peiyu didn't want to beat around the bush, so she came right to the point and asked.

As soon as she spoke, not only was Shi Xiaolian stunned, but Huo Zhenying was also taken aback.

Behind Shi Xiaolian, the faint smile that Fang Bai had on his lips vanished, replaced by a hint of coldness.

On the way to Yunhai Sect, Fang Bai had sensed Shi Xiaolian's deep love for him. Although he could not immediately accept the transformation of this "little sister" into a close confidante, he would never allow Shi Xiaolian's fate to be dictated by others.

Huo Zhenying looked at Fang Bai, then at Shi Xiaolian, feeling that she had to speak up; otherwise, who knows how much rebellious and oppositional sentiment the Sect Master's words might provoke in Shi Xiaolian and Fang Bai.

"Sect Master, Xiao Lian and Fang Bai have known each other since before, they were childhood friends..."

Before she could finish speaking, Lan Peiyu interrupted her with a wave of her hand, saying in a deep voice, "What childhood friends, the past doesn't count! Now that Shi Xiaolian is a disciple of my Yunhai Sect, she must listen to me in all matters!"

Pausing, her gaze bypassed Shi Xiaolian to look at Fang Bai behind her, and asked coldly, "I don't care who you are, in any case, Shi Xiaolian is not someone you are worthy of. If you have any sense, leave her side!"

Perhaps realizing her words were heavy, Lan Peiyu softened her tone slightly and continued, "Here's the deal: as long as you leave Shi Xiaolian, I'll compensate you with some cultivation resources, enough for your next ten years of cultivation. How about it?"

"No!"

Shi Xiaolian bit her lip, suddenly turning her head to glance at Fang Bai, and said defiantly, "Sect Master, you can't make him leave!"

Lan Peiyu was a strong Sect Master, saying one thing and meaning it in the sect; no disciple ever dared to defy her.

In Lan Peiyu's impression, Shi Xiaolian was usually obedient and mild, so she didn't expect her to defy her in front of the high-ranking members and Zhuang Ling, who was an outsider. She couldn't help but give a sharp look.

"Shi Xiaolian, do you not even listen to me now?"

Lan Peiyu called out softly, her voice filled with authority and faint pressure.

If it were other disciples, seeing the Sect Master angry, they would have already knelt on the ground, trembling.

But Shi Xiaolian was unyielding, stubbornly raising her head, and said clearly, "Sect Master, if your words are reasonable, I'll listen. If they're not, I won't! Brother Fang is my friend. He hasn't done anything wrong, nor offended anyone in our sect, so why do you make him leave?"

"You..."

Lan Peiyu was furious, her eyes flaring, her right palm slowly rising.

For Shi Xiaolian to defy the Sect Master like this, it amounted to a grave crime against the sect rules, and it would be entirely justified for Lan Peiyu to kill Shi Xiaolian on the spot.

In her anger, Lan Peiyu indeed harbored some killing intent but reconsidered, realizing Shi Xiaolian was an unparalleled genius disciple of Yunhai Sect in centuries, and she couldn't bear to harm her.

"Sect Master, don't!"

Huo Zhenying, seeing the Sect Master's anger, was aghast and rushed forward, shielding Shi Xiaolian behind her, pleading, "Xiao Lian is young and doesn't understand..."

Shi Xiaolian said aggrievedly, "Master, I'm not a child anymore..."

Huo Zhenying looked back at Shi Xiaolian and softly said, "Xiao Lian, listen to your Master, don't anger the Sect Master anymore!"

Within Yunhai Sect, Shi Xiaolian held the strongest affection for Huo Zhenying. Huo Zhenying always treated Shi Xiaolian like her own granddaughter and couldn't bear to see her continue to defy the Sect Master and possibly make an irreparable mistake.

Zhuang Ling chuckled from the side, saying, "Sect Master Lan, don't be angry. This matter seems easy to resolve to me..."

He glanced at Fang Bai, and his voice carried a chilling intent as he continued, "With a junior, why babble? Just force him to leave, and all problems will be solved, won't they? If he's unyielding, beat him until he submits! If he still doesn't get it, slap him to death!"

Upon hearing this, Shi Xiaolian immediately became unwilling, her beautiful eyes wide open as she pointed angrily at Zhuang Ling, "Hey, how can you speak like this? What has my Brother Fang done to you? You're a guest here. If we forcibly drove you away, would you be pleased?"

Zhuang Ling's expression darkened, and he snorted, "Rude girl! Sect Master Lan, are all your Yunhai Sect disciples this ill-bred?"

His last remark essentially insulted all Yunhai Sect disciples, causing the present high-ranking members of Yunhai Sect to look displeased, silently wondering how Zhuang Ling could speak so poorly, as Shi Xiaolian was the only one to offend him, yet he implied the entire Yunhai Sect disciples lacked discipline.

Lan Peiyu took a deep breath, suppressing her anger, and looked at Fang Bai, who had remained silent with indifference, saying, "Did you hear what I just said? If you don't want Shi Xiaolian punished, leave her side!"

"And if I don't leave?"

Fang Bai sneered.

No one expected him to be able to smile at this moment.

Lan Peiyu was surprised by Fang Bai's composure, and said coldly, "You also heard what Steward Zhuang said. If you don't leave, I'll act!"

Fang Bai nodded and waved to Shi Xiaolian, saying, "Xiao Lian, it seems your sect doesn't welcome me! Let's go!"

Shi Xiaolian responded with an "Oh", obediently walked to his side, and held Fang Bai's hand again.

When Shi Xiaolian was defying the Sect Master earlier, she had been somewhat apprehensive, but Fang Bai's composure gave her confidence and courage, making her feel that with Brother Fang by her side, there was nothing to fear.

Even if it meant death, Shi Xiaolian felt that being with Brother Fang was a kind of happiness.

Watching Fang Bai and Shi Xiaolian holding hands, Lan Peiyu almost lost control of her emotions and erupted on the spot.

Zhuang Ling remained silent, merely glancing at Lan Peiyu with a constant cold sneer.

The other high-ranking members of Yunhai Sect looked at Shi Xiaolian and Fang Bai, then at Lan Peiyu, shaking their heads and sighing, looking troubled.

"Ignoring master's orders and defying the Sect Master, akin to a rebellious crime, what use is such a disciple?"

Lan Peiyu closed her eyes, gritted her teeth, and made a harsh decision, "Elder Huo, according to the sect rules, you take care of this!"

Chapter 1676: My Sect

As soon as Lan Peiyu spoke these words, Huo Zhenying trembled all over, an unbelievable expression on his face.

The high-ranking members of Yunhai Sect present were also moved, feeling that the Sect Master was too harsh in punishing Xiao Lian.

Zhuang Ling frowned slightly, thinking that he was ordered to come for the marriage alliance, and if Xiao Lian were executed, it would be difficult to explain to He Linfeng, the Sect Master's son.

Inside the grand hall, there was a deathly silence, and the heavy atmosphere was suffocating.

"Alian, are you afraid?"

Fang Bai turned his head to the side and asked Shi Xiaolian, who was standing next to him.

Shi Xiaolian slightly smiled, showing no trace of fear on her face, and softly replied, "With Brother Fang here, Alian is not afraid!"

Fang Bai patted her small hand and said, "Rest assured, I'm here, and no one can hurt you!"

He turned his head and locked eyes with Lan Peiyu, sneeringly saying, "Sect Master Lan, may I ask: Was your Martial Dao partner also forcibly designated by the previous Sect Master?"

"You're courting death!"

Lan Peiyu's pupils contracted, her gaze sharp as a knife, seemingly able to pierce through Fang Bai's body, while a trace of Thunder Tribulation Expert's pressure bore down on Fang Bai.

Lan Peiyu was a second realm Thunder Tribulation Expert. The pressure she emitted was immensely powerful, and if it were any other Soul Severing beginner martial artist, they would have been crushed.

But Fang Bai seemed completely unaffected, instead stepping forward with a loud voice, "Sect Master Lan dares not answer my question, which means the answer is no! I ask you, Sect Master Lan, if it's something you're unwilling to do yourself, why force Xiao Lian to do it? Where is your conscience?"

Lan Peiyu had been the Sect Master of Yunhai Sect for decades, controlling tens of thousands of disciples under her command, with immense power and a formidable reputation, never had she been questioned so aggressively. Her anger flared, and a killing intent suddenly arose.

"Sect Master!"

Huo Zhenying knew that if he didn't speak up now, Fang Bai and Shi Xiaolian would be bloodied in the hall. He hurriedly said, "Sect Master, please don't act rashly, listen to me first..."

"What more is there to say? Elder Huo, are you reluctant to act?"

Lan Peiyu said coldly.

Huo Zhenying smiled bitterly and said, “The Sect Master may not know, but back in Danxia City, Han Dongweng of the Blue Sea Sect and his disciple Yang Heng insulted Shi Xiaolian. Afterwards, Fang Bai took action and killed the master and disciple... Regardless, Fang Bai did help us vent our anger. If we kill him and word gets out, what will others think of us?”

“What?”

As soon as Huo Zhenying said this, all the high-ranking members of Yunhai Sect at the scene gasped simultaneously, looking at Fang Bai.

Even Steward Zhuang of Danxia Manor was shocked and incredulous.

They all knew Han Dongweng, one of the four Great Elders of the Blue Sea Sect, with a cultivation level at the first realm of Thunder Tribulation.

And this Fang Bai before them, with cultivation level only at the beginner stage of Soul Severing, although his martial artist aura indicated his combat power was much higher than his cultivation level, no one dared to imagine he could actually kill Han Dongweng.

After all, their cultivation levels were a whole major realm apart!

In the path of Martial Dao, the strength gap of a major realm is like heaven and earth!

Huo Zhenying also knew that his words were hard to believe, and solemnly said, “Sect Master, what I said is absolutely true! Please think it over carefully!”

Her meaning was to hope that Lan Peiyu would not kill Fang Bai, so as not to damage the reputation of Yunhai Sect.

In fact, another layer of Huo Zhenying’s meaning was that Fang Bai, at such a young age, being able to kill a first realm Thunder Tribulation Expert, his identity and background should not be underestimated.

If Fang Bai came from a more powerful sect and was killed by Lan Peiyu, it would be a disaster for Yunhai Sect.

Only then did Lan Peiyu realize that she had been too impulsive before. She forced herself to calm down and looked at Fang Bai again, her eyes filled with seriousness and contemplation.

“Xiao Lian, this friend of yours... what sect does he come from?”

Lan Peiyu pondered for a moment before asking, her tone much more relaxed than before.

Huo Zhenying secretly breathed a sigh of relief, knowing that Fang Bai and Shi Xiaolian were temporarily safe. He glanced at Zhuang Ling, finding that he was also staring at Fang Bai with flickering eyes and a gloomy expression, not knowing what he was thinking.

Lan Peiyu’s previous ruthless words had already made Shi Xiaolian somewhat disheartened toward Yunhai Sect. She replied indifferently, “My Brother Fang...”

She originally wanted to say that my Brother Fang is unaffiliated, a loose cultivator, but Fang Bai interjected, “I come from the Nine Heavens Immortal Emperor Palace.”

Shi Xiaolian exclaimed, “Huh?” She turned her head curiously and asked, “Brother Fang, what sect is the Nine Heavens Immortal Emperor Palace? When did you join?”

Fang Bai grinned and said softly, “This sect is something I recently established. In the future, our friends and family from the mortal world will all become its disciples. What do you think, isn’t the name grand?”

Shi Xiaolian nodded with a smile, “Mm, very grand! But what does Nine Heavens mean? What about Immortal Emperor?”

Fang Bai said, “In legend, the Immortal Realm has nine heavens, so the Nine Heavens refer to the Immortal Realm. As for Immortal Emperor, it’s the most powerful existence in the Immortal Realm. I named the sect Nine Heavens Immortal Emperor Palace to imply that in the future, we can all ascend to the Immortal Realm and achieve the Immortal Emperor Position!”

Zhuang Ling snorted coldly and said sarcastically, "What arrogance! In the vast world, only one can achieve the Ninefold Heavy Tribulations out of a hundred thousand Thunder Tribulation Experts, and to successfully transcend them is a rarity among millions. Aspiring to ascend to the Immortal Realm is no easy talk!"

Shi Xiaolian glared with beautiful eyes, pointed at Zhuang Ling without politeness, and said, "You're really something, aren't you? Was I talking to you with Brother Fang? You're so annoying!"

Zhuang Ling, being reprimanded by a junior in public, could not help but become sullen. If it weren't for considering that this girl might become his Manor Master's son's Martial Dao partner in the future, he would have risen in anger and refuted on the spot.

"At such a young age, you've already created your own sect? How many disciples does your sect have?"

Lan Peiyu couldn't help but find it amusing to hear that Fang Bai had founded his own sect and appointed himself as Palace Master. She thought establishing a sect wasn't that easy. Although the name of Fang Bai's sect was grand, whether it could continue to exist and be inherited was another question.

In the current vast world, which major sect with a bold name doesn't have a Thunder Tribulation Expert overseeing it? Which renowned sect doesn't have a millennia-old heritage and foundation? Which one doesn't have thousands upon thousands of disciples protecting it?

Fang Bai smiled indifferently and said, "My sect currently doesn't have many people, but in the future, there will be more. Within ten years, the Nine Heavens Immortal Emperor Palace will likely become the number one strong sect in this vast world of the Three Thousand Great Worlds."

As soon as he said this, everyone in the great hall, except for Shi Xiaolian, was dumbfounded, and then their expressions turned colorful, each unable to hold back laughter as if they had heard the biggest joke in the world.

Chapter 1677: Don't Push Me!

"I know you all want to laugh... if you want to laugh, then laugh. No need to hold it in so painfully!"

Fang Bai surveyed the hall with his gaze and started laughing first.

In the hall, there were more than a dozen people. Apart from Fang Bai, Shi Xiaolian, and Zhuang Ling, all were high-ranking members of the Yunhai Sect. Although they found Fang Bai's words somewhat amusing, out of decorum, they suppressed their laughter.

Shi Xiaolian put on a stern face, feeling that everyone was looking down on her Brother Fang, which was really annoying.

Lan Peiyu considered Fang Bai's words as a joke. Recalling Huo Zhenying's previous words and pondering the consequences, her expression gradually turned grim.

"Elder Huo, were you and Shi Xiaolian present when Fang Bai killed Han Dongweng and his disciple?"

Lan Peiyu suddenly asked.

Huo Zhenying nodded and said, "Present."

Lan Peiyu asked again, "Were there other martial artists present at the time?"

Huo Zhenying replied, "Yes."

Lan Peiyu's face turned even grimmer. "In that case, would the news of Han Dongweng and his disciple being killed not quickly reach the Blue Sea Sect? And wouldn't you two also become implicated?"

Huo Zhenying smiled bitterly, "Indeed so."

Lan Peiyu scolded, "Bringing him here is equivalent to telling the Blue Sea Sect that he is associated with our sect. Wouldn't Blue Sea Sect take their anger out on us, Elder Huo? You were muddle-headed!"

Huo Zhenying glanced at Fang Bai, sighed, and was about to speak when Fang Bai stepped forward and sternly said, "Sect Master Lan, I came here for Alian. If you are worried the Blue Sea Sect will come to settle accounts, I'll take Alian and leave right away."

Knowing Fang Bai had no considerable background as a fallback, Lan Peiyu no longer held back her tone, speaking indifferently, "You may leave, I won't stop you. But Shi Xiaolian is a disciple of the Yunhai Sect, and you shall not take her away! Let me give you a kind advice: leave this place immediately and the farther the better, or your life will be at risk!"

Shi Xiaolian took a step forward, holding Fang Bai's hand tightly, and declared resolutely, "Sect Master, if Brother Fang leaves, I will certainly not stay behind!"

Lan Peiyu's expression went cold, speaking in a chilling voice, "Xiao Lian, don't force me!"

Shi Xiaolian smiled sweetly, "You're the Sect Master; how could I possibly force you? You have mighty power and command tens of thousands of disciples; it would be easy for you to kill me, but I'm not afraid! I have said that I will be with Brother Fang through life and death!"

Zhuang Ling laughed loudly, saying, "Sect Master Lan, this female disciple of your esteemed sect is truly stubborn and unyielding! Here's a thought: let me take Shi Xiaolian back to Danxia Manor, and have her spend some time with our Manor Master's son. Perhaps after spending time together, they will develop mutual feelings. Then, I will come to your sect to propose marriage. Wouldn't that be a good arrangement? What do you think, Sect Master Lan?"

Lan Peiyu replied, "This..."

Her earlier remark about cleaning up her household was made in a fit of anger, and she might not be truly willing to strike and kill Shi Xiaolian. However, letting Shi Xiaolian remain stubborn and defiant was not an option. If it went the way Zhuang Ling suggested, it might indeed be a solution.

Fang Bai's killing of Han Dongweng and his disciple inevitably involved the Yunhai Sect in the mess, provoking the Blue Sea Sect's wrath. If the Yunhai Sect could form an alliance with Danxia Manor through marriage, they could completely suppress the Blue Sea Sect from then on.

As a woman, Lan Peiyu knew of many stubborn female martial artists. Once the deed was done and they became a couple with a male martial artist, they would surrender and resign themselves to fate.

Lan Peiyu herself experienced such a fate when her master forced her to become martial dao partners with a disciple from another sect. She resisted initially, but her master employed forceful measures, and she had no choice but to accept it.

After that, Lan Peiyu had witnessed too many similar instances. Even after becoming a Sect Master, she frequently played matchmaker.

However, the present Shi Xiaolian seemed more willful and untamable than she was back then. If Shi Xiaolian were to resist to the death, it would indeed pose some trouble.

Lan Peiyu was contemplating with a headache when, suddenly, a white flash passed before her eyes. Fang Bai moved, grabbing Zhuang Ling by the neck and lifting him up.

“Speak one more word, and Han Dongweng’s fate will be yours!”

With a cold gaze, Fang Bai stared at the lifted Zhuang Ling, speaking in a chilling voice.

Zhuang Ling seemed to be caught at his weak spot, paralyzed and limp, unable to struggle. He was shocked and his eyes showed a plea for mercy.

Fang Bai’s swift actions, as quick as lightning, made even Lan Peiyu unable to see clearly how Zhuang Ling ended up in his grasp, causing her to exclaim in surprise. It’s no wonder he could kill a Heavenly Tribulation stage martial artist like Han Dongweng.

“Spare him!”

“Do not act recklessly!”

“Release Steward Zhuang immediately!”

Three Yunhai Sect Elders spoke almost simultaneously.

Although Zhuang Ling held only a steward position, his connection to Danxia Manor gave him a distinct status. If Fang Bai killed him here, Danxia Manor's wrath would undoubtedly land on the Yunhai Sect.

The Yunhai Sect had already offended the Blue Sea Sect. If they also antagonized Danxia Manor, their future would become quite difficult.

Fang Bai raised his hand, and Zhuang Ling's body flew out, gliding several yards across the hall floor before coming to a halt.

He struggled to get up, his clothing and hair in disarray, presenting a pitiful sight.

Zhuang Ling, despite being a Soul Severing Perfection practitioner, was toyed with by Fang Bai as if being played with by a monkey, without being able to retaliate at all. The Yunhai Sect Elders, witnessing this, were inwardly shocked, giving Fang Bai a newfound level of respect.

"Get out!"

Fang Bai berated Zhuang Ling lightly.

Zhuang Ling, having just brushed with death, was still shaken. Upon Fang Bai's shout, he shuddered, dared not linger, and immediately flashed out of the Sect Master Hall, taking off on his Spiritual Artifact.

As he soared through the sky, more than ten miles away, his voice resonated back from the distance, "Fang Bai, just you wait! Sect Master Lan, I won't forget your sect's 'hospitality!' "

His voice gradually faded away, leaving the Sect Master Hall once again shrouded in silence.

After a long pause, Lan Peiyu sighed deeply, her expression filled with dejection.

“Are you satisfied? Are you two satisfied?”

Lan Peiyu’s gaze swept over Fang Bai and Shi Xiaolian, her expression cold and indifferent as she said, “Because of you, the Yunhai Sect has formed an irreconcilable vendetta with the Blue Sea Sect! Because of you, the Yunhai Sect has offended Danxia Manor! Because of you, the Yunhai Sect will now find itself in peril! You...”

Fang Bai interrupted Lan Peiyu with a cold laugh and said loudly, “Sect Master Lan, you keep blaming us for everything, dodging responsibility expertly!”

“Fang Bai! Though I provided you a path to escape earlier, and you refused to leave! Now, you shall not escape!”

Lan Peiyu rose from her stone seat, slowly advancing toward Fang Bai, her aura as a Heavenly Tribulation second stage surged like a tide, engulfing Fang Bai.

Chapter 1678: Leaving

As Lan Peiyu advanced step by step, Fang Bai stood proudly, not retreating a single step.

His eyes shone with a cold gleam, fists clenched tightly, evil qi spreading around him, his fighting spirit burning fiercely in his chest, making him appear like a deity of slaughter.

Though Lan Peiyu was a formidable opponent at the second stage of the Thunder Tribulation realm, Fang Bai did not fear her but did not underestimate her either. He was highly focused, his body taut like a drawn bowstring, ready to unleash a powerful strike at any moment.

Seeing the fighting spirit emanating from Fang Bai, which indeed matched that of a first-stage Thunder Tribulation cultivator, the senior members of the Yunhai Sect in the hall were shocked and finally believed that he truly had the ability to kill Han Dongweng.

This Fang Bai was a prodigy in the Martial Dao, his talent clearly surpassing Shi Xiaolian by far. If he were to perish at the hands of the Sect Master today, it would truly be a loss of a great talent.

However, his actions and words today angered the Sect Master. Given the Sect Master's temperament, it was unlikely he would show mercy.

Though he was strong, he was by no means a match for the Sect Master. The battle seemed destined to end in death before it even began.

Looking at Shi Xiaolian's attitude, it was clear she intended to live and die with Fang Bai. If the Sect Master killed Fang Bai, Shi Xiaolian would likely not survive either.

Over the years Shi Xiaolian had been with the Yunhai Sect, the sect had invested a lot of manpower and resources into her, grooming her as a future leader or even the Sect Master. If she were to perish, years of effort would be in vain, which would be a considerable loss.

But with the Sect Master in a fury, who dared to step forward and intervene?

"Sect Master, please show mercy!"

During these past years, Huo Zhenying had shown great care and guidance to Shi Xiaolian, forming a deep bond, unwilling to see her harmed. She stood in front of Lan Peiyu, "thud" kneeled down, her eyes red with emotion, and said, "Sect Master, I am willing to exchange my life for the lives of Fang Bai and Shi Xiaolian. Please, grant them mercy!"

Lan Peiyu glanced at her, expressionless, and said, "Elder Huo, I understand you pleading for Shi Xiaolian, but why plead for Fang Bai? He has brought trouble to our sect and wants to take Shi Xiaolian away. How can I tolerate him?"

Huo Zhenying replied sorrowfully, "But if Fang Bai dies, Xiaolian cannot survive either!"

Lan Peiyu said indifferently, "We have raised her for years, taught her Martial Arts Techniques, and invested immense cultivation resources in her, yet her heart leans towards an outsider... Tell me, what use is a disciple like this?"

Huo Zhenying was stunned and speechlessly shocked.

Seeing Huo Zhenying kneeling before her, Lan Peiyu couldn't help but feel a bit irritated, and angrily said, "Elder Huo, if Shi Xiaolian remains obstinate, sever your master-disciple relationship with her and expel her from the sect! A disciple like her isn't worth the sympathy, and it's better not to have her! From now on, her life and death will have nothing to do with us!"

"This... this..."

Huo Zhenying trembled, then was filled with tears and turned his head to look at Shi Xiaolian, murmuring, "Xiaolian, Master... cannot help you anymore..."

When Shi Xiaolian heard Lan Peiyu talk about "severing the master-disciple relationship" and "expel her from the sect," she didn't feel angry; instead, she felt a sense of relief.

However, when she saw Huo Zhenying kneeling and pleading for her and Fang Bai, her face full of tears, she remembered the kindness she had received, and her eyes couldn't help but redden as she choked, "Master, there's no need to plead for me. I understand your kind intentions."

"Shi Xiaolian, considering the past relationships, if you sever ties with Fang Bai now, you will still be a disciple of the Yunhai Sect. Your fate is yours to choose!"

Lan Peiyu bypassed Huo Zhenying, her gaze bore into Shi Xiaolian, deciding to give her one last chance.

Shi Xiaolian glanced at her calmly, moved a little closer to Fang Bai, her chin raised high, showing an unyielding demeanor.

Though she didn't speak, she demonstrated everything through her actions.

In Lan Peiyu's eyes, sparks ignited, she took a deep breath, her gaze sweeping over Fang Bai and Shi Xiaolian's faces, saying word by word, "The two of you, you might as well become a pair of fate-bound mandarin ducks."

Her aura locked onto both Fang Bai and Shi Xiaolian, her palm slowly raised, ready to strike.

At this moment, a sudden thunder roared from outside the hall, as if it cracked the heavens and the earth, stunning all the masters inside the hall.

“The Supreme Elder is about to cross the fourth Thunder Tribulation!”

Inside the hall, an elder exclaimed, his voice trembling with excitement.

Upon hearing this, the high-level members of the Yunhai Sect were elated and emotional, rising one after another.

Lan Peiyu’s expression was even more excited than the others in the Yunhai Sect high-ranking members. She couldn’t afford to care for Fang Bai and Shi Xiaolian anymore, her figure flickered like lightning past them and flew outside the hall.

“Let’s all head to the back mountain together!”

Lan Peiyu called back before she soared into the sky, flying towards the back mountain.

The high-level members of the Yunhai Sect all ascended, following her trailing light.

“Xiaolian, take this chance, you... hurry and leave!”

Huo Zhenying gave Fang Bai and Shi Xiaolian a deep look, left these words, and also flew off like a stream of light.

The bustling Sect Master Hall was quickly left with only Fang Bai and Shi Xiaolian.

“Brother Fang, let’s heed Elder Huo’s advice and leave now!”

Shi Xiaolian, following Fang Bai out of the Sect Master Hall, glanced towards the direction where Lan Peiyu and the Yunhai Sect's powerful figures had gone, and then spoke to Fang Bai.

Fang Bai, seemingly in thought, looked towards the direction of the Yunhai Sect's back mountain. There in the sky were clouds of calamity, lightning and thunder flashing, a mystical sign indeed indicating a strong cultivator preparing to cross the Thunder Tribulation.

The Supreme Elder of the Yunhai Sect was originally a third-stage Thunder Tribulation cultivator. If she crossed this Thunder Tribulation, she would reach the fourth stage, becoming a top-tier expert within a hundred thousand miles, and the Yunhai Sect would surpass the neighboring sects because of her.

No wonder Lan Peiyu was so excited to learn about the Supreme Elder's tribulation, neglecting the lives of Fang Bai and Shi Xiaolian.

In Lan Peiyu's eyes, two young Martial Artists meant little compared to their sect's Supreme Elder about to cross the fourth Thunder Tribulation.

"Alright, let's go!"

Fang Bai smiled slightly, took Shi Xiaolian's small hand, summoned the Blood-Drinking Mad Blade, and flew away from the Yunhai Sect.

Although Fang Bai was confident about escaping the Yunhai Sect's high-ranking members' encirclement, he was somewhat cautious about confronting the sect's Supreme Elder, a third-stage Thunder Tribulation cultivator. He thought it better to leave rather than face potential trouble.

Afterward, Shi Xiaolian severed off all relations with the Yunhai Sect.

Outside the Sect Master Hall were some Yunhai Sect disciples on duty, but because there were no orders from the Sect Master to stop Fang Bai from taking Shi Xiaolian with him, they remained motionless.

Flying hundreds of miles away, they were out of danger, making it hard for the Yunhai Sect disciples to pursue. Shi Xiaolian relaxed and asked, "Brother Fang, where are we going?"

Fang Bai replied, "To find Dongfang Rushi and Dongfang Ruhua."

Chapter 1679: The Stone Figure of Immortal Stone City

Shi Xiaolian's eyes suddenly lit up with surprise and delight, "Ah, the two Sister Dongfang, where are they?"

Fang Bai said, "If my senses are correct, they should be in the Xuanyang Realm."

Shi Xiaolian asked, "Where is the Xuanyang Realm?"

In his past life, Fang Bai had traveled through almost the entire three thousand great worlds and was very familiar with each realm here. He thought for a moment and said, "Probably tens of thousands of miles away."

Shi Xiaolian exclaimed in shock, "So far away!"

Fang Bai smiled, "Actually, calling it far isn't quite right. It's just that from the Heaven Fiend Realm to the Xuanyang Realm, there's the vast Black Sea in between, and the pressure over that sea is so immense that even a Thunder Tribulation Expert finds it hard to fly over and must travel by sea ship..."

Shi Xiaolian said, "No matter how far the journey, we must go! Finding the two Sister Dongfang is urgent! I can't wait to meet them!"

Fang Bai said, "We definitely must go. I'm thinking... from where should we go that would be the closest?"

Fang Bai furrowed his brows slightly, looking down, trying hard to recall the sights from his past life's travels through these three thousand great worlds.

He still remembered passing through here once in his past life, but with tens of thousands of years having passed, the stars shifted, and seas turned into mulberry fields, some places had changed so much that it was hard to recognize, making it difficult to find a shortcut.

Continuing to fly forward for a hundred miles, between the mountains below, there appeared a rushing great river, and a light bulb went off in Fang Bai's mind as he joyfully said, "I know!"

He pointed to the great river flowing east below and said, "This great river winds into the Black Sea, and following it all the way down, we can reach the edge of the Black Sea in the shortest possible time."

Shi Xiaolian asked curiously, "Brother Fang, have you been here before?"

Fang Bai laughed out loud and said, "No... I heard about it from someone else."

Shi Xiaolian let out an "Oh" sound, not doubting Fang Bai's words.

Fang Bai extended his hand, "Come, hold my hand tightly, let's accelerate our flight, aim to reach the Black Sea's edge soon, cross the Black Sea early, and find the two Dongfang sisters as soon as possible!"

Shi Xiaolian, who was originally holding onto Fang Bai's arm, extended her right hand as instructed, clasping Fang Bai's hand with intertwined fingers.

Fang Bai fully activated the Wind Essence Art, circulating Wind Essence Qi, taking Shi Xiaolian with him, they flew at high speed in the sky, carried by the mighty wind, like a streak of light crossing the sky, moving so fast that only a trail of afterimages could be seen.

The two of them flew and stopped intermittently, joking and laughing all the way; after more than a month, they could already smell a faint salty sea breeze. Fang Bai knew it was the smell of the sea breeze blowing from the sea surface, indicating that the Black Sea was not far.

...

Immortal Stone City is a small city a few miles away from the Black Sea.

It is said that Immortal Stone City was just an ordinary small fishing village with a population of over a hundred tens of thousands of years ago. Later, a Sea Beast suddenly landed from the sea, intending to feast on the fishing village villagers.

Although the fishing village's villagers were not short of strong individuals, with even a few one-fold and two-fold Thunder Tribulation experts residing long-term, that Sea Beast was even more ferocious. Even with the united efforts of a few Thunder Tribulation experts leading over a hundred villagers, they were unable to defeat the Sea Beast.

In a critical moment, thanks to the arrival of a Thunder Tribulation eight-layer expert, who defeated the Sea Beast with great power, saving the lives of over a hundred villagers.

That Thunder Tribulation eight-layer expert, though still one Tribulation away from ascending to become an Immortal, was already surrounded by auspicious light, divine brilliance, hinting at some Immortal attributes. It is later rumored that the expert successfully crossed the Ninefold Heavy Tribulations and ascended to become an Immortal, becoming a member of the Immortal Realm.

To commemorate the Immortal who saved their lives, the fishing village's villagers carved a lifelike stone figure ten feet tall based on the person's appearance, placing it in the village center.

What was amazing was that since the stone man was placed in the village, no Sea Beast dared to invade the village again.

In the tens of thousands of years since, the stone man became a landmark of the fishing village, attracting many strong individuals to view its majestic posture; some Thunder Tribulation experts even came to pay respects, hoping to draw some Immortal Qi, to ensure their own safe passage through the terrifying Thunder Tribulations.

Over time, more Martial Artists moved here, expanding the size of the fishing village until it gradually became today's small city with a population of tens of thousands.

And that stone figure has always remained at the center of Immortal Stone City.

Over the tens of thousands of years, despite the constant erosion by the sea breeze, because it was maintained, the stone man appeared vivid, as if newly sculpted.

In a manor closest to the stone figure, resided a mysterious and powerful family.

The ancestors of that family are said to have moved here as soon as the stone figure was carved, becoming its maintainers and guardians, and succeeding generations have continuously guarded the stone statue, allowing none to damage it.

By the current generation, that family has branched out with many members, although the other family members moved away, leaving only a family of four to guard the place.

The family of four consists of a middle-aged couple and their two children.

The middle-aged couple was around fifty years old, and their children, both in their twenties, were outstanding in appearance and had an extraordinary aura.

On the surface, the family of four appeared as ordinary people, but only true strong experts knew that they were formidable cultivators.

The middle-aged couple both had Thunder Tribulation three-layer cultivation level. Together, their strength increased severalfold, capable of countering a Thunder Tribulation four-layer expert.

Even their children, both merely twenty years of age, had reached Soul Severing perfection, a talent that was astonishing.

Their family's cultivation techniques and martial arts techniques were said to be incredibly profound and unique, likely due to some fortuitous chance they had encountered.

Some Thunder Tribulation experts once tried to covet their cultivation techniques and martial arts but were met with the family's united attack, ending up in a fate of utter obliteration.

Since then, no one dared to provoke the family living closest to the stone figure, and the manor became the most peaceful and serene place in all of Immortal Stone City.

That morning, the side door of the manor opened, and a woman in a fire-red dress, with a slender waist, elegantly walked out, sitting down at the stone table under a willow tree on the eastern side of the courtyard, cupping her chin in her hands, staring blankly at the stone statue not far away.

The woman in the red dress had eyebrows like jade feathers, eyes like autumn water, lips as red as cherries, and an innate charm between her eyebrows, possessing unparalleled beauty.

However, the expression on the woman in the red dress carried a deep melancholy that seemed impossible to dissipate, as if she hadn't been truly happy for a long time.

The woman in the red dress gazed at the stone man's face nearby, observing the familiar, handsome features, muttering to herself, "This stone man bears a faint resemblance to Fang Bai..."

"Sister Chenyu, out here looking at the stone man again?"

At this moment, a woman in blue clothes, about the same age as the woman in red, walked out briskly, sitting next to the red-dressed woman named "Chenyu."

Chapter 1680: One of a Kind

"Qingluan, you've emerged from secluded meditation?"

Seeing the woman in green appear, Chenyu sat up straight, a slight smile appearing on her lips as she said, "I was feeling bored in the courtyard, so I came out to sit for a while."

"Yes! I've been in secluded cultivation for ten days straight, almost suffocating from it!"

The woman named "Qingluan" sighed, with an expression of despair as she grumbled, "Since I was three years old, my father has been forcing me into secluded cultivation once a month, for twenty years without interruption. Doing this every day is so annoying!"

Chenyu smiled with understanding, "Uncle Wei only does it for your own good! Without Uncle Di's strict supervision, you wouldn't have reached the realm of Soul Severing Perfection at such a young age!"

Qingluan pouted her lips like a red lotus petal and said, "But Sister Chenyu, you don't need anyone to supervise you, nor do you work as hard as I do, yet your cultivation level progresses just as quickly!"

After a pause, she added, "That's right, my father said you have an Innate Fire Spirit Root, and your cultivation techniques and martial arts are even more wonderful than our family's heritage... By the way, Sister Chenyu, you said your martial arts techniques were passed on by a friend, who exactly is this friend of yours?"

The smile on Chenyu's face faded when she heard Qingluan's question, her expression dimmed as she fell into a trance.

"Sister Chenyu, did I say something wrong?"

Seeing Chenyu's expression was off, Qingluan asked cautiously.

Chenyu gave a bitter smile and sighed softly, "It's not your fault. I just... just suddenly miss him a bit..."

Qingluan seemed to have an understanding and said, "Is he the friend who taught you the cultivation techniques?"

Chenyu nodded, "Yes."

Qingluan looked at her expression and softly asked, "Then... is he your loved one?"

Chenyu's cheeks flushed slightly before she frankly admitted, "Yes. He is my man."

Qingluan exclaimed in surprise, then smiled playfully, "I always thought someone as heavenly as Sister Chenyu would look down on the mundane men of this world! I didn't expect... didn't expect..."

Stopping here, she followed Chenyu's gaze to the stone statue and said thoughtfully, "Sister Chenyu sits here every day looking at that stone statue, could it be that your loved one resembles that stone statue?"

Chenyu nodded, "Strangely enough, I don't know who carved this stone statue, but it bears a seven or eight-part resemblance to Fang Bai."

Qingluan's eyes lit up as she said, "So Sister Chenyu's loved one is also a very handsome man?"

Chenyu chuckled softly, seemingly reminiscing, her eyes a bit distant as she gently said, "Actually, whether he's handsome or not doesn't matter to me. I only know that in my heart, he is incomparable!"

Seeing the happiness in her eyes as she spoke these words, Qingluan couldn't help but feel a bit envious and said, "Listening to Sister Chenyu, I really want to meet him and see what kind of man could captivate Sister Chenyu so much."

Chenyu said, "Since I came to the Three Thousand Great Worlds, I have been thinking of him every moment, wanting to see him. But this vast world is limitless, and I don't know where he is now, or if he is safe and sound..."

As she spoke, she paused for a moment before continuing, "However, I can feel that he has been looking for me all along, and it seems like he is getting closer to me... I truly hope we can reunite soon."

Qingluan rested her chin in her hands, tilting her head as she asked, "Sister Chenyu, what's your loved one's name? Maybe the martial artists in my family can help you find him."

Chenyu said, "His name is Fang Bai."

As soon as she mentioned "Fang Bai", Qingluan was stunned, exclaiming, "What did you say?"

Chenyu didn't notice the odd expression on her face and said, "Fang Bai."

"How could it be such a coincidence..."

Qingluan muttered to herself, then turned to point at the stone statue in front of them, saying to Chenyu, "Sister Chenyu, do you know that the stone statue was carved in the image of an immortal from tens of thousands of years ago, and that immortal's name was also Fang Bai."

Now it was Chenyu's turn to be stunned. It took her a long moment to regain her composure, and she gave a bitter smile, "Indeed, what a coincidence..."

Her gaze fell back onto the stone statue, and the more she looked, the more it resembled Fang Bai. She grew more puzzled, thinking it was one thing if they just looked alike, but even sharing the same name made her wonder if there was some connection between the stone statue and Fang Bai.

But she quickly dismissed the idea, thinking it was unlikely, as the statue was carved and placed there tens of thousands of years ago, while Fang Bai was born in the secular world and was much younger.

At that moment, the Great Bell hanging on the gate of Immortal Stone City facing the Black Sea was suddenly struck.

The bell's sound was melodious yet urgent, its sound waves rapidly spreading in all directions, so that within a short period, all the hundreds of thousands of residents of Immortal Stone City could hear it.

Instantly, the originally peaceful and harmonious small city became tumultuous. Countless strong individuals flew into the sky from their courtyards, looking toward the Black Sea.

Qingluan's expression also changed slightly as she swiftly stood up, her figure soaring into the sky to a height of a hundred feet.

At the same time, in Qingluan's family courtyard, two green figures also flew up—Qingluan's parents, Wei Zhengtian and Shi Hongye.

“Qingluan, what’s happening?”

Chenyu felt puzzled by the actions of all the strong individuals in Immortal Stone City upon hearing the bell and flew next to Qingluan to ask.

Qingluan looked straight toward the Black Sea, solemnly saying, “Sea Beasts are about to invade Immortal Stone City.”

Chenyu recalled some of the past stories of Immortal Stone City that Qingluan had told her before, and she couldn’t help but feel a chill in her heart.

The Black Sea was vast, tens of thousands of miles in circumference, teeming with Sea Beasts. Some Sea Beasts absorbed the spiritual energy from the heavens and the sea, becoming powerful, comparable to human strong individuals.

Sea Beasts reproduced quickly, but the resources of the Black Sea were limited. As a result, some powerful Sea Beasts, capable of transforming into human shapes, would come ashore, searching for cultivation resources on land and even preying on human martial artists.

Back when Immortal Stone City was still a small fishing village, countless cultivation resources that belonged to humans were plundered by Sea Beasts, and countless human martial artists ended up as the food for Sea Beasts.

However, those incidents mostly happened tens of thousands of years ago. Since the small fishing village developed into Immortal Stone City and the stone statue was placed at the city’s center, the frequency of Sea Beasts invading Immortal Stone City had greatly decreased.

In particular, over the recent millennia, due to the rapid growth of Qingluan’s family, they not only guarded the stone statue but also protected Immortal Stone City. Every time Sea Beasts launched a large-scale invasion, Qingluan’s family would join forces with the city’s strong individuals to repel them.

In the past few hundred years, the Sea Beasts in the Black Sea and Immortal Stone City had lived in peace, and many residents of Immortal Stone City believed that peace would continue indefinitely.

But to everyone's surprise, the Great Bell, which hadn't rung against a Sea Beast attack for centuries, was suddenly struck.

The bell's sound broke the peace that Immortal Stone City had enjoyed for hundreds of years, heralding the imminent assault of the Sea Beasts.