

M. Slaying 161

Chapter 161: Lecture

The two young men carefully observed a dudou for quite some time, and finally came to a unanimous conclusion.

It was indeed a dudou[1].

"Hurry up and draw the next one," Chu Liang said, pocketing the dudou and not wanting to bring it up again.

He held onto it because a faint hope lingered within him. Perhaps, since Southern-Route Guider valued this item, it might actually serve a purpose?

Having said that, he took out another item himself.

The item had considerable weight to it. As it landed on the table with a clang, it revealed itself to be a copper furnace roughly the size of a human head. Its protruding and gilded body was adorned with numerous grotesque carvings.

Wen Yulong lifted the lid, inspected it, and said, "This is a Soul-Refining Furnace."

"For souls you want to control, you can put them in this furnace and continuously refine and torment them until you completely control them."

"This is also an extremely evil enchanted tool."

Chu Liang set the Soul-Refining Furnace aside, knowing it was something he definitely wouldn't need.

Next, it was Wen Yulong's turn. He reached in and retrieved half of a black candle. In its center was a golden thread, giving it a peculiar appearance.

"What's this?" After a moment of contemplation, he finally concluded, "This must be the Mind-Reflecting Candle."

"Mind-Reflecting Candle?" Chu Liang asked.

"It's an ancient artifact used by the Dark King Sect to judge criminals," Wen Yulong explained. "The raw materials for this item are very rare nowadays. When the Mind-Reflecting Candle is lit, if someone beneath it tells a lie, their shadow will quiver."

"That's rather useful." Chu Liang carefully put the item away as he said, "Unfortunately, there is only half of it left."

Then he went to retrieve another item, finding a stack of talismanic papers, approximately four sheets.

"These are Undead-Summoning Talismans!" Wen Yulong exclaimed in shock. He took a closer look at the papers and said, "They are ancient artifacts as well. This item has been lost for several hundred years."

"I have only heard of Undead-Sealing Talisman," Chu Liang said.

"The Undead-Sealing Talismans are used to suppress the undead. The Undead-Summoning Talisman has a completely different effect. These talismanic papers can resurrect corpses, turning them into undead that obey your commands for a certain period." Wen Yulong explained.

"I see."

Chu Liang stored the stack of talismanic papers away. There weren't many items left in the storage space.

Wen Yulong reached into the statue once more and drew another item.

He extracted a jade slip.

"It's a legacy technique of the Dark King Sect." This time, Wen Yulong wasn't too interested. "The Hall of Conservation should already have possession of this."

When Chu Liang heard this, he lost interest as well. They were already cultivating the techniques of the Mount Shu Sect so it was simply impossible for them to study the Heavenly Star Unusual Art. Since he wouldn't be able to exchange any reward for this, this item was useless.

With only one item left in the storage, Chu Liang rubbed his hands together, hoping to draw something exceedingly valuable.

Unfortunately, the koi is not here today. If not, we might have had better rewards... The thought filled Chu Liang with a tinge of regret.

Then, he stretched his hand into the storage space.

This time, he pulled out a semi-circular iron token engraved with mysterious patterns.

"What is this now?" Chu Liang was confused.

Wen Yulong examined it for a while but couldn't identify it. "It seems like half of something. Its purpose should only be revealed when the two halves are put together."

Half...

Chu Liang remembered he still had a quarter of a treasure map in his hand, and he wasn't sure when he would be able to complete it. Once he started collecting various items, it was easy for him to accumulate miscellaneous objects.

"So, these are the things at the bottom of the box..."

After scanning with his divine sense and finding the storage space empty, Chu Liang sighed and withdrew his hand, feeling a bit disappointed. "Well, there isn't even a decent enchanted tool."

Despite his complaints, Chu Liang knew he couldn't blame the Southern-Route Guider. The Evil Ksitigarbha, Netherworld Spirit Sword, and Soul-Refining Furnace were, at least, extremely powerful enchanted tools, but he simply couldn't utilize them.

He carefully picked out the Mind-Reflecting Candle, five Shadowburst Thunder Bombs, four Undead-Summoning Talismans, an engraved semicircular metal plate, the Mi Luo Green Leaves, and a dudou with a black lotus design.

As for the Evil Ksitigarbha, the Netherworld Spirit Sword, the Soul Subjugator Token, the Soul-Refining Furnace, and the inherited technique of the Dark King Sect, he opted to leave these items behind.

"These items are valuable, but they aren't of much use to us at the Mount Shu Sect. We can only refine the resentful souls inside the Netherworld Spirit Sword," said Wen Yu Long. "Why not sell the Mi Luo Green Leaves as well? Combined with the rewards you've received, I am guessing that the final amount should be close to five thousand sword coins."

Five thousand...

This is definitely a huge amount.

The last time Chu Liang extorted that particular peak master with his teacher, they obtained about this much money.

However, Chu Liang currently felt the pressure of needing to gather the materials for his Core Formation, and he needed to prepare at least two sets. Just the basic materials for the formation of the high-grade Golden Pill would require around four thousand sword coins. If he failed one out of the two attempts, then he wouldn't have enough.

Ordinary disciples at the Spiritual Awareness Realm would usually remain at this stage for a few years. During this time, they would constantly save money and eventually accumulate enough funds to gather all the materials for the formation of the Golden Core.

However, Chu Liang's time spent being at the Spiritual Awareness Realm was too short, and he didn't have enough time to save money. Luckily, a good amount of money was coming his way.

In the end, he packed up several items and paid Wen Yu Long the pay he deserved.

Then, Chu Liang smiled as he stood up.

"I appreciate your help this time," he thanked, "I'll take my leave now."

"I'll accompany you out," Wen Yu Long stood up as well.

"Huh

, aren't you halfway through your shift?" Chu Liang asked.

"It's fine if I skip work for half a day. Anyway, aside from you, no one else asks me to make enchanted tools," Wen Yulong said with a smile. "There's something I must attend to today."

"What is it?" Chu Liang asked.

"Jiang Yuebai's lecture." Wen Yulong looked at Chu Liang with a puzzled expression. "How can a disciple of Mount Shu miss out on this?"

...

The lecture was arranged beneath the ancient tree at the Azure Falling Peak. Jiang Yuebai would stand on the sturdy branches, overlooking the expansive open space halfway up the mountain below. Disciples from various peaks brought their own cushions and settled on the ground to listen attentively.

When Chu Liang and Wen Yulong hurried over together, there was still at least an hour before the lecture began. Yet there were already dozens of rows formed, almost reaching the top of the mountain.

It was hard to imagine what time the first row of brothers arrived here...

With a sweep of his eyes, Chu Liang spotted a familiar figure sitting in the front row. It was Lin Bei. Just as he was thinking about approaching to see if he could join him in the front row, Lin Bei also noticed him.

Then, Lin Bei made a teasing expression and gently pointed to a figure in the front.

Chu Liang instantly understood his meaning.

The tall figure in front, with a well-defined back of the head, should be Senior Brother Xu Ziyang from the Jade Sword Peak. Since all the members of the Jade Sword Peak were sitting together, it wouldn't be convenient for him to squeeze through.

That would be like walking into the lion's den.

As if sensing the gaze, Xu Ziyang suddenly turned his head. Lin Bei immediately withdrew his pointing hand, pretending to be an innocent guy.

Xu Ziyang and Chu Liang locked eyes. His gaze was sharp as a sword, piercing and intense.

However, Chu Liang remained unfazed, calmly meeting Xu Ziyang's gaze without backing down. After a tense moment, both sides withdrew their gazes without exchanging a single word.

Despite feeling helpless, Chu Liang had no choice but to sit at the back with Wen Yulong.

Gradually, more and more people arrived, and Chu Liang couldn't help but be astonished by the sheer number of individuals present on Mount Shu.

In addition to some disciples being in the first four realms of cultivation, there were also numerous disciples of the Mount Shu Sect who had reached the fifth or sixth realm of cultivation.

These individuals, senior brothers, and sisters who were no longer actively participating in the affairs of the Mount Shu Sect, spent more time traveling outside than staying within the sect. Surprisingly, they had all gathered here, indicating that many were very curious about this event.

The higher-ups, such as the peak masters, needed to uphold their status and naturally refrained from attending. However, it was probable that some of them were secretly observing from a distance.

As the time approached, the crowd surged and nearly everyone had arrived.

"Here she comes!"

With a resounding shout, a large white flower suddenly burst forth from the ancient tree ahead. A figure emerged, stepping gracefully onto the flower and ascending. With each step, a new flower bloomed, capturing her ethereal figure in a mesmerizing display.

The conversations below ceased, and everyone watched in silence. Although Jiang Yuebai was well-known on Mount Shu and often drew attention when appearing in public, this was the first time she had made such a formal entrance in front of so many people.

Yet, she showed no signs of unease, remaining cool and composed as she gracefully descended onto a tree branch, then turned around with effortless poise.

Her eyes resembled the crescent moon. Her robes billowed with the wind, and flowers embraced her, making her seem like a celestial being descending to the mortal realm.

Chapter 162: Having A Private Chat In Public

Jiang Yuebai didn't waste much time talking about unnecessary things. She gave a brief introduction and got right to the main topic.

"Perfect Qi Circulation just refers to executing the Qi-Circulation Technique at the pinnacle level. I managed to do it by relying on my special constitution, but after understanding the method, I realized that it should be achievable without the support of a special constitution," Jiang Yuebai said with a clear, warm, and delicate voice.

It was rather rare that Jiang Yuebai did not avoid talking about how she possessed the special constitution Transcendent Spirit. After all, although it wasn't a particularly big secret in the Mount Shu Sect that she possessed the Transcendent Spirit, it could draw unwanted attention if news of this were to get out... especially from those with evil intentions.

Chu Liang gazed at Jiang Yuebai as she stood on a branch of the Azure Falling Peak's ancient tree, seeming as pure and cold as an immortal.

Then he suddenly felt a little disillusioned. He thought back to the first time they'd met—that moment he'd found Jiang Yuebai in the cave with her arm around her knee while holding a bowl of noodles. It was really hard to think of her as the same person as the one standing on that tree branch.

For some reason, I feel a little... proud of myself. All of you in the audience have only seen her like this in all her brilliance and splendor. I'm the only one who has seen her slurp up noodles.

Thinking that way made Chu Liang feel rather strange. Nevertheless, he found himself quickly getting pulled into Jiang Yuebai's lecture.

The topic at hand was very thought-provoking. Jiang Yuebai understood the Qi-Circulation Technique as basically creating a vortex in her body. The cultivator using the technique had to produce a vortex with a pull that could draw in spiritual qi from the heavens and the earth and retain it there.

Of course, this was just an analogy. A human body had as many acupoints as there were stars in the sky. There were countless permutations in a person's qi-circulation route, so it wasn't as simple as whirling the qi around. Achieving Perfect Qi Circulation meant exerting the maximum utility of the vortex's pull, and the fundamental requirement needed for that was to circulate with sufficient speed and force.

Therefore, cultivators should push their limits as much as possible during their training. They should not shy away from danger. Breaking through their limits might just allow them to be on the verge of achieving Perfect Qi Circulation.

Of course, this was just one method to achieve Perfect Qi Circulation. The heavens and the earth favored Transcendent Spirits, so they were naturally able to achieve a more ideal state of qi circulation.

However, the question remained as to whether cultivators with ordinary constitutions could achieve this state with hard work. There was one thing that was for certain though—working hard to improve their qi circulation would hasten their cultivation progress.

Actually, Jiang Yuebai wasn't the first one to think of this. The theory that accelerating the circulation of one's qi to the maximum was beneficial for cultivation progress had been spreading within the cultivation world since a long time ago.

Nonetheless, Jiang Yuebai did mention some new ideas, such as advising her fellow disciples to extend the duration of their cultivation sessions. This was because, much like normal vortexes, the pull of the circulation vortex would become stronger the longer it continued to exist.

After the Major Qi-Circulation Technique was executed once, it would be like the vortex had completed one rotation. Then when it was executed a second time, the vortex would pull in foundational qi at a significantly faster rate.

This meant that after using the technique numerous times, a cultivator would eventually be able to accelerate their qi-circulation to maximum speed and advance their cultivation at an extremely fast rate.

In other words, if a cultivator were to execute the Major Qi-Circulation Technique five times in one cultivation session, it would have a much greater effect than executing the technique once in five separate sessions. This was a truly eye-opening concept.

Chu Liang mulled over it for a moment. If the idea that Jiang Yuebai put forth was indeed feasible, then she would be making a name for herself today. Her discovery wasn't groundbreaking enough to be a major theoretical breakthrough, but it was as astonishing as someone publishing an innovative academic thesis at a very young age.

Chu Liang pondered about the matter more deeply. Considering that Jiang Yuebai was the first one to make this discovery, perhaps the method she proposed did not actually lead to a significant growth in cultivation. After all, significance was always prioritized; if the produced effect was insignificant, then the method would be considered useless. In that case, it made sense that it hadn't been made known in the past.

Moreover, cultivators were human and had limitations; they could not cultivate continuously all day and night. For most cultivators, the longest they could cultivate without a break was half a day. So, if the cultivation time for one session needed to exceed half a day in order to have a significant effect on the cultivation advancement rate, then that meant Jiang Yuebai's method would be pointless... unless cultivators could find a way to extend their cultivation time.

Wait a minute.

It was like a light bulb went off in Chu Liang's head.

People can't work all year long without taking breaks, but my Large-Headed Doll can!

I did notice recently that I've been accumulating foundational qi at an increasingly fast rate. In fact, it's alarmingly fast. Could it be related to this?

If executing the Qi-Circulation Technique once is the same as the vortex making one rotation, then that means the Large-Headed Doll's vortex has already become so massive that it's a tornado!

Just as Chu Liang came to that conclusion, Jiang Yuebai wrapped up her considerably short lecture. "Fellow disciples, feel free to ask me any questions you may have about this. I will try my best to answer them."

A commotion immediately stirred in the crowd on the ground. This was an opportunity to ask Fairy Jiang questions and speak with her one-on-one!

However, no one dared to hastily raise their hand; this was an extremely precious opportunity! If they were to casually ask a pointless question, they would draw the disdain of the crowd and fail to leave an impression on Jiang Fairy.

The most important thing was that the question they asked couldn't be too difficult. This was Jiang Yuebai's first lecture. Wouldn't her image be damaged if she couldn't answer the first question she was asked?

They had to ask a unique, intelligent, and simple yet meaningful question!

As the crowd fell silent for a moment, a handsome young man at the back of the crowd raised his hand high with a smile.

When Jiang Yuebai saw who that disciple was, she wore an enchanting smile like that of a fairy.

Jiang Yuebai pointed to that disciple and asked, "Fellow disciple, what's your question?"

Chu Liang stood up and asked loudly, "Senior Sister Jiang, I'd like to ask about what would happen once you've already achieved Perfect Qi Circulation. According to the theory you've presented, would you be able to continue raising your cultivation advancement rate? Or is the advancement rate that you acquire upon achieving Perfect Qi Circulation the limit?"

The crowd broke into an uproar. Almost everyone rolled their eyes condescendingly at Chu Liang.

What kind of bullshit question is that?

You're just a disciple who is merely at the third realm and may not even ever get close to achieving Perfect Qi Circulation in your lifetime. Yet, you're asking about what happens after achieving Perfect Qi Circulation?

You're obviously just dreaming.

What a waste of Senior Sister Jiang's time and our precious opportunity to ask questions. How irritating.

Nevertheless, Jiang Yuebai didn't treat Chu Liang's words as merely an unrealistic dream. She thought about it carefully before answering.

"I was in the state of Perfect Qi Circulation for just a short period. Moreover, I can't achieve this state all the time, so I don't have a deep understanding of it," Jiang Yuebai said slowly. "But I surmise that it's probably impossible to continue raising your cultivation advancement rate. Achieving the state of Perfect Qi Circulation means that your foundational qi has already perfectly filled every meridian and acupoint of the qi-circulation route. So, you wouldn't have enough room in your body to continue raising your cultivation advancement rate like that."

"But..." Chu Liang began whilst in thought. "What if we consider the Heavenly Qi-Circulation Phenomenon as the overflow of the qi-circulation route? If we can use this phenomenon to connect with the world, that would mean there's unlimited room for growth."

As he said that, he sent part of his divine sense into the White Pagoda just to observe the Large-Headed Doll. He found that not much was different with the doll, even though it had been in a state of Perfect Qi Circulation for such a long time. The only difference was that it kept emitting more and more smoke!

The rising clouds of smoke were actually a third-realm phenomenon. Chu Liang hadn't paid much attention to it before, but looking at it now, he realized it was becoming a much more powerful phenomenon!

Nonetheless, Chu Liang's response had angered the crowd around him again.

This kid actually dares to question Fairy Jiang?

I don't know what you were talking about, but you should be taking it as a great kindness and honor that Fairy Jiang even bothered to answer your question. How dare you question her? Her good intentions are wasted on you!

Yet, they saw Jiang Yuebai nod soon after.

"What you said makes a lot of sense!" Jiang Yuebai's eyes lit up. "We've always thought of the Heavenly Qi-Circulation Phenomenon as an indication of an achievement and that it has no practical purpose. However, if we think about it in the way you suggested, the Heavenly Qi-Circulation Phenomenon would be a transitional realm between the mortal world and the heavens—a manifestation of the union between the heavens and mortals!"

"That's it! It's a union between the heavens and mortals! The perfect state is actually the beginning of the link between a cultivator's Sea of Qi and the heavens and the earth!"

Chu Liang was awestruck by what Jiang Yuebai said. He finally understood what that mystical feeling was—the one he had experienced when Xue Lingxue played the "Morale-Boosting Melody: The Rise of the Azure Waves." That was the feeling of connecting with the heavens and the earth!

As their discussion reached this point, Chu Liang's eyes lit up brightly. Jiang Yuebai seemed rather excited too.

Everyone had always thought that the state of Perfect Qi Circulation was a limit—an indication that a cultivator had reached the peak of their cultivation. However, if they thought of the perfect state as an overflow that connected with the heavens and the earth, then it wasn't a limit but a starting point for much more.

It was like thinking the sky was the limit and then discovering the endlessly vast lands of immortals above the sky. This was such an overwhelming feeling of vastness that would send people reeling!

The people in the crowd felt a little dumbfounded as they listened to Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai's conversation.

What are they talking about? Why are they getting more and more excited?

Don't we all use the same technique? Why does it seem like they're talking about something unimaginable? I understand every word they're saying, but their conversation is kind of hard to comprehend as a whole...

There were currently several thousand people on Azure Falling Peak. Yet, it seemed more like there were only two people—just Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai. There was a barrier called intelligence that kept the irrelevant people out of their conversation.

Jiang Yuebai muttered to herself, "I just don't know if the Heavenly Qi-Circulation Phenomenon will come after the Perfect Qi Circulation and continue to increase in power. If it does, then it would prove that our conjecture is right!"

Chu Liang gave an extremely natural, confident, and smooth reply, "It will."

Chapter 163: Who Is This Nobody?

The disciples of Mount Shu around the area couldn't sit still after hearing these words.

Even though I don't know what you guys are talking about, this kid seems to be acting a bit too much!

How can you talk about achieving Perfect Qi Circulation so casually, as if it was as easy as drinking soup? Senior Sister Jiang had truly achieved the state of Perfect Qi Circulation at the fourth realm, which was an unparalleled achievement! Why are you, a Third Realm cultivator, pretending to be a big shot here?

Even if it's to gain Sister Jiang's attention, isn't this a bit too much?

In an instant, someone sarcastically remarked, "Since you're so skilled, you must have achieved Perfect Qi Circulation as well, right?"

Immediately, a chorus of mocking laughter erupted below in agreement.

Chu Liang felt somewhat powerless in this situation. His response came almost instinctively, as he had contemplated it while observing his Large-Headed Doll emitting smoke. He was not lying, but there was no way for him to prove it to the people present.

With a subtle smile, Chu Liang raised his arm and responded, "I was fortunate enough to briefly reach the state of Perfect Qi Circulation with the assistance of Miss Xue from the Southern Melody Conservatory, through her Morale-Boosting Melody: The Rise of the Azure Waves. As a result, I've gained some modest insights. However, I'm sure the senior brothers are far more knowledgeable on the subject. I humbly invite them to correct me if I've misspoken."

His words hung in the air, causing a momentary silence that caught everyone off guard.

Oh, so you really achieved the state of Perfect Qi Circulation at the third realm.

Then it's fine. Feel free to enlighten us as well...

Everyone present would know the Morale-Boosting Melody: The Rise of the Azure Waves. Indeed, some might even have had the opportunity to listen to this melody before.

To have Xue Lingxue of the Southern Melody Pavilion personally play this composition and assist in one's cultivation... That was a privilege not easily attained by just anyone.

Such treatment was certainly not something experienced casually by most cultivators.

Even if they had received the same treatment, it would have been unlikely for more than ten individuals present to attain the state of Perfect Qi Circulation. Even if they had assistance from others, they needed a profound understanding of the cultivation technique. This was a key point well aware by everyone present.

Upon deeper contemplation, the question naturally arose: What kind of relationship did he have with Miss Xue to warrant such special treatment? One wouldn't even dare to think about the possibilities.

A group of male disciples glared at Chu Liang, their frustration palpable as their teeth gritted in resentment. To them, the notion that a junior disciple at the third realm of cultivation could have such an experience felt more intolerable than facing death itself.

Furthermore, he had been publicly exchanging encrypted messages with Senior Sister Jiang, understood only by the two of them. It was like having a private conversation in front of everyone, which was simply infuriating to the extreme!

But when Jiang Yuebai heard him say that, it seemed like she remembered something. She snapped out of her contemplative state and nodded gently.

"You asked a very good question. I will delve into it later. Thank you, junior brother, please have a seat for now," she said calmly.

"...Okay," Chu Liang replied.

"Any other questions?" Jiang Yuebai looked around and asked.

Just as the crowd was eager to ask more questions, someone in the front raised their hand high into the air. Upon seeing this, everyone abandoned the idea of asking any further questions.

Because the individual who had raised their hand was Xu Ziyang, the eldest senior brother of Jade Sword Peak, who held a prestigious status within Mount Shu.

Who would dare to compete with him?

"Please," said Jiang Yuebai.

With sharp eyebrows and sparkling eyes, Xu Ziyang stood up abruptly. The entire place fell silent, as his presence resembled that of a sharp sword.

"You mentioned a special constitution isn't needed to achieve the Perfect Qi Circulation, and there should be seniors who are able to confirm this. But..." Xu Ziyang furrowed his brow and continued "I have tried executing the cultivation technique after the consumption of cultivation-enhancing pills. I felt like I reached the pinnacle, but I still couldn't attain that..."

Most people would feel embarrassed to ask that same question.

The reason was simple. If an ordinary disciple were to ask... "You claimed that anyone with an ordinary constitution would be able to attain that state, but why can't I?" Everyone would certainly refute and believe that the questioner had intentionally asked this question to cause a scene. They would say that the questioner lacked talent for cultivation and should reflect on himself instead of blaming it on his own ordinary constitution.

If the factor of the Transcendent Spirit constitution wasn't taken into consideration, everyone would agree that Xu Ziyang should be the most talented cultivator.

He was truly a genius.

If Xu Ziyang couldn't achieve it even when he had consumed cultivation-enhancing pills, no one else would have been able to achieve this.

"Mmm..." Jiang Yuebai pondered for a moment.

This was not an easy question.

She couldn't argue that Xu Ziyang wasn't strong enough, considering that many others hadn't achieved the state of Perfect Qi Circulation either. With each person having different reasons, it was challenging for her to explain the unique circumstances of each individual.

And at this moment...

A voice echoed in Xu Ziyang's ears.

"Are you a fool?!", it was the voice of his teacher, Wang Xuanling, that was coming from somewhere unknown, and only Xu Ziyang could hear it. The voice continued, "You're making things difficult for the girl! How do you expect her to respond?"

Xu Ziyang's eyes flashed with a hint of surprise as he responded, "Esteemed Teacher, didn't you instruct me to ask questions?"

Wang Xuanling responded, "I told you to ask questions so that you can interact with her. Maybe you and her will get to know each other, and perhaps become friends in the future. But what are you doing? Making it difficult for her?"

Wang Xuanling felt exasperated. He couldn't help but think that this disciple of his was even more dense than a rock.

From Wang Xuanling's point of view, this disciple of his excelled in many aspects and even bore a resemblance to himself in numerous ways. However, when it came to emotional intelligence, he was nothing short of a disaster.

Wang Xuanling had observed the scene for a while and urged Xu Ziyang to ask questions, hoping that Xu Ziyang would leave a good impression on Jiang Yuebai. However, Wang Xuanling never expected that the moment Xu Ziyang spoke, he would ruin the atmosphere and leave Jiang Yuebai with no chance of salvaging her reputation.

Although Jiang Yuebai was indeed thinking about the question seriously, the situation seemed to be in a deadlock.

And so, Wang Xuanling decided that if necessary, he would intervene to help alleviate the situation for Jiang Yuebai. There were certain things that Jiang Yuebai would never be able to say to Xu Ziliang. However, as Xu Ziyang's teacher, it would be acceptable for Wang Xuanling to publicly acknowledge that his disciple's cultivation level was not up to par.

As the awkward atmosphere continued to intensify, a clear voice suddenly rang out from the back of the crowd.

"It should be due to insufficient enhancement."

In this moment of utter silence, the voice instantly captured everyone's attention. When people turned to look, they discovered it was the same disciple who had asked a question earlier!

Why is he standing up again? Everyone wondered.

Haaa. The truth was that Chu Liang was also sighing. He truly felt reluctant to stand out in this manner as he knew that his behavior would have irked so many people. Nevertheless, he couldn't bear to witness Senior Sister Jiang in such a predicament and not take any action,

It just so happened that he had researched this particular question.

Following the cultivation-enhancement effect he experienced with the help of Xu Lingxue at South Gate City, he returned home still feeling unsatisfied.

At that time, he had spent a considerable amount of money to purchase pills that could enhance the circulation of foundational qi. However, he found it ineffective. Later on, he discovered the reason after some research.

"To achieve the state of Perfect Qi Circulation, it's not just about enhancing the flow of foundational qi; it requires a complete empowerment in essence, energy, and spirit, all merging into one," Chu Liang explained. "Improving the flow of foundational qi alone isn't enough to achieve Perfect Qi Circulation. It also meant that you would have to enhance the essence, qi, and spirit."

This was the knowledge he had gained from previous attempts.

After the failed attempt, Chu Liang realized that simply enhancing the flow of foundational qi wasn't enough to achieve Perfect Qi Circulation. With Xue Lingxue's Morale-Boosting Melody: The Rise of the Azure Waves, he succeeded and this was because the melody not only accelerated the flow of foundational qi but also boosted his essence, spirit, and other attributes like fighting spirit and vitality.

Jiang Yuebai's constitution of the Transcendent Spirit had likely achieved the same effects.

While achieving such holistic empowerment through other methods might pose challenges, there must be a way, considering that predecessors who achieved it must have had their means. At least, that's what Chu Liang suspected.

Xu Ziliang's failure demonstrated that achieving Perfect Qi Circulation couldn't be accomplished solely by relying on one's own strength.

Regardless, when it came to disciples with pure cultivation talent, Xu Ziyang stood at the peak. He gave up in the end because it was indeed challenging to achieve that state. Moreover, the cost was too high, even if it could be attained eventually, this was not a sustainable method.

With the Large-Headed Doll handling the heavy work, Chu Liang didn't need to exert so much effort himself to achieve this. This exemplified the principle that if one couldn't be promoted to lead the team, they would have to work themselves to death.

Upon hearing these words, Jiang Yuebai once again wore a thoughtful expression. She felt puzzled, understanding that Chu Liang wasn't speaking without reason but was instead hitting the mark.

Chu Liang asserted that he had only had Xue Lingxue play the qin once, briefly entering the state of Perfect Qi Circulation. However, given his profound understanding of this state, it didn't seem as brief as he claimed it to be.

And so, Jiang Yuebai began to doubt the number of times Chu Liang had listened to the qin and attempted to achieve this state.

Xu Ziyang also turned around and looked at Chu Liang with a contemplative gaze.

He didn't carry any sense of pride in his status; rather, he found Chu Liang's words reasonable and wanted to ask one more question.

"Are you saying that the key is to achieve a holistic empowerment of essence, energy, and spirit?" he asked.

"Not necessarily. This requires a thorough understanding and mastery of the cultivation technique. If someone fully comprehends and masters the technique and achieves holistic empowerment, success should follow," Chu Liang replied.

Xu Ziyang pondered for a moment before nodding, "I'll give it a try. Thank you."

"You're welcome," Chu Liang said with a smile.

After helping Jiang Yuebai out of the predicament, he elegantly took his seat.

The crowd around him stared with excitement and astonishment.

Did I hear correctly just now? Was he teaching Senior Brother Xu?

After teaching Fairy Jiang, he went on to teach Senior Brother Xu.

Do the two strongest geniuses of Mount Shu fall short compared to him?

Oh, my heavens.

Who is this nobody at the third realm, anyway?

In that moment of widespread astonishment, dark clouds silently gathered around the Azure Falling Peak.

Suddenly, it started raining and the rain turned out to be golden in color.

Chapter 164: Black Whale Mountain

In a gloomy room, a shadowy figure sat upright with their brows furrowed.

A figure in white robes could be seen right across the shadowy figure. There was a serious expression on his face, devoiding any hint of a smile.

He was using the Immortal Art: Roaming the World.

It was clear that he had crossed vast distances through divine arts and celestial methods to meet the shadowy figure.

"Jiang Yuebai is not the only one of Mount Shu who has achieved Perfect Qi Circulation. There was another third-realm disciple who stood out." The white-clad figure spoke with a deep tone, remarking, "The Mount Shu Sect is still nurturing talented youngsters, proving that this sect is still destined for great things."

"Heh?" The shadowy figure sneered and said, "The Mount Shu Sect is like a centipede that will never really die. With the size of the Mount Shu Sect, they are bound to nurture a few gifted cultivators in every generation. What's so strange about that? As long as they lack a legendary artifact, they are bound to perish."

"There are gaps between geniuses as well," the white-clad figure said. He paused for a moment before adding, "You may not understand, but the reality is that geniuses who are able to achieve Perfect Qi Circulation are extraordinary."

"You..." the shadowy figure was somewhat irritated but he couldn't come up with a sound argument. In the end, he could only express his indignation. "I admit that your cultivation level is higher than mine. If not, you wouldn't have been selected to infiltrate the Mount Shu Sect back then."

Upon hearing this, the white-clad figure's expression turned grim.

The two then stopped talking for a while.

After a brief pause, the shadowy figure finally spoke up, saying, "Come on. Don't be upset."

"Hmph," the white-clad figure snorted coldly.

"I understand your concerns. You fear that the Mount Shu Sect still possesses formidable luck and a destined path for greatness. You are worried that our plan will go wrong. But rest assured, our intention isn't to deliver a fatal blow. Instead, we aim to gradually diminish their strength and good fortune. We'll start by targeting and eliminating their exceptionally talented disciples, then strip away their status within the Divine Nine. Over time, their influence in the world will wane."

"I cannot intervene again," the white-clad figure declared in a decisive voice.

"Naturally, I won't allow you to intervene; it's too risky on Mount Shu," the shadowy figure responded. "Your task is to keep a close eye on these exceptional disciples. If any of them decides to leave Mount Shu, promptly report the news to me. I will then arrange for someone to intercept and eliminate them."

The shadowy figure continued saying firmly, "Since the Mount Shu Sect prefers sending their disciples out to gain experience, we'll ensure they face the repercussions of venturing into the world." As he spoke, he gestured his right hand with determination.

"Handle it with caution," the figure dressed in the white robes instructed.

"You don't have to worry when I am the one handling it," the shadowy figure said with a smile.

"Take that disciple at the third realm as an example. I will hire cultivators at the fifth realm or sixth realm to kill him. We won't fail."

"When I urged you to be careful, I wasn't talking about the possibility of failure. How could the assassination of a cultivator at the third realm fail?" The figure in the white robes remarked. "What I meant was for you to be meticulous in your actions and ensure that no information slips through. Since the descent of the True Dragon, Old Man Sikong has been relatively idle. I've heard that he attempted to read the fate of Mount Shu several times. If I didn't have an artifact that could hide my presence from divination, I would have been exposed for what I have done."

"I understand," the shadowy figure nodded and said, "We will make bold moves on the day of the Mount Shu Summit, which is happening soon. Until then, I will be very careful with every move I make."

"That's good," the white-clad figure said. "By the way, I heard there's some unusual activity with the Violet and Azure Twin Swords. If you decide to take action, it's best to bring a legendary artifact. Otherwise, I fear there might be changes."

"Big bro, you are asking me to bring one of the most renowned legendary artifacts in the world. It's not some cabbage I can pick up from the fields..." the shadowy figure revealed a hint of pain in his voice as he spoke. "If you want the Dark King Sect to bring the True Body of Ksitigarbha, it will come at a different cost!"

"Heh, I don't care," the person in white robes shook his head. "That's something you need to figure out. Anyway, I've given you the information. The way you handle it has nothing to do with me."

"You..." The shadowy figure was once again left speechless.

The white-clad figure waved his sleeves, and his illusionary figure vanished with a whoosh.

Somewhere a thousand li away on Mount Shu...

A white-clad figure sitting cross-legged suddenly opened his eyes, revealing a radiant gleam within their gaze.

...

The Black Whale Mountain.

In the local Li tribe, there was a legend about the origin of this mountain.

A long time ago, this place was originally a flat land, located close to the East Sea. The hardworking and courageous Li tribe people lived by the sea. They were cheerful and hospitable people with tanned skin, making a living as fishermen.

However, one day, a terrifying demonic creature, a Black Devil Whale, emerged from the sea. It roamed the ocean like an island, ferocious and dreadful, frequently attacking fishing boats and devouring everyone on board.

Due to the presence of the Black Devil Whale, the Li tribe people could no longer find food in the sea, and during that era, they were almost left with no options.

At this critical moment, a mighty giant wanderer arrived at this place, and his name was Fang Yi.

Upon hearing about the tragic plight of the Li tribe people, he decided to help them. However, the Black Devil Whale was almost invincible in the vast sea, and no one could defeat it.

And so, Fang Yi went to the Southern Regions to cut a branch from the ancient tree on the Azure Falling Peak. He then went to the Western Regions and killed a flood dragon to harvest its tendon. After that, he went to the Northern Regions and located the best artificer[1] in the world. With these materials, the artificer forged an exceptional fishing rod of unparalleled quality for the mortal realm.

Fang Yi had indeed planned to lure the Black Devil Whale onto the shore.

Nevertheless, even with the fishing rod ready, there was still a need for bait.

Luo Sha, the most beautiful and melodious singer of the Li tribe, stepped forward willingly, volunteering to be the bait in the sea.

So the next day, Luo Sha sailed out to sea on a small boat. Standing at the bow, she sang loudly, and indeed, her beautiful voice attracted the Black Devil Whale.

This terrifying giant beast immediately swallowed Luo Sha in one gulp, only to be caught by the fish hook entwined on her.

The giant Fang Yi began to exert all his strength to drag the fishing rod. After three days and three nights of struggle, he finally pulled the Black Devil Whale onto the shore.

Once the fierce Black Devil Whale was out of the water, it could no longer unleash its ferocity. While Fang Yi kept it under control, the Li tribe people rushed forward and killed the Black Devil Whale on the shore.

Its carcass transformed into this mountain later on.

To this day, atop Black Whale Mountain stood a giant statue, and below the giant statue was a woman singing with all her might.

This was what the Li tribe people crafted to commemorate the giant Fang Yi and Luo Sha.

...

"This legend..."

Chu Liang pondered after hearing it.

In this world, any legend should not be taken lightly because it might very well be true. He nervously tapped on the black rocky ground beneath his feet as he wondered if this mountain would suddenly come to life.

In front of him stood the towering giant statue that looked vivid and full of heroic spirit.

"Forget about the legends for now..." Lin Bei, standing beside him, said as he admired the Big Head playing with the black rocks on the side, "Can't you lend me a ride on this big guy later?"

"No," Chu Liang refused without any hesitation. "I can already guess without thinking that you want to use it for something. Are you planning to pretend to be some aristocrat or a genius cultivator from Mount Shu to deceive naive girls?"

"How can you see through me like that, bro!" Lin Bei protested indignantly. "You're way too accurate, aren't you?"

Chu Liang: "..."

"Haaa." Lin Bei shook his head and sighed again. "You took the spotlight at Sister Jiang's lecture, and now the junior sisters at Mount Shu probably all admire you. You won't have any worries in the

future. But as for me, I still don't have my future secured. Can you bear to see me lonely every day?"

"I can't bear it." Chu Liang said, "Didn't I advise you to cut off the root of the problem long ago?"

"Uh..." Lin Bei resisted, arguing, "I can remove the grass, but cutting the root is out of the question."

"If you're doing something legitimate, I'll definitely help you. But if you're going to deceive people for pleasure, how can I help you?" Chu Liang said as he patted Lin Bei on the shoulder. "Stop thinking about these crooked ways. Let's go find the spirit herb."

Lin Bei hummed twice, shrugged helplessly, and then led the way forward.

After passing two statues and walking quite a distance, they arrived at a narrow path within the towering mountain wall. The place was covered with trees and hidden by weeds, making it almost impossible to see. Looking up, there was a vast mountain wall, with only a faint line indicating the expansive sky.

"How did you even discover such a small path?" Chu Liang laughed. "How did you manage that?"

"Don't mention it. At that time, I got separated by accident and was chased relentlessly by a water demon. I couldn't fly into the sky as it would notice me. So, in my panic, I dodged and hid under this cliff. I thought I was about to be cornered... but unexpectedly, I found this crack here," Lin Bei recounted.

"Weren't you talking about a thrilling battle with the water demon?" Chu Liang recalled what Lin Bei said earlier.

"It did scare me to death!" Lin Bei said with a confident expression.

It turned out that this thrilling battle was more of a one-sided thrilling experience.

Since Chu Liang still needed to rely on his brother to locate the spirit herb, he didn't dare to delve too deeply into the matter. Otherwise, it would be quite embarrassing.

This journey proved challenging for the Big Head. The crack in the mountain was just wide enough for its body, forcing it to squeeze through the entire way. As they finally emerged from this narrow opening, the surroundings suddenly brightened, unveiling a vast mountain valley adorned with exotic flowers and plants that filled the air with fragrance!

The path was narrow, allowing only one person to pass through at a time.

After taking a dozen or so steps, the space suddenly broadened.

Chapter 165: Old Ape

There were butterflies fluttering in the breeze and an abundance of peculiarly shaped flowers and plants in the colorful valley. Spirit plants rarely found elsewhere could be seen at every couple of steps.

"So, this area truly is filled with a high concentration of spiritual qi," Chu Liang remarked.

He realized that Lin Bei hadn't exaggerated. There were indeed treasures of nature all over this place. However, most of them were seedlings that needed a few hundred years to a thousand years to mature. The rest were dead, either from withering naturally or getting plucked.

"The treasure-guarding demonic beast here is an old ape that's very powerful, so be careful," Lin Bei warned prudently.

These treasures of nature were growing in a remote location, so demonic beasts would find them long before any cultivator could. Nevertheless, the demonic beasts often did not consume the spirit plants immediately because the plants hadn't matured yet or the demonic beasts were still waiting for the right moment to make a breakthrough in their cultivation.

During this interim period, the demonic beasts that found the treasures of nature first would attack any other demonic beast or human who found the treasures later. This was why such demonic beasts were referred to as treasure-guarding demonic beasts.

Nonetheless, it wasn't like those treasure-guarding demonic beasts had planted the spirit plants, and the spirit plants didn't need the demonic beasts' protection to mature. The treasure-guarding demonic beasts were basically like people who claimed "finders, keepers" after spotting money that someone else had dropped.

Money that had been dropped could be picked up straight away; they didn't need to be concerned about someone else chancing upon it and making the same claim. However, the matter at hand was regarding spirit plants that were still growing in the earth. How could someone claim ownership of it?

Chu Liang nodded. "Mm."

He activated his divine sense and spread it out, vigilantly keeping an eye on his surroundings.

When the Golden-Furred Hou entered this fragrant Valley of Spiritual Plants, it was immediately entranced. The Hou's big head turned to the left and right, sniffing intensely for something tasty to gobble up.

Chu Liang admonished the Hou, "Do not harm these immature spirit plants. You can eat whatever you like when we return to Mount Shu."

He was only thinking of taking away the Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower.

"This was where I fell from. When I landed, I saw a Fiery Lingzhi right in front of me," Lin Bei said. Then he pointed to the right and added, "That Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower should be over there."

Lin Bei then led Chu Liang a few steps in that direction. Up ahead was a boulder, and behind it was an eye-catching flower with long, narrow green leaves and stunning scarlet petals.

Facing the sunlight, the flowers' stamens and pistils glimmered with a golden light as if swallowing the sun's radiance.

"This is an indication that the Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower has matured..."

Chu Liang's heart skipped a beat. He could gather enough ingredients to make two high-tier Golden Cores from this one spirit plant.

"The Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower grows by absorbing the sun's energy. Additionally, the plant contains the spiritual qi of metal spirits. Whenever someone tries to pick the flower part of the plant, the plant's eight incredibly sharp sword-like leaves will close automatically," Chu Liang recited from memory the key points from his research on how to pick the flower.

He continued, "To pick this treasure of nature, a long object must first be used to trick the plant into closing its sword-like leaves. Then to acquire an intact Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower, the entire plant has to be uprooted."

These treasures of nature were inedible plants that had defense mechanisms. Those who did not handle them properly might get hurt in the picking process. In the case of the Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower, many people all throughout history had lost their hands when they recklessly tried to pick it.

Chu Liang continued walking forward and was about to reach that boulder. However, he suddenly heard a whoosh as a gust of wind blew down from overhead!

It's coming from above!

Chu Liang looked up and saw numerous vines hanging off the precipitous and barren mountain wall. Swinging down on one of those vines was a huge White Ape that was more than one zhang tall! And it was pouncing toward Chu Liang!

The White Ape had likely spotted Chu Liang and Lin Bei entering the area with the formidable Golden-Furred Hou quite a while back. It had held off on attacking, lying in wait for this opportune moment to launch a surprise attack.

Nevertheless, Chu Liang wasn't caught off guard; his vigilance paid off. Even when success was within his reach, he had not retracted his divine sense even in the slightest.

"Golden-Furred Hou!" Chu Liang yelled.

He stepped back and made a gesture, signaling for the Hou to attack.

Judging from the White Ape's aura, it was probably at the pinnacle of the fourth realm.

This extremely ferocious ape was approaching Chu Liang with a mighty momentum. It wouldn't be a good idea to face the ape alone.

Nevertheless, none of that bothered the Golden-Furred Hou. Even before Chu Liang called for it, the Hou had already noticed the incoming White Ape.

The Hou unleashed a fierce roar that shook the mountains and fields. It charged toward the ape, moving so swiftly that it appeared as a gust of golden wind!

Whaaam.

The white figure and the golden figure slammed against each other like two planets colliding! The dull sound of two massive bodies slamming against each other resounded through the area!

"Raaaaar!"

Unexpectedly, the Golden-Furred Hou was the one that was sent flying backward by the impact of the collision!

Boom!

The Hou crashed into the ground, plowing a deep ditch in the earth. The impact of the collision continued to push the Hou across the ground until a small hill of soil had formed, putting a stop to its momentum.

Fortunately, the Hou's greatest strength was its tough body. It wasn't injured at all. The Hou rolled back onto its feet, ready to attack again with an intense bloodthirst!

The White Ape calmly landed on top of the boulder opposite the Hou.

Despite being a demonic beast, the ape wore a short-sleeved shirt and shorts. It had a strong and muscular physique with arms that looked like young coiling dragons, making for a very intimidating appearance.

The ape took on a stance where it had one hand extending outward, with its palm facing the Golden-Furred Hou. After holding this pose for a while without anything happening, the ape took on a more relaxed posture.

"I don't know which sect you disciples are from, but this valley is my home. So, leave now!" the White Ape shouted.

"Senior, we currently require a Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower. If you would be so kind as to let us have it, we will leave. We won't tell anyone else about the treasures of nature that are growing here," Chu Liang replied.

"Hmph." The White Ape flung his hand out dismissively. "Dream on."

Chu Liang pursed his lips.

"Just because we're being polite, you're truly treating these treasures of nature as vegetables you planted in your garden!" Lin Bei rebuked. "We're treating you with too much respect!"

Chu Liang nodded silently.

It was as though Lin Bei had taken the words right out of Chu Liang's mind.

"Raaaaaar!"

With a loud roar, the Golden-Furred Hou charged out once more, causing the earth to quake and the mountains to shake!

The old ape's gaze turned fierce. Taking on a fighting stance, the ape raised its hands and extended one hand as a fist, leaving the other open with the palm facing outward. Seeing the incoming Golden-Furred Hou, the ape pivoted, defending and attacking simultaneously.

Wham.

The massive Golden-Furred Hou was once again sent flying. It crashed onto the ground and rolled over three times before coming to a stop.

Chu Liang was astonished.

This White Ape could only be at the pinnacle of the fourth realm at most. Its cultivation level and skills should be worlds apart compared to those of a fifth-realm spirit beast, yet it had managed to withstand and counter the Golden-Furred Hou's charge. This was because the ape had fought using the leverage principle, redirecting the force of its opponent's attack to work in its favor.

Could the White Ape be a martial arts master?!

Nonetheless, the Golden-Furred Hou absolutely refused to admit defeat, especially since the White Ape's heavy punches hadn't actually caused any damage due to the Hou's strong defenses. The Hou turned over and got back on its feet, preparing to attack again!

The White Ape leaped up and dodged the Hou's charge. Then the ape launched a flying kick, smashing its foot into the Golden-Furred Hou's head with a whip-like motion!

Bam!

The Golden-Furred Hou was a terrifyingly powerful spirit beast, but the White Ape had been born as a demonic beast, so there was no doubt that it was incredibly strong as well. Chu Liang's Power of Ten Tigers couldn't even be compared to the White Ape's prowess.

Chu Liang and Lin Bei grimaced at the thunderous sound of the White Ape's foot smashing into the Hou's head. If they were dealt such a blow, their heads would probably explode on the spot.

The White Ape's speed and strength were inferior to that of the Golden-Furred Hou, but its martial arts skills far surpassed the combat ability of the Hou. When the two beasts collided earlier, the ape had held the upper hand!

However, the Golden-Furred Hou's body had amazing defensive qualities. The Hou turned over and got back on its feet again. It shook its head, totally unfazed by the heavy blow it had just received.

The Hou's heavy head weighed 500 jin[1], but at least 400 jin of that was its natural armor!

Wham! Wham! Wham!

The two beasts collided violently over and over more than ten times, causing an unending string of thunderous noises to echo through the valley. Their fight sent dust flying all over and destroyed countless plants. Luckily, none of those were precious spirit plants.

Both beasts emitted a terrifyingly intense murderous aura that rose toward the sky. This was a purely physical confrontation; it was primal and violent!

During the battle, the White Ape demonstrated many martial arts moves. It was a demonic beast, so it was expected that the ape would possess tremendous strength that could easily split rock and cut into a mountain. The surprising thing was that the ape's martial arts abilities were very unusual. It was executing martial arts techniques brilliantly and masterfully.

Chu Liang had no idea where a mere demonic beast could have learned master-level martial arts techniques.

Nevertheless, the Golden-Furred Hou was no pushover. Even after enduring so many punches and kicks, the Hou was still full of fighting spirit and even fiercer than before! It seemed like an indestructible guardian deity!

As the battle dragged on, the White Ape was the first to show signs of fatigue.

Noticing this, Chu Liang yelled, "Stop!"

Upon hearing Chu Liang's command, the Golden-Furred Hou stopped in its tracks and turned its huge head toward Chu Liang. "Raawr."

The White Ape took a step back, staring at Chu Liang with a dark expression. "What do you mean by this?"

Chu Liang stepped forward and said loudly, "I can tell that my mount can't do much to you and that you're incapable of injuring it as well. It would surely be disadvantageous to you if you were to continue with this fight."

The White Ape's gaze turned grave.

The ape couldn't help but concede that Chu Liang spoke the truth. Considering the high cultivation levels of the two beasts, it was a given that this battle wasn't something the two third-realm cultivators could take part in.

However, the two beasts would eventually become exhausted as the fight dragged on... and it appeared that the White Ape would be the first to do so.

At that point, Chu Liang's party of three would have a numerical advantage over the ape.

"Are you trying to threaten me?" the White Ape asked coldly, refusing to yield.

"No." Chu Liang shook his head with a small smile. "Since things have come to this, I'd like to suggest that we make a bet."

"A bet?"

"This Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower sprouted from the earth here, so logically, it doesn't belong to either of us," Chu Liang said. "In that case, why don't we make a bet? Whoever manages to pick the flower barehanded today will own it. What do you say?"

Chapter 166: A Turn of Events

"Harvesting the Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower barehanded..."

The Old White Ape pondered for a moment, a trace of a cold smile crossing its face.

Despite its demonic body and resilient flesh, coupled with years of martial arts cultivation, it still didn't dare to straightforwardly harvest the Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower.

The Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower's sword-leaves alone could be used to refine formidable artifacts. It was exceptionally sharp! Who would casually attempt to pluck it with bare hands?

But the Old White Ape was puzzled by Chu Liang's attitude. If Chu Liang wasn't confident, why would he say such words?

Upon reflection, even if there were some divine skills capable of enhancing the physical body, it was undoubtedly not some technique that could be performed by a third-level cultivator like him.

He was just bluffing! The Old White Ape simply believed that Chu Liang was trying to trick it into plucking the leaf with its bare hands. Once it was hurt, it would not be able to fight the Golden-Furred Hou.

For a moment, the Old White Ape felt that it had seen through the opponent's trickery, and a cold smile appeared at the corner of its mouth. "Alright," it responded, "I admit that I cannot harvest the Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower barehanded. If you can do it, you can take it with you. If not, leave now."

The Old White Ape had intended to gain the upper hand with this move, and in its view, this young man definitely would not dare to accept the challenge.

Yet, Chu Liang, with a slight smile, said, "Alright!"

Before the words had even settled, he had already stepped forward!

"Hmm?" The Old White Ape's face, resembling that of a human, showed a hint of confusion.

Chu Liang ascended a large stone and gazed at the cluster of Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflowers in front of him. The dazzling flowers, as radiant as the sun, were surrounded by several seemingly loosely arranged sword-shaped long leaves.

Just as Lin Bei and the Old White Ape had directed their attention toward him, he suddenly extended two fingers and grabbed the stem of the Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower at a lightning-fast speed!

Twist!

The eight long leaves straightened almost simultaneously, transforming into blade-like edges and rotating slightly as they closed. Even iron hands would be twisted upon touching them.

Clang!

But when the sword-leaves wrapped around Chu Liang's fingers, a metallic clang sounded. The leaves couldn't close tightly together!

What? The Old White Ape's eyes narrowed. It couldn't believe what it had just seen.

The fingers of apes and monkeys were incredibly strong, each one robust and powerful. Yet, it couldn't achieve this with the two of its fingers!

Upon closer inspection, those sword-leaves had embedded themselves into Chu Liang's fingers, piercing through his skin and flesh. However, upon reaching his bones, they encountered formidable resistance.

What could be the reason for this?

In the perplexed gaze of the Old White Ape, Chu Liang exerted force with his two fingers, breaking and plucking the Dark Sunflower stem. Instantly, scalding liquid flowed out of it.

"Excuse me," he said as he smiled at the White Ape. Then, he landed gracefully on the ground.

"You..."

The Old White Ape was unhappy with the outcome, but with the Golden-Furred Hou guarding by its side, it couldn't take any action.

Upon seeing Chu Liang's return, Lin Bei approached and asked, "How did you do that?"

"Hehe." Chu Liang raised his two fingers and gestured, saying, "My fingers are quite extraordinary."

Back when he was at the Valley of Bewildering Fog, he had strengthened the bones of these two fingers. They were said to be as tough as gold and stone, but this description was merely an estimate of their resilience. With the infusion of spiritual energy, the bones of these two fingers would be even harder than gold and iron.

Chu Liang and Lin Bei didn't linger around the area. They were constantly keeping an eye out for any sudden moves from the Old White Ape. After they left the valley, they rode on the Golden-Furred Hou and flew away.

Little did they know that after their departure, the Old White Ape revealed a sinister gaze.

...

After this series of activities, dusk was already approaching.

The Mount Shu Sect was quite a distance from their current location, and flying back would likely mean traveling well into the night. After a brief discussion, Chu Liang and Lin Bei decided to find a place to stay for the night and return to Mount Shu early the next morning.

The area was near Yanzhou City near the East Sea.

The cities in the Eastern Regions were very different from those in the Southern Regions. Though each city thrived with prosperity, in comparison to Taotie City, there were fewer cultivators, and it lacked the same bustling atmosphere.

The last time Lin Bei was here, he was in a hurry to head back and consume the Fiery Lingzhi, so he didn't have time to explore. And now, both of them wanted to tour around and check out the scenery of the Eastern Regions.

However, upon reaching the city gate, they were confronted with a harsh reality.

"A spirit beast at the fifth realm of cultivation is too fierce," the soldier guarding the city was a martial arts cultivator at the second realm. Despite this, he displayed no fear when facing the Golden-Furred Hou and continued saying, "According to the laws, this creature is not allowed to enter the city."

To safeguard the common people, large-scale demonic beasts were typically prohibited from entering cities. Chu Liang and Lin Bei, primarily residing in the Mount Shu Sect and not having owned a mount before, were not very familiar with these rules.

"Ah..."

The two were extremely disappointed. It wasn't feasible to leave the Golden-Furred Hou outside the city on its own, and they couldn't let its Big Head fly back to Mount Shu alone; they wouldn't feel at ease on the way.

As night was approaching, they had no choice but to find an inn outside the city and settle down.

Since large demonic beasts weren't permitted to enter Misty Waters City, there were naturally inns outside the city that catered specifically to cultivators with such companions. The inn they chose had a designated courtyard at the back specifically for accommodating these big creatures.

They tied the Golden-Furred Hou to the courtyard and left it to be taken care of by the dedicated personnel. Chu Liang and Lin Bei then went upstairs to rest.

After this series of activities, when they finally lay down to sleep, the moon had already reached its zenith.

However, not long after, a roar echoed! All the demonic beasts in the courtyard were startled!

Chu Liang instantly woke up; it was the roar of the Golden-Furred Hou!

He quickly leaped out of the window, only to see that the iron chain around the Golden-Furred Hou's neck had somehow loosened. The Big Head was now ferociously threatening a small figure, who was sitting on the ground, trembling with fear.

Beside them lay a headless figure and a pool of blood covered the ground

Oh no!

At first glance, it seemed like the Golden-Furred Hou had killed someone. However, Chu Liang immediately realized that while it might be fierce towards outsiders, it was not a wild animal. It was a spirit beast!

With it being a spirit beast, It would never arbitrarily take another person's life! Something else had happened.

Chu Liang was not the only one who had gone out to see what was happening. Soon, people from all directions gathered. There were many cultivators in this inn, and a crowd instantly formed.

Upon seeing more people, the man sitting on the ground quickly mustered his courage and shouted, "This ferocious beast eats people! It's a man-eating beast! Quickly, go call the officials!"

"Roar—"

When the man yelled at the Golden-Furred Hou, the creature became even angrier. It opened its mouth and let out a roar that seemed to convey its intention to kill the man on the spot.

"!" Chu Liang quickly shouted.

If that person were to die, they would have no way to explain the situation. If the Golden-Furred Hou killed another person in front of everyone, the situation would escalate beyond his ability to salvage.

"What's going on?" Lin Bei also arrived at his side.

At this point, nearly all the guests at the inn had emerged. Many were pointing and discussing, while others had gone to report the incident to the authorities. If it weren't for the recognition of the Golden-Furred Hou's formidable strength, someone would have likely stepped forward to try to restrain it.

Regardless of whether it was a spirit beast at the fifth realm or if the owners were disciples of the Mount Shu Sect, if laws were violated, the authorities of the Yu dynasty would not let them off easily.

In recent years, it was a great taboo for disciples from the sect in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten to harm ordinary people!

Chu Liang was also unaware of what had happened, but the urgency of the situation demanded immediate action. Without hesitation, he raised his hand, causing a red light to swiftly wrap around the man, binding him securely.

"Golden-Furred Hou, guard the door!" Chu Liang lifted the man bound by the tortoise-shell bondage method and said, "Let's find out what exactly happened before the officials arrive!"

In the courtyard, the various cultivators observed as Chu Liang lifted the man into a room. With the Golden-Furred Hou standing guard, no one dared to utter a word of accusation. Many of these cultivators had lower cultivation levels and didn't dare provoke a fierce spirit beast at the fifth realm.

"Chu Liang, what are you doing?" Inside the room, Lin Bei was also surprised and confused about everything that had just happened. "Isn't he the victim?"

"I believe the Golden-Furred Hou wouldn't harm people without any reason," Chu Liang stated, his brow furrowing. "Our priority is to quickly determine what happened. If he's truly a victim, we won't hesitate to take responsibility, but for now..."

With a thud, he threw the man to the ground and said coldly, "I will ask the question and you will answer."

While saying this, he also retrieved a black candle from his pocket and lit it.

Lin Bei glanced at the tightly bound man before turning his attention to the candle in Chu Liang's hand. He then glanced at the Demon-Binding Rope and at the candle again...

Lin Bei couldn't help but feel a chill rising from his spine.

Has Chu Liang's cultivation reached such a staggering level that it's shocking even to me? Lin Bei pondered silently.

Chapter 167: I Have the Closest Relationship with Him.

"Here you go."

While in the room, Lin Bei suddenly took off his belt and handed it to Chu Liang as he said, "Here you go."

"Why?" Chu Liang was so confused by his actions during this moment of seriousness.

"Bind him up properly. With the candle lit, I just feel like something is missing if you don't have a whip," Lin Bei said as he handed over the belt.

"..." Chu Liang felt so speechless as he stared at the pervert standing before him.

On the other hand, Lin Bei stared at the pervert holding the candle with a humble expression, indicating his eagerness to learn.

"I'm not using regular candles..." Chu Liang had no choice but to explain. "This is a Mind-Reflecting Candle that can detect if he's lying."

With that said, he placed the black candle on the table, and the flickering candlelight cast a long shadow of the man against the wall.

The tanned man, in his thirties or forties and of average height, was currently bound to the ground, his expression filled with panic.

Upon hearing Chu Liang say that it was a Mind-Reflecting Candle instead of the other kind, the man first heaved a sigh of relief, but then immediately tensed up again, his expression growing nervous.

"Let me ask you now. Did you come here with the guy who is now dead on the ground? Why did you come here?" Chu Liang asked.

"I don't know..." The man replied immediately, shaking his head.

"You have the right to remain silent," Chu Liang said, "but once the officers arrive, I'll feed you to the Golden-Furred Hou."

"No, no, no!" The man panicked upon hearing the words and quickly exclaimed, "I was just... I was just passing by when I saw that spirit beast devouring people..."

Swoosh.

Even in the absence of any wind, the light from the Mind-Reflecting Candle suddenly flickered the moment those words were uttered. His shadow on the wall became ethereal and mysterious, lingering for a moment before settling down.

"I am sure you can tell that the shadows suggest you are lying, right?" responded Chu Liang with a stern expression.

"We..." The man gritted his teeth and then hesitantly admitted, "We actually came to steal the spirit beast. We saw its value and wanted to..."

Swoosh.

Once again, the light on the Mind-Reflecting Candle flickered wildly.

Lin Bei frowned and suggested, "Why not just feed this guy to the Golden-Furred Hou? It's been hungry all day, and that guy from earlier probably wasn't enough for it to eat."

"No, please!" The man instantly pleaded. "My family lineage spans nine generations, and I am the only one from my generation. You can't kill me because I haven't had the chance to father an heir yet!"

Swoosh.

The light from the Mind-Reflecting Candle flickered again.

"..." Lin Bei sighed and remarked, "Even when you are begging for mercy, you are lying."

"I didn't," The man felt embarrassed for a moment before admitting, "It's just that my neighbor has a son who is actually my child. I usually don't think about that child... I only have that one child who can't even take care of me when I am old..."

Swoosh.

The light from the Mind-Reflecting Candle flickered again.

"What?" The man was so shocked that he was momentarily speechless. Then, his face paled as he exclaimed, "Could it be that Widow Lin's child is also mine? I didn't expect that at all!"

Well, you really deserve to die... Chu Liang cursed inwardly.

"Haaa... You truly are a role model for our generation," said Lin Bei with a sigh.

"I'll give you one more chance. Don't waste my Mind-Reflecting Candle," Chu Liang threatened. "If you give me one more lie, and I'll feed you to the Golden-Furred Hou without hesitation."

"I..." The man stammered for a moment before finally conceding, "Fine."

Only then did he begin to speak the truth.

It turned out that he and the guy who died were both ruffians and rogues in the Misty Waters City. They would often bully widows and dig up graves, attempting to use various means to make money.

Some time ago, a wealthy elderly man dressed in luxurious attire approached them, asking for their help to steal a spirit beast.

Though they were bold, they didn't dare take on such a job. However, the old man offered them a hefty sum of money, promising an additional half once the task was completed. He even presented a brocade box as an advance.

He said that as long as they unchained the Golden-Furred Hou and opened this box, the Golden-Furred Hou would follow them obediently.

Lured by the promise of money and deeming the task easy, they both agreed. They arrived discreetly at night, and when they unlocked the iron chain, the Golden-Furred Hou didn't show any hostility, as it detected none from the two guys.

However, as soon as the brocade box was opened, a sudden burst of white light, resembling the head of a beast, emerged. It swiftly bit down on his companion's head, leaving behind a gaping hole on the neck as the white light dissipated!

Only then did the Golden-Furred Hou let out a roar!

Naturally, he didn't dare to admit that he had come to steal the spirit beast after attracting a crowd. With the intention of extorting some money, he claimed that it was the Golden-Furred Hou that had bitten his companion to death.

The light on the Mind-Reflecting Candle remained still.

So that was what happened.

Upon hearing this, Chu Liang pondered. Someone is obviously plotting against me. This person must have deduced that these ruffians are the type who would conveniently frame the Golden-Furred Hou if one of their companions died.

Chu Liang quickly blew out the candle. After burning for half a day, the candle had already shrunk to half its original size, which wasn't much to begin with.

Regardless of who it was that had plotted against him, he needed to deal with the government officials first. Even though sects in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten were powerful, their influence wouldn't matter much because a spirit beast taking a human life was a serious issue.

But now that he knew the truth, he could finally set his mind at ease.

...

When he pushed the door open, he saw the sturdy back of the Golden-Furred Hou.

He had previously instructed this Big Head to keep an eye on the door, and indeed, it diligently stood guard here. It was indeed a reliable guardian.

As for the government officials, it turned out that they had arrived long ago.

The incident of a beast devouring a person was significant, prompting a squad of officials with martial arts skills to swiftly respond to the scene. These officials were likely the soldiers stationed at the city gate, explaining their prompt arrival.

Upon seeing the Golden-Furred Hou at the fifth realm, the group of people surrounding it felt intimidated and were scared to approach.

In a large city like the Misty Waters City, there were likely numerous experts keeping watch, poised to intervene as the situation unfolded.

At this moment, Chu Liang stepped forward with a smile and addressed the crowd, "Everyone, the situation has been clarified. These two individuals were manipulated by criminals to frame our spirit beast. This has nothing to do with us and we are innocent."

Even after he said that, not a single person showed any sign of relief.

They had witnessed Chu Liang tying up the victim and bringing him into the room. Then, a candle and a whip were used on him for almost half a day. Afterwards, the victim emerged with a changed statement. From the looks of it, it seemed like coercion.

A soldier, likely the squad leader, stepped forward and shouted sternly, "Don't act hastily. Wait for the chief officer and the city supervisor. They will make the judgment on this matter!"

Despite the Yu Dynasty's efforts to train numerous cultivators, there remained an insufficient distribution of them in each city. Because of this shortage, the imperial court consistently applied the same approach to cases involving cultivators and eerie supernatural elements.

They could only deal with such cases afterward.

Faced with the realities of the world, the best the court could do was to deploy the main force to handle the aftermath of the incident and conduct a thorough investigation with utmost rigor.

While they may not be able to save lives, they would exert every effort to seek justice for the deceased. Only by doing so could they deter those malicious devils and evil spirits.

The chief officer was a military officer stationed in Misty Waters City, while the city supervisor was a civil officer, typically someone with a scholarly background from major academies.

Almost as soon as he finished talking, a distant howling wind echoed through the sky.

The two officials, one from the military and the other from the civil service, arrived together.

"Which wicked creature dares to cause trouble outside Misty Waters City!" With a loud boom, a burly man with sharp eyebrows and piercing eyes landed heavily. Clad in armor, he exuded an unmistakably martial presence.

"A Golden-Furred Hou?" the other person questioned, his expression immediately turning serious as he recognized the creature. He was a middle-aged man with a slender figure, dressed in scholarly attire, fair-faced, with a slight beard.

The chief officer and the city supervisor were both powerful cultivators: the former a martial cultivator at the fifth realm, and the latter a Confucian cultivator at the fifth realm. They were expected to be the strongest personnel in Misty Waters City. If cultivators of higher levels were required, they would have to come from another major city or the capital of Yu.

Even with the combined strength of the two, capturing a fleeing fifth-realm spirit beast would still be challenging.

"Gentlemen! Please, hear me out!" Chu Liang spoke loudly to calm them down before reiterating the statements he made earlier.

"Is that so?" the chief officer said to the city supervisor as he furrowed his brows. He then asked, "Official Du, what are your thoughts about this?"

The city supervisor surveyed the surroundings and said, "It's not difficult to verify whether what he said is true or not. The lingering resentment of the deceased hasn't dispersed completely; we can check if any lingering grievance has attached itself to this spirit beast."

"In that case, we'll have to trouble you to cast the spell, as this rough man doesn't understand these things," the chief officer chuckled.

"Leave it to me. Martial arts and Confucianism each have their strengths," the city supervisor surnamed Du said. He then proceeded to praise Chief Officer Li, saying, "Chief Officer Li is renowned for his martial prowess and strategic acumen in the military. He's not just any rough man."

"No, no, no," Chief Officer Li shook his head and said, "I am quite rough."

"..." City Supervisor Du pursed his lips, appearing to be a bit speechless. He turned back and began to form hand seals, then lightly pressed them against the ground.

Bang—

A gust of wind, like ripples, swept in and quickly enveloped the entire inn. Threads of soul auras gradually gathered from all directions.

Chu Liang could see that City Supervisor Du was gathering the scattered souls of the deceased. This technique seemed vaguely similar to the summoning technique used by Shang Shuwen, but it was uniquely designed for soul auras.

As the resentful soul of the deceased gradually formed, there was not a trace of it attaching to the Golden-Furred Hou. The expression on City Supervisor Du's face gradually relaxed.

The young man who could afford to keep the Golden-Furred Hou was likely either a disciple of an immortal sect or a scion of a prominent family. Regardless of his background, if it turned out that the Golden-Furred Hou was indeed responsible for the killings, holding the owner of the Golden-Furred Hou accountable would undoubtedly be challenging and could potentially lead to trouble.

Now that the Golden-Furred Hou's innocence was proven, they could finally relax.

With this thought in mind, he turned to Chu Liang and Lin Bei and asked, "Which immortal sect do you two belong to?"

"We are disciples of Mount Shu," Chu Liang replied. "We have always considered it our duty to eliminate evil entities and uphold justice."

"Mount Shu?" City Supervisor Du suddenly spoke, "The master of Mount Shu's Cloud Horizon Peak, Shang Shuwen, was once a fellow classmate of mine. Do you know him?"

"Oh," Chu Liang's face lit up with joy. "So, you are Senior Uncle Shang's fellow classmate... I have the closest relationship with him!"

Chapter 168: Burning Eyes

Among the three conventional schools of thought, the way that the Confucian cultivators passed down their cultivation legacies was quite different from the Buddhist cultivators. Most Confucian disciples were taught in academies, and after a period of study, they would leave the academy. They usually did not belong to a specific sect.

After leaving the academy, the Confucian disciples would venture out into the world in search of their own paths. There were some disciples who stayed on at the academy to teach, but the rest of the disciples would not keep a connection to the academy. If they had a deep attachment to the academy, they might do some things to contribute to the academy if they became famous and successful in the future. Aside from that, the Confucian disciples had a high degree of freedom.

As for Buddhist and Daoist cultivators, it didn't matter if they left their sects to establish their own sect. However, if they were to join another sect, it was inevitable that they would be seen as a traitor.

Unexpectedly, City Supervisor Du and Shang Shuwen of the Mount Shu Sect used to be classmates at an academy.

Upon hearing Chu Liang mention that he had a close relationship with Shang Shuwen, City Supervisor Du smiled. "Oh? Is that so?"

Chu Liang nodded sincerely. "Yes, Senior Uncle Shang has truly helped me a lot with my cultivation journey!"

Even the Mind-Reflecting Candle would not be able to detect any falsehood in these earnest words!

As Chu Liang and City Supervisor Du chatted for a while, the resentful soul finished forming. A faint shadow hovered over the body of the deceased. This was just a small part of the soul, and it was devoid of any consciousness. Nonetheless, if the murderer were present, this resentful soul would attach itself to them.

Yet, at this moment, the innocent Golden-Furred Hou had nothing on its big head except for a shiny patch of moonlight.

"It seems that it's true this spirit beast did not commit the murder. It was probably the work of someone evil or a demon," City Supervisor Du said to Chief Officer Li.

Chief Officer Li looked at the ruffian and asked sternly, "Who is the mastermind that incited you to do this?"

The ruffian knelt on the ground and pleaded tearfully, "Sir! I really don't know!"

Freed from suspicion, Chu Liang calmed down and added his opinion, "It's likely that he truly doesn't know."

After all, he spoke under the illumination of the Mind-Reflecting Candle earlier. If he knew the identity of the mastermind, he would have already revealed it.

"You're disciples of the Mount Shu Sect, so you wouldn't have any enemies here..." City Supervisor Du frowned as he pondered about the situation. "Do you have anyone you suspect?"

"I suspect it's—" Lin Bei was about to name a suspect. However, Chu Liang discreetly tugged at Lin Bei's clothes, and Lin Bei quickly changed what he was about to say. "I suspect it's his neighbor."

Lin Bei pointed at the ruffian and said, "His neighbor is raising his child. If I were the neighbor, I'd want to kill this guy too."[1]

Chief Officer Li and City Supervisor Du looked at Lin Bei with a baffled expression, thinking that his reasoning was absurd.

They continued with the investigation for a while more, but they couldn't find anything amiss. By this time, the sky was getting bright.

The officials decided to call it a day.

City Supervisor Du said to Chu Liang, "Feel free to come find me if you encounter any more issues in Misty Waters City."

As the city supervisor overseeing the cultivators in the city, City Supervisor Du was qualified to say such a thing.

"Thank you, Senior Uncle Du!" Chu Liang said gratefully, making use of his connections to form a friendly relationship with the city supervisor.

"You're young, but you have a cultured and refined demeanor, and you handle things with great poise and judgment. That's the nobleman way that we of the Confucian school of thought aspire to," City Supervisor Du praised. "It's no wonder that Senior Brother Shang likes you."

"It's because I'm learning from exemplary figures like you and Senior Uncle Shang," Chu Liang replied with a smile.

After seeing off the two officials, Lin Bei asked confusedly, "Why didn't you let me speak? Didn't you think of that old ape? It's the only demonic entity we've offended in this region."

"Well, rather than suspect..." Chu Liang grinned. "I'm almost certain it's him! Look at this."

He opened his hand, unexpectedly revealing a strand of white monkey hair to Lin Bei.

Chu Liang had found this strand of hair earlier. It still retained a hint of spiritual energy. That human-devouring white light had to have come from this strand of hair.

"That..." Lin Bei began, wanting to ask something.

However, a confused expression suddenly appeared on his face as he realized that if he were to report the Old White Ape to the authorities, they would undoubtedly rush over to that valley where the ape lived to punish it. The imperial court would certainly want to eliminate a demonic creature that treated humans like weeds. In that case, it meant that all the treasures of nature in the valley would be discovered.

Seeing as a monster had to be slayed, Lin Bei and Chu Liang might as well do it themselves.

...

Earlier...

Back in that dark room, the white-robed man was sitting opposite the shadowy figure.

"Did you see it?" the white robed-man asked.

"You're right. Chu Liang is indeed in Misty Waters City. I scanned around and found him in an inn on the outskirts of the city," the shadowy figure answered with closed eyes.

His hands were in the position of a hand seal. He was using what seemed to be a divine skill.

"What do you see?" the man in white robes said next without much thought.

The shadowy figure began, "I see him in—"

Then he suddenly stopped, his expression turning strange. He had a look of surprise and then of disbelief. Then he sighed like he'd suddenly aged decades.

"What's wrong?" the white-robed man asked puzzledly.

"Sheesh...

"

The shadowy figure swiftly deactivated the divine skill, lowered his head, and rubbed his eyes with his hands, seemingly exhausted.

After a while, he finally squeezed out, "My eyes are burning. What an abominable sight.[2]"

"What exactly did you see?" the white-robed man said curiously.

"I saw him in a room binding a man into an appalling position. He was even holding a candle in one hand... Beside him was another man, and this man was taking off his pants..."[3]

The shadowy figure had an astonished look, unable to continue describing what he'd seen.

"Young people these days..." The white-robed man now looked just as astonished. "Are you sure he was doing those things with a man?"

"Yes."

"All three of them were men...?"

"Fortunately, I can't use Heavenly Sight and Hearing for long when using from a great distance away," the shadowy figure said, speaking as if he had just barely narrowly escaped disaster. "I don't know how long it will take me to forget what I saw in just that one glance."

The immortal art Heavenly Sight and Hearing allowed the cultivator to extend their senses to any location in the world.

"Thank goodness I don't know how to use that immortal art," the man in white robes remarked gladly.

"In any case, we've already determined that guy's whereabouts," the shadowy figure concluded angrily. "I want to get someone to kill him swiftly, make him disappear from this world!"

The white-robed man regained his composure and said solemnly, "Oh, there's one more thing,"

"What is it?"

"It appears that Xu Ziyang might have gained some insight from Jiang Yuebai's lecture, as he achieved Perfect Qi Circulation as well recently and produced the Heavenly Qi-Circulation Phenomenon."

"The Heavenly Qi-Circulation Phenomenon... suddenly seems as common and cheap as cabbage," the shadowy figure scoffed coldly with hatred.

"Additionally..." the white-robed man began. He paused for a moment before revealing, "He had another cultivation phenomenon, but it wasn't the Sea of Qi Phenomenon; it was the Transformation of Five Qi into Essence Phenomenon."

"What?!" The shadowy figure was truly shocked this time. "Doesn't that mean he's already at the fifth realm?!"

"That's right," the white-robed man answered. "Now that the Mount Shu Sect has Jiang Yuebai, with her Transcendent Spirit, and Xu Ziyang, a fifth-realm cultivator, it's pretty much impossible that they will fall."

"We must kill those two while they're still developing their abilities." The shadowy figure gritted his teeth. "I want the Mount Shu Sect to never be able to rise again!"

Chapter 169: A Large Club

"Outrageous!"

As the officials and Chu Liang's group gathered, other cultivators surrounded them to watch the commotion. Among them was a tall old man with sharp features, round eyes, and a keen gaze, quietly observing everything from the shadows.

This was the human form of that Old White Ape in the valley.

Having lived in the valley for many years, it considered all the spirit plants in the valley as its own possessions. When Chu Liang took away the Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower earlier, it felt intense resentment. It followed silently and made plans to frame Chu Liang for a crime.

According to its plan, the ideal outcome would be framing Chu Liang for the murder. If that wasn't possible, it just needed to wait until the Golden-Furred Hou was restrained before seeking revenge from the two youngsters. It could obviously reclaim the treasure of nature.

However, it hadn't anticipated that Chu Liang would face this dangerous situation with no fear and swiftly investigated the truth of the matter.

Then, the city official cleared the Golden-Furred Hou of suspicion in front of everyone.

It had initially planned to witness the success of its scheme at the crime scene, only to find that the plan had completely failed.

And it then felt nervous.

Those two young cultivators, upon a moment of contemplation, would likely figure out the mastermind behind this incident, and they might come back for revenge.

If it had to deal with this situation alone, it would be difficult.

With these thoughts in mind, it left in a hurry, walking a considerable distance before revealing its true form. Then, like a swirling white wind, it returned to the Black Whale Mountain and retreated to its dwelling in the valley. Yet, it didn't stop there. It continued on and reached the other end of the valley.

There was another cave dwelling.

Inside lived a fox demon who had been cultivating for centuries, also at the peak of the fourth realm. Its cultivation prowess matched, if not surpassed, that of the Old White Ape.

Back then, the Old White Ape had been a follower of an elder of the Celestial Pivot Pavilion. It picked up numerous martial skills and had impressive combat abilities. Among demonic creatures, none could rival its strength.

Following the death of the elder, the Old White Ape parted ways with the Celestial Pivot Pavilion. While journeying, it stumbled upon this place by chance. At that time, the fox demon had already been cultivating in the valley and had settled down before the Old White Ape had arrived. However, with its formidable combat prowess, the Old White Ape claimed the fox demon's dwelling as its own.

The fox demon had a bunch of powerful divine skills, hence why the Old White Ape had not been able to kill it completely. Additionally, the fox demon threatened to wreck all the medicinal herbs in this mountain. So, in the end, the Old White Ape decided to make an agreement with the fox demon.

The agreement stated that both demons would coexist in the valley and could use its spirit plants as needed. However, anyone else approaching the valley would face severe attacks.

Given their complex relationship, both demons remained cautious around each other. The fox demon couldn't live too close to the Old White Ape, prompting it to establish another cave dwelling at the opposite end of the valley. Generally, they upheld a respectful distance, minimizing interference and avoiding direct contact.

However, the Old White Ape took the initiative to visit today.

The Old White Ape reached the entrance of the cave dwelling. Even before having to knock, a red-furred fox, standing as tall as a human, jumped out and gave him a cautious glare.

"Why are you here?" the fox demon asked.

"I have something urgent to tell you and I need your help," the Old White Ape said.

"What is it?" the fox demon asked.

"A few days ago, two disciples from an immortal sect came here to steal the treasures of this valley. I was outnumbered, and they took away a Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower. I'm worried they might come back. When that happens, you have to help me deal with them," the Old White Ape said. "Otherwise, the spirit plants in the valley will be taken away!"

"Disciples of an immortal sect?" the fox demon shrugged and asked, "They won't bring any senior members from their sect, will they?"

As a demonic entity cultivating in the wilderness, it feared nothing more than disciples from conventional immortal sects with powerful backgrounds.

"No need to panic," said the Old White Ape as its expression became more composed. "If they bring senior members from their sect, then I'll ask the Celestial Pivot Pavilion for reinforcements. Currently, they are only supported by a powerful Golden-Furred Hou that is at the fifth realm of cultivation. If it weren't for that Hou blocking the way, I would have already killed those two cultivators at the third realm of cultivation."

"A spirit beast at the fifth realm of cultivation?" The fox demon pondered for a moment and asked, "How do you want me to help you?"

"You are adept at the art of transformation. If you can take on one of their appearances and lure the Golden-Furred Hou away, I can handle the rest in no time," the Old White Ape said confidently.

"A spirit beast at the fifth realm is extremely sensitive to smells. They are not creatures I can easily deceive." The fox demon still felt slightly uneasy.

"It's not a problem," the Old White Ape stated, "I'll cast some spells to generate a mist in the valley, obstructing their vision and confusing their sense of smell. At that point, you just need to appear and lead that Hou far away so it won't intervene when I make my move. Once I've dealt with those two humans, we can join forces to fight that spirit beast."

The fox demon still seemed somewhat hesitant.

The Old White Ape pressed on, saying, "If you refuse to help me, we can resort to what you previously threatened me with and set the whole valley ablaze. This way, the treasures of nature in this mountain won't end up in anyone else's possession."

Upon hearing this, the fox demon made up its mind and came to a decision. "Alright then!"

The fox demon had guarded this valley for far longer than the Old White Ape. With the Old White Ape already laying claim to the valley, it wasn't difficult to imagine how challenging it would be for the fox demon to relinquish control of its territory.

...

When Chu Liang came to the Black Whale Mountain last time, he had only intended to harvest the Sword-Leaf Dark Sunflower. And so, he didn't use any excessive force.

If not, when the Golden-Furred Hou was fighting with the Old White Ape, he wouldn't have merely observed from the sidelines. After all, he wasn't just an ordinary weakling at the third realm of cultivation. With the few cards up his sleeve, he could certainly help.

However, the dynamics of the situation had changed. The Old White Ape had committed murder and framed them for it. When they returned to the valley, both he and Lin Bei were much more serious.

But as they looked around, there was no sign of the Old White Ape.

"Huh?"

"Lin Bei wondered, "Where did it go? Could it have guessed that we were coming for revenge and fled in advance?"

"Definitely not," Chu Liang replied, pointing to several intact spirit plants around them, "If the Old White Ape had escaped, it would have harvested these mature spirit plants. It would have never left it here for us."

"That's strange," Lin Bei remarked.

"Stay alert; it could be avoiding the Golden-Furred Hou and planning a surprise attack from the dark," Chu Liang warned. He then spoke loudly, "If it doesn't show up, let's start gathering these spirit plants!"

As soon as he finished speaking, a sudden burst of white mist appeared from all directions. In an instant, it filled the entire valley. At the same time, a strong wind kicked up, making it hard for anyone to see!

"Fly up and take a look," Chu Liang sensed something was amiss and immediately signaled Lin Bei and the Golden-Furred Hou to take flight.

However, just as the two humans and the beast were about to ascend simultaneously, a swift white figure suddenly shot out from the side. It was the Old White Ape!

With a big club in its hand, it raised it high and swung the club down with a loud roar, shouting, "Down you go!"

This powerful strike packed a tremendous punch, shaking the very foundations with an incredibly intimidating force that could be felt across the entire landscape!

The two people going up suddenly felt a strong force pushing them down into the mist below. Yet, the Golden-Furred Hou boldly lifted its head and took the impact with its big skull!

Bang!

Despite the thick and tough fur of the Golden-Furred Hou, being left hanging in the air with no solid ground beneath its feet resulted in it getting swiftly pushed down by the club, and it landed back on the ground.

As they moved back and forth, the distance between the two humans and the Hou creature increased slightly. The dense fog made it impossible to see anything within a foot in front of them.

"Golden-Furred Hou!"

A voice suddenly called out from among the mist.

The Golden-Furred Hou raised its big head and saw a figure in the distance that kind of looked like Chu Liang. But because the surrounding was very hazy, it was hard to tell. So, the Big Head decided to move closer to get a better look.

The figure who was supposedly "Chu Liang" then took a few steps back, creating some distance, which prompted the Golden-Furred Hou to follow. After several repetitions of this, "Chu Liang" eventually led the Hou to the edge of the fog.

Deep within the dense fog, the real Chu Liang contemplated altering his course and trying to escape. Suddenly, a sense of impending danger washed over him.

He sensed that some kind of energy or presence was focusing on him.

"You will soon realize how wrong it was to come here." A sinister and chilling laughter reverberated through the fog.

Once again, a large club approached!

Chapter 170: A Hunting Hou

"A third-realm cultivator? A genius?"

A figure clad in robust armor and a face mask emerged, bearing two long sabers crossed on his back. His eyes, the sole visible features, conveyed a perplexing blend of confusion and scorn.

"Don't underestimate him. Even though he is at the third realm of cultivation and this level isn't considered very high, he was able to reach the state of Perfect Qi Circulation, which shocked many at Mount Shu," said a crow that was currently perched on his outstretched right arm.

Even though the masked man had heard what the crow said, he still sneered and said, "Cool."

The crow continued explaining, "Plus, he has a spirit beast, a Golden-Furred Hou, that is at the fifth realm of cultivation. You mustn't underestimate him."

The masked man took another glance at the sketch of Chu Liang in his hands.

After memorizing the appearance, he gently shook his hand, and the paper turned into countless shreds, drifting away with the wind.

"Just lead the way," the masked man requested.

The crow spread its wings, emitting two hoarse calls, and the masked man followed closely, riding the wind.

After a while, they arrived at the Black Whale Mountain.

Once again, the crow reminded, "He's in that valley, shrouded in thick fog. Be careful."

"Isn't that even better for an ambush?" chuckled the masked man. "He's just a third-realm cultivator. I can take him down in an instant. The spirit beast won't even have time to react."

"Keep me informed," the crow added before suddenly exploding into a burst of black feathers and transforming into a puddle of ink that splattered on the ground. It turned out that this crow was not a real living creature.

With a swift leap, the masked man descended from the air and landed on the ground.

His codename was Dual Wielder, a specialized assassin within the organization. In the realm of assassin cultivation, he regarded himself as at the pinnacle of this world.

He couldn't quite grasp why he was assigned to eliminate a third-realm cultivator. Perhaps that youngster possessed extraordinary qualities and was someone highly valued by the Mount Shu Sect.

The mysterious leader of the organization harbored a deep-seated grudge against the Mount Shu Sect. After decades of scheming, he gathered a group of orphans who had endured suffering inflicted by the Mount Shu Sect and established the current organization.

Take Dual Wielder, for instance; his father was just a local tyrant, engaged in commonplace bullying, pillaging, and violence to survive. One day, disciples from the Mount Shu Sect showed up at his doorstep and brutally beat him to death.

These disciples of the Mount Shu Sect were merciless.

Most of the people in the organization shared similar backgrounds, entangled in shady dealings in their daily lives while concurrently scheming to undermine the Mount Shu Sect.

In the blink of an eye, the masked assassin landed in the thick fog of the valley. As he entered the edge of the dense mist, a figure not far away caught his attention.

The youth perfectly matched the features and stature depicted in the drawing. Behind him stood a massive creature, presumably the fifth-realm Golden-Furred Hou.

It seemed like an effortless job.

A smirk graced Dual Wielder's lips. The moment he landed on the ground, he transformed into a shadow with a glinting black light. A chilling aura pierced through the thick fog.

Swish—

His shadow sliced through the ethereal silhouette of the youth in the dense mist.

The Dual Wielder used the technique Shadow Slash.

And with that, Dual Wielder left without looking back. He had executed a lethal strike and retreated a thousand li away. So what if Chu Liang was protected by a spirit beast at the fifth realm?

I can kill you instantly and retreat safely even before your spirit beast arrives.No difficulty at all.
The Dual Wielder thought to himself.

The youth stood frozen in place, as if under a petrification spell. After a pause, a circle of blood lines spread from his waist. Following that, his upper body slumped down.

During the descent, a flash of light appeared, and both his upper and lower halves of the body transformed into an inhuman shape.

As the youth crashed on the ground, a sudden flash of light illuminated the scene. His upper and lower parts of his body underwent a rapid, profound transformation, assuming a shape utterly unlike that of a human.

It was the body of a fox.

The Golden-Furred Hou finally caught up. It approached the corpse and sniffed around.

No. Wrong person. The Golden-Furred Hou concluded.

It shook its large head and returned to the thick fog to search for Chu Liang, leaving behind a crime scene as if nothing had happened.

...

Bang!

With no time to dodge this suddenly swinging club, Chu Liang could only wrap himself in a zongzi and brace for the impact.

The zongzi was instantly sent several dozen zhang away, disappearing into the mist.

Nevertheless, the Old White Ape followed closely after the sound.

Having practiced martial arts for many years, it could lock onto the enemy's position based on the slightest rustle of the wind or the most subtle breath. This was its extraordinary skill!

Yet, as it pursued, it didn't detect a sound nor a trace of breath.

What's going on? Where did he go? The Old White Ape wondered.

Just as confusion crept into the Old White Ape's mind, a faint sound reached its ears, prompting it to swing the club immediately.

But the Old White Ape found that it was a small copper ball thrown at him, and as he struck it, the copper ball exploded with a thunderous bang!

The intense explosion dispersed a large portion of the mist. It not only sent the Old White Ape flying but also shook its mind, as if struck by a heavy hammer. An inexplicable fear suddenly overcame it.

It was the Shadowburst Thunder Bomb!

Chu Liang then stood up.

It turned out that, while wrapping himself in the green leaf, he assessed the current situation and immediately ingested an Essence-Concealing Pill.

As he ingested the Essence-Concealing Pill and held his breath, the Old White Ape could not locate him at all in this thick fog. It was only then that Chu Liang successfully launched the surprise attack with this Shadowburst Thunder Bomb.

The thick fog around them dispersed. The Old White Ape had fallen and Chu Liang remained standing. They could finally see each other clearly.

"Little thief!" The Old White Ape roared in anger.

It had finally overcome the lingering fear in its heart.

It propped up its large club and suddenly bounced up, charging at Chu Liang once again.

Upon seeing this, Chu Liang immediately recognized the movement technique that the Old White Ape was using. It was the Turbulent Stream Movement Art, the same one that Yun Chaoxian had taught him.

While not a high-level technique, this martial arts technique yielded vastly different outcomes when executed by practitioners of the third and fourth realms. The variance in their cultivation levels led to a substantial gap in speed.

If Chu Liang had escaped using the Turbulent Stream Movement Art, he would likely be caught by the Old White Ape in an instant.

If he had decided to fight, a collision with the club wielded by the Old White Ape could cause his bones to shatter and his tendons to snap, potentially resulting in immediate death.

As of now, he couldn't escape and he couldn't win.

What should I do? He thought to himself.

Chu Lian raised his hand, and once again, the green light flashed, initiating another defensive process.

The Old White Ape sneered as it thought to itself. How many times can you use this trick? I will shatter this enchanted tool within three or five strikes!"

However, in the next moment, it realized it was wrong. This time, the green light didn't envelop Chu Liang. Instead, the Old White Ape found itself wrapped up in the zongzi.

Indeed. As the green leaf enchanted tool curled around, it suddenly wrapped the Old White Ape around. The Old White Ape immediately raised its large club, attempting to force its way out of the zongzi.

But with just a slight delay, thunderous explosions rang in its ears.

Boom! Boom! The explosion sounded like two suppressed thunderclaps.

The explosion sounded muffled this time as they happened inside the zongzi.

The Old White Ape had only encountered two explosions, one more than its previous experience. However, as these explosions occurred within the zongzi, the impact the White Ape felt this time surpassed the magnitude of the first explosion by over a dozen times.

Regrettably, the explosion also inflicted cracks upon the green leaf artifact. Anguished by the damage to his tool, Chu Liang withdrew the green light. With a soft thud, a charred white ape collapsed to the ground, its eyes shut in unconsciousness.

It looked like a black ape.

Still, Chu Liang remained vigilant.

If he had killed a demonic creature, there would have been golden light floating towards him. But at this moment, there was nothing, indicating that the Old White Ape had not died.

He summoned the Dustless Sword, and it flew towards the charred ape, leaving behind a trail of white light. With the sword, he probed the ape's chest, stomach, and lower body to determine if it was alive.

With the sword probing, the white ape could no longer feign death. It flipped over and sent the Dustless Sword flying with a swing of its club.

Severely injured and deeply traumatized by the Shadowburst Thunder Bombs, the ape had no intention of fighting. It flipped over and attempted to escape.

If it could escape, it planned to return to its sect and seek support from its sect members. It no longer cared if doing so would reveal this location filled the treasures of nature. Even if it had to abandon all the treasures, it was determined to find and seek revenge against this little thief!

Coincidentally, at this moment, a roar resounded. The Golden-Furred Hou saw its master and rushed over with earth-shaking steps. It was at this moment that the white ape jumped out and collided head-on with the Big Head emerging from the thick fog.

Crunch!

The Golden-Furred Hou sank its teeth into the Old White Ape.

Among all the threats around Chu Liang capable of penetrating the white ape's defenses, the fangs of the Golden-Furred Hou stood out as the most formidable.

"Ah!" The Old White Ape shrieked in agony. Its eyes were filled with resentment as it realized that escape was now impossible.

It plucked a strand of hair from its fur and spat a mouthful of blood out as it tossed the single strand of hair upward.

Swish!

That hair transformed into a streak of white light and flew away.

When Chu Liang saw that the White Ape was about to be bitten to death, he raised his middle finger and index finger. The Dustless Sword then swept through with its brilliance and pierced through the white ape's throat.

Only then did a golden light descend around Chu Liang.

"You did an awesome job." Chu Liang walked over and gave the Golden-Furred Hou a pat on its head. He showered it with tremendous praise for its timely intervention and for the impressive control it showed in biting without causing fatal harm.

The Golden-Furred Hou was now considered a qualified hunting Hou.

With the death of the Old White Ape, the surrounding mist dispersed instantly. At the mouth of the valley, there was also a strong scent of blood, indicating that a battle had taken place there as well.

Only then did Lin Bei, who had been absent for a while, hastily emerge. He looked at the fallen white ape and then glanced at Chu Liang, exhaling a sigh of relief.

"That was a close call, but thankfully, everything ended well," he remarked with a grin. "My brother Chu Liang's strength is truly remarkable!"