

M. Slaying 221

Chapter 221: The Five Elements Talismans

At Silver Sword Peak, Chu Liang quietly remarked in annoyance, "I wonder which crazy guy came up with these things..."

Pretty much all of the renowned master alchemists would have their own unique alchemical recipes that they kept confidential. Naturally, the Mount Shu Sect's Alchemy Master also had quite a number of unique pills that he'd created to be used exclusively within the sect.

The Green Pill[1] was one of them. This pill was not commonly sought out, as its effect was that it would increase the cultivator's affinity with the spiritual qi of wood. After taking a high-grade Green Pill, the cultivator could hide in a forest by becoming one with it, blending in like one of the trees.

No one had much use for it except in special circumstances, so no one would concoct them in advance. If a cultivator needed the Green Pill, they would have to place an order with the Hall of Alchemy for the pill to be made.

However... considering the bad relationship that Silver Sword Peak had with the Hall of Alchemy, this was a blatant move against Chu Liang.

He couldn't purchase a Green Pill himself. Asking someone else to do it definitely wouldn't work either, as he was the only one who had reached this stage of the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony. The other disciples were still trying to figure out the mystery hidden in the four paintings.

If the Alchemy Master wanted to stop Chu Liang from winning, all he needed to do was prohibit all sales of the Green Pills. After all, the Green Pill was rarely used. This made it obvious that if there was anyone wanting to purchase it in the next couple of days, it would undoubtedly be Chu Liang.

It wasn't even that the other disciples were slow. There was still some time before the Mount Shu Summit. The treasure hunt had been deliberately planned so that the disciples would spend a few days on each stage, bringing the event to an end just before the summit... It was Chu Liang who was too fast!

Nevertheless, Chu Liang still held onto some hope and went to ask Chen Su if she could help him concoct a Green Pill.

Chen Su looked troubled. She wasn't capable of concocting high-grade Green Pills. That was something that only the Alchemy Master and a few of his disciples could do. Moreover, that very day, the Alchemy Master had already given out strict orders forbidding Green Pills to be sold in the short term.

This scheme was definitely the work of several of the sect's elders. Their goal was to punish Chu Liang for selling the second stage's puzzle for profit.

"Haaa," Chu Liang sighed.

Who would want to sell the information they've attained unless they were left without a choice?

Prior to this, Chu Liang had shown some restraint. However, since he was being targeted now, he might as well go all out.

At noon that day, his team for the treasure hunt gathered at Silver Sword Peak once again.

"Big Bro! Did you already solve the puzzle?" Shang Ziliang asked excitedly.

He felt that he had followed the right person. Despite racking their brains for so many days, none of the other disciples had managed to solve the puzzle. Yet, Chu Liang had only been back for two days, and he'd already made a breakthrough.

"Mmhm." Chu Liang nodded. "We can sell the solution for the second stage's puzzle now."

Everyone was astonished. "Huh?"

He still wants to continue selling information?

"Big Boss!" Lackey A said anxiously. "This is already the second stage, and we're so close to the final answer. I don't think we should sell this information."

Chu Liang looked at him with a smile. "This is great. Keep that attitude."

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In just one afternoon, news spread all over Mount Shu that someone from Silver Sword Peak would be selling the solution to the second stage's puzzle that evening at the Red Cotton Market.

In the evening, a continuous stream of several hundred people arrived at Red Cotton Peak. Chu Liang had set up a platform there and was standing on it.

Upon seeing that most of the disciples had arrived, Chu Liang said loudly, "My fellow disciples, after solving the second stage's puzzle, I spent time in careful deliberation. I've decided to do something that will go against our predecessors' wishes—"

"Big Boss! You mustn't sell the information!" someone yelled.

That person dashed up onto the platform to stop Chu Liang. It was Lackey A.

He said, "This is already the second stage. If you share the information with others and they somehow end up solving the next puzzle, won't they get their hands on the White-Jade Porcelain Cup before us?!"

"So what? We're all disciples of Mount Shu; we're family. What boundaries are there among family?!" Chu Liang shouted.

"No, you can't do this!" Lackey A replied. "I'm in your team, and I want to win. You can't sell that information!"

"Ha," Chu Liang let out a cold laugh. "I can't sell it? Since you won't let me sell it... Okay, I won't."

"Really?" Lackey A asked.

Chu Liang waved his hand and declared, "I'll give it away for free! Let's see how you'll stop me! Men, drag him away!"

Lin Bei and Shang Ziliang rushed up and pulled Lackey A off the platform.

Kicking the air in a fit of anger, Lackey A bellowed, "You'll regret this!"

Their little show piqued everyone's interest.

Chu Liang then said, "I'll be giving away the solution to the second stage's puzzle to you, my fellow disciples!"

He waved his hand, and Lackey B walked up with a box of berries.

Chu Liang explained, "These Dragon Breath Golden Vein Berries are the specialty of my peak, Silver Sword Peak. I'm sure that those of you who often come to Red Cotton Peak know what these berries are and that they're worth buying. This box of three berries costs only one sword coin. That has always been the price, and I'm sure all of you know that. This time around, I'll be giving away the answer to the puzzle with the sale of these berries!"

Chu Liang opened the box of berries and took out a small copper talisman.

He continued, "We've made character talismans for each of the five elements—metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. There's one of them in each box of berries. As long as you can collect the character talismans for all five elements, you can trade them for a copy of the answer!"

"Seven days later, we'll give out copies of the answer to everyone at the same time. Anyone with the full set of character talismans of the five elements will get a copy!"

"My dear family! This is a chance not to be missed!"

At this moment, Lackey A suddenly dashed up again. "You weren't even profiting from that price! And now you're giving away the answer! You worked so hard to grow these berries... You're going to suffer a great loss by doing this!"

Chu Liang pushed him away and said angrily, "Why are you getting in my way again? All right, since you think the price is low, I'll lower it even more! My dear family! I'm holding a seven-day promotional event! You can get two boxes of berries for one sword coin! This is half the usual price!"

Hearing that, even Lin Bei stepped forward to try and persuade Chu Liang. "Chu Liang, you shouldn't make yourself suffer such a great loss in earnings just because you're angry at him."

"Leave me alone!" Chu Liang raised his hand to stop Lin Bei. "I'm a temperamental guy!"

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Fortunately, Silver Sword Peak's garden was adequately large and had a production rate that could accommodate such a huge number of sales.

On the first day, a large quantity of berries was sold out in less than two hours.

Chu Liang was almost submerged by the crowd of people wanting to buy the berries. He raised his hands and gave his assurance that he would continue selling the berries at the same price the next day. After that, the crowd finally allowed him to leave.

The Golden Vein Berries had always been high in demand in the Red Cotton Market. Chu Liang had only put the berries up for sale a few times, but the berries had always sold well. Yet, Chu Liang was selling the berries at such a great discount this time and even giving away the solution to the second stage's puzzle. This was a ridiculously good deal!

In any case, it didn't matter even if there were usually only a few people interested in the Golden Vein Berries. After all, there were many people interested in the solution to the second stage's puzzle. Lackey A's words reminded many of them that if they could get their hands on the second stage's answer, then all they needed to do was solve the final puzzle. After that, they could emerge as the winner of the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony!

The Mountain God Memorial Ceremony was held once every ten years. If they could become a dark horse and clinch the first place, wouldn't it be such a glorious achievement?

For just one sword coin, they could buy one character talisman and six berries... Moreover, six berries usually cost two sword coins. This was a deal that was hard to say no to.

After three consecutive days of sales, there was an additional reason driving the disciples to buy the berries—the desire to complete their set of talismans.

Once someone possessed the character talismans for metal, wood, water, and fire, they would have an intense desire for the Earth Character Talisman. Consequently, a craze of trading Five Elements Talismans emerged on Mount Shu.

The first question everyone asked the moment they headed out in the morning was, "Do you have the character talisman for earth?"

If the Five Elements Talismans had been evenly spread among the boxes of berries, then theoretically, each team would only need to purchase five boxes of berries and trade the talismans with each other to gather the full set of five.

However, there seemed to be relatively fewer Fire Character Talismans given with the latest batch of berries, and there were even fewer Earth Character Talismans. There were plenty of character talismans for the other three elements though. Everyone was missing the same character talisman, so all they could do was buy more berries.

The Earth Character Talisman became a hard currency. There were even people who conducted private sales and sold the Earth Character Talismans for a very high price. Before long, this became a common practice.

This craze that Chu Liang had created went beyond what he'd predicted. Over the past few days, he'd harvested more thorny black balls in a rush, planted the berry seeds, and added a great amount of Herbal Wood Spirit Powder to speed up the plants' growth. That was how he had barely managed to keep up with the high level of demand.

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"Argh! This is so annoying!" Jiang Yuebai scowled. "Why is it that I just can't get the Earth Character Talisman?! Did you only put in four types of talismans?! You despicable merchant!"

Chu Liang refused to admit it. "How could that be? Perhaps the five types of talismans weren't evenly spread among the boxes, and the Earth Character Talismans are all in the later batches?"

Even Jiang Yuebai had gotten pulled into the craze. She had bought several tens of boxes of berries but hadn't gotten a single Earth Character Talisman. She was so angry that she punched Chu Liang.

"Senior Sister Jiang, if you want the Earth Character Talisman, I can just give it to you." Chu Liang displayed the aura of a mastermind manipulating everything from the shadows. "I can just tell you the answer to the second stage's puzzle too if you want."

"What's the point of that?" Jiang Yuebai blinked. "And how could I take advantage of you like that?"

"Senior Sister Jiang, you taught me divine skills and immortal arts without asking for anything in return, so why would I hold anything against you over such a trifling thing like this?" Chu Liang replied with a smile.

"Oh, right. I forgot to ask you something," Jiang Yuebai said, smiling too. "How's it going with Dimension Compression?"

"Haaa..." Chu Liang sighed, shaking his head. "I'm really lacking in aptitude for this..."

Jiang Yuebai was about to tell him some words of comfort.

Then Chu Liang continued, "I practiced for quite a number of days, but I can only use it to cover a distance of one zhang at most."

Jiang Yuebai's smile vanished, and she fell silent for quite a while.

Noticing that, Chu Liang asked, "Senior Sister Jiang? What's the matter?"

Jiang Yuebai mumbled for a bit under her breath before bellowing, "You swindler!"

Chapter 222: Cocoon

Chu Liang had surprised Jiang Yuebai countless times. Every time she thought she wouldn't be surprised again, Chu Liang would find a way to astonish her once more.

She couldn't help but recall what it had been like for her when she first started practicing Dimension Compression.

Back then, she had just reached the beginning stage of the Golden Core Realm. When her esteemed teacher taught her the immortal art, there was no expectation of her mastering it quickly. Her esteemed teacher simply hoped that she would try to comprehend the Great Dao.

However, Jiang Yuebai studied really hard. She spent days and nights learning to understand this and eventually understood the existence of the Dao of Distancelessness within less than three months.

Half a year later, she was able to practice the Immortal Art: Dimension Compression with ease.

Back then, her teacher even praised her constitution of the Transcendent Spirit, saying that it was as expected of someone with a constitution beloved by the spirit world.

But what does it mean when Chu Liang is progressing at such incredible speed?

It has only been a month since I taught him Dimension Compression, yet he is already able to move swiftly and appear in different locations, Jiang Yuebai thought to herself.

After mastering the Dao of Distancelessness, she recalled needing to practice for an entire month to control the direction. Why did it seem like he didn't need to do the same?

Even though he mastered it so quickly, he still appeared really unimpressed and dissatisfied. This was maddening.

As Chu Liang faced Jiang Yuebai's anger, he appeared innocent.

Jiang Yuebai paused for a moment and said, "Nevermind. I won't bother with these things. I came here for a serious matter. I heard that Yang Yuhu of the Penglai Supreme Sect has sought you out before."

"Yes," Chu Liang responded as he nodded.

It wasn't surprising that his movements in Misty Waters City had been noticed by others. After all, Lin Bei had been with him at the time.

"He probably wanted you to join Penglai, right?" Jiang Yuebai asked, "Did he promise that all resources will be provided without limit? Did he mention that you could focus solely on cultivating, free from worries, and achieve the Dao Attainment Realm twenty years ahead of schedule?"

"Eh? Senior Sister, how did you know?"

Chu Liang froze for a moment. He did not mention his conversation with Yang Yuhu to Lin Bei.

"The member of Penglai had said the exact same words to me. But in reality, they would try to recruit every talented figure in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten," Jiang Yuebai explained.

"Hmm..." Chu Liang pondered. The truth was not exactly what Jiang Yuebai had said.

What Yang Yuhu really said was that he would be able to achieve the Dao Attainment Realm ten years ahead of schedule...

He's looking down on me...

Chu Liang thought to himself.

"I'm just reminding you, don't get caught up in this trap," Jiang Yuebai continued. "Penglai may offer enticing conditions, but if your progress slows even a bit once you're in, and you don't advance as swiftly as before, all the special treatment will disappear. Plus, as an outsider, they won't show you any patience. Countless geniuses have ended up as mere mediocrities there."

"I see." This was the first time Chu Liang had heard about this.

Everyone's growth in cultivation was different. Some might advance from the Spiritual Awareness Realm to the Golden Core Realm at an incredible speed and once they reach the Golden Core Realm, they would display mediocrity. It was also normal for the Penglai Supreme Sect to not show any more patience toward an outsider.

As long as they could recruit talented cultivators from the other immortal sects and ensure that these talented figures wouldn't weaken the ranking of their own sect in the future. As for the future development of this person, they wouldn't care much.

This was a very cunning competitive strategy.

Penglai's primary concern wasn't acquiring another talented cultivator for their sect; rather, they aimed to diminish the talent pool of their competing sect.

There wasn't much to discuss about those who departed for their own interests and were subsequently forsaken for the same reasons.

Mount Shu Sect wouldn't abandon a disciple simply because they remained at a certain cultivation level for an extended period, unless the disciple decided to leave the sect on their own terms. However, if one were an outsider initially, equal patience and treatment might not be extended. As Chu Liang previously remarked, leaving one's place of origin could make him someone who had lost his root.

"Don't worry," Chu Liang smiled, "I won't leave Mount Shu. Does Penglai Supreme Sect have such a beautiful and gentle senior sister like you?"

"Heh, Xi Miaoxian from Penglai is renowned for her unparalleled beauty. Some even claim she's the most stunning woman of our generation," Jiang Yuebai remarked with a playful blink and a smile.

"Is that so?" Chu Liang's expression shifted to one of deep contemplation. "Yang Yuhu never brought this up to me..."

Jiang Yuebai's smile gradually sharpened, as if concealing a hidden saber within.

"Haha, just kidding," Chu Liang interjected hastily. "How could I not have heard of Xi Miaoxian? I've long known that she and Yang Shenlong grew up together. Who would dare have eyes on her? Besides, I firmly believe there's no woman more beautiful than Senior Sister Jiang in this world! As long as you remain at Mount Shu, so shall I!

"With a loyal soul ignited by fervent blood, I shall remain a part of Mount Shu forever."

...

After descending from the Treasured Pagoda Peak, Chu Liang inspected the progress of the garden before retiring to his room to resume cultivation.

He retrieved the tiny silkworm that had now grown to the size of a palm, and placed both it and the remaining chunk of the Immortal's Cauldron of Inferno on the table, allowing the silkworm to chew and feed.

While he was about to start his cultivation, he decided to feed the silkworm as well.

He then closed his eyes, entering the space within the White Pagoda, where he joined the two Large-Headed Dolls already entrenched in dual cultivation every day and night. Together, all three of them synchronized their circulation of qi as they practiced the Qi-Circulation Technique.

As Chu Liang immersed himself in cultivation, he couldn't sense the passing of time. It was only when the chirping of birds startled him awake that he realized it was already afternoon.

A white crane threw a book on the table outside before hastily departing, offering a brief greeting before its departure. It turned out that the latest issue of the Seven Stars Gazette had arrived.

As he stood up to retrieve the book, he suddenly noticed that the little silkworm had devoured the last chunk of the Immortal's Cauldron of Inferno. What's more, it had already woven a sturdy golden silk cocoon and nestled itself within.

Wait...

Is this a cocoon?

It seemed his guess was correct. After consuming material with sufficient spiritual energy, the little silkworm had begun a new cycle of evolution.

He wondered what form it would emerge in this time.

After observing for a while, Chu Liang returned the golden cocoon to the space within the White Pagoda.

Even though he had hatched the little silkworm himself and has become a parent, he didn't know much about how the child might perceive the world nor much about the child at all. Apart from providing enough food, he couldn't do much to help and could only hope it would grow up healthy.

After stowing away the cocoon, he retrieved this month's issue of the Seven Stars Gazette from outside and brought it indoors.

As he opened the Gazette, prominent headlines caught his eye: "Monsters Rampant Across the Nine Provinces! Righteous Forces Stand Ready!"

During such eventful times, even the atmosphere conveyed by the Seven Stars Gazette took on a solemn tone.

As usual, he first looked at the "Catalog of the Mortal World's Ten Thousand Treasures."

In this issue of the catalog, there were no major changes, only a solemn declaration.

In Winding Mountain City, a new master swordsmith emerged, proudly presenting a legendary sword worthy of ranking among the top one hundred treasures. It was said that upon its creation, the sword successfully vanquished a greater demon of the world.

However, when disciples from the Celestial Pivot Pavilion arrived to verify it, they discovered that the sword did not possess the formidable power claimed, and the claim of slaying greater demons seemed to have been fabricated.

Therefore, the Celestial Pivot Pavilion announced that they would never include any works of this master swordsmith in the rankings.

Initially, the Catalog of the Mortal World's Ten Thousand Treasures ranked enchanted tools solely based on rumors, without requiring verification. However, as the influence of the catalog grew, numerous unscrupulous individuals began exploiting it for personal gain.

For instance, individuals would claim to have defeated renowned enchanted tools listed in the catalog using ordinary ones, falsely promoting their own items. As a result, the ordinary enchanted tools would also receive high rankings, allowing them to profit from their sale.

Not every purchaser of enchanted tools possessed the ability to discern their authenticity. When buyers realized they had been deceived, they might hold the Catalog of the Mortal World's Ten

Thousand Treasures partly responsible. Over time, the Celestial Pivot Pavilion decided that every enchanted tool listed must undergo verification to maintain trust and integrity.

If anyone were to engage in false promotion or attempt deceit to manipulate their item's ranking, they would face permanent banning.

This news caught Chu Liang's attention because the description of that sword reminded him of the Crimson Executioner.

The Crimson Executioner had helped him, a third-realm cultivator, kill a strong cultivator at the sixth realm. This meant that the Crimson Executioner definitely deserved the title of "legendary sword." However, if someone were to verify its power, the likely outcome would be his own banning as well.

As he flipped through the pages past the "Catalog of the Mortal World's Ten Thousand Treasures," he delved into the "Chronicles of the Nine Provinces." To his dismay, he found that there were quite a few major events last month, and none of them were good.

Leading the list was the emergence of Taowu[1].

In the world of spirit beasts, there existed celestial beings like Baize alongside vicious creatures like Taowu, which thrived on malevolent qi and were feared for their terrifying, bloodthirsty, and cruel nature.

For years, Taowu had resided in the Evil Demon Mountain, a gathering place for vicious beasts, without venturing out. However, for reasons unknown, Taowu suddenly departed from the Evil Demon Mountain and went missing. This caused the vicious beasts in the Evil Demon Mountain to fall into a chaotic state, resulting in widespread devastation in the surrounding areas.

Following the news regarding Taowu, the Chronicles of the Nine Provinces then shifted focus to Cataclysmic Ba.

Chapter 223: The Upheavals

On that fateful day, the Celestial Pivot Pavilion conducted a hexagram divination to forecast events in the mortal realm, revealing the ominous emergence of the Cataclysmic Ba. The Eminent Ones[1] in the sects within the Divine Nine then gathered at the Immortals' Marsh with the intention of capturing the Cataclysmic Ba.

However, they failed as the Cataclysmic Ba escaped through the water out to the South Sea.

In the past, when the Cataclysmic Ba would emerge, it would relentlessly pursue slaughter and sought ascension. An escape like this has never happened before and this unprecedented escape has raised alarms among both the Divine Nine and the Terrestrial Ten. Wherever the Cataclysmic Ba roamed, calamity was bound to happen. It was likely that casualties would occur and people would suffer.

However, no such calamitous events happened. The Cataclysmic Ba was instead intercepted by a solitary cultivator known as the Whale-Riding Immortal, who whisked it away to an undisclosed location. Subsequently, its whereabouts remained shrouded in mystery. In response, the Divine Nine and the Terrestrial Ten issued a stern warning to the Whale-Riding Immortal, cautioning against any attempt to manipulate the power of the Cataclysmic Ba for malevolent purposes within the mortal realm.

As Chu Liang read this, his brows furrowed.

He had been the source of some of the information in this report, particularly regarding the young girl and the Whale-Riding Immortal. He had reported this to the senior members of Mount Shu, and Mount Shu Sect had likely communicated with the Celestial Pivot Pavilion.

Still, he wasn't sure about the little girl's identity.

Is the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten sure that she is the Cataclysmic Ba? Chu Liang wondered.

When Chu Liang saw the next thing on the news, he then realized why they were so sure.

The next thing on the news was the Mortal-Realm Wanted Notice posted by the Greater-Yin Cult, offering valuable rewards for the assassination of the Whale-Riding Immortal, as well as any information or clues provided.

This was the Greater-Yin Cult's way of doing things. They had always remained isolated and disliked participating in the disputes between immortal sects. However, if a conflict were to arise, they would never hold back.

This was especially the case. They had not provoked anyone. Even so, their ancestors' graves were dug out and the coffin was stolen. Considering what had happened, their anger was indeed reasonable.

The Celestial Pivot Pavilion deduced that the Whale-Riding Immortal had snatched the ice coffin to suppress the cataclysmic qi in the Cataclysmic Ba. The article wrote that this method was not sustainable and would eventually backfire.

It all made sense now.

The series of behaviors displayed by the Whale-Riding Immortal could all be explained now. The Whale-Riding Immortal first took the Cataclysmic Ba from the South Sea and went to the Northern Regions to rob an ice coffin to suppress its karmic calamity and temporarily keep that cataclysmic qi under control.

As for why the Whale-Riding Immortal had captured the Cataclysmic Ba, Chu Liang didn't think that it was because he had the intention of using the power of the Cataclysmic Ba. It was more likely that the little girl was part of the Jiang Family and the Whale-Riding Immortal might also be surnamed Jiang...

When they have the answer to this, they would then know the cause of these series of events.

The next article was a major piece of news.

Xu Bashan, the chief of the Four Seas Whale Gang, had gone missing.

Currently, the competition for the new chief of the Whale Gang was becoming more intense. Jiang Shenting from the Eastern Whale Division surprisingly stood toe-to-toe with the current chief Xu Bashan, which caught many off guard.

During this period, while Xu Bashan was traveling by boat to the West Sea, a vicious beast, the Heaven-Devouring Python, suddenly emerged and swallowed the ship he was on in one gulp.

The Heaven-Devouring Python harbored immense power and could devour everything in its path.

However, with Xu Bashan being a powerful Eminent One at the seventh realm, it was expected that he would be able to easily crawl out of that huge python. Yet, he vanished without a trace, leaving everyone wondering what had happened to him inside the python.

Many suspected Jiang Shenting to be the mastermind of this incident, but Jiang Shenting quickly issued a statement, expressing shock, anger, and sorrow at the disappearance of the current chief. He emphasized that the Eastern Whale Division had no involvement in the matter and that his men were actively searching for Xu Bashan as well.

As for whether people believed this statement, it was hard to tell.

Chu Liang then recalled Xu Hongqiu, the lady he met at Taotie City.

How is that generous girl? Chu Liang wondered.

During times when there weren't many major events in the mortal realm, news often revolved around the younger generations in the world of immortality cultivators.

However, amidst the current upheavals, the younger ones weren't deemed important enough to warrant attention. There was one exception, though: the latest piece of news.

On the Cloud-Gazing Mountain, Wei Tiandi, the second senior brother of Thunderbolt Stronghold, and Feng Chaoyang, head disciple of the Celestial King Sect, clashed fiercely, wreaking havoc to the mountain areas. Despite the intensity of their fight, it ended in a deadlock, with neither combatant winning.

Disputes over treasures of nature, secret techniques, enchanted tools, and the like had always occurred frequently in the past, especially when both parties represented their sect's best interests. Such events were nothing new.

The three core disciples of the Thunderbolt Stronghold were extremely famous. The eldest senior brother Du Wuhen was known for his loyalty and courage, second senior brother Wei Tiandi for his wit and bravery, as well as the third brother for his smile and extraordinary strength.

Many outsiders believed that they represented the generation destined to lead the Thunderbolt Stronghold into ascending to the ranks of the Divine Nine.

Of course, the disciples of Mount Shu were not one of these believers.

After all, the disciples of Mount Shu knew that if one sect within the Divine Nine ranking had to be ousted and the Mount Shu Sect agreed, none of the other sects would request it to stay.

Now, even a mere second senior brother of the Thunderbolt Stronghold could rival the head disciple of the Celestial King Sect, demonstrating the true strength of the new generation.

The future looked promising!

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The latest issue of the "Uncommon Tales of the Martial World" was rather uneventful. Apart from the upcoming tour organized by Shen Qingyan, there was no other noteworthy news.

With the Celestial Pivot Pavilion's limited manpower, it was unlikely for them to cover everything, especially since the "Chronicles of the Nine Provinces" section involved investigating major news. This meant there was naturally less energy and effort left for the "Uncommon Tales of the Martial World."

Chu Liang placed the Seven Stars Gazette down and left the house for a breath of fresh air.

Amidst the current upheavals, the sense of impending winter grew. Names like Taotie, Cataclysmic Ba, and Sky-Swallowing Python, which rarely appeared or hadn't surfaced for a long time, were now emerging all at once. Yet, everyone knew that these were not the most terrifying...

The most terrifying existence was the demon god.

That was an existence that the humans could not win against at all. After all, the mortal realm had yet to witness the emergence of another human cultivator at the ninth realm.

Throughout the long ages, the Hallowed One[2] would emerge once every thousand years. This meant that a ninth-realm cultivator, regardless of the race and species, would appear once every thousand years.

In the history of the human race, there were two Hallowed Ones.

One such figure was Hallowed Li from ancient times. Because it happened so long ago, stories about him had become obscure. Legend has it that in the past, the highest cultivation level humans had ever achieved was the seventh realm. Back then, the seventh realm, known as the Dao Attainment Realm, had been considered the peak of cultivation.

It was Hallowed Li who first broke through to the ninth realm, thereby elevating the highest level of cultivation for humanity to the Profound Realm. It was only after him that the path to the heavens was opened for future generations.

Hallowed Yang, from over four thousand years ago, was a woman who had achieved sanctity. She wielded unparalleled prowess in battle, dominating the world as she advanced in her cultivation to the Profound Realm. She established the human race's control over the continent of the nine provinces and shaped the human-dominated world that everyone knows today.

During her lifetime, demons and other races scattered far and wide to the four seas. Evil entities in the world revered her not only with awe, but almost as if she were a deity. Even beyond the four seas, there were still some ancient demon races that worshiped statues of the Hallowed One of the human race.

Various signs indicated that there had been more than just these two Hallowed Ones within the human race. However, for some unknown reasons, the stories of the other Hallowed Ones were not passed down. In fact, there wasn't even a single word written about the other Hallowed Ones in historical records.

In the past three thousand years, since the demon god appeared, there hasn't been another human cultivator at the ninth realm. Some speculate that it was because the demon god had remained alive all this time, preventing the birth of new Hallowed Ones.

Some had even suggested that Mount Shu should have unsealed the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda a long time ago and released the demon god so that the humans could slay it for good. This would have allowed the Destiny of the Profound to be diverted for a new Hallowed One to emerge.

Mount Shu only regarded such remarks as words of wisdom.

And now, there was a high chance of the demon god returning, causing the people in the continent of the nine provinces to tremble in fear, hoping that this was fake news. As for those who boasted that they would slay the demon god and reclaim the destiny, they had remained very quiet since the news came out.

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Chu Liang found himself lost in thought when suddenly, he noticed a cloud descending from the distant sky, followed by a slightly stooped figure approaching slowly.

The visitor turned out to be Old Man Sikong.

Chu Liang quickly stepped forward and bowed, "Greetings, Senior Granduncle!"

Despite lacking actual power on Mount Shu, this old man commanded great respect due to his seniority and esteemed status. His recent success in luring the dragon for Mount Shu had further elevated his honor, and now, no one dared to show him disrespect.

"Hehe, it's been years since I last visited Silver Sword Peak, and it seems to be flourishing," Old Man Sikong looked at the vast orchard before him and Liu Xiaoyu'er toiling in the garden, smiling.

"Just planting some fruits casually," Chu Liang chuckled.

"These fruits nurtured by the dragon's breath are quite good. Someone brought them to me earlier, and they tasted delicious," Old Man Sikong praised.

Chu Liang's eyes lit up.

If Old Man Sikong tried the fruits and liked them, this meant that he would likely have another big figure advertising for him.

"Senior Granduncle, if you like it, I can supply you with the fruits whenever you want," Chu Liang immediately offered.

"Haha! No need for that," Old Man Sikong said with a smile as he waved his hand. "Actually, I came here for an important matter. I am not here for your fruits."

"Should I inform my esteemed teacher?" Chu Liang asked.

He was confused. If Old Man Sikong came here for important matters, why wouldn't he head straight to the pavilion? Why would he come to this orchard for a casual chat?

"I am not here for Di Nufeng. I am here for her." Old Man Sikong raised his hand and pointed forward.

Chu Liang gazed at the tiny figure, currently watering plants. Under the brilliant sunlight, the mist sprayed from the small watering reflected rainbow colors.

The sunlight, the rainbow, and the little girl created a picturesque scene.

He was surprised as he asked, "You are here for Xiaoyu'er?"

Chapter 224: Bestowing A Cultivation Legacy

"I believe you've also noticed that when the White Dragon's breath turns into rain, that rain always seems to only fall on Silver Sword Peak," Old Man Sikong said slowly.

"It is indeed rather strange," Chu Liang replied with a smile.

Of course, he had noticed it a long time ago. In fact, he felt that the dragon-breath rain wasn't actually focused on Silver Sword Peak... Rather, it was targeting him. The golden rain had fallen on him even when he was away from the peak, and it had happened more than once.

However, Chu Liang didn't dare to make that fact known. After all, he wasn't sure if it was a sign of good fortune or misfortune.

Normally, when someone was being favored by a True Dragon, it could mean that they were the bearer of Mount Shu's great destiny[1], which should be a good thing. But Chu Liang was hiding a secret—the White Pagoda. He was afraid that if it became known that the True Dragon favored him, his secret would be uncovered.

The True Dragon had a very unusual spiritual nature. Who knew if it had sensed something?

Moreover, although the Mount Shu Sect revered the True Dragon, they didn't completely trust it. So, they might not necessarily see it as a good thing that the White Dragon was targeting Chu Liang.

"After I noticed that, I asked the True Dragon about it once," Old Man Sikong continued. "Its answer was basically that it had sensed that there was a bearer of great destiny on Silver Sword Peak."

Chu Liang muttered, "Is that so..."

Old Man Sikong then pointed at Liu Xiaoyu'er. "I remembered this little girl whom I once did a divinity reading for. Her innate constitution is that of a koi fish; she is indeed a bearer of a great destiny[2]. Moreover, the True Dragon only showed a reaction after you brought her over there. Perhaps, she is the person that the True Dragon sensed."

"Eh?"

Chu Liang thought it made sense. Liu Xiaoyu'er was a koi fish, which meant she had been born with a great destiny. This meant she was more likely to be the True Dragon's target than him.

"So, I plan to take her to see the True Dragon. Like the True Dragon, the young lady is also an aquatic creature. If she could receive the True Dragon's cultivation legacy, she may even reach the Dragon Gate[3] in the future," Old Man Sikong said.

"This is a great opportunity, but... She won't encounter any danger, will she?" Chu Liang asked.

"Haha, that's unlikely," Old Man Sikong answered with a smile. "The True Dragon helped suppress our sect's fate, but it hasn't gained our total trust yet. The elders of our sect keep a close eye on it, so it's impossible for it to harm anyone on the mountain."

Chu Liang nodded. "That's good."

As long as Liu Xiaoyu'er's safety was guaranteed, it was indeed an excellent opportunity.

Chu Liang waved to Liu Xiaoyu'er, beckoning her over. "Xiaoyu'er, come here for a moment!"

"Huh?" Liu Xiaoyu'er uttered.

The little girl turned her head to look behind her and found there were two people standing there. She recognized the old man as the grandpa that had done a divinity reading for her to find out about her elder sister.

Liu Xiuyu'er then ran over with a small water watering can in hand.

She greeted Old Man Sikong politely. "Hello, Grandpa."

"Hey there." Old Man Sikong's smile softened, becoming much kinder. "In a moment, I'll take you to see a dragon. You need not be afraid."

"A dragon?" Liu Xiaoyu'er tilted her head puzzledly. "Why do I need to see it? Does it need watering too?"

"You mustn't do that." Chu Liang hurriedly took the small water can from Liu Xiaoyu'er. "The dragon is the maker of all the rain that falls on our peak. It's basically the grandmaster of watering. You should go learn from it."

"Wow. That's amazing."

Liu Xiaoyu'er had been benefiting from the golden rain that fell on Silver Sword Peak, so it was of great significance to her.

The golden rain benefited her in two ways. The first was that the dragon's breath nourished her body; as an aquatic creature, it had extremely beneficial effects for her. The second was that when it rained, she didn't need to water the plants, so she could take a day off... She valued the second one a bit more.

So, the little girl followed Old Man Sikong and left the peak for a while to learn advanced watering techniques.

...

At the Dragon Fishing Pool on Solitude Peak...

This was the second time Liu Xiaoyu'er had visited this place. Her first visit had merely consisted of talking to Old Man Sikong on the side of the pool. However, this time, Old Man Sikong was bringing her onto the pool itself.

The calm surface of the pool was as smooth as a mirror, without a ripple in sight. Old Man Sikong and Liu Xiaoyu'er stepped onto the pool. It was surprisingly solid as they steadily began making their way to the center of the pool.

"Eh...?" Liu Xiaoyu'er uttered.

As they walked, Liu Xiaoyu'er gazed at the water beneath her feet in amazement. She knew water extremely well, but it was her first time seeing water in such a state.

Upon arriving at the center of the pool, Old Man Sikong smiled and said loudly, "Noble White Dragon, please appear before us."

"Noble" was used as a title of respect for all of Mount Shu's celestial beasts. For example, the celestial beast Baize, who had been protecting Mount Shu for many generations, was addressed as "Noble Baize."

Whoosh—

A blurry streak of massive gold-white scales flashed through the water, giving off a terrifyingly strong pressure.

Liu Xiaoyu'er's heart skipped a beat. But when she looked down, she saw nothing.

Then there was a splashing sound. She raised her head back up and found the head of a towering gold-white dragon right before her!

Half of the enormous dragon emerged from the water. It stood tall with its head up high and looked down at Liu Xiaoyu'er, who stood far below!

Rumble.

Liu Xiaoyu'er hadn't felt scared when she first arrived at the pool. However, she was, after all, an aquatic creature. The blood vessels of Liu Xiaoyu'er's innate constitution constricted with great force the moment she saw the True Dragon, and it became difficult for her to breathe.

An indescribable fear washed over her from the depths of her heart.

Old Man Sikong placed his hand on her shoulder, pressing gently. A cool breeze seemed to blow past, and Liu Xiaoyu'er almost completely stopped trembling in fear.

"Earlier, you mentioned sensing that there's a bearer of a great destiny on Silver Sword Peak. I assume it is this little girl, is it not?" Old Man Sikong asked. "Now that I've brought her here... If there's a destiny you'd like to bestow upon her, please go ahead and do it."

The majestic White Dragon had eyes with pupils that looked like vertical slits and golden flames that burned in its irises. Despite that, it gazed down icily at the old man and little girl.

Seeing Liu Xiaoyu'er, an expression filled with confusion and displeasure flashed across its face. Then the White Dragon suddenly paused, and his confusion and displeasure quickly disappeared.

The White Dragon glanced in the direction of Silver Sword Peak. After that, it moved its head forward, leaning closer to Liu Xiaoyu'er.

Liu Xiaoyu'er unconsciously took a step back.

The White Dragon suddenly let out a deep roar, "Raaaar..."

A stately voice rang out in Old Man Sikong's and Liu Xiaoyu'er's minds.

—Today, I shall bestow my cultivation legacy unto you. You cannot cast off the inexorable catastrophe you're destined to face in the days to come.

Neither Old Man Sikong nor Liu Xiaoyu'er understood the true meaning of those words. Liu Xiaoyu'er looked rather blank as she nodded, while Old Man Sikong's pupils contracted, revealing a pensive expression.

Whoosh.

During this moment of silence, a beam of white light shot out from the White Dragon's forehead and hit the center of Liu Xiaoyu'er's forehead.

The white light shone out of the girl's eyes.

Boom.

Countless ancient characters exploded into her mind.

...

"What's that voice?"

Chu Liang, who was on Silver Sword Peak, got a fright.

That very same deep, stately voice that sounded like it belonged to a deity... was ringing in Chu Liang's mind as well.

—Today, I shall bestow my cultivation legacy unto you. You cannot cast off the inexorable catastrophe you're destined to face in the days to come.

Who's talking to me?

Chu Liang took on a guarded posture, poised to fight. He looked around, but he couldn't find the person that was talking to him.

Could it be an Eminent One using the divine skill Long-Distance Voice Transmission? Perhaps the message was transmitted to the wrong person?

He shook his head. This isn't a phone call. It's not like it could be a case of dialing the wrong number.

Right when Chu Liang was feeling bewildered about the whole situation, Liu Xiaoyu'er flew back to the peak. After landing, she seemed to be lost in thought as she walked, and her eyes were filled with confusion.

Chu Liang quickly set aside his bewilderment and went to greet her. "Xiaoyu'er? You're back."

"Mm," Liu Xiaoyu'er uttered, giving a slight nod.

"What's the matter?"

Liu Xiaoyu'er looked like she was about to faint. Seeing that, Chu Liang reached out to support her.

She raised her eyes, and white light shone out from them.

Boom.

Just like what had happened to Liu Xiaoyu'er, countless ancient characters exploded into Chu Liang's mind. Those characters were scattered among imposing, complicated drawings that had lengthy and curved strokes. Altogether, they looked like talismanic script, indicating the presence of Heavenly Law.

This is...

Chu Liang immediately understood why Liu Xiaoyu'er looked so dizzy. Anyone would need quite a long while to process such a huge amount of information streaming into their mind. Moreover, the little girl wasn't a particularly fast thinker to begin with, so she was actually doing pretty well seeing as she hadn't fainted straight away.

Even Chu Liang had his divine sense darting around in his mind for quite a long while before he could finally digest the information.

Afterward, his eyes opened wide with shock.

It's a dragon clan's secret cultivation method!

He looked in the direction of Solitude Peak.

So, those words I heard in my mind earlier... The True Dragon said them for me...?

What is it afraid of?

Chapter 225: Breathing: A Form of Cultivation

In this world, True Dragons could easily stand shoulder to shoulder with celestial beasts. However, most celestial beast species were scarce in number and had difficulty reproducing while the dragons held a significant numerical advantage, which was also one of their strengths.

This numerical advantage might be due to a characteristic of dragons. In the human world, there was this saying, "Dragons are naturally promiscuous," and this saying was not unfounded. Compared to other celestial beasts, dragons were more enthusiastic about reproduction.

The reasoning was simple: treating it as a mission would make success elusive, while approaching it as a hobby would pave the way for effortless excellence.

That was how reproduction worked[1]

The races that had found joy in this were the humans and dragons and these races stood at the pinnacle of the mortal realm. This proved that the love for reproduction was a characteristic of a higher being.

...

As for the existence of celestial beasts, there was one thing that many had misunderstood. They thought that celestial beasts wouldn't need to cultivate and that they would naturally grow to have the power to understand heaven and earth.

This was obviously impossible.

Celestial beasts possessed terrifyingly great talent for cultivation, but they needed to cultivate to advance farther. It was precisely due to this factor that there were differences in strength among celestial beasts. However, their way of cultivation was different from humans. It was not the same as the general divine techniques practiced by cultivators in the mortal realm.

If humans could understand some of the innate divine abilities of celestial beasts, they would be gaining access to a huge wealth of knowledge. For example, the very famous immortal art Invoking the Tempest was one of the divine techniques created after gaining understanding of the divine abilities of dragons.

However, the innate divine abilities of celestial beasts were ultimately just some normal skills for them.

Their way of cultivation was much more fundamental than that, stemming from their primal instincts. This way of cultivation could also be referred to as "Dao."

As the white light flashed and entered Chu Liang's mind, he was overwhelmed by a flood of information. He recognized that this knowledge was similar to the dragons' most fundamental cultivation principles! It was like the Divine Nine's Profound Mental Cultivation Technique, yet it was not just a technique. It was profound and mysterious.

I've never heard of anyone being imparted with such primal cultivation principles. It's possible that someone had been imparted this knowledge, but their stories were simply never told.

Chu Liang realized that the white light not only imparted the cultivation legacy but also seemed to be a symbol of permission received.

If Chu Liang had shared this way of cultivation with another person but that person had not received this beam of white light, they would not have been able to practice it.

Chu Liang opened his eyes slowly.

After processing all the information just now, he noticed a small platinum-colored scale on his left wrist. It appeared inconspicuous, yet it contained powerful spiritual energy.

This should be the original form of that white light.

He lifted Liu Xiaoyu'er's arm and discovered that there was also a white scale on her wrist.

I must be the True Dragon's target. Chu Liang concluded within himself at that moment.

A True Dragon is spiritually connected with the heavens and the earth and could suppress fate, so it must have sensed something mystical within me. That's why it bestowed upon me this gift.

However, he wasn't exactly happy because the dragon chant that echoed in his mind mentioned that he would have to repay it in the future.

Liu Xiaoyu'er also noticed the white scale on her wrist and exclaimed with surprise, "Eh? What's this? How did my scale change color? Hehe, it looks quite nice."

Chu Liang looked at her and sighed.

Liu Xiaoyu'er, being still a young fish, had no idea that every dragon scale bestowed by fate had already been secretly marked with a price.

I don't think there's anything wrong with the dragon scales. Otherwise, Old Man Sikong would not have allowed the True Dragon to bestow it upon us, Chu Liang thought to himself.

Regardless of the True Dragon's expectations for him in the future, he had no choice but to accept this gift. As of now, it was definitely right of him to strengthen and improve his abilities.

And so, Chu Liang attempted to activate the scale.

The dragons' primal cultivation principles didn't have a name, so he named it the Secret Dragon Blood Technique.

...

Other common techniques typically involved a complex execution method to cultivate specific aspects of the body, often focusing on one of the three energies—vitality, qi, and spirit—or other components of the body.

However, the Secret Dragon Blood Technique was simple and straightforward. It first required the opening of the meridians throughout the body. Then, by inhaling and exhaling spiritual qi, transforming the inhaled qi into dragon breath, and using this dragon breath to purge the meridians within one's body, it simultaneously boosted vitality, qi, and spirit.

Breathing was a form of cultivation.

The white scale functioned as the key to transforming the qi into dragon breath.

Without the white scale, one would only be able to understand the cultivation method, but never be able to practice it.

After his first successful attempt, Chu Liang couldn't help but marvel that it was no wonder the dragons were born powerful. They could cultivate simply by breathing, and their cultivation could simultaneously strengthen their entire body.

With such conditions, how could they not reign supreme over all other lineages?

After just two hours of opening his meridians, Chu Liang distinctly sensed the fortification of his physical body and divine intent, areas in which he had previously felt weaker.

He couldn't sense much growth in his Sea of Qi, as the cultivation of his foundational qi was already at a high level. With the two ultimate-tier Golden Cores, he had been able to advance very quickly in his cultivation, which was why he couldn't perceive any noticeable strengthening in this aspect.

Aside from this, Chu Liang realized something...

As he stood up and activated the Secret Dragon Blood Technique throughout his entire body, golden flames suddenly ignited in his eyes.

Golden irises!

With the Dustless Sword in hand, he swung it effortlessly.

Swish! A sword qi swept out, carrying white and golden hues, fiercely tearing through the air!

It was unstoppable!

As he channeled foundational qi throughout his body to employ the divine skills, he caught a faint whiff of dragon breath. The scent was subtle for now, but he knew that as he continued cultivating with the Secret Dragon Blood Technique, it would undoubtedly grow stronger.

Dragon Breath carried powerful effects of burning, breaking defenses, and dispelling illusions. It could even enhance the power of one's divine skill.

The casual brandishing of the sword not only showcased the power of the foundational qi, already formidable on its own, but also the augmented power through the sword intent of the Cloud of Determination, dragon breath, and various other elements. This combined power far surpassed the typical strength unleashed by a cultivator at the Golden Core Realm.

The Secret Dragon Blood Technique was indeed very powerful!

Chu Liang then spent the entire night studying this technique.

The following morning, Chu Liang ran into Liu Xiaoyu'er once more and promptly inquired, "How's your cultivation coming along?"

"Cultivation? What cultivation?" Liu Xiaoyu'er asked in confusion.

"The cultivation legacy imparted by the True Dragon. How far have you progressed in your cultivation? Have you completed the opening of your meridians?" Chu Liang asked again.

"Cultivation legacy?" Liu Xiaoyu'er scratched her head and said, "Are you referring to the words in my mind? I haven't finished reading them yet!"

"..." It was only then that Chu Liang remembered that for ordinary people, processing so much information wasn't an easy task, let alone for someone like Liu Xiaoyu'er, whose mind wasn't particularly sharp.

Haaaa... He sighed, resolving to assist Liu Xiaoyu'er with opening her meridians next time. After that, she would simply need to focus on breathing, a task that should be well within her capabilities.

As he contemplated, a letter in the shape of a paper crane drifted slowly towards him.

It was a message from Wen Yulong.

When Chu Liang returned to Mount Shu, the first thing he did was deliver the golden skull to Wen Yulong. Now, at last, it has been opened.

...

"Thankfully, I did not let you down," Wen Yulong said as he placed the golden skull down carefully. Beside the skull lay an unopened scroll made of sheepskin.

He then smiled and said, "It was quite challenging."

"Junior Brother Wen, I knew you could solve it, no matter how difficult," Chu Liang said with a grin.

"I spent days and nights studying this. Eventually, I asked a few seniors for help and finally managed to unlock it. It is truly outrageous that they turned the skull of a seventh-realm Eminent One into a sealing enchanted tool!" Wen Yulong remarked. "If I wasn't smart enough and found the key to unlock the enchanted tool, you probably wouldn't be able to open it with brute force."

"Thank you for your hard work," Chu Liang quickly responded.

In fact, Wen Yulong being able to open it was already a pleasant surprise. Chu Liang simply wanted him to give it a try.

"Could I perhaps request a slightly higher fee for my efforts this time?" Wen Yulong asked cautiously.

As the saying went, when at the end of one's resources, one would have to use whatever was at hand.

However, Chu Liang didn't argue with him; instead, he waved his hand and said, "No problem, I'll double your pay."

These days, he established a thriving berry-selling system. Each day, Liu Xiaoyu'er toiled in the garden, while Lin Bei and Shang Ziliang oversaw the picking and transportation of the berries to Red Cotton Peak for sale. Lackey A managed the accounts behind the scenes, while Lackey B attracted customers at the market by enthusiastically munching on berries.

Everyone had their own tasks.

As for Chu Liang, he didn't need to do anything. All he had to do was take away eighty percent of the profits each day.

Chu Liang stowed the golden skull away since it was, after all, an enchanted tool. He needed to figure out how to use it later on.

The item retrieved from within the skull was a torn piece of scroll made of sheepskin.

As Chu Liang observed this torn piece of scroll carefully, he realized it was just as he had expected that this piece connected with the torn piece of scroll he found in the cave.

It was quite remarkable. The scroll had been divided into four pieces, and Chu Liang had come across two of them by chance. He remained unaware of the scroll's purpose. However, the sealing of even a mere quarter of the torn scroll with an enchanted tool crafted from the skull of an Eminent One suggested its value was immensely significant.

Having dealt with this matter, Chu Liang inquired further, "Do you happen to have any enchanted tools at the Hall of Weapons designed specifically for empowering spirit beasts? The stronger, the better."

"Are you planning to buy enchanted tools for the Golden-Furred Hou?" Wen Yulong asked.

At this moment, he realized that Senior Brother Chu had made a fortune.

In the world of immortal cultivators, many bought enchanted tools for spirit pets and mounts. However, these enchanted tools were typically just toys or some other minor items. Powerful enchanted tools specifically designed for powerful demonic beasts were rare. After all, even cultivators often lacked powerful enchanted tools, and only those who had amassed considerable wealth and were exceptionally generous would even consider buying equipment for their demonic beasts.

"No," Chu Liang shook his head and answered, "It is for Little Baize."

Chapter 226: How Could They Possibly Bypass?

Seven days passed.

Red Cotton Peak was overcrowded, with most of the teams attending the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony present. In recent days, they had gradually purchased a considerable amount of berries from Chu Liang. Now, they had all gathered the Five Elements Talismans to exchange for clues and answers.

As they watched the smiling and seemingly harmless youth slowly approach the stage, the gazes below were filled with complex emotions.

Many among them harbored both love and resentment towards Chu Liang.

When the team representing Silver Sword Peak first started selling clues, they did it discreetly, taking advantage of the information gap. However, when someone realized this and attempted to profit by selling the answers they purchased, they discovered that nearly everyone had already made their purchases.

They were given absolutely no chance to profit from reselling.

When Chu Liang decided to sell clues and answers for the second time, some people were cautious and wanted to buy early to resell at a lower price, so that they would at least break even.

There were some who had already agreed to share the answers freely to prevent this unscrupulous merchant from profiting.

However, they didn't expect him to change the sales format this time around.

The final form of exchanging answers by gathering the Five Elements Talismans made everyone uncertain of whether they could obtain the answers, yet it also made everyone eager to give it a try. Unknowingly, they all fell into the trap.

The purchase of a box in exchange for potentially obtaining the answer from the legitimate source was structured such that the cost of one box was only one sword coin. Additionally, it came with a complimentary Golden Vein Berry that was valued at two sword coins. Essentially, this arrangement meant that the box was free.

Moreover, the attractive design of the Five Elements Talismans was enticing, and by buying five boxes, they could potentially complete the collection...

In theory, several individuals just had to pool their resources and complete one collection in exchange for the complete answer. However, what actually happened was the complete opposite.

The act of collecting these cards became somewhat addictive. Later on, many even began offering high prices to buy Earth Character Talismans, forgetting why they had started in the first place.

In the final two days of the sales, the Earth Character Talisman that had high rarity started appearing frequently in the boxes of berries sold. As a result, many were able to complete their collection of the Five Elements Talismans.

This proved that Chu Liang's claim that there was an even distribution of Five Elements Talismans was indeed true. However, most of the Earth Character Talismans were found in the final batch of berry boxes. This accumulation at the very end might have been the reason why the sales of the berries multiplied several times over what was expected.

With all this going on, there was almost no chance for those intending to resell the clues and answers.

Chu Liang had been the only one making a profit and it was inevitable that people would be jealous of him.

But even if they were envious, they had to wait, as indeed only he held the answers to the second stage clues.

In fact, during past Mountain God Memorial Ceremonies, the first stage would still be ongoing at this time. It was quite common for people not to have solved the clues of the second stage yet, and there was no need for anyone to feel impatient.

Those with integrity could choose to continue contemplating the puzzle at their own pace.

However, Chu Liang had already solved the puzzle and made the answers available for purchase. If you chose not to buy them while others did, any clues you managed to solve would just be meaningless.

They had no choice but to helplessly follow along what the others were doing.

"Dear fellow disciples," greeted Chu Liang with a smile that resembled the spring breeze.

"After seven days of diligent effort, all of you here have managed to collect the Five Elements Talismans. Now, as promised, I will share the answers to the second stage puzzle with you all."

With this, he took the four drawings and hung them around like lanterns. Then, he positioned a candle in the center.

"That is the answer!"

At this moment, it was a sunny day outdoors, so there were no shadows to be cast.

However, the disciples of Mount Shu were not stupid. With his arrangement, they naturally grasped the meaning behind it.

"So, it seems these four paintings aren't meant to be laid flat on the ground, but to be set upright! No wonder they didn't fit together like a puzzle!"

"You'd need to layer them together and shine a candle through to reveal the actual image!"

" ... "

As realization dawned on the crowd, cries of astonishment echoed continuously.

In an instant, some rushed back, eager to experiment with the discovery. Soon after, the bustling Red Cotton Peak had cleared out.

Only the members of the Silver Sword Peak team remained.

Lin Bei turned to Lackey A, who managed the accounts, and inquired, "How much have we earned altogether these days?"

With a succinct response, Lackey A replied, "We made a killing."

...

Chu Liang did not directly reveal the location indicated by the second puzzle. Instead, he merely demonstrated the method to solve it.

Subsequently, members of other teams returned to their respective locations, endeavoring to solve the puzzle independently. Eventually, they realized that it led to the valley at the Treasured Pagoda Peak.

This distinctive landmark was recognizable at a glance to most people, and even for those who couldn't identify it initially, they were able to locate it by asking around.

After all, there was already a growing swarm of people heading in that direction.

The initial group to reach the valley at Treasured Pagoda Peak comprised approximately a dozen individuals. They arrived swiftly and quickly pinpointed the location of the massive rock.

Just as they were about to push the rock, a series of "Hreeooorh" cries resonated through the air! A silver streak darted forward like lightning!

Bang!

The young Baize wasn't as gentle with others, especially those not named Chu Liang. This behavior was particularly evident since the task had been assigned by the higher-ups of Mount Shu, granting it permission to assertively bump into individuals without facing repercussions!

"Ahhhhhhhhhh—" exclaimed the disciple closest to it, who was headbutted into the sky and promptly transformed into a mere speck in the sky.

It's the Little Baize!" someone shouted.

"Even Mount Shu's guardian celestial beast is guarding the checkpoint?"

"Don't panic, Little Baize isn't good at fighting. There are plenty of us here, we can totally... Wait, what's that?!"

As the Baize youngling came to a stop and revealed its entire body, the exclamations suddenly ceased.

Because at this moment, its appearance was completely different from the usual.

In addition to its original scales, it now sported a layer of lightweight and resilient silver chain armor, likely an enchanted defensive equipment. Its horns were adorned with layers of golden talisman paper, appearing to be some giant spirit talismans that could greatly enhance its force of impact...

Clouds of qi enveloped its hooves, each bound with a whistling-wind bead that was specially used to enhance the speed of spirit beasts. Additionally, it was equipped with some other less obvious enchanted tools.

The Baize youngling was fully equipped!

It possessed extremely powerful innate talent. Even in its youth, it possessed the speed and strength akin to a creature at the fifth realm. However, it lacked skill in combat, knowing only a single headbutt.

While individual disciples of Mount Shu would be far from a match for it, the combined efforts of one or two teams would be enough to drive it away.

Under normal circumstances, there should only be three to five teams remaining at this stage, and these teams are typically top-notch in their strength, unlikely to be stumped by this challenge.

When the higher-ups of Mount Shu were organizing this event, they would have never expected that almost all the teams participating in the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony would gain access to this puzzle. And now, all these noobs were rushing toward Treasured Pagoda Peak.

Meanwhile, the Baize youngling had undergone a powerful upgrade.

How could they possibly bypass the Baize youngling?

With the Baize youngling equipped with this array of enchanted tools, its speed and strength have been elevated to an unprecedented level. This changed the situation entirely.

Even if a sea of third-realm disciples swarmed toward it, they wouldn't be able to harm it in the slightest.

Thud, thud, thud, thud—

The dull thuds of headbutts striking their targets rang out continuously, and the initial group of around a dozen Mount Shu disciples who rushed over seemed to disperse like raindrops, their clamorous echoes fading into the distant forest.

Among them, a chubby youth fell to the ground. Although not heavily injured, he found himself unable to get up for a moment.

At that moment, a hand reached out from the side and helped him to his feet.

"Thank you," the chubby youth expressed his gratitude immediately.

"No need. As fellow disciples, we should help each other," the other disciple responded.

The chubby youth raised his head and saw a young man with thick eyebrows, large eyes, and slightly tanned skin. At a glance, he exuded a vibrant aura.

It was indeed Lin Bei.

"Senior Brother, you... look familiar?" the chubby youth frowned.

"I'm from the Silver Sword Peak team. I sold you the answer to the first puzzle before," Lin Bei smiled.

"Oh yeah, I remember you!" The chubby youth stood up, rubbed his sore bottom, and said, "We also got the answer to the second puzzle from you."

"Now that you've gotten the answers, why aren't you going in?" Lin Bei asked.

"Haven't you seen it? Little Baize is guarding over there and it's not letting anyone get close!" The chubby youth replied. "It hurts like crazy if you get headbutted by it."

"It's truly frustrating to have the final puzzle right in front of you but be unable to solve it," Lin Bei said with a sigh. "What can you do? Oh? How about I help you distract the young Baize, and you take the opportunity to get the third puzzle?"

"Huh?" The chubby boy was surprised. "Can you do that? And even if you can, I feel bad..."

"What's there to feel bad about? We're bros, right?" Lin Bei patted his chest and said, "How about thirty sword coins?"

"Well..." The chubby youth hesitated for a moment.

He had already spent several dozen sword coins on the first and second puzzles... He had invested quite a sum, but with the third puzzle right in front of him... If he takes the risk and is fortunate, he could potentially emerge as the champion of this year's Mountain God Memorial Ceremony.

The chance for fame and fortune was right there!

After much deliberation, he clenched his jaw and said, "Fine! I'll give it to you!"

Lin Bei immediately flew boldly and confidently towards the central crater, where the Baize youngling was wreaking havoc. Despite the chaos, he exuded unwavering confidence.

He flew straight to the giant rock. At this moment, the Baize youngling had just knocked away a new group of disciples who came to explore.

Lin Bei stepped forward and shouted, "Hey, look here! It's an enchanted artifact!"

Chapter 227: He's Come For Me!

"Hey, look! It's an enchanted artifact!" Lin Bei shouted.

He shook his right hand, and silver light that looked like a full moon shot out.

The chubby guy behind him vaguely saw that the silver light was actually an enchanted tool that had the shape of a disc. However, the enchanted tool didn't seem to contain powerful spiritual energy... Instead of flying toward the Baize youngling, the enchanted tool went whirling into the thicket at the side.

Instead of going straight, it turned...? And then it completely missed the target! the chubby guy complained inwardly.

Amazingly, when the enchanted tool flew into the distance, the Baize youngling chased after it. The Baize youngling left like the wind, disappearing at lightning speed!

"Eh?" the chubby guy uttered.

He was astonished; he didn't understand the point of the enchanted tool.

"What are you doing? Hurry up! Go in and find the puzzle!" Lin Bei yelled, hurriedly pointing at the boulder.

"Oh, oh!"

The chubby guy ran over, exerting all his foundational qi to push the boulder. Rumbling reverberated through the ground as he rolled the boulder, revealing a corner of the cave entrance.

The chubby guy was sweating profusely, but he didn't bother wiping his sweat off. He just squeezed into the gap he'd uncovered and entered the cave.

There were enchanted formations inside, and the Baize youngling wasn't there to destroy them this time. Still, if nothing unexpected happened, the disciples should be able to successfully view the third puzzle with no issues.

When Lin Bei was done with his task, he wore a small smile. Then he turned and left in the direction that the Baize youngling had sped off to.

Hiding in the surrounding forest, Chu Liang crouched down and petted the Baize youngling. "You did really well. Keep being that fast, accurate, and ruthless! But try controlling your strength a little more precisely..."

Beside him was Shang Ziliang and his two lackeys.

Seeing Lin Bei return gleefully, Shang Ziliang went up to him and said, "You're done? It's my turn now!"

Shang Ziliang took the flying disc and set off to wait for the next target.

After a while, the Baize youngling suddenly quivered. It stood up and cried out "Hreeooooorh~" twice. Then it whooshed away, looking like a streak of lightning.

As Chu Liang watched the Baize youngling leave, he waved. "Go, Little Baize!"

Actually, his initial plan had only consisted of selling the second stage's puzzle; he hadn't intended to include the Baize youngling in his scheme. However, his scheme ended up drastically increasing the number of teams still actively participating in the treasure hunt. That, in turn, indirectly gave the Baize youngling a lot more work to do... Chu Liang felt rather guilty about that.

The Baize youngling would initially have only needed to deal with a few teams, but now most of Mount Shu's disciples were on their way to the cave.

Chu Liang had pondered about how he should compensate the Baize youngling. Then he had another thought, Why don't I strengthen it?

That gave him yet another idea. Why don't I give it such a big boost that it will be powerful enough to keep everyone from getting into the cave? Then I'll offer to help them for a fee!

Huh?

Chu Liang was surprised by his own thoughts.

I wasn't even intending to rake in more money. Why did my train of thought unconsciously shift in that direction...? It seems to be becoming instinctual.

Chu Liang didn't get involved in the action this time. Instead, he asked the rest of his team to handle it. Additionally, he didn't intend to have them share the earnings with him; he was going to let them have it all.

These guys had been really busy working for so many days, so much so that they could be considered experienced entrepreneurs by now. It was only right that Chu Liang let them profit too.

Moreover, this trick that involved the Baize youngling couldn't be used too many times. After all, everyone was working smarter now. It wouldn't be too long before the puzzle in the cave was spread among the rest of the disciples.

Furthermore, even though the Baize youngling was fully armed, there were some teams that wouldn't need any help to get past it. Jiang Yuebai and Xu Ziyang were powerful enough to take on the Baize youngling alone. Just by following them, other teams would be able to get into the cave too.

So, Chu Liang estimated that his team wouldn't be able to earn much from helping the other teams get past the Baize youngling. His teammates would probably only earn a few hundred sword coins at most.

Thinking that made Chu Liang feel a little sad. A few months ago, he'd thought that a flying sword that cost three hundred sword coins had been too expensive. Now, a few hundred sword coins was chump change.

Nevertheless, running their little business was still the better choice compared to doing missions. Even if they did their missions diligently, it would take ages to save up even a few hundred sword coins.

The sound of the flying disc whizzing through the air rang out once again. The disc flew over to where Chu Liang was, with the Baize youngling running speedily behind it.

Shang Ziliang had just completed his turn. He gleefully headed back to the group in the forest and looked at Chu Liang with an adoring gaze.

I really wonder how Big Bro's brain developed. Why does he have so many ingenious ideas?

...

Meanwhile, in the snowy lands of the Northern Regions, two people were in a deadlock.

"Eat a little. Even though you're a Ba, you still have to eat; you can't keep starving yourself," a middle-aged man wearing a bamboo hat coaxed. "And you even refuse to sleep in the ice coffin. Moving about outside will use up your spiritual energy. You have to replenish it at least a little. Otherwise, you won't be able to run if we encounter any trouble."

The little girl in front of him pouted, shaking her head stubbornly. "No..."

On the ground before them lay the corpse of a large bear. The blood gushing out of its wounds was frozen instantly by the frigid weather.

The two people in question were none other than the Whale-Riding Immortal, who had been mentioned in The Seven Stars Gazette, and the little girl he'd taken from the South Sea.

Heavy snowfall pelted the land, accompanied by a biting wind. It was so cold that life could not exist in this place. Even the beasts with the thickest of furs would be turned into ice sculptures by such a frigid wind that penetrated their fur like blades.

Yet, these two people were dressed simply. It seemed like the word "cold" wasn't even in their vocabulary.

"Do you really have to eat fruit?" the Whale-Riding Immortal asked, feeling rather helpless.

He wouldn't be ruffled at all dealing with a seventh-realm Eminent One. Yet, dealing with this little girl caused his feelings of helplessness and exasperation to be written all over his face.

This time, the little girl nodded repeatedly. "Mm!"

"Didn't I already find some fruit for you?"

The Whale-Riding Immortal pointed at the two golden fruits on the ground. They seemed to be the fruit of an extraordinary spirit plant.

"Wan... dewi... fru."

The little girl was probably trying to say that she wanted to eat delicious fruits, but she was having difficulty forming the words with her mouth.

"What am I supposed to do...?" the Whale-Riding Immortal said, rubbing his hands exasperatedly. "Those young ladies from the Greater-Yin Cult are on my trail, and they're not far behind. You witnessed that yourself that day. We can't even fly now, in case we get spotted. All we can do is travel on foot in these icy lands. How am I supposed to find that kind of fruit for you?"

"You... no scare."

The Whale-Riding Immortal chuckled loftily. "Heheh. Of course, I'm not afraid of them."

Then he said helplessly, "But you should be. Once your whereabouts are exposed, people from the sects in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten will hunt you down. Then there won't be any delicious fruit for you to eat then."

"Hmph," the little girl huffed, seemingly very angry.

The more she thought about their situation, the angrier she got.

Ultimately, she plopped down into the snow on the ground, hugging her shoulders. The snow was so thick that when she sank into it, it almost swallowed her whole, turning her into a small black dot in the snowfield.

"Be good." The Whale-Riding Immortal patted the little girl's head. "I promise you that I'll take you to Mount Shu to search for the delicious fruit once it's safe, okay?"

The little girl pouted for quite a while before she finally nodded in acceptance. "Mm."

"Let's go! We have to go to the Holy Mountain that's up ahead. It might have a treasure that can dispel your cataclysmic qi. Then you can play outside freely like a normal child."

The Whale-Riding Immortal took off his hat and picked up the little girl. He sat her on his shoulders and set off toward the mountain.

"I've been trying to think of what name I should give you. Since you love fruits so much, let's call you Jiang Guo[1].

"It's really hard to raise a girl. If you were a boy, I definitely would have given you a beating earlier. I would have hit you until you ate something. Haaa, but you're a girl. How could I not spoil you?

"I have a daughter. I haven't seen her since she was little, but I assume she's probably similar to you.

"All the girls of the Jiang Family have a temper like yours. It runs in the blood.

"Oh, I guess she takes after you."

Jiang Guo: "..."

The Whale-Riding Immortal prattled on the whole way. He forged ahead through seven chi of wind and snow, climbing toward the center of the snowy regions where the Holy Mountain—which was as lofty as a cloud—was situated.

...

Once the situation on Treasured Pagoda Peak was stable, Chu Liang returned to Silver Sword Peak and continued focusing on his cultivation.

The number of divine skills and arts he could use had gradually increased over time. He could use the Secret Technique of Dragon Blood just by breathing, but he needed to actively practice the other skills and arts.

However, just when he started working on them, someone came looking for him.

Chu Liang opened his eyes and looked outside. There was a gentle-looking elderly man dressed in white robes standing quietly on the hillside.

The Conservation Master?

Chu Liang was still in a bit of a daze and felt baffled as he looked at the elderly man's face. Nevertheless, according to Chu Liang's memory, this was indeed the Conservation Master he'd met in the past.

Consequently, Chu Liang rushed out to greet him.

He bowed respectfully and said, "Greetings, Conservation Master! Are you here to see my teacher?"

"No, I was looking for you," the Conservation Master replied nonchalantly.

Huh?

Chu Liang was confused.

However, before Chu Liang could ask why, the Conservation Master continued speaking.

"I don't know if you're aware, but I'm in charge of the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony this time."

"Oh," Chu Liang uttered.

His heart dropped.

Crap.

He's come for me!

Chapter 228: But Your Esteemed Teacher is Di Nufeng!

"I was thinking that this Mountain God Memorial Ceremony was designed exceptionally ingeniously. It turns out that the Conservation Master is the mastermind for this event. No wonder.." Chu Liang quickly praised with a smile.

"You have quite the silver tongue, and you're very smart too. Unfortunately, you chose the wrong path, but you do share some similarities with..." the Conservation Master remarked with a smile.

He was about to draw a comparison between Chu Liang and his teacher Di Nufeng when he hesitated. This didn't seem like Di Nufeng's usual style, suggesting Chu Liang might not have learned from her.

He paused for a moment before continuing, "With the unscrupulous Shang Jiaqi from Taotie City."

"Hehe," Chu Liang chuckled a few times.

While Taotie City has undoubtedly facilitated the world of immortality cultivators, it has also fostered a wholly profit-driven and negative atmosphere.

Many traditional cultivators still uphold the belief that the pursuit of immortality should exude an ethereal and detached aura. They deeply disdain the profit-seeking aura of merchants.

"As representatives of the traditional immortal sects, Mount Shu naturally boasted a higher proportion of old-school cultivators.

"To be honest, you've really given the elders quite a headache," remarked the Conservation Master with amusement as he looked at Chu Liang. "The Mountain God Memorial Ceremony has been held for thousands of years, and it's rare to see a disciple behaving so recklessly."

What he said was indeed true.

Chu Liang engaged in selling clues, conducting a large-scale sale of talisman collection... All the commercial activities were able to make profit because of the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony. However, he didn't violate any rules.

Chu Liang was like an outlaw skirting the edges of the sect's regulations.

Ultimately, the only option remaining was to implement further conditions to discipline him, as no other effective method seemed viable in managing his behavior.

Just as Chu Liang was feeling slightly nervous, the Conservation Master spoke again.

"Nevertheless, I do have high hopes for you. This cunningness could also be described as extraordinary intelligence. However, mere cleverness isn't sufficient for success. You require guidance to steer you onto the correct path..." He paused, then smiled at Chu Liang. "Would you consider joining the Hall of Conservation?"

Huh? This turn of events left Chu Liang momentarily stunned.

Did the Conservation Master visit me to extend this invitation?

Among the four halls, the Hall of Conservation recruits the fewest attendant disciples. At least, Chu Liang had only encountered that square-faced Senior Brother. Perhaps it was because the Hall of Conservation had relatively fewer affairs to manage, or maybe because the position was considered more valuable.

If you were an attendant in the Hall of Weapons, you couldn't casually use all the available enchanted tools; if you were an attendant in the Hall of Alchemy, you couldn't casually consume any pills. However, as an attendant in the Hall of Conservation, you could almost casually peruse all divine arts.

After all, divine arts manuals were different from enchanted tools and pills; just seeing them was already a gain.

Chu Liang asked somewhat puzzledly, "Does the Hall of Conservation need attendant disciples?"

"I am not referring to attendant disciples. I am asking if you would be interested in being my disciple," the Conservation Master said slowly.

"What?" Chu Liang was even more surprised.

An attendant disciple of a hall stationed at the entrance of the hall resembled more of a paid apprentice. Take Chen Su, for instance. Though she was a member of another peak and followed another teacher, she would use her spare time to learn the art of refining pills.

A disciple of a teacher would be someone like Liu Qin and Lu Xun from the Hall of Alchemy. Acknowledged by the guardian elder as his disciples, they would be imparted knowledge of his legacy.

Obviously, you could only join one lineage and acknowledge one person as your esteemed teacher.

Chu Liang's first reaction was to glance towards the direction of the pavilion where Di Nufeng was, feeling guilty as he said, "This is not something I dare say on Silver Sword Peak..."

"Heh. I wouldn't be intimidated by someone from the younger generation like her..." The Conservation Master chuckled lightly and continued, "I've already sealed off this entire area with my secret technique. Not a soul will overhear our conversation."

"That's good." Chu Liang heaved a sigh of relief.

He knew very well that Di Nufeng never held back when beating up old men.

Chu Liang has been recruited by others before. However, it was the first time someone had dared to come boldly to Silver Sword Peak to recruit him.

Chu Liang contemplated it for a while. Then, he tactfully replied, "I am deeply honored by your high regard for me. However, regardless of where I go, I remain a disciple of Mount Shu. What reason would compel me to change my allegiance?"

When the Conservation Master heard this, he said, "That is true. But your teacher is Di Nufeng?"

This was basically déjà vu. It was almost as though Chu Liang had heard this exact line before.

Chu Liang couldn't help but chuckle inwardly. However, he maintained a composed demeanor and replied, "My teacher saved my life and accepted me into the sect. She's like a second parent to me. How could I betray her?"

The Conservation Master gazed at Chu Liang and suddenly nodded, a clear hint of admiration shining in his eyes.

The hierarchical system of the peaks on Mount Shu meant that even if a disciple was exceptionally talented, it would be difficult for them to receive direct attention from the higher-ups. The most crucial figure in their growth would be their esteemed teacher. However, Di Nufeng was evidently an inadequate esteemed teacher, providing little assistance to her disciples and often causing more harm than good.

But facing such a figure, Chu Liang also couldn't bear to betray, instead revealing his deep sense of loyalty and righteousness.

The visit today by the Conservation Master wasn't exactly about recruiting. Instead, it felt more like an evaluation. If Chu Liang indeed entertained the idea of joining another lineage, regardless of his intelligence, he wouldn't be deemed worthy of being a future leader of Mount Shu.

It was at this moment when the Conservation Master really considered Chu Liang as one of the future leaders of the Mount Shu Sect.

In this era, there were initially only two individuals with such esteemed status: Xu Ziyang and Jiang Yuebai. They, too, had to endure numerous trials to achieve their current positions. However, Chu Liang's appearance has captured the interest of the upper ranks of Mount Shu, once more offering them a fresh seedling to consider.

An strange one... but he is a promising seed for the future.

"You also have a strong sense of loyalty and righteousness," the Conservation Master smiled and nodded. He waved his hand as he said, "Oh, by the way, the Alchemy Master wanted me to deliver a message to you. He said that the price of one high-grade Green Pill will be ten thousand sword coins."

Chu Liang naturally remained unaware of the Conservation Master's inner thoughts. He merely noted the shifts in the elder's expression and vaguely sensed that he had made the correct decision.

Upon hearing that the high-grade Green Pill was priced at ten thousand sword coins, Chu Liang's brow furrowed immediately as he sensed that the situation was far from straightforward.

Ten thousand? You might as well just rob me!

Why bother giving me a pill?

However, upon further contemplation, Chu Liang realized that this was likely a strategy by which the higher-ups of Mount Shu used to take back a portion of his profits from this venture.

He had earned approximately fifteen to sixteen thousand sword coins, and they would be reclaiming a significant portion of the earnings while disregarding the remainder. By doing so, he could still claim first place at the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony. After all, he deserved it.

To achieve first place, sacrifices inevitably had to be made...

As the Conservation Master departed, Chu Liang found himself alone, deep in contemplation.

...

As night fell, the Soul Subjugator Token suddenly vibrated.

Chu Liang had previously helped Liu Xiaoyu'er unlock her potential, aiding her in mastering the path of the Secret Dragon Blood Technique. Just as he had settled down to sleep, he was abruptly awakened by the token's vibration.

This item had not vibrated for a long time and he had almost forgotten about it.

The sudden vibration made him feel a bit nervous.

[Eastern-Route Guider]: "The marquess has summoned you all."

[Fifty-Ninth]: "Ah, ah, ah, is it finally happening? Is it about the undercover mission at White-Bone Hall? I've been looking forward to this for so long, and now the day has finally arrived. The moment to serve the marquess has finally come, how exciting..."

[Sixtieth]: "When? Where?"

Chu Liang looked at the responses of the two individuals who replied before him, feeling like he was caught between two extremes. In comparison, whatever he said would seem like the words of the only sane person in the group.

[Fifty-Eighth]: "Honorable Guider, I have received your message. Please instruct on the next step."

[Eastern-Route Guider]: "There's news that White-Bone Hall will undergo significant changes and is expanding its manpower. This will be an opportunity for you to infiltrate White-Bone Hall. Someone will rendezvous with you for assembly in three days. Be prepared."

[Sixtieth]: "Noted."

[Fifty-Eighth]: "Noted."

[Fifty-Ninth]: "Oh my heavens!!! Is it about to start? I am feeling a little nervous. Honorable Guider, do you have any advice for us? Who will rendezvous with us? Has someone already infiltrated the White-Bone Hall? If we made accomplishments, will we get to see the marquess? Has he recovered from his injuries?"

The Eastern-Route Guider remained silent.

Message read but no response.

Chapter 229: The Righteous Qi of a Mount Shu Disciple

The next morning, the brilliant rays of sunshine casted a warm glow over the room.

Chu Liang woke up early, washed, and tidied himself before heading out to clean the surrounding areas, trimming any unruly vegetation.

Two of his friends were visiting the Silver Sword Peak today.

After their discussion in the interdimensional soul domain within the Soul Subjugator Token, Chu Liang sent a letter to Luo Yao and Pushan to arrange for a visit here. They had previously agreed that if there were any major issues, their team of undercover agents would gather at the Silver Sword Peak of Mount Shu for the discussion.

The Mount Shu Sect and the Valley of the Three Absolutes were both located in the Southern Regions, conveniently accessible for cultivators. In contrast, the Buddhist Cloud Monastery resided near the heavens.

However, the Valley of the Three Absolutes was in a desolate and eerie area within the Southern Regions, making it the more remote location. In comparison to the other two, Mount Shu Sect emerged as the most suitable gathering place.

Chu Liang took the initiative to clean up the place before their companions' arrival, aiming to leave a good impression.

By noon, Luo Yao had arrived first.

Dressed in her usual black attire, Luo Yao landed on the Silver Sword Peak. Her glossy white hair and icy gaze were unmistakable. Carrying three umbrellas on her back, she remained silent until Chu Liang spotted her standing there and greeted her.

"Miss Luo, you are here! It's been a while! How are you?" Chu Liang waved.

"Mm." Luo Yao nodded gently in response.

Chu Liang didn't find her response impolite either, knowing well that she had always been this cold-faced.

"How have you been lately?" Chu Liang asked again.

"Fine," replied Luo Yao.

After a brief exchange of pleasantries, Chu Liang ushered her to the table, where he presented a plate of Golden Vein Berries and poured some tea—a gesture of proper hospitality.

Still, the atmosphere remained awkward.

Being in the same room with a fierce person who didn't speak much brought a certain amount of stress, and Chu Liang couldn't help but hope that Pushan would arrive soon. At least with him around, the atmosphere wouldn't feel so cold.

As he pondered this, he heard a voice outside chanting a Buddhist mantra, "Sadhu sadhu sadhu. It's my first time at Mount Shu. The atmosphere on the thirty-six peaks is quite remarkable!"

Chu Liang rushed outside and immediately spotted the handsome bald figure. A warm smile graced his face as he stood clad in a white monk's robe.

"Master Pushan, we've been waiting for you," Chu Liang greeted with a smile.

"Oh, Young Hero Chu and Miss Luo, it's been too long! I've missed you both dearly!" Pushan's smile grew even brighter upon seeing them, revealing a set of perfectly white teeth that had clearly always been exposed to the sun[1]

He pulled out a box, saying, "These are specialties from the Buddhist Cloud Monastery called the Buddha's Blessed Fruits. I brought some for you to taste."

"Haha, you're too kind. You've come all this way; you didn't need to bring anything," Chu Liang said, taking the box. "You should learn from Miss Luo here; it's nice to come empty-handed."

"Huh?"

" remarked Luo Yao.

After exchanging pleasantries, the three gathered and sat down to discuss the matter at hand.

"When we parted ways, I went back and contemplated for a while about this. If we want to infiltrate the deepest parts of the Dark King Sect, we must know how to use some diabolical techniques. At

least we need some techniques that appear to have similar effects, so that we can act effectively in battles," Luo Yao said.

When it was a discussion about a serious matter, Luo Yao would usually talk a bit more.

"Indeed, I've thought about that too," Pushan nodded in agreement. "That's why I specifically practiced several forbidden palm techniques of our temple, which should be good enough for the disguise."

The Buddhist Cloud Monastery passed on ancient cultivation legacies and naturally had some divine techniques of eerie nature.

"In this aspect, I haven't made any preparations, although I've thought about it..." Chu Liang furrowed his brows as he spoke. "The techniques of Mount Shu Sect are too righteous[2] that it would be too difficult to practice any diabolical techniques, even if I had access to any. So, if necessary, I can only rely on some tricks and the Battle Soul I obtained last time to support me.

The techniques of each immortal sect are of different nature. For example, Luo Yao from the Valley of the Three Absolutes wouldn't even have to disguise herself as the techniques that she uses would be eerie and dark. As for Pushan's Buddhist sect techniques, they were quite diverse as well.

The Divine Nine's Profound Mental Cultivation Technique of the Mount Shu Sect is just too righteous![3] Chu Liang complained inwardly.

"Haaa. We, the disciples of Mount Shu, are filled with righteous qi." Chu Liang said as he sighed. "It is simply too difficult for us to hide our identities."

"I do have a minor divine technique that you can learn." Luo Yao said as she handed over a jade slip.

Chu Liang took it and found it to be a minor divine technique called "Skill of Yin-Nature Talisman."

With the use of some talismanic script of yin nature, yin energy could be condensed to strike the enemy. The execution of this technique resembled diabolical techniques.

This technique was very suitable for Chu Liang as it could be used in combination with the Talismanic Sword Seal.

"Miss Luo, very thoughtful of you," Chu Liang and Monk Pushan expressed their gratitude promptly.

This minor divine technique wasn't too difficult. After scanning it with his divine sense a couple of times, Chu Liang basically memorized the talismanic script. Since he was already quite adept at drawing talismans, the three decided to leave the house so that Chu Liang could test out the power of this technique.

The moment they stepped out, they saw Liu Xiaoyu'er coming over with her hand massaging her waist. She yawned and said, "Big Brother Chu Liang, I feel so tired after you helped me open up my meridians last night. My back feels sore. I won't be working at the garden today. Would that be okay?"

"Sure, take a rest," Chu Liang replied.

Liu Xiaoyu'er was a demon, but in terms of her physique, she was much weaker than Chu Liang. When Chu Liang opened his own meridians, he didn't feel a single thing. On the other hand, Liu Xiaoyu'er felt as though she had been taken apart.

Even after resting for an entire night, she still hadn't fully recovered.

Chu Liang was fine with it as he could always water the plants later.

As Chu Liang turned around, he noticed Pushan and Luo Yao looking at him with subtle, peculiar expressions. It was as if they thought he was a scumbag.

"That girl doesn't seem very old, does she?" Monk Pushan blinked and asked.

"And you are even forcing her to do farm work..." Luo Yao added.

"It's not what you think," Chu Liang hurriedly explained. But he couldn't reveal the Secret Dragon Blood Technique, so he could only say, "I was helping her with her cultivation!"

Seeing the disbelief on their faces, Chu Liang continued firmly, "As a disciple of Mount Shu, I uphold righteousness. How can I be one of those people who deceives innocent girls? You have to believe me!"

Before he could finish his sentence, a voice called from afar, "Chu Liang, my best bro! Please save me! Let me hide here for a while!"

Like a streak of black smoke, Lin Bei appeared and dashed into Chu Liang's house.

Lu Ren appeared behind him and landed slowly.

Chu Liang had met Lu Ren before. He was a senior brother from the Jade Sword Peak.

"What's going on?" Chu Liang asked with a frown.

"Don't even get me started. This dude deceived an innocent girl and got caught!" Lu Ren, who followed after, said indignantly. "While he was distracting and luring the Baize youngling yesterday, he met this junior sister from the Bamboo Sea Peak. He refused to take the junior sister's money and wanted to arrange a secret meeting with her at night. The senior brothers and sisters of that girl found out about it. Since last night, they have been trying to seize him. And now, they are all causing a scene at the Jade Sword Peak so he escaped here for a while."

While Lu Ren was talking about Lin Bei, Chu Liang felt the weight of Luo Yao and Pushan's gaze on him growing heavier.

Luo Yao sneered as she asked, "Aren't you Mount Shu disciples supposed to be righteous?"

Pushan turned to look inside the room. "You are his best bro..."

"Actually, I don't know him very well..." Chu Liang said with a solemn expression. "In fact, I strongly condemn such behavior. He's the exception, a disgrace to Mount Shu! He does not represent the general populace of Mount Shu. I am not like him. My reputation in Mount Shu has always been good."

While he was talking, another beam of sword light descended from the distant sky.

As he spoke, another sword light fell from the distant sky.

It turned out to be Shang Ziliang. However, the expression on Shang Ziliang's face was really gloomy. He looked really sad and carried a small bundle on his back.

"What's up with you now?" Chu Liang asked.

"Our business has grown so big that my father found out about it," Shang Ziliang lamented. "My father said that the members of the Silver Sword Peak are all shameless and scrupulous people. He criticized me for befriending you. He wants to disown me. Big bro, I just ran away from home!"

What the heck is going on today... Chu Liang thought as he smacked himself on the forehead.

Luo Yao and Pushan, who were behind him, became even more certain as they stared at him.

Pushan said, "Righteousness, huh?"

Luo Yao said, "Good reputation, huh?"

Chu Liang: "..."

Chapter 230: I'm Not Interested In Women

Three days later...

On a remote hilltop, Chu Liang, Luo Yao, and Monk Pushan—all dressed in their identical robes—walked toward the meeting place in unison. They were out in broad daylight and extremely eye-catching. If they hadn't worn their black robes, they wouldn't have stood out as much.

According to the Eastern-Route Guider's instructions, if they waited here, someone would come take them to the White-Bone Hall.

"My temple's elders said that if the White-Bone Hall makes any unusual moves, we should just observe them first. As long as nothing significant occurs, it's also a good option to wait until we have the hall's location before we take action to destroy it," Monk Pushan said as they walked.

In the current era, the righteous path was clearly superior to the diabolical path in the mortal realm. Diabolical sects were strong, but the combined forces of the Yu Dynasty and the sects in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten were powerful enough to wipe them out.

Despite that, one diabolical sect had managed to continue existing for a long time—the Dark King Sect. One of the most important factors contributing to the Dark King Sect's longevity was its extraordinary concealment methods.

That meant it would be a huge merit for Chu Liang, Luo Yao, Monk Pushan, and their sects if the three of them could arrive at the White-Bone Hall safely and determine its location.

The White-Bone Hall's master was the Elder of White-Bone Mountain, and he was just as important a figure in the sect as the Violet Gold Marquess.

Luo Yao spoke next. "My valley's elders said the same thing. We should all work together to wipe out the White-Bone Hall."

Chu Liang thought about the conversation he had with his teacher before leaving Mount Shu...

Di Nufeng had patted Chu Liang's shoulder and told him, "The Elder of White-Bone Mountain is my prey! Mark my words, even the heavens won't be able to save him!"

So, Chu Liang nodded. "My teacher said pretty much the same thing. We just need to make sure that we destroy the White-Bone Hall. We'll have to play it by ear for the rest of the details."

The three righteous cultivators temporarily reached a consensus on the aim of this trip.

Once they neared the meeting place, all three of them kept silent to avoid being overheard by anyone malicious. Restricted to silence, Monk Pushan paced to and fro restlessly, presenting an obviously anxious expression.

The moment they arrived at the meeting spot, there was a flash of light at a black tree on a hillside in the distance. That black tree gradually took on a human form. It turned out to be a diabolical cultivator that had been in disguise.

The diabolical cultivator was thin and tall. He was also dressed in black robes like Chu Liang and the others, but his face was left uncovered. He had narrow, slanted eyes, giving him an extremely chilling appearance.

The diabolical cultivator walked over, looked at the three people in black robes, and said, "The Eastern-Route Guider?"

"United under the marquess," Chu Liang responded with a secret phrase.

"Mm." The man with the narrow and slanted eyes nodded. "I'm Liu Sen. The Eastern-Route Guider once saved my life, so I decided to pledge my loyalty to the marquess instead of the White-Bone Hall. However, I hit the limit in my cultivation, so I don't have a high position in the White-Bone Hall. I'm taking you to join the hall today in hopes that you can climb to high positions in the future."

"We will not let the marquess down," the trio replied, nodding in unison.

Liu Sen waved his hand wide, unfurling a huge black leaf that looked like a rug. He and the trio stepped onto the leaf, and they flew up into the sky.

Then Liu Sen gave the trio an introduction of the White-Bone Hall. "The White-Bone Hall is purported to have eight hundred chambers and an army of a hundred thousand diabolical soldiers[1]. The actual numbers aren't that high, but the White-Bone Hall is indeed our sect's largest hall. The chain of command is relatively relaxed here, and there's no restriction on your activities. You just need to come when you're summoned."

The trio were not surprised by this. It was, after all, not possible for diabolical sects to function like righteous sects.

For righteous sects like those ranked in the Divine Nine and the Terrestrial Ten, they usually had a fixed base on a mountain, and that's where most of their disciples would cultivate.

However, for diabolical sects, there was always the crisis of imminent destruction. If a diabolical sect's disciples were always convened in the same location, they might all get wiped out at the same time. That's why they usually moved about on their own.

Compared to the rest of the Dark King Sect, the White-Bone Hall was considered to be quite unbridled and arrogant. It had the most members, so they had always acted ostentatiously.

The other halls—like the Scarlet-Robe Hall or the Vermillion-Azurite Hall for example—only had a few disciples.

That's why the trio had chosen the White-Bone Hall. With its high number of disciples, it was the easiest of the four halls for the trio to infiltrate without being conspicuous.

"The one I'm taking you to and having you join is the Chamber of Loyalty. The chamber master is Hei Yu[2], also known as General Hei Yu. He's one of White-Bone Hall's most outstanding members, and he's been rising up the ranks pretty quickly in the recent years. I've been with him for the past two years."

"Loyalty?"

The trio found the chamber's name rather strange.

...

After flying for over a thousand li, they finally saw a dense dark cloud in the distant sky. Liu Sen ordered the black leaf to rush forward, plunging straight into the dark cloud.

Rumble—

The moment they entered the cloud, roaring thunder filled their ears.

However, a moment later, they flew through to the other side of the dark cloud, and their view opened up. Before them stood an enormous imposing and majestic mountain peak suspended high up in the sky. It was a feast for the eyes! The most shocking thing about this mountain peak was that it had been formed from a huge skull!

More accurately, it was a skull that was the size of a mountain peak. Over the years, it had been covered with rocks, plants, and trees that could be found on mountains, which gave the skull some semblance of a mountain.

Now, there were numerous pavilions on this floating mountain, and small black figures were constantly ascending and descending it. The hollows of the skull, where the orifices used to be, were still visible, and there were buildings inside them that looked like they were part of a palace.

The gloomy palace buildings looked much grander than the pavilions outside. They were presumably where the Elder of White-Bone Mountain stayed.

It's hard to imagine what kind of person could have had such a gigantic skull!

Dark clouds surrounded the skull, and streaks of lightning flashed about. There were even beams of golden light revolving around the skull, making it look like the realm of gods and demons.

It was no wonder that the righteous cultivators hadn't been able to find where the Dark King Sect was located. It seemed the sect's other halls had to be like this White-Bone Hall. Hidden amid dark clouds, they could move their base at any time, making it impossible for anyone to locate them.

"This White-Bone Mountain can move at any time..." Chu Liang said as he looked at the mountain. Curious, he asked, "Then how do the troops find their way back to the mountain after leaving it?"

Liu Sen glanced at Chu Liang and answered, "The White-Bone Mountain moves along a preset route. Every time there's a change in that route, it is communicated to the troops. We'll all know in advance which area the mountain will move to next. So, we'll be fine regardless of when the mountain may suddenly disappear, just as long as we remember the name of the new area it has moved to."

The closer the flying leaf got to the gigantic White-Bone Mountain, the more terrifying it seemed to the trio. Moreover, there were waves of intense pressure shrouding the mountain, making it difficult for anyone who approached to breathe.

Feeling the discomfort sink deep into him, Chu Liang realized that this pressure was malevolent qi. It would cause righteous cultivators like Chu Liang who were used to the righteous qi in their sect to feel unwell, but it would be the opposite for the disciples of diabolical sects.

Consequently, Chu Liang concealed his discomfort.

Liu Sen led them through the mountain pass where many pavilions were situated. They eventually arrived at a chamber with a signboard hanging outside that read "Chamber of Loyalty."

The neighboring chambers all had names like Mountain of Corpses Chamber and Sea of Blood Chamber, so the sudden appearance of a Chamber of Loyalty was rather out of place in a diabolical sect.

Liu Sen's leaf landed, and the trio and Liu Sen disembarked.

However, before they could even enter the Chamber of Loyalty, a loud shout rang out overhead. "Enchantresses, we welcome the two of you to White-Bone Mountain!"

The group of four turned to look and saw two women in red robes in the distance, descending from the sky with a trailing beam of scarlet light that looked akin to a waterfall.

A dozen or so envoys carrying banners flew out from the eye sockets of the skull. They yelled as they emerged from the inner palace, giving the two women a very grand welcome.

Meanwhile, everyone on the mountaintop was sticking their head out, trying to catch a glimpse of the women's beautiful faces. It seemed that the two women were quite popular among the members of White-Bone Hall.

"They are the Enchantresses from Scarlet-Robe Hall. I'm sure you've heard of them, right?" Liu Sen gave the trio an introduction of the Enchantresses. "These two women should be Enchantress Liu, who is ranked second, and Enchantress Yi, who is ranked fourth. They have many fans in the diabolical sects. After all, there aren't many women in diabolical sects, and it's easy for those who are beautiful to have their good looks ruined. It's quite rare to see women in diabolical sects become famous like them—huh? Why are you turning away?"

Liu Sen had turned his head to look at the trio when he was speaking and noticed that one of the three newcomers was behaving strangely. The newcomer was turning away, making it so that his back faced the two Enchantresses instead. He looked rather out of place.

"Oh," Chu Liang uttered, turning away in fear that the two Enchantresses would notice him. Simultaneously, he replied, "I'm not interested in women... Even just glancing at them annoys me."