

M. Slaying 301

Chapter 301: Jiuli Soul Armor

With his teacher's story and what Senior Sister Jiang told him, Chu Liang was able to piece together the life story of the Whale-Riding Immortal.

In the first half of his life, the Whale-Riding Immortal was as carefree and powerful. He was basically like the protagonist of a novel.

However, he later married a woman with a mysterious background, which led to the annihilation of his entire family. He then roamed around for reasons unknown—whether he was seeking to find his wife or avenge his family remained unclear.

Nevertheless, Chu Liang wouldn't be concerned for a powerful being at the eighth-realm.

After returning to his small cabin, he immediately sat down eagerly, ready to unbox the reward.

Recently, he had been preparing for the Mount Shu Summit and participating in consecutive matches, leaving him no time to descend the mountain to slay monsters and obliterate devils. Naturally, he had no chance to farm for rewards. After such a long time, he was itching with anticipation.

Moreover, he killed a big one this time.

As he entered White Pagoda in his divine sense, he saw a huge golden apparition filling up an entire cell. When Chu Liang approached and pressed the refine button, he unexpectedly felt nervous.

His heart raced with excitement, and his hands trembled.

Boom.

After a flash of dazzling light, a white glow emerged, appearing quite substantial. Information about the valuable item then surfaced in Chu Liang's mind.

[Jiuli Soul Armor: A powerful armor imbued with the Battle Soul of an ancient vicious beast. This armor craves blood. Besides its strong defensive capabilities, whenever your attack harms a living

being, the attached beast soul can absorb some of the blood-stained aura and use it to restore your strength. Additionally, when someone else's attack harms you, the beast soul can reflect a portion of the attack back to them. Warning: Do not attack yourself.]

This is a good reward!

Upon first glance, Chu Liang immediately knew that this was definitely a good item.

Armor-type enchanted tools were relatively rare in the world of immortality cultivators.

Defensive enchanted tools were much rarer than offensive ones because they needed to be flawless and cover a large area with enchanted formations. Crafting them required significantly more time and energy than creating offensive tools. Consequently, many artificers chose to focus on enhancing the power of offensive enchanted tools instead.

Most defensive enchanted tools, like the Green Leaf Umbrella crafted by Wen Yulong, provided instant defense, requiring you to activate the enchanted tool when facing an attack.

Compared to instant defenses, clothing or armor that provided continuous defense was naturally more convenient and practical.

However, crafting enchanted tools with the function of continuous defense was several times more difficult and posed a significant challenge for artificers. If it weren't so challenging, such useful items would undoubtedly be widely available.

Enchanted tools that provide both continuous defense and additional powers were rare treasures, typically obtained by luck and seldom found.

The Jiuli Soul Armor before him was such a valuable item.

Its two effects were extremely enticing. The first was that when the wearer injured another person, the armor would absorb some of the blood-stained aura and strengthen the wearer.

The effect of the blood-stained aura was likely to enhance strength and replenish vitality. This meant that if Chu Liang attacked others, it would increase his strength, and if he were injured, it would also quickly heal part of his wounds.

The second effect was even more powerful: when attacked by others, the soul armor would reflect part of the damage back to the attacker. This meant that any attack would result in the attacker getting hurt as well.

Of course, although this all sounded powerful, the effectiveness still depended on the intensity of the attacks.

To know how strong the defense of this armor was, a test was needed.

However, Chu Liang couldn't hit himself—this was a stern warning in the Jiuli Soul Armor's instructions.

This warning made sense.

If Chu Liang attacked himself, the first effect would be triggered, absorbing some of his blood-stained aura and restoring his own strength and vitality.

Simultaneously, the second effect would be triggered, reflecting part of the damage back to the attacker... which would be Chu Liang himself.

Then the reflected damage would trigger the first effect again, repeating the process over and over.

Although the intensity would gradually weaken, theoretically, it could continue indefinitely. If Chu Liang didn't take off the soul armor, he could be stuck in an endless cycle of self-harm for the rest of his life.

As Chu Liang thought about it, he found it quite amusing. While he was pondering, he heard a loud laugh outside.

"Heheheh! Brother, how are you?"

...

Who else could it be if not Lin Bei?

Having just gone through a major battle, he was completely unscathed. The Mount Shu Sect had very few casualties this time, and Chu Liang had already confirmed before returning to his cabin that none of his close friends were injured, which gave him peace of mind.

After cleaning up the battlefield, Lin Bei was eager to see Chu Liang. After all, anyone who witnessed him wielding the Violet and Azure Twin Swords would be astounded.

Lin Bei, being a close friend of Chu Liang, naturally wanted to check in on him.

“You’ve really made a name for yourself now. After today, your name will be known by everyone across the nine provinces and four seas,” he said enviously.

"The force unleashed was from an external source," Chu Liang replied with a smile, not saying much more.

It was fine for him to talk about the Violet and Azure Twin Swords, but he wasn't sure if he could tell another soul about the immortal art, Longevity of Heaven and Earth.

If he told Lin Bei, it was basically akin to telling the entire world.

Lin Bei was Mount Shu's unofficial spokesperson, spending his days gossiping with the disciples of various immortal sects in the square at Heaven-Reaching Peak.

Of course, he wasn't just giving out information; he had also gathered a lot of secrets about the other immortal sects.

"How did you do it?" Lin Bei asked out of curiosity, which Chu Liang had expected.

"Let me ask the elders and I will tell you later. First, I need your help with something," Chu Liang said.

"Uh? What is it?" Lin Bei asked.

"Hit me," Chu Liang said.

Lin Bei was so confused.

As he stared at Chu Liang, his gaze shifted from admiration and envy to shock and confusion, then to hesitation and nervousness...

He vaguely remembered that not long ago, Chu Liang was a master of the tortoise-shell bondage method. What had he gone through in such a short time to undergo such a transformation?

Seeing his expression, Chu Liang immediately guessed what was on his mind and said, "I just got a defensive enchanted tool and need your help to test its effect."

"Oh, I see," Lin Bei clearly heaved a sigh of relief.

With a thought, the Jiuli Soul Armor appeared on Chu Liang's body.

It didn't appear very tight, and the craftsmanship seemed somewhat rough, resembling thick armor woven from some kind of beast hide. However, the dense blood-stained aura and fiendish qi it emitted were terrifying.

As Chu Liang infused it with foundational qi, he activated the hidden mode with his divine intent. In an instant, a brilliant flash of radiance enveloped him, and the leather armor disappeared from sight, leaving no trace on Chu Liang's body.

Although it became invisible, the heavy feeling of wearing it remained, providing a great sense of security.

As Lin Bei sensed the aura of the armor, he immediately guessed the origin of the enchanted tool Chu Liang was wearing. This was definitely loot he had obtained from the recent battle with the diabolical sect.

In this great battle, the members of the diabolical sect fled in disarray, leaving behind their helmets and armor. Despite how poor many of the diabolical disciples might have been, they certainly had some savings. There was bound to be a significant amount of loot.

Although Mount Shu would collect the loot centrally, some useful enchanted tools might be privately kept by disciples, and the sect wouldn't mind much.

Chu Liang reminded him, "Just use a tenth of your strength. This armor will reflect part of the attack back to you."

"Is it really that powerful?" Lin Bei smiled, gathering a tenth of his foundational qi, and smacked Chu Liang on the shoulder.

Given Chu Liang's physical resilience, even without armor, Lin Bei's smack wouldn't cause him any injuries, so Chu Liang wasn't worried about any accidents happening.

Bang! A resounding thud echoed through the air.

Lin Bei's palm strike landed on Chu Liang, and immediately, a powerful wave-like force surged back with explosive intensity!

Bam—

Lin Bei was thrown over ten zhang away, tumbling through the air before finally sitting up.

"What the heck?" he exclaimed, still somewhat stunned. "I used a tenth of my strength, but at least seventy to eighty percent of it bounced back. This armor is too powerful."

While Lin Bei was thrown back, Chu Liang felt a trace of blood-stained aura entering his body.

However, the effect was not significant. It was likely because the damage to Lin Bei was minimal, resulting in low absorption.

However, the rebound of the force was a pleasant surprise for him.

The reason for such a strong rebound was likely because Lin Bei used minimal force. If the force had been greater, the enchanted tool's effect wouldn't have been as strong. There must be a limit.

If this armor allowed a rebound of seventy to eighty percent of every attack, it would mean that not even the top twenty weapons in the Catalog of the Mortal World's Ten Thousand Treasures could prevail against it. This was simply impossible.

He quickly helped Lin Bei up and said, "Because you used minimal force, the proportion of the force that rebounded was high. If you used more force, the proportion of the force that rebounded should be smaller."

"Really?" Lin Bei asked skeptically.

"It should be true," Chu Liang said with a smile. He paused for a moment before adding, "Do you want to try again?"

Lin Bei had just taken a hard fall. He rubbed his sore butt and quickly shook his head. "Let's not. That really hurt!"

Before Lin Bei could finish speaking, Chu Liang suddenly noticed a figure behind Lin Bei.

It was Daoist Yan, who was dressed in flowing white robes.

At this moment, Daoist Yan, who usually wouldn't show a change of expression, was looking at the two of them with a puzzled and surprised look. She had likely overheard their conversation.

Chu Liang jumped at the sight of Senior Aunt Yan. "Senior Aunt Yan, what a surprise! What brings you here? We were..."

"No need for explanations. You have the freedom to do what you want." Daoist Yan interrupted, shaking her head. "The sect leader wishes to see you. I also have questions, which is why I've come to inform you personally."

Chu Liang's brow furrowed deeply as these thoughts raced through his mind.

Noooooo! What do you mean you don't need an explanation? What freedom?

You can ask any questions, but please, can I at least explain?

Pleaseeeeeeeeeee...

Chapter 302: Crime Scene

"I was just asking him to help me test the effect of a defensive enchanted tool!" Chu Liang said hastily.

"Yes," Lin Bei said as he quickly nodded, "We're just friends."

Just shut up, bro... Chu Liang felt speechless.

"Alright," Daoist Yan nodded casually, her expression unreadable. It seemed like she didn't care about Chu Liang's explanation.

Even though Chu Liang felt like crying, he could not shed a single tear.

If he tried explaining further, it would seem like he was trying to hide something. And so, he quickly shifted the topic, asking, "What did you want to ask me, Senior Aunt Yan?"

Daoist Yan cast a glance at Lin Bei.

Lin Bei immediately took the hint and said, "I'm a bit tired, I'll go rest. See you later."

With that, he swiftly departed, eager to leave behind the awkward atmosphere on the peak.

Daoist Yan then said to Chu Liang, "I heard you met the Whale-Riding Immortal?"

"To be precise, I didn't see him," Chu Liang answered truthfully. "He communicated through voice transmissions, explaining his plan to transfer foundational qi using the immortal art, Longevity of Heaven and Earth."

"Do you not know where he visited Mount Shu?" Daoist Yan inquired.

"I..." Chu Liang hesitated briefly, then replied, "I don't know where he was when he communicated with me through the voice transmission, but it's likely that he visited Silver Sword Peak."

As he spoke, he gestured toward the nearby garden.

"Here?" Daoist Yan floated over and arrived beside the garden.

She silently gazed at the garden for a moment, then raised her two fingers, forming hand seals. An ethereal glow emerged from the ground, gradually enveloping the entire garden.

Only then did Chu Liang realize what she was doing.

She was executing the Immortal art Shadow of Radiance.

Jiang Yuebai had once showcased this immortal art on stage. However, back then, she had used it primarily as a potent illusory technique.

When mastered at its highest level, this immortal art could not only conjure illusions but also recreate scenes that had occurred at a location shortly before.

Among the sects in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten, few could master the Shadow of Radiance to such a degree. It was surprising that Daoist Yan possessed such capability.

The world knew her as a master of swordsmanship, but few were aware of her exceptional skills in illusory techniques.

This was also due to her typically low profile. Chu Liang had just learned that she was the head disciple of the Mount Shu Sect during its golden generation sixty years ago.

No wonder she was so powerful.

The Whale-Riding Immortal had just left not long ago and Daoist Yan likely wanted to see what he looked like using this method.

Whoosh!

In the blink of an eye, a layer of misty light enveloped the garden, conjuring mirage-like scenes on its surface.

Daoist Yan's eyes flickered, her thoughts unreadable, leaving one to wonder what she was anticipating.

Then she saw...

A middle-aged woman crept to the edge of the garden with a little boy in tow. Without hesitation, she threw the child out to the garden.

She then used a divine ability to swiftly harvest a large area of spirit plants, shouting something as she worked.

She seemed to be instructing the child to eat as much as possible while no one was around.

The scene was quite absurd, almost surreal in its unexpectedness.

"..."

Silence. A long, heavy silence.

Senior Aunt Yan was essentially helping me recreate the crime scene. I must admit, this technique would be quite effective if used by the authorities to solve crimes.

After a moment of silence, Chu Liang quickly figured it out. The Whale-Riding Immortal and the little girl were currently wanted by the sects in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten, so it made sense that they disguised themselves to enter Mount Shu.

Especially the way the little girl rushed into the berry field and ate ravenously. Which kid but the little Cataclysmic Ba could do such a thing?

So Chu Liang began to explain, "The esteemed Whale-Riding Immortal might be in disguise..."

"I know," Daoist Yan said firmly, "That is him."

Chu Liang knew that she had not recognized the Whale-Riding Immortal but rather the person she was familiar with—Jiang Tiankuo.

Chu Liang then asked softly, "Senior Aunt Yan, how can you be so sure?"

"No matter how much a person's appearance and body change, their eyes, temperament, and aura will never change," Daoist Yan said, her gaze distant, as if she were reminiscing about something from long ago.

What temperament? Chu Liang stared at the illusion for a while as he pondered.

All I see is a middle-aged auntie stealing fruits.

As Chu Liang watched this scene unfold, he felt a little angry...

However, when he saw the Whale-Riding Immortal petting the Golden-Furred Hou, Chu Liang felt convinced that this Immortal was the reason why the Golden-Furred Hou had shown progress in its cultivation.

The Whale-Riding Immortal still maintained the same way of doing things. If he took something, he would compensate by returning something of higher value. This was equivalent to an exchange.

Moments later, the two figures, one big and one small, had eaten their fill and packed up half the garden before they disappeared from the scene. It was only then that Daoist Yan withdrew her divine ability.

Her expression looked complicated.

As Chu Liang observed her expression, he understood why she felt this way. If someone had been thinking about a man since their youth and then saw him for the first time in twenty years dressed as a woman and stealing fruits, they would undoubtedly have mixed feelings.

"I hope you keep everything about this person confidential. If anyone asks how you managed to use the Violet and Azure Twin Swords today, just tell them that the elders of the Mount Shu Sect supported you," Daoist Yan advised in the end.

Chu Liang nodded in agreement. "Alright."

...

"You're not looking well, are you?"

In an elegant room filled with the enchanting melody of a guqin, a young nobleman lounged lazily on a couch. He looked at the figure in front of him, and spoke with a flippant inquiry and a tone dripping with mockery.

The young man, around twenty years old, had red lips, white teeth, thick eyebrows, and a broad face, giving him a handsome appearance. Dressed in a loose-fitting green robe with a loosely tied belt, he rested his head on his hand, looking both leisurely and comfortable.

Behind a folding screen, a musician played the guqin while two maids attended to him. One massaged his calf, while the other fed him green grapes.

"Hmph!" A cold snort sounded in front of him.

Yet, there was no one in front of him. Upon closer look, one would notice a wooden puppet of four-cun height sitting on the table.

The small puppet had flexible joints and lively features. Upon closer inspection, the face was unmistakably that of Lu Chengchou who was on Mount Shu!

"Heh," the young nobleman laughed and asked, "How did you end up like this?"

"The plan was leaked, and the Mount Shu Sect was ready," Lu Chengchou replied in a low voice. "The Buddhist Cloud Monastery and the Valley of the Three Absolutes came to their aid, and the True Form of Ksitigarbha was blocked by the Dharma Lotus Platform. Initially, I activated the grand formation of Mount Shu to temporarily hold off Wen Yuan and give Taowu the opportunity to charge into Baize.

"But then an annoying kid appeared, wielding the Violet and Azure Twin Swords. He killed Taowu and ruined everything."

"I told you before, your plan wasn't thorough. With so many people in the Dark King Sect, it's no surprise the plan leaked. How can you expect to achieve anything significant by partnering with those diabolical cultivators?" The young nobleman shook his head, clicking his tongue in disapproval.

"If they hadn't helped me, were you going to?" Lu Chengchou snorted irritably. "Do you expect me to gather an army of a hundred thousand with your broken puppets?"

"Look who's talking," the young nobleman sneered. "You're nothing more than a broken puppet yourself right now."

Lu Chengchou was instantly choked with anger, unable to find a retort, so he simply grunted.

"It is very heartless of you to lash out at me like this. Among the members of the Celestial Charm Sect, only I would treat you so well, even going through the trouble of carving a body for you. If those short-tempered ones encountered you in this crippled state, wouldn't they just destroy you outright?" The young nobleman chuckled once more.

After a long silence, Lu Chengchou finally spoke, "While this defeat has been devastating, it does have its silver lining. The revelation that Mount Shu has been hiding Baize will prompt others to attempt its destruction. Although I cannot personally extinguish Mount Shu's hope, I will at least live to see that day."

"Why don't you focus on staying alive until that day arrives?" the young nobleman continued to mock relentlessly.

"You..." Lu Chengchou gritted his teeth in anger, then said, "Despite my body being destroyed and my soul incomplete, I still retained my understanding of Dao. If the higher-ups are willing to assist me, I might return to my peak condition in due time."

"Keep dreaming," the young noble scoffed, shattering his delusion. "The higher-ups warned you about the demon god's potential return and advised against attacking the Mount Shu Sect now. Yet, you ignored their counsel and went ahead, colluding with the diabolical sect on your own."

Lu Chengchou was left speechless by the harsh words, his eyes bulging wide with anger.

His expression seemed to convey, "Will you only be satisfied if I start crying?"

"I'm just stating the truth. My advice to you is to not contact the higher-ups at this moment," the young noble said with a shrug. "Your cultivation isn't what it used to be, and most of the secrets you hold about Mount Shu have been exposed. They might decide to silence you for good... I'm serious."

His expression grew slightly more serious.

"No, I still know secrets about the Divine Ruins," Lu Chengchou's eyes gleamed, conveying his unwillingness to admit defeat. "There's still a chance for me to turn things around!"

The young noble glanced at him, sighed, and abruptly rose from his seat, making his way to the door. "Someone's looking for me. I'll step out for a bit. You can leave once you're recovered. If you linger here too long, I might end up in trouble with the higher-ups."

As he stood up, the two beautiful maids beside him froze abruptly. A sudden flash of light passed over them, changing them into human-shaped puppets!

He pushed open the door, crossed a courtyard adorned with rockeries and flowing water, proceeded through a long corridor, and finally reached the main hall.

Someone was waiting in the hall. A servant boy stood nearby, offering tea. The person clutched their shoulder where an arm was missing, the wound on the stump completely blackened. With a very pale face, they were clearly not in the mood for tea.

Upon seeing the young noble arriving gracefully, the injured person's spirits lifted. They immediately got up and knelt, pleading, "I have long heard of Young Noble Xunyang's great name! Today, I came seeking your help!"

"You lost your arm, didn't you? Come on, get up," the young noble said with a casual smile. "No problem. I'll craft you a new arm, guaranteed to be better than the real one."

"Thank you, Young Noble Xunyang!" the injured person exclaimed, rising excitedly to their feet.

"However, according to the rules..." Young Noble Xunyang said, "You owe me a favor."

Chapter 303: Di Nufeng and the Others

"All of Mount Shu owes you a debt of gratitude this time."

That was the first thing the sect leader of the Mount Shu Sect said to Chu Liang when he arrived at the Boundless Palace on Heaven-Reaching Peak, and it left Chu Liang feeling deeply honored.

"This disciple dares not accept such gratitude!" Chu Liang immediately replied. "Our sect was in a critical crisis. It's a given that everyone should give their all. As a disciple of the Mount Shu Sect, it was my duty to do whatever I could."

The corners of Venerable Wen Yuan's lips lifted into a slight smile.

Venerable Wen Yuan looked at Chu Liang with a satisfied gaze and said, "Baize is in hibernation to break through to the ninth realm. This is of paramount importance to our sect. We could even say that your slaying of Taowu has saved Mount Shu's great hope for the future. And you were also the first to report the Dark King Sect's attack, right? It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say you contributed immensely to our victory."

"I was able to slay Taowu thanks to the Violet and Azure Twin Swords and the Longevity of Heaven and Earth. I dare not claim the credit for it alone," Chu Liang replied.

Hearing that, Venerable Wen Yuan looked even more satisfied with Chu Liang.

As the sect leader of the Mount Shu Sect, Venerable Wen Yuan had the highest ranking status in the sect, so he was usually unaware of the matters regarding young disciples.

Venerable Wen Yuan's impression of Chu Liang hadn't been particularly strong previously. He had known that Chu Liang was an outstanding young disciple, and he had been amazed when he found out Chu Liang was from Silver Sword Peak. Venerable Wen Yuan had found it unbelievable that Di Nufeng had been able to produce such an excellent disciple, but that was about it.

Nevertheless, after the battle with Taowu, Venerable Wen Yuan committed Chu Liang's name to memory.

"You need not be so modest. Our sect's victory over the invaders was certainly a collective effort, but you definitely had a huge part in it," Venerable Wen Yuan said, praising Chu Liang without holding back at all. "From now on, the sect will focus on your development, and you will receive the same treatment as the head disciple."

The Mount Shu Sect's head disciple enjoyed special privileges, such as unlimited access to the Hall of Conservation, a monthly stipend of five thousand sword coins, priority access to important resources, the right to represent Mount Shu at major gatherings of the immortal sects, and so on.

These privileges were initially only available to the head disciple Jiang Yuebai. Now that Chu Liang would be given these benefits too, it meant he would be treated the same as the head disciple, with the only exception being that he wouldn't have the Human Authority Token.

In other words, it was equivalent to sharing the same position as Jiang Yuebai.

"Additionally..." Venerable Wen Yuan turned his hand over and took a golden jade talisman out from his storage tool. "I stored the immortal art Shattering the Void in here. If you encounter any danger in the future, just crush the jade talisman, and you'll instantly be moved a thousand li away. This immortal art cannot be stopped by ordinary means, so it can serve as a life-saving talisman."

Chu Liang raised his eyebrows in surprise.

This was a genuine life-saving talisman!

Chu Liang had become really famous, so going outside the sect now would certainly be different from before. He would likely draw a lot of attention, both good and bad. On Mount Shu, he had the protection of the Violet and Azure Twin Swords, so he wasn't afraid anything would happen. However, he couldn't take the twin sword with him whenever he went down the mountain. If he were to lose them, Mount Shu would see him as a criminal.

Consequently, Chu Liang really needed some life-saving treasures.

People usually had methods to counter ordinary art-storing jade talismans or tracking jade talismans. For example, the shamanic technique Forbidden Ground could prevent these talismans from being used.

Nevertheless, an immortal art that was stored by a powerful eighth-realm cultivator was different. Unless a cultivator of the same level were to intervene, it was very difficult to prevent the immortal art from being used or interfere with it! That meant Chu Liang would be able to instantly escape to a location a thousand li away no matter when or where he was.

This was an extremely precious treasure. It was unlikely that the head disciples of the other sects in the Divine Nine would have a treasure like this.

The reason wasn't that eighth-realm cultivators thought it was beneath them or that they didn't have time to store an immortal art for the head disciples of their sects. Rather, the capacity of a jade talisman was limited by the materials that had been used to make it. Consequently, jade talismans that had the capacity to store eighth-realm immortal arts were extremely rare.

"Thank you, Sect Leader!" Chu Liang exclaimed, hurriedly accepting the jade talisman.

Venerable Wen Yuan said leisurely, "Now that Baize's location has been exposed, Mount Shu will inevitably become a target. The days ahead will not be easy. As disciples of our sect, you and your peers may be targeted and attacked when you're traveling out there. I hope you're prepared."

He was quite worried for the young disciples of his sect.

Venerable Wen Yuan was certain there was a mastermind behind the recent battle at Mount Shu. It couldn't have been Lu Chengchou. He was merely a pawn; he didn't have the power or influence to have been able to orchestrate such a grand scheme.

The mastermind was very likely a cultivator at the same level as Baize.

The enemy is unknown, but we are exposed. We must stay vigilant.

"Yes!" Chu Liang replied, sounding even chirpier after he received the jade talisman.

The concerns that the higher-ups of his sect had weren't for Chu Liang to worry about.

He'd already been rewarded once today by the White Pagoda, and now he'd gotten another reward from Venerable Wen Yuan. Just these were enough to make him happy.

...

Di Nufeng was probably the happiest person on Mount Shu at present.

It had been three days since the great battle, and the sect had mostly recovered from the damages. Mount Shu's peaks had already been restored to their original state.

However, the aftermath of the battle had only just begun. News of the battle gradually reached all four seas across the nine provinces, shocking everyone in the world of immortality cultivators.

The Dark King Sect had actually infiltrated during the Mount Shu Summit and brazenly launched a raid! They killed people, set fires, destroyed buildings, attacked spirit beasts, ambushed prodigies, and plundered from a fruit garden...

The Dark King Sect had committed every evil act conceivable!

There were battles between the righteous and the diabolical sects every year, but it was rare for there to be a battle on such a grand scale! In comparison, the battle that had occurred earlier in the year, during which Immortal Jiuyi had killed the White Silver King, seemed significantly less impressive.

The day before was the day of the month when Celestial Pivot Pavilion would have usually released the monthly issue of The Seven Stars Gazette. The release had been delayed by a day, so the issue was only distributed today.

This had happened before. It had usually been because some major event had occurred, so they had to change the headliner. As for what major event had disrupted the Celestial Pivot Pavilion's plans this time—well, that was obvious.

The first page of the "Chronicles of the Nine Provinces" only had these two words printed on it: Mount Shu!

This time, Elder Huang had written the entire article about Mount Shu himself.

Elder Huang had previously promised Di Nufeng that he would write an article full of praise for her to help improve her reputation, so Di Nufeng had been eagerly awaiting this day.

When the white crane delivered her copy of The Seven Stars Gazette, Di Nufeng flipped it open with anticipation.

Compared to the writing style of the Wind-Catching Hall disciples who had written the previous articles, Elder Huang's writing style was more casual yet vivid, making the readers feel as if they were on the scene.

The article was divided into three sections. In the first section, Elder Huang gave a brief account of the events he'd watched at the Mount Shu Summit a few days ago. He talked about how the Mount Shu Sect had quite a few outstanding disciples in the current generation and that they would certainly uphold the Mount Shu Sect's great reputation in the future.

Elder Huang used nearly eight hundred words to describe the Mount Shu Sect's new head disciple, Jiang Yuebai. He praised her without holding back in the slightest, making it obvious he was a fan of hers.

The next section featured the highlight of the article, the Dark King Sect's raid on Mount Shu!

Before writing the article, Elder Huang had probably communicated with Mount Shu's higher-ups, as he did not mention the conversation between Lu Chengchou and Venerable Wen Yuan before the battle broke out.

Aside from that, Elder Huang gave a meticulous account of everything that had happened in the battle. It was hard for the readers not to wonder if this old man had done nothing during the battle; they suspected that perhaps he'd simply been standing on the sidelines observing it the whole time.

There had been many twists and turns during the battle. However, the climax had obviously been when Chu Liang used the Violet and Azure Twin Swords and unleashed the devastating blow that slayed Taowu. This tale of a young disciple slaying an ancient vicious beast with legendary artifacts was thrilling no matter how it was told.

Elder Huang then used another five hundred words to praise Chu Liang. He brought this rising star of the Mount Shu Sect, who was relatively unknown to the public, into the spotlight.

At the end of the article, there was a change in Elder Huang's tone.

Speaking of Chu Liang, one cannot help but think of his teacher.

Di Nufeng's eyes lit up as she held the gazette, eagerly turning to the next page.

In this battle, the Mount Shu Sect's Discipline Master, Weapons Master, Alchemy Master, Conservation Master, and the sect's peak masters—Azure Falling Peak's peak master Daoist Yan, Silver Sword's peak master Di Nufeng, and the others—all made significant contributions to the Mount Shu Sect's victory.

The article ended there.

As promised, Elder Huang praised Di Nufeng—well, sort of.

Di Nufeng stared at the words "Di Nufeng, and the others" for a while.

Then she gritted her teeth and spat out three words.

"You old scoundrel!!!"

Chapter 304: Fame Across the World

The thing that Di Nufeng found even more unacceptable was an article in the next section of the magazine, titled "Uncommon Tales of the Martial World."

The article mentioned that two Eminent Ones plundered the Golden Vein Berries on Mount Shu during the Mount Shu Summit.

To investigate, Zhang Xiaohan, a disciple from the Wind-Catching Hall, went to Silver Sword Peak for a special interview, exploring the mysteries of Mount Shu's Golden Vein Berries.

She wouldn't have known if she hadn't tried to look into this, but what she discovered surprised her greatly.

This seemingly ordinary fruit had the miraculous effects of enhancing male virility and beautifying females.

The reason for its miraculous properties lay in its origin...

Zhang Xiaohan began the story from "Borrowing an Umbrella on the Lake" to "Stealing Fruit From the Mountain of Immortals." Due to space constraints, this exciting "Legend of the Berries" wasn't fully recounted, with the rest promised for the next issue of The Seven Stars Gazette.

Upon reading this, Di Nufeng's chest rose and fell rapidly, her eyes burning with rage. Her inner energy roared, and her qi surged as she released a furious scream.

The subjects of the article were both on Silver Sword Peak.

It might have been acceptable if her disciple Chu Liang had received a thousand-word feature, but even the berries were given a special interview... in a two-part series.

And she was only briefly mentioned as "Di Nufeng and the others."

She was so furious that she felt an overwhelming urge to storm over to the Celestial Pivot Pavilion, confront that old rogue, and settle this once and for all.

Just as she was about to leave, Chu Liang walked in leisurely and asked, "Esteemed Teacher, hmm? Are you going out?"

"Yes," Di Nufeng said angrily.

"Teacher, what are you in such a hurry to do?" Chu Liang asked.

"To beat up an old man," Di Nufeng replied curtly.

Chu Liang's eyebrows twitched, and he quickly interjected, "I have something to report. Please, calm down for a moment."

"Speak quickly, or he might get away," Di Nufeng snapped.

Chu Liang continued, "I've made some significant achievements, and the sect leader has rewarded me with the same privileges as the head disciple. I'll be receiving a monthly stipend of five thousand sword coins."

Upon hearing this, Di Nufeng's attention shifted instantly. She said, "As expected of my disciple! But why are you telling me this specifically? Are you planning to give me a share?"

"Share?" Chu Liang laughed. "Share what? I'm planning to give you all the five thousand sword coins every month as a token of gratitude for the effort you've invested in me over the years."

"Huh?" Di Nufeng's eyes widened in disbelief. "People always told me that raising a disciple would help provide for old age, but I never believed it. So it's true?"

"It's what I should do as your disciple," Chu Liang said. He paused before adding, "But there's another matter I need your help with."

"Just say it!" Di Nufeng's face lit up at the mention of money, and she cheerfully said, "From now on, let's treat each other as buddies. Don't hesitate to ask if you need anything."

"Since the Mount Shu Summit and the promotion done by The Seven Stars Gazette, our Golden Vein Berries from Silver Sword Peak have become famous. There's bound to be a surge of curious visitors," Chu Liang explained slowly. "I plan to expand the garden and create a picking area where visitors can pick the berries themselves and then buy them at the original price."

"I've arranged for Xiaoyu'er to manage the fruit garden and the Golden-Furred Hou for security," Chu Liang finally got to the point. "But both of them are not very smart, so I would like you to oversee things and protect our property at Silver Sword Peak if anything happens."

This idea had only occurred to him today.

After reading The Seven Stars Gazette, many Mount Shu disciples came to buy berries, and some wanted to visit the fruit garden to see if it really was as half-destroyed by diabolical cultivators.

With an increasing number of berries being sold, Xiaoyu'er alone couldn't keep up with the picking. As publicity from The Seven Stars Gazette spread, more visitors were expected due to the growing fame.

Chu Liang thought it would be better to just set up a picking area and let people pick the berries themselves.

This way, he could save on labor costs and let visitors enjoy the experience. He could even add some activities, such as paying fifty sword coins to skip the queue, eighty sword coins for a lucky koi blessing, or a hundred sword coins to ride the Hou for half an hour while picking berries.

But he couldn't be there all the time, and security was a concern. Although the theft of berries that had occurred this time did not cause a major loss, it served as a wake-up call.

One must always guard against theft in the martial world.

The only person he could rely on at Silver Sword Peak was his teacher.

Although in terms of intelligence, adding another dumbo to the dumb and dumber combination wouldn't make much sense. However, in terms of combat power, having his teacher as the watchdog would be much more reassuring than relying on the Hou.

Spending five thousand sword coins to hire a seventh-realm Eminent One for security was definitely a profitable deal.

Certainly, there was also the risk of his teacher causing trouble, so it was preferable for Di Nufeng to be present only during critical incidents.

This way, he would not have to worry about the security of the Silver Sword Peak.

Di Nufeng's gaze showed a rare look of comfort, as though she had finally met someone who understood her deeply.

"So you came to me for help because of my wisdom?" she asked.

Chu Liang nodded emphatically as he said, "Of course!"

...

On a lonely island in the vast sea, a girl in fiery red clothes stood alone, gazing into the distance. At that moment, a bird arrived, delivering a jade booklet. She raised her hand to catch it, opened it, and read for a moment. Her eyes suddenly shifted as if in surprise.[1]

"Chu Liang?" she murmured.

This girl was Xu Hongqiu, the Young Lady of the Four Seas Whale Gang.

After the disappearance of Xu Bashan, the Chief of the Whale Gang, the internal situation of the gang changed drastically. The day of the election was approaching. If Xu Bashan still did not make it back, the position of Chief would undoubtedly go to Jiang Shenting from the Eastern Whale Division. Many were already backing Jiang Shenting, while a few held out hope for Xu Bashan's return.

Xu Hongqiu had been tirelessly wandering the West Sea in search of her father. She never lost hope.

Seeing that familiar name in The Seven Stars Gazette, she recalled their brief encounter in Taotie City. That impressive young man, who had left such a lasting impression, had indeed become famous across the world.

No matter what, being able to kill Taowu was truly astonishing. The Heaven-Devouring Python, which had swallowed her father and caused his disappearance, was equally vicious and formidable as Taowu!

...

In Solaris City located in the Eastern Regions, the noise outside had become lively. Xue Lingxue, dressed in an ice-blue dress with her hair still loose, curled up lazily in a chair, looking a bit tired.

She had just finished a tour performance the previous day and traveled through the night to this place to support her junior sister, Shen Qingyan.

Each tour performance for a South Melody Conservatory disciple was as exhausting as a battle that drained their true essence. Afterward, they would be left utterly fatigued in both body and spirit.

Technically, she and Shen Qingyan were competitors, but they were also good friends. They supported each other in their performances, showing their fans they were on good terms.

While waiting, she picked up The Seven Stars Gazette beside her. As she read, she suddenly noticed a name.

"Chu Liang..."

Back then, he had amazed the audience with a brilliant performance just before she started her tour, leaving a lasting impression on her. She was sure he would achieve fame one day. Could that day have finally arrived?

...

...

In the depths of the magma-filled underground, the intense heat charred everything around, turning the surroundings into a blazing inferno.

Suddenly, with a splash, a sturdy figure leapt out of the magma. He moved through the boiling liquid as if he were bathing, and as the magma rolled off him, he shook his hand and put on his clothes.

This man had high brows and bright eyes, with a face that seemed carved from stone. Though he appeared young, there was a maturity about him. His cold expression was intensified by the fierce and intense gleam in his eyes.

He picked up The Seven Stars Gazette beside him, glanced at it briefly, and then casually tossed it into the magma.

"The Dark King Sect has taken a significant hit. It's time for Inferno Devil Valley to rise up."

"Chu Liang..."

Chapter 305: Any Friends Who Visit Shall Will be Welcomed With Fine Wine

Seven days later, the Berry Wonderland at Silver Sword Peak officially opened.

Currently, the Berry Wonderland offered a few activities, mainly focusing on berry picking.

Over the past few days, Chu Liang and his team worked diligently to develop the unused half of Silver Sword Peak. They focused on transplanting the dense Golden Vein Flowers into the sparse forest, spacing them out so that one had to walk a few steps to find a stalk of flowers with berries, making the berry-picking experience more entertaining.

After all, the most abundant resource at Silver Sword Peak was the empty land.

They had temporarily stopped selling berries a few days in advance, so that the people who were interested in the purchase could come pick the berries themselves.

They also widely promoted this inside and outside Mount Shu, mainly by distributing flyers and posting advertisements at various peaks...

The day before Berry Wonderland opened, Chu Liang was worried the event might not be successful, so he specifically asked Yun Chaoxian to bring some people from the Great Astral Sect to help. They didn't need to do anything; they just had to stand there and form a queue, making the event seem more popular than it actually was.

Yun Chaoxian, being a very loyal and faithful friend, brought a group of brawny men. There were a dozen of them, all muscular and robust, with bulging muscles and strong physiques.

When Chu Liang saw this, he gave a thumbs-up.

The brothers at the Great Astral Sect truly exemplified the loyalty and faithfulness of brotherhood!

He also sent a letter to Xue Lingxue, inviting a somewhat famous musician girl from South Melody Conservatory to perform before the opening of Berry Wonderland.

Xue Lingxue responded with much enthusiasm. If she hadn't been on tour, she might have come by herself.

Chu Liang gave another thumbs-up, finding the sisters from South Melody Conservatory reliable as well.

Of course, Chu Liang paid these people for their help, but without connections, it would be hard to hire them even with money.

The day arrived quickly.

The event's popularity exceeded his expectations. Half an hour before the park opened, the queue was already very long. Many interested onlookers saw the line and quickly called their friends to come early and join, making the crowd grow even larger.

Surprisingly, half of the visitors were from other regions, mostly drawn by the allure of the garden that even members of the diabolical sects had risked their lives to steal from. While the Mount Shu disciples were familiar with the Golden Vein Berries, they were very interested in the park, eager to see what new ideas Chu Liang had introduced.

Seeing the growing crowd, Chu Liang quickly called over the men he had asked to line up as fake customers to boost the event's popularity. He instructed them to change into security uniforms. The group of muscular men then stood in two rows at the berry wonderland entrance, looking imposing and formidable.

The Golden-Furred Hou, a sixth-realm vicious beast, stood obediently to the left of the entrance to Berry Wonderland. It had a large embroidered ball hanging from its chest and it looked a bit dazed. On the right stood the Baize youngling, also with a small red embroidered ball, appearing equally confused.

"Welcome to Berry Wonderland. Tickets are ten sword coins per person. Once inside, you pay the regular price for the berries you pick. Today, for the grand opening, everything is half off for the first three days! Please store your enchanted storage tools here and trust the security in this wonderland. See the person sitting over there? Know who she is? Good..." Lin Bei said, pointing to Di Nufeng.

"Everyone exiting Berry Wonderland will receive a Koi-Blessing Jade Talisman specially crafted on Silver Sword Peak," Shang Ziliang announced, holding up the finely crafted talisman. "Only 500 are available for the grand opening. First come, first served!"

Someone in the crowd exclaimed, "Wow, this looks so beautiful! Wearing this will make me look respectable!"

Chu Liang had roped in his small team to help, and by now, they were so accustomed to his somewhat unconventional methods that they hardly batted an eye.

Chu Liang had Shang Ziliang charge entry fees outside the park, Lin Bei act as a guide inside, Liu Xiaoyu'er and the young Baize serve as mascots, Lackey A direct people at the information counter. As for Lackey B, he was just reminded not to eat secretly[1].

Everyone performed their duties enthusiastically.

As the opening time approached, Chu Liang stepped onto a stage they had set up earlier. Seeing the long queue in front of him, he couldn't help but feel emotional.

It seemed that some things would never change, no matter where he was.

Something that initially had little value can become a popular trend and be praised by many through persistent marketing, packaging, and framing.

Because human values were not as strong as imagined and were often quite fragile, they could be easily influenced or changed.

He briefly said a few welcoming words, and then a red ribbon was pulled open on both sides. His teacher, Di Nufeng, stepped onto the stage to cut it.

Di Nufeng ascended the stage, looking around with an air of arrogance.

"This fruit garden is run by my disciple and is the property of Silver Sword Peak. Friends who visit shall be welcomed with fine wine, but anyone with ill intentions looking to cause trouble..."

Whoosh—

The red ribbon was instantly burned to ashes by a flash of purple-gold flame.

Then she added, "Don't let me catch you."

Chu Liang's eyelids started twitching; it was the first time he had seen a ribbon-cutting done so thoroughly.

He quickly escorted Di Nufeng off the stage and, with a reassuring smile, called out to the crowd, "No need to be afraid, everyone. As long as no one breaks the rules, my teacher is quite gentle and amiable."

The crowd looked at Chu Liang, then at Di Nufeng, who was baring her teeth at the Golden-Furred Hou, causing it to tremble in fear. For a moment, they felt doubtful.

Fearing that any further delay would scare people away, Chu Liang quickly waved his hand and announced, "Berry Wonderland is officially open!"

...

Obviously, the higher-ups of the Mount Shu Sect naturally knew about the Berry Wonderland that Chu Liang had set up on Mount Shu.

It was hard not to notice, with Silver Sword Peak's flyers almost plastered on the windows of Boundless Palace; they were visible everywhere.

However, the Mount Shu Sect's regulations had no rules regarding the posting of advertisements, so there was no way to penalize him. The Discipline Master was pondering whether to discuss with the sect leader about drafting a new regulation to maintain the sect's appearance and prohibit random postings.

Regardless, Chu Liang had already exploited this loophole.

It must be said that Chu Liang's presence on Mount Shu had indeed brought many new challenges to the higher-ups of the Mount Shu Sect.

These were minor issues compared to the bigger problem.

Recently, there was a shortage of sword coins!

There was already a very healthy cycle of sword coins in Mount Shu. The sword coins functioned like contribution points; disciples would complete tasks for the sect and exchange the coins for items within the sect.

Even if disciples engaged in some trading among themselves, such as the trading of enchanted tools and pills, the coins would eventually be used to purchase items in the sect, keeping the circulation of sword coins undisrupted.

But Chu Liang basically appeared out of nowhere. Since then, he had been using sword coins purely for commercial activities. During the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony, he used some clues to earn tens of thousands of sword coins.

During the Mount Shu Summit, most of the berries were sold for sword coins, and he also converted other forms of spirit-stone payments into sword coins. Over many days, he amassed another large sum.

In terms of sword coins alone, almost no peak master among the thirty-six peaks of Mount Shu was richer than him!

Peak masters had to distribute their sword coins to their disciples, ensuring the circulation of sword coins within the sect. However, Chu Liang, apart from buying a few techniques earlier, had hardly spent any. He had been hoarding the coins.

For the opening of his Berry Wonderland, Chu Liang aggressively promoted sword coin transactions by offering attractive discounts. Cultivators from other immortal sects who wanted to visit first had to exchange their own currency for sword coins at Mount Shu. Even before the wonderland officially opened, a significant number of sword coins had been exchanged on Mount Shu.

Although the sword coin reserves of an immortal sect wouldn't run out immediately, it was foreseeable that they would eventually be depleted if this continued!

The Weapon Master, responsible for minting sword coins, was troubled and immediately reported the issue to the higher-ups of Mount Shu.

"This is sheer nonsense," the Weapon Master complained. "If this continues, how many more sword coins will I have to mint? The number of coins minted in the past ten years combined doesn't compare to the amount needed this year alone."

The Conservation Master smiled, "This Chu Liang is truly interesting."

The Alchemy Master shrugged and said, "I can't do anything about this. Back when Di Nufeng and I had a disagreement, you all sided with her. Now I dare not provoke her."

Of course, the Alchemy Master was just making a minor complaint. Given his current relationship with Chu Liang, he certainly wouldn't target him like before.

The Discipline Master pondered for a moment and said, "I'm not afraid of Di Nufeng. I'm just wondering... is this a good thing or a bad thing?"

Venerable Wen Yuan listened to their discussion and, after some thought, said, "Let him be. Weapons Master, mint more sword coins. If ten years' worth isn't enough, mint twenty years' worth. Increase the allocations for all peak masters by thirty percent, so they can give more to their disciples... except for Di Nufeng's. Raise prices by thirty percent in the Hall of Alchemy, the Hall of Weapons, the Hall of Conservation, and the Sword Exchange Pavilion. If people from other sects come to exchange their spirit-stone coins for sword coins, let them exchange as many as they want. Then, use those coins to buy resources from other sects."

"This is excellent!" The Conservation Master was the first to agree. "This way, although the large amount of sword coins in Chu Liang's possession won't decrease, the value of sword coins will depreciate. Then, more people from other sects will come to exchange for sword coins, and we can trade the extra minted coins for resources. Essentially, we will be exchanging our spirit-stone coins for their precious treasures of nature!"

For spirit-stone coins to retain their value, they had to be exchanged for resources. No matter how the situation was viewed, using the extra minted spirit-stone coins to trade for external resources would be a profitable exchange.

"Brilliant!" The Weapons Master exclaimed, clapping his hands in realization. The impact caused his hand to throb with pain from the black-iron hand, but he grinned and said, "The trouble started by that kid will actually benefit the Mount Shu Sect greatly! This is truly a blessing in disguise!"

"Did he really not plan this?" the Alchemy Master suddenly asked with a subtle smile on his face.

"Either way, it's a good thing," the Discipline Master said.

"Yes, it's just a minor commotion among the disciples." Venerable Wen Yuan shook his head, not wanting to discuss the matter further. He then turned to the Alchemy Master and asked, "Have you finished interrogating your disciple?"

At the mention of this, the Alchemy Master's smile instantly vanished.

It would be a lie to say there wasn't a bond with the disciple he had spent years training. The realization that this disciple was a spy hit him hard, filling him with a turbulent mix of sorrow and anger he couldn't easily shake.

"He confessed everything," the Alchemy Master replied after a pause. "There is indeed a powerful force behind Lu Chengchou. They were the ones who supported him over the years, gathering the orphans of Mount Shu's enemies to go against our sect. They provided the resources exchanged with the Dark King Sect. However, Lu Xun never had direct contact with the higher-ups and he only heard Lu Chengchou mention the name of this sect..."

"It's the Celestial Charm Sect."

Chapter 306: The Celestial Charm Sect

It was September 13th, and it was storming in Solaris City.

Once night fell, the atmosphere by the city gates grew stifled, and the only sound that could be heard was the noisy pitter-patter of the rain.

A group of people and horses suddenly rushed into the empty main street. Despite their large, swift strides, their steps didn't make a sound.

They were dressed in black clothes and black armor and had long swords hanging at their waists.

As they moved through the street in the dark of the night, they almost looked like ghosts, barely visible to the naked eye.

There were many more hazy figures in the sky, indicating the troop's massive size.

The few lamps that lit up the street died out in succession as the black-clad people passed by. Darkness flooded the area with every step they took.

Still in complete silence, they eventually arrived at a residence. If a person were to look down at the scene from above, they would see that hazy figures had completely surrounded the residence, so much so that nothing would be able to slip out.

The signboard hanging above the entrance of the residence had been inscribed with one word: Xunyang.

There were very few among the common folk living in Solaris City who did not know of this place. It was home to the extraordinary Young Noble Xunyang.

He could carve prosthetic limbs from spirit wood, and he would use his divine abilities to make them indistinguishable from the real thing once they were attached to a person's body. Moreover, he never charged for this service. He only asked that they do him a favor when he needed one. As for what the favor would be, that would depend on what the person who owed him the favor could do.

For example, the head chef of The Fragrant Cassia[1] had lost a finger while chopping vegetables. After Young Noble Xunyang gave the head chef a new finger, he asked the head chef to prepare a fine meal for his friends. When Young Noble Xunyang gave Landlord Liu from the east side of the city a new leg, he'd asked Landlord Liu to do a charitable deed—provide porridge to the poor for three days. Then when Young Noble Xunyang gave a poor farmer outside the city a new arm, he'd just asked for a few cabbages in return.

Over time, the people of Solaris City regarded him as a living Buddha.

Yet, today, these black figures surrounded the place like dark clouds looming over the city. In a flash, they had all raised their sabers, their blades glinting in the light!

Before they could charge in, the residence's entrance doors creaked ajar on their own, swinging wide open to reveal a large courtyard. Past the courtyard was the main hall, where an azure-robed nobleman was reclining languidly in a chair.

"Dear friends outside, where have you all come from?" Young Noble Xunyang asked. "I don't recall offending anyone."

"We're the Black-Clothed Guards from the Night Dragon Hall!"

The person leading the charge held out a token of a black-iron coiling dragon.

Young Noble Xunyang narrowed his eyes as he muttered, "People from the capital of Yu are here...?"

As the prosperous ruling dynasty of the nine provinces, the Yu Dynasty naturally possessed a force of formidable cultivators. At the very least, that force had to be stronger than all the sects. Otherwise, how could the imperial court intimidate the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten?

In terms of cultivators, the Yu Dynasty had, of course, the reigning imperial family, the Xia Family. They were an old aristocratic clan that was also an immortal sect. There were also the sects within the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten that were aligned with the imperial court.

The imperial court's exclusive force of cultivators mainly consisted of three divisions.

The first division was naturally the Imperial Supervisory Bureau. The Imperial Supervisory Bureau oversaw all the City Supervisory Divisions of the nine provinces' major cities and appointed the city supervisors to their respective stations. The bureau also had a group of powerful cultivators on standby in the capital of Yu, ready to be dispatched to handle any seemingly unresolvable issues in the cities.

The Imperial Supervisory Bureau was headed by the esteemed Imperial Commanding Supervisor. It received orders directly from the emperor to protect the people of the state, making it the most important division of cultivators in the dynasty.

The second division was the High Heavens Pavilion, located within the imperial city. It was named the High Heavens Pavilion due to the tagline, "The immortal realm has the High Heavens Hall, and the mortal realm has the High Heavens Pavilion.[2]" The cultivators in the High Heavens Pavilion

were idle but powerful. Those willing to work for the imperial court could sign on with the pavilion and receive the generous salary of a government official.

Unlike the Imperial Supervisory Bureau, the High Heavens Pavilion was not fully subordinate to the imperial court, and the cultivators in this division did not need to constantly be on standby for orders. Rather, they were akin to the imperial family's honored allies.

Only top-tier cultivators at the sixth realm and above could be part of the High Heavens Pavilion. Most of them were idle Eminent Ones, so the pavilion only had a small number of members. They had joined the High Heavens Pavilion mainly to express their goodwill toward the imperial court.

The third division was the Night Dragon Hall. The Night Dragon Hall referred to the place where the emperor did his work at night. There were imperial guards that had to patrol the imperial city on the outside, so over time, the ones that guarded the inside of the city collectively came to be known as the Night Dragon Hall.

The first two divisions of cultivators were more loyal and devoted to the state, rather than the emperor.

Governmental departments like the Imperial Supervisory Bureau existed in every dynasty and worked to defend the human territories. The Imperial Supervisory Bureau was a powerful division, but it was primarily used to protect the state. The emperor couldn't simply order them to do as he wished.

In comparison, the High Heavens Pavilion was more flexible in the work its cultivators could take on. Nevertheless, the emperor still could not rely on them for extremely important tasks.

The Night Dragon Hall was the only division that could truly be considered as the emperor's private army! They obeyed all of the emperor's orders unconditionally!

The imperial city's inner guards consisted of seven units known as the Seven Guards of the Night Dragon, each with its own duties. The Black-Clothed Guards was one of those units, and they were responsible for infiltration, reconnaissance, assassination, and night raids.

Whenever people across the Yu Dynasty saw the black-clothed troops of the Night Dragon Hall, they knew something major had happened.

The Black-Clothed Guard holding the token continued, "We have discovered surviving members of the Celestial Charm Sect here. Everyone in this residence is under arrest. Any resistance will be met with lethal force!"

Young Noble Xunyang gasped in shock.

He furrowed his brows and shouted, "We're innocent!"

Boom!

The rumble of an explosion reverberated throughout Solaris City in the dead of night.

...

"The Celestial Charm Sect?" Chu Liang muttered to himself.

After the Heavenly Star Divine Cult split up, one of the factions that emerged was the Celestial Charm Sect. It could be said that the Celestial Charm Sect was the main cause of the split.

The Celestial Charm Sect's cultivation legacy specialized in manipulating people and causing chaos in the world. The other sects that emerged from the split took root in the martial world, but the members of the Celestial Charm Sect dove straight into the imperial court.

They concealed their identities and infiltrated the imperial court, the imperial city, and even the imperial harem. They worked in secret to wreak havoc, nearly causing a massive upheaval in the Yu Dynasty. Fortunately, they were suppressed in time. Ultimately, the imperial court and the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten joined hands to hunt down the members of the Celestial Charm Sect.

The Celestial Charm Sect was brutally purged from the Yu Dynasty. Most of the sect's members were decapitated; only a few managed to escape. In the years that followed years, any disciples of the Celestial Charm Sect that surfaced were immediately struck down.

The approach that the Yu Dynasty took to suppress the Celestial Charm Sect was far more intense than the approach it had taken toward eliminating other evil forces. In fact, that approach was even harsher than the methods the Yu Dynasty normally used against diabolical sects.

The root cause lay in the Heavenly Star Divine Cult's cultivation method. They practiced the Heavenly Star Divine Arts, aligning themselves with the celestial bodies[3]. The higher their cultivation level got, the more they had to conform to the nature of the celestial bodies.

For example, the Celestial King Sect embodied righteousness and solemnity, the Sea King Sect acted freely and without restraint, and the Celestial Pivot Pavilion was an information-spreading machine... There were subtle differences between the disciples of each sect, but they all embodied the common traits of their sect.

The Dark King Sect was all about cold and ruthless massacres, which was why they ultimately became a diabolical sect. The Seven Killings Star was known for its vicious and cunning nature, so its members were best suited to become assassins.

However, the harm that the Celestial Charm Sect caused was even greater than that of the Dark King Sect and the Seven Killings Star. That was because their cultivation legacy was meant to bring chaos to the world!

For the members of the Celestial Charm Sect to achieve their full potential, they had to throw the world into chaos and cause rivers of blood!

They would be agents of chaos no matter where they went. This was why both the imperial court and the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten were extremely vigilant against them.

In Di Nufeng's words, "If the members of the Celestial Charm Sect infiltrate the imperial court, they'll be like a stick stirring up shit."

Therefore, when the Mount Shu Sect discovered that Lu Chengchou had been supported by the Celestial Charm Sect, they immediately announced this news to the world. On one hand, it was to alert the nine provinces to be wary of the Celestial Charm Sect's resurgence; on the other hand, it was to demonstrate that what Lu Chengchou represented was cunning and evil.

Mount Shu had won the battle against the Dark King Sect, but the things Lu Chengchou had said had been spread around as well. That caused many people outside the Mount Shu Sect to doubt Venerable Wen Yuan's character.

Consequently, Mount Shu released the information about the Celestial Charm Sect to prove that everything Lu Chengchou had said had been to throw the Mount Shu Sect into chaos. That included all the personal attacks on Venerable Wen Yuan. Nothing Lu Chengchou had said could be trusted.

Additionally, the Mount Shu Sect publicly condemned the Penglai Supreme Sect for having assisted Lu Chengchou that day.

The Penglai Supreme Sect immediately explained that Enlightened Bai Lin had merely been trying to keep the situation under control at a time when nothing was certain. Later, when Lu Chengchou colluded with the Dark King Sect and attacked Mount Shu, Enlightened Bai Lin led the Penglai Supreme Sect's troops and killed many diabolical cultivators.

Of course, this level of bickering wouldn't lead to much of a conclusion.

After getting a grasp on the general situation, Chu Liang didn't think much of it, since such matters weren't for someone of his level to deal with.

Now, he faced another problem.

The Mount Shu Sect had issued more sword coins. That meant his riches were depreciating rapidly!

Chapter 307: Can It Really Be Given Away for Free?

In Taotie City, which was located in the vast Northern Regions, spirit birds and beasts, auspicious clouds, and rainbow lights converged upon the ancient city, infusing it with boundless vitality. The desolate mountains surrounding it only enhanced the city's prosperity, making its very existence seem like a miracle.

Two inconspicuous swordlights landed outside the city gate, joining the line and waiting to enter the city.

Both were young men: Chu Liang, with his handsome, gentle demeanor and perpetual smile, stood in front, while behind him was Wen Yulong, notable for his pale complexion and elegant bearing.

"It's truly bustling," remarked Chu Liang sincerely, as he observed the scene of Taotie City.

"Yes, treasures from all corners gather here," Wen Yulong said with a nod. "Mount Shu is too far away; otherwise, it would be fun to visit often."

"When we have our own Taotie City someday, we won't need to visit others," Chu Liang said.

"That would be difficult to achieve. After all, Mount Shu Sect is a proper immortal sect," Wen Yulong responded as he pondered. "Even if we become stronger, our competitor should be the Penglai Supreme Sect instead of Taotie City."

Hearing this, Chu Liang chuckled and said nothing as he turned to enter the city.

The two went directly to a shop with a signboard that read "Precious Pill Pavilion." Wen Yulong had helped to contact this place, which was one of the largest pill shops in Taotie City.

Since Wen Yulong was more familiar with Taotie City, he had come along with Chu Liang.

With the diverse requirements and materials needed when crafting tools, Wen Yulong would often visit this store to procure materials.

The reason they didn't bring anyone else was that everyone else, including the Golden-Furred Hou, was busy working in the bustling fruit garden.

Nowadays, Silver Sword Peak didn't support idlers—every bite of food was earned.

As they walked through the large doors of Precious Pill Pavilion, they entered a wide room that wasn't even the main hall.

In the center stood a pillar wrapped with a dragon, supporting stairs that spiraled up to rooms on different floors, reaching what seemed like over a dozen levels. However, from the outside, the building looked like a simple two-story pavilion, revealing it was much bigger on the inside.

This was a common trick used by many shops in Taotie City. To make management easier, the city's officials didn't allow buildings to be too tall. If there were tall buildings everywhere and cultivators flying high, managing the city would become much more complicated.

As a result, some shops that wanted to appear grand would use spatial techniques to create a larger interior.

It was indeed necessary for the shops to look grand. Often, an item wasn't worth a certain price, but being sold in such an impressive place made people who didn't know better think it was.

When a server approached them, Wen Yulong said to the server, "I have an appointment with Elder Sun[1]."

"Are you the young heroes from Mount Shu? Please, this way." The server immediately bowed and led the way, and the three of them ascended the cloud stairs to a room on the fourth floor.

It was a quiet, open-spaced room with smoke swirling around. Inside, an older man with long hair and a beard was making tea. When he saw them enter, he raised his hand and said, "Please, young heroes, sit down."

"Elder Sun," Wen Yulong and Chu Liang greeted before they sat down.

"Is this the friend Young Hero Wen mentioned who is interested in buying pills?" Elder Sun asked with a smile.

"Yes," Wen Yulong replied, "This is my senior brother from Silver Sword Peak of the Mount Shu Sect. His name is Chu Liang."

"Chu Liang?" Elder Sun's eyes immediately lit up.

A person's name carries weight.

If this was a month ago, the mention of Chu Liang's name might have only elicited a nod, with little attention paid.

But now, after the recent battle on Mount Shu, Chu Liang's name had become well known throughout all nine provinces.

"Are you that same Chu Liang from the Mount Shu Sect who killed Taowu and injured Ksitigarbha all with one strike in the battle against the Dark King Sect?" Elder Sun asked.

This string of accolades made Chu Liang smile modestly. "I'm not worthy of such praise; I'm just an ordinary disciple of Mount Shu," he said.

"Oh my, the Precious Pill Pavilion truly feels honored to gain a visit from Young Hero Chu," Elder Sun said, becoming noticeably more polite. "What kind of pills do you need? Our Precious Pill Pavilion has a complete range. Even if we don't have what you need, we can find it for you."

Chu Liang replied, "I want to buy Spirit-Concentration Pills."

"Ah..." Elder Sun froze for a moment. He still smiled, but he leaned back a bit.

Elder Sun initially thought that Chu Liang, the famous genius, might purchase some valuable, rare pills. However, it turned out he just wanted some fairly common Spirit-Concentration Pills.

Elder Sun couldn't help but feel a bit annoyed with Wen Yulong.

If you needed Spirit-Concentration Pills, why bother contacting me in advance? You could have just bought them from the staff downstairs, Elder Sun complained inwardly.

Seeing Elder Sun's expression, Chu Liang could guess what he was thinking and quickly added, "Although I'm just buying Spirit-Concentration Pills, I will be buying a huge amount."

"Heh, it sounds like you are very diligent in your cultivation," Elder Sun praised.

Elder Sun naturally didn't have much hope. No matter how much of a genius Chu Liang was, he was still only a fourth-realm cultivator. Normally, one or two pills a day would suffice. Even if Chu Liang were to consume Spirit-Concentration Pills constantly during cultivation, how many more could he possibly use?

For an elder of his level, this wasn't worth his time.

"If I am buying a huge amount, can I get a discount?" Chu Liang asked.

"Young Hero Chu," Elder Sun said with a smile, "the pills at the Precious Pill Pavilion have always been of excellent quality. We charge a fair price and never offer discounts. However, if it's just a

few Spirit-Concentration Pills, it's no big deal. How many do you need? We can give them to you for free. Consider this a gift to celebrate our newfound friendship."

Elder Sun had a different plan in mind. There was no point in giving a discount on a few Spirit-Concentration Pills? They only cost a few sword coins each and they wouldn't actually make a real profit out of this transaction.

It would be better to give them away for free and build a good relationship with this newly famous genius. This would ensure substantial purchases in the future.

Upon hearing this, Chu Liang's eyes lit up and he asked, "Can they really be given for free? I need quite a lot."

"How many do you need?" Elder Sun sipped his tea with a smile, not believing that Chu Liang would need that many.

Chu Liang blurted out, "One hundred and fifty thousand."

"Pfft—" Elder Sun spat the tea water he had just drunk.

...

In the Hall of Conservation, Jiang Yuebai dusted off the rows of tall bookshelves, searching for a specific book. After a while, she finally found the one she wanted to read.

It was one of a pile of jade books long covered in dust, recording the outstanding disciples of past Mount Shu Summits, usually listing the champion of the recreational competition and the top four of the main competition.

In the latest volume, Jiang Yuebai's own name was recorded at the forefront. The ink on her name was still wet.

After flipping through for a while, she finally found a volume from five hundred years ago.

Previously, in the small house beneath the sea of clouds, they found a diary recording secrets about the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda. After reading it, Chu Liang felt it wasn't something he should be concerned with and placed it aside.

But Jiang Yuebai couldn't be so carefree. It felt like a restless claw in her heart, driving her to uncover the truth of the events of those years.

Even though the elders had advised her and Chu Liang not to delve too deeply into the matter, as it would be handled by others, she couldn't let go of anything related to the Divine Ruins Monastery.

Does the disappearance of the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda really has something to do with that disciple? Did he truly obtain the method from the Divine Ruins Monastery? If so... where did he find the Divine Ruins Monastery? These were the thoughts that kept bothering her, and so she decided to take action.

The diary didn't mention the name of the writer, but it wouldn't be too hard to identify him as it was mentioned in the diary that he had won second place in the Mount Shu Summit of his generation.

All the past occurrences of the Mount Shu Summit were documented in the Mount Shu Sect's archives. The Mount Shu Summit from five hundred years ago was particularly noteworthy, as it featured Venerable Wuqi's famous battle.

She quickly turned to that page and finally found the name that had piqued her curiosity for a long time. The name was written right after Lu Wuqi.

"Yan Renjie."

Chapter 308: Training Mission

"One hundred and fifty thousand Spirit-Concentration Pills..." Wen Yulong couldn't help but exclaim as he stared at the gourds filling the entire warehouse.

Chu Liang stayed calm, waving his hand to store the Spirit-Concentration Pills into his storage artifact one by one. The warehouse would fill up about two of his storage items, and he had brought four more just in case.

This scene seemed like an exaggeration.

Finally, Wen Yulong couldn't help but ask, "Senior Brother Chu, what are you going to do with so many Spirit-Concentration Pills?"

What's the point of purchasing this many Spirit-Concentration Pills?

Chu Liang smiled slightly and did not answer.

The explanation would have to start two days ago, when the higher-ups of the Mount Shu Sect decided to mint more sword coins. When Venerable Wen Yuan made the announcement, most disciples were confused and couldn't understand the reasoning behind the decision.

However, when the news was released, Chu Liang sensed that something was wrong.

It was decided that the thirty-five peaks of the Mount Shu Sect would issue thirty percent more sword coins, and the resources for disciples would also increase by thirty percent. Additionally, the Sword Exchange Hall would raise their pay, and all the halls on Mount Shu would increase their prices by thirty percent. With the price increase, it almost seemed as though the influx of sword coins had become meaningless.

But this meant that the sword coins that Chu Liang was hoarding immediately depreciated.

He immediately realized that the higher-ups of the Mount Shu Sect were targeting him. It happened sooner than he anticipated, but he had expected them to use such methods.

It seemed that although the higher-ups of the Mount Shu Sect had never studied economics, they had enough wisdom to quickly come up with countermeasures once they recognized the problem.

However, Chu Liang also had a well-thought-out contingency plan.

If Chu Liang had been heartless, he could have taken advantage of his market foresight and made large-scale purchases of pills, spirit plants, and other valuable commodities within the Mount Shu Sect.

With these items having limited stock, the sudden large-scale purchase would result in the market becoming depleted. With the Mount Shu Sect having issued more sword coins, everyone would have money, which would drive prices extremely high.

While prices were extremely high, he could release the items in batches at those high prices and accumulate more sword coins. This would lead to the depreciation of the money held by the Mount Shu disciples. With his ample capital, he would maintain control of the market.

Of course, by doing so, he could anger the higher-ups and bring about more direct sanctions.

Even if there were no sanctions, Chu Liang felt reluctant to cause trouble on Mount Shu. After all, no matter how much he could scheme, he was doing it to his own sect, which meant that his fellow disciples would be the ones to suffer in the end.

Mount Shu was just a small pond, and sword coins were merely like sect contribution points, circulating only among the few thousand people in the Mount Shu Sect, with a fixed amount at any given time.

After playing this game for merely half a year, Chu Liang was about to become the richest person on Mount Shu...

Once a few more batches of earnings from the Berry Park were settled, he would undoubtedly be the richest. Therefore, there was no point in continuing this struggle with the higher-ups.

But Taotie City was different.

Taotie City was the hub of commercial activities, and its currency was recognized by the entire world of immortal cultivators.

The amount of spirit-stone coins in circulation was sufficient for over a hundred thousand cultivators. In fact, the current trend showed that the currency was even starting to be used among mortals and ordinary people.

In some locations, commoners were even using Taotie City's beast coins for transactions involving more expensive items.

If Mount Shu was a pond, then Taotie City would undoubtedly be an ocean!

Chu Liang had accumulated significant capital in the small pond, but in the vast ocean of Taotie City, this amount of capital only barely granted him the qualification to step into the game.

First, he needed to exchange his sword coins for hard currency.

The people in Taotie City were willing to exchange various sects' spirit-stone currencies because they could use them to trade for resources at those sects. If they discovered that the same amount of sword coins could be exchanged for fewer resources at Mount Shu, they would definitely lower the exchange rate.

Fortunately, the market had yet to react to the changes, allowing Chu Liang to expend a large amount of sword coins before the market realized that their value had depreciated.

However, he needed to carefully consider the type of hard currency he should choose for the trade.

The obvious answer was pills. Everyone needed them, making pills the easiest item to sell.

He could easily spend tens of thousands of sword coins on an artifact or a spirit beast, but it would be difficult to sell them.

For hard currency, pills such as Qi-Concentration Pills and Spirit-Concentration Pills were the best options. However, the quantity of Qi-Concentration Pills was too large for him to manage, so Chu Liang set his sights on Spirit-Concentration Pills.

Spirit-Concentration Pills were usually bought in bulk, which meant that even slightly famous alchemists would never bother to refine these pills.

Most of the Spirit-Concentration Pills in the Taotie City were really provided by the immortal sects in the Divine Nine.

Only immortal sects could support a hall for large-scale pill refinement, like the Hall of Alchemy, which had enough disciples to mass-produce lower-level pills like Spirit-Concentration Pills and sell them to Taotie City's pill shops for profit.

Chu Liang had firsthand information that, due to the recent battle at Mount Shu, the Hall of Alchemy was destroyed by Taowu and would take at least twenty days to restore its previous production capacity.

This meant that the supply of Spirit-Concentration Pills in Taotie City would drop by ten percent for a while.

Under normal circumstances, this wouldn't have much impact because there would still be enough supply in the market. But what if someone bought up a large portion of that supply?

The stock of Spirit-Concentration Pills at Precious Pill Pavilion alone wasn't enough to meet Chu Liang's needs. They helped him contact several other pill shops, and Chu Liang ended up buying over half of Taotie City's supply in one go.

Due to the bulk purchase, he managed to get a discount. The normal price for Spirit-Concentration Pills was two for one sword coin, but he got five pills for two sword coins.

He set aside a few thousand sword coins as readily available assets and invested the remaining sixty thousand sword coins, purchasing a total of one hundred and fifty thousand pills.

"Junior Brother Wen, please stay in Taotie City for a few more days. I'll take care of all your expenses," Chu Liang instructed before leaving. "Keep a close watch on the prices of Spirit-Concentration Pills in the city. If the prices start to increase, inform me immediately."

"Alright," Wen Yulong agreed cheerfully, despite feeling a bit puzzled.

...

Chu Liang returned to Mount Shu with a sense of great satisfaction, having achieved a bountiful harvest.

He wasn't worried about the purchase of the Spirit-Concentration Pills being a failed investment. He could always use them himself. The Golden Core Puppet needed three pills daily for training and more during fights. He could save them and use them gradually.

Shortly after returning to Silver Sword Peak and contemplating a visit to the fruit garden, he received an urgent summons from Heaven-Reaching Peak, prompting him to come over immediately.

Chu Liang rushed over and found Senior Sister Jiang, Xu Ziyang, and Ling Ao already waiting upon his arrival.

Jiang Yuebai sat gracefully in the front row, her appearance still radiant, but Chu Liang couldn't help but notice a slight dullness in her eyes.

She didn't seem very happy.

Xu Ziyang was his usual self, unaffected in demeanor. He stood tall, chest out, head held high, radiating confidence. Since his battle with Chu Liang, he appeared even more determined.

Ling Ao, on the other hand, had undergone quite a change—he had trimmed his bangs.

The grand peak master, Wang Xuanling, sat on top. Upon Chu Liang's arrival, he gave a slight nod and motioned for him to take a seat.

"After every Mount Shu Summit, the top four disciples will typically embark on a mission together. It serves as both an opportunity for training and a way to foster teamwork," Wang Xuanling explained once everyone had gathered. "This year, due to recent events, the mission was postponed. Now that the Mount Shu Sect has recovered, it's time to resume this tradition."

The disciples understood this tradition well.

The mission's purpose was to foster teamwork rather than solely for training. With the Immortal Sect Conference scheduled to take place next year in the Capital of Yu, the four of them would probably represent Mount Shu, provided nothing unexpected occurred.

They needed to cultivate strong teamwork in order to effectively represent their sect in battle.

"There's a suitable mission available here, so I suggested it to the sect leader as your training mission," Wang Xuanling continued. "Go back and get ready. You will leave at noon tomorrow; don't be late."

"Yes!" the four responded in unison.

After leaving the pavilion, Chu Liang caught Jiang Yuebai's eye, and they exchanged a knowing glance before heading towards Treasured Pagoda Peak together.

It wasn't clear if the top four needed to work on their teamwork, but Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai definitely had a strong bond.

At their usual spot, Jiang Yuebai sat down gracefully.

"Senior Sister Jiang, are you feeling unhappy about something?" Chu Liang asked.

Jiang Yuebai lowered her head and whispered, "Chu Liang... I discovered that the person who may have broken the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda was actually my teacher's great-grandfather."

Chapter 309: The Martial World Is Very Unpredictable [End of Book 3]

It turned out that after Jiang Yuebai found the name "Yan Renjie," she had searched through the registry of the Mount Shu Sect's disciples and found no other record of him aside from the fact that he'd had a son and a daughter.

The lineage of his family continued on from there, eventually leading to a person named Yan Zi. That person was the peak master of Azure Falling Peak, Daoist Yan.

Jiang Yuebai was rather worried. The fact that her investigation into this matter led her to her teacher meant that her teacher's great-grandfather might have damaged one of the Mount Shu Sect's legendary artifacts. Moreover, it also suggested that there was a high possibility her teacher might be a descendant of a half-demon person!

Even after passing through hundreds and thousands of generations of descendants, demon blood was still demon blood. No matter how little of it had actually been passed down, there was always the possibility that the descendants might transform into demons.

This discovery didn't make Jiang Yuebai think any less of her teacher. However, she feared what would happen if this matter were revealed because of her. She didn't want her teacher to be criticized.

Nevertheless, it didn't matter even if Jiang Yuebai kept her lips sealed. There was no doubt that the higher-ups of the Mount Shu Sect would have made headway in their investigation even faster than she had. Her desire to keep what she had discovered a secret was pointless.

Now, Jiang Yuebai was weighed down by her guilt.

"I see..." Chu Liang muttered.

As he listened to Jiang Yuebai express her worries, he finally understood why Daoist Yan had been able to defeat two monstrous talents of her generation, one with the Transcendent Spirit constitution and the other with the Divine Fire Spirit. If they had a peer with the Xuan Yuan Eyes, the Mount Shu Sect would have had all three mystical abilities of the three great powerful families in the same generation of disciples.

If Daoist Yan were truly half demon, that would explain how she'd managed to defeat Jiang Tiankuo and Di Nufeng. All three of them were freaks of nature.

It also explained why Daoist Yan kept a low profile despite being so talented. If this matter were discovered, she would inevitably be subjected to the same strange looks that her great-grandfather had gotten.

After pondering for a moment, Chu Liang asked, "Have you talked to Senior Aunt Yan about this?"

"Huh?" Jiang Yuebai raised her head. "How am I supposed to tell her—"

"You feel guilty because you think she'll get criticized because of this, but how does she feel about it?" Chu Liang said slowly. "Ultimately, the effect this matter will have on Senior Aunt Yan depends on how she feels about it. So, you might as well just be honest and upfront with her."

"You're right." Jiang Yuebai suddenly stood up. "I'll go talk to her now."

She hurriedly walked toward the cave's entrance.

Just as she got there, she turned back. "Thank you, Chu Liang."

Chu Liang smiled softly.

...

Chu Liang was about to head to the fruit garden when he suddenly felt something vibrate in the pocket by his chest.

He took the item out and found that it was the jade pendant the chamber master of the Ghost-Face Chamber had given him. This jade pendant couldn't be used for communication; it only contained a preset meeting point. Once the members of the Ghost-Face Chamber received their summon through the jade pendant, the jade pendant would lead the members to gather at the meeting point.

"This guy isn't dead yet?" Chu Liang was surprised. "He's pretty lucky."

After the recent battle between the Mount Shu Sect and the Dark King Sect, Chu Liang deeply realized just how important a role intelligence played in a war. Now that he had another opportunity to gain more information about the Mount Shu Sect's enemy, he set off gladly.

At night, Chu Liang flew straight to the familiar meeting point and saw Ghost Face waiting there with a few of his subordinates. This made for quite a pitiful scene compared to when that large group of diabolical cultivators had assembled there previously.

"Ah..." Ghost Face uttered when he saw Chu Liang. "You're still alive."

Ghost Face had a strong impression of Chu Liang because of his enthusiasm during the meeting they had before the Dark King Sect attacked Mount Shu.

"It's all thanks to your great fortune, Chamber Master," Chu Liang said with his hands cupped together respectfully. "I killed two disciples of the Mount Shu Sect that day, but I was injured and fell into a sea of clouds. After waking up, I struggled to climb out."

Ghost Face looked surprised.

"What a coincidence..." Monk Pushan spoke at this moment. "I just reported to the chamber master that I killed three disciples of the Mount Shu Sect that day, fell into a sea of clouds, and struggled to climb out..."

"It is indeed a coincidence," Luo Yao chimed in. "Before the two of you reported to the chamber master, I reported something similar."

Chu Liang felt a bit awkward.

This story... ended up getting repeated. It seemed that it had been raining black-clad diabolical cultivators over the sea of clouds that day.

Fortunately, Ghost Face did not dwell on this.

Besides the trio, there was only one other member of the Ghost-Face Chamber. That meant Ghost Face only had four subordinates left.

Ghost Face said, "We've waited for a long time. It's unlikely anyone else will be coming. There's probably only the four of you left in our chamber."

"Haaa..." the trio sighed in unison.

The remaining member of the Ghost-Face Chamber thought that was strange.

He wondered, Why do those three seem to move so synchronously? Am I the odd one out?

Chu Liang, Luo Yao, and Pushan had joined the Ghost-Face Chamber together, but they didn't pay much attention to each other. It was the same for the last member of the Ghost-Face Chamber; he hadn't been concerned about their backgrounds.

Ghost Face continued excitedly, "But this might not be bad news. Our sect suffered heavy casualties in that great battle! It's a time when we're short on members, which means it's time for us to get promoted!"

"Our honorable hall master is recruiting guards for the White-Bone Hall, and I've been fortunate enough to be selected. From now on, I'll be the hall master's bodyguard!"

"Congratulations on your promotion, Chamber Master!" the trio said in unison.

"Haha!" Ghost Face laughed. "After I become the hall master's personal guard, the chamber master position of the Ghost-Face Chamber will be vacant. But I don't wish for the Ghost-Face Chamber to disband."

In reality, there was no such thing as interpersonal bonds in diabolical sects. There was already grass growing over the grave of the most loyal member of the White-Bone Hall, General Hei Yu[1].

Despite becoming a guard of the White-Bone Hall, Ghost Face didn't want to give up having his own troops. That's why he was talking about not wanting to disband the chamber. The other guards of the White-Bone Hall had done the same. In addition to being the hall master's bodyguards, they all had a chamber's worth of troops under their control. That way, they had the manpower to support them when they vied for positions of power within the White-Bone Hall.

Ghost Face announced, "So, I plan to select one of you to take over as the new chamber master so that the Ghost-Face Chamber can continue to exist. With the chamber master's token, you can recruit more members and expand the Ghost-Face Chamber in the future!"

He wants to select a new chamber master...? Chu Liang blinked. I'm surprised there's such a great opportunity.

Ghost Face grinned. "If you want to become the new chamber master, come up here and talk about your ambitions for the chamber. Then the four of you will vote to select the new chamber master. I think it's best for you to choose among yourselves."

Chu Liang, Luo Yao, and Pushan exchanged glances. Despite feeling quite surprised, they all nodded in agreement.

Vote to select the new chamber master... Mm, that was fair.

"Me!" The lone real member of the Ghost-Face Chamber sprang up. "Chamber Master, I want to compete for the position!"

Consequently, they went through a fair and democratic process of appealing for votes and then having the members cast the votes. Chu Liang was voted the new chamber master of the Ghost-Face Chamber, winning by a margin of two votes.

The lone member of the Ghost-Face Chamber stood there with his head hung low, wondering where he'd been lacking in his speech.

Ghost Face gave the chamber master's token to Chu Liang.

Chu Liang smiled, feeling a little bewildered.

This is truly an unexpected turn of events.

How did I, a proper disciple of the Mount Shu Sect, end up as a chamber master of the White-Bone Hall?

The martial world is truly full of uncertainties.

...

According to the legends of the humans living in the nine provinces, the Far West was a wild, desolate, and terrifying land of evil. Fire fell from the sky, and ice formed on the ground. Earthquakes and tsunamis ravaged the land day and night. Not even a blade of grass could grow in that place. That was where most of the demons living in the nine provinces had fled to after the demon god had been suppressed.

Yet, the Far West that Young Noble Xunyang saw was nothing like what the legends described.

After crossing a high mountain ridge, he saw a city!

Well, calling it a city might be a bit of an exaggeration. It was more of a very large fortified village. There were no tall buildings or bustling streets and markets. Instead, it stretched continuously over a vast plain, seemingly without an end in sight.

It looked just like a human village. The demons had dwellings, clothing, a written language... and even agriculture. These demons cared about producing grains and vegetables.

Young Noble Xunyang looked around and saw huge, bulky demons wearing raggedy clothes and carrying hoes. Some were fully humanoid, while others were partially humanoid. Aside from the few demons who needed to carry heavy objects, all the demons tried to live in forms that were as close as possible to that of a human.

The demon children, however, were still in their natural form as demonic beasts. Despite looking like little white foxes and black bears, they were chattering away as they learned the human language, making for quite a bizarre scene.

It was hard to believe that this was the legendary Land of Demons!

"Shocking, isn't it? It was the same for me when I first came here," said the man standing in front of Young Noble Xunyang with a gentle smile.

The man was dressed in a tall hat and a scholar's robes. He had soft facial features, which made him look a little feminine.

Young Noble Xunyang nodded. "It is indeed astonishing."

"Not every demon king runs things like this. Among the Seven Great Demon Kings of the Land of Demons, Demon King Qingqiu[2] is the only one who is friendly toward humans and is committed to developing a civilized society in the Far West," the man in the tall hat explained. "She has been in power for over two centuries. However, that is a short period for demons, so the influence she holds is still quite limited. If she's given a few more centuries, she might actually be able to have enough influence to help the Far West develop into a state like the Yu Dynasty."

Young Noble Xunyang remarked, "That's quite a terrifying possibility."

The strength of the average demon was far greater than that of the average human. Furthermore, in terms of numbers, the demon race as a whole—with all the various clans included—was on par with the human race. However, the difference in their stages of civilization was the main reason the humans had always suppressed the demons.

In an era when neither race had a ninth-realm Hallowed One, the demons had never been a match for humans. If the demons were to develop a more civilized society and shift their focus from the individual to the collective, then they might truly become incredibly powerful in the future.

"That's good for us though. In the Yu Dynasty, we're criminals that the humans cannot leave alive. But here, we're Demon King Qingqiu's honored guests," replied the man in the tall hat as he walked. "She welcomes anyone from the Yu Dynasty. It doesn't matter if they're criminals or convicts. As long as they can bring knowledge of human culture and change the way of life here, she will accept them."

Young Noble Xunyang nodded with a smile. "That's great."

Despite his words, he still looked rather pale.

He was thinking about how the Black-Clothed Guards had launched an attack on his residence and almost captured him the other night. He'd managed to escape, but his identity had been exposed, and the imperial court and the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten were putting in full effort to hunt him down. He would have a hard time surviving during this time.

After making some arrangements, he had fled to the Far West, planning to lay low for a while. He had thought the Far West would be full of bloodthirsty demons, but he ended up discovering that it was more like a utopia.

As the two men climbed over a hill, the man in the tall hat pointed at a slender and alluring figure in a green dress up ahead.

"Look, that's Demon King Qingqiu," he said. Then he lowered his voice. "She prefers to meet people alone, so I won't accompany you any further. Remember to be polite. Although Demon King Qingqiu likes to appear as a young lady, she is still a demon king."

Young Noble Xunyang nodded. "I understand."

"Also, the demon king likes to be addressed by her human name," the man in the tall crown added a final reminder. "Her human name is... Caiyi[3]."

Chapter 310: Unnecessary [Start of Book 4]

Shaonan Town.

The river flowed gently, and the wind carried the scent of osmanthus.

In the distance, a small boat approached the shore. A young man in a long robe stood at the bow, looking refined as he played a gentle melody on his flute.

The flute's melody was clear and elegant, tugging at the heartstrings.

Under the osmanthus tree by the river, a shy girl in a peach-pink dress noticed the young man staring at her.

Immediately, she lowered her gaze shyly. Then, slowly, she looked up again, appearing worried that the young man might not approach her.

Beneath a night sky filled with sparkling stars, the osmanthus flowers overhead swayed in the breeze.

The young man's boat soon reached the shore, and with a gentle step, he landed on the bank.

As he approached, his features became clearer, making him appear even more handsome.

The girl's eyes sparkled like stars. As she watched the young man approach, her gaze was filled with both anticipation and nervousness.

She heard the young man's footsteps approaching, and they did not disappoint her. With a few quick strides, he stood before her and gently asked, "Miss, did you come here alone?"

"I got separated from my friends near the bridge," the girl murmured softly.

"Would you like to accompany me for a while?" the young man asked politely.

"Mhmm..." the girl lowered her head and answered softly.

Seeing this, the young man smiled and reached up to pick a small twig of osmanthus flowers from the tree above. The tree was especially lush and fragrant, with flowers as white as moonlight.

The girl lowered her head even further, her neck flushing red, making her look like a shy quail.

Just as the young man was about to place the twig of osmanthus flower in the girl's hair, his gaze shifted past her shoulder to a more graceful figure standing under the nearby woods.

That figure wore a jade-white long dress, cinched at the waist, accentuating her slender figure and full chest. Her skin appeared so clear and fair that it seemed almost transparent.

At that moment, her black hair and dress fluttered in the breeze.

She looked so beautiful that she seemed almost unreal.

In comparison to the white-clad beauty, the gentle and cute girl in front of him suddenly seemed ordinary.

As the young man caught sight of the girl in white, he fell into a momentary daze, leaving the girl with her head lowered wondering why he hadn't yet placed the flower in her hair.

Just then, the white-clad beauty suddenly waved at the young man, instantly captivating his soul.

"Miss, I just remembered something I need to take care of at home. I can't stay with you right now. Please forgive me, and I promise I'll accompany you next time!"

The young man suddenly apologized, then lifted his trousers and hurriedly ran towards the beauty under the moonlight, taking long strides to cover the distance quickly.

"Ah?" The girl was stunned by his sudden change. She turned to see the young man impatiently running with the flower twig towards a distant beauty dressed in white.

"..." The girl's delicate features twisted in frustration, and her small chest heaved with anger. After a moment, she finally muttered, "What a jerk!"

Even though the boy had chosen someone else and she felt abandoned, she had to admit that the beauty was indeed alluring and extremely attractive. Even she herself couldn't help but steal a few more glances.

She saw the young man holding the flower twig, eagerly approaching the white-clad beauty and saying something to her. The beauty nodded lightly in response.

Then the beauty turned her head, with her back facing the girl so that the young man could place the osmanthus twig behind her ear.

As the beauty turned her head, her eyes suddenly met the girl's. Despite the distance, her eyes were incredibly bright, allowing the girl to clearly see her gaze. The eyes of the white-clad beauty held no pride, but were filled with a comforting warmth.

Her eyes seemed to be saying, "Look... this is the man you liked."

Wait! The girl's eyebrows suddenly furrowed.

As the white-clad beauty turned her head in the other direction, the girl should have been looking at the back of her head.

How am I looking at her eyes?

A chill ran down the girl's spine. Could this white-clad beauty really have two faces?!

"Ah..." The girl gasped in terror. She wanted to scream, but before she could, something out of the ordinary occurred.

As the young man placed the flower twig behind the white-clad beauty's ear, he heard her ask softly, "Am I beautiful?"

"The flower is beautiful, but you are even more so. Together, you are the epitome of beauty," the young man replied without hesitation.

"You didn't even look before saying that. You're just speaking with a silver tongue, so you must be lying," the white-clad beauty said softly.

"Then lift your face and let me see clearly," the young man said with a smile.

Without hesitation, the white-clad beauty lifted her face.

She still had beautiful features and a lovely face shape, but her skin had taken on a porcelain-like texture, marred by black cracks, resembling broken porcelain.

"Am I beautiful?" she asked, her cracked lips parting to reveal not a tongue but a horrifying, blood-filled void.

"Ahhhhhh..." The young man's eyes widened in shock as he instinctively felt the urge to scream and flee.

But the white-clad beauty seized him by the neck, pulling him back, and whispered in his ear, "Tell me, am I beautiful?"

...

"The scenery in Shaonan Town is truly breathtaking," Chu Liang said with a smile. "I didn't expect the town to be so bustling."

"Shaonan may be a small town, but it's close to Osmanthus River, which connects to major transportation routes. Naturally, it's lively and prosperous," Jiang Yuebai replied with a gentle smile.

As they strolled through the bustling streets, their presence brought a brief hush to every corner they passed. People paused, unable to resist stopping and staring.

The well-dressed young man was handsome and graceful, with a smile that felt as refreshing as a spring breeze, giving off a friendly and approachable vibe.

The girl was even more stunning, as if she was a goddess.

Jiang Yuebai wore a crisp white sleeved dress, her tall figure perfectly complementing Chu Liang's beside her. As they walked down the lively street, she looked like a deity who had descended to the mortal world.

The two walked side by side, like a perfect match made in heaven, a sight not commonly seen on the streets.

"Hey?" Chu Liang glanced at the sugar painting[1] stall and asked, "Senior Sister Jiang, would you like one? It's my treat."

"I'm not a child," Jiang Yuebai said, looking away briefly before turning back. "But if you want one, I'll get one too."

"Sure," Chu Liang said with a smile.

He had noticed her glancing at the stall several times, which was why he had asked if she wanted to try it.

This girl... Chu Liang thought.

The two approached the stall, where an elderly man skillfully crafted intricate sugar paintings. His grandson was right beside him. The stall showcased an array of finished pieces—dragons, phoenixes, qilins, and spirit plants—each one remarkably lifelike.

As Jiang Yuebai approached, the young boy stared at her in a daze, clearly having never seen such a beautiful young lady before.

"Old man, we'll take two sugar paintings."

"What painting would you two like?" the old man asked warmly, gesturing to a menu of designs. "Anything on this list is available."

Chu Liang glanced at the menu and suddenly asked, "Can I make it myself?"

Hearing this, the old man froze momentarily. Then, with a smile, he said, "Young noble, I can't let you do that. We've practiced this craft for many years. If you do it yourself, it would ruin the painting. The one rule that has passed down through the generations is to not waste sugar..."

"I'll pay extra."

Chu Liang didn't hesitate and slapped down a tael of silver, instantly showcasing the wealth of the richest man in Mount Shu.

Of course, a tael of silver meant nothing to cultivators.

As the silver landed on the table, the spoon was promptly handed to him.

The old man was straightforward as well.

Chu Liang took the spoon and scooped up the syrup. As he gently twirled his wrist, he spread the perfect amount of syrup smoothly in one fluid motion.

In no time, the syrup cooled and a lifelike sugar painting was completed.

He held up the sugar painting, revealing an image of a beautiful woman with flowing sleeves that looked incredibly lifelike. At first glance, it was clear that this sugar painting depicted Jiang Yuebai.

"Oh my, young master, this skill is something I could never catch up to in my lifetime. It's magical!" the old man exclaimed.

He wasn't exaggerating. The divine control and physical dexterity of a fourth-realm cultivator were incomparable to years of practice by an ordinary person. What would take years for him to master, Chu Liang could grasp in just a few glances.

"Heh, not bad," Jiang Yuebai said with a smile. As soon as she took the sugar painting, she turned and walked away.

Chu Liang thanked the old man and followed her.

The young boy was left in a daze. The old man looked down and said, "See that? If you learn how to make sugar paintings well, you too can find such a beautiful wife."

"Huh?" The young boy's mouth dropped open in shock.

Just then, two more distinguished-looking young men walked past the stall.

One had a straight posture, sharp eyebrows, and bright eyes. Dressed in a white robe, he looked both handsome and otherworldly.

The other wore black, with deep-set eyes, giving off a colder demeanor. For some unknown reason, he often flicked at the air in front of his left eye as he walked.

These two were, of course, Xu Ziyang and Ling Ao, the remaining two of Mount Shu's top four disciples.

Watching the two figures ahead, Xu Ziyang asked in a deep voice, "Why do you always make me lag behind by a few steps with you?"

"Because if I lag behind by myself, it looks like I don't fit in," Ling Ao answered coldly.

Xu Ziyang was puzzled. "Then why do you have to intentionally lag behind at all?"

"Don't you feel it?" Ling Ao said, looking at Xu Ziyang. "Whenever you walk beside them, you get this strange feeling about yourself."

"What feeling?" Xu Ziyang asked.

Ling Ao coldly spat out a few words, "Like you are unnecessary."