

M. Slaying 381

Chapter 381: Heaven-Devouring

A large bird covered in flame-colored feathers descended toward the Volcanic Island, where the Inferno Dragons of the South Sea resided.

This bird had a head that looked like a dragon's; it was featherless and had two protruding horns on its forehead. It was unmistakably an Inferno Dragon-Bird!

The Inferno Dragon-Bird was a descendant of dragons—a draconic demonic beast.

With wings spanning over ten zhang, this large bald bird flew extremely fast. It swooped down from the mountain peak and suddenly appeared above Chu Liang's and Lin Bei's heads, looming over them!

The Inferno Dragon-Bird seemed to consider the Flowing Inferno Fruit as its own.

No wonder we didn't see a treasure-guarding demonic beast on the island. It turns out it was in the sky this whole time! Chu Liang realized.

He immediately called out to Lin Bei, warning him to be careful.

However, Lin Bei was in the midst of putting away the ice-jade box containing the Flowing Inferno Fruit when the Inferno Dragon-Bird attacked. It was too late for him to dodge.

According to the customs of the martial world, when one person was picking a spirit plant, their companion should be assisting by protecting them.

In this moment of urgency, Chu Liang didn't bother with using his flying sword. Instead, he lunged forward with his bare hands. He grabbed the Inferno Dragon-Bird's claws, which were like hooks the size of King Kong, and pulled hard.

Chu Liang activated the second stage of the Secret Dragon Blood Technique, running it at full power. White dragon breath poured out from all over his body, and explosive cracks rang out from his bones as he moved. Nevertheless, he actually managed to hold the dragon-bird down!

"HAAA!!!" Chu Liang roared with the voice of a dragon!

In a panic, Lin Bei had swiftly put away the ice-jade box and was about to flee, but hearing Chu Liang's roar made Lin Bei look behind him. He was stunned by what he saw.

While gripping onto the Inferno Dragon-Bird's claws, Chu Liang activated the Divine Dragons' Great Blood-Burning Technique, and blood-colored qi flames ignited all over him. He then swung his arms with great force!

Whoosh.

The swing was so powerful that the wind whistled.

With one hand gripping one of the giant bird's claws, Chu Liang swung the bird around twice before hurling it away!

Whoosh.

The giant bird was thrown straight into the volcano. It disappeared into the lava without a trace, meeting a swift end.

Lin Bei's mouth gaped open in shock, and he looked at Chu Liang with great disbelief in his eyes.

Such immense strength...

That's terrifying.

Are you even human?

You seem more like a dragon than the draconic descendants.

Lin Bei had always known that Chu Liang was amazing, but it was still within a range that he could make sense of. So far, Chu Liang had progressed faster in his cultivation, mastered his divine abilities quicker, and had more enchanted tools...

However, how could an ordinary human cultivator suddenly have the power to contend with draconic descendants? This was beyond Lin Bei's comprehension.

Even the cultivators from the Great Astral Sect who focused solely on martial artists might not have such immense power at Chu Liang's age.

What is this?

Lin Bei used to think Chu Liang had just surpassed him in the cultivating race, speeding through it at lightning speed. However, Lin Bei had no idea that Chu Liang had been silently running in another race and that he'd already advanced that far.

Chu Liang knew that the dragon-bird was likely at a level somewhere between the fifth and sixth realms. Demonic beasts were not as powerful as cultivators of the same level, so Chu Liang had known that he could probably handle the dragon-bird if he used all his skills. Still, it shouldn't have been that easy.

Yet, the moment Chu Liang's dragon breath emerged, the giant bird had recoiled. It seemed to fear the True Dragon's breath coming from him.

These draconic descendants gained great power from being part of the dragon bloodline, but they would also be suppressed by it their entire lives. That could be treated as the price they paid for their power.

Seeing Lin Bei staring at him blankly, Chu Liang maintained a calm and casual demeanor.

He shrugged slightly and said, "Everything's fine now."

Nevertheless, just as Chu Liang finished speaking, Lin Bei's mouth ended up opening even wider, and his pupils became extremely dilated. He was filled with even greater shock and terror.

Chu Liang thought, Even if I'm powerful, you don't need to be this scared, right?

He was about to tell Lin Bei they should head back when he suddenly felt a blast of heat and a wave of cold on his back.

That was when Chu Liang realized Lin Bei's shock hadn't been because of him.

The heat was from scorching waves, and the cold was from the chill running down his spine...

Puffs of scorching dragon breath were blowing toward Chu Liang from behind. If Chu Liang's dragon breath was a pot of water, then the dragon breath being blown at him now was a tidal wave!

Boom!

There was a surge of Divine Dragon Fire, and raging flames filled the sky!

Chu Liang muttered, "All I did was throw a bird in there. No need for you to kick up such a big fuss, right?"

...

In the distance, two people were hovering over the sea.

One was a tall man with a rugged face. He wore a tattered hemp robe and had a large gourd hanging from his waist. His half-squinted eyes glinted with a cold gaze.

If Chu Liang were to see him, he would recognize that this was Huo Tianya—the man he'd met outside the Phoenix Sheep Hidden Realm.

The other person was a beautiful youth with a silver scale on his forehead. His skin was so smooth that it looked like he'd been sculpted from fine jade; his appearance was simply otherworldly.

"Ji Lingjue, you owe me a big favor this time," Huo Tianya said, frowning. "I just stirred up trouble with the Divine Phoenix Clan in the West Sea, and now I'm here in the South Sea provoking the Inferno Dragon Clan. Seriously..."

"You have indeed helped me a lot, but I hope you remember not to call me by that name next time," the silver-scaled youth reminded.

His eyes flashed with golden light as he gazed into the distance.

"Got it, got it," Huo Tianya replied, his lip curling in annoyance.

"There won't be any mistakes, right?" the silver-scaled youth asked. "There is more than one Inferno Dragon in the South Sea. We need to act quickly."

"It's the South-Sea Inferno Dragon's hibernation period right now. That guy is in a deep sleep. Besides, I've always restrained these things. How could there be any mistakes?"

Huo Tianya waved his hand, and the air around him surged violently in a flash!

He said, "Just watch."

Boom!

A ripple broke out in the sea, rolling out from Huo Tianya. It grew in intensity as it moved forward. The ripple swelled with the wind, and in the blink of an eye, the ripple transformed into a towering wave hundreds of zhang high!

...

"Didn't they say it's not the active period for the South-Sea Inferno Dragon?!" Chu Liang exclaimed.

Lin Bei said, "Maybe that bird you threw in earlier angered it?"

"That bird isn't even big enough to fill one of the gaps in between the Inferno Dragon's teeth. How could throwing that bird in the volcano anger it? It's not like the bird can curse at it, right?"

"The Inferno Dragon's target doesn't seem to be us though?"

"Regardless, it's always better to run far away!"

"You're faster on the sword. You go first! If I can't get away, I'll go all out!"

Chu Liang retorted, "You'll go all out? Risking your life doing what, exactly? Scraping off the plaque on the Inferno Dragon's teeth? Forget it. Just keep up with me!"

Lin Bei: "..."[1]

On that island, the enormous head of the terrifying South-Sea Inferno Dragon emerged from the volcano's crater. With only the top half of its body visible above the mouth of the volcano, it pivoted in a full circle and destroyed everything around the volcano in the blink of an eye.

In just that one movement, the raging flames of Divine Dragon Fire descended like rain.

Chu Liang realized, Now it makes sense why it's said the Inferno Dragon is inactive during the growth period of the Flowing Inferno Fruit. All it needs to do is move, and it will kill off every living being within a hundred li!

At the low altitudes of the island, two tiny figures were desperately trying to escape.

Chu Liang's sword-flying speed was, of course, as swift as that of a shooting star. In the face of a potential impending death, Lin Bei burst forth with considerable speed. Chu Liang very quickly left Lin Bei far behind, but they were still within range to communicate through voice transmissions.

The island was large, but the two of them flew speedily. In just a breath's worth of time, they had already gotten far from the island.

Chu Liang scanned the island with his divine sense and realized the South-Sea Inferno Dragon had no intention of pursuing them. Instead, it was gazing into the distance.

It seemed the target wasn't them.

Chu Liang was about to breathe a sigh of relief when he suddenly noticed something was off.

These waves up ahead... What's going on with them?!

A circular formation of giant waves was converging from all directions. The speed of the waves increased with the pull of the tide.

In the blink of an eye, they reached thousands of zhang high, emerging from the sea and becoming one in the sky. The large circle of waves merged into a ginormous sky-blue water ball in the air!

The water ball then encompassed the Volcanic Island, the South-Sea Inferno Dragon, and the surrounding seawaters.

Chu Liang and Lin Bei crashed into water ball's wall of sea waves with a bang and were thrown back by the impact! This massive seawave wall was as solid as metal and stone and heavy as meteoric iron!

Chu Liang swiftly realized that someone was targeting the Inferno Dragon, and he and Lin Bei had been caught in the middle of it!

What bad luck.

The South-Sea Inferno Dragon's hibernation period lasts a few months each year. Couldn't you have picked another day to fight it? Why did it have to be today?

And couldn't you have cleared the area beforehand??

Beside Chu Liang, Lin Bei's tanned face paled. "I suddenly understand the importance of making money..."

"Hmm?" Chu Liang uttered, looking at Lin Bei curiously.

Lin Bei slapped his forehead regretfully. "If I had spent money on a treasure of nature, I'd be concocting pills right now instead of dealing with this."

Indeed, Chu Liang thought. Money may not bring happiness, but it can help you avoid many troubles.

But is this the time to talk about that?!

Chu Liang ignored Lin Bei and made a hand seal. He summoned the Dustless Sword and forcefully struck the seawave wall!

Boooom!

His sword qi was quickly dispersed by the flowing water, neutralizing the force.

What a solid water prison!

Considering that the ginormous water barrier had to cover such a tremendous area, it couldn't be equally strong at every point.

Chu Liang was certain of this and attacked the seawave wall again with all his might!

A giant swordlight appeared, filled the sky! It was the Heavenly Sword Seal!

Boom—

In the face of death, Chu Liang suddenly comprehended a bit of the workings of the Heaven-Raising Sword.

He had worked on comprehending the Heaven-Raising Sword and the Great Dao of the Cloud of Determination for a long time, but he hadn't been able to grasp the sword intent behind them. At this moment, he finally understood that he needed to be resolved to go all in!

Advance and you'll live, retreat and you'll die. The world is vast, and life and death hang in the balance.

I have only this one sword!

Heaven-Raising Sword!

Suddenly, the giant swordlight shone brilliantly.

Shiiing.

With Chu Liang's renewed resolve, his sword intent upgraded the Heavenly Sword Seal to a true immortal art! It was the Heaven-Raising Sword!

Boooom.

The giant sword struck the barrier of flowing water and finally broke a huge hole in it before it could disperse the destructive force of Chu Liang's sword qi!

Lin Bei shouted, "It's open! Quick—"

He was about to flee with Chu Liang, but his words got caught in his throat.

They looked outside through the hole in the barrier, and what they saw wasn't the sky... but a serpent's head that seemed even bigger than the sky!

As it approached from afar, it opened its massive mouth, and that mouth became an indescribably large black hole.

The South-Sea Inferno Dragon was enormous, and when it was curled up, it was like a mountain peak. So, naturally, the volcano housing the dragon had to be enormous too. However, the volcano was just one part of an island, so that meant the island had to be even larger. That in turn meant the spherical water prison, which encased the island and the surrounding seawater, had to be even larger still.

Yet, the serpent's head's gaping mouth swallowed the water prison and everything within it in one gulp.

It seemed as if this ginormous serpent could even engulf the sun and moon!

Neither Chu Liang nor Lin Bei had ever seen such an incredibly humongous serpent, but the same name popped into their minds simultaneously.

Heaven-Devouring Python!

Chapter 382: What is This?

"Shit, fuck, fuck, fuck... glug, glug... fuck... glug..."

Lin Bei's curses mingled with the gurgling bubbles as he struggled in the water, barely audible beneath the deafening roar of the waves.

The waves were a testament to the mighty power of the Heavens and Earth.

Such a shocking scene could only unfold on the vast, endless sea. The water prison, along with the surrounding land, was swallowed whole by the terrifying Heaven-Devouring Python.

In the vast expanse of the South Sea, the piece of land swallowed might seem like a mere corner. However, when compared to the land of the nine provinces, its surface area was as large as a huge city. This meant that if the Heaven-Devouring Python wasn't allowed to rampage, it could easily swallow Taotie City in the Northern Regions and the capital of Yu in the Central Region in a single bite.

It was unknown as to whether it was due to the caster deactivating the divine technique or simply because the water prison could not withstand the immense force, the wall of waves around the water prison crushed as soon as the water prison entered the giant beast's mouth. However, Chu Liang and the others could no longer escape; a tremendous suction capable of destroying mountains and pulling up peaks came from the depths of the black hole, dragging all the endless seawater and everything in it.

Devouring the world!

Initially, Chu Liang managed to maintain his balance above the water. As he scanned his surroundings, all he could see was darkness and the terrified aquatic beasts thrashing in the waves. Suddenly, a giant wave crashed into him from behind, sending him plunging into the churning depths. Each attempt to resurface was thwarted by the relentless current. Finally, he surrendered to the flow, letting it carry him wherever it willed.

As the pressure of the water flow increased, the black hole ahead began to narrow.

Chu Liang's ears thundered with a drumming sound, and it felt as if his limbs no longer belonged to him. He was like a lone boat tossed about in the torrent of waves.

Just when Chu Liang thought his cultivation was strong enough to consider himself an expert among immortality cultivators, this encounter swiftly reminded him of his insignificance.

In the presence of beings who controlled the Great Dao, even a mass of flowing fire could incinerate him, an innocent fish in the pond, in an instant.

He vaguely heard an angry dragon's roar again. Could it be the South Sea Inferno Dragon?

The Heaven-Devouring Python had swallowed the Inferno Dragon along with the water prison. Naturally, the newly awakened Inferno Dragon would not let it go easily.

Logically speaking, the Heaven-Devouring Python and the Inferno Dragon were both vicious beasts of the same level, but the Heaven-Devouring Python possessed the mystical ability to devour everything. However, if the Inferno Dragon used its mythical abilities, it still stood a chance against the Heaven-Devouring Python.

But the dragon's chant did not last long. The wind and thunder roaring in Chu Liang's ears made it difficult for him to hear anything clearly. He could only focus on activating a layer of foundational qi around his body to protect himself from being pierced by sharp objects in the torrent.

At the same time, he extended his divine sense in an attempt to locate Lin Bei. Unfortunately, they had been separated when they were swept inside. Finding someone in this chaos was far from easy.

Boom—

Although he couldn't detect Lin Bei with his divine sense, he did sense a massive Sword Halberd Shark behind him. Its jaws were wide open, charging at him with the full force of the torrent!

Who knew how many aquatic beasts had suffered in this mass devouring by the Heaven-Devouring Python?

If Chu Liang stayed motionless, the giant shark would swallow him in one bite. He was already on his way into the stomach of the Heaven-Devouring Python, and he refused to become a nesting doll—a human nested in a shark nested in a python.

Chu Liang dared not summon the Dustless Sword; if he lost his grip in this chaotic current, he would lose the legendary enchanted weapon forever. Instead, he activated more foundational qi, lifting his body lightly before executing a swift roll.

The giant shark swiftly shot past him from below. As Chu Liang rolled back, he found himself positioned behind the shark. Now, it was his turn to use the current's force to his advantage.

Drawing power from his Sea of Qi, Chu Liang swung a fist toward the shark's halberd-like dorsal fin. Though the force was diminished by the water, it still carried immense power.

Boom—

The giant shark let out a muffled sound before exploding in the water!

A large plume of dark blood spread quickly, agitating the surrounding aquatic demonic beasts. Yet, most of them had no way out, struggling to survive in the relentless torrent.

One demonic beast managed to drift close to Chu Liang. It was a red-scaled creature over ten zhang long, resembling a snake but with four powerful legs.

The beast's vertical pupils glinted with a fiery light, hinting at its lineage—likely a descendant of the Inferno Dragon.

The red-scaled aquatic beast was enormous, but after witnessing the colossal size of the Heaven-Devouring Python, Chu Liang no longer felt awed by this creature's size.

Seeing the long tail of the red-scaled aquatic beast whipping toward him, Chu Liang seized it.

Just as he prepared to strike, a sudden change occurred!

The torrent burst out of the waterway, and the space suddenly expanded!

Boom—

It felt as if the endless seawater had been thrown into the sky, carrying Chu Liang and the red-scaled aquatic beast he clung to by the tail. Amid the chaos, Chu Liang only managed to kick the beast as he used the force to propel himself upward.

Suddenly, a heavy blow struck him.

The falling seawater crashed down like a collapsing sky, slamming Chu Liang downward with relentless force. His entire head buzzed from the impact!!

Boom, boom, boom—

What lay beneath him felt like an abyss, as though he were suspended ten thousand zhang high in the air.

Boom—

A thunderous explosion shattered the air, and then, abruptly, all was quiet.

...

Spat

After a brief moment of unconsciousness, Chu Liang slowly opened his eyes.

He frowned and stayed still, maintaining his original posture while extending his divine sense around to scan his surroundings.

Where am I?

He found himself on a reef in the middle of a lake, his body soaked and occasionally submerged by the waves. Beneath him was slick black rock.

Suddenly, a large net descended, enveloping him completely.

Someone was pulling him hard.

Was it the gray-clad girl on the shore?

She had delicate features and wore a robe made of patched cloth. With her hair simply tied back, she looked around sixteen or seventeen years old. A small bamboo basket was strapped to her back as she struggled to pull the large net that had ensnared Chu Liang.

"Heave ho... heave ho... heave—"

The girl was struggling and cheering herself on, but she couldn't move Chu Liang at all. It was as if she was trying to pull a big rock.

The Sea of Qi was the source of his powerful foundational qi. Though this might not be apparent from his appearance, his true physical strength stemmed from his blood essence. Strengthening his physique to this level had fundamentally altered his body.

Although he still appeared as a slightly thin, delicate young man, his body was as if forged from diamond, and his weight was no less than that of an ordinary demonic beast.

"Heave ho... heave ho..." The girl on the shore strained with all her might, pulling with every bit of strength she had. As she tugged, she suddenly noticed something was off. Why did it feel so much lighter?

She looked up and found that the person in the net had already reached her, while her fishing net held only some half-dead fish and shrimp.

"You woke up?" she exclaimed, surprise lighting up her face.

"Mm..." Chu Liang replied, staring at the living person in front of him, feeling dazed and disoriented.

Looking around, Chu Liang noticed the surroundings of the lake were bare black rocks, an unfamiliar material he had never seen before. In the distance, the outline of a city loomed, shrouded in darkness.

There was no sun in the sky, only a dark purple halo hanging high, casting an eerie glow over the landscape.

"Excuse me, miss, where is this place?" Chu Liang asked.

"This place is called Python Belly City," the girl answered cheerfully. "You must be unfamiliar with everything since you just arrived from the outside world. Come home with me, and I'll explain everything in detail along the way."

Chu Liang smiled wryly. Did this even need explaining? The answer was right in the name.

Python Belly City? It was a straightforward and rather unsettling name.

They used to say the Heaven-Devouring Python could swallow the world, devouring billions of beings in one bite. Although slightly exaggerated, it wasn't entirely false. But a giant beast with a city inside its stomach was something Chu Liang had never encountered before.

Since he was unharmed, Lin Bei likely wouldn't be either, but who knew where he had ended up after being separated.

Chu Liang decided to follow the girl back first, settle down, and then plan his next steps.

"Then I shall trouble you, miss," he said.

"No trouble at all," the girl chuckled. "Every time there's a white rain, everyone is thrilled. It brings new food, tools, and most importantly, new labor—oh, I mean, newcomers."

Heh. Chu Liang smiled again. Laborer it is then.

"My name is Xu Zhiyin. I grew up in Python Belly City and have never been outside, so I love hearing stories about the outside world," the girl continued. "Every time there's a white rain, I come outside the city to fish people out."

"Miss Xu, you mentioned white rain twice just now," Chu Liang asked curiously. "What is that?"

Xu Zhiyin explained, "In Python Belly City, we have two types of rain: black rain and white rain..."

As she spoke, Chu Liang listened intently, gradually piecing together the reality of Python Belly City. The more she explained, the clearer the picture became.

They stood on an expansive land, with a bustling city of nearly a hundred thousand people at its center. Surrounding the city was a vast, foreboding black ocean known as the Black Sea.

Every drop of water in the Black Sea was highly poisonous. Just a single touch of the water would result in the corrosion of the entire body and flesh would be turned into blood. No one knew what lay at the end of this treacherous sea.

Tidal flooding of the Black Sea occurred at irregular intervals. The poisonous waves would inundate half the land, leaving only the area of Python Belly City untouched. As a result, it was much safer inside the city, while the landscape outside was barren and desolate.

The black rocks they stood on were the only solid ground resistant to the corrosive nature of the Black Sea.

But the Python Belly City was not absolutely safe. Occasionally, black rain would fall from the sky. The rain droplets are as poisonous as the water in the Black Sea, with the single drop capable of killing a demonic beast

If there was no cover during the black rain, death would be certain.

The other type of rain, white rain, referred to seawater entering from the outside. Along with the seawater, fresh people and items from the outside would also come in.

Therefore, for the people of Python Belly City, the black rain was a harbinger of destruction, while the white rain symbolized the promise of life.

Chu Liang listened in amazement.

The place had clearly evolved its own unique ecosystem.

With curiosity getting the better of him, he asked, "What is the source of food here?"

He glanced at the black rock beneath his feet, which was as hard as meteoric iron, making plantation and farming impossible.

The sky was devoid of sunlight and it seemed rather impossible that the flood of shrimps and fish from the outside world could support a population of over a hundred thousand.

"The primary food source here is black tree rice," Xu Zhiyin explained. "We have several vast fields of it located just outside the city. These fields have long been a point of fierce competition among various factions."

She continued, "In addition to the rice, we also raise livestock and farm fish and shrimp in our lakes. This time, the white rain was exceptionally heavy, so we can expect several new, large lakes to be created."

Chu Liang surveyed the landscape. The so-called lakes seemed more like natural depressions in the black rock, filled with seawater to create the illusion of lakes.

"Won't these fields be killed by the tidal floods from the Black Sea?" Chu Liang asked, skepticism evident in his voice.

"No, the black tree rice actually thrives on the Black Sea's nourishment," Xu Zhiyin explained. "The black rain doesn't dissolve in water, so if you find yourself caught in black rain or tides outside the city, your best bet is to dive into one of the lakes—if you're not afraid of drowning, of course."

Chu Liang muttered, "That doesn't sound too dangerous..."

Xu Zhiyin's expression remained composed as she added, "But you should be wary of demonic beasts. While they have a treaty with the human factions, which means they won't hunt inside the

city, there are often hungry demonic beasts hunting outside the city. They would be the kind of demonic beasts that don't like black tree rice and only love meat."

"There are demonic beasts?" Chu Liang immediately became alert, and he immediately expanded his divine sense, scanning the surroundings.

"There's no need to be afraid," Xu Zhiyin said calmly with a smile. "The demonic beast factions are located to the west of the city, so they generally stay away from the eastern regions."

"Really?" Chu Liang asked, pointing to a large figure behind them. "Then what's that?"

In the direction he indicated, a menacing beast with thick legs, a long neck, and razor-sharp fangs had just zeroed in on them. It resembled a deer, but its fangs made it clear that it wasn't a herbivore.

Xu Zhiyin's eyes widened in horror as she saw the beast. Her voice turned to a shriek as she exclaimed, "Ah! Help—"

Chapter 383: The Three Major Factions

Xu Zhiyin was clearly someone who had practiced martial arts. She was incredibly agile. As she sprinted forward, she didn't forget to pull Chu Liang along with her.

The long-necked demonic beast behind them noticed that they started running and immediately galloped forward. Despite its enormous size, its four legs moved with unnerving speed, the ground trembling under its surprisingly light, rapid footsteps.

"Miss Xu, stop running!" Chu Liang called out.

"You're right. We can't keep running." Xu Zhiyin replied, her mind racing. "We're too far from Python Belly City to outrun it on flat ground. We need to hide!"

With that, she veered sharply and darted into a cluster of jagged black rocks. Finding a semi-protruding boulder, she ducked behind it, sitting with her back against the black rock. She peeked out cautiously, trying to spot the demonic beast.

The beast was nowhere to be seen, but she didn't dare relax. Her eyes darted around, scanning every shadow, every crevice.

At the same time, a long shadow stretched out from above the black rock.

Chu Liang's eyes widened in terror as he found himself face-to-face with the demonic beast.

Xu Zhiyin also sensed something was wrong. She turned her head, and for a split second, her pupils dilated in sheer horror, her breath catching in her throat. She was so scared that she couldn't make a sound.

With the long neck, the demonic beast dangled its ferocious head low, its eyes glinting with a predatory greed as it locked onto the two. To their shock, it uttered garbled, almost human speech, "Found you..."

Chu Liang met its gaze calmly. So what if you found us? This isn't a game of hide-and-seek where you win just by finding us, he thought.

"Roar—"

The demonic beast let out a deafening roar and lunged, its jaws gaping wide to devour them.

At this moment, Chu Liang made a move.

No, to be precise, he delivered a kick.

While maintaining his seated position, he launched himself up with both hands. With his feet up in the air and his body upside down, he delivered a powerful kick straight to the demonic beast's massive eye.

BAM!

The kick was so forceful that it caused the demonic beast's eyeball to burst, sending vibrant liquid splattering everywhere.

Yet, not a single drop touched Chu Liang. With a graceful twirl in the air, he soared above the demonic beast's head and delivered a powerful punch directly onto it. Bang!

The impact was accompanied by the sharp, crisp sound of bones breaking.

Boom—

The colossal body of the demonic beast crumpled to the ground.

Chu Liang descended with an effortless grace, his movements fluid and elegant. The entire sequence of actions appeared seamless and easy.

As for Xu Zhiyin, her entire body was splattered with the colorful liquid, leaving her looking rather disheveled. She sat there, staring dumbfounded at Chu Liang.

"Ah, Miss Xu, sorry about that," Chu Liang quickly apologized.

"You're quite the fighter, huh?" Xu Zhiyin responded. The splatter of liquid didn't bother her at all as she casually wiped her face, inadvertently spreading the dirty liquid even more.

Chu Liang smiled slightly and said nothing more. In this unfamiliar environment, he didn't want to reveal too much about himself. Otherwise, he could have simply summoned his flying sword and pierced the demonic beast from a distance.

Xu Zhiyin stood up and said, "With such impressive skills, the Blazing Fire Gang will definitely want to recruit you."

With that, she prepared to head back to Python Belly City.

Chu Liang pointed at the demonic beast's corpse and asked, "Aren't we taking this back to eat?"

Xu Zhiyin looked at Chu Liang, stunned at how quickly he adapted.

She immediately shook her head. "If the demonic beasts of the Divine Tiger Hall know that we did that, they'll definitely come for revenge. They're very fierce. We'd better leave quickly."

Chu Liang hesitated. He wanted to tell Xu Zhiyin that it might not be a horrible thing if that were to happen, but he decided to keep silent. The current situation was too uncertain, and he couldn't afford to make enemies recklessly.

So, he decided to follow Xu Zhiyin for now.

On the way back to Python Belly City, Xu Zhiyin explained the distribution of powers to Chu Liang.

The city was divided among three major factions. The Blazing Fire Gang, made up of human martial artists, was in the eastern areas of the city. The southern area of the city was controlled by the Sun and Moon Pavilion, which was a faction made up of human cultivators. Lastly, the Celestial Tiger Hall, which was a faction of demon race, was in the western area of the city.

Of the three factions, the Blazing Fire Gang controlled the most civilians and black tree rice fields. With the largest number of members, it was the most powerful force in the city.

Although the cultivators in the Sun and Moon Pavilion were also human, they were fewer in number and more detached from the general public. Consequently, more civilians chose to ally themselves with the Blazing Fire Gang.

As for the demon race, their territory in the western area of the city was off-limits to everyone.

Law and order gradually took shape among the three factions, but conflicts were inevitable.

Aside from the civilians governed by the three major factions, the city was mostly filled with ordinary people like Xu Zhiyin's family, who were not part of any forces and survived in the gaps between these powers.

Chu Liang's curiosity got the better of him. "What about the northern area of the city?" he asked.

"I don't know," she replied, shaking her head. "Since I was a child, my father warned me that the northern area is the most terrifying place in Python Belly City because it's... the territory of the city lord."

...

As they drew closer, the so-called Python Belly City came into view, its walls made of layers of black rock, stacked in a primitive manner. It was clear the city lacked specialized talents like the disciples from Mount Shu Sect's Construction Hall.

The two entered the city through the south gate, where several burly human martial artists stood guard.

Anyone entering the city would be extorted by them.

"We have to pay a toll?" Chu Liang asked as he observed the scene from a distance.

"No need," Xu Zhiyin replied. "They're just members of the Blazing Fire Gang. Most people leaving the city today are taking advantage of the white rain to scavenge, so they should have some gains on them."

As they approached, the martial artists didn't stop Xu Zhiyin. Instead, they greeted her with smiles. "Zhiyin, what treasures did you find today?"

Xu Zhiyin laughed brightly. "Nothing at all, just a big living person."

They turned their gaze to Chu Liang, sizing him up with a mix of amusement.

"The young man looks quite handsome, but who knows how many days he'll survive," one of them teased.

Chu Liang didn't argue with them; he simply smiled and nodded as he followed Xu Zhiyin into the city.

As Chu Liang wondered why the guards were so lenient with Xu Zhiyin, she led him to her home, and the answer became clear.

It turned out that Xu Zhiyin's home was a medicinal hall.

"My father is one of the few healers in Python Belly City, so everyone respects him," Xu Zhiyin explained.

Chu Liang nodded.

It's no wonder. In a harsh place like this, no one would dare offend a healer.

As he lifted the white cloth and stepped into the medicinal hall, a heart-wrenching scream echoed from behind.

"Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh—"

Chu Liang couldn't help but wince as he asked, "What kind of illness is this that they are in this much pain."

"Most likely corroded by the black rain," Xu Zhiyin said.

"Isn't this corrosion fatal?" Chu Liang asked.

"My father can treat it," Xu Zhiyin said proudly. "As long as the parts touched by the Black Sea are cut off in time, they won't die."

No wonder they're screaming so miserably, Chu Liang thought. From the sound of it, they aren't given any anesthesia at all. If the corroded parts are just being cut off, I could be a healer too.

Xu Zhiyin had just asked Chu Liang to sit down when a commotion erupted outside, and a large group of people rushed into the medicinal hall.

From the looks of it, they were all robust men brimming with vitality and clearly martial arts cultivators.

However, every one of them were injured. The more seriously wounded were carried in, looking as if they had barely escaped a fierce battle.

Xu Zhiyin had mentioned that because their medicinal hall was in the east of the city, they had close ties with the Blazing Fire Gang, so the injured were often brought here.

"Zhiyin, where's your father?" the leader called out as he entered.

"He's treating someone right now; you'll have to wait a bit," Xu Zhiyin said. "Was it another battle?"

"Not a formal battle. We ran into a group from the Sun and Moon Pavilion while scavenging. They attacked without a word," the leader replied angrily. "I will leave the injured brothers here and head back to report to the vice-chief so we can prepare for revenge! Zhiyin, tell your father to hurry."

"Haaaaa," Xu Zhiyin sighed. "Got it."

It seemed that while food wasn't particularly scarce in Python Belly City, the competition for other resources was just as fierce. Every outing could turn into a battle.

...

After the leader left, Xu Zhiyin helped the injured get settled in the medicinal hall. She then turned to Chu Liang and said, "I'll head to the back to freshen up and change my clothes. You can make yourself comfortable here for a while."

With that, she also left the main hall.

Sitting in the medicinal hall, Chu Liang noticed an unsettling detail: there was no smell of herbs, only the metallic scent of blood lingering in the air.

It was astonishing to think these people had been living here for so many years. But with the Heaven-Devouring Python rampaging across the seas, sometimes swallowing entire small countries in one gulp, the sheer size of Python Belly City was not strange at all.

But regardless, this place couldn't possibly be inside a Heaven-Devouring Python's belly. If it were, the entire city would be flipped upside down whenever the python turned. It had to be a self-contained realm, akin to a hidden dimension. The python's enormous mouth was merely a passage connecting this realm to the outside world.

But how could he get out?

He could use the jade talisman with the Shattering the Void immortal art that Venerable Wen Yuan gave him. However, this technically wasn't a life-or-death crisis, which was why he hadn't used it. Nonetheless, staying here indefinitely wasn't a solution. It would be fine to use it...as he could always head back and request for another one.

Randomly teleporting a thousand li away might get him out of the python's body.

But what if he couldn't leave this realm and ended up in a dangerous place like the Black Sea? It wouldn't be worth the risk.

Every hidden realm should have its own exit.

Where would the exit of this realm be?

He seemed to have fallen from the sky, so could he return the same way? Or perhaps the exit lay within the mysterious territory in the north of the city?

As he pondered this, the sound of urgent and heavy footsteps suddenly broke his concentration.

Thump, thump, thump...

With a scan of his divine sense, he saw a golden-patterned giant elephant emerge onto the broad, dilapidated black street. Its massive body almost filled the entire street.

A man in a brocade robe sat cross-legged on the elephant's back, and dozens of sword-riding cultivators hovered in the air behind him, arriving outside the medicinal hall in the blink of an eye.

"This is the place, right?" The brocade-robed man lazily glanced around, a murderous intent flashing in his eyes. He raised his hand and commanded, "Kill everyone here. Don't let any of them get out alive!"

Chapter 384: Which Esteemed Cultivator From the Mount Shu Sect?

The owner of the medicinal hall, his daughter, and a few young apprentices, were busy at the back of the medicinal hall. The martial artists from the Blazing Fire Gang were familiar with the place, so they just went inside and found somewhere to sit as they waited.

Chu Liang was the only one sitting in the main hall, and that was why he had witnessed the sudden arrival of the cultivators and heard one of them say, "Don't let any of them get out alive!"

Chu Liang raised his eyebrows in shock. What do they mean by that?

The dozens of cultivators outside the medicinal hall didn't enter it. Instead, they formed hand seals, summoning their flying swords!

"Hold on!" Chu Liang shouted, trying to stop them.

This group was obviously there to exterminate everyone in the medicinal hall. They'd just had a fierce battle, yet they even followed the opposing gang into the medicinal hall to finish the job. They were acting just like criminals!

Chu Liang had just arrived, so he didn't want to get involved in the local gang conflicts, and he had no intention of stopping their mutual acts of revenge. Nonetheless, these people were being extremely rude!

Inside the medicinal hall, there was Chu Liang, who was an innocent bystander, as well as Xu Zhiyin and her father, both of whom had nothing to do with the gangs.

With his cultivation level, it would be easy for Chu Liang to leave, but he wouldn't be able to inform Xu Zhiyin and her father in time. Besides, Xu Zhiyin might be in the middle of a bath; he couldn't just barge in and take her away.

Just imagine...

The young lady is bathing, and I push open the bathroom door.

I lift the curtain and yell, "Miss Xu, bad guys are coming!"

That... would be like I'm announcing my own arrival.[1]

So, all Chu Liang could do was stop the people in front of him.

However, the group's leader had already given an order. The dozens of cultivators ignored Chu Liang, and their flying swords spread out, transforming into thousands of swordlights.

The beams of swordlight shot into the hall!

A few rounds of attacks from these thousands of swordlights would turn the medicinal hall into a huge sieve. No one inside would be able to survive. If the Blazing Fire Gang members were uninjured, they might be able to put up a fight, but they had no chance in their current state.

Nevertheless, Chu Liang was there.

Frowning, he summoned the Dustless Sword. It instantly split into hundreds and thousands of swordlights. Chu Liang had activated the Thousand Swords Seal!

Under the control of Chu Liang's powerful divine sense, each beam of swordlight precisely intercepted the swordlights shooting toward the medicinal hall. As the clang of clashing metal rang incessantly, the outer walls of the medicinal hall remained undamaged.

Clang, clang, clang—

After the group's first round of attacks, their thousands of swordlights shattered.

Chu Liang's Dustless Sword returned to his side, its blade gleaming brilliantly. However, more than half of the opponent's flying swords had broken!

It was a fight of one against dozens, yet Chu Liang emerged victorious! If Chu Liang hadn't held back, the next round of attacks from the Dustless Sword would have rendered almost all of these cultivators incapable of escaping.

Even when compared to the Mount Shu Sect's standard-issue flying swords, those cultivators' flying swords were inferior. How could they withstand an attack from a legendary sword like the Dustless Sword? It was natural that the Dustless Sword would cut them in two with one strike.

Despite their low quality, those flying swords had been extremely rare finds in Python Belly City. This was evident from the pained expressions of the cultivators.

Seeing their precious flying swords cut down, the group of cultivators became irate and wanted to attack Chu Liang with their divine abilities.

Right then, someone shouted, "Hold on!"

It was the brocade-robed man on the elephant's back.

He sat up straight in alarm and said, "Where did this powerful cultivator come from?"

The cultivators around him were generally at the third realm. There were even a few at the second realm. So, to them, Chu Liang, who was a top-tier fourth realm cultivator, could indeed be considered a powerful cultivator.

In Python Belly City, it was normal for cultivators to have low cultivation levels.

If Chu Liang were considered to be part of the ruling upper class of cultivators, then the middle class was made up of the prodigious disciples of the Divine Nine and the Terrestrial Ten and the lower-middle class was made up of the ordinary disciples. That meant the poor lower class was made up of the sectless cultivators in the martial world, and the cultivators in Python Belly City were undoubtedly part of an even lower class—the beggar class.

When resources were extremely scarce, a cultivator's lack of talent would be less apparent. The third realm would be an impassible wall for everyone.

Those who had already been cultivators before entering the Python Belly City would very likely remain forever stuck at the cultivation level they were at when they entered. It was only possible for cultivators to make breakthroughs in cultivation without any resources when they had surpassed the sixth realm and entered the Heavenly Gate[2].

Chu Liang swiftly moved to the front of the medicinal hall and said loudly, "I am not a member of the Blazing Fire Gang, nor am I a martial artist. I have nothing to do with your grudges. But today you have provoked me, so you better leave my sight immediately, or else..."

He took a large stride forward and pivoted, launching into a sudden leap. Then he punched downward, striking the giant elephant's head from above!

Boooooom.

Chu Liang's punch left the several-zhang-tall giant elephant shaking violently.

At the next moment, the black rock beneath it cracked. The elephant sank over a zhang deep into the black-rock ground. It died instantly, with its corpse embedded in the earth.

A chill washed over the surrounding cultivators, and not one of them dared to make a sound. They were all there together, yet none of them had managed to stop Chu Liang's punch, so how could they dare to act up again?

The brocade-robed man on the dead elephant looked up at Chu Liang and unconsciously found himself kneeling before Chu Liang.

The brocade-robed man trembled for a long while before finally squeezing out one sentence. "And you say you're not a martial artist..."

He used such great divine strength to kill the giant elephant with one punch... He can't be an immortality cultivator that also cultivates martial arts, could he?

...

The Sun and Moon Pavilion cultivators left in utter disgrace, practically fleeing in disarray.

While watching them go, Chu Liang sighed.

He had gotten involved in something troublesome so soon after arriving in Python Belly City.

"What happened?" Xu Zhiyin asked cautiously as she walked up from behind.

She and the group of martial artists behind her had heard the noises of the clashing flying swords and emerged from the medicinal hall to see what was going on. However, instead of a sword fight, what they saw was Chu Liang punching an elephant.

Chu Liang briefly explained what had happened.

"Ah..." Xu Zhiyin gasped in shock, breathing in a mouthful of the cold, foul air of Python Belly City.

She and her father had been practicing medicine there for many years and never thought they would one day become the targets of a major faction.

Xu Zhiyin had lived in Python Belly City all her life. It was impossible for her to be unafraid of what might happen next.

"You don't need to be so afraid. Their main target is these martial artists, not you and your father," Chu Liang comforted.

"But..." Xu Zhiyin turned to look at the martial artists behind her. "Normally, no matter how fiercely you fight each other, you never chase the opposing party into the medicinal hall. Why has that changed today?"

Among the martial artists, there was an older man who had lost half of his arm. That arm had just been bandaged, but judging from the neatness of the wound, it seemed that the amputated half of an arm had been cleanly sliced off with a flying sword.

That man stood up angrily and said, "Those cultivators are afraid of our chief, so they used to pretend they were noble and virtuous, standing aloof from worldly affairs. But now that the chief —"

"Old Zhang!" someone called out, reminding the man not to divulge the matter.

That man then reluctantly closed his mouth.

The east side of the city was the Blazing Fire Gang's territory, so they quickly learned of how the Sun and Moon Pavilion had gone after their members even at the medicinal hall.

Soon after, a large group of over a hundred martial artists gathered at the medicinal hall, setting a tight defensive formation around it.

That probably wasn't even all of the Blazing Fire Gang's members.

The threshold for becoming a martial artist was much lower than that for immortality cultivators. Truly talented cultivators were rare, with there being only one in ten thousand, whereas good martial artists were one in a hundred. Moreover, it was much simpler for martial artists at a level below the seventh realm to advance in their cultivation. Therefore, the ratio of martial artists to cultivators in the world was always disproportionate.

However, there were only two sects practicing martial arts ranked in the Divine Nine and the Terrestrial Ten. That was because immortality cultivators held an absolute advantage once they surpassed the seventh realm and entered the peak realms of power.

The person leading the large group of martial artists was a short-haired woman in a close-fitting outfit. She was tall and robust, with a scar between her brows. The woman looked fierce as well as capable and experienced. Judging by how the others in the group addressed her, the woman had to be the vice-chief of the Blazing Fire Gang.

The vice-chief entered the main hall of the medicinal hall and glanced at everyone there.

The first thing she asked was, "Is everyone all right?"

All of the injured people, including those missing an arm or a leg, replied in unison, "We're fine."

Chu Liang knew why they responded like that, but he still found the scene quite strange.

The vice-chief shifted her gaze to Chu Liang. "So, it was this young hero who saved you all? Indeed, heroes emerge from the young."

"I don't deserve your praise," Chu Liang replied modestly. "I am Chu Liang. Miss Xu saved me and brought me back here, so it's only right that I help when the medicinal hall is in trouble."

He tactfully indicated that he had only taken action because of Xu Zhiyin.

The vice-chief immediately said, "Xu Zhiyin and her father aren't part of the Blazing Fire Gang, but they've saved many of our brothers in the east side over the years. Our brothers have deep feelings of gratitude toward them. We won't let the Sun and Moon Pavilion get away with this!"

Chu Liang gave a nod of support, but he didn't intend to get further involved in the conflict.

However, the vice-chief added, "Young hero, with your exceptional skills, you'll be a great help when you join us."

Chu Liang hurriedly forced a smile. "Vice-Chief, I don't have such plans at the moment..."

"Hmm?" The vice-chief looked at him strangely, feeling rather puzzled. "But you've offended the Sun and Moon Pavilion, and you can't join the demons. Where else can you go in Python Belly City if you don't join us?"

"I have a senior brother who fell in here with me," Chu Liang answered. "I want to find him quickly and then leave together."

"Leave?" the vice-chief uttered, her expression suddenly turning odd.

It wasn't just her. The expressions of the surrounding Blazing Fire Gang members also became very odd, as if they had just heard something utterly absurd.

After a long while, the vice-chief said quietly, "Young Hero Chu, I advise you to give up this idea. I guess you're unfamiliar with how things work here since you've just entered Python Belly City, but you have to know that no one has ever left here alive..."

"That may be the case in the past, but..." Chu Liang declared in a powerful and resonating voice, "I am a disciple of the Mount Shu Sect!"

He spoke with a strong sense of confidence that he could get out of Python Belly City.

Even if Chu Liang didn't use the jade talisman that contained Shattering the Void, he believed it wouldn't be long before his teacher and the Mount Shu Sect's higher-ups noticed that he was missing. They would then go looking for him in the South Sea.

If he had disappeared quietly, it would be different. However, such a huge event had occurred in the South Sea. There was no way they would miss it in their investigation.

The vice-chief of the Four Seas Whale Gang had been swallowed by the Heaven-Devouring Python and had never been found.

Nevertheless, the Mount Shu Sect was different from the Whale Gang.

Every disciple of the Mount Shu Sect held this belief: No matter where you are when you encounter danger, don't give up. Remember that you have a powerful sect behind you...

Upon hearing that Chu Liang was a disciple of the Mount Shu Sect, the people around him looked surprised.

There were many cultivators in Python Belly City, but disciples of sects in the Divine Nine were extremely rare.

Furthermore, they had no idea that Chu Liang was not simply an ordinary disciple of Mount Shu. He had yet to mention his prestigious titles: the eldest senior brother of Silver Sword Peak, the semi-finalist of the Mount Shu Sect's Mahjong Tournament, the champion of the Mount Shu Sect's Flying-Sword Race, and the runner-up of the Mount Shu Summit...

How could the Mount Shu Sect not care that he was missing?

After getting over her shock, the vice-chief asked, "Then which immortality cultivator of the Mount Shu Sect is your teacher?"

"Silver Sword Peak's Di Nu—"

Being in Python Belly City, Chu Liang had lowered his guard a little and casually mentioned his teacher's name.

Midway, he suddenly realized, I can't mention my teacher's name as long as I'm outside Mount Shu!

As expected, before he even finished speaking...

"Di Nufeng?!" the vice-chief exclaimed.

The gazes of the surrounding Blazing Fire Gang members darkened slightly.

Their expressions said it all.

Chu Liang thought, Crap!

Chapter 385: Behave Wisely

Inside the medicinal hall, the atmosphere was tense and far from harmonious.

Chu Liang forced a smile and asked, "Do you all have some kind of past with my esteemed teacher?"

The vice-chief, gritting her teeth, responded, "What kind of people are we to be worthy of having a relationship with an esteemed cultivator of Mount Shu... Do you even know why we ended up in Python Belly City?"

"..."

It couldn't be that my esteemed teacher actually fed you to the Heaven-Devouring Python, right? Chu Liang wondered. He kept his thoughts to himself, not daring to utter a single word.

The vice-chief began, "We were once the imperial guards of the capital city..."

As she explained, Chu Liang started to understand the situation.

It turned out that the Blazing Fire Gang weren't just martial world outlaws but actual imperial guards from the capital!

Twenty years ago, a scandal occurred in the capital city of Yu. The only son of the then-chancellor abducted a common girl, leading to her tragic death. The incident sparked outrage among the people of the capital.

In response, the old chancellor knelt and wept in the Night Dragon Hall, begging for forgiveness day and night. The old emperor, recalling the chancellor's years of diligent service and significant contributions, decided to pardon his son.

The old emperor arranged for a death row inmate who resembled the chancellor's son to be executed publicly, hoping to quell the people's anger. Meanwhile, the real son of the chancellor was discreetly escorted back to his hometown by a team of imperial guards.

After this incident, the old chancellor retired and returned to his hometown, withdrawing from court affairs. With his departure, everything seemed to settle down.

But while the escort team was en route to the chancellor's hometown, a fire cloud descended from the sky. In an instant, a terrifying figure appeared, engulfing the chancellor's son in flames and reducing him to ashes.

The wind roared, leaving not even a trace of ash.

The imperial guards, despite being powerful, didn't even catch a clear glimpse of the assailant's face. Fortunately, before departing, she announced her name.

"He was killed by Di Nufeng of Mount Shu!"

With a loud shout, she vanished as swiftly as she had appeared, leaving in an incredibly carefree manner.

The imperial guards were left dumbfounded, unable to process what had just transpired.

Where did the big figure that was sitting on the horse go?

Did the chancellor's son vanish just like that?

If you said you killed him, you should at least leave a corpse so we can report back. But not even a trace of ash is left. If we are going back and claiming that Di Nufeng did it, how can we prove it?

No one would know if we disposed of him ourselves.

Even if the emperor believes that Di Nufeng killed him, would he be willing to offend the Mount Shu Sect for the sake of this scoundrel?

How can this matter be brought to the table?

In the end, to appease the chancellor's grievances, the matter would be resolved by killing the team of incompetent imperial guards.

The imperial guards, well-versed in the politics of the imperial court, quickly realized they couldn't return to the capital. They had to flee immediately, as far away as possible!

By fleeing immediately, the imperial court might assume they perished along with the person they were escorting, thereby sparing their families.

If they attempted to return home to take their family members along, it would be difficult to escape unnoticed.

Thus, a group of over a dozen fled the land of the nine provinces and went overseas, intending to live anonymously in foreign lands for some time. They planned to return to the capital and contact their families in a few years.

Who would have thought that upon reaching a small island to rest, the imperial guards would encounter the Heaven-Devouring Python? The vicious beast devoured not only the island's natives but also the imperial guards, the outsiders on the island.

That was how the group ended up in Python Belly City.

In those days, the balance of power in Python Belly City was a far cry from what it later became, marked by a fierce struggle between the cultivators and the demons.

This group of imperial guards formed the Blazing Fire Gang, relying on their hard fists and sharp blades to carve out their own territory.

The chief of the Blazing Fire Gang was a martial arts expert at the peak of the sixth realm, who remained the strongest person in Python Belly City for the past twenty years. No one dared to challenge him.

His presence forced the demons, who were once arrogant and tyrannical, to become more subdued and lay low for the past few years.

Still, even the strongest person in the Python Belly City could not leave the Python Belly City.

These people naturally harbored resentment towards the main culprits of their plight.

Di Nufeng held a significant weight among them.

AS Chu Liang listened to the vice-chief's story, his expression grew increasingly serious. Glancing at the hundred or so people outside, he felt a sense of apprehension.

He had managed to handle dozens earlier because there were no true experts among them.

Now, with the vice-chief whose martial arts cultivation was clearly formidable, and if everyone joined in, he wouldn't stand a chance.

If you had said you had a grudge against my esteemed teacher, I wouldn't have fought the Sun and Moon Pavilion people just now. At least I could potentially have a group of people on my side.

What should I do now?

Should I join the demons' side?

Hmm...

After she finished speaking, there was a brief pause, and the atmosphere remained tense.

At that moment, Chu Liang suddenly stood up!

The members of the Blazing Fire Gang immediately grew wary, their hands instinctively moving to their weapons.

"Given the circumstances, there's no other way. Today, I can only... on behalf of my esteemed teacher..." Chu Liang said, looking around solemnly, "apologize to you all."

"Huh?"

This sudden turn of events caught everyone off guard.

"Vice-Chief, my esteemed teacher is old and somewhat immature in handling matters, inevitably lacking consideration in some areas. But her nature isn't bad. As you said, her intentions were to be heroic," Chu Liang earnestly explained. "Of course, as her disciple, I bear the responsibility for not guiding her properly. However, back then, I hadn't even been born yet. Rest assured, from now on, I will guide my esteemed teacher properly to ensure such things won't happen again."

His words left the Blazing Fire Gang members with an indescribable sense of strangeness... the more they thought about it, the stranger it felt.

Some younger members, unfamiliar with outside affairs, were completely confused. Who exactly was the esteemed teacher here?

The vice-chief remained silent for a while, then sighed and said, "Forget it. The events of the past indeed have nothing to do with you. We'll just consider this a misfortune we were destined to face. Since you're here in Python Belly City, behave wisely. We're leaving!"

With that, she turned around and led her subordinates away in a flurry.

Chu Liang watched their departing figures and heaved a sigh of relief.

They originally wanted to recruit me, but as soon as they heard my esteemed teacher's name, they left without a word.

I really don't know if this is a good or bad thing.

...

Although the Blazing Fire Gang left, they still left a few scouts to keep watch in case the Sun and Moon Pavilion caused trouble again.

Inside the medicinal hall, Xu Zhiyin and her father tended to the injured before turning their attention to Chu Liang.

Xu Zhiyin's father was a middle-aged man with tired eyes and a weathered face. His appearance bore the visible weight of many years of labor and anxiety, making him appear far older than his true age.

Xu Zhiyin and his father prepared a feast at home for Chu Liang. While it was considered a feast by Python Belly City's standards, it was quite modest compared to a true banquet.

The so-called black tree rice was nothing more than a solid mass of rough, coarse grains. Calling it rice was a bit of a stretch; it was more like a way to make people feel better about what they were eating.

The dishes, however, were a seafood feast. Thanks to today's fresh catch, seafood wasn't rare in Python Belly City. But there wasn't a single vegetable, and eating like this long-term might lead to gout.

Today, Chu Liang had saved the medicinal hall. Naturally, Xu Zhiyin and his father were very grateful. Given his exceptional martial prowess, they were more than willing to let him stay for a while.

Chu Liang had nowhere else to go, and with night approaching, he decided to rest here.

The night in Python Belly City was truly dark. The dim light in the sky gradually faded, and unlike outside, there were no stars or moonlight to brighten the night. Except for the torch-lit areas in the streets, everything else was pitch black.

In the simple house, Chu Liang still didn't forget to reward himself.

His divine sense sank into the White Pagoda, which was now quite lively.

The three Large-Headed Dolls sat in a row, and the latest colorful doll now had white and green bright colors, along with three dark colors.

The high-quality foundational qi provided by the Five-Elements Puppet included Geng Metal foundational qi, which was sharp and strong, and Jia Wood foundational qi, which was resilient and regenerative. Thus, its effects weren't as apparent in battle.

But if Chu Liang were injured, he would appreciate the charm of Jia Wood foundational qi.

Chu Liang eagerly anticipated the day when all five elements of foundational qi were activated. Even if he hadn't reached the fifth realm by then, he would still be as strong as an average fifth realm expert.

Of course, it was still important for him to break through sooner.

As Chu Liang stepped before the iron prison, he pressed the "Refine" button without hesitation.

Yesterday, he had killed three demonic beasts: the man-eating shark from the sea, the long-necked red-scaled beast, and finally the giant elephant.

Rather than killing people, Chu Liang chose to kill the giant elephant to establish his power. Killing people would only make enemies, which would be counterproductive. Additionally, he hoped to unbox more rewards from the giant elephant.

Boom, boom, boom...

Three rewards were given to him consecutively, which brought him much satisfaction.

[Shark Spine Halberd: A unique weapon forged in the shape of an iron shark's dorsal fin, exquisitely crafted and perfect for water combat.]

[Demonic Beast Leather Pouch: Made from the carcass of a demonic beast, wearing it emits a powerful demonic aura.]

[Giant Elephant Shield: A heavy shield imbued with the spirit of a giant elephant, capable of blocking nearly any attack... though not guaranteed to be able to defend against every attack.]

These three demonic beasts weren't particularly strong, so Chu Liang didn't have high expectations.

Among the three rewards, two were weapons: a halberd and a shield.

The Shark Spine Halberd, standing as tall as a person, resembled a shark's dorsal fin. Its peculiar shape concealed a lethal sharpness, with the blade glinting menacingly.

The Giant Elephant Shield, nearly a zhang high and immensely thick, required great physical strength to wield. If Chu Liang wasn't as physically strong as he was now, it would have been really difficult for him to use this shield.

These seemed like weapons suited for a martial artist, which didn't particularly appeal to Chu Liang.

On the contrary, the Demonic Beast Leather Pouch intrigued him. It looked like uniquely shaped scale armor and emitted a genuine demonic aura when worn.

Naturally, he didn't dare to sleep that night. Instead, Chu Liang spent the hours practicing Qi Circulation Technique, restoring his mental state. He knew he could sleep peacefully once he returned to Silver Sword Peak.

As the light gradually intensified and noises filled the air, he pushed the door open and stepped outside.

As soon as he stepped out, a wave of fear and unrest washed over him. The long street was deserted, no one daring to venture out.

He received news from the people in the medicinal hall.

The Blazing Fire Gang and the Sun and Moon Pavilion were going to war!

Chapter 386: Fight?

When Chu Liang asked Xu Zhiyin about what was going on, the young lady's face was filled with fear.

"Before dawn, news broke from the south of the city that the Sun and Moon Pavilion had gathered their forces and were marching here. The vice-chief was prepared as she swiftly rallied her troops to confront them. Now, a significant standoff is happening on the front street... it seems to be a Deathmatch Arena instead of a full-scale war. If it were an actual battle, many in Python Belly City would perish," she murmured.

The term "Deathmatch Arena" piqued Chu Liang's interest and he only understood after Xu Zhiyin had explained to him.

In Python Belly City, medical supplies were scarce, and every skirmish resulted in heavy casualties. Cultivators, martial artists, and even demons often met their end. The balance of power in the city was maintained by these three forces. If two factions were gravely wounded, the third would surely seize the opportunity.

Over time, the city came up with the Deathmatch Arena rule.

Minor skirmishes were ignored, but for major disputes, each faction would send three champions to fight in the Deathmatch Arena, with the best of three rounds determining the winner. Each member was only allowed to participate in one match per year.

The victorious side would be declared the winner and could claim the contested item, preventing widespread bloodshed.

After hearing this, Chu Liang said, "I'll go check out the commotion."

"Young Hero Chu, it's very dangerous over there. You had a conflict with the Sun and Moon Pavilion people yesterday..." Xu Zhiyin's voice was laced with worry as she tried to dissuade Chu Liang.

Chu Liang gave a reassuring smile. "It's alright, I know my limits."

He wanted to check out the scene because this large-scale confrontation meant that most of the members from both parties would be present. Lin Bei had arrived with him yesterday, and as a cultivator, it was likely he had been recruited by the Sun and Moon Pavilion. By heading to the scene, Chu Liang might be able to find him.

Hearing this, Xu Zhiyin relented and urged, "Stay safe then."

The battlefield of cultivators and martial artists was not one that ordinary people dared to approach. There was a risk of getting caught in the deadly aftermath even if one was watching from a distance.

As Chu Liang stepped out of the medicinal hall, he extended his divine sense, scanning the surroundings. Soon, he located this street in which the sky was dark, as if covered by gloomy clouds, with flames of qi rising into the air.

The residents near the long street had already evacuated. Those on the periphery were calmly moving their belongings. The people of Python Belly City were clearly accustomed to such events and well-versed in the course of actions.

Chu Liang quietly slipped into a house through a window and peeked out from another window at the long street.

The scene was indeed quite spectacular!

On the Blazing Fire Gang's side, there were five to six hundred people. A large number of robust martial artists filled half the street, their figures even visible on the rooftops.

These martial artists couldn't all be outsiders. Given the scale of Python Belly City's population, it was likely that every individual with the potential to master martial arts had joined one of these factions.

It was a natural outcome. Those born with talent in such a place couldn't afford to let it go to waste. There was no need for the faction to convince them to join as they would proactively seek to learn for the sake of keeping oneself safe.

Among the few hundred martial artists gathered, many were true experts. At this moment, their vigorous qi and vitality combined, sending a powerful surge of yang energy skyward!

On the opposite side, about a hundred cultivators stood, either balanced on their swords or hovering in mid-air. Their sharp auras matched the martial artists' intensity, neither side yielding an inch.

The leader on the Blazing Fire Gang's side was naturally the vice-chief from yesterday. Despite being a woman, she commanded this group of strong men with effortless authority.

She rode a saber-toothed liger beast that was ten zhang tall. With a crimson crescent blade strapped to her back, she exuded an air of unparalleled might!

On the opposite side, the Sun and Moon Pavilion made a grand entrance. Four giant elephants, engulfed in flames, marched forward, carrying a luxurious carriage that resembled a pavilion.

Constructing such a lavish carriage in Python Belly City was a testament to their top-tier prestige.

Four cultivators, their divine light subdued, stood around the carriage. At first glance, they exuded an aura of formidable power.

From Chu Liang's perspective, they seemed to be on par with him, if not stronger, at least in terms of cultivation level.

Yesterday, Chu Liang learned from Xu Zhiyin about Elder Yin, the master of the Sun and Moon Pavilion. Elder Yin, having arrived here a hundred years ago, was the person in Python Belly City who had lived the longest.

Unfortunately, in this place, it was almost impossible to advance in cultivation. No matter how long he stayed here, he couldn't achieve a breakthrough and could only watch his lifespan slowly diminish.

The Sun and Moon Pavilion he established had a clear hierarchy with four levels.

The first level comprised various cultivators, most of whom were present at the moment. The second level included the minor leaders. The third level was reserved for four individuals—Elder Yin's most trusted subordinates who were also his adopted sons. Elder Yin stood alone at the fourth level.

Now, it seemed that the individuals surrounding the luxurious carriage were the third-level experts of the Sun and Moon Pavilion.

The brocade-robed man from the previous day was among them. He was one of Elder Yin's adopted sons, which explained his arrogance. However, among the four, he stood at the rear of the carriage, signifying that while he held some status, it wasn't particularly high.

Tension filled the air.

With both sides presenting such formidable formations, it was clear that neither would back down easily.

After a while, the vice-chief of the Blazing Fire Gang urged her saber-toothed liger forward and shouted, "Elder Yin, making such a grand entrance into our territory, are you trying to start a war?!"

A man in white stepped forward from the carriage and replied with disdain, "Tell Hua Zhengshan to show up and talk to my father."

"Hmph," the vice-chief retorted, "You worthless lot aren't worthy of our leader's presence."

"Is it that we're unworthy, or that Hua Zhengshan can't come out?" a deep, aged voice suddenly boomed from the carriage.

Whoosh.

A light breeze lifted the curtain, revealing an old, withered face inside.

An old man in loose robes leaned on the carriage, looking lean and weathered, as if he were at death's door. Yet, his eyes blazed with a terrifying brightness, like the final flames of life.

"If it's a fight you want, the Blazing Fire Gang is never afraid!" the vice-chief shouted. "But if you have other nonsense to spout, you may as well leave!"

"Hehe..." Elder Yin chuckled, then spoke clearly, "Hua Zhengshan tried to escape Python Belly City but was caught by the city lord's guardians. He's imprisoned in the northern iron prison. I saw it with my own eyes! No one has ever come out of there..."

"Ah?"

At these words, the Blazing Fire Gang erupted in an uproar.

The vice-chief's gaze darkened sharply.

She knew about this, but it had never been made public. Now, with Elder Yin suddenly revealing it, the Blazing Fire Gang's formation was disrupted before the battle even began.

But as the backbone of the Blazing Fire Gang, she showed no panic. "Even without our leader, we still have over six hundred brothers who can guarantee that you won't return home! You can test it out if you don't believe me!"

It was a very blunt response that avoided any unnecessary chatter. All she did was ask if they had the nerve to fight.

"Hmph." Elder Yin shook his head lightly. "If we start a full-scale war without Hua Zhengshan, the demon race will surely take advantage of this situation. I came today to discuss something important with you."

"Is this how you start a discussion?" the vice-chief retorted, raising her crescent blade and pointing it at the opposing formation.

"If I didn't approach it this way, I fear this discussion would end in failure," Elder Yin replied with a smile. He then added, "A few of my incompetent subordinates went to the medicinal hall to kill some of your Blazing Fire Gang members, but they were stopped by a young swordsman. If you hand over that young man, we can consider this matter resolved, and I promise not to make things difficult for you anymore."

Huh?

A young swordsman in the medicinal hall?

Chu Liang, who was peeking from the side, blinked in surprise. How did he suddenly get mentioned while he was just watching the commotion? This old man seemed to have a sharp eye for picking out people.

"You said he's not a member of the Blazing Fire Gang, so I can't do this for you," the vice-chief immediately refused. "Even if he were one of us, I wouldn't hand him over to you. Forget about it."

"Haaaa..." Elder Yin sighed and said, "Then have your people step aside and let my Sun and Moon Pavilion members enter the eastern area of the city to find him."

"Dream on!" The vice-chief shouted again, "Today, you have only two choices: either go back to where you came from, or fight!"

Chu Liang thought that this vice-chief was a person of much integrity. Despite having a grudge against his esteemed teacher, she did not betray him.

Of course, he knew that the vice-chief was not just protecting him but also upholding the authority of the Blazing Fire Gang. With their leader absent, the gang's morale depended entirely on her. If she showed any weakness in front of the enemy, their morale would immediately plummet.

At that time, the Sun and Moon Pavilion could easily break and dismantle the Blazing Fire Gang.

This old man seemed to be discussing things amicably, but in reality, he harbored malicious intentions. Nevertheless, the vice-chief didn't fall for it.

"Since that's the case, I suppose we have no choice...but to fight?" Elder Yin muttered with a helpless expression.

As soon as these words were uttered, all the cultivators behind him drew their flying swords! In an instant, the air was filled with the deafening clang of steel against steel.

Sword qi erupted in every direction!

The vice-chief also shouted loudly, "Fight!"

On the Blazing Fire Gang's side, weapons were unsheathed, and flames of qi burst into the sky, painting the horizon with fire.

A great battle would happen at any moment!

At this critical moment, Chu Liang could no longer stay hidden. He sprang into the center of the chaos, his voice cutting through the noise, "Wait!"

In the blink of an eye, he appeared between the two factions. As he faced the cultivators from the Sun and Moon Pavilion, he called out, "I heard you're looking for me?"

Elder Yin glanced at the brocade-robed man beside him, the same one who had been taught a lesson by Chu Liang yesterday.

The brocade-robed man immediately nodded fervently. "Elder Yin, it's him..."

He pointed at Chu Liang, only to find Chu Liang's gaze fixed on him. As their eyes met, he quickly looked away in fear.

"Impressive," Elder Yin said, smiling at Chu Liang instead of ordering an attack. "For a young man to have such cultivation, it's truly remarkable. I hear you possess a top-grade flying sword. May I take a look?"

Hmm? So his target was the Dustless Sword? Chu Liang pondered for a moment.

He had revealed himself to prevent both sides from starting a war over him. After all, he hadn't formed any deep grudge with them; he had merely killed a giant elephant yesterday. Surely, there was nothing that couldn't be resolved through discussion.

And with his current cultivation, even if negotiations failed and he truly wanted to escape, those cultivators might not be able to stop him.

But upon hearing this, he realized that the old man was interested in his flying sword,

This was something he couldn't give away...

In actuality, when the group of cultivators returned yesterday, they were too embarrassed to admit that their own cultivation levels were too weak, having had their flying swords broken by just one person. Instead, they told Elder Yin that Chu Liang's sword was extraordinarily powerful, exaggerating its strength to the point of claiming it was one of the top ten treasures in the Catalog of the Mortal World's Ten Thousand Treasures.

Elder Yin then examined the broken swords' blades and sensed a trace of familiar qi...

This struck a chord with him, aligning perfectly with something that had been weighing on his mind.

This was why he made such a grand entrance today, hoping to enter the eastern area of the city to locate someone.

In fact, he was searching for a particular sword.

Chu Liang had no idea of what had happened behind the scenes. All he knew was that Elder Yin seemed to be scheming in Python Belly City and coveting his Dustless Sword.

If my teacher were here, she would never allow you to act so presumptuously for such a long time. She would have already broken your cane! How dare you covet my treasure? No way, not a chance! Chu Liang thought. Even though these were his thoughts, he said, "Esteemed Senior, it's not that I'm stingy. The fact is, I am poor, and this flying sword is my only means of survival after all these years of cultivation. It's really not something I can easily lend to others."

Elder Yin frowned slightly and asked, "No room for negotiation?"

The threat in his tone was obvious. Hearing this, Chu Liang smiled and said, "How about this? Let's follow the rules of Python Belly City and have a Deathmatch Arena."

"Hmm?" Elder Yin stared at Chu Liang's face.

"I will fight on my own. You can send three people to challenge me one-on-one in three matches. If I lose just one match, I'll hand over the flying sword. If you lose, then please return the way you

came and the Sun and Moon Pavilion people shall not set foot in the eastern area of the city for a year!"

Even as Chu Liang faced the numerous members of the Sun and Moon Pavilion alone, he remained fearless, issuing his challenge with a smile.

Elder Yin stared at him for a moment. Then, he nodded gently and said, "Nice one! As expected of the youngsters! Such vigor and energy! Very well. We shall do as you say!"

Chapter 387: Be Careful of His

"All right. In that case, we—the Blazing Fire Gang—will serve as witnesses!" the vice-chief said from behind Chu Liang. "Elder Yin, you've agreed on a duel. If the Sun and Moon Pavilion doesn't play fair, then we won't either."

"Rest assured," Elder Yin replied softly. "I've been around for so many years, but I still want to maintain my image."

The crowd parted, creating a large area in the middle to serve as a temporary arena. Thousands of eyes were fixed on the arena, making the atmosphere quite intense.

Chu Liang stood quietly in the center.

He had proposed to have a Deathmatch Arena match because he had no other choice. The other party clearly wasn't going to let the matter go, and Python Belly City wasn't large enough for him to have somewhere to hide. It would be better to settle things right then and there.

Proposing this challenge might seem bold, but in reality, the other party's biggest advantage was their numbers. Chu Liang removed that advantage by suggesting to have duels. If Elder Yin refused, the Sun and Moon Pavilion would lose face in front of everyone.

Elder Yin was obviously determined to get the Dustless Sword, but Chu Liang's challenge put him in a difficult position. Nevertheless, he didn't think Chu Liang could win.

The aura that Chu Liang released when he landed was at best that of a cultivator at the peak of the fourth realm. On the other hand, three of Elder Yin's four adopted sons were at the fifth realm.

Except for his most disappointing adopted son... the brocade-robed man that Chu Liang taught a lesson yesterday... the others were all at one realm higher than Chu Liang. If it wasn't for their resources being cut off due to entering Python Belly City, they would have been able to achieve a much higher level of cultivation.

Elder Yin thought, Even if you manage to win one match by luck, can you win three in a row?

"Yin Tian, you go first," Elder Yin ordered.

"Yes, Father!"

There was a young man in a black robe with a jade belt standing on the carriage shaft. He immediately accepted Elder Yin's order and looked at Chu Liang with a fierce gaze.

"Third Brother, be careful of his powerful flying sword!" the brocade-robed man loudly reminded from the side.

"I know," replied Yin Tian, the black-robed young man.

He then flew down to the arena.

Everyone around held their breath, attentively watching the two people in the arena.

Chu Liang cupped his hands together in greeting. "I'm Chu Liang from the Mount Shu Sect."

"I'm Yin Tian from the Sun and Moon Pavilion," Yin Tian responded coldly. "You go first."

"Me first?" Chu Liang smiled. "Are you letting me have the advantage?"

"You're at a lower realm. I don't want others to say I won unfairly."

Seems he is an honest man, Chu Liang thought.

He then nodded and said, "In that case, I'll gladly accept it."

Chu Liang summoned the Dustless Sword, and a beam of sword light whistled through the air, transforming into hundreds of swordlights!

He started with the Thousand Swords Seal to test the waters.

On the carriage, Elder Yin's eyes lit up the moment he saw the Dustless Sword. "That's right. This is the flying sword that's imbued with the essence of the Cloud Sword..."

Swish, swish, swish—

Countless shadows of swords descended from midair like falling rain.

Despite that, Yin Tian showed no fear. He stomped his right foot on the black-rock ground, and his longsword flew out too. It transformed into three thousand beams of swordlights, clashing with Chu Liang's swordlights!

Yin Tian's longsword was an excellent flying sword and a rare item in Python Belly City. Nevertheless, it was still far inferior to the Dustless Sword.

In a situation where both of them had Geng Metal foundational qi infused into their swords, Yin Tian's swordlights shattered upon making contact with Chu Liang's. Yin Tian suddenly found himself at a disadvantage, and all he could do was besiege Chu Liang's swordlights with a greater number of his own.

The two young men were like commanding generals leading their armies in battle. One commanded a thousand mounted soldiers, and the other commanded three thousand brave foot soldiers; they were evenly matched.

Right then, Chu Liang leaped. The general was joining the fray!

Yin Tian was a little surprised. He had to place his full focus on manipulating his swordlights to fight against Chu Liang's swordlights, yet Chu Liang was effortlessly controlling the Thousand Swords Seal. On top of that, he even launched an attack on Yin Tian.

A feeling of doubt surfaced in Yin Tian's mind. Is it a bluff?

Nevertheless, Yin Tian responded cautiously, immediately pulling back three hundred swordlights to defend himself. Simultaneously, he used the sword in his right hand to draw something in the air.

At the next moment, a powerful whirlwind formed from the ground, surrounding him protectively.

How would Chu Liang tackle Yin Tian's heavy defenses?

He did nothing.

A moment ago, he activated the Secret Dragon Blood Technique and the Divine Dragons' Great Blood-Burning Technique, causing blood-colored qi flames and smoke to emerge from all over his body. Furthermore, his Geng Metal foundational qi circulated throughout his body.

A fourth-realm cultivator's version of the fifth-realm Metallic Body was not weak at all.

Chu Liang charged straight through the Hundred Swords Seal head-on!

A hint of hesitation flashed in Yin Tian's eyes, but right after that, he ruthlessly directed his flying sword at Chu Liang.

Swish, swish, swish—

Hundreds of flying swords sliced through the air but hit nothing.

Whoosh.

Chu Liang suddenly appeared in front of Yin Tian.

Yin Tian thought, This is... that legendary immortal art? It's Dimension Compression!

Chu Liang flitted through the cluster of swordlights. His sword remained in the sky, and in his right hand was instead half a gold brick.

In a panic, Yin Tian could only concentrate his Geng Metal foundational qi on his head.

You have a gold brick, but I have a Metallic Body! My Metallic Body is as hard as your brick.

Yin Tian's Metallic Body was indeed just as hard as the Demon-Revealing Brick.

However... Chu Liang's form as a humanoid divine dragon was famous for a reason.

Chu Liang slammed his brick into Yin Tian's right temple with a bang, sending him flying dozens of zhang... Yin Tian crashed through two black-rock houses before landing in the rubble.

The crowd fell into a stunned silence. Brutal.

A moment later, the crowd broke into a clamor.

"Third Brother!"

"Third Brother!"

"Third Young Master!"

"What kind of weapon is that?"

"It seems to be half a brick? How can it be so powerful?"

"It actually sent the third young master of the Sun and Moon Pavilion flying... Oh, heavens."

"..."

A group of people pulled Yin Tian out of the rubble and treated his injuries by circulating his qi. After that, they woke him up.

Yin Tian had suffered such a heavy blow that when he woke, his head was buzzing, and he felt as if the world was spinning. Nevertheless, he didn't forget to kneel before Elder Yin's carriage.

Yin Tian cried out, "I, your son, have lost. Please punish me, Father!"

"Victory and defeat are common in battle. Don't take it too hard," the person in front of him consoled. "Also, I'm Laosi. Father is to your left."

"Eh?"

Yin Tian raised his head and exerted all his strength to lean closer toward the carriage. He then realized he had indeed knelt in front of the wrong person...

Elder Yin's smile disappeared, and he said, "Yin Kuo, go duel him... Don't underestimate him."

"That's right." Yin Tian scrambled to his feet. "Second Brother, be careful of his powerful flying sword and brick!"

"I know," Yin Kuo replied.

He was the white-robed man who had been speaking with the Blazing Fire Gang's vice-chief earlier. Yin Kuo had high brows and broad eyes on a deep-set face.

Yin Kuo stepped before Chu Liang, cupped his hands together, and introduced himself. "I'm Yin Kuo from the Sun and Moon Pavilion. Shall we just begin?"

Chu Liang nodded. "Yes."

The previous fight had ended too quickly. He had used basically no energy to defeat his previous opponent.

During the time that members of the Sun and Moon Pavilion spent treating Yin Tian, Chu Liang's Sea of Qi had already replenished.

With two ultimate-tier Golden Cores and three Large-Headed Dolls, what seemed like a one-on-one match was actually six against one. Chu Liang alone was an entire army!

Yin Kuo wasted no time on unnecessary words. He raised his hands and made a series of hand seals, conjuring a complex inscription seal overhead.

A black cloud of qi suddenly appeared above Yin Kuo. Golden streaks flashed about within it like a golden dragon roaming the skies.

Chu Liang senses tingled a little, indicating this was something that could be dangerous.

It appeared that Yin Kuo specialized in lightning techniques. As long as Chu Liang got within three meters of Yin Kuo, lightning would descend from that cloud. Yin Kuo seemed to be guarding against close combat.

In the face of Yin Kuo's defenses, Chu Liang did not press forward.

While Yin Kuo had been making the hand seals, Chu Liang had made good use of his time. He gathered his foundational qi to unleash the Heaven-Raising Sword he had just gained a greater understanding of!

Boom.

He started off with an offensive immortal art!

Yin Kuo narrowed his eyes. How could someone who was clearly at the fourth realm release such a powerful divine sword seal?

The Heaven-Raising Sword's power terrified everyone present. They cowered toward the ground, afraid of being harmed by the sword qi.

Yin Kuo gritted his teeth and pointed upward, summoning his flying sword. He decided to use his strongest sword seal.

In a split second, a golden lightning dragon[1] coiled around Yin Kuo's flying sword and flew forth with a whoosh!

What a swift sword!

Chu Liang was a little surprised.

Despite being released after the Heaven-Raising Sword, Yin Kuo's Golden Radiance Sword Seal reached Chu Liang way before his Heaven-Raising Sword reached Yin Kuo.

Chu Liang hadn't even seen the trajectory of the golden light and had to pick a side to dodge on the spot.

Swoosh.

Using Dimension Compression, Chu Liang narrowly evaded the lightning-fast sword.

However, Yin Kuo's sword didn't stop there. After missing its mark, the sword split into nine golden lightning dragons! They all turned and shot toward Chu Liang!

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh—

Chu Liang couldn't just keep using Dimension Compression to dodge the attacks.

How long will I have to dodge for?

He raised his hand and summoned the Green Leaf Umbrella.

Clang, clang, clang...

A golden dragon struck the umbrella and sent bursts of electricity up Chu Liang's arm, numbing it.

Fortunately, the umbrella had been made using the Green Leaf as its base, so it absorbed and neutralized much of the electric charge in that golden dragon. If the umbrella were an iron umbrella, Chu Liang would have been struck by the golden dragon and left paralyzed.

Meanwhile, Yin Kuo's situation wasn't much better.

When the Heaven-Raising Sword approached him, a lightning storm descended from the black cloud above him, blocking the giant swordlight. However, this was the top immortal art for slaying. How could it be stopped so easily? Chu Liang had not perfected his execution yet, but it was good enough to put Yin Kuo in a dangerous situation!

In the end, Yin Kuo brought the black cloud down and leaped back, letting the cloud take its place.

Rumble—

The black cloud and the Heaven-Raising Sword exploded, causing an earthquake-like tremor that shook half of Python Belly City.

In the chaos, the two men were suddenly less than ten zhang apart.

Chu Liang had been deliberately closing the distance between them...

The umbrella in Chu Liang's hand had disappeared, replaced by a beam of green light that looked like a saber blade. Then he threw the blade into the sky.

Huh? Yin Kuo's first reaction was confusion. Where is he throwing the flying saber? It's just a random throw...?

Then...

Swoosh.

The next thought Yin Kuo had was that his back hurt a little...

"Ah!" Yin Kuo screamed as the Razor Leaf struck his back, causing him to fall to the ground.

Nonetheless, that wasn't enough to incapacitate him.

Chu Liang stepped forward and manipulated the Razor Leaf, pulling it out of Yin Kuo's back. Then Chu Liang had the Razor Leaf transform into a green snake, intending to use it to restrain Yin Kuo.

"Hissssss."

The green snake soared into the air and bared its fangs!

At this critical moment, a hand suddenly reached out from behind Yin Kuo and grabbed the green snake, swiftly rendering the enchanted tool immobile. The green snake struggled against the hand's grip, but it couldn't break free.

It turned out that the hand belonged to a tall, broad-shouldered middle-aged man with chiseled facial features. Just looking at him made Yin Kuo feel at ease.

This man was the first young master of the Sun and Moon Pavilion, Yin Guang!

"Eldest Brother..." Yin Kuo uttered as he struggled to get up.

The wound on his back wasn't serious, but it left him feeling very aggrieved.

How did things end up this way?

Yin Kuo couldn't figure it out.

"You're injured. Go tend to your injury. Leave this to me," Yin Guang said in his deep voice.

With a light flick, he tossed the green snake back toward Chu Liang. The green snake reverted to its original form, the Green Leaf, in midair.

Chu Liang caught the Green Leaf and gently put it away.

Before leaving the arena, Yin Kuo reminded his brother, "Eldest Brother, be careful of his flying sword, brick, and flying saber... They're powerful."

Chapter 388: Killing on the Street

As a gentle breeze swept through the venue, it whisked away the lingering dust and smoke, allowing them to drift back down and settle once more.

"You indeed have extraordinary skills," said Yin Guang. "Even though you were aided by enchanted tools, you managed to consecutively defeat my second brother and third brother. Your cultivation level is remarkable. You must be the head disciple of the Mount Shu Sect."

"Second," Chu Liang said with a chuckle.

Yin Guang was taken aback and asked, "Is there a prodigy even more powerful than you in the Mount Shu Sect?"

He then sighed and said, "It seems I have indeed been stuck in this place for too long. Back then, Mount Shu was the weakest among the Divine Nine."

Chu Liang wanted to say that not much had changed and that this might only change after the upcoming Assembly of Immortal Sects. However, as he thought more into it, he realized that he might not even make it to the Assembly... Regardless, it was better to deal with the current situation first.

"I'm Yin Guang from the Sun and Moon Pavilion," the man in front of Chu Liang said, cupping his hands together.

Suddenly, an overwhelming wave of qi pressed forward.

Chu Liang felt suffocated and immediately sensed the vast difference between Yin Guang and his previous two opponents.

The previous two were only at the first and second levels of the fifth realm, respectively. They were at the beginning stage of the fifth realm. Yin Guang, however, was at least at the fourth or fifth level of the fifth realm. He had built a strong foundation, and the pressure unleashed by his aura was immense.

He was a formidable opponent.

Chu Liang's expression turned serious as he started observing his opponent.

Instead of letting Chu Liang attack first, Yin Guang suddenly struck forward... or rather, it was more like a powerful stomp.

Boom—

As his foot landed, the black rock around him suddenly shattered into pieces, transforming into countless sharp stone arrows!

This was his legendary weapon made from nature.

Swish, swish, swish, swish, swish—

The stone arrows rained down, thousands launching simultaneously! There was nowhere to hide!

Chu Liang could no longer rely on the Green Leaf umbrella to block them, as each stone arrow carried the immense weight of a thousand jun[1]. The Green Leaf umbrella was too fragile to withstand such heavy blows.

Boom!

In an instant, a massive shield that towered above Chu Liang appeared in his hands!

Clang, clang, clang, clang, clang...

The scattered stone arrows struck the shield, producing deep, resonant sounds like the ringing of an ancient bell.

Even with the massive shield and Chu Liang's strength, resisting the relentless barrage of stone arrows was a struggle. Each impact pushed both him and the heavy shield back.

The rain of stone arrows continued for a moment before finally stopping.

Chu Liang barely had time to catch his breath behind the shield when another thunderous "boom" reverberated through the air.

Yin Guang stomped the ground once more.

This time, the black rock took on the shape of long stone pillars instead of arrows.

Boom—

The stone pillar shot forward like a battering ram, smashing into the heavy shield with tremendous force! It was a clash of two blunt forces!

The heavy shield was hammered several zhang away!

I can't continue this way. No matter how durable the shield is, it would eventually be shattered by the hammering, Chu Liang thought.

With a determined grit, he leaped out from behind the shield!

Yin Guang was about to strike again when he saw Chu Liang, Dustless Sword in hand, launching himself from behind the shield.

With a blank expression, Yin Guang lifted his foot and stomped again, conjuring a stone spear and hurling it towards Chu Liang!

Chu Liang slashed with his sword in mid-air while dodging to the side, narrowly avoiding the attack.

At the same instant, another Chu Liang, wielding half a gold brick, leaped out from behind the shield!

Boom!

Amidst the sudden changes, Yin Guang remained unflustered, launching another stone spear, which Chu Liang narrowly dodged upon landing.

From behind the shield, another Chu Liang burst out, gripping a Shark Spine Halberd, with yet another right behind him, wielding the Crimson Executioner sword.

Although Chu Liang seemed to have many weapons, it still wasn't enough as each clone needed one. The last one that charged forward bare-handed.

The five Chu Liangs lunged forward, surrounding Yin Guang.

The group assault didn't faze Yin Guang at all. With a wave of his hands, debris from the battlefield soared into the air, swirling around him like a protective barrier. But as Chu Liang drew closer, Yin Guang abruptly dropped his hands, ready for the real clash.

A heavy ring of stones flew out once more!

But then, the five Chu Liangs suddenly unleashed intense waves of qi!

The wave of qi unleashed was so powerful.

For the first time in the fight, Yin Guang's face showed a flicker of surprise.

He couldn't hide his astonishment as Chu Liang activated the Celestial Trap formation!

The combination of the Army of Beans and the Celestial Trap had always been Chu Liang's strongest combat method at this stage.

The air around them compressed suddenly!

The flying stones dropped one by one as Chu Liang and his clones precisely struck them with their weapons and bare fists!

Despite Yin Guang's sturdy physique, he was no martial artist. He sensed something was wrong with the very first hit.

Why did it hurt so much?

He had assumed his third brother was struck down because the brick was powerful. Only when he felt the impact himself did he realize it was because this kid was incredibly strong!

It was absurdly strong.

Boom—

It was another punch.

Yin Guang found himself surrounded by the five Chu Liangs and was knocked down after a flurry of hits, followed by a brutal round of kicks...

The Blazing Fire Gang and Sun and Moon Pavilion members around were momentarily stunned, frozen in place.

Is this the power of enchanted tools and divine abilities? It was simply overwhelming.

It was clear to everyone that Chu Liang's cultivation level was far below Yin Guang's, yet with his powerful enchanted tools and divine abilities, he had managed to completely knock down the young master of the Sun and Moon Pavilion!

Not only were the Sun and Moon Pavilion members in shock, but even the Blazing Fire Gang members couldn't help but eye him with ill intentions.

"This kid is loaded with valuable items."

"Killing one like him would be enough for everyone in the city to feast for half a year."

The continuous sounds of pounding and thumping echoed. Chu Liang did not hold back. The only thing he had yet to do was stab with the Dustless Sword. Yet, Yin Guang didn't utter a single cry. He was truly a real man.

"Enough!"

After a while, it was Elder Yin from the carriage who shouted and only then did Chu Liang stop.

With an innocent smile on his face, he retrieved the Puppet Pills and stood calmly on the spot. It was as if the person who had been frantically kicking just a moment ago had nothing to do with him.

Yin Guang lay on the ground, struggling for a long time before getting up. He staggered back to the carriage and slowly said, "Father, I am sorry. He... is really strong."

The other brothers quickly helped him over and they all sat together to treat their wounds together.

Elder Yin looked at Chu Liang for a long time before finally saying, "You won. For the next year, none of our Sun and Moon Pavilion members will set foot in the eastern part of the city."

"Elder Yin, you are a man of your word. I admire that," Chu Liang complimented.

"But if there's a chance, I still hope to talk with you..." Elder Yin seemed to want to say something but stopped, finally saying, "Forget it, it's no use talking here."

While speaking, Chu Liang looked at the brocade-robed man and curiously asked, "The names of the other three combined mean broad, vast, sky.[2]... What's your name?"

The brocade-robed man glanced at Chu Liang nervously and subconsciously answered, "My name is Yin Laosi.[3]"

I see. Chu Liang nodded.

Indeed. These names truly contained Elder Yin's hopes for them.

Even while they stay in Python Belly City, they must keep their sights set on the vast world beyond.

...

Just as the two sides were about to disperse, a shout came from behind: "The Dragon Cavalry is coming!"

"Ahhhh—"

A wave of panic surged through the crowd.

The previous standoff between the Blazing Fire Gang and the Sun and Moon Pavilion hadn't frightened the crowd as much as this did. Now, everyone was extremely terrified.

What was happening?

Almost everyone rushed to hide in nearby buildings, and those who couldn't hide immediately knelt on the ground. In an instant, almost no one dared to remain in the open.

Although Chu Liang didn't understand what was coming, he was in the center of the chaos. With a quick movement, he joined a group of Blazing Fire Gang members in a nearby building.

"Brothers, what's happening?" he asked curiously.

"Shh—"

" A burly man next to him, his eyes trembling, raised a finger to his lips, signaling Chu Liang to be quiet, and then whispered, "The Dragon Cavalry... they're the city lord's guardians and envoys..."

Although there were over thousands of people hiding here, it was so eerily quiet that you could hear a pin drop.

Clip-clop, clip-clop, clip-clop...

The sound of hooves echoed ominously, growing louder with each passing second.

Chu Liang then saw eight horses appear in his line of sight.

These weren't ordinary horses—they were draconic descendants, covered in black scales with vertical pupils that burned with flames. In addition, the bloodline of these draconic descendants seemed rather pure.

The riders on these majestic beasts were anything but ordinary.

They had dragon heads and human bodies!

Their towering, muscular frames bore formidable dragon heads. There was a patch of silver scale on their foreheads and their flame-flickering eyes exuded this iciness.

They wore black armor and strapped a sharp saber at their waist.

A team of eight knights slowly rode down the long street.

Chu Liang thought they looked familiar. They seemed to be from the Jimeng Clan, a legendary lineage of draconic descendants.

He had encountered a dead one before in the Blue Dragon Hidden Realm.

Everyone who hadn't managed to hide in time was already kneeling on the ground, heads bowed low. No one dared to look directly at the Dragon Cavalry.

The Jimeng Clansmen rode their black-scaled draconic horses to the center of the street.

One of the riders raised his voice and declared, "Hua Zhengshan of the Blazing Fire Gang has offended the authority of the heavens. He will be executed here tomorrow at noon."

"Ah? Chief..." Someone couldn't help but glance up at the Dragon Cavalry.

No one pleaded for mercy; they merely risked a quick glance.

The Dragon Calvarymen suddenly drew their sabers!

Swish, swish, swish, swish—

In an instant, four or five men were beheaded by the flash of the sabers. Blood splattered as their heads flew from their bodies. The remaining onlookers didn't dare to resist; they immediately buried their faces deeply in the blood-soaked ground.

They didn't dare to look directly at the Dragon Calvary.

They were killed on the street.

Witnessing the brutality and ruthlessness of the Dragon Cavalry made Chu Liang frown.

After delivering their message and executing the men, the Dragon Cavalry sheathed their sabers, turned around, and slowly headed back to the north of the city.

The silence felt like death.

It wasn't until they had been gone for a while that anyone dared to lift their heads, only to collapse to the ground in despair.

...

After seeing off the Sun and Moon Pavilion members, Chu Liang turned to face the Blazing Fire Gang.

Winning three rounds against the Sun and Moon Pavilion would have been a cause for celebration. However, this victory was overshadowed by the Dragon Cavalry's killing spree. It casted a dark shadow over the event and left the Blazing Fire Gang members mostly silent.

Chu Liang bowed and said, "Thank you, vice-chief, for not selling me out just now."

Logically, the vice-chief, being someone who held a grudge against his esteemed teacher, was not obligated to help him out. If it wasn't because of the Blazing Fire Gang, the Sun and Moon Pavilion wouldn't have to agree to a duel.

The vice-chief glanced around and suddenly called out to Chu Liang, "Come with me,"

She led him toward an intact stone house nearby.

What for...

Chu Liang felt a bit uneasy, but since she called him, he had to follow her step by step.

Inside the stone house, the vice-chief turned around.

Chu Liang hurriedly offered the Shark Spine Halberd and said, "I have nothing to repay you with, so I present this weapon to your gang as a token of gratitude."

In the resource-poor Python Belly City, such a fine weapon was a dream come true for many martial artists. To Chu Liang, the Shark Spine Halberd didn't mean much, but to the Blazing Fire Gang, it was very valuable.

The vice-chief took the weapon, set it aside, and then said, "I called you here to tell you a secret. Whether you agree to do it or not, you must not tell another soul about it."

"Okay," Chu Liang solemnly agreed, a bit nervous inside, not knowing what she wanted him to agree to.

After all, he had already given his thank-you gift.

The vice-chief leaned in, her voice low and urgent. "I know you want to leave. Actually, there is a way out of the Python Belly City..."

Chapter 389: Get The Fuck Out Here

Chu Liang's eyes widened. "Oh?"

The moment the vice-chief brought up this topic, he became intrigued.

He had two major concerns on his mind: Lin Bei's safety and finding a way out of this place.

Locating Lin Bei shouldn't be too difficult. Python Belly City wasn't that big. If he couldn't find him today, he would find him tomorrow, assuming nothing bad had happened. With Lin Bei's ability to blend in anywhere, he'd probably already adapted to life here in just an hour. His knack for fitting in made the chances of him running into trouble pretty slim.

Most of the city's inhabitants understood the importance of newcomers, viewing them as essential sources of fresh energy. They wouldn't exploit their knowledge to harm the newcomers; such behavior was frowned upon. Because of this, Chu Liang wasn't overly worried about Lin Bei.

However, the prospect of finding an exit was a different story. No one had ever escaped from Python Belly City. What made him think he could be the first?

When the vice-chief unexpectedly mentioned the possibility, Chu Liang's demeanor changed instantly and he listened solemnly.

"It's not just you. Everyone feels the same when they first arrive," the vice-chief said, her face darkening. "Who wants to spend their entire life in the belly of a python, in this dark, barren place? But there's no other choice."

Chu Liang nodded, understanding the grim reality.

The vice-chief continued, "Some people have never given up trying to find a way out, and our chief is one of them. He's been searching relentlessly for twenty years and finally discovered a possible exit. He tried, but he failed."

"So where exactly is this exit?" Chu Liang couldn't help but ask.

"I don't know," the vice-chief replied, shaking her head. "The chief never mentioned it to us; he was quietly exploring on his own."

"Only he knows?" Chu Liang looked skeptical. Could she be trying to manipulate him into saving their chief?

The vice-chief seemed to read his thoughts. "This is absolutely true. Anyone caught attempting to escape would be executed by the city lord, and anyone who knows about it but doesn't report it would be killed too. There have been countless such incidents. The chief feared that if he failed, it would bring disaster to the entire Blazing Fire Gang. I believe that if he confirms that there's an exit, he'll come for us all and take us out of this place."

As Chu Liang pondered her words, he sensed that she wasn't lying. If she knew where the exit was, she wouldn't be stuck here; she would have escaped herself.

Moreover, under the terrifying rule of the City Lord's Residence, even if the chief found clues about the exit, he wouldn't share them immediately. If word got out, someone might betray him. Doubts would always linger in the air.

In any case, this was his only choice; he had to give it a try.

"So, if I want to find the exit, what should I do?" Chu Liang asked.

The vice-chief's expression turned grave. "You've guessed it. I plan to save the chief," she said. "I haven't informed the entire Blazing Fire Gang, just the brothers who started out with us. If you want to leave, come with us... to grab him from the execution ground."

Whoa. This was truly the behavior of esteemed heroes.

Chu Liang immediately asked, "Will we be strong enough to do that?"

"There are always fewer than ten Dragon Cavalry members when they go out on missions. They're all at the fifth or sixth cultivation realms. With the high-ranking members of the Blazing Fire Gang and you, we have a chance," the vice-chief said.

Chu Liang wasn't easily convinced. "If it were that simple, wouldn't the people of Python Belly City have overthrown the City Lord's Residence long ago?"

He quickly spotted the flaw in her plan. It couldn't be as straightforward as she made it seem.

"The reason the City Lord's Residence maintains its rule is because the city lord is invincible," the vice-chief explained. "It's not actually those envoys from the Dragon Cavalry."

"But the beings swallowed by the Heaven-Devouring Python should be below the seventh realm, right?" Chu Liang wondered aloud.

The most powerful trait of the Heaven-Devouring Python was its enormous mouth and the world within its stomach; its actual combat strength shouldn't be particularly formidable. Otherwise, it would have become the world's most ferocious beast long ago.

As for the seventh realm beings it previously devoured...

The Inferno Dragon of the South Sea that was swallowed as well had been trapped by a powerful water prison, which was why it could be swallowed. And now, the Inferno Dragon of the South Sea was nowhere to be seen, which meant that it was likely not trapped here.

As for Xu Bashan, the chief of the Whale Gang and a master of that level, he was even less likely to be trapped here. There must be other reasons. This place must be hiding some secrets.

There must be a limit to how powerful the cultivation of those present here.

That limit would be the cultivation level of the Heaven-Devouring Python.

"The city lord wasn't swallowed by the Heaven-Devouring Python," the vice-chief said as she shook her head. "He is the master of the Heaven-Devouring Python."

"What?" Chu Liang's eyes widened in shock. "Is that true?"

The Heaven-Devouring Python had been a terrifying presence in the immortal realm for over a thousand years. There was only one, and it was never known to have a master.

"I've heard from others that the city lord can come and go as he pleases, spending most of his time outside the city. He rarely shows up, but when he does, it's a bloodbath." The vice-chief's voice trembled slightly as she recalled, "The fear of the city lord in Python Belly City was built through countless massacres."

"So you're saying..." Chu Liang said as he pondered, "We have to defeat the Dragon Cavalry, rescue your chief, and escape before the city lord arrives. Otherwise, it would be nearly impossible?"

"Yes," the vice-chief nodded.

"I agree," Chu Liang said solemnly.

"Good." The vice-chief finally smiled. "I'll arrange matters within the Blazing Fire Gang and contact you later."

...

Meanwhile, on Mount Shu...

Chu Liang's disappearance finally caused a stir.

Since he often went out for tasks, his absence on Silver Sword Peak had become quite normal. Everyone on the Silver Sword Peak grew accustomed to his absence.

Jiang Yuebai had been the first to notice that something was wrong.

She had told Chu Liang about the Whale Gang's grand ceremony, scheduled to take place in three days, and he had agreed to attend with her. Yet, since then, she had not heard anything from him. Jiang Yuebai even went to Silver Sword Peak to find him, but he was nowhere to be seen.

With the ceremony happening tomorrow, they needed to arrive a day early, meaning that they would have to leave this afternoon. If Chu Liang didn't return soon, it would be too late for him to attend the ceremony.

This was unlike Chu Liang's meticulous way of doing things.

It would only happen if something bad happened to him.

Jiang Yuebai reported this to Wang Xuanling, who immediately sensed that something was wrong.

His first step was to search for Lin Bei at Jade Sword Peak. Everyone knew Lin Bei spent all his time with Chu Liang and would likely know his whereabouts.

Upon inquiry, Wang Xuanling discovered that Lin Bei was about to form his core and had gone to the South Sea two days ago to gather treasures of nature. Lin Bei had asked Chu Liang to accompany him.

Could it be that something had happened to them in the South Sea?

With the team set to depart for the grand ceremony, Wang Xuanling had no choice but to pay Di Nufeng a visit.

When grand peakmaster Wang Xuanling arrived, Di Nufeng was just about to leave.

Wang Xuanling met her head-on and asked, "Where are you headed?"

"I'm going to the fruit garden," Di Nufeng replied.

Lately, she had been diligently working as the garden's security guard, patrolling several times a day. With the influx of sword coins into her wallet every month, Di Nufeng had become much more disciplined.

She realized that Chu Liang's line of work was making much more money at a faster rate than her previous exploits outside Silver Sword Peak.

Since Di Nufeng wasn't causing trouble, Mount Shu had become significantly safer. Chu Liang's decision to employ her as security in the fruit garden somehow improved the safety of the entire sect.

Wang Xuanling said sternly, "Do you know your disciple is missing?"

"Hmm?" Di Nufeng's eyes widened in surprise. "What happened?"

Since Chu Liang had become busier, he no longer reported to her every time he went out, so she genuinely didn't know where he had gone.

Wang Xuanling then explained the situation.

"He must have had an accident," Di Nufeng said as she started frowning. "My disciple handles things just like me; he wouldn't do something as unreliable as being late..."

You've done far more unreliable things than being late, Wang Xuanling thought.

Wang Xuanling's chest rose and fell rapidly, as if he was about to unleash a torrent of harsh words, but considering the urgency of the situation, he held back.

"He went missing while helping your disciple find treasures of nature. If something really happened to him, you owe me a new disciple!" Di Nufeng said.

Wang Xuanling finally lost his temper. "At a time like this, you're worried about that? Chu Liang is the swordmaster of the Violet and Azure Twin Swords. Losing him would be a huge blow to Mount Shu. Even if I gave you all my disciples, it wouldn't make up for it!"

Di Nufeng shook her head. "I don't want your crooked disciples. How about you become my disciple instead?"

Wang Xuanling couldn't be bothered to argue with her. He took a deep breath and asked, "Can you find him or not?"

"I haven't sensed the disappearance of the tracking jade talisman, so there shouldn't be any major issues," Di Nufeng said, looking up at the distant sky. "I'll go find him now!"

With that, she took a step, and her entire body turned into a blaze of fire heading southeast.

Although she always sounded indifferent, Di Nufeng was always the first to arrive whenever Chu Liang was in trouble. It was never a coincidence.

Chu Liang always carried the tracking jade talisman she had given him, so she could vaguely sense his position. She followed the tracking jade talisman and arrived at the South Sea.

But as she arrived above the South Sea, she realized the spiritual energy she was sensing became a blur. The jade talisman was probably being blocked by some force. She could still sense a general direction but couldn't pinpoint his exact location.

"Could he have entered a hidden realm?" Di Nufeng murmured.

The current situation showed that there was an eighty percent chance he would be in another small world and the barriers of that world were blocking the spiritual energy of the jade talisman from being sensed by people outside accurately. This was going to be troublesome.

No matter how big the hidden realm was, its entrance could be in a tiny, almost impossible-to-find location.

Di Nufeng then went to the spot on the map where the volcanic island with the Inferno Dragon of the South Sea was supposed to be, but there was no island in sight. All she saw was a stretch of blue waves.

Di Nufeng hovered in the air for a while. Then, instead of continuing the search, she turned around and headed north in a blaze of fire.

Before long, she arrived at a celestial mountain in the Central Region.

Purple qi swirled through the air, mingling with the floating mist, hinting at the presence of an immortal sect hidden within. Amidst the rolling mountains were clusters of pavilions and towers,

with architectural styles blending seamlessly with the surrounding scenery, making it look like a true paradise.

Mount Reticence of the Celestial Pivot Pavilion.

Legend has it that an esteemed senior of divination once observed the Big Dipper here and understood the world, foreseeing five hundred years of human affairs. To warn himself not to divulge the secrets of heaven, he named this mountain "Reticence" and lived in seclusion here.

He carved the major human events he saw onto the mountain walls.

When people in later generations found this mountain, they discovered that the ancient writings of today's events had come true and realized the mystic nature of the writing. Upon exploring the cave, they found it desolate and dilapidated, with only the legacy of the techniques and the five words "Be a Reticent Heaven Observer" engraved on a stone plaque left by the esteemed senior.

Therefore, the people who inherited his legacy roamed the world and called themselves the descendants of the Heaven Observer. Because they predicted the secrets of heaven, they attracted numerous unfortunate events.[1] Only then did they understand the profound reason why the esteemed senior had written the word reticent before he died.

The later generations from the lineage of the Heaven Observer had no choice but to join the Heavenly Star Divine Cult for protection. With this merge, they evolved and became the lineage of the Celestial Pivot.

After the Heavenly Star Divine Cult split up, the Celestial Pivot Pavilion returned to Mount Reticence. It was as if the cycle had come full circle, back to its starting point.

The esteemed senior back then would have never imagined that the heaven-observing techniques he left behind for predicting worldly affairs would end up being used mostly for forecasting minor news and martial world gossip.

Di Nufeng hovered above Mount Reticence. She didn't descend to the ground. Standing upright in mid-air, she shouted loudly, her voice like the roar of thunder.

"Zhou Yijian, get the fuck out here!"

Chapter 390: The Real Deal! (I)

In the evening, the situation had changed again.

The vice-chief of the Blazing Fire Gang had called Chu Liang to the gang's chamber to discuss the plan. When Chu Liang arrived, he found an unexpected person there.

The thin and withered-looking Elder Yin leaned back in his seat.

He gazed at Chu Liang with a smile and said, "You're here, Young hero Chu?"

"Elder Yin?" Chu Liang uttered.

He glanced at the vice-chief in surprise.

The vice-chief told Chu Liang, "We are all part of the same human race after all, so I sought help from the Sun and Moon Pavilion too. Elder Yin is willing to help us."

Chu Liang was quite impressed by the vice-chief's boldness. Was she not worried that the Sun and Moon Pavilion would betray them?

Seeing Chu Liang's confusion, Elder Yin smiled and explained, "The relationship between our two factions is not as antagonistic as it appears to the outside world. As fellow members of the human race, it is unwise for us to scheme against each other. It is better that we work together so that we can all survive in Python Belly City. We were compelled by our circumstances to put up a front of being in a conflict."

Upon hearing that, Chu Liang immediately understood the reason behind the unusual relationship between the two human factions.

If their dangerous circumstances had occurred naturally, the humans in Python Belly City would inevitably have united after a brief struggle. Once the resources in Python Belly City reached an economic equilibrium[1], the remaining people would surely have banded together to seek a way out.

Yet, they were still competing for resources. The reason had to be that a hand of darkness was suppressing them.

Once a unified human faction emerged in Python Belly City, it would inevitably be ruthlessly purged by the City Lord... so the humans had chosen to remain split as two factions. The only way they could all survive was to pretend to oppose each other.

The arguments and fights between the ordinary members were real, but the higher-ups of the two factions had a tacit understanding of what they were really doing. This was the real reason that they had confronted each other for so long during the day without actually fighting!

Then Chu Liang thought of something. "In that case, the Deathmatch Arena..."

"That's right." Elder Yin nodded with a smile. "I thought of this method many years ago to preserve our manpower to the greatest extent. For nearly a hundred years, I have been secretly supporting the other human faction so that they can compete with mine. It is all so we can avoid getting purged by the City Lord."

Chu Liang gazed at Elder Yin with admiration.

It could not have been easy for the humans to establish themselves in a place like Python Belly City and survive for a hundred years.

This old man looked so skinny; he likely weighed around 100 jin[2]. Considering how he had managed to come up with such an impressive scheme, 99 jin of his 100-jin weight had to be his brains.

"I did not tell the youngsters about these things, so they do not know about our true relationship," Elder Yin continued. "Yesterday, Laosi chased members of the Blazing Fire Gang to the medicinal hall in a fit of rage, with the intention of killing them. When he got back home, I severely punished him for it."

Finally understanding everything now, Chu Liang turned to the vice-chief and asked, "So, will the Sun and Moon Pavilion join us in rescuing the chief of the Blazing Fire Gang from the execution grounds? If so, our chances of success will increase greatly."

Surprisingly, Elder Yin shook his head and replied, "It is pointless to rescue him from there."

Chu Liang shifted his gaze back to Elder Yin. "Huh?"

"Who do you think told Hua Zhengshan the location of Python Belly City's exit?" Elder Yin said softly.

Judging from your tone... it was you, wasn't it?

This was beyond Chu Liang's expectations.

So, he knew everything?

This means that I could find out the location of the exit even without rescuing the chief of the Blazing Fire Gang. Still, the old man knows where it is, yet he hasn't left for so many years. There has to be a reason for that.

The vice-chief explained, "I was still confused about the whole situation until I talked with Elder Yin earlier. I was so puzzled during today's confrontation... Elder Yin mentioned that he had seen our chief get captured, but even we—the chief's close subordinates—weren't fully aware of what had happened. So, how did Elder Yin manage to witness the incident?

"Then I suddenly thought of how the chief had been searching for a way out of Python Belly City for years without any results. But then one day, he went to the southern part of the city, and when he came back, something was different...

"With that in mind, I finally dared to seek out Elder Yin and ask him about it."

After hearing all that, Chu Liang just asked the question he cared most about. "So... where is the exit?"

Elder Yin gently raised his finger and pointed straight up.

Chu Liang paused for a moment, immediately understanding what Elder Yin meant. "So, it's in that..."

"That's right. It is right above that dark sun. The exit is usually obscured by the dark sun, so no one can see it," Elder Yin replied. "I quietly investigated Python Belly City for decades and finally figured out the path that the City Lord uses to leave the city.

"I have told others about this before. Hua Zhengshan was not the first, but he was the only one who managed to get close to the exit. Through his experience, I was able to confirm that there is indeed a door there... But even if we've found the door, we do not have the key for it."

Chu Liang then thought of his hidden realm, the Blue Dragon's Hidden Realm.

As the master of that hidden realm, he could enter and exit it from anywhere in the realm. However, if others wanted to enter or exit it, they would need to take two iron plates to a fixed location and use them to unlock the enchanted formation. It was probably the same for the hidden realm inside the Heaven-Devouring Python's belly.

The "door" and "key" that Elder Yin mentioned did not actually exist; they referred to the enchanted formation locking off access to the hidden realm and the method to unlock it. It could be an inscription seal or even an enchanted tool.

"Hua Zhengshan fought the Dragon Cavalry, broke through their defenses, and made his way to the dark sun. But when he got there, he only saw a door that could not be opened..." Elder Yin said, looking a little emotional as he recalled what had happened. "In fact, it was a result that Hua Zhengshan had anticipated."

"But for the sake of everyone in Python Belly City... even though he knew he would likely fail and perish... Hua Zhengshan still went." Elder Yin's voice gradually softened. "If not for my withered vitality, rendering me unable to fight, I should have been the one to pave the way. He is still young, and he can pass this information on to the younger generations and those who join arrive at the city later."

"But where should we even go to search for the key..." Chu Liang muttered, lost in his own thoughts.

The Blazing Fire Gang's chief efforts in paving the way for the younger generations and future residents of Python Belly City certainly make him admirable, but it is more important right now to spend more energy on figuring out how we can escape. That way, Hua Zhengshan's efforts will not be in vain.

"This is why I said it is pointless to rescue him from the execution grounds," Elder Yin stated.

The vice-chief took over from there. "And that's why we intend to change our strategy. Perhaps we should just storm the City Lord's Residence instead!"

Chu Liang was surprised once more.

The City Lord's Residence was located in the northern part of Python Belly City. It was a massive and solid fortress built with black rock and talismanic spells. The gates of the fortress only ever opened to let the Dragon Cavalry in and out. It was usually impossible for anyone else to even catch a glimpse of what was inside the City Lord's Residence.

We don't even have any idea how many members of the Jimeng Dragon Cavalry there are inside that fortress.

How do they plan to break in?