

M. Slaying 591

Chapter 591: Xu Ziyang's Decision (II)

Of course, not all the battles were that bloody and intense.

Nearby, an extremely calm and peaceful duel had begun between Ye Yongxing of the Celestial Pivot Pavilion and Li Guanlong of the Fog-Hidden Mountain of Immortals.

Ye Yongxing gave a slight bow in greeting, and Li Guanlong responded with a nod.

Their gazes met, and upon seeing the light in the other person's eyes, they immediately recognized the other person's mystical ability.

Ye Yongxing had the Netherworld Eye, which he had developed while in his mother's womb, and Li Guanlong had the expired Curse Insect of Dreams that he had swallowed[1]. It was a clash of two total opposites.

"I suppress you instantly with my Talisman of Life Destruction. You struggle to counter it," Ye Yongxing said, his eyes glowing with a concentrated divine light.

Despite what he said, he made no movements.

Seemingly in acceptance of the scenario Ye Yongxing depicted, Li Guanlong spent a moment in silence. Then his eyes lit up as well. "Using my illusory technique, I disguise my real self and let you attack my fake self. While you're distracted by the decoy, I draw you into a dream."

Light flickered in their eyes, as if the scenarios they described were already unfolding before them.

Ye Yongxing furrowed his brows slightly. "I have been drawn into your dream, but I perceive the secrets of heaven within the dream and am able to take control of it."

"Oh, no," Li Guanlong uttered softly and took two steps back. He fell silent for a moment and then said, "You may be able to fight for the control of the dream from me, but my cultivation level is higher than yours. And even if we were of the same cultivation level, you would still be no match for the secret techniques of my sect."

"I use the Heavenly Grand Formation of the Nine Palaces and Eight Trigrams to surround and destroy you. You have no way of escaping."

Ye Yongxing replied calmly, "I, too, am skilled in enchanted formations. The three enchanted formations of the Seven Killings Star, Ruinous Star, and Greedy Wolf Star can instantly break your Nine Palaces and Eight Trigrams Formation."

Li Guanlong quickly countered, "But you have fallen into my trap. With the Curse Insect of Dreams's support, I can replenish my qi, blood, and true essence within the dream. The longer you linger in the dream, the more your qi, blood, and true essence will be drained. If you do not concede your loss, your divine sense will be severely damaged."

Ye Yongxing pondered for a moment. "The only way I could break the dream is with overwhelming cultivation power, but my cultivation power is inadequate for that. It seems that there is no way for me to break the dream."

Li Guanlong wore a small smile. "So, you're letting me win."

A while later, the divine light in Ye Yongxing's eyes finally dimmed. He shook his head sadly. "In the end, this is as far as I can go."

"Victory and defeat are common in battle. There is no need to dwell on it, Brother Ye."

The two young men had decided on the outcome after merely speaking for a short while. This left the spectators utterly bewildered.

What was that all about?

Were the two of you fighting with civility and decorum?

If all it took was words to win, then wouldn't you be invincible if you brought in that old storyteller who tells erotic stories?

Is this really not a case of collusion for mutual benefit? I suggest that those two be thoroughly investigated for match-fixing.

...

"Jiang Yuebai of the Mount Shu Sect has defeated... Tie Chui of the South Melody Conservatory!"

Earlier, while those two young men were in a battle of wits, two young women were locked in a fierce and violent battle.

Tie Chui swung her two golden mallets with great force, producing fierce, whistling winds. For a moment, it seemed as though Jiang Yuebai was in grave danger. However, she had intentionally delayed taking action. She spotted an opening in Tie Chui's defenses and quickly subdued her.

Tie Chui was not weak, but she was still a notch weaker than Jiang Yuebai. The battle between Jiang Yuebai and Tie Chui paled in comparison to Jiang Yuebai's previous battle against Xi Miaoxian, where Jiang Yuebai had displayed much greater power.

Two of the three opponents Jiang Yuebai had faced so far had been women.

In the second round, Jiang Yuebai faced Xi Miaoxian of the Penglai Supreme Sect. Both women were contenders for the title of the Number One Beauty of their generation. Nevertheless, neither of them were simply beautiful young women; they both exhibited astonishing power in the duel.

Xi Miaoxian was proficient in the Penglai Supreme Sect's stealth traversal arts, making her movements unpredictable. However, that would not have been enough to earn her a spot in the team representing the Penglai Supreme Sect in this Assembly of Immortal Sects. After all, there was an abundance of talented disciples within the Penglai Supreme Sect, and many of them were just as good as her in stealth traversal arts.

The reason Xi Miaoxian was able to rise above them was the Talisman of Life Destruction that she had obtained in the Celestial Talisman Master's Hidden Realm. Coupled with her unpredictable arsenal of stealth traversal arts, her offensive capabilities were drastically enhanced, eliminating her weakness of lacking attack power. In fact, Xi Miaoxian was able to use the Talisman of Life Destruction even more effectively than Ye Yongxing.

Unfortunately for Xi Miaoxian, Jiang Yuebai was just as adept in stealth traversal arts and far surpassed her in other immortal arts. No matter how many times they fought, Jiang Yuebai would

always emerge victorious. Perhaps this gap in power was simply the difference between those that had a Transcendent Spirit and those that didn't.

After defeating Tie Chui, Jiang Yuebai entered the next corridor. Moments later, she saw Xu Ziyang enter, covered in blood.

Xu Ziyang's path had been arduous. It began with a fight against Xu Hu of the Sword Sect, followed by victories over Luo Yao of the Valley of the Three Absolutes and Feng Chaoyang of the Celestial King Sect.

He had fought his way there through fierce battles and was covered in wounds, yet his eyes gleamed brightly like a sharp sword. His fighting spirit was indomitable.

By this point, the top five contenders had been decided. Chu Liang, who had earned a bye, had been the first to advance. He was followed by Yang Shenlong of the Penglai Supreme Sect, Li Guanlong of the Fog-Hidden Mountain of Immortals, and the Mount Shu Sect's Jiang Yuebai and Xu Ziyang.

The Mount Shu Sect claimed three of the top five spots! Without a doubt, this generation of disciples was the strongest the Mount Shu Sect had produced in the past sixty years!

Now that Xu Ziyang had gotten matched with Jiang Yuebai, it seemed like this should be the end point of his mission.

Normally, when two disciples from the same sect got matched up, one of them would concede defeat to allow the other disciple to avoid an unnecessary battle and instead conserve their energy for the next one. This wasn't considered cheating; this was a legitimate advantage of having multiple disciples successfully advance to the later rounds.

In this case, Jiang Yuebai was the Mount Shu Sect's head disciple and in peak condition, while Xu Ziyang was covered in blood and clearly exhausted. By all accounts, he should withdraw from the duel.

If Xu Ziyang were to concede defeat, Jiang Yuebai would advance straight to the finals. This way, even if Yang Shenlong won his fourth duel, he would be the last to advance. That meant he would first have to face Chu Liang and then Jiang Yuebai, creating a situation where he would be trapped between Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai.

This situation was highly advantageous for the Mount Shu Sect. It was undoubtedly the overwhelming strength of their representative team that allowed them to defeat powerful opponents and secure this advantage.

However, just as everyone was waiting for Xu Ziyang to concede defeat... he straightened his bloody back.

Filled with an intense fighting spirit, he looked Jiang Yuebai in the eye and said, "I wish to fight."

Huh? The spectators watching were stunned by his decision. Is he going to engage in an internal fight, giving up the Mount Shu Sect's advantage of having three members in the fourth round?

As Wang Xuanling watched his disciple, he let out a quiet sigh.

From a strategic standpoint for the Mount Shu Sect, it would certainly have been better for Xu Ziyang to concede defeat. Nevertheless, on a personal level, the Assembly of Immortal Sects was a once-in-a-lifetime stage. Wang Xuanling didn't wish for his disciple to hastily leave the stage in such a manner either.

Furthermore, Xu Ziyang and Jiang Yuebai had never dueled each other before. Xu Ziyang had just experienced several bloody battles in a row. Despite getting injured, he emerged tempered and with a soaring fighting spirit. It wasn't for certain that he would lose.

This decision was a critical turning point for Xu Ziyang. Regardless of the outcome, he needed this duel to satisfy his Dao heart. If Xu Ziyang were to voluntarily leave the competition now, his future progress might be limited by mediocrity.

Yet, as the grand peak master of the Mount Shu Sect, Wang Xuanling couldn't wholeheartedly support Xu Ziyang's decision. He fell into a deep silence.

Di Nufeng, on the other hand, furrowed her brows at the puzzled murmurs around her. "What's so strange about this? Isn't it just a fight?"

As the one being challenged, Jiang Yuebai showed no displeasure. Instead, she smiled, commending Xu Ziyang's decision.

The twin pillars of the Mount Shu Sect had been admired by many even before the Mount Shu Summit, but they had never been given the chance to fight each other. Now, they were finally about to have their long-awaited duel.

Jiang Yuebai cupped her hands together respectfully. "Then, please enlighten me, Senior Brother Xu."

Chapter 592: What Good Would That Do!? (I)

"A fight should happen now," the Sword Saint, Old Li Ba, said as he watched with his arms folded. Though his disciples had all been eliminated, it didn't bother him. After hundreds of years in the martial world, he had seen countless battles; the outcome of any single tournament no longer concerned him.

As long as his sect didn't repeatedly fail in the second round like the Mount Shu Sect, someone of his status wouldn't be too bothered. Now that all his disciples were eliminated, he was content to settle into the role of a spectator and enjoy the show.

He continued saying, "Xu Ziyang has fought through three fierce battles. Though his Sea of Qi is depleted and he's severely injured, his vitality, qi, and spirit are all at their peak. If he were to draw his sword against an opponent now, it would strengthen his resolve for the Dao. If he stops here due to a bit of scheming, he will miss a valuable chance to improve himself.

"There's a saying among sword cultivators: sword qi comes easily, but a true heart for the sword is hard to find. A chance to refine one's heart for the sword may come only once in a lifetime."

"But in doing so, he may lose the chance to advance straight to the finals," Immortal Jiuyi replied, his expression equally calm. "Originally, if Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai took turns fighting Yang Shenlong, they might have had a good chance of defeating him."

"What's this? You don't have faith in your own disciple?" Old Li Ba chuckled. "Can't Li Guanlong win?"

"There's hope," Immortal Jiuyi replied with a nod, "but it's slim."

"Oh?" Old Li Ba was slightly confused.

He had been joking; no one seriously believed Li Guanlong could defeat Yang Shenlong. But seeing Immortal Jiuyi's demeanor, could it be that Li Guanlong truly had some hidden trump card that could lead to victory?

...

The attention shifted to the screen where this meeting of two dragons had just begun.

Normally, at this stage, disciples from the immortal sects would rush to secure victory and advance straight to the finals. However, upon hearing that both contestants in the other match were disciples of the Mount Shu Sect, Yang Shenlong assumed Xu Ziyang would concede and decided to take his time.

"Brother Li," he greeted first.

"Brother Yang," Li Guanlong politely returned the greeting.

The two were not well-acquainted, but they remained respectful with each other due to the longstanding friendly relations between the Fog-Hidden Mountain of Immortals and the Penglai Supreme Sect.

Li Guanlong smiled and added, "Since I've encountered you, it seems my journey ends here."

"You're too modest, Brother Li," Yang Shenlong replied calmly, golden flames flickering in his eyes.

Suddenly, a faint popping sound echoed through the air.

It was as if something had shattered.

Li Guanlong forced a wry smile. "So, you saw through this little trick after all."

It turned out that Li Guanlong had tried to quietly draw Yang Shenlong into a dream, but Yang Shenlong had detected the attempt. The difference in cultivation levels created an overwhelming gap in vitality, qi, and spirit.

Li Guanlong stopped smiling and said in a serious expression, "It seems defeating you with ordinary methods is impossible. I'll have to gamble everything."

The Assembly of Immortal Sects was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and everyone who entered sought victory. No one came simply to play. Now, facing what was likely the strongest opponent he had ever encountered, Li Guanlong knew he had to stay fully alert and no longer act casually as he had before.

He had prepared a trump card specifically for this competition.

However, this trump card could only be used once within a certain period, which was why he had held back from fighting with full force until now. But now that he had reached this stage and was face to face with Yang Shenlong, there was no avoiding it.

At this point, it was a matter of win or go home.

Li Guanlong clasped his hands, forming a seal.

He closed his eyes and stood still, focusing quietly.

Is he really going to take a nap in front of Yang Shenlong? The audience wondered. But honestly speaking, they didn't actually think that such an absurd thing could happen during a match of the Battle at the Imperial City, so they watched in silence, waiting for the next change.

Meanwhile, Li Guanlong's fellow disciples from Fog-Hidden Mountain of Immortals were worried, as they knew their Eldest Senior Brother was, in fact, capable of taking a nap even in such a critical moment.

Li Guanlong truly had the great divine ability to drift into dreams at any time and place.

Fortunately, it did not happen this time.

As Li Guanlong closed his eyes, golden light began to radiate from beneath his feet.

In the blink of an eye, threads of golden silk spun around his feet and legs. Then, the shimmering threads began to envelop the upper part of his body.

In an instant, he was enveloped in a massive golden cocoon!

Immediately Yang Shenlong sensed something amiss.

The moment Li Guanlong started performing his divine ability, he flew over and attacked with his three-chi long dragon bone, piercing into the cocoon before it had even completely enclosed Li Guanlong.

But then, golden threads started wrapping around his dragon bone, releasing an eerie and disorienting energy.

Yang Shenlong, sensing the danger, reacted swiftly, retreating just in time to escape the energy's grasp.

In that brief moment, the golden cocoon sealed shut.

Yang Shenlong formed a hand seal with his left hand and unleashed another strike. In an instant, a massive dragon claw descended from the sky, slamming into the golden cocoon.

Boom!

The cocoon was sent flying, embedding halfway into a wall.

But that was all. The golden threads remained intact, shimmering as though unaffected by the impact.

Yang Shenlong's eyes narrowed. He formed another hand seal, and his three-chi long dragon bone erupted with dazzling green light, as brilliant as a thousand stars converging in one place.

Whoosh—

In this very moment, he unleashed an explosive surge of cultivation power that sent chills down everyone's spine.

Since the Competition of a Hundred Sects, he had once again showed improvement!

Rip—

As the tearing sound echoed, the dragon bone in Yang Shenlong's hand pierced straight into the massive golden cocoon.

Burning, golden-colored blood began to flow from the cracks in the cocoon.

Then came the sound of crackling from within, as the cracks spread and the cocoon started to break apart.

A figure emerged once more.

Li Guanlong, shrouded in golden light, kept his eyes closed.

Even with his eyes shut, he had begun to move.

A jade-colored dragon bone spike protruded from his shoulder, which Li Guanlong gripped with one hand. With a forceful pull, he yanked it out, ignoring the blood pouring from the wound.

Yang Shenlong could not press forward at all.

With no other option, he was forced to fly back.

Li Guanlong appeared to be in a sleepwalking state, yet he was showing such terrifying strength that intimidated even Yang Shenlong.

Yang Shenlong had to be careful.

"The Curse Insect of Dreams possesses many mystical abilities. One could even become an immortal within a dream," Immortal Jiuyi explained with a smile. "Under normal circumstances, when Li Guanlong uses his dream-watching ability, he struggles to differentiate between the real world and the dream world. Because the boundary between dream and reality becomes blurred, he has to remain conscious and alert. He never truly dares to fall asleep. If he were to enter a real slumber, the Curse Insect of Dreams would take control of his body. While this would grant him immense power, he would also then no longer have control of himself..."

As if to prove Immortal Jiuyi's explanation, the screen now showed Li Guanlong leaping recklessly from high up without a care of the risk of injury, and striking down hard with his palm.

The palm strike appeared simple and straightforward, but from Yang Shenlong's expression, it was clear he felt intimidated, as if he had encountered an extremely powerful enemy.

He even transformed his hand into a dragon claw to block the strike.

Boom—

As Li Guanlong crashed to the ground, Yang Shenlong was forced back more than ten steps.

It was such immense power.

The last opponent to suddenly unleash such monstrous strength was Chu Liang. Facing yet another opponent in a berserk state inevitably brought back some unpleasant memories for Yang Shenlong.

"Haah..." Li Guanlong exhaled sharply and lunged forward once more.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

A series of powerful blows sent Yang Shenlong stumbling backward. He kept being pushed back repeatedly.

At this moment, Li Guanlong was as strong as a celestial beast.

In addition, the faint golden aura surrounding his entire body absorbed much of the damage from Yang Shenlong's attacks, giving him a clear advantage for the moment.

Each of Li Guanlong's strikes that hit the nearby solid walls left deep dents, showcasing their devastating power. The fact that Yang Shenlong was able to withstand each blow was already very astonishing.

Could Yang Shenlong be defeated once again?

The same thought echoed in the minds of all the spectators.

Yang Shenlong remained unusually calm and composed as he faced Li Guanlong, who was in a berserk state. He even took some time to observe Li Guanlong closely.

Just as another powerful palm strike sent Yang Shenlong flying, his figure suddenly flickered, and in the blink of an eye, three versions of him appeared at the same time.

He had used the Immortal Art: External Manifestation.

The three Yang Shenlong surrounded Li Guanlong, trapping him in the center.

Each of them formed a hand seal simultaneously and pointed toward Li Guanlong.

Boom—

Three streams of azure qi converged and struck at Li Guanlong, who was trapped in the center.

Flickers of light and flames erupted, but Li Guanlong charged through the flames, nearly unscathed, and landed a punch squarely on the face of one of the clones.

Bang!

The punch was so powerful that the clone was instantly crushed and vanished.

As of now, Li Guanlong was like a wild beast that had gone crazy. The instant he sensed any hostility, he responded with a swift attack that would instantly kill his opponent.

Yang Shenlong's eyes gleamed sharply as the other clone didn't dodge. Instead, it stepped forward, raising one arm.

Suddenly, Li Guanlong was enveloped in an azure light with a radius of several zhang.

Yang Shenlong had just used the Immortal Art Ring of Confinement.

While the Immortal Art: The Spoken Divine Law could sometimes produce a similar effect, it was nowhere near as powerful.

At that moment, Li Guanlong found himself suddenly trapped within a circle with a radius of three zhang.

Chapter 593: What Good Would That Do!? (II)

Bam!

Li Guanlong kept slamming himself onto this barrier of azure light that was barely visible in the air.

With how the azure light flickered and shook, the Ring of Confinement clearly would not be able to trap Li Guanlong for long.

But even if it was only fifteen minutes, it was more than enough.

The actual Yang Shenlong had transformed himself. His head had become a dragon head.

As he opened his mouth wide, it revealed fangs of a dragon that were as sharp as swords and halberds.

Then, he released an earth-shaking roar!

"ROARRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR"

A deep, resonant dragon chant suddenly erupted from the depths of his throat.

The sound was like a thunderous vibration, carrying with it a power that seemed to clear the mind. Technically, this was not an attack. This sound was meant to dispel evil influences and purify the mind.

But as soon as Li Guanlong heard this sound, he started struggling and became visibly distressed. The golden light that enveloped his body started flickering erratically.

"In the end, he found the flaw with the Curse Insect of Dreams," Immortal Jiuyi said with a sigh, a trace of regret in his voice.

"The Curse Insect of Dreams resides within the host's dream. Therefore, there's no way an opponent can win by attacking the host's physical body. The only way to end this is by targeting the dream and ending the dream," Old Li Ba murmured as he speculated. "Am I right?"

"Esteemed Senior, you are indeed correct," Immortal Jiuyi confirmed.

This Awakening Dragon Chant was like the Great Buddhist Thunderclap, capable of awakening the mind and shattering any illusory dreams.

Since the Curse Insect of Dreams had implanted itself within the dream world, it would lose its foothold the moment the host awakened. The power of the Curse Insect would then dissipate, forcing Li Guanlong to regain control of his body.

As long as Li Guanlong remained asleep, he would continue to be invincible in the fight. But if he were to wake up, he would then lose that godly power.

It was no surprise that Old Li Ba, with his vast experience and countless battles, quickly figured out the answer.

However, it was truly remarkable for Yang Shenlong to show such maturity at his young age.

Ultimately, there was still a gap in cultivation between Yang Shenlong and Li Guanlong. Had it been anyone else, they would have been defeated by the first round of attacks. Even if they knew how to counter, they wouldn't have survived long enough to awaken Li Guanlong.

"Ugh..." Li Guanlong slowly opened his eyes, struggling to do so. His gaze was still cloudy and dazed, as if he had just awakened from a deep dream.

At this moment, a massive dragon claw descended upon him.

Boom!

It was that one strike.

Li Guanlong was sent flying, and the winner of this match was decided.

"Hah." Yang Shenlong exhaled, wasting no time to readjust his breathing and rest as he rushed to the next corridor.

...

While Yang Shenlong and Li Guanlong were still locked in battle, the duel between the twin pillars of the Mount Shu Sect had already ended and the winner had been decided.

As Xu Ziyang faced Jiang Yuebai, he shouted and focused all his vitality, qi, and spirit into this one strike.

As his longsword pierced the air, the light of the sword took on the form of a dragon. It was a simple and straightforward thrust!

This was a strike that contained the Cloud of Determination Great Dao, which was one of the most popular Great Daos of Sword on the Mount Shu Sect.

The sword qi generated through this Cloud of Determination Great Dao could move mountains and cause waves to surge!

Jiang Yuebai responded with equal directness. She countered with a reverse strike and countered with the exact same thrust.

As she struck, her sword qi surged like a sea of clouds.

This was a display of the deep mutual understanding between the two prodigies of Mount Shu Sect. Though they had to fight, both of them knew it was best not to prolong the fight, which was why they opted for a single decisive strike to determine the victor.

Xu Ziyang's sword qi blazed like the midday sun, radiating with fierce intensity. In contrast, Jiang Yuebai's sword qi flowed like an ethereal sea of clouds, intertwined with biting cold winds.

Boom—

The collision was so intense that the residual energy nearly shattered the surrounding walls. The swirling flames created by the sword qi obscured the view, slowly dispersing after a long moment.

Who won? The spectators wondered as they craned their necks to see.

Clang.

As the dust settled, Xu Ziyang stood alone amidst the ruined corridor. Blood dripped from his right arm, and his longsword clattered to the ground with a sharp clang.

Meanwhile, Jiang Yuebai's figure had already vanished into the distance.

In the end, the head disciple remained the head disciple. Xu Ziyang had lost.

Though it seemed Xu Ziyang was at a disadvantage, having fought through numerous fierce fights to reach this point while Jiang Yuebai had been able to rest and conserve her strength.

But Xu Ziyang understood that, in this exchange, he had actually held the initial advantage. Having fought his way to this point, his vitality, qi, and spirit were at their peak—this was when his sword intent was at its strongest.

If the fight had been drawn out, Jiang Yuebai, in a better state, would have had the upper hand. But in a clash of single sword strikes, being calm and collected wasn't always a good thing.

Yet, even under these conditions, her sword qi felt overwhelming. It felt like a vast ocean that completely engulfed him. This could only mean that her strength was on an entirely different level.

The results of the previous Mount Shu Summit had not been a coincidence.

Yet, in this moment, he had no regrets in his defeat.

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When Chu Liang saw that the approaching figure was Yang Shenlong, a smile slowly spread across his face.

This feels right, Chu Liang thought to himself.

Yang Shenlong walked slowly into the corridor. He stared at Chu Liang with a calm gaze that flickered with a hint of fighting spirit.

As Yang Shenlong faced the only person of his generation who had ever defeated him, no matter how composed he was, he could not suppress the rekindling desire to win.

Chu Liang, however, remained composed, gazing at him calmly with a smile. "We meet again."

"I don't know what trick you used inside the Divine Mirror of the Eight Trigrams, but I admit my defeat. I truly hope to win this time," Yang Shenlong confessed earnestly.

"Say no more," Chu Liang replied curtly.

Due to the Pure Jade Transcendent Form and the Azure Dragon legacy, Yang Shenlong had an incredibly fast recovery rate. If more time passed, Chu Liang would lose his advantage of having rested and conserved his strength.

With that, his qi and blood ignited fiercely, surging skyward!

This was the nature of the Battle at the Imperial City. The fights would come one after another, and the contestants never knew who would walk in next. All they knew was that only one would walk out!

Yang Shenlong's eyes flared as his dragon bone swept through the air, sending waves of azure light to block Chu Liang.

With a sharp swoosh, Chu Liang used Dimension Compression to close the distance, gearing up for close combat.

Yang Shenlong immediately understood Chu Liang's strategy.

If they engaged in a long-range fight of divine techniques, the difference in cultivation levels would likely lead to Chu Liang's defeat without him landing a single blow.

But in close combat, even if Chu Liang lost, he could still inflict injuries and deplete Yang Shenlong's energy, potentially improving Jiang Yuebai's chances in the next round.

Yang Shenlong took half a step back, seemingly remaining in place. But as Chu Liang slashed with his sword, the figure in front of him turned out to be nothing more than an apparition. The real Yang Shenlong had already retreated several zhang away.

As Chu Liang's first attack missed, Yang Shenlong made his assessment, noting that Chu Liang's cultivation level was at the third stage of the fifth realm. His cultivation power would not be as crazy as it had been last time.

With this, he felt reassured.

In this case, he no longer needed to retreat and could focus on ending the fight as soon as possible.

But just as he made that decision, Chu Liang's next attack came. It was the Heaven-Raising Sword!

As Chu Liang wielded his Dustless Sword, he didn't use his strongest move, the Sword Strike of Severing Void. Instead, he used the Immortal Art: Heaven-Raising Sword, bringing it down on Yang Shenlong with overwhelming sword qi.

Yang Shenlong raised his palm, pulling in both the Dustless Sword and its sword qi into his palm using the technique, A World in One's Palm.

There they became like fishes swimming on his palm.

Without a pill to boost his cultivation, the difference in their cultivation levels was clearly immense.

But in the next instant, Chu Liang was already upon him.

It turned out that the use of the Heaven-Raising Sword was merely a distraction. Using Dimension Compression, Chu Liang closed the gap and suddenly activated his Three-Headed and Six-Armed Form. All six arms shot forward, locking Yang Shenlong in a firm embrace.

"Huh?"

Spectators who had attended the Mount Shu Summit immediately recognized the scene.

Back then, Chu Liang had done the same thing to Jiang Yuebai.

So he doesn't just hug girls? He's fine with hugging guys too? Hey, this is a fight—what are you doing?

Yang Shenlong, however, immediately sensed the danger and prepared to use a divine ability to shake Chu Liang off.

Crack!

The effect of the Forbidden Ground was activated.

When Chu Liang crushed the jade talisman in the illusory realm, Yang Shenlong had witnessed it with his own eyes. Now, a deep sense of foreboding arose within him.

It was just as Yang Shenlong had expected.

However, as Yang Shenlong's cultivation level was much higher than Chu Liang's, this single jade talisman could not restrict Yang Shenlong for long. The effect of the Forbidden Ground on him was greatly diminished, and within the span of a single breath, its influence began to fade.

But Chu Liang had plenty of jade talismans to spare.

A series of crisp "pop, pop, pop" sounds echoed, reminiscent of firecrackers during New Year celebrations.

As the effects of the Forbidden Ground accumulated and settled upon Yang Shenlong, he was once again trapped for another two breaths.

Meanwhile, behind them, a figure retrieved the Dustless Sword that had fallen to the ground. He gripped it firmly and concentrated deeply, focusing his sword intent.

It was a clone that had been created through the Immortal Art: External Manifestation!

Chapter 594: What Good Would That Do!? (III)

When that clone appeared, Yang Shenlong immediately figured out what Chu Liang wanted to do.

Chu Liang intended to attack while he himself was holding Yang Shenlong down, meaning that he would be launching a strike that targeted both himself and Yang Shenlong.

After all, Chu Liang's most powerful technique was the Sword Strike of Severing the Void. To defeat Yang Shenlong, he would need to use this technique. However, when he had used it normally, even Yun Chaoxian had been able to counter it—let alone someone like Yang Shenlong.

But the span of two breaths was enough for the other Chu Liang to raise the Dustless Sword from behind!

The sword was raised!

And the sword fell!

Shing—

A familiar arc of sword qi sliced through the air!

The six-armed Chu Liang twisted his body with all his might, striving to lock Yang Shenlong in his embrace, ensuring that both he and Yang Shenlong would bear the full force of the sword strike from the side.

Boom!

The sword qi erupted, sending both of them flying and crashing hard to the ground.

Amidst the dazzling sword light, a streak of azure energy shot out like a mighty Azure Dragon, piercing straight through the chest of the other Chu Liang wielding the sword.

With a loud bang, the clone exploded and vanished.

The moment Yang Shenlong was sent flying into the air, he was finally able to use his divine abilities and immediately seized the opportunity to use a divine technique. He quickly drew the dragon bone and struck down at the other Chu Liang wielding the sword, delivering a decisive and lethal blow.

But what he didn't expect was that the Chu Liang he had killed was the clone!

Yang Shenlong had been certain that the person holding him in an embrace, ready to bear the attack with him, had to be the clone. He had been convinced that the real Chu Liang was the one wielding the sword.

This was common sense—who would use their real body as the target and have the clone do the attacking?

But Chu Liang had deliberately done the opposite.

Sure enough, amid the smoke and dust, the Chu Liang who had been sent flying a few zhang away and landing on the ground suddenly leaped up with such explosive force!

This was Chu Liang's first time experiencing the power of the Sword Strike of Severing the Void. Even with his formidable physique, he felt the sword qi pierce through the right side of his body, leaving it bloodied and splattered.

Yang Shenlong was in a similar state, though his left side was the one that had been injured.

The two were so close that Yang Shenlong couldn't activate any divine abilities in time. Chu Liang charged forward, striking him in the face with a brick in his left hand.

Thud—

As Chu Liang landed the strike, Yang Shenlong swatted him away with his right dragon claw, sending him flying.

Chu Liang crashed into the wall but rebounded instantly, following up with another strike using the brick.

Thud!

At this point, both of them were bleeding profusely. In fact, Chu Liang's injuries were even worse than that of Yang Shenlong. Yet, he charged forward relentlessly, as though he feared nothing, not even death.

Thud! Thud!

As Chu Liang smashed down with his brick, Yang Shenlong swung his claw to block. In the end, the two were locked in a fierce close-combat struggle.

This chaotic situation was precisely what Chu Liang had planned.

In terms of cultivation, Chu Liang was far inferior to Yang Shenlong. But in close combat, the situation would be different.

Yang Shenlong carried the legacy of the Azure Dragon, but Chu Liang wielded the power of the Blue Dragon, White Dragon, and Inferno Dragon.

Yang Shenlong could activate the Pure Jade Transcendent Form, while Chu Liang had the Large-Headed Dolls.

Though Chu Liang would still be at a slight disadvantage, he wouldn't lose by much.

As long as he could close the distance and initiate a close-range combat with Yang Shenlong, even if he lost, he wouldn't let Yang Shenlong leave the fight unscathed.

Chu Liang firmly believed that if he could drain enough of Yang Shenlong's combat strength, Jiang Yuebai would ensure his efforts weren't in vain. With this determination, he launched wave after wave of relentless attacks.

"Hraaah—"

Aside from that time in the illusory realm, when had Yang Shenlong ever suffered such severe injuries? One side of his body appeared bloodied and mangled. His eyes gleamed with a ferocious light as he swung his dragon claw, determined to obliterate Chu Liang with a single blow!

But Chu Liang's vitality radiated with the intensity of the sun, making it incredibly difficult to defeat him.

In truth, had all of Yang Shenlong's attacks landed cleanly, the severely injured Chu Liang might have already collapsed. However, Chu Liang was wearing the Jiuli Soul Armor, which reflected part of Yang Shenlong's strikes back onto him. This created a strange stalemate between them.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!

The two continued exchanging relentless blows, each strike landing with heavy force.

The spectators outside were dumbfounded. The sheer resilience of these two fighters surpassed all expectations. Time and again, they thought one would finally collapse, only for them to stagger back to their feet.

And yet... why in the world had these two ended up fighting like this?

After exchanging several devastating strikes in quick succession, Yang Shenlong realized that defeating Chu Liang in close combat was impossible. A portion of the force he unleashed seemed to rebound onto him, worsening his injuries.

Without hesitation, he flipped his right palm, drawing power once again from the Great Dao of the World, aiming to compress Chu Liang completely.

Feeling the crushing pressure around him, Chu Liang began to shrink under its weight. Just as he was about to be compressed into Yang Shenlong's palm, he let out a thunderous shout, "Ahhhhhhhhhh—"

Boom!

Chu Liang ignited his vitality and qi, forcibly breaking free from the grip of the Great Dao of the World. The cost was his blood erupting from his body and hot dragon blood splattering everywhere. He collapsed backward, crashing heavily to the ground.

If he didn't want to be compressed within the Great Dao of the World, he had no choice but to pay this price.

It seemed as though Yang Shenlong was on the verge of winning, yet he didn't relax. He raised his hand and conjured a barrier of azure light.

Sure enough, the golden blood droplets in the air suddenly coalesced and formed into a sharp sword, slashing downward with blinding speed.

Chu Liang had just used the Blood-Refinement Technique: Divine Light.

Through this complex technique, Chu Liang had refined his blood, imbuing it with powerful spiritual energy. During the Mount Shu Summit, he had used this very move to feign defeat and severely injure Xu Ziyang.

Yang Shenlong had specifically studied the techniques and moves used by Chu Liang. Naturally, he knew better than to let his guard down now.

Screech—

The Spirit Blood Sword struck the barrier, shattering it with a single blow. As the barrier crumbled, the sword dissolved into droplets of blood, which fell to the ground, forming a puddle.

Huff—

A gentle breeze swept through.

Yang Shenlong stood tall, his body drenched in blood.

Chu Liang lay on the ground, soaked in blood.

It was unknown if he was dead or alive.

The outcome seemed obvious.

Yet Yang Shenlong's brows were tightly furrowed, showing no sign of joy.

For someone of Chu Liang's cultivation level, the power he unleashed was far too overwhelming. A person of his level shouldn't have been able to put Yang Shenlong in such an embarrassing state.

Nevertheless, he was an opponent worthy of respect.

"You should be proud of yourself for injuring me this badly," Yang Shenlong said slowly.

With that, he turned and walked away.

Jiang Yuebai was waiting for him in the next corridor.

At this moment, Yang Shenlong had no idea whether he could defeat her in his current, severely injured state.

"Yang Shenlong of the Penglai Supreme Sect defeats—" the announcer began, but then abruptly stopped.

The blood-soaked figure on the ground was trembling as he slowly rose once again.

"You should be proud of yourself for beating me to such a state," Chu Liang said with great difficulty. "Unfortunately, you haven't won yet..."

Chu Liang lifted his head high.

Yang Shenlong glanced at him in astonishment, baffled by how Chu Liang could still stand after losing so much blood.

In the next moment, Chu Liang threw his head back and let out a deafening roar as his face morphed into that of a dragon!

"Hraaah—"

Taking on the form of a dragon was Yang Shenlong's signature move! Yet here it was, suddenly demonstrated by Chu Liang.

But Chu Liang's dragon head was a striking blend of three colors: one side blue-black, the other pure white, with fiery red whiskers.

A tri-colored dragon? The audience thought.

Then, Chu Liang opened his mouth and unleashed a crimson-gold flame.

The flames caught Yang Shenlong off guard, and he was instantly engulfed by the raging fire!

Boom—

The spiritual power within the flame was so intense that even Yang Shenlong, with his invincible body, couldn't endure it. As he was already gravely injured, he was forced to retreat in a panic.

But Chu Liang quickly pursued, launching another attack.

He grabbed Yang Shenlong by the waist with his massive dragon claw. At the same time, his right hand blazed with fire as he formed a fist, ready to strike again.

This was indeed Yang Shenlong's technique, but now it was being used by Chu Liang, who demonstrated far greater power.

After all, Yang Shenlong only carried the legacy of one dragon. What good would just one legacy do?

Boom—

Chapter 595: Champion of the Assembly(I)

Yang Shenlong left peacefully.

...

The White Dragon had only recently arrived on Mount Shu, while the Azure Dragon had been guarding the fate of the Penglai Supreme Sect for several thousand years.

Over these several thousands of years, the disciples of the Penglai Supreme Sect had developed numerous secret techniques rooted in the dragons' cultivation legacy, such as Dragon Soul Protection and the Physical Dragon Transformation.

It was the first fight with Yang Shenlong that sparked Chu Liang's curiosity in this physical transformation ability.

He wondered how Yang Shenlong was able to perform the divine ability that transformed part of himself into a dragon.

He had never seen such an ability before, so he even asked Wang Xuanling about it later on.

However, Wang Xuanling knew very little about it. After all, few sects in the world had close ties to dragons, and the Mount Shu Sect still had much to explore in this field.

After some thought, Chu Liang reasoned that if Yang Shenlong, with only the cultivation legacy of the Azure Dragon, could wield such divine abilities, then with three dragon cultivation legacies, he should have no reason not to.

The issue lay in not having the proper method.

However...

There were three places where their fate was suppressed by a dragon.

In addition to Mount Shu and Penglai, there was one other ancient and legendary location that might provide him with the proper method.

This was naturally the imperial court of the Yu Dynasty.

The Golden Dragon, symbolizing the imperial family's fate, had guarded the Imperial City for millennia.

In terms of raw power, it was likely the most formidable entity serving under the imperial court.

However, the Golden Dragon was loyal only to fate, not to the imperial family.

If a dynasty embodied the great destiny of the Nine Provinces, the Golden Dragon might then fight for it.

If the emperor were tyrannical and had lost the Mandate of Heaven, the imperial family's karmic luck would fade, and the Golden Dragon would ruthlessly abandon its master, disappearing without a trace.

It would only reappear once a new dynasty was established.

The Yu Dynasty had coexisted with the Golden Dragon for centuries. If any secret techniques existed, the members of the Yu Dynasty were likely the ones who had mastered them.

On the night before they entered the Divine Mirror of the Eight Trigrams for intense cultivation, Chu Liang not only helped Ling Ao seek Yun Chaoxian's guidance in martial arts but also visited the imperial palace to request a technique for himself.

By the end of the day, these words were what truly mattered: top-tier connections.

With the imperial family members already eliminated, and the Mount Shu Sect being the only hope to defeat the Penglai Supreme Sect, the emperor readily agreed to Chu Liang's request. Without hesitation, he issued a decree to consult the Dragon-Keeping Eunuch, Yao Dengxian, and soon received the requested answer.

The technique of Physical Dragon Transformation was really a form of immortal art. Only those who carried the cultivation legacy of the dragons could perform it, so very few people had learned it throughout history. Compared to more common immortal arts like Dimension Compression, it could be considered a secret technique.

However, Yao Dengxian also mentioned that mastering the Physical Dragon Transformation within seven days was nearly impossible.

In contrast to immortal arts, which relied on a deep understanding of the Great Dao, the challenge of mastering Physical Dragon Transformation depended more on the type of dragon legacy bestowed upon the individual.

For instance, the gift of dragon blood that Ling Ao had received could be considered a dragon cultivation legacy, but there was too little of the dragon blood. Because of this, mastering the immortal art would be as difficult as reaching the heavens for someone like him.

For someone gifted with dragon breath, the difficulty of mastering this secret technique would be comparable to that of mastering ordinary immortal arts. This was how Yang Shenlong was able to master the technique.

For someone gifted with a dragon soul, mastering the technique would be even easier. In a few short years, when Qi Lin'er had mastered it, dealing with him would be even more challenging.

Apart from these dragon cultivation legacies, Chu Liang had inherited a legacy that no human could ever completely master—the Dragon Orb.

Technically, acquiring the Dragon Orb could not be considered as having received a legacy; it was more like succeeding a position. The Blue Dragon's Orb granted him not only the physical form of a dragon but also the full authority of a True Dragon.

Although Chu Liang could not yet fully command the Blue Dragon's Orb, having the dragon orb within him made him ninety-nine percent dragon. Thus, with only a minimal exertion of qi, he was able to master the Immortal Art of Physical Dragon Transformation.

Yao Dengxian assumed that the White Dragon of Mount Shu had only gifted him the cultivation legacy of dragon breath, hence why he said it was impossible for Chu Liang to master the Immortal Art of Physical Dragon Transformation within seven days.

Just moments ago, the emperor had been lamenting, thinking it would have been better if Chu Liang had sought the technique earlier.

But then, right before his eyes, Chu Liang formed a seal and activated the technique, instantly transforming one of his hands into a dragon's claw.

"Hmm..." the emperor muttered. Had he not been concerned with maintaining the dignity of his position, he might have blurted some words of astonishment that people of his pedigree shouldn't have said.

...

Originally, Chu Liang's ability to transform into a dragon would have made him stand out already in the matches in the Battle at the Imperial City. However, he soon attained complete understanding of

the Great Dao of Severing the Void. In comparison to the profound power of the Great Dao, immortal arts seemed somewhat lacking.

With the Sword Strike of Severing the Void, he progressed decisively and smoothly all the way to this point.

Throughout his battle with Yang Shenlong, he had been patiently searching for an opening, waiting for Yang Shenlong to lower his guard so he could unleash this technique with maximum effect.

It was only after his stealthy strike—executed with the Blood-Refinement Technique: Divine Light—was successfully blocked that Yang Shenlong assumed Chu Liang had no strength left to fight back. Relaxation began to settle in.

When facing certain enemies, even the slightest relaxation could provide them with the chance to turn the tables.

For ordinary cultivators, having their blood scattered across the sky would have left them incapable of continuing the fight.

But even in this near-death moment, Chu Liang had a trump card. As he activated the Physical Dragon Transformation, his body surged with vitality. The remaining blood in his body transformed into the blood of the dragon, and an overwhelming torrent of power coursed through him once more.

This was the might of the dragons.

This was Chu Liang's final burst of strength!

If Yang Shenlong could withstand this counterattack, Chu Liang's defeat would be inevitable.

Unfortunately for Yang Shenlong, he had also reached his limit.

A blazing fist smashed into Yang Shenlong's face, sending him sprawling backward. In the next instant, his right arm morphed into a dragon claw, swiping desperately to push Chu Liang away.

To his shock, he realized that Chu Liang's strength still far surpassed his own!

As Chu Liang had mentioned, he had the cultivation legacies of the Blue Dragon, White Dragon, and the Inferno Dragon. Upon transforming into a dragon, the power of these three legacies surged within him, far surpassing the might of the Physical Dragon Transformation from one dragon cultivation legacy.

Bang—

Chu Liang leaned forward, pinning Yang Shenlong down with his left claw while driving his right fist into him once more.

How similar this scene was to when he first defeated Yang Shenlong in the illusory realm!

The difference was that last time he relied on the Great Pill of the Endlessly Devouring Whale, but this time, it was his own strength.

Both were prodigies of immortal sects, yet the gap between the fifth realm and the sixth realm was immense. Through his wisdom, strength, and willpower... he had forcibly closed this gap!

Yang Shenlong, battered and dazed from repeated injuries, felt his mind growing muddled. Yet, a burning refusal to admit defeat still lingered. With his left hand, he lifted the Dragon Bone Jade Blade, channeling a sharp surge of sword qi into it, and thrust it toward Chu Liang in a desperate strike.

Swish.

Chu Liang was too exhausted to dodge and could only shift slightly to protect his vital points. As the Dragon Bone Jade Blade pierced his shoulder, he had lost so much blood that barely any remained to flow freely.

Both sides had fought to their last drop of blood.

"Ah..." Chu Liang growled softly, twisting his shoulder to wrench the Dragon Bone Jade Blade from Yang Shenlong's grasp. Without hesitation, he leaned forward again, his right fist igniting in flames as he struck.

Bang—

Another punch.

After three devastating blows, Yang Shenlong lay motionless beneath Chu Liang's hand.

His dragon scales were shattered.

He looked like a wreck, his body covered in blood and wounds.

He exhaled one last time and no longer inhaled.

The fight was over.

Chu Liang raised his head and unleashed an angry roar, echoing the chant of a dragon.

ROARRRRR—

At this moment, the winds howled, and the clouds churned in response!

Dense clouds started gathering in the sky above.

It was just as the saying goes: The wind follows the tiger, and the clouds follow the dragon.[1]

At this moment, his dragon chant reverberated through the heavens and earth, shaking the very fabric of the world!

It was as if announcing the birth of a new king!

Whiz—

He yanked Yang Shenlong's jade-green dragon bone free, letting it clatter to the ground as he stumbled forward. Every step seemed heavier than the last.

Behind him came an announcement tinged with astonishment.

"Chu Liang of the Mount Shu Sect has defeated Yang Shenlong of the Penglai Supreme Sect!"

Chapter 596: Champion of the Assembly(II)

"He actually won?"

On the spectator platform, Elder Huang couldn't believe what had just happened.

Although Chu Liang had once defied the odds during the Competition of a Hundred Sects, that was an exception. The audience had later witnessed the immense price he paid.

In the illusory realm, his meridians had been severed, and his Sea of Qi completely destroyed.

It seemed nearly impossible for him to continue cultivating.

The same method couldn't possibly work again during the Battle at the Imperial City.

Although Elder Huang had a strong emotional connection to the Mount Shu Sect, he had always firmly believed that Yang Shenlong would win.

At that moment, Scholar Sun chuckled beside him and teased, "What was it you said previously? Upsets like this happen once, but can they happen a second time?"

"Upsets can't happen twice..." Elder Huang muttered. "If he wins again, it means his raw strength is on a higher level, and he truly deserves this victory."

"It truly is unbelievable," Scholar Sun remarked. "Back at the Mount Shu Summit, he appeared out of nowhere as a dark horse. Nobody thought he could win. But he became the one who led the Mount Shu Sect, upheld its status in the Divine Nine, and once again secured the championship for them."

"Jiangjiang, as the head disciple, won't be fighting him. He'll let Jiangjiang claim the championship. Yet still..." Elder Huang said with a deep sigh, shaking his head, "Chu Liang is really a legend."

Jiang Yuebai was indeed the head disciple of this generation.

However, during this Assembly of Immortal Sects, Chu Liang had been the one turning the tides in the Competition of a Hundred Sects, launching a night raid on Misty Waters City and winning the first round of the assembly, and now defeating Yang Shenlong again in Corridor City, securing championship for the sect.

It would not be wrong to say that he led them to victory.

It wasn't just the two elders thinking this; countless spectators in the capital of Yu thought the same.

At this moment, deafening cheers erupted like waves crashing against the mountains.

"Mount Shu! Mount Shu!"

"The Young Hero with the Divine Whip! The Young Hero with the Divine Whip!"

"Jiangjiang, I love you..."

"Chu Liang! Chu Liang!"

"Mount Shu Sect wins the championship!"

"..."

Countless voices merged into a tidal wave that shook the heavens, scattering the clouds that had just gathered. Even the supporters of other immortal sects now found themselves cheering for the Mount Shu Sect.

It was as though time rushed by like a fleeting white horse across the imperial city.

As the eighty-year-old Di Nufeng stared at the current Chu Liang, she felt as though she was looking at herself when she was eighteen.

She couldn't help but offer Chu Liang her highest praise, exclaiming, "Truly worthy of being my disciple."

"Ah..."

"We're number one!"

"We have won the Assembly of Immortal Sects!"

Lin Bei, Shang Ziliang, and Lackey A embraced each other, their faces wet with tears of joy and excitement.

"Ahhhh—" Lin Bei's eyes brimmed with tears. "My brother won the championship! I'm so proud!"

"Ahhhh—" Shang Ziliang cried out, "All the money I won from the Competition of a Hundred Sects—I bet it all on Penglai to win this time!"

"Ahhhh—" Lackey A cried like he had lost a loved one. "I also bet fifty on Penglai!"

"Ah... it's fine," Lin Bei said, wiping away his tears. "The betting parlor from Taotie City where you placed your bets now belongs to Chu Liang."

"Ah?" The two froze in shock.

"Before the Competition of a Hundred Sects started, Chu Liang bet half his fortune on the Mount Shu Sect winning. He wagered so many spirit stones that the smaller bets couldn't cover the payout. The owner knew he couldn't simply refuse to pay Chu Liang his winnings. In the end, he had no choice but to hand over the entire betting parlor to him," Lin Bei explained casually. "I went with him to settle it the night the competition ended."

"My goodness." Shang Ziliang stopped crying and couldn't help but marvel, "How many things has Big Bro accomplished in just a few days?"

...

After Chu Liang defeated Yang Shenlong, the crowd erupted into deafening cheers, which lasted until he stepped into the next corridor to face Jiang Yuebai. Only then did the spectators remember that the Battle at the Imperial City was not yet over.

Jiang Yuebai looked at Chu Liang standing before her.

His clothes were torn to shreds, and his body was a patchwork of blood and bruises. Thanks to his incredible regenerative powers, most of the wounds had begun to heal, but the cuts and gashes were alarmingly deep.

Just by looking at him, one could tell how fierce the fight was.

If anyone else of his cultivation realm had suffered even a single one of these injuries, they would have lost the ability to fight.

After all, Yang Shenlong was one cultivation level higher, giving him an overwhelming advantage.

Yet Chu Liang had won.

The first victory merely showed that he had won against a stronger opponent. But if it happened again, it would prove that he was truly strong.

Like everyone else, Jiang Yuebai was unaware of Chu Liang's Large-Headed Dolls or the elemental foundational qi powered by two Golden Cores. She didn't know that the difference between him and the other ordinary fifth-realm cultivators was as great as the distance between heaven and earth.

However, she knew that this wasn't the first time Chu Liang had achieved a seemingly miraculous victory.

Chu Liang possessed a kind of inexplicable power.

For some reason, she suddenly recalled the first time she met Chu Liang.

Back then, he was just a young disciple in the third realm, riding a Baize youngling, and had suddenly appeared, barging into her small world.

If someone had told her back then that this person would soon rise to prominence, lead the Mount Shu Sect to prosperity and strength, and reclaim the championship at the Assembly of Immortal Sects...

Jiang Yuebai would never have believed it.

For quite a long time, she thought of Chu Liang as a little junior brother who needed her care, and she had even been resentful that his cultivation speed surpassed her own.

He had still lost to her at the Mount Shu Summit.

She didn't know when it had started, but gradually, she had begun to accept that he might actually be stronger than her.

"Hey," Chu Liang said, looking utterly battered as he walked over slowly.

As he was walking, he suddenly smiled.

"Hehe," Jiang Yuebai smiled gently in return.

She stepped toward him, stopping a few paces away, and softly asked, "Still want to fight?"

"Of course," Chu Liang replied with such faint breathing. "I lost to you at the Mount Shu Summit and held a grudge for a long time. If I lose to you again this time, won't I be bullied by you for the rest of my life?"

"Then let's fight," Jiang Yuebai said with a bright smile.

For someone who usually carried a cool and aloof expression, her smile was surprisingly bright, and there were even tears welling up in her eyes.

It seemed like Chu Liang wanted to say something, but before he could, he suddenly collapsed forward, losing consciousness. Jiang Yuebai quickly caught him, holding him gently in her arms.

As she touched Chu Liang, she could feel how icy cold he was. Clearly, every bit of his strength was drained.

"Wow—"

A commotion erupted outside as everyone saw Jiang Yuebai holding Chu Liang. From their earlier exchange, they had expected a fight to break out, but now it seemed it had all been playful banter.

How could they possibly fight now?

Those who had witnessed the Mount Shu Summit found this sequence of events oddly familiar. Chu Liang had defeated the strongest opponent, only to lose to Jiang Yuebai once again.

The title of champion for the Assembly of Immortal Sects, like the head disciple position of Mount Shu, was seemingly handed over to Jiang Yuebai.

Didn't the same exact thing happen? Is this the same script?

Did someone plan for the Mount Shu Summit and the Assembly of Immortal Sects to end this way? Did the sects in the Divine Nine and the Terrestrial Ten work with the imperial court to elevate Jiang Yuebai's status?

These speculations spread everywhere, but they did not reach Corridor City.

Under the watchful eyes of countless spectators, Jiang Yuebai held Chu Liang in her arms for a long time.

Finally, an announcement echoed throughout the corridors.

"Chu Liang of the Mount Shu Sect is unable to continue fighting, so...."

"Wait..." At this moment, Jiang Yuebai suddenly said as she raised a hand. "I concede."

Chapter 597: The Names Sung at the Dragon Terrace

The majestic Dragon Terrace gleamed with a golden radiance, its brilliance mirrored by swirling clusters of clouds that adorned the sky.

An immense crowd gathered below, their eager gazes burning with the intensity of the midday sun. Behind the Dragon Terrace stood ten towering pillars, each adorned with carvings of coiling dragons and carrying the banner of one of the ten sects participating in the Battle at the Imperial City.

As the competition progressed and sects were eliminated, the pillars were taken down one by one. Now, only a single banner remained—a white flag embroidered with gold—fluttering elegantly in the wind.

"Mount Shu Sect!"

As the Emperor of the Yu Dynasty ascended the Dragon Terrace, the deafening cheers for the Mount Shu Sect came to an abrupt halt. Traditionally, a high-ranking official from the Imperial Supervisory Bureau would make such announcements, but this time, the emperor himself stepped forward to announce the names. Clearly, the emperor was in an exceptionally good mood.

"After many days of fierce competition, the winning sect of this year's Assembly of Immortal Sects is... the Mount Shu Sect!" The emperor's voice resonated with a commanding blend of authority and delight.

The emperor was happy not just because Chu Liang held the title of Imperial Younger Brother. The main reason was that the reign of the Penglai Supreme Sect had lasted for far too long. Any sect that could defeat Penglai Supreme Sect and take the championship was sure to bring him joy.

"Ling Ao! Xu Ziyang! Jiang Yuebai!" He called out each name slowly and clearly. "And my Imperial Younger Brother, Chu Liang!"

"He is the champion of this year's Assembly of Immortal Sects!"

Each time a name was called, the twelve great drums on the city walls thundered in unison, and the crowd erupted in cheers and applause. Even the auspicious clouds above seemed to join in the celebration of these young champions.

These were the most dazzling names of this generation!

In no time, their names would echo across the nine provinces and beyond, known far and wide. No matter where life took them, the glory they achieved today would be a source of pride for a lifetime.

The entire capital of Yu buzzed with excitement!

At this moment, he lay peacefully with his eyes closed in Jiang Yuebai's arms.

Jiang Yuebai sat beside him in the Imperial City's medical hall, letting him rest his head on her lap as they waited for the Imperial Supervisory Commissioner to personally tend to his injuries.

"Strange..." The Imperial Supervisory Commissioner frowned and said, "I've used my foundational qi to stabilize his life force. Although his wounds appear serious, they are only skin-deep. For someone as strong as him, the major injuries should already be repaired. It doesn't make sense for him to still be unconscious."

"Did you hear that?" Jiang Yuebai said, gently patting Chu Liang's face. "It's time to wake up."

"Mm..." Chu Liang's eyelids fluttered, but he still didn't open his eyes.

"If you keep this up, you will miss the moment when they announce your name at the Dragon Terrace. Stop faking it," Jiang Yuebai added.

Chu Liang opened his eyes immediately.

"Owh..." he groaned, rubbing the back of his head. Still sounding groggy, he added, "If you say I was unconscious, I guess I was. But even then, I swear I heard a voice... like the sound of heaven calling me back."

Jiang Yuebai smiled faintly and said in a helpless tone, "What should I do with you?"

As Chu Liang gazed at her face, he couldn't help but reflect on how some beauties appeared stunning from a distance but lost their charm up close. Jiang Yuebai, however, was different. From afar, she looked breathtaking, and up close, she was even more radiant.

"Why did you concede?" he asked.

Hearing this, Jiang Yuebai rolled her eyes at him in annoyance, thinking, So, he heard that too. Which means he was never actually unconscious. He just tripped, fell, and conveniently let me catch him. This guy was faking it the whole time.

"That is what you deserve." After a brief pause, she stood up and pointed toward the city walls outside. "Listen, everyone's calling your name."

Chu Liang was severely injured, but as the Imperial Supervisory Commissioner had noted, they were merely wounds to his skin and flesh. For a cultivator—especially one with Chu Liang's exceptional regenerative abilities—the vital damage had already healed in no time. The remaining injuries would mend with rest and posed no serious threat. While he couldn't engage in combat for now, his movements were unaffected.

Several chambers lined the corridor, each dedicating to treating injured disciples from the Battle at the Imperial City. Yang Yuhu stood at the entrance of one of these rooms.

He stood there, listening to the sounds from outside, seemingly lost in thought.

When he saw Chu Liang emerge from the room, a hint of awkwardness crossed his face. Chu Liang, however, was the first to smile and greet him. "Brother Yang, how is your brother doing?"

"My elder brother... he's fine. A few days of rest, and he'll be back to normal," Yang Yuhu replied. After a brief hesitation, he added, "Congratulations."

Since Yang Shenlong's Azure Dragon cultivation legacy specialized in recovery, his healing process was undoubtedly as quick as Chu Liang's.

"Thank you," Chu Liang said with a slight nod.

He then leaped into the air alongside Jiang Yuebai, landing gracefully atop the high walls of the Imperial City. Ling Ao and Xu Ziyang were already there, waiting for them. With everyone gathered, they were ready to ascend the Dragon Terrace together.

The moment Jiang Yuebai and Chu Liang showed up together, the already thunderous cheers grew even more intense.

In the past, whenever Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai were seen together, the crowd would mock Chu Liang with cries of "Scoundrel!" But now, those jeers had become cheers of "A perfect match," and no one dared to oppose it anymore.

Even if a few die-hard Jiangjiang fans refused to accept reality, someone would immediately step forward to admonish them, "He's talented, and she's beautiful—they're a match made in heaven! What right does a monster like you have to object to this?"

"Come forth!" the emperor commanded with a grand wave of his hand.

Chu Liang and the other three ascended the Dragon Terrace together, where palace attendants promptly stepped forward to dress them in golden crowns, jade belts, vibrant ribbons, and robes embroidered with red patterns. In an instant, the four were transformed, radiating dazzling splendor.

Chu Liang and Jiang Yuebai stood in the center, looking like a bridegroom and bride. Xu Ziyang gave off the image of a valiant and dignified best man, while Ling Ao... looked like the unwilling younger brother of the bride, forced to step in after their father passed out drunk and couldn't escort her.

Amid this atmosphere of universal celebration, the emperor clasped Chu Liang's hand and said, "Champion, say something to everyone."

As the new champion of the Assembly of Immortal Sects, this was Chu Liang's moment to speak. From atop the Dragon Terrace, even the softest words would echo across the entire city and be etched into everyone's memory.

He stepped forward, cleared his throat, and stood tall under the radiant glory of the moment. Even someone as accustomed to the limelight as him couldn't help but feel a surge of emotion.

Chu Liang composed himself briefly before finally speaking, his voice filled with excitement: "My dear friends...

"Red Cotton Peak of Mount Shu is proud to announce the opening of new shops in the Immortal's Square of the capital of Yu! To celebrate our championship this month, everything will be fifty percent off!"

...

While the citizens of the capital of Yu gathered outside the Imperial City, caught up in the excitement of the Assembly of Immortal Sects, a boy remained completely indifferent to it all.

People did not share the same joys and sorrows.

He cradled a tiny turtle in his hands, its head hanging lifelessly. The boy sat on the ground, tears streaming down his face as he sobbed quietly.

Just then, a kind and gentle voice spoke nearby.

"Little one, why are you so sad?"

The boy lifted his gaze and saw an elderly man with long white hair and a beard, wearing plain, coarse robes.

It was hard to tell how old he was, but he seemed very kind. Most of his face was hidden behind his flowing white hair, yet a warm smile shone through.

"My little turtle died..." the boy said sadly, his voice trembling. "Everyone was running over there to watch the Assembly of Immortal Sects, and my turtle accidentally crawled onto the road and got stepped on!"

"Then... do you wish for it to come back to life?" the kind elder asked suddenly.

"Huh?" The boy looked up with a strange expression. Though he was young, he knew that the dead could not return to life. "Is that even possible?" he asked.

"If you sincerely make a wish, I can help you bring it back to life," the elderly man said with a gentle smile.

Hearing this, the boy quickly closed his eyes and whispered his wish. "I sincerely wish for my turtle to come back to life."

As the words left his lips, the elderly man gently waved his hand over the turtle's lifeless body. In that moment, something miraculous happened.

The turtle's once drooping head slowly lifted, and it began moving from side to side again.

"Huh?" The boy's eyes widened in astonishment. "My turtle really came back to life!"

He gazed at the elderly man with awe, as if he were a divine being. "Grandpa, you're amazing!"

"Heheh." The elder chuckled softly and asked, "Are you happy?"

"Yes!" The boy nodded eagerly.

"Since I helped fulfill your wish, would you be willing to help me with something in return?" the elderly man asked gently.

"Yes!" The boy nodded again and asked, "What can I do to help you?"

"Help me by singing this ballad to your little friends, okay?" There was something unusual about the elderly man's voice, as though it carried a hidden power that engraved the words deeply in the boy's mind.

The ballad was long, yet the child remembered every word after hearing it just once, as though the lyrics had been etched into his soul.

The melody lingered in his mind as he hopped and skipped through the streets and alleys, eager to find his friends and sing it to them. "When the Purple Star retreats from sight,

"And Celestial Charm ascends the night,

"The Celestial Master comes from realms on high,

"To cut through demons beneath the sky. "Chaos stirs in the Dragon Pool,

"The Divine Fire Fades and Cool,

"Through mountain strife and shadowed fray,

"The Dragon-Slaying Saber lay."

Chapter 598: Father and Daughter

With the announcement of names on the Dragon Terrace complete, the ceremony took a brief pause and the members of the immortal sects dispersed.

Those from the immortal sects who had no interest in staying began their return journeys, while those in the mood to look around could explore the areas around the capital of Yu.

The disciples of the Mount Shu Sect returned to the residence prepared for them by the imperial court. However, their celebration was far from over.

The next evening, they would enter the palace to join the emperor at the Qinghong Banquet, famed as the finest feast in the mortal world.

Their names had been proclaimed upon the Dragon Terrace, but the championship ceremony would only be complete after they were honored at the Qinghong Banquet.

Not only would the disciples of Mount Shu Sect be invited to the Qinghong Banquet, but the event would also feature musical and dance performances. The finest musicians and dancers of the Yu Dynasty had already been invited in advance.

In past years, the South Melody Conservatory would have already selected an exceptional disciple to perform at the banquet. This year, however, they hadn't, as they were one of the rare top ten sects to participate in the Battle at the Imperial City. Such an occurrence was rare, and there had even been a faint hope they could seize the championship.

Anyone eligible to sit at the Qinghong Banquet would naturally not perform as a guest artist. Therefore, it wasn't until after the champion's name was proclaimed on the Dragon Terrace that the leading elder of the South Melody Conservatory team decided that Shen Qingyan would perform at the palace.

The imperial court had always shown favor toward Shen Qingyan, openly expressing their hopes for her to marry the Second Prince and become the future empress. While the South Melody Conservatory was willing to create such opportunities, they remained respectful of their disciple's decision. Sending her to perform at the palace was just another chance for her to interact with the Second Prince.

Shen Qingyan herself was not particularly keen on interacting with the Second Prince again, but this was a task assigned by her sect. Traditionally, only the most exceptional disciples were selected for this honor, and refusing it would only create unnecessary awkwardness for everyone.

Besides, having participated in the Battle at the Imperial City and achieving the best results in decades, the sisters of the South Melody Conservatory were in high spirits and eagerly planned to celebrate together that evening.

However, the city remained swept up in the excitement of the Assembly of Immortal Sects. The streets were bustling with activity, and if the disciples of the South Melody Conservatory ventured out, they would undoubtedly attract a mob of onlookers.

Thus, they took a carriage out of the city to an estate in the countryside, a familiar and quiet place where they could relax, eat, drink, and enjoy themselves without worry.

The carriage slowly rolled out of the capital, coming to a halt before a garden estate adorned with a plaque that read "Serene Elegance Villa."

What was meant to be a pleasant outing took an unexpected turn the moment Shen Qingyan stepped down from the carriage!

A shadowy figure emerged stealthily from the bamboo forest surrounding the estate, creeping closer with each passing moment. The girls remained blissfully unaware until a sudden, commanding voice rang out from within the carriage, "Who dares lurk here?"

Ever since Shen Qingyan had been the target of a stealthy attack, the South Melody Conservatory had assigned an experienced elder to join the team as an additional safeguard alongside the supervising elder. It was this battle-hardened elder that immediately detected the stealthy enemy.

A sharp, resonant twang of strings echoed through the air, and the shadowy figures crawling along the ground were suddenly flung back, as if colliding with an invisible wall.

With a few sharp cries of pain, the black-clad figures were flung into the air, crashing heavily onto the ground.

As the core disciples exited the carriage, they immediately went on high alert, grabbing their instruments and surveying the area with sharp focus.

In an instant, a whirlwind of dust and debris swirled into the air. A streak of yellow wind shot past, and a shadowy figure surged forward like a violent gale, suddenly materializing before Shen Qingyan.

"How dare you!" The elder inside the carriage bellowed, leaping into action without hesitation!

Shen Qingyan raised her hands in an attempt to defend, but the shadowy figure's palm strike came as swift as lightning, giving her no time to dodge.

Bang—

Shen Qingyan was hit with overwhelming force, flung through the air as blood spurted from her lips before she crashed heavily to the ground.

Silently, the shadowy figure turned and vanished into the darkness, retreating without a trace.

The elder of the South Melody Conservatory swiftly plucked her strings four times, unleashing four sonic blades that shot toward the retreating figure. However, with a sweep of his wide sleeve, the shadowy figure conjured a black vortex that swallowed the blades whole, causing them to vanish without a trace.

He delivered a single strike and departed without any intention of continuing the fight.

"As a seventh-realm Eminent One, how shameless of you to launch a stealthy attack on a disciple of my sect!" the elder spat furiously.

The opponent's ghostly movements made it clear he was also at the seventh realm. In such a situation, with one attacking and one defending, it was exceedingly difficult for her to fully protect all the disciples.

She could only watch him leave, shifting her focus immediately to check on Shen Qingyan's condition.

The elder placed her fingers on Shen Qingyan's wrist, checking her pulse. With a slight frown, she said, "Fortunately, the attack only injured your meridians. It's not serious; rest and proper medicine will ensure a full recovery."

At the same time, a sense of puzzlement arose as she thought to herself, What could these men be after? Why would a seventh-realm Eminent One be sent to harm Shen Qingyan? Could it possibly be some crazed admirer of Xue Lingxue or Yu Xiang'er?

The thought occurred to her because such absurd incidents had happened before—instances where an obsessive fan of one core disciple attacked another. These occurrences, while unusual, were not unheard of. However, it was very rare for someone of such high cultivation to be involved.

"I'm fine, don't worry," Shen Qingyan said weakly after taking a moment to regulate her breathing and confirming her injuries weren't severe. "But I probably won't be able to perform at the palace tomorrow."

...

"Slurp. "

"Slurp."

In the always-empty Divine Fire Hall, a copper hotpot bubbled and steamed at its center. Two figures sat facing each other, each taking up vermicelli noodles from a bowl and slurping it down with enthusiasm.

"Ss-haaa."

"Ss-haaa."

"Why are you copying me all the time?" Di Nufeng shot an annoyed glare at her father across the table.

"I'm not," Mingde replied as he set down his chopsticks. "It's just... really tasty."

"Right?" Di Nufeng said confidently. "With the bond we share, would I ever lie to you? With our Mount Shu broth base and my secret dipping sauce, it's impossible for anything not to taste amazing."

"Agreed," Mingde said with an approving nod.

"This is a family secret passed down through generations," Di Nufeng proclaimed. "It's taught only to the daughters in the family and never to the sons. If I didn't need something from you, I wouldn't even be sharing it today."

Hearing this, Mingde couldn't help but feel puzzled.

Traditionally, shouldn't he, as the father, be the one passing down family secrets? Yet here she was, saying things that contradicted the very tradition she was describing.

But he still asked, "What do you need?"

"With this delicious sauce, I need you to sneak into the Qinghong Aviary tonight and steal a Qinghong bird. Tomorrow, we'll have hotpot, and I guarantee it'll be delicious," Di Nufeng answered.

"..." Mingde was stunned into silence for a moment. "You're still hung up on that?"

"If I'd never tasted it, fine. But I had it once back then, and the flavor was unforgettable," Di Nufeng said, smacking her lips in fond remembrance.

"The Qinghong Banquet has been a tradition for years," Mingde chuckled. "Aside from the emperor, I've never heard of anyone trying to sneak back for seconds."

"That's true." Di Nufeng suddenly paused, lost in thought. "If I became the emperor, I could rightfully eat it every twelve years."

"That's entirely unnecessary," Mingde quickly interjected, cutting off her train of thought.

The idea of wanting to become emperor just to eat the Qinghong Banquet might sound absurd, but knowing Di Nufeng, she could very well be serious.

"Hehe, don't worry," Di Nufeng said with a laugh. "I gave up on wanting the emperor's position a long time ago..."

Just as Mingde began to breathe a sigh of relief, she added, "What I want is yours."

"Haaaaa..." Mingde couldn't help but let out a sigh.

Such misdeeds! the words echoed bitterly in his mind.

Di Nufeng said, "You agreed, didn't you? You're not planning to go back on your word, are you?"

She was, of course, referring to their agreement—should the Mount Shu Sect win the championship at the Assembly of Immortal Sects, she would have the right to challenge him for control of the Great Dao of Incinerating Heavens.

"Of course," Mingde replied with a bitter smile.

In truth, no one believed Di Nufeng would succeed in fighting for control of the Great Dao of Incinerating Heavens.

The members of the imperial family tried to stop Di Nufeng because they were worried that Mingde, overcome by fatherly love, would willingly hand over the Great Dao of Incinerating Heavens. After all, Mingde's past as the guardian of the imperial family showed that he wasn't particularly reliable.

Fortunately, the emperor later confirmed with Mingde that he had no such intentions.

As long as he didn't willingly relinquish it, no matter how many people tried to contend for the Great Dao—be it ten or ten thousand—they would never succeed.

This was why the emperor had no reservations with assisting Chu Liang, even going so far as to gift him immortal arts to enhance his strength. He wasn't worried about the Mount Shu Sect winning the championship, because as long as Mingde didn't want to give up control of the Great Dao of Incinerating Heavens, Di Nufeng's efforts to take it were meaningless.

It was nearly impossible for a seventh-realm cultivator to challenge and seize control of a Great Dao that already had a master.

Seeing Di Nufeng's smug expression, as if she had already won, Mingde couldn't help but feel helpless.

This daughter of his truly was...

He could completely understand why her reputation in the immortal cultivation world was so terrible.

After all, not everyone would put up with her as if they were her father.

She was even willing to take on her own father in a fight. Truly, she spared no one.

"When the time comes, don't hold back or go easy on me," Di Nufeng said firmly. "We're family, but we'll settle this fair and square. No mercy."

"..." Mingde felt a vein throb at his temple.

As he grappled for a response, a resounding dragon's roar suddenly echoed from outside.

"Raaaaaaaar!"

The dragon chant carried immense spiritual energy, shaking the entire Imperial City, including the Divine Fire Hall. The resulting tidal wave of energy rippled outward, toppling countless pedestrians in the streets.

Mingde stomped his foot, grounding himself like an unshakable pillar. A powerful force surged from him, halting the tidal wave before it could sweep through the entire capital of Yu.

"What's going on?" Di Nufeng squinted, looking in the direction of the dragon chant.

Mingde had already risen abruptly. "It's the Dragon-Keeping Pool!"

Chapter 599: The Dragon-Keeping Eunuch

"The reason Chu Liang won the Assembly of Immortal Sects was because of that crucial immortal art, Physical Dragon Transformation. If His Majesty were willing to request that immortal art for you, with your talent, how could you possibly lose to him?"

A stunning woman in a palace dress moved gracefully, like a willow swaying in the breeze. Beside her walked a refined young man, their steps in sync as they chatted.

"Your praise is unwarranted. My talent could never compare to the champion of the Assembly of Immortal Sects," the young man said with a light smile. "While you may not accept my loss to Chu Liang, I, however, do."

He spoke with calm detachment, his voice devoid of emotion, appearing completely unbothered by his loss at the Assembly of Immortal Sects.

"His Majesty often compliments you in front of me, Thirteenth Prince. He says that you are humble and never compete with others. You are the one who gives him the most peace of mind," the woman in the palace dress said softly. "It seems that's truly the case."

"Oh? Father often compliments me?" The refined young man blinked, as if about to ask something, but then thought better of it. Instead, he said, "That's all thanks to His Majesty's excellent teachings."

"Of course, His Majesty speaks of you the most," the imperial consort said with a light chuckle. "He sees everything clearly—how his sons handle things and interact with others. He knows who is most capable, talented, and ambitious. He knows it all. Our emperor is wise and perceptive. If there is something good for you, how could he overlook it?"

"Father is truly a wise and enlightened ruler," the young man said with a smile.

"Alright, you should go in and see him now." When they arrived at the Night Dragon Hall, the imperial consort gestured toward it. "I won't interrupt your audience with your father."

"Thank you, Consort," the young man said, offering a slight bow.

The two in question were, of course, Gong Yu'er, the current favorite imperial consort, and the Thirteenth Prince, who had just returned from participating in the Assembly of Immortal Sects.

After the Assembly of Immortal Sects, the Sixth Princess and the Thirteenth Prince, as participants in this year's assembly, were required to present themselves before the emperor to report and receive his guidance.

Gong Yu'er just so happened to be heading in the same direction and walked with the Thirteenth Prince for part of the way.

Later that night, the Thirteenth Prince emerged from the Night Dragon Hall. As he walked alone, he couldn't help but lose himself in thought, drifting into deep contemplation.

The imperial consort's words had taken root in his heart, gradually sprouting and intertwining into tangled vines.

Just moments ago, his father had indeed praised him. He hadn't reprimanded him for his lackluster performance at the Assembly of Immortal Sects, and even mentioned arranging future duties for him.

If his father had, as the court and the public believed, already decided to make his second brother the Crown Prince, he wouldn't have shown such an attitude.

He had always presented himself as someone who doesn't compete. However, he knew he needed to show his father his ambition. He had to gradually present himself as someone who wouldn't let the emperor feel too at ease, ensuring that his father wouldn't favor his second brother entirely.

If he wanted to demonstrate his ambition after this assembly, he knew just the way to do it—the Dragon-Keeping Eunuch.

While the Dragon-Keeping Pool was a forbidden area within the palace, the emperor's children were permitted to seek the Golden Dragon's cultivation legacy. However, the Golden Dragon could not be forced to share its knowledge.

Like Ling Ao, who sought the gift of cultivation legacy at the Dragon-Fishing Pool on Mount Shu, showing genuine sincerity could earn one the blessing of a True Dragon.

However, out of every hundred kids of the imperial family who went to the Dragon-Keeping Pool, ninety-nine would come back with nothing.

However, if even one succeeded, it meant they possessed great destiny and gained significant recognition.

For the children of the imperial family, seeking the gift of cultivation legacy at the Dragon-Keeping Pool was often like a gamble.

The Thirteenth Prince, wishing to present himself as someone who didn't care about the throne, had never gone before.

But the imperial consort's words that day stirred something within him.

He thought it was time.

And so, he went straight to see the Dragon-Keeping Eunuch.

The Dragon-Keeping Eunuch was tasked with all matters related to the care of True Dragons and originally held little power.

But ever since Yao Dengxian was promoted to the position of Dragon-Keeping Eunuch and reached the eighth realm of cultivation, everything had changed.

Having a monster who had attained the Heavenly Origin to protect the imperial court was of immense importance to the entire imperial city.

Since then, the Dragon-Keeping Eunuch's status had risen to the highest echelons, becoming one of the most influential figures in the imperial court.

Yao Dengxian eventually rose to become the foremost of the Four Great Warriors, and a single cough from him could make half of the imperial city tremble.

Having attained the Heavenly Origin, Yao Dengxian was no longer bound by the hierarchy of emperor and subject. If he chose to remain in the imperial city, his status would be that of a guardian of the imperial family, incomparable to that of ordinary officials.

Thus, before the Thirteenth Prince even went to seek the gift of cultivation legacy at the Dragon-Keeping Pool, he needed to pay Yao Dengxian a visit.

After waiting briefly outside the palace pavilion, a young eunuch emerged with a message from the Dragon-Keeping Eunuch.

"My grandfather[1] says you may proceed on your own to seek the gift of cultivation. It's late, and he is already resting..."

"Then I won't disturb Warrior Yao any further. I'll go in myself," the Thirteenth Prince replied politely.

Led by the young eunuch, he stepped through the gate inscribed with the words "Dragon-Keeping Pool."

Though it was called a pool, upon entering, one found it to be a world unto itself. With a single step, a vast landscape of towering mountains unfolded. The air buzzed with spiritual energy, celestial birds soared overhead, and the land was rich with the scent of heavenly treasures.

It was truly a rare and extraordinarily blessed mountain range.

This was the dwelling of the Golden Dragon. The Thirteenth Prince slowly made his way into the mountains.

Within the mountains, a golden-scaled waterfall cascaded down, behind which lay the Golden Dragon's lair. If the seeker was blessed with fate, they would only need to circle the hill, and the

Golden Dragon would appear. Without such fortune, however, the seeker would be left to depart on their own. Making noise or causing a disturbance was strictly forbidden.

It had been over a century since any child of the imperial family had received the Golden Dragon's teachings. The Thirteenth Prince had no real expectations for himself. This act was simply a way to show his father that he possessed ambition, and that alone was enough.

However, as soon as he stepped into the mountains, a thunderous clap echoed through the air, as if the secrets of the heavens had been unlocked.

With a deafening crack, golden light erupted from the waterfall on the mountain. A mighty dragon's roar followed, and the Thirteenth Prince was stunned, collapsing unconscious on the spot.

Roar—

...

The night before the Qinghong Banquet was filled with joy and celebration. The Mount Shu Sect team gathered at the palace atop the mountain, and all of Chu Liang's friends and family who were in the capital of Yu came to join in the festivities.

The only one absent was Chu Liang's teacher. Di Nufeng had already greeted everyone before eagerly heading to the Imperial City to dine with her father.

Knowing about the bet between Di Nufeng and her father, Chu Liang understood that the dinner with Mingde was not about food, but rather a declaration of war.

Yet after three rounds of drinks, Jiang Yuebai suddenly disappeared from the banquet.

Chu Liang looked around, puzzled, before standing up and leaving the table. Eventually, he found Senior Sister Jiang sitting alone on the palace rooftop, gazing at the moon.

"Why are you here?" Chu Liang asked softly.

The frosty moonlight bathed their figures in an icy glow.

"Just needed some fresh air," Jiang Yuebai replied gently.

Chu Liang sat down beside her, glanced at her, and said, "You don't seem to be in a good mood."

"Hmm..." Jiang Yuebai hesitated before answering, "I didn't tell you before, but I'll be leaving after the Assembly of Immortal Sects."

"You're leaving Mount Shu too?" Chu Liang asked in surprise. "But you're the head disciple."

It wasn't unusual for young disciples to leave their sect after the Assembly, but for a head disciple, the usual expectation was to eventually become a peak master. So, there was really no reason for her to leave.

"This was decided long before the assembly," Jiang Yuebai said after a moment of silence. "It was decided when I met with my father. He said... he'd be willing to take me with him from now on."

Huh? The Whale-Riding Immortal's face flashed across Chu Liang's mind. So that old rascal's planning to take Jiang Yuebai away?

He frowned and asked, "But he's always wandering aimlessly. What could you—"

"He was never wandering aimlessly. He's been searching for a way to rescue my mother," Jiang Yuebai replied.

"Your mother?"

Chu Liang recalled that her mother was someone who had walked out of the Divine Ruins but was later taken back by the people from the Divine Ruins Monastery, who then annihilated the rest of the Jiang family...

"Both of you are going to the Divine Ruins?" he immediately asked.

Anyone who entered or interacted with that place would be in grave danger. It was no surprise that the Whale-Riding Immortal, despite being at the eighth realm, still acted with such caution in all his endeavors.

"Going to the Divine Ruins isn't difficult," Jiang Yuebai said. "But the Divine Ruins isn't a small realm. It's far larger than the Nine Provinces and the Four Seas combined. It's a place with countless layers of danger and hidden worlds. Without a precise route to navigate through these dangers, locating the Divine Ruins Monastery would be impossible."

"But even if you find the Divine Ruins Monastery..." Chu Liang asked, "can you really save your mother?"

"We have to try," Jiang Yuebai turned her gaze to him. "If it were me trapped in the Divine Ruins Monastery, what would you do?"

Chu Liang fell silent.

If Senior Sister Jiang were taken, he would stop at nothing to find her, no matter what, even if the heavens collapsed.

"Then..." After a long pause, he finally asked, "Is there anything I can do to help?"

"When I leave, you'll be the head disciple," Jiang Yuebai said, looking at him intently. "As the champion of the immortal sects, you're far more suited for the position than I am. You must strengthen Mount Shu's power. When I find my mother, I'll come back to find you, and then—"

Jiang Yuebai didn't finish her sentence.

Because, at that moment, Chu Liang suddenly leaned in and kissed her.

This was the first time he had been so bold. If they were destined to part, he could only savor this fleeting moment.

After what felt like an eternity, they finally pulled apart.

"You—"

Jiang Yuebai was about to say something.

Suddenly, a beam of golden light shot across the sky, crashing into Chu Liang with a deafening roar. His vision went dark, and in an instant, he lost consciousness.

Chapter 600: The Little Golden Dragon

"Owhhh..." Chu Liang groaned as he clutched his head in pain, feeling it both physically and emotionally.

The headache was tolerable, but the emotional blow was far worse.

He couldn't help but scream inwardly, Who is it this time? Why does something always go wrong whenever I finally manage to spend some quiet time with Jiangjiang? Last time, it was the pavilion on my peak blowing up, and then her dad showing up. Now, a meteor falls on me out of nowhere. If this commotion draws others here, then... wait?

As he looked up, he suddenly realized that something was off.

He found himself in a dazzling palace, surrounded by splendor. The entire structure appeared to be made of pure gold, with intricate scaly patterns adorning the surfaces.

"Where is this?" he muttered in confusion.

"This is the Golden Scale Hall," a childlike voice suddenly chimed from behind him, crisp and cheerful. "It's my personal hidden realm and you are the first human to step in here."

Chu Liang turned around and saw a young boy in a yellow robe standing behind him. The boy had a bright, adorable face, faint outlines of golden-scales on his skin, a pair of horns on his head, and a short tail behind him.

Clearly, he was a little dragon boy.

"What kind of little dragon are you?" Chu Liang asked aloud.

Having interacted with many True Dragons, Chu Liang no longer held the dragon race in such high regard. After all his training, by bloodline standards, most draconic descendants weren't as pure as he was.

"Show some respect," the boy said, trying to appear stern. "I am the great Golden Dragon!"

"Little Golden Dragon?" Chu Liang teased.

"Don't call me little!" The boy puffed out his chest as he spoke. "I am the supreme Golden Dragon!"

"Alright, Little Golden Dragon," Chu Liang nodded. He then asked, "But how did you bring me here? This... Golden Scale Hall, right? Can you let me out now? I have urgent matters to attend to."

The Little Golden Dragon looked more serious than before.

"You can leave, but only after you hear me out," he said solemnly, "Otherwise, I won't let you go, no matter what."

Chu Liang studied the little dragon boy for a moment, noticing that while the child gave off no obvious aura. However, since he could still control this hidden realm, it meant that his cultivation was likely higher.

There was a high chance that he was at the seventh realm.

If he wanted to leave but the little dragon disagreed, there was no way he could force his way out.

So, he had no choice but to say, "Fine, just get on with it."

"Ahem ahem..." The Little Golden Dragon cleared his throat dramatically. "I am the great Golden Dragon of the imperial city, tasked with suppressing the fate of the nation. However, that despicable Yao Dengxian has stolen the teachings of Dao that should have been passed down to me, and I need someone to help me."

"Alright," Chu Liang agreed immediately. "You've found the right guy! The emperor's my buddy, and I'm having dinner with him tomorrow. I'll bring it up during the meal, and it'll be resolved. Just let me out first, and I'll make sure it's done by tomorrow."

"No!" The Little Golden Dragon replied firmly. "This is something only you can do!"

"Huh?" Chu Liang asked, confused. "You're asking me to take on someone who's at the Heavenly Origin level? An eighth-realm cultivator?"

"Haaaaaa..." The Little Golden Dragon let out a heavy sigh. "This is a long story."

"Make it short!" Chu Liang said ruthlessly.

The Little Golden Dragon then began recounting its life story, and after a while, Chu Liang finally understood why he had made such a request.

The original five-clawed Golden Dragon of the imperial city had existed since the era of the Dragon God, making it one of the oldest dragons in human history.

However, about two hundred years ago, its lifespan was finally coming to an end.

Though it had reached the eighth realm, near the pinnacle of the world, it could not achieve a breakthrough and become a Hallowed Dragon, transcending life and death. In the final moments of its life, the ancient golden dragon decided to pass on everything it had.

It laid a dragon egg, within which rested a supreme dragon hatchling that would become the seventh realm upon hatching. This dragon hatchling would also get the ancient golden dragon's hidden realm, true essence, dragon orb, and teachings of Dao...

Once the dragon hatchling emerged, it only needed to consume its mother's dragon orb and absorb the Dao essence left behind to naturally inherit its mother's Great Dao and become an eighth-realm existence from birth.

Starting from such an elevated point, it would have the potential to reach heights far greater than those of its mother.

While the Golden Dragon suppressed the fate of this imperial dynasty, it was also using the fate of the dynasty to cultivate. The Golden Dragon had also passed on this mission to its offspring, leaving the hatchling in the Dragon-Keeping Pool.

In a way, this dragon egg was the Golden Dragon's way of passing on the legacy of its life.

The day the Golden Dragon died was also the day the dragon egg hatched.

But at that moment, Yao Dengxian, the newly appointed Dragon-Keeping Eunuch, appeared. This ambitious chief eunuch used cunning methods and stole the Golden Dragon's teachings of Dao.

For dragons to ascend to the eighth realm, they had to comprehend the Great Dao. Some Great Daos were particularly attuned to dragons, but it did not mean that intelligent humans would not be able to understand them.

When the Golden Dragon died and the Little Golden Dragon hatched, there was only a fleeting moment when it was at its most vulnerable.

But at that moment, Yao Dengxian suddenly appeared, seizing the Dao essence of heavens and earth. Since he was already at the pinnacle of the seventh realm, he managed to steal the Great Dao of Cloud Dominion that the ancient Golden Dragon had left for the dragon hatchling.

Yao Dengxian then became the Dao Master of the Cloud Dominion Great Dao.

From that moment on, Yao Dengxian ascended to the eighth realm, reaching unprecedented heights. He suppressed the Golden Dragon's Dragon Orb, preventing the Little Golden Dragon from consuming it and fully inheriting its mother's power. Meanwhile, the Little Golden Dragon remained trapped in the Dragon-Keeping Pool and forced to continue suppressing the fate of the Yu Dynasty.

And the pitiful Little Golden Dragon grew up in that Dragon-Keeping Pool and was still trapped there today.

Earlier today, someone brought a mysterious power that shattered Yao Dengxian's restraints, allowing the Little Golden Dragon to seize the chance and escape.

But he couldn't just leave without doing anything. He needed to reclaim his mother's Dragon Orb.

"Wait..." Chu Liang interrupted. "You've said all this, but how does it explain why you came to me?"

"Because no one else can help me," the Little Golden Dragon replied. "You were the person with the strongest dragon aura that I sensed when I was near the capital of Yu. I thought you were one of my kin, so I sought you out."

"I'd like to help, but I'm honestly not capable enough. That's why I thought of informing the imperial family about Yao Dengxian's despicable actions," Chu Liang said.

"They already know!" The Little Golden Dragon frowned and huffed angrily. "They're all in on it! Otherwise, there's no way I could have been locked up for so long without anyone noticing."

Hearing this, Chu Liang thought for a moment and quickly understood.

The court needed a Golden Dragon to stabilize the nation's fate and an eighth-realm expert to protect the imperial city.

Yet, despite all the changes, nothing had truly been resolved.

Furthermore, to the court, the Golden Dragon wasn't entirely loyal. The moment the fate of the current dynasty faded, the Golden Dragon would depart without a second thought.

Yao Dengxian had likely struck some kind of deal with the court, pledging his service and perhaps even promising to pass down the Great Dao of Cloud Dominion to the dynasty after his own lifespan had run its course.

In this way, the emperor wouldn't risk opposing an eighth-realm expert for the sake of a Golden Dragon that was still fulfilling its role.

Moreover, it was likely this powerful cultivator had closer ties to the imperial family than the Golden Dragon did.

Realizing this, Chu Liang spread his hands helplessly. "While I sympathize with your plight, there's really nothing I can do to help."

"Hmph, you're not truly a noble dragon after all," the Little Golden Dragon said as he snorted twice before adding, "I promise, if you help me retrieve the Dragon Orb, I'll grant you a great reward."

"Hmm?" Chu Liang raised his head at this. "While I may not be able to help, I wouldn't mind hearing about this reward."

"If you help me retrieve the Dragon Orb, you will gain..." the Little Golden Dragon said seriously, "my friendship!"

Hearing this, Chu Liang immediately stood up, rolling his sleeves up as he retorted, "There must be a door or window in this damned hall of yours! Watch me smash a hole in your hidden realm!"