

M. Slaying 66

Chapter 66: Hidden Motives

[Fiend]: "Hey, Fifty-Eighth, is everything wrapped up in Kaoshan City? Are you okay?"

Chu Liang checked the Soul Subjugator Token with his divine sense and found this message.

Heh.

Chu Liang couldn't help but smirk.

I won't even bother exposing your ulterior motives. Are you truly worried about me, or are you only interested in that Nethersea Golden Lotus?

With a single glance, he knew Fiend's ulterior motive.

The incident in Kaoshan City had wrapped up several days ago, but Chu Liang, under the guise of Fifty-Eighth, hadn't communicated with his fellow disciples from the Dark King Sect through the interdimensional soul domain.

Fiend had likely learned about the news through the Seven Stars Gazette and found out about the death of the demon god's divine envoy in Kaoshan City. That meant the Nethersea Golden Lotus, which Fifty-Eighth had mentioned previously, had to be in someone else's possession.

And so, Fiend got worried.

[Fifty-Ninth]: "I've also read the reports in The Seven Stars Gazette. The divine envoy of the demons was slain by two disciples of the righteous path. Senior, you've been silent these past few days. I hope nothing untoward has befallen you?"

Fifty-Ninth, the street-smart individual, might have been fashionably late, but his presence was as reliable as ever.

Chu Liang's hesitation in promptly sharing the news was a result of meticulous contemplation.

Firstly, as a righteous disciple of the Mount Shu Sect, he had indeed acquired the Nethersea Golden Lotus. However, surrendering such a precious treasure to Fiend was out of the question.

The purpose of Chu Liang's undercover presence in this interdimensional soul domain was to uncover the mysterious Violet Gold Marquess. Given the absence of tangible results, revealing his identity by handing over the lotus was simply impractical.

While the idea of using the Nethersea Golden Lotus as bait to lure Fiend and eliminate him had crossed Chu Liang's mind, such a tactic would undoubtedly expose Chu Liang's identity.

Fiend, one of the twenty-four fiends of the Dark King Sect, was a powerful cultivator at the fifth realm of cultivation. In Chu Liang's eyes, such a cultivator was terrifying. However, in the eyes of Di Nufeng, such a cultivator was but a small fry. Sacrificing the secrecy of his precious undercover role for someone like Fiend seemed hardly worthwhile.

Hence, Chu Liang could not give the Nethersea Golden Lotus away, at least not at this moment. Chu Liang would consider using it only if it served another purpose in the future, but he had already made up his mind about keeping it for now.

Now, he needed to look at the situation from the perspective of Fifty-Eighth, a Soul Subjugator of the Dark King Sect. Considering the perspective of a diabolical cultivator who had gone through immense efforts to secure a valuable item for their superior, Chu Liang questioned whether such an individual would hand over their hard-won treasure in an honest manner.

The answer to such a scenario was likely a resounding no. Therefore, regardless of whether Chu Liang followed the logic of a bad person or a good person, he still had no intention of handing over the Nethersea Golden Lotus.

But if he was going to refuse to hand the Nethersea Golden Lotus over, he needed to provide a plausible explanation. It had to be convincing enough to make Fiend believe it, or at the very least, it shouldn't make Fiend lose trust in him.

If Chu Liang were to simply state that he had failed to seize the item, it would be acceptable. However, the drawback was that Fiend's trust in him would diminish, making it more challenging to extract information in the future.

Therefore, Chu Liang came up with a story where he not only experienced failure but also suffered severe injuries and had to retreat into hiding to recover.

He did it this way so that Fiend's perception of him might improve, even if Fiend might not be fully convinced of his loyalty.

As an experienced diabolical cultivator, it was unlikely for someone to actively reach out to their fellow disciples after sustaining serious injuries. Chu Liang believed this wouldn't happen.

Even the Violet Gold Marquess, when severely injured, dared not return to the Dark King Sect's mountain gate for fear of covert attacks from fellow disciples. And here was Fifty-Eighth, a small fry in comparison.

Remaining silent was a rational choice.

As expected, after the latest issue of The Seven Stars Gazette

was released, Fiend couldn't resist inquiring about the lotus.

After careful consideration, Chu Liang provided his response.

[Fifty-Eighth]: "Apologies, esteemed Fiend. I'm incompetent! I attempted to seize the Nethersea Golden Lotus in Kaoshan City and failed, sustaining severe injuries. Currently, I am in hiding and recuperating."

[Fiend]: "Injured? Who hurt you? How bad is your injury?"

Chu Liang had anticipated such questions, allowing him to respond without hesitation.

[Fifty-Eighth]: "The disciple from the Great Astral Sect was very powerful. I suffered significant internal injuries, but I have been gradually recovering over the past few days."

The latest issue of The Seven Stars Gazette had already disclosed that the ones responsible for slaying the demonic divine envoy were Yun Chaoxian from the Great Astral Sect and Chu Liang from the Mount Shu Sect. Emphasizing this information was crucial for credibility.

Chu Liang couldn't afford to attract more animosity towards himself, so he had no choice but to attribute the deed to Yun Chaoxian.

[Fiend]: "Sigh. You are not at fault here."

Fiend was mentally prepared for Fifty-Eighth's failure.

As Chu Liang observed the calm tone of the message, he felt confident that he had successfully deceived them. Maintaining the current situation was the best course of action, allowing him to continue gathering information from the interdimensional soul domain without offering any additional benefits.

However, at that very moment, another message unexpectedly appeared.

[Sixtieth]: "I'm currently near Kaoshan City, and I happen to have a precious medicine for healing internal injuries caused by augmented qi. Let me deliver it to you."

Eh?

At this statement, Chu Liang furrowed his brows.

Why the sudden offer?

Diabolical sect disciples were typically wary of each other, as evidenced by the past transaction between Fifty-Ninth and Sixtieth conducted through the Taotie Pavilion. These individuals preferred paying high fees to engage in offline transactions.

Why wasn't Sixtieth concerned about potential precautions?

Chu Liang pondered. He had just mentioned his severe injury, and now Sixtieth appeared out of nowhere, offering to deliver medicine. Who would believe such an offer? What if it was a ploy to attack him upon delivery? In the Dark King Sect, such actions wouldn't be surprising.

Isn't this crossing the line?

But Chu Liang hesitated to reject it immediately.

Since Sixtieth dared to make such an offer, maybe there was some deep bond or unknown connection between him and Fifty-Eighth. Perhaps there was mutual trust even in times of injury.

An immediate refusal could raise suspicions and potentially expose his identity, but how could he politely decline? Honestly, the sudden concern of fellow disciples would indeed put him at the highest risk.

As Chu Liang contemplated, a new message arrived.

[Fiend]: "Very well. Sixtieth, deliver the medicine to him. Guard him safe and take care of him. Fifty-Eighth was injured because he tried to seize the Nethersea Golden Lotus for me. If something bad happened again, I would feel uneasy."

Hiss.

Chu Liang stared at Fiend's message, and his expression tightened even more.

Despite the seemingly caring words, there was a hidden agenda. As fellow disciples of the diabolical sect, Fiend couldn't be unaware of the current situation. It was clear that Chu Liang would be safest on his own.

Yet, Fiend still sent Sixtieth to look after Fifty-Eighth. Why?

There could only be two possibilities.

The first possibility was that the Fiend didn't trust Fifty-Eighth.

It was likely that the Fiend suspected Chu Liang of obtaining the Nethersea Golden Lotus but not handing it over. Hence, he intended to facilitate a meeting between Sixtieth and Fifty-Eighth.

In such a scenario, if Sixtieth made a move while Fifty-Eighth was injured, it would provide a pretext for the Fiend to intervene and eliminate the remaining party. If the Nethersea Golden Lotus was present, it would end up in the Fiend's hands. The Fiend might willingly sacrifice two subordinates to obtain the valuable Nethersea Golden Lotus that could enhance his cultivation level.

Chu Liang couldn't be certain, but from the Fiend's perspective, this line of thinking was highly probable.

The second possibility was that Sixtieth and Fifty-Eighth indeed shared a deep bond, and Fiend genuinely believed that Fifty-Eighth would be safe under Sixtieth's protection. However, this would mean that everyone in this interdimensional soul domain shared a deep bond with each other. Chu Liang was doubtful that was the case.

From his perspective, it seemed unlikely that individuals from the Dark King Sect had a conscience. He was more inclined to believe in the first—a scheme arising from distrust.

Regardless of the situation, a direct refusal appeared to be the safest option. Meeting face-to-face could potentially lead to exposure, a literal death, and even with a strong backing for safety, revealing his identity would be a loss not worth the gain.

Yet, how could he reject the offer without raising any suspicion? This was a matter that required careful consideration.

While Chu Liang was still hesitating and pondering his response, another message popped up in the interdimensional soul domain.

[Fifty-Ninth]: "Eh? Are you all meeting up? Can I come? Let's all meet up."

This guy wants to join the fun too? What's he up to? Is he afraid of us forming a small group and isolating him?

However, this nonsensical message actually allowed Chu Liang to breathe a sigh of relief. Because of this interruption, a direct refusal became more reasonable.

[Fifty-Eighth]: "No, thanks."

[Fifty-Eighth]: "I'm still relatively safe now, and my injuries are healing. There's no need for this much manpower."

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The individuals in this group each harbored their own hidden motives. Chu Liang could make educated guesses about Fiend's thoughts, but he could only speculate about half of Sixtieth's logic, remaining unsure of the other half.

As for Fifty-Ninth's thought process, Chu Liang felt completely in the dark. He couldn't figure it out at all and didn't even know where to start when analyzing his thought process.

It was truly mind-boggling.

After putting down the Soul Subjugator Token, he was still contemplating whether there were any flaws in his recent replies when he heard a call coming from outside.

"Senior Brother Chu?"

"Eh?"

The sky had already become dark. Who could be visiting him at this late hour?

Chu Liang pushed open the door and stepped out.

There, he beheld a young disciple, who seemed a little timid. The disciple possessed a fair complexion and had an air of scholarly elegance enveloping him.

It's Wen Yulong.

As Chu Liang recalled the disciple's name, his eyes lit up with recognition. A visit from this attendant of the Hall of Weapons could only mean one thing.

The enchanted tool was done!