

M. Slaying 81

Chapter 81: Evening Banquet

The structure of the human cultivation world—the ranking of the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten—actually took shape only in the past five hundred years. If there was a dividing line, it would be traced back to the loss of the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda by the Mount Shu Sect.

Since the Mount Shu Sect lost the legendary artifact that protected the sect, its status gradually declined. The position of the number one immortal sect in the mortal realm naturally became vacant.

At that time, the two most powerful competitors were the overseas Penglai Supreme Sect and the Heavenly Star Divine Cult, a sect that didn't follow the three schools of thought.

The Penglai Supreme Sect had operated beyond the continent of the nine provinces for years. With an ancient lineage and abundant resources, it stood as a sect of significant heritage.

In contrast, the Heavenly Star Divine Cult stood apart from the three conventional schools of thought. At its peak, it could be deemed the fourth school, a huge faction dedicated to continuing the legacy of the Heavenly Star Unusual Art. It served as both a force for good and evil and an overseer of various martial arts lineages.

In their competition for the position of the leading sect of the righteous path at that time, both sects embarked on extensive recruitment campaigns, aiming to enhance their strength as much as possible and surpass each other within a short time.

In reality, although there were very few individuals with the aptitude for cultivation, it wasn't as rare as one might think. The main reason major sects always maintained a relatively small scale was due to resource limitations. It would be meaningless to recruit more disciples when there were insufficient resources for cultivation.

While the competition between the two sects in the short term seemed evenly matched, as time passed, the disadvantages of the Heavenly Star Divine Cult became apparent.

The Penglai Supreme Sect, based across the seas with abundant resources, effortlessly navigated through this brief period of high expenditure.

The Heavenly Star Divine Cult, however, lacked such abundant resources for cultivation.

Within less than a hundred years, intense competition erupted within the sect. Moreover, with different lineages having distinct characteristics, the Heavenly Star Divine Cult wasn't united. The leader at that time lacked full control.

As a result, the Heavenly Star Divine Cult, despite being such a huge existence, unexpectedly fell apart without any external military intervention.

Just by looking at the various sects and factions that emerged after the split of the Heavenly Star Divine Cult, one could vividly grasp the magnitude of its former terror.

The Celestial Pivot Pavilion, one of the Divine Nine, held a unique position. The Celestial King Sect, one of the Divine Nine, the Sea King Sect, part of the Terrestrial Ten, and the Dark King Sect, the sect currently leading in the diabolical path, had only started following the diabolical path after the Heavenly Star Divine Cult broke apart.

Apart from these major sects, there were also scattered small lineages, encompassing both righteous and diabolical paths.

For instance, in the early days of the human cultivation world, there was the Evening Star Sect, which stirred up a small ripple in the sea of the martial world... There was also the Celestial Charm Sect that wreaked havoc in the world... Some martial arts lineages, like the Seven-Killings Star, the Ruinous Star, and the Greedy Wolf Star, were considered more diabolical than righteous...

In the realm of immortal cultivation, some martial arts styles had stood the test of time while others had been forgotten. But there were those that, although inactive for a while, had the power to suddenly reappear and make a big comeback.

...

"Distinguished guests of South Gate City! Welcome! Your presence here brings light to our humble abode. If there's anything about today's feast that doesn't meet your satisfaction, please don't hesitate to let us know. We'll make sure to make any adjustments needed."

With a smiling face, Master Li stood on a platform that was one-step higher and extended a warm welcome to the well-dressed dignitaries before him.

This was the start of the prelude banquet that happened before Xue Lingxue's performance today. Everyone present was either a wealthy or noble prominent figure in the city. The spacious hall was adorned with several banquet tables with each table accommodating only a few guests.

The open space provided convenience to the upcoming festivities, allowing people to move around to offer toasts and engage in social interactions.

The banquet, no matter its original purpose, would soon veer away from its intended focus and turn into a lively social gathering.

Chu Liang and Lin Bei glanced around. They felt a bit perplexed as they took their seats at the table closest to the stage, reserved for the chief guests of the banquet.

Xue Lingxue's name was also prominently displayed on the same table, emphasizing its significance. Although her time at the table would be brief, it underscored the importance of that particular seating arrangement.

Seated beside them were the distinguished officials of South Gate City. While Chu Liang and Lin Bei didn't know the names of these individuals, the respectful behavior of those nearby suggested their esteemed status.

If the seats were arranged out of respect for the Mount Shu Sect, that would have made sense. However, Chu Liang and Lin Bei weren't representatives of the Mount Shu Sect; they had merely completed a mission for the sect and were young attendees who had gotten a chance to attend the concert for free. How had they managed to secure seats near the stage?

And so, Chu Liang went to see Manager Cui and asked in a whisper, "How did we end up with such prime seats near the front? I feel a bit out of place."

"It was at Miss Xue's request," Manager Cui explained with a smile. "I hadn't planned on assigning these seats to you, but Miss Xue insisted, so we had to comply."

Chu Liang was somewhat puzzled, but it was too late to rearrange seats, so he had no choice but to sit down.

While Chu Liang had gone to seek clarification, Lin Bei had already started drinking with the two middle-aged men.

"Uncle Zhang, are you the general of the garrison? The military power of the entire city is under your command! That's impressive!

"Chen, you are the city's chief official? Is your position higher or is the general of the garrison more senior?

"Heheheh! Who am I? I am Lin Bei..."

Chu Liang couldn't help but smile wryly; Lin Bei's social skills were terrifyingly good. Unless there was a rope around his neck to restrain his movement, he would be capable of striking up a conversation with anyone in an instant.

Just as they were talking, they heard a voice outside shouting, "Lord of the House of the Mountain-Subjugating Marquess, Xia An, is here!"

All eyes shifted towards the entrance as a handsome young man entered, accompanied by a tall, thin figure in black, presumably his bodyguard. The tall and thin figure in black was also holding a long box in his hands.

Without a doubt, the young man was the Lord of the Marquessate, the person Chu Liang intended to inquire about concerning Liu Xiaoyu'er's elder sister.

Lord Xia was seated at the foremost table, which meant that he was naturally seated close to Chu Liang.

However, instead of immediately approaching Lord Xia, Chu Liang appeared cautious, directing his attention to the man in black.

The thin, tall man in black handed the long box to a banquet servant and took a seat towards the back.

A servant then loudly announced, "Lord Xia presents a gift to Miss Xue! The sandalwood kite-shaped guqin!"

"Wow!"

The crowd buzzed with excitement. The sandalwood kite-shaped guqin was known as one of the legendary instruments, believed to be lost for many years. Unexpectedly, the Lord Xia had found it and generously presented this precious instrument to Xue Lingxue.

As a skilled musician specializing in the art of the qin, one could easily imagine how much Xue Lingxue would love such an exquisite instrument.

However, Chu Liang's attention was not on the qin but on the man in black. The moment he appeared, Chu Liang felt the sudden movement of the Crimson Executioner.

This black-clad man was enveloped by a cloud of resentment.

Although the Crimson Executioner was eager to act, Chu Liang couldn't just leap up and strike with his sword. After all, the situation was different this time; the person in question had a legal and proper identity. Even if he might be a bad person, he could only take action after gathering enough evidence. Otherwise, if he randomly killed that person, he would become the villain instead.

Moreover, Chu Liang wasn't certain if he could defeat the man.

While the Crimson Executioner could boost the attack power, Chu Liang's strength in cultivation was limited. Even if the attack power was boosted, the strength would only be somewhere between the pinnacle of the fifth realm and the beginning stage of the sixth realm.

The man in black exuded a profound aura, completely undetectable. If he happened to be a cultivator in the sixth realm, Chu Liang wouldn't be able to fight with him even with the Crimson Executioner.

Nonetheless, this person had captured Chu Liang's attention.

At this moment, a female musician from the South Melody Conservatory, serving under Xue Lingxue, took the stage. She announced, "Thank you all for being here. Senior Sister Xue is currently preparing backstage. As a prelude to the main event scheduled in two days, she will be presenting a warm-up performance today."

The audience erupted in enthusiastic applause.

The musician continued, "However, Sister Xue's performance requires a collaborator. She intends to choose from among you. Is anyone willing?"

The crowd responded with a resounding, "Yes."

At that moment, Master Li beside them suggested, "Since Lord Xia has just gifted the sandalwood kite-shaped guqin, how about performing with this legendary instrument? Let us hear the melody of this lost ancient qin."

The female musician hesitated for a moment, looking towards the side. Naturally, she couldn't make the decision for Xue Lingxue.

Then, Xue Lingxue, dressed in a plain blue gown, calmly stepped onto the stage. With an aloof-looking smile directed at the Lord of the Marquessate, she said, "Of course. Lord Xia, thank you for finding this legendary qin... In this case, I would like to ask Young Hero Chu of the Mount Shu Sect to help me in this performance."