

War God 291

Chapter 291 - Yuqin Palace

Everyone thought Long Chen was as good as dead.

The Seventh Commander was famous for being quick to kill. There was once a cultivator at the Heavenly River Realm who made a ruckus after being blocked outside of the gates. The Seventh Commander killed that cultivator in one strike.

Long Chen had done something even worse than that cultivator, so he was most certainly dead.

The Seventh Commander took one look and knew what had happened. He didn't need his underlings to recount what had transpired. He approached Long Chen and carefully inspected him, just five meters away.

Long Chen felt a strong pressure from the Seventh Commander; it was comparable to Elder Yan's aura. Long Chen knew that the Seventh Commander was at least as strong as Elder Yan, which was roughly around the Fifth River Stage, so he knew he couldn't beat him.

"Any last words before you die?" The Seventh Commander's voice was solemn.

Long Chen was fearless and stated his reasoning. "My name is Long Chen, the Immortal Guard that the Ninth Prince recruited in Yuanling City. I was separated from the Ninth Prince due to special circumstances a few days ago. I am here to find him."

Long Chen was sure that the Seventh Commander would do nothing as long as he brought the Ninth Prince into the picture.

"The Ninth Prince?" The Seventh Commander was stunned. He had indeed heard the news that the Ninth Prince had been ambushed near the capital a few days ago. What Long Chen meant by "special reasons" was most definitely this.

"How do I know if you are telling the truth?" the Seventh Commander whispered. He couldn't do anything to Long Chen if Long Chen was telling the truth.

The Ninth Prince had indeed gone out to recruit an Immortal Guard. The Immortal Guards were the direct troops underneath the imperial family. In terms of hierarchy, they were above the guards of the capital. If Long Chen was telling the truth, the Seventh Commander would not dare to do anything to him.

"Let me follow you into the city and you can send someone to notify the Ninth Prince. The person the Ninth Prince sends over can verify my identity."

The Seventh Commander gave Long Chen an uneasy look. He wanted to kill the kid immediately, but he didn't dare risk it.

"Fine, follow me. All of you! Go back to your positions! Sun Qin, clear this mess up!"

The spectators had been trying to listen to what the Seventh Commander and Long Chen were talking about. They had barely heard a few sentences when everything was over.

Everyone understood what that order meant. Long Chen was saved! The guards were in shock. They were a tight-knit group, so they felt extremely unhappy to see Long Chen get off scot-free. How could they endure that?

But they could not disobey the Seventh Commander. They glared at Long Chen, itching to tear him to pieces.

The normal spectators were even more shocked.

“That young man must have a special background. Even the guards had to suffer that humiliation. At the very least, the young man must have connections to the nobles.”

“No shit. He’s so young and is already at the Heavenly River Realm. Even though he’s not as talented as the princes, he’s already on par with some of the disciples of the three large families.”

Long Chen ignored their discussions. He had accomplished two things here: killing the guard that planned to take Ling Xi and using the Seventh Commander to notify the Ninth Prince. He had saved himself a lot of trouble.

“Wait here. The person from the Ninth Prince’s faction should arrive in two hours or so. If I find out you’re lying, I will kill you,” the Seventh Commander said coldly as he led Long Chen to a courtyard.

Long Chen ignored his threat completely.

The Seventh Commander left to do his job.

In the courtyard, Long Chen and Ling Xi talked to each other to pass the time. Ling Xi got hungry halfway, and Long Chen gave her a meal prepared by the people on the Goldfish Island.

He suddenly felt like being able to live peacefully like that was a good choice. No wonder Li Xuanji had told him to hide somewhere remote with Ling Xi and just live a good life. They would’ve been able to live peacefully for their entire lives.

But this was not what Long Chen wanted.

He was anxious. There were too many people above him that could crush him easily, and he needed to become stronger than all of them.

If I have to face these challenges, so be it.

Lingqing, Ling Xi and I will find you one day, Long Chen swore to himself.

Two hours passed, and Long Chen stood up. He sensed someone approaching.

The doors to the courtyard opened and two people walked in. One of them was an old man wearing a black robe. It was Elder Yan! The other person was the Seventh Commander.

“Long Chen, I can’t believe you actually survived. It has been more than twenty days since you disappeared, so we thought you were dead since you didn’t show up in the capital.” Elder Yan was part shocked and part reprimanding.

“Sorry, Elder Yan. I had to delay my arrival by several days due to my cultivation.”

Elder Yan inspected Long Chen when he heard his explanation.

“So you’ve progressed to the Second River Stage. Your advancement speed far exceeds the geniuses in the capital. Our Lord thinks highly of you, so don’t disappoint him. He’s waiting at Yuqin Palace for you, so let’s go.”

“Thank you, Elder Yan.”

“It seems that Ling Xi is fine too. Good, good. Our Lord will be happy to see both of you.”

“We apologize for making the Ninth Prince worry about us. We will seek his forgiveness once we get back,” Long Chen said in a serious tone, but he picked up on Elder Yan’s change of tone. Long Chen was an Immortal Guard, while Ling Xi had no connection with the Ninth Prince at all. Why was the Ninth Prince worried about her?

Long Chen raised his guard.

I can’t catch a tiger’s cub if I don’t enter its den. I have to face these challenges to obtain the Nine Heavens Immortal Fruit.

The Seventh Commander took note of the conversation between Long Chen and Elder Yan. He now confirmed that Long Chen had told the truth. He also learned that the Ninth Prince was taking special care of Long Chen. To be fair, someone at the Second River Stage was considered weak in the Ninth Prince faction, but Long Chen’s potential was very high. It was that aspect of Long Chen that attracted the Ninth Prince.

The Seventh Commander was secretly very shocked to find that there was someone with that much potential in Yuanling City. He silently noted down who Long Chen was.

Long Chen hopped onto a fancy carriage with Elder Yan. The carriage was being pulled by demonic beasts, both of which were fast and smart, making their trip nice and smooth.

“When our Lord was fifteen, his achievements in both the written exam and combat exam were highly regarded by the Emperor and he was given a separate palace and a title: King Yuqin. That’s why our Lord is not living in the palace. Yuqin Palace is situated outside of the imperial palace. It’s even larger than the actual imperial palace and is where our Lord works every day. Our Lord is very knowledgeable and socially connected; his cultivation level is also very high. The Emperor has relied on our Lord many times in the past two years, so more and more people are joining our faction! Thanks to his rising reputation, the Heavenly Demon Palace sent someone to kill him!” Elder Yan said proudly.

Long Chen noted down what he had heard and asked, “Elder Yan, what happened to the assassin?”

“That assassin was at the Seventh River Stage. Cultivators at his level are rare even in the imperial palace. Neither me nor our Lord were not his match, so we had to flee.

Several commanders surrounded the assassin and killed him when we approached the city.”

“Elder Yan, what is the Heavenly Demon Palace? Why would they dare to attack the imperial family?” Long Chen seized his chance to ask this too.

“The Heavenly Demon Palace? They are the largest enemy of the imperial family. They are hungry for the position of the imperial family and they have experts scattered throughout the Cangyang Kingdom. It’s the only enemy faction that the imperial family is wary of. Their headquarters is situated west of the imperial capital, at the top of Demon Emperor Mountain. The mountain is a treacherous place to even climb. The imperial family has sent expert fighters numerous times to destroy the headquarters of the Heavenly Demon Palace, but they failed every time. It’s not that they are strong, but the Heavenly Demon Palace has the geological advantage while being holed up there.”

Since Elder Yan belonged to the imperial family faction, he needed to maintain the honor of the imperial family. That was why he had been boasting so much. Long Chen filtered out the fluff and understood that the Heavenly Demon Palace was a faction that rivaled the imperial family.

“If you meet someone from the Heavenly Demon Palace, you have to be careful. They are vicious people that would do anything to accomplish their goal. You are certainly dead if you meet them.”

Long Chen nodded.

Is the imperial capital another den of wolves? One day, I will make sure to step on all these wolves. Long Chen clenched his fists.

They soon arrived at Yuqin Palace.

Long Chen raised his head and was shocked to see the scale of the palace. The imperial family was indeed on a whole different level. Yuqin Palace made the Jade Royal Palace look like a small house. There were two massive stone lions at the entrance that radiated a sharp aura. They deterred any would-be intruders from entering.

“These stone lions are carved out of Heavenly River Stones. Those below the Divine Core Realm get carved up by the sharp aura. I suggest that you protect Miss Ling Xi,” Elder Yan advised calmly.

It was unbelievable that the two stone lions at the entrance was enough to deter those below the Divine Core Realm. The authority of the imperial family was not to be trifled with.

“Follow me. Our Lord is already waiting for you.”

Chapter 292 - Fire Essence

After entering Yuqin Palace, Long Chen finally understood the difference between the imperial family and normal nobles. The scale and grandness of the buildings were too different; they were far fancier than the ones he had seen in Yuanling City.

Elder Yan held a high position in Yuqin Palace. Therefore, the servants and guards took notice when they saw him walking alongside Long Chen. They only discussed amongst themselves once Long Chen was gone. Many people visited the palace each day, but it was rare to see Elder Yan escort someone personally.

“Our Lord is waiting for you in the study.” Elder Yan was emotionless as he pointed in a direction before leading Long Chen over there. Elder Yan didn’t talk much, but he did look at Ling Xi a few times, his eyes revealing a suspicious intent.

While walking through the palace, Long Chen felt that the temperature was higher than outside. A sense of warmth circulated around him, completely dispelling the chill from the spring wind. He felt his body become lighter whenever he breathed in.

“What is this? A normal human would be able to extend their lifespan by just being in this environment.” Long Chen carefully inspected his surroundings.

Ling Xi would benefit greatly from the warmth since she was a normal human now, though she retained her knowledge as a cultivator.

“This must be an effect from a treasure that releases a lot of Yang energy. It can dispel the chill while increasing the efficiency of cultivation.”

“I see. I wonder if that treasure would help Xiaolang,” Long Chen whispered.

Elder Yan looked back when he sensed that Long Chen was examining the surroundings. “Do you feel something different here?”

Long Chen nodded.

“All those who enter Yuqin Palace have the same sensation. Just wait a bit and you will see the item that causes it.” Elder Yan was filled with pride.

“I wonder what that item is.” Long Chen probed further.

“It’s not exactly a secret. When our Lord became an adult, the Sword Emperor gifted him ten Fire Essences, a rare item that can only be found deep inside underground lava. It is very difficult to even come across one, much less ten of them. It’s no surprise, considering how much the Sword Emperor adores the Ninth Prince.” Elder Yan smiled at the thought.

The Sword Emperor was the current emperor of the Cangyang Kingdom. He had received the title due to his achievements in swordsmanship.

Long Chen knew the reason why the imperial family could control the entire Cangyang Kingdom was because of their cultivation.

There were three main types of cultivators in the Cangyang Kingdom. The first was the normal cultivators, the second was the Beast Warriors. In the Beast Soul Palace of Yuanling City, most cultivators were Beast Warriors. The final type was the Armament Warrior.

Long Chen had heard of them before but had never seen one. It was said that a Beast Warrior was stronger than a normal cultivator at the same cultivation level, while an Armament Warrior was stronger than a Beast Warrior! Still, Armament Warriors were only the strongest among normal cultivators. They were nowhere close to someone like Long Chen, who was a Dragon Warrior.

Becoming a Beast Warrior required quite a bit of talent, and becoming an Armament Warrior required even more. They needed to be born with something special. Usually, the souls of humans could be separated into ten equal pieces. Armament Warriors were born with one extra piece in their dantian, and that extra piece was called the Armament Soul.

Those with an Armament Soul could merge it with their weapon. Doing so would make their weapon a part of their body, allowing them to utilize stronger techniques. There were also other benefits that Long Chen was unaware of.

Some Armament Warriors used only a single weapon throughout their entire lives, but their weapons were able to grow stronger as they themselves improved in their cultivation. If the host grew extremely strong, even a normal weapon could transform into a Divine Arm.

Most Divine Arms were born directly in the Armament Souls of Armament Warriors.

Long Chen knew that the imperial family of the Cangyang Kingdom was a traditional Armament Warrior family. Everyone in their family used a sword, and they most likely had a complete set of sword techniques in their archives. Swords were the main weapons of most Armament Warriors, and the Emperor was even called the Sword Emperor to honor his accomplishments.

“Ten Fire Essences ... Our Lord used nine of them to forge an advanced Earth-tier Divine Arm. It’s thanks to that sword that our Lord managed to hold out against the Seventh River Stage assassin,” Elder Yan explained with a sigh.

Long Chen had gathered some useful information from their conversation. Such as the fact that the Ninth Prince was at the Sixth River Stage, and he had an advanced Earth-tier Divine Arm.

Long Chen’s Azure Dragon Halberd was only at the intermediate Earth-tier. He could only become the Ninth Prince’s errand boy at best now that he knew how strong the Ninth Prince was.

But so what?

Long Chen had no fear.

“Elder Yan, does that mean I get to see the final Fire Essence later on?” Long Chen probed further.

“You can see it if you raise your head now.”

Long Chen looked up. There was a massive building in front of him. The entire building was most likely the Ninth Prince’s study. At the apex of the study was a shining object. Long Chen closed his eyes instinctively from the blinding light, but he managed to catch a glimpse of it.

It was close to what he had imagined—a palm-sized orb that shot out a blinding light. It was hard for people to look at directly. Even though Long Chen did not manage to get a clear look, he was confident that he would be able to identify it the next time he spotted one.

“With the Fire Essence embedded at the top of the study, Yuqin Palace is impervious to ghosts and spirits alike. The Yang energy radiating from it also dispels the chill from the cold wind. The servants and guards alike don’t need to fear the cold. In fact, the Fire Essence even agitates the fire energy in the air and allows us to cultivate more efficiently.”

Mo Xiaolang’s eyes were bursting with greed when he saw the Fire Essence. Long Chen looked at him while listening to Elder Yan. He knew that the Fire Essence would most likely benefit Mo Xiaolang as much as the Eight Clawed Fire Chi.

Long Chen finally understood why the Sun Devouring Wolf was considered such a monstrous beast. He was also glad to be able to find two different items that could help Mo Xiaolang improve drastically, the demonic core of the Eight Clawed Fire Chi and the Fire Essence. As long as they get more treasures of the same nature and let Mo Xiaolang consume them, his strength would grow exponentially. This would also benefit Long Chen.

“Xiaolang, now’s not the time. Let’s wait for now,” Long Chen whispered.

Mo Xiaolang understood that it was not the time.

They could only bide their time since Long Chen was still too weak to plunder it.

“We’ve arrived.”

Elder Yan was at the front of the door and was about to knock when they heard the Ninth Prince’s voice.

“Come in.”

Elder Yan said nothing and nodded as he pushed the door open. He then escorted Long Chen and Ling Xi inside. Mo Xiaolang followed suit.

Once inside, Long Chen gasped when he saw how lavish the interior was. Since it was the study, there was naturally an ungodly amount of books. There was also a large amount of writing utensils and decorations that lent the place a distinguished aura.

Long Chen saw the Ninth Prince sitting on a chair in the middle of the room. The Ninth Prince was drinking tea while reading a book, surrounded by a lot of servants. When he saw Long Chen and Ling Xi enter, he waved his hand at the servants. The beautiful servants nodded and carefully left the place before closing the door.

“Long Chen and Miss Ling Xi, please sit.” The Ninth Prince straightened up as he looked at Long Chen and stole several glances at Ling Xi without betraying any emotion.

“Thank you, my Lord.”

In order to enter the Counter Essence Realm to obtain a Nine Heavens Immortal Fruit so Ling Xi could completely recover, Long Chen was more than ready to enter the imperial capital even though it might be an abyss of no return, much less the Ninth Prince's palace.

Long Chen took Ling Xi's hand and sat at the side. Even though Ling Xi was strong as a spirit, she was now a normal human. She had learned how to be docile since she could do nothing now. She usually didn't speak in front of strangers, but her senses were sharp enough to tell that someone was staring at her greedily.

Is it the Ninth Prince? Ling Xi looked at the Ninth Prince but saw that he was speaking to Long Chen. He had not once looked at her.

Ling Xi thought she was overthinking it.

"Long Chen, it's been seventeen days since we separated. I tried to search for you, but you were not at your original location. I kept trying to listen to news of your appearance for the past few days. You sure made me work." The Ninth Prince's tone contained a hint of impatience.

"Sorry. I was worried that there were other assassins, so I went and hid myself."

Despite apologizing, he was not sorry at all. He did not care about the Ninth Prince, as the only thing he wanted was the Nine Heavens Immortal Fruit.

"Tell me everything that happened while we were separated," the Ninth Prince said distractedly.

Long Chen decided to not say anything about Goldfish Island, as he didn't trust the Ninth Prince enough.

"I felt that I was on the verge of advancing, so I found a place to cultivate and entered the Second River Stage before coming to the capital."

Even though he had lied, there was a kernel of truth in his story. He had indeed reached the Second River Stage.

"You've broken into the Second River Stage so soon after reaching the First River Stage?"

The Ninth Prince was shocked. Long Chen was only at the late Heavenly Core Realm when he earned his position as an Immortal Guard. To think he had reached the Second River Stage in such a short amount of time.

The Ninth Prince had no choice but to reevaluate Long Chen's potential.

Chapter 293 - Heavenly Wolf Gang

After the Ninth Prince finished his questioning, Long Chen immediately asked about his main objective.

"My Lord, when will I depart for the Counter Essence Realm?"

“You are very lucky. If you had arrived tomorrow, you might’ve needed to wait another month. The shift for the Immortal Guards changes every month. Today is the end of the month, so the other Immortal Guards directly underneath me should be returning soon.”

The Ninth Prince smiled, his gaze flashing past Ling Xi’s beautiful face as his eyes glinted with greed.

Ling Xi sat still and looked at Long Chen, her eyes radiating happiness. The Ninth Prince saw that too.

Long Chen smiled at her and asked the Ninth Prince, “Does that mean I will officially start my work as an Immortal Guard tomorrow and enter the Counter Essence Realm?”

The Ninth Prince had been looking at Ling Xi before he got interrupted by Long Chen. He quickly shifted his gaze and answered, “Yes. Tomorrow is the start of a new month. Some of my other Immortal Guards will be entering the Counter Essence Realm too, and you will follow them. I will arrange for someone to take you to my uncle to register.”

Long Chen did not mind that he was being rushed. The earlier he could enter the Counter Essence Realm, the faster he could start searching for the Nine Heavens Immortal Fruit. He needed to leave this place as soon as possible.

“Looks like Miss Ling Xi loves you a lot, but unfortunately, you will have to be separated for an entire month.” The Ninth Prince looked at Ling Xi again.

“Separated?” Long Chen was stunned before he realized that it was natural.

The Counter Essence Realm was the imperial family’s treasure trove. Even as an Immortal Guard, Long Chen still had to register to enter. Ling Xi and Mo Xiaolang would naturally not be able to go with him.

“Brother Chen?” Ling Xi had anticipated this, but she was still nervous. Long Chen was her only safe place. If he left, she would feel very exposed to danger.

“Don’t worry, this is not a life-or-death situation. Long Chen, let Ling Xi stay with me here at Yuqin Palace while you are inside the Counter Essence Realm. I will ensure her safety,” the Ninth Prince said solemnly.

Long Chen did not answer immediately. Even though the Ninth Prince’s gaze was sincere, Long Chen knew his instincts didn’t lie.

The Ninth Prince was definitely not doing this out of kindness.

Ling Xi held onto Long Chen’s sleeve.

He needed to make a choice. In order to enter the Counter Essence Realm and find the Nine Heavens Immortal Fruit, he had to leave Ling Xi in Yuqin Palace.

He didn’t trust the Ninth Prince, so he hesitated.

“Brother Chen, it’s okay. Mo Xiaolang said he would protect me,” Ling Xi whispered to him.

Long Chen was painfully aware of that too. He needed to leave Mo Xiaolang as well if he wanted to enter the Counter Essence Realm. At least he trusted Mo Xiaolang.

But now it was time for him to make a choice. This was a gamble, and he would regret his decision if anything went wrong.

Laughter suddenly came from outside, breaking the silence. Long Chen was temporarily saved from making a decision.

The Ninth Prince was not offended even though Long Chen had not given him an answer. When he heard the laughter outside, he told Long Chen, “Long Chen, my Immortal Guards are back. Most of them are from the Heavenly Wolf Gang, a group that has pledged their loyalty to me. They aren’t exactly refined, but they are fairly easy-going people. You will be mingling with them for the next month.”

The Ninth Prince had just finished talking when a group of tall men entered the room with his permission. Long Chen looked at them and noted that they were around twenty to thirty years old. All of them had something in common, which was their bodies. All of them were roughly two meters tall and had bulging muscles. It was clear that they were plenty strong.

Additionally, each of them was bald and had a wolf tattoo. The tattoos were horrifying and blood-red. Even though the men weren’t laughing, their smiles were extremely sinister.

“What are you laughing at?” The Ninth Prince smiled plainly. It seemed that he was quite lax to his underlings.

“We were discussing which women in the brothel would be strong enough to endure everyone’s onslaught throughout the night. Let me tell you, the star prostitute of the brothel was so pretty ...”

The one who answered the Ninth Prince was an older man. He had the same bald head and bulging muscles with a tattoo. His eyes were bloodshot and he radiated killing intent even though he was just chatting. This was a man who had killed plenty.

Long Chen instinctively knew that this person was the leader of the Heavenly Wolf Gang; he was also the strongest among them.

While the man was speaking about the prostitute, he saw there were people in the study. He wanted to say that the prostitute was so beautiful that she could bring entire cities to their knees, but he stuffed those words back into his throat when he saw Ling Xi.

One look at her was more than enough to make him think that the prostitute looked like shit.

The Heavenly Wolf Gang consisted of seven men. All of them were staring at Ling Xi with blank expressions.

Anyone else would’ve reacted the same if a goddess were to descend onto the mortal realm without any warning.

“Let me introduce you to them. This is the Immortal Guard I recruited in Yuanling City, Long Chen. And this is Miss Ling Xi.”

The Ninth Prince’s words made them realize what was going on. The leader of the Heavenly Wolf Gang looked at the gaze of the Ninth Prince and then at Ling Xi before realizing what was going on.

“You idiots! Stop looking! Do you think you’re worthy of looking at someone that pretty?”

The rest of them weren’t angry at all even after being scolded. All of them looked at Long Chen instead.

Long Chen was also looking at them.

He was not an idiot.

Damn, it seems that the Ninth Prince is indeed trying to get Ling Xi. The bald leader is basically telling the others that Ling Xi is the Ninth Prince’s goal and that they must not touch her. You guys are smart, but I’m not an idiot either.

Long Chen had already noticed that something was off with the Ninth Prince when he first saw Ling Xi. Everyone loved beautiful girls, especially ones who were beautiful enough to bring a kingdom to ruin.

The Ninth Prince’s strength and status were many times higher than Long Chen’s, so there was no way he would let Long Chen get Ling Xi.

The Ninth Prince had indeed highly regarded Long Chen’s potential in the beginning, but everything changed when Ling Xi appeared.

Long Chen started to feel the pressure. He tried to think of numerous ways to get out of this. Luckily, he had managed to confirm what was going on early, so he had time to think about how to solve it.

He pretended that he did not understand what they were talking about.

The Heavenly Wolf Gang was also looking at Long Chen. All of them knew that Long Chen was very unlucky to have the Ninth Prince notice Ling Xi.

Especially when they saw that Long Chen was only at the First or Second Heavenly River Stage.

“Go ahead and introduce yourselves. Long Chen will be joining you next time. I won’t forgive you if you teach him bad things.” The Ninth Prince chuckled.

All of them started introducing themselves to Long Chen. He learned that the leader of the Heavenly Wolf Gang was called Yu Tao, who was at the Fifth River Stage. The others were at the Third or Fourth River Stages. Only one of them was roughly at the same age as Long Chen.

Long Chen pretended to be very meek and didn’t say much. He only nodded when they mentioned him in their conversation.

The Ninth Prince was strangely very friendly with them and laughed at their crude jokes.

“Yu Tao, before you head to the Counter Essence Realm tomorrow, remember to let Long Chen know about the rules and take him to my uncle for registration,” the Ninth Prince reminded.

“Don’t worry, I will remember your orders clearly. I will ensure that there won’t be any problems at all. But with his strength, it seems that the elementary zone will be quite dangerous for him. My Lord, are you sure you want to let him enter the Counter Essence Realm?” Yu Tao’s eyes were filled with contempt.

“That’s why I want you to be extra careful with him,” the Ninth Prince responded.

They were conversing amongst themselves and completely ignoring Long Chen. To them, Long Chen was just a sad man waiting for an unfortunate accident.

“Hmm? This wolf looks interesting. It seems that it's a demonic beast, and it's quite strong!” the youngest of the Heavenly Wolf Gang exclaimed. He was roughly at the Third River Stage.

Even though he was young, his body was twice as large as Long Chen’s.

“Of course it's strong. It’s a Category Two Earth-tier demonic beast. I’m not sure what kind of wolf demonic beast it is, but it’s definitely a mutated one,” the Ninth Prince said simply.

“Is that true?” the young man shouted with glee. “We are so lucky to find one! Big Brother, our third brother is going to enter the Heavenly River Realm soon. Since we are good friends with wolves, the beast soul of this wolf demonic beast should be a great gift for him.”

He was talking to Yu Tao.

The eldest and youngest of the group were siblings. *No wonder they look similar.*

“Long Chen, my third brother needs the beast soul of an Earth-tier wolf-type demonic beast. Would you be kind enough to give us yours?” Yu Tao was greedily eyeing Mo Xiaolang.

Chapter 294 - Bet

Killing Mo Xiaolang and then giving them the beast soul? To Long Chen, this was nothing more than bullshit.

Long Chen was already irritated when they ignored him while thinking that he was an idiot. He knew that he needed to hold back, but he didn’t mind showing them that it was a bad idea to piss him off.

His voice was ice cold when he rebuked Yu Tao’s absurd request. “Impossible. Xiaolang is my sworn brother who has gone through life-and-death situations with me. I can’t let him become your third brother’s Primary Beast Soul.”

Long Chen's refusal caused the smiles on their faces to freeze. They thought Long Chen was just a pitiful man, but now that same man was being arrogant towards them. How could they let that slide?

Before being taken in by the Ninth Prince, they were bandits that killed innocent people for fun. It was because they had to take the Ninth Prince's reputation into consideration that they stopped doing all those things. But that didn't mean they would allow Long Chen to insult them just like that.

"The beast soul is very important to my third brother. Long Chen, are you sure you don't want to give it to us?" Yu Tao asked in a threatening tone.

If it wasn't for the Ninth Prince being present, he would've slapped Long Chen silly with his Fifth River Stage strength.

Long Chen was not afraid of him. He pointed at Yu Tao's second brother, the youth at the Third River Stage. "If I asked for his life, would you give it to me?"

He had made his meaning clear: Xiaolang was his sworn brother!

"You seek death! Do you want to fight me?" The youth stood up from his chair when he saw that Long Chen was underestimating him. He wanted to kill Long Chen badly.

"Yu Chong, sit down!" The Ninth Prince scoffed.

Yu Chong had to obey the Ninth Prince, so he sat down begrudgingly. Even though he dared not move again, the killing intent in his eyes was growing.

"You have just met and are already fighting over a small issue. Yu Tao, you need an Earth-tier wolf-type demonic beast, correct? I will just ask someone to go find one tomorrow. This matter has been resolved, so neither party should seek the other out for revenge. Understood? All of you are working under me as Immortal Guards. My reputation will fall if you can't cooperate!" The Ninth Prince's voice grew colder as he spoke.

Even though the Heavenly Wolf Gang was still angry, none of them dared to mention it again after seeing how angry the Ninth Prince was.

They assumed Long Chen's status was low, but it seemed that he had a little. But they only understood why the Ninth Prince was so angry after looking at Ling Xi. Their altercation had made Ling Xi upset.

Looks like the Ninth Prince is going all out for this lady. Ling Xi is clearly in love with Long Chen, and the Ninth Prince is different from us. Not only does he want her body, he wants her heart too. If we cause trouble for Long Chen, it will only make Ling Xi hate the Ninth Prince even more. It's a good thing we stopped ourselves! Yu Tao understood after looking at the situation.

"In that case, we will be going. We will come and guide Long Chen tomorrow." Yu Tao was worried that his underlings, who were all very aggressive, would seek trouble with Long Chen, so he had to leave with them now.

The Ninth Prince was about to nod when Long Chen called out, “Wait.”

The Heavenly Wolf Gang was confused. They were about to stand up when Long Chen stopped them. The Ninth Prince gestured for them to sit back down.

“What do you want from them?” The Ninth Prince was confused.

“I thought it through. We will be brothers in the future since we are going to cooperate in the Counter Essence Realm. Naturally, I cannot be selfish if my brothers need a beast soul urgently. But I don’t think I can just hand Xiaolang over to you after having it for so long. I will agree to it under one condition.” Long Chen smiled mischievously when he looked at the Heavenly Wolf Gang.

“What condition?” Yu Tao was confused too. Long Chen was such a weird individual to him. He had been as prickly as a porcupine, and now he wanted to give up the beast soul?

Is Long Chen afraid?

Long Chen’s eyes were sharp, and he pointed at Yu Chong, Yu Tao’s brother. “It’s simple. If you can defeat me, I will give you the wolf.”

Everyone froze before laughing. Yu Chong laughed the hardest.

Yu Tao stifled his laughter and patted Yu Chong’s shoulder. “Second Brother, stop laughing. Come, show him the strength of the Heavenly Wolf Gang! Let this bumpkin see how strong we are.”

“Of course, Big Brother. I will put on a satisfactory show.”

Yu Chong had to hold in his laughter. Long Chen’s suggestion had come as a complete surprise. They thought Long Chen was a prickly idiot, one that was too difficult to deal with. But now they realized that he was a complete moron.

The Heavenly Wolf Gang was a group who recruited strong people, ones who could fight opponents above their levels. Long Chen was just a country bumpkin at the Second River Stage, and now he wanted to challenge them?

It was the biggest joke they had heard today. Even the mature Yu Tao had to force himself not to laugh.

“Bastard, we are all Immortal Guards working under the Ninth Prince. Just hold yourself back and don’t injure him! We need to be able to cooperate peacefully in the future,” Yu Tao fake-warned his brother.

“Of course.” Yu Chong stopped laughing and looked at Long Chen excitedly. He had no idea how Long Chen could be so stupid.

Both the Ninth Prince and Elder Yan looked at each other. They weren’t laughing.

They knew how Long Chen was—he would never do something stupid out of anger. The Ninth Prince had also checked Long Chen’s history. He was an unknown boy who had worked his way into Yuanling City and then ended up killing Yuanling City’s strongest cultivator, Emperor Yuan.

The Ninth Prince didn't believe that Long Chen would make such an offer without an ulterior motive.

As he had expected, Long Chen continued, "Since this is a duel, it's only natural that you need to state your reward if I defeat you. I've already stated mine. This is fair and square. You guys are my seniors, so there's no way you would put up something trivial as a reward, right?"

The Heavenly Wolf Gang thought about it and found the suggestion to be reasonable.

Of course, they never thought that Yu Chong would lose, so Yu Tao said in a lazy tone, "Sure, what do you want? Heavenly River Pills? Earth-tier Divine Arms? Martial techniques or spiritual herbs? Name it and we can give it to you!"

They had thought Long Chen was just a country bumpkin that wouldn't even know what an Earth-tier martial technique was. That was why they had spoken so rashly.

Long Chen was not interested in what they offered. He turned towards the Ninth Prince instead. "I am interested in the Fire Essence at the top of the study room. I wonder, would the Ninth Prince be kind enough to set it up as a reward?"

Long Chen looked at the Ninth Prince with anticipation.

This was his true goal.

The Heavenly Wolf Gang wasn't sure what to do after they had heard what Long Chen wanted.

The Fire Essence was the Ninth Prince's possession, and there was no way they could even touch it, much less give it to Long Chen. They never thought Long Chen would come up with such a request.

"No, that is the possession of our Lord. Long Chen, ask for something else," Yu Tao said, irritated.

Long Chen did not answer him and continued to look at the Ninth Prince.

"Sure." The Ninth Prince smiled peacefully. "Since Long Chen wants it, then I will just set it up as the reward. This is my territory after all. All of you are my Immortal Guards, so there is no harm in me using it as a reward. I will also be your judge. If Yu Chong wins, Long Chen will have to give up the demonic beast. If Long Chen wins, the Fire Essence will be his."

Long Chen smiled.

He knew the Ninth Prince would agree.

Most battles were fought intellectually. He knew that the Ninth Prince would want to see him spar with Yu Chong. That was why Long Chen had gotten greedy and asked for the Fire Essence.

"Thank you, my Lord!" Yu Tao nodded fervently at the Ninth Prince before looking at Yu Chong. "Second Brother, you know what to do. If you lose, the Ninth Prince will have to give up on the Fire Essence. I will beat you up if you do!"

"Don't worry. Have I ever let you down?" Yu Chong rubbed his fists. He was very eager to fight Long Chen.

“Brother Chen ...” Ling Xi was worried.

“Sit down. I will show you how I bully the bad bastards.” Long Chen stood up, lowered his head, and gave Ling Xi a peck on her jade-like cheek.

Ling Xi blushed, the redness spreading from her neck to her ears. She lowered her head, wanting to bury herself in a hole out of embarrassment from being kissed in public.

The Ninth Prince’s killing intent flashed across his eyes after seeing what Long Chen was doing.

Yu Tao saw what Long Chen had done and whispered to Yu Chong, “Our Lord is angry. Just fight seriously.”

“I understand.” Yu Chong licked his lips with his blood-red tongue while still rubbing his fists.

“Long Chen, follow me outside.” Yu Chong walked out first.

There was a big empty space in front of the study room, one big enough for them to fight.

Long Chen held Ling Xi’s hand as they walked out. The others follow suit with the Ninth Prince at the lead. All of them wanted to see Long Chen and Yu Chong fight.

Xiaolang saw everything and he raised his head. He glanced at the Fire Essence at the top of the study room, his eyes revealing gratitude and contentment.

He knew that the Fire Essence would be his soon. Ling Xi was the only other person who knew how strong Long Chen was.

“The Third River Stage?” Yu Chong was stronger than Emperor Yuan, and younger too. Yu Chong’s cultivation level and age were roughly the same as Long Chen’s, and he was considered as a genius. But Long Chen was not afraid.

“Let’s start,” Yu Chong said excitedly.

Chapter 295 - Divine Fire Clone Activate!

Even though he was certain of his victory, Long Chen dared not be careless. The Biyang Imperial Capital was larger than Yuanling City, so even though Long Chen was considered a genius in Yuanling City, he was just a regular cultivator here in the imperial capital. There was an abundance of people at the same cultivation level as him.

Long Chen was wagering Xiaolang’s life, so he had to win. Naturally, he only dared to suggest that because he was certain he could win.

The battle that everyone had been anticipating started.

Yu Chong and Long Chen both transformed at the start of the battle. Long Chen dared not let his guard down, especially since he was fighting against someone at a higher cultivation level. He needed to transform into his strongest form right now.

Yu Chong had completed his transformation too.

It was clear that Yu Chong was using an Earth-tier wolf-type demonic beast as his Primary Beast Soul. He had grown into a three-meter-tall beast and silver fur had sprouted on his skin. His sharp claws revealed a bloody glint.

Yu Chong was visually stronger than Long Chen.

“This is a Category Four Earth-tier Silver Moon Wolf. What is your Primary Beast Soul? What category is it? You look like a lizard.” Yu Chong laughed after he taunted Long Chen. To him, a country bumpkin would always be a bumpkin. He thought there was no way Long Chen’s primary beast soul could compete with his.

The Heavenly Wolf Gang laughed too.

The Ninth Prince didn’t. He was fixated on what type of beast soul Long Chen was using.

He knew Long Chen had been using the same beast soul since the Draconic Realm, but what was surprising was that it appeared to have grown in strength as Long Chen became stronger. It was one of the reasons why the Ninth Prince thought Long Chen was mysterious.

Long Chen decided to end it as fast as possible to prevent any unforeseen circumstances from happening.

“Be careful,” Long Chen said before rushing towards the massive beast. His speed caused wind to blow in every direction.

Yu Chong was still laughing, but he became serious after seeing Long Chen’s speed.

While running, Long Chen brandished the Azure Dragon Halberd. Without saying anything, he waved it around and pointed the tip at Yu Chong. Afterimages of the halberd circled around him.

What an idiot to fight the Ninth Prince for a woman. Yu Chong licked his lips, and his Qi exploded outwards. A wolf tattoo appeared on his body and killing intent spilled forth.

He clenched his feet and jumped, his body turning into a cannon ball that barrelled towards Long Chen before he extended his claws.

The ground shook from the impact.

“Die! Tear through the heavens and earth! Heaven Rending Claw!”

His hand flew towards Long Chen. Long Chen knew that the technique was at least as strong as an elementary Earth-tier martial technique.

“Azure Dragon Combat Technique, Starsweep Dragon!”

The afterimages of the halberd filled the air as they crashed into Yu Chong’s claws. The sound of clashing metals and scraping nails could be heard countless times. Yu Chong’s claws were stronger than Long Chen had expected. After clashing with each other numerous times, both of them remained unscathed. In the end, both flew backwards from the impact.

Bam! Boom!

They each took several steps back before stopping. It appeared that they were evenly matched. Everyone had expected for Long Chen to be blown back, so they were surprised when they saw Yu Chong look equally disheveled. The Heavenly Wolf Gang was perplexed at what they were seeing.

“Bastard! Did you not eat lunch or did you waste all of your energy on the woman yesterday? If you dare humiliate our Lord, I will skin you alive!” Yu Tao shouted.

Yu Chong was dejected. He had used his full strength, yet he had failed to defeat Long Chen. He was confused too. Long Chen was only at the Second River Stage but already had the strength of a Third River Stage cultivator. Yu Chong was considered an elite in terms of raw strength, so how could he get pushed back by Long Chen?

“Shit! I don’t believe this! I will defeat you in one technique!”

Yu Chong’s eyes were cold and his body became a blur as he ran towards Long Chen.

Long Chen had also shaken off the pain from the previous clash.

“Demonic Wolf Secret Technique, Silver Moon Slash!”

Yu Chong’s massive frame became a giant blade of moonlight that flew towards Long Chen. The martial technique was immensely powerful. Long Chen saw numerous wolf faces hidden within the blade. The faint faces seemed to make the attack stronger.

“Nine Spinning Fire Shields!”

Long Chen did not attack head-on with another technique, instead opting to block. He was now capable of using the Nine Spinning Fire Shields much more naturally compared to when he fought Emperor Yuan. After training and cultivating it, he could now use the complete Nine Spinning Fire Shields rather than his previous record of six rotations.

There were a lot of martial techniques that focused on attacking, but few of them were defensive ones. All defensive martial techniques were considered superior techniques, and the Nine Spinning Fire Shields was one of them. It was an intermediate Earth-tier martial technique that used spinning fire to disperse the energy from incoming attacks.

Everyone saw the Silver Moon Slash and the Nine Spinning Fire Shields clashing into each other. The rotation from the fire expunged gusts of hot air everywhere, forming dust clouds around Long Chen.

The time is now! Long Chen’s eyes glinted.

Even though the Nine Spinning Fire Shields was facing strong pressure, Long Chen was confident that it would not break. But it would not be easy for him to injure Yu Chong from behind the shield. Still, he was not out of options.

Let’s try this method instead. Long Chen smiled when he felt that Yu Chong was desperately trying to break the shield.

Divine Fire Clone, activate!

A blazing flame engulfed Long Chen before detaching from his body, forming a fiery clone! This was a Divine Fire Clone.

Long Chen had made the first True Fire Seed and planted it in his body back at Goldfish Island. He could finally use it today.

Only Yu Chong failed to notice the clone. Yu Tao and everyone else didn't know what the Divine Fire Clone was, so they were looking at it in confusion. But the Ninth Prince knew. Long Chen had only obtained the Nine Spinning Fire Shields and Divine Fire Clone recently, yet he could already use them! It was a testament to his talent.

The Ninth Prince had only barely made the first True Fire Seed recently, and he didn't even know if he could use it in battle.

Elder Yan saw the Ninth Prince's face. "My Lord, should I snuff him out?"

"Stop your nonsense. Do not talk about this ever again. Focus on the battle," the Ninth Prince whispered.

"Boss, what is that thing? Is that a Divine Technique? How could a country bumpkin have so many things? Not only does he have an intermediate Earth-tier martial technique and a defensive technique, he even has an intermediate Earth-tier Divine Arm!" All of them were looking at Long Chen greedily.

"He belongs to the Ninth Prince now. If our Lord didn't say anything, we must not do anything. Remember this!" Yu Tao said with a frown.

Long Chen's Divine Fire Clone was ready and immediately jumped into the Nine Spinning Fire Shields. It then merged with it!

The Divine Fire Clone has one fifth of my strength. This is already stronger than a regular First River Stage cultivator. I wonder if he could take on a surprise attack on that level? Long Chen smiled coldly.

He slowly stepped back the Silver Moon Slash's strength.

He's retreating? Yu Chong was desperate to win and was elated to see that his attack was working. He was about to press on when a fiery person suddenly jumped out of the Nine Spinning Fire Shields and punched him in the face. Yu Chong didn't have time to prepare for it!

Bam!

The fire engulfed Yu Chong's body, burning off a lot of his fur.

Yu Chong flew backwards from the attack, and Long Chen dispersed his Nine Spinning Fire Shields. He then slammed the Azure Dragon Halberd down onto Yu Chong's abdomen and pinned him down!

Bam!

Yu Chong crashed into the ground and howled painfully. He had barely managed to put out the fire on his body when he felt something cold and metallic on his throat. When he could finally see properly, Long Chen's Azure Dragon Halberd was already on his neck.

"You lose," Long Chen said plainly.

Yu Chong could not believe what he was seeing, but the pain all over his body reminded him of the harsh truth. Long Chen was not lying—he had indeed lost.

“Impossible!” Yu Chong tried to struggle.

“Not accepting defeat? Do you think I won’t chop your head off?”

Everyone saw what had happened. Yu Tao and the others were as shocked as Yu Chong, and that feeling was followed by anger, regret, and self-blame. They had caused the Ninth Prince to lose the Fire Essence.

The Ninth Prince looked at Long Chen plainly, but his hands were clenching hard behind his back. Only Elder Yan noticed this.

Chapter 296 - When Will We Consummate Our Relationship

In truth, that Fire Essence was an extra to the Ninth Prince. That was why he put it in his study.

The killing intent that rose within him was not due to losing the Fire Essence, but because Long Chen was putting pressure on him.

Long Chen had grown from a nameless minor character, one that he could squash at any time, to a person who was quickly catching up to him.

The group felt all sorts of different emotions when they saw Long Chen defeat Yu Chong. The members of the Heavenly Wolf Gang were initially still mocking Long Chen, but now they had received an invisible slap across their faces.

The weak and the cowardly will only receive endless bullying and humiliation. If I had not taken the risk to fight the brat, I’m afraid I would not even have been able to lift my head around these people. But now it will be different ... Long Chen thought to himself.

He deactivated his Dragon Soul Transformation, put away the Azure Dragon Halberd, and no longer looked at his defeated opponent. He turned to the Ninth Prince and said, “Your Highness, you were the witness. I believe the outcome of the duel is clear?”

“Mhm. You have defeated Yu Chong. According to the promise, the Fire Essence belongs to you. Old Yan, go up and get it,” said the Ninth Prince with a small smile, hiding the emotions in his heart.

Old Yan nodded, taking a glance at Long Chen. Then he went up to the ceiling to retrieve it. He handed the Fire Refining Essence to Long Chen before the guilty eyes of the Heavenly Wolf Gang.

There was a lot of heat radiating from the Fire Essence, as well as powerful light. Long Chen hurriedly put it in his Universe Pouch before it brought harm to Ling Xi’s eyes.

“Thank you, Your Highness. Also, Ling Xi and Xiaolang will be staying at Yuqin Palace during my time at the Counter Essence Realm,” Long Chen suddenly said.

“Oh?” The Ninth Prince thought Long Chen had already declined the offer since he did not truly trust him. So why was he willing to hand over the people dearest to him?

“That’s good. You don’t have to worry. I promise you that Miss Ling Xi will be completely safe in my palace,” said the Ninth Prince with a smile, though there was an unidentifiable twinkle in his eyes.

Seeing as there was nothing else for them to do, the Heavenly Wolf Gang glared hard at Long Chen, then prepared to excuse themselves.

“It’s late. I’ll send someone to arrange for your quarters.” After the gang left, the Ninth Prince made arrangements for Ling Xi and Long Chen, then he left as well.

Within a luxurious but cozy room, Long Chen stood with his back leaning against the wall, hugging Ling Xi.

“Xiao Xi, are you sure you want to stay in Yuqin Palace?” he asked worriedly. He was under no illusions about the Ninth Prince’s intentions. Allowing Ling Xi to stay here was the same as putting a goat in a tiger’s jaws. He had only agreed because Ling Xi was silently hinting for him to do it.

“Brother Chen, do you not have any confidence in me? How can a weakling at the Sixth River Stage do anything to me? Plus, won’t Xiaolang be here? If I can’t stay alive, I’ll abandon this body and return to the Ling Xi Sword. You’re going to get me the Nine Heavens Immortal Fruit anyway. This body has many inconveniences, so it’s fine if I abandon it,” Ling Xi said mischievously.

“You’re right. But getting our hands on the Profound Heavenly Jade Lotus wasn’t easy. Plus, we’ve barely gotten to spend any time with each other; it would be a pity to abandon this body.”

Long Chen finally understood her plan. The Ninth Prince was interested in Ling Xi, but he would not use an extreme method like killing Long Chen directly to get Ling Xi by force. This meant that he was a proud person who saw actions like that as beneath him. What he wanted was Ling Xi’s heart. But Ling Xi’s heart was with Long Chen, so how could he ever get it?

And if he went crazy in the end, Ling Xi could abandon the Profound Heavenly Jade Lotus and return to the Ling Xi Sword. No one here could harm the sword.

“We don’t have a choice. We didn’t expect the Ninth Prince to be a bad person before this. He only accidentally revealed his intentions today. If we knew earlier, Xiaolang and I would have stayed at Goldfish Island and not come here. Now that he has targeted me, someone as powerful as him will be able to find me wherever I go. I might as well stay here and await the good news from you,” Ling Xi explained patiently, worried that Long Chen would feel too stressed out.

Their relationship had grown to an unbreakable level.

After hearing her out, Long Chen’s mind opened up. He no longer dwelled on his worries. Since the Ninth Prince could not get what he wanted no matter what he did, what was there to be afraid of?

As long as he obtained the Nine Heavens Immortal Fruit, he would be able to run far away. He would be stronger by then, and if the Ninth Prince tried to stop him, he would stab him with his halberd.

“Ninth Prince, O’ Ninth Prince. You let me become an Immortal Guard and gave me a chance to go to the Counter Essence Realm. If you had been a good person, I would have been willing to be friends and return the favor in the future. However, now that you have set your eyes on my darling, don’t you blame me for being vicious.”

Long Chen had always refused to be bullied by anyone. Right now, he was a subordinate in a foreign faction, so he had no choice but to hold it in. If he ever had the chance, Long Chen would get his revenge, no matter who they were!

Harming Ling Xi was a huge taboo to Long Chen. He would kill any man who had the slightest intention of hurting her. Since the Ninth Prince dared to cross the line, he had received a sentence.

“Xiao Xi, you and Xiaolang stay here and be good. I’ll get the Nine Heavens Immortal Fruit very soon and take you two away from here. With my current cultivation speed, perhaps no one will be able to stop me then.”

Ever since obtaining the Inherited Blood Essence, he possessed great confidence.

“Brother Chen, I know! You’re so long-winded! Like a woman!” Ling Xi made a face.

“Ling Xi, you’re the woman! Wait, don’t I need to make you into one?” Long Chen chuckled, his mood lifting.

“How?” Ling Xi asked naively.

“You’ll see!” Long Chen chuckled strangely and picked her delicate body up. With a whoosh, he moved to the side of the bed and put her down. He stretched his arms outwards, then pulled her into them.

“What are you doing? Brother Chen, you’re so heavy!” Ling Xi panicked a little, sensing his burning aura. Her face reddened and she hurriedly tried to push him away. Unfortunately, she was a normal person right now and could not move him at all.

The fragrance of lotus wafted from her body, which ignited a fire in Long Chen. The startled and embarrassed Ling Xi in his arms looked so cute, with her watery, swooning eyes and gentle panting. All of this made Long Chen’s blood surge.

“Ling Xi, can I ask you something?” Long Chen knew that Ling Xi was a very traditional person. He would not dare to do anything that would traumatize her. After all, it didn’t seem like she knew anything at this point.

“What is it?” Ling Xi felt her own body temperature increase as she felt the warmth from his body. This feeling made her yearn for him but also miserable. It felt as if her heart had risen into the air but could not go up or come back down.

“Have you decided when we will consummate our relationship?” Long Chen asked shamelessly.

Ling Xi had heard about consummating a relationship before. It seemed that through this process, she would transform from a girl to a woman. Ling Xi faintly guessed what he was referring to.

“You jerk! You bastard! Only after you die!” Long Chen’s question terrified her, and she pushed even harder.

Indeed, she was still averse to the idea ...

“Then I’ll die now!” Long Chen let out a guffaw, ready to scare Ling Xi. That was when Xiaolang entered the room. Startled, Long Chen jumped off the bed at lightning speed, staring at Xiaolang awkwardly with a reddened face.

Xiaolang froze and his eyes widened. Then, as if startled, he quickly turned and ran out of the room.

“Brother Chen! Get out!”

Long Chen himself was embarrassed after being seen by Xiaolang, so one could only imagine how Ling Xi was feeling. Seeing as her embarrassment had turned to anger, he hurriedly comforted her a little, then he ran out.

Although Ling Xi had become more mature, when she raged, it was still scary.

When he found Xiaolang outside, he pretended as if nothing had happened and regarded Xiaolang for a while. He asked, “Have you swallowed and absorbed the Fire Essence? And have you become a Category Four Earth-tier already?”

Xiaolang nodded.

After the confirmation, Long Chen was stunned. It was no wonder the Burning Heaven Emperor praised Xiaolang’s talent so much. As long as the Sun Devouring Wolf received enough fire elemental treasures, it would grow miraculously fast.

Usually, it was difficult for demonic beasts to level up, but Xiaolang was leveling up at a speed faster than humans.

Sitting down on a boulder, Long Chen looked up at the starry sky and said, “I’m heading to the Counter Essence Realm tomorrow. You must always stay by Ling Xi’s side and protect her. Once I get the Nine Heavens Immortal Fruit, we’ll find a place to hide and cultivate. When we become stronger, we’ll return to take your revenge. What do you think?”

Xiaolang nodded, looking at him gratefully.

His enemy was the imperial family, yet Long Chen had volunteered to help him take revenge without hesitation.

“We’re both cultivating Divine Fire Clone. Since I succeeded first, let me tell you about my cultivation experience. In the future, let’s cultivate together again if we find something good.”

Xiaolang possessed talent in cultivating combat techniques too. Although a wolf’s meridians differed from human meridians, it was still a sentient being from the same world. Since Xiaolang was still human, he might actually succeed through exploration.

While conversing with Xiaolang, Long Chen continued to condense his fire seed. He found that the most difficult thing about Divine Fire Clone was condensing the first clone. Afterwards, he would only need to replicate the process.

After spending the whole night with Xiaolang, Long Chen left for the Counter Essence Realm the next day.

Chapter 297 - Counter Essence City

Long Chen had already said what he wanted to say to Ling Xi and Xiaolang. Early the next morning, he did not let them send him off and left Yuqin Palace on his own. Since no one else had arrived, he stood outside for a while until the Heavenly Wolf Gang appeared at the end of the street.

“This brat! Why do we need to go to him? Who does he think he is? Let me show him what we’re made of,” said one of the bald men viciously.

“Don’t be rash! If you want to do something, do it in the Immortal Realm, where there are no witnesses. You may not care about your reputation, but His Highness does. Don’t you dare cause more problems for him,” Yu Tao reprimanded.

When they neared Long Chen, Yu Tao yelled, “You brat! Follow me! We’re going out of the city!”

Is the Counter Essence Realm outside the imperial capital? Long Chen guessed this from their words. He joined up with the group.

They ignored him, and he ignored them as well.

Walking next to Yu Tao, Yu Chong’s desire to kill Long Chen grew stronger with Long Chen’s nonchalant attitude.

“Brother! Promise me you’ll kill Long Chen in the Immortal Realm!” Yu Chong said in a low voice.

“Why are you so impatient? I spoke to His Highness last night. His plan is first to get to know Ling Xi for a month and see how it goes. If we kill Long Chen now, His Highness is worried that Miss Ling Xi will guess the truth and hate him. That is why it’s best we hold it in. As for whether we kill him or not, we must wait a month,” Yu Tao answered sternly.

“I don’t understand. Did he bring Long Chen from Yuanling City because of Miss Ling Xi? Why didn’t he kill Long Chen before?” Yu Chong asked.

“In the beginning, His Highness took notice of him due to his potential. However, I’m guessing that due to Miss Ling Xi, he knew that Long Chen would never become completely loyal to him. That’s why he decided to give up on Long Chen.”

“Why go through all the trouble? I think he might as well kill Long Chen directly. She’s just a woman! He could just take her if he wanted to, right?” Yu Chong asked.

“Nonsense. He’s a prince, so he has a lot of pride. How could you equate him and us? However, if Miss Ling Xi is stubborn, sooner or later, His Highness will go mad and Long Chen will die. So, what are you worried about?” whispered Yu Tao darkly.

Yu Chong understood now.

They exited the Biyang Imperial Capital. Yu Tao led everyone, including Long Chen, towards the east. Along the way, the Heavenly Wolf Gang stuck together, conversing and joking loudly. They completely forgot about Long Chen, who was happy to ignore them and get some peace.

After walking over twenty kilometers, a lush green forest appeared ahead. Yu Tao walked by Long Chen’s side and talked down to him, “We’ll be arriving in Counter Essence City soon. There, I will take you to meet the legendary Lord Sword Devil. Hold your tongue and stay still. Otherwise, don’t blame me if you die.”

“You can’t wait for me to die, can you?” Long Chen asked nonchalantly with a smile.

“What do you mean by that?” Yu Tao asked darkly.

Long Chen shrugged and did not reply, focusing on walking.

“You brat, you’re so smug now. You’re just a village boy and you think you can go against His Highness! You’re going to get yourself killed.” Yu Tao chuckled darkly behind him.

They soon arrived at Counter Essence City. It was completely different from the Biyang Imperial Capital—Counter Essence City was completely black and looked like a fort. It looked evil yet magnificent, with sharp corners and silhouettes that radiated a terrifying aura.

There was only one wall that circled the whole city, but countless houses were densely packed within the wall. Long Chen looked from far away and knew that at least tens of thousands of soldiers were staying there.

“Don’t underestimate the Counter Essence Army! Even a hundred and fifty thousand Biyang Capital city guards are no match for fifty thousand Counter Essence soldiers! The minimum requirement to join the Counter Essence Army is the Earthly Core Realm. There are five main leaders of the Counter Essence Army, plus the lofty Royal Uncle, the Sword Devil. How could the seven commanders of the Imperial Capital Guard compare?”

Long Chen could faintly hear the Heavenly Wolf Gang discussing this topic.

The city guards guarded the outside of the Imperial Capital, while fifty thousand Counter Essence soldiers were based within Counter Essence City. All of them were above the Earthly Core Realm, and there were great experts such as the five leaders and the Sword Devil based here. From this, it was clear that the imperial family was extremely strict in recruiting for the Counter Essence Realm's guards.

It looks like it's going to be difficult for me to find the Nine Heavens Immortal Fruit in the Counter Essence Realm. Long Chen started to have worries about obtaining the fruit.

He soon followed Yu Tao into Counter Essence City. Very strict guards were stationed at the gates. Only Immortal Guards who were able to produce a white identity token would be able to enter. Long Chen should not have been able to enter, but Yu Tao told the guard that Long Chen was a recruit with the Ninth Prince's recommendation. The guard agreed to let him in, but a small team of Counter Essence soldiers had to personally escort him to the Sword Devil.

After confirming their identities, they all registered.

Long Chen felt dejected in the face of such a strict system.

Looking towards the inside of the city, he could see that Counter Essence City was built surrounding a giant lake. The lake was clean and transparent, its surface like a tranquil mirror. It was only when people entered that faint ripples would appear, though they too vanished immediately.

All Counter Essence soldiers in the city wore black armor; even their heads were covered by thick and heavy helmets. Only the Immortal Guards wore all sorts of clothing.

The people who entered the lake did not wear black armor, so Long Chen assumed that they were Immortal Guards. This meant that the entrance to the Immortal Realm was likely inside the lake.

"This is Sorrow Moon Lake. The entrance to the Counter Essence Realm is within the lake. I'm so jealous that you get to become an Immortal Guard and enter the Counter Essence Realm," a black-armored Counter Essence soldier said to Long Chen.

Despite the fact that they had entered as a group, he could tell that the Heavenly Wolf Gang and Long Chen were not together.

"How many years have you been here?" The soldier looked like a teenager and seemed to be the same age as Long Chen.

"Three years. My childhood dream was to be an Immortal Guard, but due to my lack of talent, I'm only at the mid Heavenly Core realm right now. That is why I can only be a Counter Essence soldier. But this job has its advantages, like the fact that it's not all that dangerous. No one has dared to attack Counter Essence City so far to conquer the Counter Essence Realm. You, on the other hand, will face threats from immortal beasts in the Immortal Realm, plus manipulation and betrayal from your own people. I think you need to be careful."

As he spoke, the black-armored teenager glanced at the hostile-looking Heavenly Wolf Gang and continued, "I know these people. They used to be bandits, and they have taken many lives. It was

only after they pledged their loyalty to the Ninth Prince that they reined in their violence. But it's difficult to change old habits ...”

“Thank you!” Long Chen nodded after listening to his advice. He could tell that the young man was a kind person. It was rare to meet such someone so genuine.

“I'm talking too much. Hehe, we're approaching Lord Sword Devil's palace soon. Then again, I've never seen him with my own eyes during my three years here. You're lucky to be able to see his face the day you arrive.”

Sword Devil? Long Chen had some inkling about this person. Before Xiaolang turned into the Sun Devouring Wolf, Long Chen had asked who his enemies were. The name ‘Sword Devil’ was part of the list as one of the main culprits.

“Lord Sword Devil is the incumbent Sword Emperor's younger brother. He is at the Ninth River Stage, making him one of the top three cultivators in the entire Cangyang Kingdom. With him guarding Counter Essence City, the city is bound to win all battles. The two brothers are the pillars of the Cangyang Kingdom; I've worshiped them since I was young!” gushed the black-armored teenager.

The teenager clearly had not had someone to talk to in a long time, because just a short chat was enough to launch him off on a tangent. The Heavenly Wolf Gang had not told Long Chen anything about the rules of the Counter Essence Realm, so Long Chen could only probe him for more information.

Soon, they finally arrived at the Sword Devil's palace.

Although he was known as the Sword Devil and a great master, he lived a simple life.

A simple black tower appeared in front of them. The steel tower was old, but it radiated a sharpness that could not be concealed. Long Chen even felt stinging pain prickle his skin from the sharp aura.

This is just where he lives, and it already radiates such a sharp sword Qi. If this person is called the Sword Devil, he is likely a formidable figure. Great masters should deserve my respect, but you're Xiaolang's enemy, so this is different ...

After escorting Long Chen here, the teenager had no choice but to excuse himself.

Today was the beginning of a new month, so there were many other new Immortal Guard recruits who had gathered over the past month. Many were already waiting outside the gates.

“Stay here. When everyone has arrived, every one of you will have to pass an inspection conducted by Lord Sword Devil himself!” Yu Tao warned Long Chen softly. Yu Tao dared not act recklessly while standing in front of the Sword Devil's palace.

Long Chen looked up. In front of him was an iron door that was shut tight. *How grand.*

He truly felt how powerful the imperial family was after arriving in Counter Essence City. This was only a corner of the imperial family's power, but it was already terrifying.

Long Chen had a lot of patience. Time passed and the morning hours ticked by. At noon, the door finally opened to reveal cold darkness within.

A gust of wind blew from inside. Since Long Chen was standing at the very front and was hit by the gust first, he quickly activated his Qi to withstand it.

After the gust of wind passed, he realized that the wind had made dozens of tiny cuts on his clothing.

This was merely a natural gust of wind caused by the presence of the sword master inside, which had naturally flowed out after the door was opened.

Long Chen was privately startled.

“New recruits of the Immortal Guard, step inside.”

Chapter 298 - Sword Devil

Long Chen and the other eight new Immortal Guards entered the steel tower, while Yu Tao and the rest could only wait outside.

It looks like the Sword Devil has quite the reputation. Those bastards did not even protest. Long Chen walked through the black walkway while eyeing the people next to him. Two of them attracted his attention. One was wearing a full suit of black armor, which was the classic Counter Essence soldier outfit. He guessed that this person was initially from the Counter Essence Army, and due to his stellar performance and quick improvement in cultivation, he had been promoted to an Immortal Guard.

The other was a thin and short man only reaching up to Long Chen's chest. He was a little pale with clean features, so he was decent-looking. However, he had an arrogant look on his face, walking with his nose in the air. He could not even hide his arrogant personality in front of the Sword Devil.

He must be a dwarf.

This person had caught his eye when they were outside because quite a few Immortal Guards had escorted him, and all of them were obsequious towards him.

After listening to the stories told by the Goldfish Islanders, Long Chen felt enmity towards the dwarves.

They were all silent while walking. Soon, they arrived in a vast hall. The walls were black with giant burning torches at four corners to light up the black hall. At the front of the hall was a main seat accompanied by five other seats. At this moment, all six seats were filled.

The Sword Devil and five leaders mentioned by the black-armored teenager came to mind. These seemed to be the six strongest experts of Counter Essence City. The person sitting at the very top drew Long Chen's attention.

He had white hair but the face of a young man. Time had not left a single trace on his skin. Although he was merely sitting in his seat, Long Chen sensed an intimidating aura rushing towards himself. He even felt a slight prickling pain on his skin when the man's gaze swept past him.

That was the Sword Devil.

He was likely in his forties, yet he maintained a youthful face. This was a rare sight, and Long Chen could tell that he was no ordinary person from this alone.

Sitting beneath the Sword Devil were five middle-aged people. Long Chen sensed that while they were weaker than the Sword Devil, they were much stronger than himself.

“Sit.” The white-haired young man, the Sword Devil, spoke gently. Long Chen instantly felt an invisible force wrap around his body, forcing him down on a seat nearby. All nine of them had their own seats. Long Chen looked around and noticed that he was sitting at the very back. Next to him was the black-armored warrior.

The Sword Devil looked around the room, then his gaze rested on the short man.

“Song Yuefeng, come here.”

When the short man was walking into the tower, he had been arrogant. However, after he entered, he was completely suppressed by the Sword Devil and did nothing but obey the Sword Devil’s commands reverently, his head hung low.

“Yes.”

The short man, Song Yuefeng, stood up and walked up to the Sword Devil shakily. He was pale from fear.

That was when a short and fat middle-aged man sitting beneath the Sword Devil hurriedly turned to the Sword Devil with all smiles and said, “My Lord, this is my son, Song Yuefeng. He is sixteen today and is already at the Fifth River Stage.”

“Your son?” The Sword Devil eyed Song Yuefeng up and down, then he nodded and said, “Reaching the Fifth River Stage at sixteen is almost on par with the people of the imperial family. Not bad. Since he is your son, there is no need for inspection. Song Yuefeng, return to your seat.”

“Yes, thank you, my Lord!” Finally, he no longer had to face the terrifying, suffocating force coming from the Sword Devil. Song Yuefeng nodded and bowed hurriedly, then he rushed back to his seat.

Long Chen watched it all calmly.

He was surprised that there was a dwarf amongst the five leaders. However, it was not very odd that they had a seat here, seeing as the Harmony family was one of the three largest factions in the Biyang Imperial Capital.

The next person had already gone up to be inspected by the Sword Devil. The Sword Devil merely placed his palm on the person’s body and rubbed a circle, feeling his star veins, and that was it.

“Brother, do you know what he is checking?” the black-armored soldier next to Long Chen suddenly asked.

“Since he is touching the star vein, I’m guessing that he is checking the quality of the person’s Qi. But we are all here through recommendations, so there should not be a problem,” Long Chen answered after some thought.

Then, he regarded the soldier. Perhaps due to the black-armored teenager from before, Long Chen felt friendly towards him. This soldier's gaze was determined yet pure, unlike Song Yuefeng, who looked like a person he should not interact with. Long Chen lacked friends now, so he would never let a chance to make a new friend slip by.

Since it was not yet their turn, Long Chen asked, "How should I address you?"

"Zhang Yuanteng. You?"

"I'm Long Chen. You're from the Counter Essence Army, right?" he asked.

"I am. I wasn't always strong, but I recently experienced some improvements and reached the Second River Stage. Since I have some knowledge on the Counter Essence Realm, I was promoted to an Immortal Guard," Zhang Yuanteng answered, sounding grateful.

"Are you familiar with the Counter Essence Realm? I followed the Ninth Prince here from Yuanling City, so everything here is foreign to me. Since you know more, tell me more," whispered Long Chen with a grin.

"Followed the Ninth Prince? If you were able to gain his favor, you must be very talented. As for your request, I am happy to oblige. Out here in the world, we can only rely on our friends. Serving you would be my honor, haha ..." Although Zhang Yuanteng had not spoken before this, the moment he did, it was clear that he was a straightforward and simple person.

Long Chen started to chat with him, asking him questions ranging from the Biyang Imperial Capital to the Counter Essence Realm. In the end, they talked about the five leaders.

"The five leaders are all at the Eighth River Stage. The two on the left are from the imperial family, while the three on the right are people from the three great clans. That guy, Song Yuefeng's father, is the patriarch of the Harmony family," whispered Zhang Yuanteng.

The Sword Devil and the rest were at the end of the great hall, so they did not dare to speak too loudly.

Very quickly, it was Zhang Yuanteng's turn. Since he had come from the Counter Essence Army, naturally, there were no problems with him. He very quickly returned, and it was Long Chen's turn next.

Long Chen walked on the shiny black floor under the gazes of a Ninth River Stage and five Eight River Stage cultivators. He stopped when he came up to the Sword Devil.

Different from the servile Song Yuefeng, Long Chen felt no fear despite standing in front of the ultimate master. There were many people he respected, but the Ninth River Stage master in front of him was not one of them.

The Sword Devil noted Long Chen's eyes, then, without a word, reached out and rubbed his palm in a circle on Long Chen's chest over his shirt. Long Chen sensed a surge of heat from the Sword

Devil's palm that flowed into his body, quickly circulated once in his star vein, and finally returned to the palm.

"You're Long Chen, the one recommended by Little Nine?" The Sword Devil looked slightly puzzled as he gazed at Long Chen. He was indeed inspecting the quality of his Qi, checking if it was Demon Qi, and subsequently determining if he was a disciple of the Heavenly Demon Palace. While he did not find any Demon Qi, Long Chen's Qi was four times stronger than that of other people. That was why the Sword Devil felt a different sensation compared to when inspecting the others.

Long Chen nodded. "Yes, Lord Sword Devil. Is there an issue?"

"No. Return to your seat." The Sword Devil shook his head, though he was just a little puzzled.

Long Chen descended and returned to his seat.

He had been able to feel the strength of Xiaolang's enemy at close range. The Sword Devil's sword Qi seemed to seep into every pore on Long Chen's skin, entering his body. Just being near him made Long Chen feel terrible.

After Long Chen returned, the inspection of the nine recruits was over. The Sword Devil did not declare the process over, whoever. Instead, he walked up to Long Chen and the others and said, "There are no problems with your backgrounds. However, what the Counter Essence Realm needs most is combat capabilities, which is not necessarily the same as cultivation level. Now, I shall inspect your combat abilities. The minimum requirement of being an Immortal Guard may be the First River Stage, but if a person of the Second River Stage has poor combat skills, he will have to get the hell out of here."

His eyes swept across the nine of them. The coldness in his gaze made them instinctively lower their heads, not daring to meet his eyes.

"The rules are simple. I will not do anything; you all may attack me with your most powerful moves. I will be able to spot anyone whose attack is too weak or has no battle experience immediately. Everyone, stand up!"

Since he was called the Sword Devil, he was sure to be more bloodthirsty than other people. He had been calm up until now, but his voice had become icy and he seemed like an extremely sharp, unsheathed sword. Just his presence alone radiated a suffocating sharpness.

Long Chen was the first to stand up. He was mentally stronger than the rest of them, plus Xiaolang held a grudge against the Sword Devil. Therefore, Long Chen was not afraid of him at all. As for the others, even the Fifth River Stage Song Yuefeng's legs trembled as he stood up.

The Sword Devil stomped on the ground, and the vibrations caused the luxurious chairs to pulverize. The great hall now seemed empty.

"Being Immortal Guards not only requires combat skills but also cooperation. From now on, all nine of you are a team. Attack me with all you have! Anyone who is not passionate enough, or cooperative enough, will be eliminated!"

The nine of them looked at each other. Just like cornered dogs jumping over a wall, they launched their attacks to avoid elimination.

Chapter 299 - Clan Death Sentence

After the Sword Devil's instruction, everyone abandoned their reservations about ranks because it was impossible for them to hurt someone as powerful as him. That was why everyone could attack without worry.

"Heh!" Once Song Yuefeng understood this, he was the first to attack. He was the only Fifth River Stage cultivator present, and he held the highest status. His father was watching as well! Recalling what his father had said, he knew that he had to put on his best performance. It would be best if he could get Lord Sword Devil's praise.

Despite his elegant features, once the violence in his genes was triggered, he was actually the craziest. With a dagger in hand, Song Yuefeng charged the fastest, surpassing the rest of the people as he ran towards the Sword Devil!

Indeed, in the face of immense pressure, everyone was able to unleash their madness. However, the situation was chaotic, and no cooperation was to be seen. Only Long Chen and Zhang Yuanteng stood side by side and locked eyes, preparing to cover for each other.

"Secret Technique, Piercing Tornado!"

Once he was ahead of everyone else, there was a cold flash in Song Yuefeng's eyes and Qi exploded from his body. He twisted the dagger in his hand, then he spun it like a tornado. Amidst the spinning tornado, there were constant flashes of a sharp blade directed at the Sword Devil!

Long Chen was privately startled when he saw the attack. It was definitely an intermediate Earth-tier combat technique. Paired with Song Yuefeng's Fifth River Stage cultivation, Long Chen guessed that even if he used his Nine Spinning Fire Shields to the maximum, it would be difficult to withstand this attack.

From this alone, it was clear that there were countless true prodigies in the Imperial Capital.

How will the Sword Devil neutralize this attack?

Long Chen's eyes were glued to the scene. Song Yuefeng's Piercing Tornado was about to hit the Sword Devil's body, but the latter's expression remained calm. When he was just about to be injured, he casually reached out. It looked casual, but in reality, it was unbelievably fast, and he plunged his arm into the tornado without the utilization of any Qi!

How is that possible? Long Chen gasped because the Sword Devil had so casually neutralized an attack he never would have been able to withstand. After reaching out into the tornado, he grabbed Song Yuefeng's wrist and flung him out.

He's so powerful! Long Chen's eyes darkened when he saw the outcome.

If Song Yuefeng had been thrown out, then everyone else would fare no better. Attacks came one after another, but they were all easily thrown out before they could approach the Sword Devil.

The Sword Devil's brows remained furrowed, as if no one had managed to satisfy him. Not even Song Yuefeng.

After being tossed away, Song Yuefeng panicked. He quickly climbed onto his feet and attacked the Sword Devil again. There had been nothing impressive about his previous performance, so now he had to do better to impress the master.

At this point, six of the nine recruits had been thrown out. While Long Chen was charging ahead, he had already taken out his Azure Dragon Halberd. It was unnecessary to boost his strength with the Dragon Soul Transformation right now.

“Brother Long Chen, shall I cover you while you attack?” Zhang Yuanteng suddenly asked at this crucial moment.

“Alright!” Long Chen agreed decisively and took a step back. They both knew that since the Sword Devil wanted to see cooperation, they should cooperate. With two people working together, they should fare better than the others who had been immediately thrown out.

Zhang Yuanteng took a step forward so he stood in front of Long Chen. At the same time, he leaped and threw a punch, unleashing a pitch-black fist seal at the Sword Devil. Long Chen followed closely behind. When Zhang Yuanteng punched, Long Chen thrust the Azure Dragon Halberd from the side!

“Azure Dragon Combat Technique, Nine Heavens Dragon Ascension!” Long Chen’s attack flew from a direction out of the Sword Devil’s field of vision, upwards at the Sword Devil!

Although this was their first time meeting each other, the duo had decent chemistry together. At least when the Sword Devil had blocked Zhang Yuanteng’s punch and thrown him out, he did not have enough time to block Long Chen’s Nine Heavens Dragon Ascension. There was a flash of approval in his eyes.

“Not bad.” He turned and used a body combat technique, easily dodging Long Chen’s attack. At the same time, he reached out to grab Long Chen at lightning speed! All the other people had already been thrown. Although there was some distance between them after the Sword Devil dodged, he did not intend to let Long Chen escape the fate of being tossed away.

Think you can throw me? Long Chen laughed internally. While he unleashed Nine Soaring Dragons, he quickly stepped back. Red flames erupted from his body and a fiery figure burst from his body towards the Sword Devil, blocking him!

“Divine Fire Clone!”

Boom!

Only one move from the Sword Devil was needed to break the Divine Fire Clone.

However, Long Chen had successfully escaped before the clone broke. After rolling on the ground a few times, he had escaped the Sword Devil’s attack range. He looked up and saw that the Sword Devil had no intention of attacking again. He gazed at Long Chen approvingly and said, “Kid, it’s

been more than a year since someone was able to avoid being thrown by me. You did it at just the Second River Stage. Not bad, not bad.”

Saying “not bad” twice was basically the highest form of praise he would ever utter.

That guy is strong! I lost a fire seed after such a simple attack from him. It takes me half a day to condense a fire seed ... Long Chen was privately resentful, not really caring about the Sword Devil’s praise.

He did not know what this meant, but everyone else did. All five leaders were looking at this person who had previously not caught their attention. Everyone had great expectations for Song Yuefeng, but to their surprise, Song Yuefeng’s performance was only average, while Long Chen had avoided being tossed out and even received praise from the Sword Devil.

The Sword Devil remained still, implying that the inspection was complete. Long Chen had garnered attention for a brief moment, which was no big deal to Long Chen himself, but one teenager already held a grudge.

Song Yuefeng had previously sworn to put on his best performance in front of the Sword Devil to gain his attention and praise. But all of it had gone to Long Chen, a minor figure no one knew. Song Yuefeng glared venomously at Long Chen, privately memorizing his face.

If I ever get my hands on you in the Immortal Realm, I am going to kill you. How dare you show off when you’re just a measly Second River Stage cultivator?

All of them stood obediently in a row in front of the Sword Devil. Zhang Yuanteng patted Long Chen’s shoulder with a grin. “That was not bad at all.”

“Actually, it’s all because you covered for me,” Long Chen said honestly.

“That’s a small matter; it’s not worth mentioning. Right, when we get out of here, don’t leave just yet. I want to talk to you about something,” Zhang Yuanteng whispered by his ear.

Long Chen nodded.

The Sword Devil’s gaze swept across the room, and he said, “I have observed all of your abilities. In terms of cultivation levels, of course, you all qualify to be Immortal Guards. However, your practical skills are not up to par; go back and work on your cultivation. Now, I will announce the names of those who have not passed the inspection.”

Their chests tightened, listening intently.

Becoming an Immortal Guard was extremely important to Long Chen. Although he knew that he had probably passed, he still felt nervous.

The Sword Devil announced the names, which did not include Long Chen and Zhang Yuanteng. Although Zhang Yuanteng was not considered strong compared to the others, he received the Sword Devil’s approval because he had cooperated with Long Chen. Ultimately, three people were eliminated from the nine. Out of the remaining six, four of them were put in a group, while Long Chen and Zhang Yuanteng were stuck together in another group.

From the Sword Devil's explanation, Long Chen had learned that the Counter Essence Realm was divided into three large zones, namely the Elementary Zone, the Intermediate Zone, and the Advanced Zone. These zones were divided based on the immortal beasts' strengths, as well as the rarity of the spiritual herbs and treasures within. Although Song Yuefeng was at the Fifth River Stage, he had to remain in the Elementary Zone and undergo training before entering the Intermediate Zone. Long Chen, being weaker, was obviously allocated to the Elementary Zone as well.

The Elementary Zone was divided into twenty areas. Long Chen and Zhang Yuanteng were assigned to Area Eighteen, same as the Heavenly Wolf Gang. Song Yuefeng and the other three were assigned to Area Seventeen.

"Take your identity jade tokens and go. Areas Seventeen and Eighteen are waiting. They will explain your responsibilities as Immortal Guards to you," said the Sword Devil, taking his seat once more.

The identity jade tokens were the tokens that Yu Tao and the rest had shown the guards when they first entered Counter Essence City. Every token had a unique mark, so no one else could use them.

Song Yunfeng's father was holding the tokens, so the six of them lined up to take their tokens from him.

The short and fat Eighth River Stage middle-aged man was one of the five leaders and also the patriarch of the Harmony family; he was named Song Zhongcheng. When it was Long Chen's turn, he looked up at Long Chen with a flash of hatred in his eyes.

Does this fat bastard hate me? Long Chen was puzzled.

After receiving their identity jade tokens, they prepared to leave. That was when the Sword Devil suddenly said, "Now that you have taken your identity jade tokens, you belong to the imperial family. You shall be loyal to the imperial family for the rest of your lives! If we find that you have stolen spiritual herbs from the Immortal Realm, you will be killed immediately! If we find that you have betrayed us, your whole clan shall be killed!"

The stern warning made them feel like they were being stabbed. Long Chen felt miserable because he felt a faint stinging pain like there was an actual blade cutting his body.

Killing the whole clan? The Mo family was likely killed due to this harsh punishment. It looks like the members of the imperial family aren't good people.

With that thought running through his mind, he walked out of the steel tower.

Chapter 300 - Counter Essence Immortal Beast

Long Chen and Zhang Yuanteng walked at the back of the group as they exited the tower. He remembered that Zhang Yuanteng had something to tell him.

As they exited, Song Yuefeng, who was walking at the very front, turned to glance over. There was hatred in his eyes. Although it was a quick glance, Long Chen was sure of what he had seen.

"Brother Zhang, are you going to tell me that the short guy ..." Long Chen said, speechless at what he just saw.

“That’s right. You outdid him, so now he will hold a grudge. Don’t be surprised though. You’re not a local, so you don’t know about the dwarves being vengeful people. They are used to bullying the weak, but when they meet strong people, they walk with their tails between their legs and act obsequiously. If they meet someone weaker than themselves, however, they are arrogant and vicious. It’s ridiculous how violent they can be.” There was unconcealable disgust in his tone.

“Factions like that really should be annihilated,” Long Chen said flatly.

His performance had triggered hate from Song Yuefeng, but he did not regret it. He had already killed dwarves once on Goldfish Island; a hundred of them had arrived on the island, but not a single one left alive. If Song Yuefeng provoked him, he would not mind doing it again.

Of course, he first had to enter the Immortal Realm, increase his cultivation level, and find the Nine Heavens Immortal Fruit.

“I too want them to die off, but there are many masters in the Harmony family. On top of Song Zhongcheng at the Eighth River Stage, they have more than ten Seventh River Stage cultivators. The dwarves are as loyal as dogs to the imperial family, and the imperial family is the only faction in the entire Cangyang Kingdom that has enough power to kill them,” whispered Zhang Yuanteng when they were about to walk out.

Since they got along well, he spoke frankly.

“But, Long Chen, you must be careful. The dwarves love to stab people in the back. Don’t fall into their traps,” Zhang Yuanteng reminded.

“Thank you, Brother Zhang. I will remember what you told me.” They had already exited the steel tower by now. With Yu Tao and the others in front, Long Chen did not dare say much.

“Did you pass?” Yu Tao asked nonchalantly, looking down at him.

“Is it possible for me to fail?” Long Chen said mildly.

Yu Tao was not surprised that Long Chen could pass the inspection, seeing as he had defeated Yu Chong. If Yu Chong could be an Immortal Guard, Long Chen could too.

However, Long Chen’s tone was not polite at all. Since they were in public, Yu Tao had to swallow his anger. He turned to Zhang Yuanteng and asked, “Are you also a new Immortal Guard for Area Eighteen?”

“I am. Are you the Area Leader of Area Eighteen, Yu Tao? Brother Yu?” Zhang Yuanteng asked.

Yu Tao nodded, then he glanced at Long Chen and said, “Let’s go. I will take you guys to Counter Essence City first, where our quarters are. Early tomorrow morning, we will go to the Counter Essence Realm and complete the previous team’s task.”

Yu Tao led them to the guards' quarters. Every Immortal Guard was allocated a place to stay within Counter Essence City so they could stay here when they were not on duty. After that, Yu Tao and the rest, who did not get along with Long Chen, disappeared. They did not even explain the rules of the Counter Essence Realm to Long Chen like the Sword Devil had said they would.

Fortunately, Zhang Yuanteng had been in the Counter Essence Army for about six or seven years and knew a few Immortal Guards. That was why he was familiar with the place.

“The spiritual Qi in the Counter Essence Realm is thick, so spiritual herbs and treasures are abundant. It is basically a sea of herbs. The most common are Yellow-tier spiritual herbs, which can be found everywhere in the Elementary Zone. You'll step on quite a few just by walking around. There are also many Black-tier spiritual herbs. Whenever you stand, there will be Black-tier herbs in your field of vision. The most precious ones are the Earth-tier spiritual herbs, and they grow in the Elementary Zone as well. As Immortal Guards, our task is to protect the Earth-tier spiritual herbs so they are not taken by immortal beasts before they ripen.”

“Immortal beasts? Brother Zhang, what are the immortal beasts like in the Immortal Realm?” Long Chen asked with a frown.

“Immortal beasts are a type of demonic beast. They are found everywhere in the Counter Essence Realm, though their strengths vary according to the zone. The Counter Essence Realm is covered in a thick mist made completely out of spiritual Qi; even a Sixth or Seventh River Stage cultivator will find it hard to see through it. However, immortal beasts can easily travel through the mist, and places where the mist is thickest are especially concentrated with them. If you encounter a place with particularly thick mist, do not enter, because it will be very dangerous. Do you know why the Elementary Zone requires Fifth River Stage Area Leaders? It's because even high-level immortal beasts are likely to appear there.”

The longer Long Chen listened to Zhang Yuanteng, the more his interest in the Counter Essence Realm grew. If that was true, then it was a place full of treasures for him. Any place with many immortal beasts would be ideal for him to use Blood Transmutation and level up, right?

“I have one more question. The Sword Devil previously said that stealing spiritual herbs from the Immortal Realm will result in a death sentence. Since there are so many herbs in there, how would anyone know?” Long Chen asked.

Zhang Yuanteng grinned. “I knew you'd ask. I'll tell you. Why are there so many people interested in becoming Immortal Guards? It's because of the benefits. As long as you don't take all of it, you can take some Yellow and Black-tier spiritual herbs, and no one will say anything. Although they are useless to you at your current stage, the other places in the Cangyang Kingdom treat Black-tier herbs as treasures!

“The imperial family isn't interested in Yellow or Black-tier herbs. However, the moment an Earth-tier one sprouts, someone will record its information. Harvesting

herbs before they mature renders them useless, but if they disappear for no reason, its absence will be easily noticed. That is why stealing Earth-tier spiritual herbs is basically suicide. Brother Long, you aren't planning to do it, are you?" Zhang Yuanteng joked.

"I'm only here to be an Immortal Guard, not to die," Long Chen responded with a smile.

He made a mental note to himself. *If there truly is a Nine Heavens Immortal Fruit in the Immortal Realm, the imperial family must have already recorded its location. If I can get my hands on the records, it will save me a lot of time searching for it.*

The question was: where would the records be?

Long Chen asked Zhang Yuanteng this question casually.

"The records are naturally with the guardian of Counter Essence Realm, Lord Sword Devil. With his strength, no one other than the Sword Emperor can infiltrate the Counter Essence Realm."

Zhang Yuanteng admired the Sword Devil.

That guy? Long Chen sighed inwardly. At his current level, getting the records from the Sword Devil would be even more difficult than flying. And so, he gave up on that idea and decided to rely on himself to find the fruit.

"Right, there's one more thing. Whenever you kill an immortal beast in the Immortal Realm, bring its immortal core back as you can turn it in for points at Counter Essence City. The points can be used to buy all kinds of things. Time to work hard, kid!" Zhang Yuanteng patted Long Chen's shoulder and laughed.

"After being a soldier for such a long time, I am finally able to make something out of myself. Now I can unleash a massacre in the Immortal Realm and earn more money, and my cultivation will grow! The Second River Stage will definitely not be my peak. In the future, even the Seventh River Stage will be possible!" As he spoke, his eyes lit up with excitement. After six years of hard work, he had finally become an Immortal Guard. It was the beginning of the rest of his life.

Zhang Yuanteng was a decent person, so he was compatible with Long Chen, even giving him a lot of essential information. Long Chen was happy to see him so happy.

"Actually, there isn't much to be happy about. We usually only encounter Category Three Earth-tier beasts or below in the Elementary Zone, and we will be guarding elementary Earth-tier spiritual herbs. The true core of the Immortal Realm is the Advanced Zone. That area is the main focus of the imperial family. The Immortal Guards there are the true elites. As long as I attain the Seventh River Stage, I can join the core team of the Immortal Guards! Then, I can truly soar high!"

How passionate ...

When Long Chen first met Zhang Yuanteng, he thought he would be a quiet person. He did not expect to find a heart that burned so brightly beneath the quiet exterior.

I hope he succeeds.

This was his dream, and Long Chen wished him well. As for himself, he knew that his goal was not as simple as attaining the Seventh River Stage and joining the core team of the Immortal Guards.

Long Chen only had one objective here at the Counter Essence Realm, which was to obtain a Nine Heavens Immortal Fruit.

Time passed. The next morning, there was a loud knock on the door. Long Chen was cultivating but had to stop because he knew that it was time to enter the Counter Essence Realm.

When he opened the door, he was met with Yu Chong's glare. There was hostility in his eyes.

"Let's go," Yu Chong said flatly, then he turned to knock loudly on Zhang Yuanteng's door. When Zhang Yuanteng was out, he walked away with a darkened expression, muttering, "I'm so unlucky; I can't believe I had to come get you two."

Long Chen and Zhang Yuanteng looked at each other and grinned.

Following Yu Tao and the others, Long Chen arrived at the calm-looking lake. It was the entrance to the Counter Essence Realm.