

Y Master 331

Chapter 331 Humiliating Oneself

Watching Ye Fan's unruffled face, everyone else, except Ye Long, was also shocked!

The Plant Essence was simply too precious, so precious that it could drive cultivators mad!

Even mercenary corps like "Adventurers" would sometimes go to all lengths, engaging in bloody battles with competing corps to obtain a piece of Plant Essence!

Ye Fan suddenly produced four pieces of Plant Essence, the shock this brought to everyone was simply indescribable!

Moreover, as far as they knew, Ye Fan was only at the Early Innate Realm. If he possessed Plant Essence, he should have consumed it early rather than saving it for the auction.

What they didn't know was that Chu Ji had given Ye Fan two pieces of Plant Essence, namely the "Five-Colored Flower" and the Fire Spirit Ginseng.

Ye Fan used the Five-Colored Flower as the main material to refine six Returning Essence Pills. Then, he planned to consume the Fire Spirit Ginseng to break through to the Innate Great Success Realm. Unfortunately, after he had finished making the pills, there was little time left, and he directly followed Chu Ji to the auction house, having no time to consume it.

"Mister A6 has offered four pieces of Plant Essence. Is there a higher bid?"

In the quiet hall, Long Yue's voice rang out again, her tone still containing some of the lingering shock and even more, envy!

In her view, whether Ye Fan owned four pieces of Plant Essence or exchanged for the Black Iron Gloves, both were enough to make others envious!

"I really didn't expect him to have four pieces of Plant Essence!"

"Yes, producing four pieces of Plant Essence all at once is something even a Supreme Strongman of the Gang Qi Realm couldn't do!"

"I thought Ye Long, with the Black Iron Fist set, could easily claim third place in the Qing bang contest, but now it seems uncertain."

"Right, although he is the Ao Xiang Organization's second-ranked genius and received key training from the Yanhuang Organization, it was already impressive that they provided three pieces of Plant Essence for him to exchange for the Black Iron Fist set."

...

As Long Yue's voice trailed off, the cultivators below gradually recovered from the shock and started whispering among themselves, their gazes shifting back and forth between Ye Fan and Ye Long.

Hearing the discussion of the crowd, as he watched Ye Fan's calm face, Ye Long felt as if he had been slapped publicly by Ye Fan, his face turning extremely unsightly, and his facial muscles were even slightly twisted!

"Four pieces of Plant Essence, once!"

On stage, Long Yue looked at Ye Long with sympathy.

As a member of the Yanhuang Organization, she had heard that Hong Lie had specifically applied for three pieces of Plant Essence to help Ye Long make a name for himself in the Qing bang contest.

Now, with Ye Fan presenting four pieces of Plant Essence, Ye Long lost his eligibility to bid!

Crack!

Hearing Long Yue's words, Ye Long was so angry his fists clenched audibly!

"Four pieces of Plant Essence, twice!"

Seeing Ye Long's nearly crazed expression, Long Yue sighed inwardly and spoke again.

The scene remained silent.

"Four pieces of Plant Essence..."

"Five pieces of Plant Essence!!"

The next moment.

Just as Long Yue was about to announce the third time, signaling the Black Iron Fist set would belong to Ye Fan, Ye Long, as if receiving a massive shock, gasped heavily and suddenly shouted.

"Uh..."

Perhaps not expecting Ye Long could produce five pieces of Plant Essence, everyone below was dumbfounded as they looked at Ye Long!

Meanwhile, Ye Fan slightly furrowed his brow.

To him, while Plant Essence was precious, even without consuming it, he could still compensate through diligent cultivation or by exchanging the Returning Essence Pills and Nirvana Pills at other auctions of the Five Great Alliances.

But...

There was only one set of Black Iron Fist!

Initially, seeing the change in Ye Long's expression, he thought securing the Black Iron Fist set was almost certain, but he hadn't expected Ye Long to offer five pieces of Plant Essence at the last moment!

Would the Yanhuang Organization provide him with five pieces of Plant Essence?

At the same time, Chu Ji, with a hint of doubt, looked at the excited Ye Long, and then turned her gaze toward Hong Lie on stage.

By the light, Chu Ji immediately noticed Hong Lie was also shocked as he stared at Ye Long.

"Do you have five pieces of Plant Essence?"

Realizing this, Chu Ji's mind raced, and she coldly asked Ye Long.

Do you?

Hearing Chu Ji's words, the cultivators below were also puzzledly looking at Ye Long.

In their eyes, the probability of the Yanhuang Organization using five precious pieces of Plant Essence to exchange for a set of Black Iron Fist for Ye Long was very low... very low...

After all, although Ye Long was a Martial Arts genius of the younger generation in the Yanhuang Organization, he was only ranked second—the top Martial Arts genius in the organization was Leng Feng, who was taken as a Direct Disciple by 'Yan'!

Moreover, given the preciousness of Plant Essence, even for Leng Feng, it would be difficult to get the Yanhuang Organization to use five pieces of Plant Essence to exchange for a High-level Magic Artifact!

In such a situation, unless Ye Long had some extraordinary encounter, obtaining Plain Essence himself, it was unlikely he could gather five pieces of Plant Essence!

If the cultivators below were merely skeptical, then Long Yue, acting as the auctioneer, was almost certain Ye Long didn't have five pieces of Plant Essence!

While confirming this, Long Yue couldn't help but remind him, "Mister A7, are you sure you want to use five pieces of Plant Essence to bid for the Black Iron Fist set?"

No response.

Ye Long looked up at Hong Lie with a pleading face like a begging dog!

In his view, given Hong Lie's status within the Yanhuang Organization, it was somewhat possible for him to apply for two more pieces of Plant Essence!

Stepping back for a moment, even if Hong Lie couldn't secure them, he could still acquire two Plant Essences from the five Great Elders of the Yanhuang Organization—he knew that all five Great Elders possessed Plant Essences!

Hmm?

Noticing Ye Long's gaze, including Ye Fan and Chu Ji, everyone seemed to realize something, and they all cast their eyes towards Hong Lie.

On the stage, Hong Lie's expression was somewhat ugly!

Although he was the captain of the Yanhuang Organization's Law Enforcement Team and a Direct Disciple of Yan, the maximum he could help Ye Long apply for was three Plant Essences!

And given the rarity of the Plant Essences, if he wanted to get them from the five Great Elders of the Yanhuang Organization, he must pay a price!

This price was something that he, ranked first below the Gang Qi Realm, was not willing to pay!

Moreover, Ye Long's action of bidding for five Plant Essences without his consent somewhat displeased him!

In the end, he saw that Ye Fan was determined to get the Black Iron Fist set. Now that Ye Long was putting all his hope on him, never mind whether he could find another two Plant Essences; if he helped Ye Long secure the Black Iron Fist set, he would completely offend Chu Ji!

If so, he should give up pursuing Chu Ji for the rest of his life!

"Xiao Long, give up!"

A few seconds later, under everyone's watchful eye, Hong Lie spoke, his tone somewhat somber.

"Mas... Master!"

Upon hearing this, Ye Long trembled, then looked at Hong Lie with a face full of reluctance.

"I told you to give up!!"

Facing Ye Long's coercive behavior, Hong Lie grew angry, suddenly shouting loudly.

Click!

Confronted with Hong Lie's roar, Ye Long was so frightened that his heart skipped a beat, and then as if all the strength had been drained from his body, he slumped powerlessly into his seat, muttering dejectedly, "I... I give up the auction."

"Bidder A7 withdraws from the auction, according to auction rules, the Black Iron Fist set will be awarded to bidder A6 for his bid of four Plant Essences," announced Long Yue.

Sensing this, Long Yue also secretly breathed a sigh of relief, then said, "Let us congratulate Mr. A6 with a round of warm applause!"

"Clap clap—"

Following Long Yue's words, applause erupted in the auction hall.

After a good ten seconds, the applause died down, and everyone's gaze once again focused on Ye Long, murmuring quietly to each other.

"In my opinion, Ye Long never had five Plant Essences to begin with!"

"Isn't that obvious? If he did, why would he need to beg Hong Lie?"

"Judging by Hong Lie's outburst just now, it seems even he couldn't produce five Plant Essences, right?"

"Really don't know what Ye Long was thinking, clearly having none but still pretending to be rich, and now he's become a laughingstock."

"Impulse is the devil; maybe he really wanted those Black Iron Fist sets too much?"

"Crunch!"

Those murmuring comments, like a series of resounding slaps on Ye Long's face, appeared as mocking faces in his vision, making him feel like a clown, with rage soaring in his heart as he clenched both fists tightly, his facial muscles completely distorted, subconsciously turning his head to look at Ye Fan!

Under the lights.

His eyes faintly reddened, filled with a sinister look, as if an Evil Ghost wished to take Ye Fan's life!

"If you can come up with six Plant Essences, I don't mind giving up the Black Iron Fist set to you," Ye Fan said with a smile, emphasizing the word "give."

Give.

Remember, just moments ago, Ye Long had also used this word, looking at Ye Fan with a victor's unique gaze, filled with mockery.

And now, in just a few minutes, Ye Fan returned those words to him exactly as they were!

"Sss~"

This stark contrast made Ye Long feel as if he had plummeted from Heaven into Hell, shivering with anger!

Seeing this, Ye Fan smiled and shifted his gaze away, ignoring Ye Long completely.

"Huff... huff... huff..."

Ye Fan's dismissive gesture further incensed Ye Long, making him resemble a completely enraged beast, seemingly ready to launch a fatal strike at Ye Fan at any moment!

"What, you want to fight over it?"

Just then, Chu Ji, sporting a seductive smile, stared at Ye Long, but the coldness in her smile was like a steel blade pressed against Ye Long's throat, scaring him to the point where he didn't dare even fart.

He had a thousand reasons to believe that if he dared to make a move on Ye Fan here, Chu Ji would absolutely obliterate him to ashes!

Stepping ten thousand steps back, even if Chu Ji didn't make a move, he had violated the auction and Yanhuang Organization's rules and would inevitably pay a heavy price!

"Master Chu misunderstood, I wanted to congratulate my cousin Ye Fan on winning the Black Iron Fist set," Ye Long struggled to adjust his emotions, squeezing out a smile uglier than crying.

"Congratulations?" Chu Ji looked at Ye Long with pity, scoffing, "Does my family's Xiao Fan even care?"

No response.

Ye Long's face squeezed tight, tighter than a virgin's thighs!

Chapter 332 Successfully Acknowledging the Master

"This auction is hereby concluded. Once again, thank you all for coming. Let's meet again next year!"

Following the closing words of the auction's chairman, Xu Chuan, the annual Huaxia Martial Arts World auction officially came to an end. Ye Long was the first to stand up and leave, moving extremely quickly.

For him, everything that happened today was a nightmare. Staying here was simply masochistic!

"Xiao Long!"

Just—

Before he could leave the auction hall, he was called to a halt by Hong Lie.

"Master."

Upon hearing the call, Ye Long subconsciously stopped in his tracks and turned his head to look at Hong Lie, completely at a loss.

"Come with me."

Hong Lie frowned at Ye Long and then strode towards Chu Ji and Ye Fan.

Whoosh!

Seeing this, Ye Long's complexion changed instantly, and then, like a defeated soldier, he followed Hong Lie with his head down and a disheartened expression.

Despite a thousand, ten thousand reluctances to see Ye Fan and Chu Ji, he dared not disobey Hong Lie's command!

"Little Chu, I didn't know Xiao Fan was also going to bid for the Black Iron Fist set, otherwise, I wouldn't have allowed Xiao Long to bid."

Soon, Hong Lie arrived in front of Chu Ji and Ye Fan with Ye Long. He first explained to Chu Ji before apologetically saying to Ye Fan in an affected manner, "Xiao Fan, I'm really sorry."

"Is it a real apology or a fake one?" Chu Ji sneered.

"Little Chu, this matter is truly a misunderstanding. If it weren't for this, I wouldn't have stopped Xiao Long from continuing to bid."

Hong Lie 'honestly' explained, then deliberately looked stern at Ye Long and scolded, "Aren't you going to apologize to Xiao Fan? Xiao Fan is your cousin, and yet you competed with him for the Black Iron Fist set. What kind of behavior is that?"

"I'm sorry, Cousin Ye Fan."

As Hong Lie's disciple, Ye Long not only knew about Hong Lie's pursuit of Chu Ji, but was also very familiar with Hong Lie's way of doing things. Seeing Hong Lie making a hypocritical apology and knowing his intentions, he had no choice but to forcefully suppress the frustration in his heart and pretend to be remorseful.

"Shouldn't an apology at least be sincere?"

Chu Ji blinked and looked at Hong Lie, slowly saying, "If you and your disciple really want to apologize, then how about compensating Xiao Fan with two Plant Essences?"

Whoosh!

Originally, for Ye Long, apologizing with such humiliation was already hard to bear. When he heard Chu Ji's words, he was so angry that his complexion changed, and he nearly passed out.

"Uh... Little Chu, it's like this, the organization gave Xiao Long three Plant Essences to bid for the Black Iron Fist set. If the bidding failed, he was supposed to return the three Plant Essences intact..."

Hong Lie lied with a troubled face. Although he fancied Chu Ji, he wasn't about to take back the Plant Essences he had secured for his disciple to give to Ye Fan, whom he disliked.

"Three Plant Essences?" Chu Ji sneered, "How come I remember your disciple bidding five Plant Essences earlier? And he seemed very confident at that time!"

"_"

Hong Lie was left speechless, his face a picture of embarrassment.

"Like master, like disciple. I see you two really are a perfect match," Chu Ji sneered, saying, "Also, Hong Lie, please stay away from me in the future. I'm not interested in you, nor do I desire you!"

"Eek~"

Hearing Chu Ji's merciless words again and sensing the cultivators around them all looking this way, even though Hong Lie was known as the top fighter below the Gang Qi Realm, he couldn't help twitching at the corner of his mouth, anger flashing in his eyes.

"Xiao Fan, let's go!"

Chu Ji completely ignored Hong Lie's anger, patted Ye Fan on the shoulder, and said.

Without a word, Ye Fan passed by Hong Lie and Ye Long as if they were air.

"Mas... Master..."

As he watched Chu Ji and Ye Fan leave, Ye Long gritted his teeth, intending to add fuel to the fire with his words.

However—

Before he could continue, he was harshly interrupted by Hong Lie, "Shut up!"

Facing Hong Lie's reprimand, Ye Long was not angry but secretly delighted, "Heh, that bitch Chu Ji has thoroughly offended Master this time. With Master's personality, even if he doesn't trouble that bitch, he will vent his anger on that bastard!"

"That bastard has offended so many powers; with his penchant for resolving conflicts with his fists, once Master gets a hold of something against him, it won't matter even if Chu Ji steps in, right?"

At the thought, Ye Long's anger and frustration dissipated, replaced by a sense of elation, as if he had eaten a Ginsengfruit, feeling ecstatic from head to toe.

"Both master and disciple are petty and vengeful, accustomed to hiding knives behind smiles. You need to be more careful in the future, best not to let them get anything on you," meanwhile, as if guessing the thoughts of Hong Lie and Ye Long, Chu Ji whispered a warning to Ye Fan.

Ye Fan smiled indifferently, "Don't worry, it won't be that easy for them to get a hold of anything on me."

"That's also true,"

Hearing Ye Fan's words, thinking of his methods in dealing with the Bai Family, Chu Ji couldn't help but laugh, "Come to think of it, even if you did fall into their hands, with Master's protective nature, they couldn't do much to you. Besides, even without Master backing you up, with your trump card, even if you slapped Ye Long to death, Hong Lie definitely wouldn't dare to let out a peep! Even Yan wouldn't say a thing!"

Ye Fan knew what Chu Ji referred to and said no more, instead, joining her to head to the auction hall's settlement area to exchange for the items they had won.

By the time Ye Fan and Chu Ji arrived at the settlement area, many cultivators had already eagerly made their way there.

Seeing Ye Fan and Chu Ji enter the settlement area, those cultivators couldn't help but direct their envious gaze towards them. The items they had won at the auction paled in comparison to Ye Fan's treasures, which were practically trash!

"Master Chu, Mr. Ye, please follow me to the VIP room for the exchange."

Quickly, under the watchful eyes of the cultivators, a worker of the auction, dressed in a cheongsam, hurriedly approached Ye Fan and Chu Ji, gave a slight bow, and made a welcoming gesture.

"Thank you."

Ye Fan thanked her with a smile, then followed her to the VIP hall with Chu Ji.

"They must be going to the VIP hall to do the exchange, right?"

"Isn't that obvious? The final item, the Black Iron Fist set, is worth all of the other auction items combined, so of course, they're heading to the VIP hall to exchange."

"It is said that Ye Fan already has the Wudang Sect's treasure, the Taiyin Xuan Sword. Now that he's gotten the Black Iron Fist set as well, owning two high-level magical artifacts, it really is a case of 'some have all the luck'..."

Watching Ye Fan and Chu Ji head towards the VIP hall, those cultivators talked with faces full of envy.

"Mr. Ye, congratulations on successfully bidding for the high-level magical artifact, the Black Iron Fist set."

In the VIP room, Long Yue, who had been waiting for a while, greeted Ye Fan and Chu Ji with a smile as they entered and then pointed to a box placed on a table nearby, saying, "That's everything you've bid for. Please check if everything is alright, and then we can proceed with the exchange."

"Alright."

Ye Fan nodded, his consciousness stirred, a flash of golden light at his brow, and his telekinesis shot out, rapidly scanning over the items on the table with the help of the Ghostly Gourd.

One item, two items, three items...

After about a dozen seconds, Ye Fan withdrew his telekinesis and said with a slight smile, "All items are accounted for without error."

"That quick?"

Long Yue was taken aback and admired the magic of magicians internally while smiling, "Then, Mr. Ye, please take out the items for the exchange."

"Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh..."

With a flip of his hand, Ye Fan took out a blue and white bottle. Upon opening the cap, three Nirvana Pills, radiating a medicinal fragrance, flew out from the bottle and miraculously floated in front of Long Yue, "These are three Nirvana Pills. Please check them."

Swish!

Long Yue's right hand waved, transforming into a phantom, and she grabbed the three Nirvana Pills, carefully sensing them before smiling, "The Nirvana Pills are verified to be correct."

"These are the three Plant Essences I've bid for previously."

Ye Fan took out the box containing the three Plant Essences he had bid on before and then took out an antique little box, saying, "Inside here is a Fire Spirit Ginseng."

"Okay."

Long Yue said, taking them with a hand and then began to carefully inspect them.

Compared to Ye Fan, Long Yue was very thorough in her inspection and incredibly slow, fearing any mistakes.

Ye Fan understood this.

The Plant Essence was a treasure that cultivators dream of, priceless, and if there were any mistakes in the transaction, even if Long Yue was a member of the Yanhuang Organization, she would not be able to bear the responsibility.

It took a full five minutes before Long Yue finished inspecting the four Plant Essences.

"Our Nirvana Pills and Returning Essence Pills were auctioned for a total of 79 billion Huaxia Coins, and the total I spent bidding for other items at the auction was 70 billion. You can transfer the remaining funds to this account," Ye Fan said, handing over Tianshan Group's bank account details to Long Yue as the Black Iron Fist set transaction was completed.

Seeing this, Chu Ji couldn't help but smile bitterly.

Initially, she had intended for Ye Fan to keep the money himself, but since Ye Fan didn't have a bank account, she had no choice but to transfer it to Tianshan Group's account.

"Today was a bountiful harvest indeed!"

A few minutes later, Chu Ji and Ye Fan arrived at the parking lot. They threw the medicinal materials for alchemy into the trunk, opened the car door, and said with full smiles, "I know you can't wait any longer. Get in the car and try on the Black Iron Fist set to see how they feel."

"Hmm."

Ye Fan nodded with a smile, got into the car, and quickly opened the box.

Click—

As the box opened, the dark Black Iron Fist set appeared before Ye Fan's eyes, with five black light spots at the joints twinkling menacingly.

Ye Fan's consciousness moved, manipulating his telekinesis to enter the Black Iron Fist set. The first thing he sensed was a high-level array set up by the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi of the Gold element.

Gold, ranking first among the Five Elements, represents unbreakability!

The Gold element's Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi possesses the utmost destructive power!

This Gold Element Array granted the Black Iron Fist set the ability to double its attack power!

The second array was set up by a combination of Fire and Water Elements of Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi.

According to the laws of nature, when hot air rises, lower temperature, cooler air flows horizontally into its place. The rising air becomes heavy and descends as it cools. Since the earth's surface is warmer, it heats the air causing it to ascend again, creating what we know as wind.

The array within the Black Iron Fist set combined these natural laws, allowing the user to generate wind during an attack through this Fire and Water Array, thus doubling the attack speed!

After carefully sensing the two arrays within the fist set, Ye Fan withdrew his telekinesis. Opening his mouth, he spat out a droplet of Life-bound Essence Blood, which transformed into a blood arrow and sprayed onto the Black Iron Fist set, immediately vanishing without a trace.

Suddenly...

Ye Fan found that he had established a special connection with the Black Iron Fist set, feeling as if it were a part of his own body!

The ritual of ownership was a success.

The Black Iron Fist set was imprinted with his life's mark!

Chapter 333 A Visit from a VIP, Revisiting the Past

"Amazing."

Seeing the Black Iron Fist set had successfully recognized its master, Ye Fan didn't delay. He quickly put it on his hands and found that the fist set had almost no weight, just a thin layer, as if it were his own skin.

"Indeed amazing."

Chu Ji, who was beside him, couldn't help but speak up in praise, "The artifact refining master from the European Union used the Gold Element Array to perfectly blend the softness of the Black Iron with the Thousand Gold Vine. It seems soft, but as soon as power is injected, the joints become as hard as iron and sharp as a knife, fully capable of clashing with swords."

"If I had used the Black Iron Fist set in my duel with Murong Sheng that day, I could have blasted him to death with just my martial arts!"

Upon hearing this, Ye Fan's consciousness stirred. He channeled his power into the Black Iron Fist set and indeed noticed that the five black light spots at the joints were dazzling and emitted a cold, intimidating light, causing palpitations. He then said with a smile,

"Let's go, let's go back and try out its power!"

Chu Ji smiled and then started the car, driving Ye Fan back to the Courtyard.

One hour later.

The Rolls-Royce Phantom Presidential Edition arrived at the entrance of the Courtyard. Ye Fan and Chu Ji got out of the car, moving the boxes of medicinal herbs from the trunk into the Courtyard.

After completing these tasks, Ye Fan walked over to a large rock in the courtyard, took out the Black Iron Fist set again, and put it on his hands.

Seeing this scene, a flicker of anticipation shone in Chu Ji's eyes.

"Hoo~"

Ye Fan took a deep breath and then... with a stir of his consciousness, streams of power erupted almost simultaneously from forty-four vital acupoints, converging together and rushing to his right fist.

"Hoo!"

As the power surged, the iron fist swung!

In the sunlight.

Ye Fan's right fist turned into a phantom as he ferociously struck the large rock. The five black light spots at the joints burst with blinding brightness, and the terrifying force poured out crazily, all of it slamming into the rock.

"Bang—"

"Crack—"

After the muffled sound, there was a crisp noise, and the man-high rock couldn't withstand the immense force, and five cracks appeared directly on it.

"So fast, so strong!"

Looking at the deep cracks, Ye Fan was thrilled. The punch he had just thrown did not use any martial arts, and its speed and power had doubled compared to his fullest punch in the past!

"High-level magical artifacts are indeed well-deserved of their reputation."

Chu Ji said wryly, "With your current strength, if you wear the Black Iron Fist set and use the 'Qi Rushes to the Sky' First Level, you would deliver an 18-fold power of a full-strength strike, nearly equal to the power strength of a Peak stage of Innate Martial Artist. And considering your unique physique, your power is stronger than a typical martial artist. In such a case, with the Black Iron Fist set, you can match an average Peak stage of Innate Martial Artist solely with martial arts!"

"Mhm."

Ye Fan nodded with a smile, yet he understood that he wasn't just on par with an average Peak stage of Innate Martial Artist, but he could completely defeat one!

Typically, the power of an Innate Great Success Martial Artist is ten times that of an Early Innate Martial Artist, the Peak stage of Innate is ten times that of Innate Great Success, and Innate Great Perfection is ten times that of the Peak stage of Innate!

Of course, there are some martial artists with strong bodies whose quality of power is higher than their peers, making their force relatively stronger.

For example, Ye Fan, although he is just an Early Innate Martial Artist, his quality of power is nearly equivalent to an Innate Great Success Martial Artist.

As a result, when he wears the Black Iron Fist set and uses the killing move 'Qi Rushes to the Sky', it is equivalent to a punch with 18 times the strength of an Innate Great Success Martial Artist, far surpassing an average Peak stage of Innate Martial Artist. Naturally, defeating an average Peak stage of Innate Martial Artist would be no difficulty!

And... that is merely Ye Fan's martial artist strength.

If one considers Ye Fan's magic cultivation, when facing an enemy, using illusion techniques, spiritual attacks, and even controlling magical artifacts in combination with close-quarters combat, it's not an overstatement to call him invincible below Innate Great Perfection. He could even vie with an Innate Great Perfection cultivator!

Hm?

Later, as Ye Fan was in silence, Chu Ji suddenly sensed a car approaching the Courtyard, with the aura of an Innate Great Perfection Stage Martial Artist coming from it!

"An Innate Great Perfection Stage Martial Artist?"

Compared to Chu Ji, Ye Fan, with his magic cultivation already at the Innate Realm, had much stronger sensing power and naturally also detected the aura of the Innate Great Perfection Stage Martial Artist.

Seconds later, under the watch of Ye Fan and Chu Ji, the car with a special license plate stopped at the entrance of the Courtyard, and a man in a black suit quickly hopped out. He swiftly opened the rear door of the car, stepped back, and bowed slightly, waiting respectfully for the person inside to alight.

"Having an Innate Great Perfection Stage Martial Artist as a bodyguard and driver, the visitor must be of no ordinary status," Ye Fan murmured in surprise as he peered through the crack of the Courtyard's main gate at this scene.

As martial arts began to flourish again, martial artists' status in society has become increasingly significant. Although Innate Great Perfection Stage Martial Artists may not have certain privileges like Gang Qi Realm Martial Artists, they are absolute experts nonetheless.

The fact that such a person would act as a bodyguard and reverently welcome the person getting out of the car was proof of the extraordinary identity of that person!

"It's not just extraordinary, but a mighty figure who could shake Huaxia with a single stomp," said Chu Ji. Despite her words, the smirk on her face and the glint in her eyes suggested she was pondering something else.

"Oh?"

Upon hearing that, Ye Fan was intrigued. He had a hunch about the identity of the visitor but was not certain; he merely stared intently at the entrance.

The next moment.

Under the gaze of Ye Fan and Chu Ji, an old man dressed in a black jacket stepped out of the Hongqi H8 sedan with the special plates.

Ye Zhen?!

Ye Fan's pupils suddenly dilated.

As the illegitimate son of Ye Wenhao, although he never returned to the Ye Family Mansion and had never met Ye Zhen, he had seen Ye Zhen's figure on TV and the Internet.

As if sensing the gaze of Ye Fan and Chu Ji, Ye Zhen smiled at them as a gesture, then turned his head and whispered to his bodyguard, "Wait for me at the door."

"Yes, Commander!"

Like the Bai Family, the Ye Family had also gathered a group of martial arts experts, but they had all been placed within the Yanhuang Organization. One of these experts was Ye Zhen's bodyguard, who bowed and received the order as soon as he heard Ye Zhen's words.

Ye Fan narrowed his eyes slightly, watching Ye Zhen who was smiling and heading toward the courtyard, his mind completely occupied with a question: What is he here for?

"May I come in?"

As if in response to Ye Fan's question, Ye Zhen smiled and glanced at Chu Ji before letting his gaze fall on Ye Fan.

Although he knew that the courtyard was under Chu Ji's control and that she was the undisputed owner, he also knew that it didn't matter what Chu Ji said, it all depended on Ye Fan's nod of approval.

Just as Ye Zhen had anticipated, as soon as he finished speaking, Chu Ji turned her gaze toward Ye Fan, leaving the decision to him.

"Fine."

Ye Fan pondered for a moment before nodding in agreement, yet he was secretly pondering the purpose of Ye Zhen's sudden visit.

Perhaps having expected Ye Fan's agreement, Ye Zhen was not surprised. He maintained his smile and confidently stepped into the courtyard, approaching Ye Fan and Chu Ji.

As one of the helmsmen of Huaxia, although Ye Zhen dealt with countless matters every day, he appeared in good health, with a rosy complexion, bright eyes, and an indomitable smile that couldn't hide the breath of a superior emitting from him, creating an unfathomable pressure.

Both Ye Fan and Chu Ji were martial arts experts with willpower far beyond ordinary people. Remaining calm and collected, they faced the unconscious authoritative presence exuded by Ye Zhen.

"Sorry, Xiao Fan, for coming unannounced. I hope you don't mind."

Soon, under the watchful eyes of Ye Fan and Chu Ji, Ye Zhen arrived in front of them and stopped. He looked at Ye Fan with a warm smile, his words lacking the authority of the Ye Family Patriarch, instead, he presented a very humble posture.

Hmm?

Ye Fan heard Ye Zhen's words and looked at his approachable smile. Chu Ji's gaze flickered, and she couldn't help thinking: One doesn't visit a temple without a cause!

"Old Ye is busy with countless affairs, with your time more precious than gold. Why would you come looking for an ordinary citizen like me?" Ye Fan responded indifferently, his words carrying traces of sarcasm.

Although he had reconciled with Ye Wenhao and internally recognized Ye Wenhao as his father, it didn't mean he acknowledged the Ye Family or Ye Zhen!

If that weren't the case, when Ye Wenhao had initially invited him on behalf of Old Master Ye to return to the Ye Family, Ye Fan had indifferently responded with a phrase: My home is in Spirit Mountain.

"Xiao Fan, I think there might be some misunderstandings between us."

Facing Ye Fan's hostility, Ye Zhen didn't care, and his smile remained unchanged. He then continued without waiting for a reply from Ye Fan, "Shall we go inside and talk?"

"Indeed, we have been impolite. Please, after you!"

Although deep down he didn't have a good impression of Ye Zhen or the entire Ye Family, when Ye Fan heard Ye Zhen's suggestion, he still made a welcoming gesture and then led the way to the main house of the courtyard.

Upon entering the main house, Ye Zhen saw Chu Ji follow them in, and his brows furrowed slightly as he hesitated to speak.

Ye Fan saw this and said, "She is my auntie. Speak whatever you want to say."

"I came to find you today for two reasons."

Ye Zhen hesitated for a moment, then went straight to the point, "First of all, I am here to apologize on behalf of the Ye Family. One is for what happened to your mother in the past, and the other is for the incident when Xiao Yan went to find you in Donghai."

"Your high status and distinguished position, your apologies, I can hardly afford to accept."

Ye Fan sneered. Although he had not witnessed how his mother was treated when she went to the Ye Family twenty years ago, he could infer from Qin Yan's high and cold demeanor she displayed in front of him.

"Sigh..."

Unable to help himself, Ye Zhen sighed, "Xiao Fan, you should know that your father has always lived in guilt over that incident from the past. And because of Xiao Yan's private trip to Donghai, your father uncharacteristically punished Xiao Yan..."

"State your second purpose." Ye Fan interrupted Ye Zhen without any courtesy.

"Xiao Fan, you are Wenhao's child. He is willing to go through fire and water for you, even willing to give up everything!"

At this point, Ye Zhen sighed softly, but his gaze was fixed on Ye Fan, "Likewise, you are also a descendant of our old Ye Family. Over the past twenty years, we have owed you far too much, but from now on, as long as you wish, the doors of the Ye Family will always be open to you, and we will do everything in our power to make up for the past—I came to see you today because I want to take you back to the old Ye Family!"

"I've said before, my home is in Spirit Mountain," Ye Fan said indifferently.

"Xiao Fan..." Ye Zhen was unwilling to give up and tried to say more.

However—

Before Ye Zhen could finish his words, Chu Ji asked with a cold laugh, "I'm very curious, how does the Ye Family intend to make amends?"

Hmm?

Maybe not expecting Chu Ji to interrupt, Ye Zhen was slightly taken aback and then asserted, "As long as Xiao Fan is willing to return to the Ye Family, whichever path he chooses, he will receive the full support of the Ye Family!"

Chapter 334 The Grudge between Two Generations - Part 1

"Are you sure?"

As Ye Zhen's resolute words fell, before Ye Fan could refuse, Chu Ji spoke again, questioning Ye Zhen.

Hmm?

Hearing Chu Ji's words, Ye Fan's expression shifted slightly, looking at her with confusion.

In his view, Chu Ji should be very clear about the decision he would make.

And... judging from Chu Ji's current tone of conversation, it seemed that as long as the Ye Family's support was strong enough, she was considering letting him return to the Ye Family.

"Certainly!"

Although he was dissatisfied with Chu Ji negotiating on behalf of Ye Fan with himself, Ye Zhen was very clear about the significance and arrangement of Ye Fan's return to the Ye Family's future. As a result, he did not express his dissatisfaction and nodded firmly, "If Xiao Fan returns to the Ye Family, he will become the one with the greatest cultivation effort among the fourth generation of the Ye Family!"

"Give us some time to consider..." Chu Ji feigned contemplation.

"Auntie!"

Ye Fan couldn't help but speak out. In his view, there were only two possibilities for Chu Ji's behavior at this point. The first was that she was really tempted, and the second was that she wanted to tease Ye Zhen in this way. To him, he had no intention of returning, and as for... teasing Ye Zhen, he felt it was meaningless.

"Since that's the case, I'll take my leave now."

Ye Zhen felt a slight joy in his heart but did not show it on his face. Instead, he stood up with a look of anticipation, "Xiao Fan, I hope the next time we meet will be at the Ye Family Mansion."

Without responding, Ye Fan just frowned and watched Chu Ji, waiting for her to give him an answer.

Seeing this, Ye Zhen chose not to stay any longer and tactfully left.

"Don't get worked up, I'm just giving you a suggestion. Ultimately, the decision is yours," said Chu Ji as soon as Ye Zhen had left the main room.

"Do you really want me to go to the Ye Family?"

Ye Fan looked at Chu Ji as if he had seen a ghost. Although he had been mentally prepared beforehand, he was still shocked to learn that Chu Ji really intended to do so.

"Yes."

Chu Ji nodded crisply.

"The Ye Family treated my mother and me so poorly back then, and Qin Yan ran to Dong Hai arrogantly, pointing at my nose and telling me to sever all ties with the Ye Family... and you actually want me to go to the Ye Family?"

After the shock subsided, Ye Fan's emotions became somewhat agitated, his tone tinged with anger, "Are you joking?"

Chu Ji did not respond, seemingly understanding Ye Fan's feelings but actually waiting for his anger to subside before having an open-hearted talk with him.

"You know me, I acknowledge Ye Wenhao as my father because I feel that he is genuinely remorseful for the past and indeed treats me as his own son, even willing to give up everything for me!"

As Ye Fan spoke, he became more agitated, "But what did the Ye Family do? Make amends? Haha... Do I care for their amends?"

"You don't care." Chu Ji gave a bitter smile.

"And you?"

Seeing Chu Ji still able to smile at this point, Ye Fan calmed down a bit. Despite her seductive allure, Chu Ji was also cunning as a fox and wouldn't aimlessly suggest he return to the Ye Family without a reason.

"I have two reasons for wanting you to return to the Ye Family, listen to me and then decide," Chu Ji sighed.

Without answering, Ye Fan gestured for Chu Ji to continue.

"First, as you said, when your mother found out she was pregnant with you, she went to the Ye Family to find Ye Wenhao, only to be met with scorn and ridicule by everyone in the Ye Family. In their eyes, your mother was just a village girl, a sparrow wanting to become a phoenix by climbing onto a branch!"

As she spoke, despite the years that had passed, Chu Ji was still indignant, feeling as if she could turn back time to accompany Ling Yun, Ye Fan's mother, to the Ye Family and slap the Ye Family members in the face.

"Crack!"

Compared to Chu Ji, Ye Fan felt even more anger, clenching his fists involuntarily, and croaked out in a hoarse voice, "If that's the case, then why are you still suggesting I go to the Ye Family?"

"Have you forgotten what Ye Zhen just said?"

Chu Ji scoffed, "He said that as long as you return to the Ye Family, no matter what path you choose, they will support you fully, and the level of support will be the greatest among the fourth-generation members of the Ye Family."

"You want me to take advantage of Ye Zhen's promise to give them a taste of their own medicine?" Ye Fan wasn't naive; he immediately grasped Chu Ji's intention.

"Exactly!"

Chu Ji's eyes sparkled as she said, "For those bastards in the Ye Family, what they least want to see is not you carving out your own niche in the world, but rather you being recognized by the Ye Family, taking over the resources that were originally theirs."

"Because, as the number one wealthy family, each of them is born with more than what ninety-nine percent of people could strive for in a lifetime. Your achievements may not be significant in their eyes. Furthermore, Ye Wenhao has done a lot for you; hence, even if you make some great accomplishment in the future, they will likely think it's Ye Wenhao helping you from behind, not your own merit!"

"In such a scenario, unless you perform a miraculous feat, they will still look down on you in their hearts and won't think they were wrong back then!"

At this point, Chu Ji's tone turned ice-cold, "And your return to the Ye Family, being fully cultivated by them, will not only let you take advantage of their resources but also allow you to vent all your resentment and fury on those bastards, seeking justice for your mother!"

Ye Fan fell silent.

Although he coveted the full cultivation of the Ye Family, he had to admit that if he was fully cultivated by the Ye Family, he could indeed slap those Ye Family members hard in the face!

"Ye Zhen keeps trying to get me to return to the Ye Family, just because of the backing of my master," Ye Fan analyzed calmly.

"They might offer me some resources to win over and please my master. But if I were to vent my resentment and anger on the other family members, I doubt they would be willing, right?"

"The master is only one aspect," Chu Ji revealed astonishingly.

"Oh?" Ye Fan was taken aback, then puzzled, "What else do I have that makes me worth their while?"

"A whetstone," Chu Ji unveiled the mystery.

"A whetstone?" Ye Fan was confused.

"The Ye Family still occupies the position of Huaxia's number one family to a large extent because that old geezer of the Ye Family is still alive. The overall quality of the Ye Family's third and fourth generations is quite inferior to the Bai Family, including your father! Of course, I'm talking about the struggle for secular power," Chu Ji said with wisdom.

"But you are different. Everything you've done in Hanghu and Dong hai proves your capabilities. If you return to the Ye Family and are cultivated with a massive amount of resources, it will inevitably lead to jealousy and even conflict with the third and fourth generations of the Ye Family. In this way, you can act as a whetstone in the hands of that old Ye geezer and Ye Zhen, honing the third and fourth generations of the Ye Family, allowing them to grow rapidly and catch up with the Bai Family and other peers before the old Ye geezer passes away."

Ye Fan was once again silent, contemplating the possibility, the more he thought about it, the more probable it seemed.

"As you said, you do not covet the cultivation from the Ye Family, but you can take this opportunity to seriously strike at the third and fourth generations of the Ye Family, especially Qin Yan and her son, Ye Wenhai and Ye Long!"

Chu Ji sneered, "In a sense, you are a double-edged sword, able to achieve the goals of both Ye Zhen and that old Ye geezer, but also able to hurt them, and make them swallow their broken teeth!"

"And the second reason?" Ye Fan changed the topic and asked.

"For your own sake, and for your master's," Chu Ji's tone became somewhat complex.

"What do you mean?" Ye Fan was somewhat baffled.

"Although you are not keen on the Ye Family's resources and cultivation, you have to admit that if the Ye Family helps, it will be much easier to erase Nanqinghong from the map of Huaxia!" Chu Ji said word by word.

Ye Fan's brow quirked, he remained silent.

When he was in Hanghu, he first killed Qiao Bazhi and the people sent by the Nanqinghong Headquarters. Then he slayed Nanqinghong Crown Prince Lin Ao Feng and the genius of Hongwu Sect, Yang Qing, effectively making bitter enemies with Nanqinghong!

And after he arrived in Dong hai, although the design of Nanqinghong to assassinate him did not succeed, it still resulted in Situ Chen leaving this world. The two parties had reached a point of life-and-death conflict!

Whether to avenge Situ Chen or to return the favor to Nanqinghong, Ye Fan was determined to eradicate Nanqinghong!

Currently, although Ye Fan had managed to suppress Nanqinghong completely on the mainland through various means with the help of Pan Jueming leading Dong hai Gang, even pushing them back to the coastal and southwestern regions, it wasn't an easy task to get rid of Nanqinghong in a short time.

As Chu Ji said, if the number one Huaxia family, the Ye Family, helped out, waving the banner of the organization, it would be much easier to eliminate Nanqinghong.

"Of course, this is just one aspect, or to be more precise, a premise," Chu Ji added when she saw Ye Fan's silence.

"The so-called premise is that if you can eradicate Nanqinghong within a short period of time, then you can spend more time and energy on Cultivation, quickly improve your strength, and fully prepare for next year's Qing bang competition, building momentum to eradicate the entire Qinghong!"

Ye Fan sighed inwardly.

A favor of a drop of water shall be repaid with a burst of spring.

An enemy gives me one knife; I return them ten!

This was his philosophy of life.

To him, because of the feud with Nanqinghong, because of the confrontation with the Bai Family, the Young Master Qinghong, Chen Feilian sent two Black Dragon Guards to assassinate him.

This event, he had never forgotten from beginning to end!

In his plan, he indeed intended to throw himself into Cultivation after eliminating Nanqinghong, striving to win the title in the Qing bang competition, not to let down Chu Xuanji, and to become a Supreme Strongman as soon as possible, then to settle accounts with Qinghong Headquarters!

"What did you mean by 'for the master'?"

After a long silence, Ye Fan recalled what Chu Ji had said earlier and couldn't help but ask.

Chapter 335 The Grudge between Two Generations - Part 2

"Before Ye Zhen came here, I had said that currently, your martial arts cultivation alone could rival that of a Peak stage of Innate Martial Artist,"

Chu Ji suddenly changed the topic, saying, "Although you are an invincible existence among martial artists of the same realm and can even kill those a realm higher, this strength alone is far from enough to secure the first place on the Qing bang!"

Moved by this, Ye Fan asked, "I heard that the current number one on the Qing bang is Bai Di, the martial arts genius from the Bai Family. What is his strength?"

"Innate Great Perfection."

Hearing the name Bai Di, Chu Ji's expression turned slightly solemn, "If nothing goes wrong, he is the absolute overlord within the Innate Great Perfection Realm, and his power could rival that of a Half-step Gang Qi realm existence!"

"That strong?"

Ye Fan was stunned, he had witnessed the battle between Ye Wenhao and Murong Gu, and he naturally knew the terror of a Half-step Gang Qi realm master—before using the mysterious and powerful 'Burning Nine Heavens,' even when executing the Sixth Level of Sky-Rushing Evil Qi at 54 times his power, Ye Wenhao had not even slightly injured Murong Gu!

Now, according to what Chu Ji said, Bai Di's power could completely rival, even surpass that of Ye Wenhao without using 'Burning Nine Heavens.' How could Ye Fan not be shocked?

"Yes."

Chu Ji nodded, "This is also what I meant before by fighting for yourself—you must improve your strength as quickly as possible if you wish to defeat Bai Di and replace him as the first on the Qing bang during the competition."

"As for your master, we must start with his enemies,"

Chu Ji's expression became somewhat complicated as she spoke, "Although our master had great cultivation talent, his wide range of interests throughout his life led him to delve into many areas, which caused him to waste his cultivation talent in his early years, so his cultivation achievements weren't particularly brilliant."

"Oh?"

While Ye Fan was well aware of Chu Xuanji's temperament, character, and abilities, he knew very little about Chu Xuanji's past, and he was stunned when Chu Ji mentioned this.

"Even though our master wasn't particularly shining in his cultivation journey in his younger years and had many enemies due to his quirky nature, his expertise in numerous fields and dual cultivation of magic and martial arts made him a formidable fighter, rarely suffering losses," continued Chu Ji.

"Among them, the two most dangerous encounters were against the Sect Leader of Ghost Sect, Wu Mu, and the infamous lone wanderer known as 'Jie Dao'."

Wu Mu?

Jie Dao?

Ye Fan's expression changed slightly upon hearing these two names.

Although he was unaware of the grudges between Wu Mu, Jie Dao, and Chu Xuanji, he knew Wu Mu, the Sect Leader of Ghost Sect, was hailed as the number one mage in Huaxia and had already entered the Gang Qi Realm, ranking sixth on the Dragon Ranking.

And... Jie Dao was also a Gang Qi realm master, ranking fourth on the Dragon Ranking!

Besides, during one of the tasks assigned by Chu Xuanji when Ye Fan was operating in the secular world, he learned that Jie Dao hailed from a martial arts family with generations of martial artists, and his ancestral saber technique was incredibly fierce.

In the 1950s and 1960s, when Huaxia was clamping down on martial artists, Jie Dao's father was tragically shot during one of these operations. On his deathbed, he entrusted Jie Dao to a life-and-death friend and changed his name to 'Jie Dao,' implying that from then on, he should no longer practice the ancestral saber technique.

Unexpectedly, Jie Dao not only did not give up practicing the saber technique but mastered it to a terrifying level. His saber skills were phenomenal—legend has it that with a saber in hand, no ghosts or gods were spared, giving him great fame in the Martial Arts World!

"You could say that Wu Mu and Jie Dao are the two greatest enemies of our master's life. They've always wanted to kill him, but they had to give up after the master's explosive growth into a Gang Qi realm Supreme Strongman who mastered both magic and martial arts," Chu Ji continued.

Ye Fan furrowed his brows and asked, "Since our master is a Gang Qi realm Supreme Strongman who has dual cultivated in magic and martial arts and ranks just below 'Yan' from the Yanhuang Organization on the Dragon Ranking, why didn't he seek revenge against Wu Mu and Jie Dao?"

"On one hand, after Wu Mu and Jie Dao learned that our master had stepped into the Gang Qi Realm in both magic and martial arts, they feared reprisal and disappeared from sight. On the other hand, 'Yan' intervened to mediate," Chu Ji explained.

"Mediated?" Ye Fan's frown deepened.

"Yes. As the Martial Arts World flourished again, the status of martial artists rose increasingly. Whether in the era of the nation-states or the current alliance era, the role of a Gang Qi realm Supreme Strongman is significant. 'Yan' did not want to see the Supreme Strongman of Huaxia killing each other and self-destructing," said Chu Ji, nodding.

"Originally, with our master's personality, even if 'Yan' intervened, he wouldn't give 'Yan' face. But Wu Mu and Jie Dao took this opportunity to back down and boasted that their grudge would be settled by the next generation!"

"Settled by the next generation?"

"Wu Mu and Jie Dao made a pact with our master that twenty years later, their respective disciples would decide the outcome in the Qing bang competition and settle the grudges! With our master's proud nature, facing their challenge, he naturally didn't fear and accepted the challenge,"

Chu Ji said and couldn't help but chuckle bitterly, "This twenty-year agreement was only known to a few Supreme Strongman at the time and wasn't widely known in the Huaxia Martial Arts World."

"If I'm not mistaken, Bai Di must be a disciple of one of these two men, and next year marks the twentieth year of the agreement, right?" Ye Fan's mind raced, and he immediately guessed something.

"Bai Di is Jie Dao's Direct Disciple, and Wu Mu has been secretly guarding the Bai Family as a Supreme Strongman. It's even said that Wu Mu advised Bai Di on spiritual and willpower cultivation. In a way, Bai Di can also be considered Wu Mu's disciple, though Wu Mu hasn't officially taken him as a disciple. His disciple is called You Ling, nicknamed Ghost, and is an Innate Mage whose exact strength is unclear," Chu Ji said sarcastically, then added, "As for the twenty-year agreement, there are still three years left. The Qing bang competition in three years is the scheduled time for the agreement between our master and them!"

Three years later!

Ye Fan clenched his fists quietly, his war intent surging!

"Emperor Bai and You Ling, though strong, will be surpassed by you in due time,"

Feeling Ye Fan's war intent, Chu Ji encouraged, "This is also why I urged you to seek the Ye Family's help to eliminate Nanqinghong as soon as possible. Of course, you haven't used the Plant Essence in your cultivation yet. Once you do, your strength will greatly increase."

Hearing Chu Ji's words again, Ye Fan fell silent.

Outsiders were unaware of why the quality and quantity of his power far exceeded those of other martial artists at the same realm, but he knew very well—he followed the cultivation method in "Nine Heavens Profound Skill," storing power in 108 vital acupoints instead of the Dantian!

This allowed the quality of his power to be ten times that of his peers at the same realm, and the quantity reached 44 times more. However, this also made his progression 45 times more difficult—only when the power seeds in 45 vital acupoints in his body were fully saturated could he step into the Innate Great Success Realm!

And when he would break through from the Innate Great Success Realm to the Peak of Innate Realm, the difficulty would increase to 72 times that of ordinary cultivators—requiring saturation of power seeds in 72 vital acupoints!

For this reason, Ye Fan was very clear that even if he used the Plant Essence, he probably could not break through the Peak of Innate Realm.

"Xiao Fan..."

Chu Ji instinctively thought Ye Fan was disheartened and tried to say something, but Ye Fan interrupted her before she could speak.

Ye Fan looked up at Chu Ji and said, "I'll listen to you and go to the Ye Family."

"Huh~"

Hearing Ye Fan's words, Chu Ji let out a sigh of relief.

In her view, Ye Fan's return to the Ye Family would not only greatly shorten the time to eliminate Nanqinghong, but would also allow Ye Fan to vent the resentment he held against the Ye Family, seek justice for his mother, and thereby further cleanse the impurities in his spirit, taking his spiritual cultivation to the next level!

This was crucial for Ye Fan's future cultivation!

"Since Emperor Bai Di Cheng can withstand half-step Gang Qi realm masters, his body must also far surpass peers of his realm, but it probably doesn't reach tenfold!"

Just as Chu Ji was quietly relieved, Ye Fan reflected on everything Chu Ji had said and thought to himself, "With his strength, even if I break through to an Innate Great Success Martial Artist, I might not be able to defeat him. And with my rate of cultivation, even if I use Plant Essence, it will be difficult to break through the Peak of Innate Realm before next year's Qing bang competition."

"Thus, what I need to focus on is improving my combat power!"

"Besides martial arts realm, combat power also includes martial arts skills and combat experience. In terms of martial arts, I possess the high-level Xuansha Fist and have mastered the first level of 'Qi Rushes to the Sky.' In terms of combat experience, I've accumulated plenty over the past two years."

"My greatest advantage lies in dual cultivation of magic and martial arts. The urgent priority now is to first transform the material for the Taiyin Xuan Sword into flying knives and practice slaying enemies with telekinetic control of the flying knives. This will not only catch my opponents off guard and become my secret weapon but will also temper my willpower, strengthen my consciousness, and improve my magic cultivation."

"Next, is to research the second level of 'Qi Rushes to the Sky.' Once mastered, I will be able to deliver punches with 18 times the power, and with the assistance of the Black Iron Fist set, it can reach 36 times the power!"

"Lastly, is to find a way to obtain the Plant Essence and break through the Innate Great Success Realm as soon as possible!"

As he thought this, Ye Fan's heart stirred, his hand flipped, and a medicine bottle holding Nirvana Pills appeared in the palm of his hand.

"Hm?"

Chu Ji noticed Ye Fan's action and was slightly surprised, "What are you doing with the Nirvana Pills?"

"There are still 10 Nirvana Pills here; take them and help me exchange them for Plant Essence. If that's not possible, they can also be exchanged for the Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures needed to manufacture Nirvana Pills," Ye Fan explained.

He had made a total of 20 Nirvana Pills, using 9 at the auction to exchange for 3 Plant Essences and selling one, leaving 10 remaining.

"Okay."

Chu Ji took the medicine bottle, hesitated for a moment, then added, "Actually, the two Plant Essences and those Heavenly Materials and Earthly Treasures I gave you earlier were from Master."

"From Master?"

Ye Fan stood rooted to the spot, his expression turning somewhat ugly.

Seeing his reaction, Chu Ji, worried that Ye Fan might misunderstand Chu Xuanji, hurriedly explained, "Don't misunderstand him. He didn't do this because he's worried you're inadequate and might embarrass him in three years. Instead, after learning you were ambushed by Duanmu with a magic artifact, he felt he hadn't fulfilled his duties as a master and was very remorseful. That's why he descended the mountain to scramble across the globe searching for Plant Essence and various Heavenly Materials and Spiritual Treasures for you..."

"I haven't misunderstood him; he has already done so much... too much..."

Upon hearing this, Ye Fan's eyes reddened, and he gently interrupted Chu Ji, "I was naive before, thinking it was only natural. But now, I feel I should do something for the old man."

"What do you want to do?" Chu Ji asked, puzzled.

"Three years is too long!"

Ye Fan closed his eyes slightly, clenched his fists, and his war intent was fierce!

Chapter 336 Tainting the Secular World

Is three years too long?

Chu Ji's charming face was full of shock upon hearing this.

Yes...

Shock!

The Qing bang competition is held every two years, and it used to be hosted in turn by the various Wu Xue Sects and Martial Arts Families, but later it was organized by the Yanhuang Organization that manages martial artists. It is the largest event in the Huaxia Martial Arts World.

Originally, Chu Ji and Chu Xuanji planned for Ye Fan to become famous in next year's Qing bang competition, but not long ago, she received some news: Emperor Bai defeated a top War General of the American Alliance!

And he did it... with just one move!

The warriors, War Generals, and War Gods of the other Five Great Alliances correspond to the three realms of the Huaxia Martial Arts World: Postnatal, Innate, and Gang Qi Realm.

Among them, cultivators from the other Five Great Alliances are further divided into Primary, Intermediate, High-Level, and Top-Level within each realm.

Therefore, a Top-Level War General is tantamount to an Innate Great Perfection Stage Martial Artist of the Huaxia Martial Arts World!

Emperor Bai single-handedly defeating a cultivator of the same level was sufficient to prove that his strength had reached an extremely terrifying extent.

This was also why Chu Ji said that Emperor Bai is the absolute overlord among those in the Innate Great Perfection Realm!

Knowing this information, she and Chu Xuanji, after brief deliberation, unanimously decided to have Ye Fan give up the Qing bang competition of next year and instead fulfill the original twenty-year agreement by participating in the competition three years later.

Now, with the knowledge of Emperor Bai's dreadful strength, Ye Fan still wanted to participate in next year's Qing bang competition—how could this not astonish Chu Ji?

"There's still half a year until the Qing bang competition. If you take three doses of Plant Essence and fully concentrate on cultivating to improve your strength, it's not impossible to defeat Emperor Bai,"

Despite being overwhelmed with shock, seeing Ye Fan's determination, Chu Ji did not discourage him but instead offered encouragement. After all, regardless of whether Ye Fan could fight Emperor Bai next year, improving his strength was certainly a good thing.

Although Ye Fan could tell from Chu Ji's facial changes that she was not confident in him, he didn't explain anything but simply nodded lightly.

"By the way, Xiao Fan, since you've decided to return to the Ye Family, let's have the Ye Family show some sincerity first," Chu Ji's mind stirred, and she reminded him upon thinking of something.

"Sincerity?" Ye Fan was puzzled.

"The so-called sincerity is having the Ye Family do something for you."

Chu Ji nodded and said, "Didn't Ye Zhen say that no matter which path you choose, the Ye Family will support you all the way? Merely speaking nicely isn't enough; they need to prove it with actions."

"What do you want the Ye Family to do as a show of sincerity?" Ye Fan couldn't help but ask.

"Aren't you planning to use the Taiyin Xuan Sword's sword body to forge a Flying Knife? This task can be entrusted to the Ye Family," explained Chu Ji.

"Does the Ye Family have an Artifact Refining Magician?"

"The Ye Family doesn't, but the Yanhuang Organization does."

Chu Ji shook her head, "The Yanhuang Organization has an Innate Great Perfection Cultivator who is proficient in Artifact Refining, named Gu le, who specifically forges Magic Artifacts for some elite members of the Yanhuang Organization. With the Ye Family's standing in Huaxia, asking Gu le to forge a Magic Artifact for you will most likely not be rejected."

"Okay."

Upon hearing what Chu Ji said, Ye Fan pondered briefly before agreeing.

Despite being confident in his strength, using the Taiyin Xuan Sword's sword body as material, the chances of successfully forging a Mid-level Magical Artifact quality Flying Knife were significant but not guaranteed.

As Gu le was an Innate Great Perfection Cultivator, only a step away from the Gang Qi Realm Cultivator, and highly skilled in Artifact Refining, using the Taiyin Xuan Sword's sword body as material, the forged Flying Knife would not only undoubtedly reach the Mid-level Magical Artifact standard, but its quality would surely exceed what he could forge himself, and there was even a chance to create the best Mid-level Magical Artifact Flying Knife!

With such prospects, there was naturally no need for Ye Fan to forge it himself.

Furthermore, as Chu Ji stated, this would also be a test to see if the Ye Family had sincerity!

Outside the courtyard, the Hongqi H8 sedan with a special license plate had already left, exiting the alley and blending into the stream of traffic, heading toward the symbol of ultimate power—the Hong Qiang Courtyard.

Would he agree?

In the back seat of the car, Ye Zhen, a man of high position, gently massaged his Taiyang point, asking himself internally.

"Buzz... Buzz..."

The answer to Ye Zhen's question was the vibrating sound of his cellphone.

Hmm?

The sudden vibration startled Ye Zhen, who instinctively glanced at the phone beside him.

Like many important figures, he had three office phones, and two cellphones, one for public use and one for private use.

The vibrating phone at this moment was his private one, known only to a handful of people.

With some perplexity, Ye Zhen picked up the phone and was startled to see an unfamiliar caller ID, with the origin of the call coming from Yanjing!

Could it be... Could it be Ye Fan's call?

Previously, when Ye Zhen left, he had specifically left his personal cellphone number, so seeing the unfamiliar incoming call, he quickly answered and tentatively asked, "Xiao Fan?"

"I can return to the Ye Family, but you must ensure that you can deliver on everything you said!" Over the phone, Ye Fan spoke plainly without beating around the bush.

"Uh..."

Ye Zhen was momentarily stunned by Ye Fan's words.

Knowing Old Master Ye's plans and that Ye Wenhao had not yet convinced Ye Fan to return to the Ye Family, and learning of Ye Fan's appearance in Yanjing to attend the Martial Arts World's annual auction, he immediately had someone find out Ye Fan's whereabouts and then took the initiative to visit him in person, inviting Ye Fan to return home!

Although he had lowered his stance significantly and shown considerable sincerity, he was not sure whether Ye Fan would agree to return to the Ye Family.

After all, Ye Fan had once firmly refused the proposal to return to the Ye Family!

"Xiao... Xiao Fan, rest assured, my word is my bond!"

Following his surprise, Ye Zhen quickly responded, his tone unusually excited--once Ye Fan returned to the Ye Family, the scheme that Old Master Ye had laid out would be completely set in motion.

According to Old Master Ye's plans, once Ye Fan came back to the Ye Family, many of the Ye Family's young masters would see Ye Fan as a thorn in their side—a whetstone indeed!

Moreover, with Ye Fan's abilities, he could indeed bring all sorts of trouble and setbacks to the Bai Family!

What's more, once Ye Fan returned to the Ye Family, they could use the Ye Family as a bridge to get to know Chu Xuanji!

In many people's eyes, Chu Xuanji was a Supreme Strongman second on the Dragon Ranking and a savior-like Divine Doctor known for his reclusive nature, someone whose influence in both the Martial Arts World and the secular world could be disregarded.

But Ye Zhen was different!

As the Ye Family Patriarch and one of Huaxia's power peak giants, he was well aware that due to Chu Xuanji's savior contribution, the high echelons of Huaxia and even those of the Five Great Alliances would show Chu Xuanji respect.

Even more, he knew that Chu Xuanji had not initiated the worldly intervention, but it was the leader of the Yanhuang Organization, 'Yan', who had personally requested him!

Although he was unaware of what terms Yan used to persuade Chu Xuanji, he believed that when the power transition in Huaxia occurred, as long as Chu Xuanji requested Yan to cast that precious vote for the Ye Family's candidate, Yan would definitely not refuse.

And if the Ye Family's future actions satisfied Ye Fan and dispelled the resentment in his heart, then through Ye Fan, they could get Chu Xuanji to step up and make Yan take the Ye Family's side!

"To prove your sincerity, you'll need to do something for me." Sensing the excitement in Ye Zhen's tone, Ye Fan had a clear insight but did not expose it. Instead, he put forth a condition.

Perhaps not expecting Ye Fan to set a condition so quickly, Ye Zhen was a bit taken aback: "What is it?"

"Have the Yanhuang Organization's Gushan forge six Flying Knives in the name of the Ye Family."

Ye Fan stated firmly: "I will provide the materials for the Flying Knives, and they must be guaranteed to reach the level of Mid-level Magical Artifacts!"

"No problem, I'll have someone come to get the materials from you in a bit!"

Ye Zhen, due to his identity, had some understanding of the Martial Arts World, and because of his status, he already had work interactions with Yan of the Yanhuang Organization. Although asking Yan to instruct his subordinates to refine a Mid-level Magical Artifact for Ye Fan was not quite appropriate, it was still possible to accomplish.

Hearing Ye Zhen's answer, Ye Fan did not waste any more words and hung up the phone.

"Beep... Beep..."

Realizing that Ye Fan had hung up the phone first, Ye Zhen was not angry but instead wore a smile of joy. He did not delay and immediately dialed Yan's private number.

"Hello, Ye XX." As the call connected, Yan's voice came through first, deep and oppressive.

"Hello, Director Yan."

In the face of Yan's indifference, Ye Zhen was not bothered. On one hand, although Yan held only a director's title, he was one of the most powerful individuals in Huaxia, and his status was on par with his own. On the other hand, as Huaxia's number one strongman, Yan always maintained an indifferent attitude towards everyone.

"What can I do for you, Ye XX?" Yan asked bluntly.

"I have a small favor to ask Director Yan."

Knowing that Yan was a man who did not like to beat around the bush, Ye Zhen got straight to the point:
"I would like to ask Director Yan to have your subordinate, Gushan, forge six Flying Knives for Ye Fan."

"Forge Flying Knives for Ye Fan?" Yan asked with rare surprise.

"Yes, according to Xiao Fan, he will provide the materials for the knives, and the requirement is that the forged Flying Knives must be Mid-level Magical Artifacts!" Ye Zhen confirmed.

"Alright."

Upon Ye Zhen's confirmation, Yan straightforwardly agreed, but he was puzzled internally: Has Xuanji's disciple returned to the Ye Family?

"I'll have someone deliver the material for forging the knives then. Thank you, Director Yan." Ye Zhen breathed a sigh of relief and said with a smile.

"Mhm."

Yan responded with a grunt, and then said, "Ye XX, I have some matters to attend to. If there's nothing else, I'll leave it at that."

"Alright."

Ye Zhen replied with a smile and then hung up the phone. After thinking it over, he decided not to call Old Master Ye but instead chose to report this matter to Old Master Ye in person.

Meanwhile, Yan put away his phone and stood by the window like a steel spear, gazing in the direction of Spirit Mountain.

"Xuanji, why have you suddenly involved yourself in worldly affairs?"

It was unclear how much time had passed before Yan withdrew his gaze, deep in thought.

Chapter 337 Storm is Coming

Yanjing West Mountain is an offshoot of Taihang Mountain, historically known as "the Head of Taihang Mountain" and also called Little Qingliang Mountain. It towers like a dragon or python, arching protectively over Yanjing City from the west, and ancient people referred to it as "the Divine Capital's Right Arm."

In the early days of the national era, the offices of several prominent figures were located in West Mountain. Over time, these figures gradually moved to the Hong Qiang Courtyard, and West Mountain slowly turned into a base for military brass.

After the era of alliances began, the Yanhuang Organization set up its headquarters outside the Hong Qiang Courtyard, with its base in West Mountain.

This also indirectly confirmed the status of the Yanhuang Organization—it had not been established for long but had already become Huaxia's strongest force for security alongside the police, armed police, and military!

At dawn, the sun slowly rose, and the morning light poured down, making the winding Taihang Mountain look like a lively red dragon from a distance.

Yanhuang Organization Yanjing Training Base.

Several members of the Yanhuang Organization sat cross-legged on a small square on the east side of the base, meditating under the morning light.

If a magician were present, they could have seen at a glance that the small square was arranged with a "Nine Star Gathering Spirit Array." The array operated by burning essence stones to harness energy,

incessantly drawing the heaven and earth primordial Qi from above West Mountain, which the members of the Yanhuang Organization absorbed.

For them, if they had no missions on hand, they generally remained at the base to practice cultivation.

This cultivation included meditation, martial arts practice, live combat drills, and mastering certain skills required by military special forces.

Superb super soldiers!

This was what the Huaxia higher-ups demanded of them!

Guardians of Huaxia.

This was how the other Five Great Alliances praised them.

Just as the American Alliance's 'Superpower Alliance' was also known as the guardians of the American Alliance.

As the second-ranked genius of the younger generation of the Yanhuang Organization, Ye Long, aside from receiving resources and treatment far exceeding other young members, was treated the same in all other respects.

When not on a mission, he, too, had to return to the base for cultivation and was strictly forbidden to leave the base unless there were special circumstances. Even leaving required strict adherence to the "Confidentiality Regulations," with breaches being treated as treason.

Once the morning sun fully rose, the meditation session ended, and the Yanhuang Organization members opened their eyes one after another and stood up.

"Report, instructor, I request to leave the base for four hours," said Ye Long, stepping forward from the crowd, saluting the instructor, and making his request.

"What's the matter?" the instructor asked.

Ye Long replied, "Report, instructor, I need to go to headquarters to request Elder Gushan of the Resource Hall to refine a magic artifact for me."

"Approved, remember to return on time!"

Upon hearing this, the instructor promptly granted the leave.

"Yes!"

Ye Long responded loudly, then lowered his arm and strode away from the cultivation square.

"I heard that the organization originally provided Ye Long with three plant essences for him to bid on the Black Iron Fist set at the auction, but he failed," said one member.

"True, and I heard that the person who got the Black Iron Fist set is called Ye Fan, Ye Long's cousin," another added.

"A cooked duck got away, Ye Long really has bad luck."

"Better luck than us, though."

"Yes, although he did not get the Black Iron Fist set, having Master Gushan refine a magic artifact personally for him still means it's definitely a top-grade mid-level magical artifact, while we don't even get a chance to have Master Gushan make one for us."

...

On the cultivation square, those Yanhuang Organization members watched Ye Long's retreating figure and discussed among themselves with varying emotions—some gloating, some envious and resentful, and some sympathetic, each harboring their own schemes.

"Hmph, even if that bastard has the Black Iron Fist set, so what? With the top-grade mid-level magical artifact Elder Gushan is making for me, I can still thrash him like a dog!"

As a Peak stage of Innate Martial Artist, Ye Long's hearing was far superior to ordinary people. Hearing his companions' comments, he secretly clenched his fists, appearing disdainful, but actually, it was sour grapes.

Forty minutes later.

Ye Long drove to the Yanhuang Organization headquarters just outside the Hong Qiang Courtyard.

Like many important institutions, the Yanhuang Organization's headquarters building was constructed impressively and also subtly incorporated Feng Shui and formations, enriching the primordial Qi at the rooftop.

Driving into the courtyard of the Yanhuang Organization headquarters, Ye Long jumped out of the car, walked into the building, and took the elevator to the eighteenth floor of the Resource Hall.

The so-called Resource Hall essentially combines the roles of the military's equipment and logistics departments, providing the members of the Yanhuang Organization with resources for cultivation and equipment needed for missions, but it included elements of the Martial Arts World, hence being called a Hall.

A few minutes later, Ye Long unobstructedly reached the office door of the elder of the Resource Hall and gently knocked on the door.

"Come in."

Soon, an elusive voice sounded as if from the farthest reaches of heaven, yet it clearly resonated in Ye Long's ears.

Creak!

Ye Long pushed open the door and was greeted by a spacious office, which, aside from having the usual office facilities, only contained two sets of bookcases filled with various old, ancient books.

Click—

As Ye Long stepped into the office, a sudden thud sounded in the quiet office, and the north wall transformed into a hidden door that slowly opened.

Seeing this, Ye Long didn't hesitate and immediately walked towards the hidden door.

Unlike the bright office, the area beyond the hidden door was dimly lit, seemingly endless, and ominously chilling.

"Woo woo~"

Before Ye Long even entered, the sound of howling yin wind could be heard.

Although he knew that the Artifact Refining Room in Elder Gushan's care was filled with yin energy, Ye Long's face still slightly changed when he suddenly heard the howling of the yin wind, and then, steeling himself, he walked into the Dark Sect.

Inside the Dark Sect was a hall about half the size of a soccer field, with an ancient stove placed in the middle and various strange and ancient Artifact Refining Materials arranged around it.

In the dim space, Elder Gushan, wearing a black robe, was sitting cross-legged in front of the stove. The stove emitted greenish flames, illuminating Elder Gushan's wrinkled face, giving him an appearance like an Evil Ghost arriving in the mortal world at first glance.

"Elder Gu."

Feeling the pervasive yin energy in the refining room and seeing Elder Gushan's frightful face, Ye Long bowed respectfully and his expression was filled with awe.

Ye Long's reverence was partly due to Elder Gushan's identity as a Magician.

The Magician School mainly divided into Manipulation Stream and Illusion Technique Stream. The former used strong spiritual power to manipulate Magical Artifacts for combat, while the latter specialized in using Magic and Formation to create illusions that silently destroyed the opponent's consciousness.

As the second-ranked genius among the younger generation of the Yanhuang Organization, Ye Long was well aware that Elder Gushan, like the Sect Leader of the Ghost Sect, Wu Mu, specialized in the Illusion Technique Stream of magic, adept at using Evil Yin Qi to create illusions to defeat his enemies.

Moreover, Ye Long knew that Elder Gushan also utilized the yin energy from the Heaven and Earth Primordial Qi to induce Yin Fire while crafting Magical Artifacts.

This was why the flames in the stove were green.

On the other hand, his awe was also because of Elder Gushan's status as an elder.

Although the Yanhuang Organization was headed by Huaxia's strongest, Yan, due to his frequent meditative cultivations, Yan rarely intervened in the organization's affairs, distributing his power among the five Great Elders, only appearing during major events.

Under such circumstances, the power of the Yanhuang Organization's five Great Elders was tremendously significant, akin to the heads of the four major military departments.

"Originally, I was to refine a set of fistwraps for you, but I received a last-minute order from the leader to craft six Flying Knives for someone else. You'll have to come back in a few days." Elder Gushan spoke

expressionlessly while simultaneously controlling the Formation to prevent the Yin Fire from damaging the materials.

"Elder Gu, has the organization recruited a new Magician?" Hearing Elder Gushan's words, Ye Long looked puzzled.

Apart from Elder Gushan and a handful of other Magicians, all other members of the Yanhuang Organization practiced 'Yanhuang Fist', a martial arts created by Yan.

Among those Magicians, only one was an Early Innate Mage and could not possibly use Mind Power to manipulate Flying Knives in combat.

Thus, it was impossible for Elder Gushan to be refining Flying Knives for those few Magicians in the organization, leaving only the possibility that he was creating them for a new Magician!

"I am crafting Flying Knives for Ye Fan." Elder Gushan shook his head.

Ye Fan?!

Hearing this name, Ye Long was as if he had heard the most incredible thing in the world, instantly widening his eyes and staring unbelievably at Elder Gushan!

Shocked.

Ye Long was completely stunned!

Because... Ye Fan was not a member of the Yanhuang Organization and had no right to have Elder Gushan craft Magical Artifacts for him!

Moreover, in Ye Long's view, even if Ye Fan managed to have Elder Gushan craft a Magical Artifact through special channels, he shouldn't have been prioritized over him!

After all, he was the second-ranked genius among the younger generation of the Yanhuang Organization!

The Yanhuang Organization's full-fledged martial arts genius next only to the top-ranked genius Leng Feng!!

"Elder Gu... how come you are crafting a Magical Artifact for him?"

After several seconds, Ye Long barely recovered from the shock and asked in disbelief.

"The leader said it was your Ye Family who requested it." Upon hearing this, Elder Gushan raised an eyebrow: "What? You didn't know about this?"

"Elder Gu, I wasn't aware of this." Ye Long was startled again and swiftly his eyes sparkled, seemingly pondering why the Ye Family would commission the Yanhuang Organization to craft a Magical Artifact for Ye Fan.

"Alright, the critical moment in the crafting process is coming, I need to focus fully on the refinement now. Leave the materials and go." Elder Gushan, unaware of Ye Long's thoughts, was constantly monitoring the stove. Seeing that the sword body of the Taiyin Xuan Sword in the stove was gradually melting, he coldly issued an expulsion order.

"Yes, Elder Gu!"

Although Ye Long was dissatisfied, he still obediently left the materials and turned to leave.

"Damn it! It must be Ye Wenhao who approached the leader and had Elder Gushan craft a Magical Artifact for that bastard Ye Fan!"

Upon leaving Elder Gushan's office, Ye Long subjectively speculated, feeling extremely angry, with his hatred for Ye Fan rising sharply, as though if Ye Fan appeared before him, he would tear him to shreds.

Meanwhile, Ye Fan was unaware of all this.

In the courtyard where Chu Ji resided, Ye Fan received a call from Ye Wenhao.

"Xiao Fan, thank you."

On the other end of the phone, Ye Wenhao, having heard of Ye Fan's return to the Ye Family, subconsciously thought it was because of him and was overjoyed. Along with the joy, he was also moved.

"Dad, I..."

Seeming to guess Ye Wenhao's thoughts, Ye Fan felt a bit awkward, trying to explain something.

"Xiao Fan, no need to say anything else, I know your thoughts."

Perhaps due to the overwhelming joy, Ye Wenhao interrupted Ye Fan, laughing and saying, "On New Year's Day, it's your great-grandfather's 110th birthday, and there will be a birthday party at the Ye Family Mansion. I will rush back to Yanjing and go with you."

"Okay."

Ye Fan hesitated briefly before agreeing, and at the same time, he quietly clenched his fists, narrowing his eyes slightly: Is the storm coming?

Chapter 338 Undercurrents Surging

The Ye Family would hold a 110th birthday celebration for Old Master Ye on New Year's Day.

After Christmas, this news spread like wildfire through the upper echelons of Huaxia society.

For a time, all the powerful circles in Huaxia were abuzz with discussion, with those elites who counted in the Forbidden City checking the news's accuracy through various channels, only to learn that Old Master Ye's birthday party was to be limited to the Ye Family members and no outsiders would be invited.

This left some elites who hoped to use this opportunity to curry favor with the Ye Family feeling powerless.

For them, if Old Master Ye's birthday party had been open to outsiders, then even if they were not qualified to attend in person, they could still send their congratulations through someone who could.

However, now that Old Master Ye's birthday party had turned into an internal gathering for the Ye Family, they had no way to send gifts even if they wanted to.

Two days before New Year's Day, Bai Guotao, the helmsman of the Nanling Region, took the opportunity of attending a meeting in Yanjing City and returned to the equally exclusive Bai Family Mansion in the evening.

"Dad, it seems Old Sir Ye doesn't have any serious health problems; there likely won't be any surprises in the next couple of years,"

Inside the study of the Courtyard, Bai Guotao sat opposite Bai Yuan, the helmsman of the Bai Family. After some idle chatter, Bai Guotao couldn't help but sigh.

As the future successor of the Bai Family, he paid great attention to every move of the Ye Family; not only did he know about the birthday party for Old Master Ye, but he also understood what it meant for the Ye Family.

Just as he said, Old Master Ye had no significant health issues; otherwise, they wouldn't have made such a fuss about a birthday party.

For aristocratic families, the status of the family is often directly proportional to the health of the family elders: the longer the elders live, the more the family thrives.

As long as Old Master Ye was alive, the Bai Family could forget about overtaking the Ye Family's position as the number one aristocratic family!

"That's not necessarily the case,"

Seeing Bai Guotao's slightly dejected mood, Bai Yuan replied with a smile to reassure him.

"Dad, what do you mean?" Bai Guotao was initially stunned, then asked with a hint of confusion.

"First, Old Ye is over a hundred years old, essentially reaching the limit of a common person's lifespan. No one can guarantee how much longer he will live. Maybe he has another decade or so, or maybe he'll pass away in a few days,"

As Bai Yuan spoke, he intentionally paused, then with a gleam in his eye, he calmly analyzed, "Secondly, just because the Ye Family is hosting a birthday party for Old Ye doesn't necessarily prove that Old Ye is in good health..."

"You mean, it's possible that Old Ye's health is failing, and the Ye Family, taking advantage of the breath he still has, deliberately planned the birthday party on the pretext of celebrating his birthday, to give outsiders the illusion that Old Ye is in robust health, thereby influencing some people's decisions?"

"Exactly, to put it simply, it's creating momentum, making use of the last of Old Ye's influence. To put it more complicatedly, it's like the ruse of the empty city used by Zhuge Liang back in the day, appearing strong outwardly while weak inside," Bai Yuan said, looking at Bai Guotao with approval.

"Now that you mention it, that's quite possible. Otherwise, why would Ye Wenhao step in for his son to face the challenge of the Great Elder of the Wudang Sect not long ago and, instead of being punished or criticized by the authorities, he advanced even further by removing the 'acting' designation and took complete control of Jiangnan,"

Bai Guotao, hearing this, had a thought, suddenly recalling the recent event where Ye Wenhao became the top leader of Jiangnan.

It was known that when Ye Wenhao was parachuted into Jiangnan, he did so as the deputy leader.

Although after his arrival, the top leader became physically unfit and Ye Wenhao essentially took charge, leading many directly to refer to him as 'Secretary,' he was, on the surface, still the deputy.

Latterly, with the top leader hospitalized for treatment, Ye Wenhao became the acting 'Secretary' and governor in charge, until recently, after he eliminated Murong Gu, the Great Elder of the Wudang Sect, and the 'acting' title was removed. His rapid rise could almost be described as supersonic, causing quite a stir within the system.

"Hmm, during the meeting when this was discussed, several people raised their hands to approve immediately; Old Ye might indeed have exerted his influence behind the scenes,"

Bai Yuan smiled knowingly, "If Old Ye were in good health, he wouldn't need to hurry like this, right? After all, the next conference is still over two years away."

This time, Bai Guotao chose silence.

Under the lamplight, his eyes shone with expectation, veiling deep aspirations.

"Guotao, it's still the same message for you; right now, don't think about anything else, just focus on doing your job well. If something major happens in the Ye Family, your rise to the top is almost certain. Even if Old Ye manages to live until then, you still may not lose," Bai Yuan said with solemn emphasis.

"With that bastard from the Ye Family around, Bai Guotao has no interest in politics. I think it would be hard even to lose!"

Speaking of Ye Fan, Bai Guotao's face showed a cold smile, his eyes flashing with an icy light, wishing he could send Ye Fan straight to Hell to vent the rage for his son!

To this day, the once unbridled Young Master Bai was still confined to the Yanhuang Organization East Sea Branch's secret prison, out of sight of the sun!

Chapter 339 Undercurrents Surge_2

"Dinglingling..."

Ye Wenhai didn't know how long it had been when he put down the third red-headed document, the telephone in the study began to ring.

Upon hearing the ringtone, Ye Wenhai extinguished his cigarette and picked up the phone, "Hello."

"Dad, it's me." Ye Long's voice came through the handset.

"What made you think to call home?"

Ye Wenhai was slightly startled, as due to the special nature of Ye Long's work, not to mention his rare visits home throughout the seasons, the chances for even a phone call were few.

"Dad, I might not be able to return for Old Master Ye's birthday."

On the other end of the call, Ye Long quickly said as he dodged the members of Yanhuang Organization's Punishment Hall who were monitoring his call.

"Work is important, I believe your grandfather will understand," Ye Wenhai said after a moment of contemplation, then added, "However, if you can come back, try your best to do so."

"I understand."

Ye Long immediately grasped the meaning behind Ye Wenhai's words. Members of the fourth generation of the Ye family normally only showed their faces to Old Master Ye during the New Year's celebrations. The birthday gathering for Old Master Ye that the Ye family was organizing was a rare opportunity to make an appearance, and one surely had to find a way to be seen.

After all, a single word from Old Master Ye could very likely determine, change the fates of the Ye family members in the future!

"Is there anything else?"

Perceiving that his son had understood his intention, Ye Wenhai didn't add anything superfluous but decided to end the call.

Upon hearing this, Ye Long hurriedly revealed the purpose of his call, "Dad, I'm calling to tell you, if I can't return for grandpa's birthday gathering, could you perhaps speak a few words on my behalf in front of grandfather, and even Old Master Ye."

"What?" Ye Wenhai asked.

"A few days ago, I went to Elder Gu of the Resource Hall to forge a Magic Artifact, only to find out that Ye Wenhao had, under the guise of the Ye family, commissioned Elder Gu to craft a Magic Artifact for Ye Fan. This is just too much!" Ye Long complained with some frustration, "If we continue with Ye Wenhao's way, we genuine Ye family's young masters won't even match the treatment of an outsider's mongrel!"

"What... What?"

Ye Wenhai was startled upon hearing this!

He was not aware of the secret agreement between Ye Fan and Ye Zhen, and naturally, he did not know about the Magic Artifact that Yan had commissioned for Ye Fan. He instinctively took Ye Long's speculation for fact.

At once, Ye Wenhai's expression turned stern.

As the second candidate to succeed the third generation of the Ye family, his position was awkward and delicate. There were many things he couldn't say.

For example, matters concerning Ye Wenhao were taboo to him. He never brought them up proactively, nor would he voice any opinion even when others did.

"What's more important is that mongrel is manipulating the Dong hai Gang behind the scenes; deeply involved in criminal activities. Ye Wenhao's actions will only aid a tyrant causing harm, eventually bringing an unpredictable impact on our Ye family!" Noticing that Ye Wenhai was silent, Ye Long added fuel to the fire with his words.

"Xiao Long, it's okay to talk about this in front of me, but you must never mention it to outsiders,"

Ye Wenhai was silent for a long while before he finally spoke, "As for what you've said, I believe your grandfather and your Old Master Ye have their own understanding, it's unnecessary for us to remind them."

"Understood."

Although Ye Long was resentful, he could only comply with Ye Wenhai's directions with frustration.

At the same time.

In Yanjing, within a single-family villa in an upscale residential area.

After returning home from work, Qin Yan ate some snacks casually and sat alone in the living room, lost in thought.

After an indeterminate amount of time, Qin Yan thought of the Ye family's gathering and picked up the phone, dialing Ye Wenhao's private mobile number.

"Wenhao, for grandpa's birthday gathering, are you coming back on the day itself or the day before?" As soon as the call connected, Qin Yan took the initiative to ask, her tone much gentler than before.

In fact, ever since the last time she was slapped to the ground by Ye Wenhao in Dong hai, Qin Yan had become much more submissive when facing him, and didn't dare to act as she once did.

"You can take Xiao Cang there, I'll go by myself," Ye Wenhao answered, not quite addressing her question.

"I... I and Xiao Cang go?"

Qin Yan was taken aback at his response. To her memory, whenever it was the New Year or Old Master Ye's birthday, all members of the Ye family would always attend together.

"Beep... Beep..."

There was no answer, Ye Wenhao had hung up the phone, leaving a busy tone coming from the receiver.

Whoosh!

Qin Yan's face changed, and she wanted to redial, but on second thought, she gave up the idea and let the phone fall onto the sofa.

Just then.

Accompanied by a light sound, the living room door opened, and a young man dressed in branded clothes, styling trendy, walked into the hall.

"Young Master."

Seeing this, the nanny immediately approached and bent down to offer the young man his slippers.

"Why are you coming back so late?"

The originally sullen Qin Yan noticed her son Ye Cang's return and, looking at her wristwatch, asked him angrily.

"I was chatting with classmates after school, what are you so worked up about?" Ye Cang frowned at Qin Yan, completely indifferent to her anger.

Qin Yan leapt up from the sofa "whoosh," trembling with anger, she interrogated him like a firing machine gun, "Worked up? How can I not be? Tell me, why don't you wear a school uniform like the other students? Are you special? And, I heard from Aunt Huang that you've been coming home late recently. What are you out doing all day long?"

"You can go months without coming home, my dad returns once in a few months, what am I supposed to do at home alone? Stare at the walls?" Ye Cang retorted sharply.

"You..."

Qin Yan was so angry she was at a loss for words, then took a deep breath and continued to question, "Fine, then let me ask you, the principal told me you're not studying properly at school and leading a group of prodigal young masters around bullying others, what's that all about?"

"Bullying others?"

Hearing Qin Yan's words, Ye Cang not only didn't feel remorse, but he sarcastically remarked, "Compared to that bastard, I must seem like a good boy, right? I've heard that relying on my dad's protection, that bastard is acting like a king without a crown in the Southern Half Country! They even say he is some underground godfather from Dong hai, laughable!"

"Why don't you learn from the good ones?" Qin Yan shouted angrily, seemingly seeing Ye Fan as the epitome of scum.

"The more that bastard stirs up trouble, the more my dad cares about him, to the point where even you can't handle him when you go to Dong hai. Why should I be the good boy who hardly ever gets a glance from my dad?" As he finished, Ye Cang clenched his fists, his face filled with anger, and his frustration could not be concealed.

"..."

Qin Yan had no response.

Compared to her son Ye Cang, Qin Yan's own frustrations were just as deep, if not deeper.

That day, she went to Dong hai, high and mighty, to scold Ye Fan and tried to make him leave Ye Wenhao and the Ye Family; not only was she threatened with death by Chu Ji, but she was also slapped to the ground by Ye Wenhao afterward, the humiliation was extreme.

However—

What she could never have dreamed was that neither Ye Zhen nor Old Master Ye blamed Ye Wenhao or Ye Fan; incomprehensibly, they even wanted Ye Fan to return to the Ye Family!

And... the Ye Family's resources were all at Ye Fan's disposal!!

Even though Ye Fan rejected Old Master Ye's invitation that day, Qin Yan knew very well that Ye Fan meant more than just a mere illegitimate child to the Ye elders; rather, he held significant weight in their hearts!

All of this, Qin Yan could not comprehend, but she dared not ask about the reasons and could only follow Old Master Ye's instructions to never speak of that day's events, as if they had never happened.

And... just now, when she called Ye Wenhao to ask when he would return to Yanjing so they could attend Old Master Ye's birthday gathering together, Ye Wenhao instructed her to bring her son Ye Cang instead...

All of these events, could they not make Qin Yan, as a Ye Family daughter-in-law, feel stifled?

"Ssss~"

Moments later, just as Ye Cang was about to head to the staircase, Qin Yan took a deep breath, looked at his retreating back, and reminded him sternly, "You've been hanging around with those prodigal young masters this past year, often bullying others with your power, even doing some over-the-line things—the rules of the Ye Family are not unknown to you. If you break them, nobody can protect you!"

Whoosh!

Ye Cang, upon hearing this, seemed to recall something, his expression slightly changed, but he pretended to hear nothing and went upstairs without looking back.

Seeing this, Qin Yan wanted to remind Ye Cang again not to provoke Ye Fan, but on second thought, she felt it was futile and gave up.

Chapter 340 Intentionally Keeping Secrets

Time flowed like a river, and three days passed in the blink of an eye.

"Eh, why aren't you practicing with the Flying Knife today?"

After breakfast, Chu Ji saw that Ye Fan wasn't heading out to the courtyard to practice with the flying dagger like he had on previous days, and she couldn't help but be curious.

In the past few days, besides cultivation, Ye Fan practiced every day without fail, engaging in meditation at night and practicing with the flying knife and the 'Qi Rushes to the Sky' martial arts technique during the day, almost as if possessed.

"Give me the Jade Beads," Ye Fan replied, seemingly off-topic.

Chu Ji heard this and took out two Jade Beads, each about the size of a walnut, gleaming with a white luster as if white light circulated within them, clearly of fine quality.

"Due to the limitation of the materials, these two Jade Beads can at best only be refined into low-level magic artifacts. Are you planning to make magic artifacts for your little lovers?" Chu Ji handed over the Jade Beads to Ye Fan, asking with a smile.

"No," Ye Fan said with a wry smile as he shook his head.

"Could it be... you're preparing a birthday gift for that old fogey from the Ye family?"

Seeing Ye Fan shake his head, Chu Ji suddenly thought about Ye Fan attending the Ye family gathering with Ye Wenhao that night and asked with a touch of shock and suspicion.

Obviously... she did not believe that Ye Fan would give the Old Master Ye a birthday gift.

After all, Ye Fan's return to the Ye family was not genuine; it was more like a transaction, or rather, a strategic play.

"Hmm."

Under Chu Ji's gaze, Ye Fan nodded lightly.

"Uh..."

Chu Ji was so surprised that she was left speechless, completely dumbfounded.

"You... you aren't feverish, are you?"

Even though Ye Fan had nodded in confirmation, Chu Ji still couldn't believe it. She stepped forward and touched Ye Fan's forehead.

Ye Fan let out a light sigh, his expression complex, "Although I don't have much affection for that old man, showing up empty-handed would embarrass my father."

"I see."

Understanding Ye Fan's explanation, Chu Ji suddenly realized and then bitterly laughed, "Ye Wenhao is really fortunate to have a son like you; it's the blessing of his eight lifetimes."

Ye Fan smiled but remained silent, focusing instead on channeling Pure Yang Qi into the two jade beads.

Swish!

After a moment, when he sensed that the Jade Beads could not store any more Pure Yang Qi, Ye Fan placed them on the coffee table and quickly formed a seal with his hands, triggering the magic technique to completely store the Pure Yang Qi within the two Jade Beads.

"A pair of Jade Beads imbued with Pure Yang Qi, though they can't even be considered low-level magic artifacts, are priceless treasures for ordinary people. Not only can they prevent entry of Evil Yin Qi into the body, but they also have the effect of warming and nourishing the body, serving as a cure-all," Chu Ji said with a bitter smile, watching Ye Fan's actions, "Let's hope that old geezer from the Ye family recognizes the value."

Ye Fan smiled, placing the two Jade Beads, now filled with Pure Yang Qi, into the antique-looking box he had prepared earlier.

After finishing all this, just as Ye Fan was about to head to the courtyard to practice with the flying knife, he suddenly felt his phone vibrate in his pocket.

Hmm?

Moved by curiosity, Ye Fan took out his phone and saw that it was a call from Ye Wenhao, which he then answered.

"Xiao Fan, something urgent came up on my side, and I can only get to Yanjing at six in the afternoon. I won't have time to come to you first; meet me directly at the airport exit, and we'll head there together."

As soon as the call connected, Ye Wenhao spoke first, his tone tinged with helplessness. Originally, he had planned to take a midday flight back to Yanjing to pick up Ye Fan and Chu Ji and then head to the Ye Family Mansion together. Now, due to an unexpected matter, he had to change his plans.

"Alright."

Ye Fan was not bothered by the change and readily agreed.

At four o'clock, Ye Fan drove Chu Ji's Rolls-Royce Phantom Presidential Edition away from the Courtyard, heading straight for the airport.

Despite the New Year's holiday, Yanjing's traffic was still severe. By the time Ye Fan reached the airport exit, it was already five thirty. He silently thanked himself for heeding Chu Ji's advice to head to the airport two hours early, otherwise, he definitely wouldn't have made it in time to meet Ye Wenhao.

After parking the car in the parking lot, Ye Fan swiftly got out and walked briskly into the airport terminal, making his way toward the arrival gates.

As Ye Fan was about to reach the arrival gates, with less than twenty minutes to go before the plane's landing, the gates were crowded with people waiting to pick someone up, many of them holding signs.

Hmm?

Suddenly, Ye Fan sensed a Martial Artist's presence and immediately looked in the direction of its source.

What appeared in Ye Fan's field of vision was a woman.

She was a short-haired woman with a round face, high nose bridge, and phoenix eyes, her skin a wheatish tone. She was dressed in an expensive and fitting business suit.

The woman stood out among the crowd, almost as if she were a crane among chickens, drawing the gaze of many men and women around her. But oddly, there was not a single person within a five-meter radius with her as the center.

Seeing this, Ye Fan was not surprised.

The woman standing in the crowd was Xu Jing, the assistant to Qin Yan, a detached Martial Artist.

Previously, when Qin Yan went to Dong Hai to find Ye Fan, she had Xu Jing go to the Tan Palace Villa to 'invite' Ye Fan.

Swish!

A moment later, before Ye Fan could look away, Xu Jing sensed something and her gaze shot towards Ye Fan like a knife.

"Is... is that him?"

Upon seeing Ye Fan's familiar face, Xu Jing's pupils dilated with shock, her composed demeanor filled with astonishment, as if she had encountered a ghost in broad daylight.

"Your sensing power is quite strong," Ye Fan thought to himself.

Seeing the shock on Xu Jing's face, Ye Fan didn't ponder why she was here and quickly averted his gaze.

"Could it be that Secretary Ye arranged for him to pick someone up at the airport?"

Xu Jing also withdrew her gaze, but her peripheral vision remained locked on Ye Fan, silently speculating.

As Mr. Qin's assistant, not only did she have a notable combat power to ensure his safety, but her work capability was also quite exceptional.

She was well aware that if Ye Fan really was sent by Ye Wenhao to pick someone up at the airport, then it was very possible that Ye Wenhao would take Ye Fan back to the Ye Family for the gathering!

Thinking of this, Xu Jing's expression changed, and she quickly took out her phone, walked to the side, and dialed Qin Yan's number, "Mr. Qin, I bumped into Ye Fan at the airport corridor, and he seems to be here to pick up Secretary Ye."

"What... What?"

On the other end of the phone, Qin Yan, who had already arrived at the Ye Family Mansion, stood up from her seat in shock upon hearing this.

Shortly after, paying no mind to the puzzled looks of the other Ye Family members, Qin Yan held her phone and quickly walked out of the room into a quiet corner of the courtyard, her tone grave, "Keep a close eye on him, and report to me immediately if anything happens!"

"Yes, Mr. Qin!"

Xu Jing respectfully acknowledged the order and waited for Qin Yan to hang up before putting away her phone.

After doing all this, Xu Jing glanced at Ye Fan guiltily, as if she were a thief, but noticed that Ye Fan gave her a slight smile.

Thump!

This discovery made her realize that Ye Fan had seen her talking to Qin Yan, sending an involuntary shudder through her heart as she guiltily averted her gaze.

"These two old foxes are really cunning. To turn me into a proper whetstone, they didn't even disclose the information about my return for the gathering."

Thinking of Xu Jing's recent conversation with Qin Yan, Ye Fan immediately guessed why Old Master Ye and Ye Zhen had done this, frowning slightly.

At six o'clock, the flight from Hanghu landed on time at the airport, and after three minutes of taxiing, it stopped at the designated gate.

The cabin door opened, and Ye Wenhao, who was seated in first class, stood up first and began walking down the aisle while pulling out his phone to call Ye Fan, "Xiao Fan, I've deplaned. Have you arrived?"

"I'm waiting at the exit."

Ye Fan replied and glance over to see Xu Jing sweeping her gaze in this direction. After a moment's thought, he decided not to tell Ye Wenhao about Xu Jing coming to the airport.

Yanjing Airport is the second largest in Huaxia, second only to Dong hai Pudong Airport, and it took Ye Wenhao a full ten minutes to reach the exit.

As an Innate Great Perfection Stage Martial Artist, Ye Wenhao's sensing power was exceptionally strong. Even before getting close, he was keenly aware of both Ye Fan and Xu Jing's presence.

He glanced at Xu Jing instinctively, his brow raising slightly.

Xu Jing, seeing this, had a bad premonition.

As if to confirm Xu Jing's feelings, Ye Wenhao treated her as if she was air and walked straight towards Ye Fan.

Observing this, Xu Jing thought for a moment and then quickly walked towards where Ye Fan was.

"Who asked you to come?"

Before Xu Jing could get close, Ye Wenhao stopped, turned his head, and asked her with a cold voice.

"Mr. Qin... Mr. Qin asked me to pick you up."

Xu Jing's heart skipped a beat. That afternoon, when she dropped Qin Yan and Ye Cang off at the Ye Family Mansion, Ye Wenhao had just called Ye Zhen saying he would only arrive in Yanjing at six. Learning this, Qin Yan took the initiative to ask Xu Jing to pick up Ye Wenhao from the airport.

"You may go back. I'll ride with Xiao Fan."

Hearing this, Ye Wenhao's frown deepened, his tone leaving no room for doubt.

"Yes."

Xu Jing bowed in acquiescence, turned around, but instead of heading out of the airport, she quickly walked into the airport restroom and dialed Qin Yan's number again.

"What's the situation?"

On the other end, Qin Yan had been waiting for Xu Jing's call. As soon as the phone rang, she answered immediately, eager to hear the update.

"Mr. Qin, Secretary Ye said he will ride with Ye Fan." Xu Jing's tone was serious. "If nothing goes wrong, he will take Ye Fan to the Ye Family Mansion."

"Uh..."

Although Qin Yan had considered the possibility that Ye Wenhao might take Ye Fan to the Ye Family gathering after learning that Ye Fan had gone to pick someone up, she was still startled upon hearing Xu Jing's report.

Under the setting sun, she stood in the courtyard as if an immobilization spell had been cast upon her, motionless.

Meanwhile, Ye Wenhao saw Xu Jing entering the restroom and guessed that she was calling Qin Yan, his expression becoming slightly displeased.

Perceiving the change in Ye Wenhao's demeanor, Ye Fan thought for a moment and said, "Besides the two elders, I think no one else knows I'm attending the gathering."

"They don't know?"

Ye Wenhao paused, surprised by the news. He had followed Ye Zhen's instructions to have Ye Fan attend Old Master Ye's birthday gathering, never once suspecting that the matter had been kept confidential.

Ye Fan nodded in confirmation.

"What's going on?"

Ye Wenhao's brows furrowed instantly.

As the chosen successor of the third generation of the Ye Family, Ye Wenhao was raised in the home of emperors and had spent many years navigating the bureaucratic arena. His emotional intelligence was far beyond average—his rational mind told him something was very wrong with this situation!