

Chapter 261: Life Exchange

Time trickled bit by bit. It was almost noon and Su Zimo had yet to come out of his secret chamber.

The merchant was getting impatient as he paced around the courtyard endlessly, frowning with a grim expression.

At this moment, he felt a sense of regret in his mind.

From his point of view, the reason why Su Zimo did not appear for such a long time must be because the weapon refinement had failed.

Two years of rent was equivalent to 6,000 superior-grade spirit stones. That was equivalent to two superior-grade spirit weapons.

Coupled with the one he had just customized, he had made a loss of three superior-grade spirit weapons!

“Just for the sake of getting acquainted with a Weapon Refinement Master, I threw in three superior-grade spirit weapons. What a loss!” The merchant was frustrated internally.

Afternoon.

Su Zimo finally came forth from his secret chamber, looking visibly fatigued – it seemed to have drained him significantly.

When the merchant saw this, he was even more certain of his speculation.

“Fellow Daoist, where’s my superior-grade spirit weapon?” The merchant approached with a fake smile.

Su Zimo shook his head. “I didn’t refine a superior-grade spirit weapon...”

True enough!

The merchant retracted his smile and his face darkened. Without waiting for Su Zimo to continue, he interrupted, “Fellow Daoist Mo, the two years of rental that I did not collect from you along with the loss I made for this superior-grade spirit weapon... let’s talk about compensation!”

“Compensation?”

Su Zimo furrowed his brows, gradually realizing what was happening. A look of mockery flashed in his eyes and he asked, “Does that mean that you don’t want this supreme-grade spirit weapon then?”

“Ow?”

“Supreme-grade spirit weapon?”

The merchant was stunned, wondering if he had heard wrongly.

Nian Qi’s beautiful eyes were widened in disbelief as well.

Su Zimo flicked his palm open and a fresh flying sword laid calmly, exactly the way the merchant had specified.

He injected spirit energy into it and a bedazzling spirit light shone from the sword!

Four rays of spirit patterns flashed consecutively, almost blinding the merchant!

“F-Four spirit patterns?”

The merchant was so frightened that he fell to the ground on his butt, remarking with a trembling voice as his jaws dropped.

“A supreme-grade spirit weapon!”

After a long time, an ear-piercing shriek echoed in every corner of the residence.

The merchant’s eyes shone with excitement. He was so emotional that he wanted to grab the supreme-grade flying sword right away. However, he was embarrassed and was at a loss.

It was no wonder why the merchant lost his composure.

Golden Cores had a lifespan of 500 years.

Typically, with the passage of time, Golden Cores would deepen in their cultivations and accumulate more resources, eventually obtaining one or two superior-grade spirit weapons.

However, other than the top factions of Tianhuang Mainland, most Golden Cores might not even obtain a single supreme-grade spirit weapon in their entire lives!

“Fellow Daoist Mo, Sir Mo...!”

The merchant said with a fawning smile, “You’re the best Weapon Refinement Master, please don’t stoop to my level. I was only spouting nonsense just now, please don’t take it for real.”

Even though the merchant was a Golden Core, the moment Su Zimo could refine superior-grade or even supreme-grade spirit weapons, their statuses were already reversed.

“Take it.”

After making the most critical step of progress on his weapon tempering technique, Su Zimo was in a great mood and could not be bothered to get calculative with this person.

“Sir Mo, this residence belongs to you from this day forth. Feel free to live as you please,” The merchant was smiling so widely it was about to bloom as he took over the supreme-grade flying sword.

His residence could only sell 100,000 superior-grade spirit stones at most.

However, a supreme-grade spirit weapon cost 500,000 superior-grade spirit stones at least!

No matter how he looked at it, this transaction was a huge gain for him – the light had shone at the end of the tunnel!

With high spirits, the merchant left Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop.

On that very day, an earth-shaking piece of news spread throughout the capital quickly!

From today on, Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop would no longer refine superior-grade spirit weapons. Instead, they would customize supreme-grade spirit weapons!

What did it mean by customizing supreme-grade spirit weapons?

It meant that Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop was extremely confident that they could refine supreme-grade spirit weapons!

Throughout history, there had never been Weapon Refinement Masters who would dare to boast of such a thing!

Of course, the rules of customizing supreme-grade spirit weapons in Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop were very different from previous rules.

First, Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop would only customize a single supreme-grade spirit weapon each month.

It would not open for business at all other times.

Second, at the start of each month, Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop would conduct an auction and the highest bidder would obtain the chance to customize a supreme-grade spirit weapon for the month.

Third, the cultivators would have to prepare 30 sets of materials for the supreme-grade spirit weapon.

When the news spread, the capital exploded instantly!

Many Golden Cores experts appeared one after another, exiting from their seclusions in a bid to head to Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop.

The allure of a supreme-grade spirit weapon was too great for Golden Cores but there was no market for it.

Given Su Zimo's capabilities, he only needed one set of materials to refine a supreme-grade spirit weapon every afternoon.

With that, he could refine 30 supreme-grade spirit weapons in a month!

That was a terrifying figure!

If all of them were placed in the market, it would cause a huge stir and might even cause many troubles. As a result, the price of supreme-grade spirit weapons would drop as well.

Therefore, Su Zimo thought up another method.

To outsiders, he would only refine a single supreme-grade spirit weapon each month.

However, in reality, Su Zimo would make use of the 30 sets of materials to refine a supreme-grade spirit weapon daily and continue to raise his weapon refinement technique.

...

That night, two Golden Cores arrived at True Fire Weapon Workshop, looking travel-worn with frost on their faces.

Both Golden Cores were old with white beards and hair with wrinkles on their faces. Their eyes were turbid and exuded an aged aura.

“Meng Han, Liang Qiu. Please come in, fellow Daoists.”

Elder Zhang went forward and quickly welcomed them into the back hall.

“Elder Zhang. It’s been many years since we last met. How have you been?” Meng Han nodded and cupped his fists.

“Hais.”

Elder Zhang shook his head and gave a long sigh.

Liang Qiu said, “Don’t worry, Elder Zhang. Our purpose for this trip is to resolve this matter for the sect. You can rest assured.”

“That’s right. The two of us don’t have much lifespan left. Rather than dying of old age, we might as well give our lives to fight this guy in exchange for the glory of True Fire Sect,” A vicious glint shone in Meng Han’s eyes.

For the past year and a half, True Fire Weapon Workshop has been enduring.

However, when news of Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop being able to customize supreme-grade spirit weapons spread, Elder Zhang could no longer sit still.

The influence of Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop was growing.

If it was allowed to develop further, it would not only affect the business of True Fire Weapon Workshop. Even True Fire Sect’s reputation would be damaged severely!

True Fire Sect sent two Golden Cores to the capital right away.

The two of them were Liang Qiu and Meng Han.

True Fire Sect’s plan was clear – to exchange lives!

In the Great Zhou’s capital, there were three great guard squads, Scarlet Vulture, Azure Falcon and White Hawk. The commanders of those squads were all Golden Core experts!

The three guard squads patrolled the streets day and night in shifts and security was tight.

Any activity would lead to the guards’ instant arrival.

Liang Qiu and Meng Han were aiming to kill Mo Ling in his weapon workshop before the guard squads arrived!

This was an assassination attempt of no return, exchanging their lives for his!

Of course, if not for the fact that Liang Qiu and Meng Han were at the end of their lifespans, they would not do something like this.

Chapter 262: Ten Breaths

Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop.

Su Zimo assumed a lotus position in his room, using the breathing and expiration method of the Organs Refinement section while refining the essence energy of the dragon egg in his body.

With each breath and expiration, a strong demonic qi would be released from Su Zimo's mouth and nose, permeating through the room and morphing into various beasts.

Some spread their wings and soared into the skies while others raised their heads and roared. All of them had different forms and were divinely extraordinary!

Su Zimo sat silently in the middle of the thousands of beasts, motionless as he exuded a terrifying aura that was above all life, sending chills down one's spine.

It was late at night and Nian Qi had already fallen asleep in her room, leaving only Night Spirit beside Su Zimo.

All of a sudden!

Su Zimo jolted awake from his cultivation and opened his eyes, causing two cold lights to shine momentarily in the night.

He felt a strong sense of trepidation!

Almost at the same time, Night Spirit also sensed something and stood up.

Su Zimo narrowed his eyes.

There seemed to be nothing different in the courtyard.

If not for his spirit perception, Su Zimo would not have been able to sense that danger was already so close to them!

Someone had managed to scale the wall and land into the courtyard while evading Su Zimo's sight and hearing. The fact that it was so silent was evident of the other party's strength.

Jishui River was still flowing and gushing.

Everything seemed normal, but Su Zimo vaguely caught a trace of abnormality amid the sound of running water!

There were experts approaching both in front and behind of them!

If Su Zimo was not wrong, the people arriving should be Golden Cores!

...

Liang Qiu and Meng Han did not dare to be careless and had already made their plans in True Fire Weapon Workshop.

To ensure that nothing went wrong, the two of them split up.

One of them would scale the wall through while the other would infiltrate Jishui River and flow down!

At almost the same time, both Golden Cores that were close to the end of their lifespans entered the residence and headed towards Su Zimo's room.

Until now, the two of them had yet to use any spirit energy.

The moment they did, especially when they were fighting, the capital guards would definitely be alerted!

The sooner they alerted the capital guards, the less time they had remaining.

All of a sudden!

A faint sight came from within the room.

"You're finally here..."

Upon hearing that, Liang Qiu and Meng Han's expressions changed.

Right after, a dazzling brilliance shone beneath their feet.

The light of an array formation!

There was an array formation carved outside the room!

The light of the formation was like a torch that shot into the sky, adding a killing intent to the vast darkness.

Tonight, it was Azure Falcon's turn to patrol.

Every single Azure Falcon guard had an Azure Falcon demon beast as a companion, hence the name.

Every single Azure Falcon was a Foundation Establishment spirit demon that was extraordinary and powerful. When they flapped their wings and released their full power, their speeds were extremely fast.

All the Azure Falcon guards patrolling the streets of the capital caught sight of the formation light beam.

"Look at the light of that formation. It should be a Grade 2 formation."

"Yes, but from the way the light is so multifarious, it's possible that there are two or more formations fused together."

The Azure Falcon guards discussed as they sped towards the origin of the formation beam.

"What direction is it coming from?"

"Eh? Judging from the location... it seems to be Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop?"

"Oh no, Mr. Mo is in trouble!"

Many of the Azure Falcon guards' expressions changed drastically as they charged forward. One of them even took out a green badge from his storage bag and tossed it into the air.

Arriving at the highest point, the badge exploded silently, forming a gigantic Azure Falcon.

The Azure Falcon Badge!

One would only use the Azure Falcon Badge if something extremely important happened!

For the past two years, the most famous person with the biggest influence in the capital would have to be the owner of Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop, Weapon Refinement Master Mo Ling.

Now, even for their discussions and gossip, people referred to him as Mr. Mo out of respect.

The sole fact that he was able to customize supreme-grade spirit weapons was enough to confer Mo Ling the title of the number one Weapon Refinement Master in the Great Zhou Dynasty!

In the capital, be it early-stage or late-stage Golden Cores, it was their honor to be able to meet Mr. Mo.

Almost at the same time, a green figure leaped into the air and sped towards Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop like lightning.

...

The moment the formation light shone, Meng Han and Liang Qiu felt their hearts sink.

It was only a Grade 2 formation and was not enough to trap the both of them.

However, the two of them had already alerted the capital guards before they even caught sight of the legendary Mo Ling. That was equivalent to losing the initiative and they were now in a passive position given the complete change in circumstances.

Ten breaths!

If the Commander of the Azure Falcon guards, Mu Dongqing, used all his strength to rush here, he would only require ten breaths worth of time.

This meant that Liang Qiu and Meng Han had to find Mo Ling and kill him on the spot within that ten breaths!

Otherwise, after ten breaths, once the Commander of the Azure Falcon guards arrive, they would be the dead ones.

“Ten breaths is more than enough time!”

Liang Qiu hollered as he conjured hand seals with his left hand, conjuring spirit arts.

His right sleeve trembled and a flying sword darted out. Almost instantly, three spirit patterns lit up on the sword – it was a superior-grade spirit weapon!

Boom!

With a loud bang, the Grade 2 formation’s barrier shattered on the spot and dissipated, revealing a green-robed cultivator at the back. He was handsome and bore a calm expression as he looked over coldly.

At the same time, Meng Han slapped his storage bag and waved both hands, shooting out two cold beams of light.

Spirit patterns lit up in a dazzling manner.

Two superior-grade flying swords!

“Go to hell!”

Meng Han’s flying sword pierced towards the green-robed cultivator like two beams of light. Before the swords even arrived, the temperature of the surroundings dipped in a suffocating manner.

By now, a breath had passed.

Everyone knew of the situation.

There were only two men and one beast in Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop and the green-robed cultivator in front of them was obviously not the little girl named Nian Qi – his identity was exposed!

In reality, the moment they caught sight of Su Zimo, Liang Qiu and Meng Han were slightly stunned.

They had never expected that Mr. Mo, the so-called number one Weapon Refinement Master in the Great Zhou Dynasty, would be a young man in his twenties.

Furthermore, the young man was only at Foundation Establishment.

But very quickly, Liang Qiu and Meng Han regained their senses as a look of mockery flashed across their eyes.

To both of them, Su Zimo was already a dead man.

Under the combined forces of two Golden Cores, notwithstanding the fact that Su Zimo was only at late-stage Foundation Establishment, even if he was a meridian cultivator, he would not be able to last more than ten breaths!

Meng Han’s two flying swords pierced towards Su Zimo at an extremely fast speed.

Su Zimo did not dodge at all, seemingly scared silly or couldn’t react in time.

“It’s over.”

Liang Qiu and Meng Han glared at Su Zimo coldly, as if they could visualize the image of the latter’s head pierced by the flying swords with fresh blood gushing out.

Snap!

The next moment, the sound of shattering on the battlefield caused their expressions to change.

He was not dead?

The flying sword did not pierce Su Zimo and instead struck another barrier of light!

There were other array formations other than the Grade 2 formation!

This was a chain formation!

Two breaths had passed.

Chapter 263: Perilous Situation

In Liang Qiu and Meng Han's eyes, Su Zimo was standing not far away, seemingly within reach.

But in reality, there were dozens of Grade 2 formations standing between them.

A year ago, on the night when Night Spirit killed the Shadow Rat, Su Zimo had already realized that someone in the capital wanted his life!

In fact, there might even be Golden Cores sent to assassinate him in the future!

The gap between Foundation Establishment and Golden Core realm was way too great.

Even if Su Zimo was both an immortal and demon cultivator, he would not be able to face a Golden Core head on with the full release of his power of blood qi.

Once a Golden Core arrives, Su Zimo would definitely die!

However, this was the capital of Great Zhou after all.

What Su Zimo wanted to do was not to confront the Golden Cores head on, but to stall for time!

As long as he could last for the short period of time and wait for the capital guards to arrive, the assassination attempt by the Golden Cores would be for naught!

For this day, Su Zimo set up many Grade 2 formations outside, linked and interconnected. Even if the people caught were Golden Cores, they would not be able to dispel the formations in a short period of time.

There were dozens of illusion, trapping and killing formations combined together. While they were all Grade 2 formations, those were the peaks of Grade 2 formations!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Liang Qiu and Meng Han continued to release their spirit arts. Light shone in the night skies as the sounds of array formations shattering rang out.

In the blink of an eye, another two breaths had passed.

Four breaths had passed since the two of them were exposed.

However, the two of them were still trapped in the formations, unable to charge out.

"Hmm?"

Sensing the urgency of time, Meng Han's expression changed slightly as he coldly asked, "Just how many formations did this person set up?"

Both of them had destroyed at least ten formations within two breaths of time but they were still not out of the area!

If this continued, they would die within the formations without even seeing Su Zimo himself.

Liang Qiu took out a talisman from his storage bag and injected spirit energy into it with a vicious glint in his eyes.

Swoosh!

The talisman floated in midair as three dazzling spirit patterns sparkled on it, exuding a domineeringly strong force that intensified!

A Grade 3 talisman!

Su Zimo's heart skipped a beat.

The aura emitted by that Grade 3 talisman was more terrifying than Liang Qiu and Meng Han's combined attacks!

Even his body would be penetrated instantly if he was struck by the power of that talisman directly.

The talisman was crushed.

Boom!

With a deafening boom, the ground in Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop shook vigorously.

The stone slabs cracked, the earth rumbled and the house shook like it could collapse at any moment as dust clouds puffed all over.

The core of the shattered talisman let out a bedazzling light akin to the sun descending as a destructive force rippled in all directions!

Initially, there were around thirty odd Grade 2 formations left surrounding Liang Qiu and Meng Han.

Since they did not know anything about formations, they had to rely on brute force to break through the formations and ten breaths was sufficient for them to deal with everything.

However, even if they could dispel the formations, their mission would be a failure.

Time was of the essence.

Therefore, Liang Qiu had no choice but to take out that Grade 3 talisman.

That was his most powerful offensive technique and he had traded for it with almost all his life savings – that was also his final trump card.

After the talisman was shattered, the terrifying strength demolished all the thirty odd Grade 2 formations in an instant.

There were still five breaths of time left.

The moment the formations were shattered, Night Spirit moved.

A black shadow darted by, indistinguishable to the naked eye under the guise of the night and arriving almost instantaneously in front of Liang Qiu.

Ten sharp claws silently reached out from the gaps of the palm. Long, sharp and slightly curved, they were like ten huge hooks that shone with a cold glint!

It would be almost impossible for one to break free if they were struck with claws like that!

Night Spirit's pair of front claws grabbed Liang Qiu's shoulders while its rear claws struck Liang Qiu's ribs. At the same time, it opened its mouth and bit at Liang Qiu's neck viciously.

While it was a simple movement, it had almost rendered Liang Qiu's entire body sealed!

Once his shoulders were locked, it was equivalent to his arms being crippled. The rear claws that pierced the ribs not only penetrated Liang Qiu's organs, Night Spirit could even change stances to counter Liang Qiu's legs at any moment.

It was not over yet.

Night Spirit's spear-like tail shimmered with a dark light and was already stabbing towards Liang Qiu's dantian in silence!

Every single Golden Core Perfected Being's strongest method was to self-destruct their Golden Cores.

The self-destruction of a Golden Core would instantly release a terrifying power that could even kill cultivators of the same level!

Of course, once they chose that option, the self-destructing Golden Core would definitely perish with nothing remaining.

Therefore, no Golden Cores would choose to self-destruct until the very last moment.

In fact, many Golden Cores would choose not to self-destruct even until the moment they died.

Not everyone had the courage to self-destruct.

By piercing Liang Qiu's dantian with its tail, Night Spirit was ensuring that Liang Qiu would not even have the chance to self-destruct!

He had no way of retreating!

Night Spirit's attack was perfect and flawless – every single detail pushed the limits of killing!

Such brilliant techniques were usually honed through countless bloodshed and battles where one experienced close shaves with death.

However, Night Spirit was an exception.

No one taught it those things.

It was as if everything was infused in his bones and were deeply rooted; an innate ability that was inherited from his bloodline.

Liang Qiu could tell of the lethality in Night Spirit's killing attack and was alarmed as an uncontrollable trace of panic flashed past his eyes.

However, he was a Golden Core after all!

Furthermore, he was a Golden Core that had lived for almost 500 years! He had seen and experienced far too many battles in his lifetime!

With a speed inferior to Night Spirit's, if Liang Qiu chose to dodge instinctively at this moment, he was bound to die!

He repressed the panic in his heart and touched his storage bag with a calm expression. Instantly, a protection talisman appeared in his hand that he crushed.

Whoosh!

A barrier appeared on Liang Qiu's body that illuminated extremely brightly and burst forth with a shocking amount of energy.

Almost all of Night Spirit's killing moves were deflected by the protection talisman.

At the same time, Night Spirit's body was repelled by the power of the protection talisman.

Liang Qiu broke out in cold sweat.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The light barrier cracked and dimmed.

Even though he was unharmed, Night Spirit's attack had cost him a Grade 3 protection talisman just like that!

However, the Grade 3 talisman extended Liang Qiu's life, allowing him to catch his breath.

"B*stard, how dare you!"

Liang Qiu was furious as he activated his Golden Core, causing pure spirit energy to channel from it. Conjuring a seal with his left hand, he waved his right hand and pierced at Night Spirit's head with an immense sword qi.

The moment Night Spirit missed its attack, it had already realized that things were not looking good.

Pshew!

A cold light flashed. Because the distance between them was too close, coupled with the fact that Liang Qiu had expended all his might in a moment of anger, the flying sword appeared almost instantly!

Night Spirit turned its head with all its might, avoiding lethal damage as a stream of blood shone.

A wound deep enough to reveal bones appeared on Night Spirit's cheek as blood dripped everywhere.

In fact, given Liang Qiu's strength as a Golden Core, even if Night Spirit had avoided damage to its vital points, the sword qi from the flying sword should have been enough to slice Night Spirit's head into half!

However, the pitch-black scales on Night Spirit's cheek blocked most of the damage from the sword qi, allowing it to survive.

In just a single exchange of blows, things were already in a perilous situation!

If either the man or the beast had dealt with things wrongly with any bit of hesitation, one party would have died on the spot!

Chapter 264: Killing Golden Cores

No matter what, the difference in strength between both sides was obvious.

Night Spirit was still in its childhood phase and could only be considered as a Foundation Establishment spirit demon.

Even though Liang Qiu was an old man past his prime, he was still a Golden Core after all!

Furthermore, the flying sword was only his first attack.

The moment he struck with the sword, Liang Qiu conjured a spirit seal with his left hand, forming a huge fire spear. It emitted an extremely scorching heat that burned the surrounding air, producing crackling sounds!

“B*stard, die!”

Liang Qiu let out a roar and revealed a sinister smile.

The distance between the two was extremely close. In addition, Night Spirit had just avoided Liang Qiu’s flying sword and its body was still hovering in midair, dealing with the resultant force. Therefore, it was incapable of dodging the new attack at all.

Once it was hit by the spirit art of a Golden Core, even with its pitch-black scales as protection, Night Spirit would probably suffer a serious injury!

That was the essence of melee combat – extremely dangerous, victory was often determined in a single instance!

With the stark change of circumstances, Night Spirit’s attack that missed caused it to lose the initiative and end up falling into a huge crisis!

On the other end, Meng Han began attacking Su Zimo as well.

Pshew! Pshew!

The sound of sharp blades tearing through the air was piercing and chilling.

Streaking through the night skies, the two sword beams arrived before Su Zimo almost in the blink of an eye!

Meng Han did not underestimate Su Zimo just because the latter was a Foundation Establishment Cultivator.

He was using his full might even as a lion that was fighting against a rabbit!

The two flying swords arrived one after another, trapping Su Zimo in the middle and cutting off his retreat route.

After the formations were dispelled, Su Zimo and Night Spirit were completely revealed before the two Golden Cores without any chance of getting through things with luck.

If they wanted to survive, they had to rely on their abilities!

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When Meng Han struck, Su Zimo did not view the attack with his eyes.

That was because he knew that Golden Cores were too fast – by the time he saw the flying swords approach, it would be too late for him to dodge.

Su Zimo was relying on spirit perception entirely!

The cicada senses autumn coming before the wind even starts to blow.

The moment Meng Han's two flying swords struck out, Su Zimo lowered his body and sprawled on the ground instantly. Using his limbs, he charged forward in an extremely fast speed like an agile python!

Meng Han frowned when the flying swords missed.

Clearly, he had not expected that Su Zimo would have such a move.

Su Zimo stuck close to the ground and traveled with a calm expression, emitting a profound light in his eyes as if he was targeting a prey!

Almost at the same time.

On the other side of the battlefield, a huge fire spear was about to leave Liang Qiu's fingertips. However, Night Spirit's eyes were pitch-black and cold without the slightest bit of panic at all.

A strange ripple suddenly appeared in the void between the beast and the man.

Swoosh!

It was as if something had cut through the night sky and stabbed in reverse!

That was Night Spirit's tail.

Poof!

The sound of a sharp weapon piercing flesh could be heard as the razor spike on Night Spirit's tail penetrated Liang Qiu's extended arm!

"Ah!"

Liang Qiu could not help but yelp upon receiving such a serious injury; his arm trembled and the spirit energy that was gathered on his fingertips nearly dissipated.

Although the fire spear was shot with all its might, its strength was considerably weaker.

Bang!

As Liang Qiu had expected, Night Spirit did not have the energy to dodge the incoming fire spear and was struck right in the chest.

However, due to the weakened strength of the fire spear, Night Spirit merely rolled on the ground once before getting up. It bore a ferocious gaze and a bloodthirsty aura emanated from its body.

Liang Qiu had not expected for the situation to change the moment they exchanged blows. Night Spirit's gambit at death's door had not only managed to avert its crisis, but injured him instead!

That was a talent for combat!

By making use of its immense combat talent, Night Spirit forcefully reversed its terrible situation and even gained an advantage against a Golden Core.

Before Liang Qiu could take a breath, another suffocating killing intent hit him.

A black shadow suddenly stood from the ground and approached.

"Die!"

With a loud shout, Su Zimo swung his arm and drew a huge arc in the air. Using his fist like a seal, it descended from the sky and erupted the air instantly with a deafening boom!

Time seemed to have stopped.

In that instant, Liang Qiu's pupils constricted as his heart stopped beating.

In just a few breaths' time, the shocks that Liang Qiu received were truly too much.

Night Spirit was only one of them.

The green-robed cultivator named Mo Ling was even more so!

Liang Qiu had truly not expected that instead of choosing to flee in the face of a combined assault from two Golden Cores, the mere Foundation Establishment Cultivator chose to retaliate against a Golden Core!

What sort of courage was that?

Furthermore, Su Zimo's timing for his attack was perfect.

Liang Qiu's protection talisman was shattered, his left arm was injured, he had yet to retrieve his flying sword and his spirit energy had not recuperated after releasing his spirit art – this was when he was at his weakest!

Against Su Zimo's incoming fist, Liang Qiu did not have any way of defending and could only raise his right arm instinctively to block. At the same time, he retreated continuously.

Bang!

Liang Qiu's arm collided against Su Zimo's fist and produced a massive sound of defeat.

Snap!

Right after, the wincing sound of bones cracking could be heard!

Liang Qiu could see that his forearm was completely snapped, twisted into an extremely strange state!

Opening his mouth, he was about to yell when an even more terrifying aura of death lunged at him, swallowing his voice whole!

That gigantic seal that snapped his arm did not stop at all and continued smashing towards his head without its strength diminishing much.

If he was struck, Liang Qiu's head would explode on the spot!

Psheew!

One of Meng Han's flying swords was embroiled in battle with Night Spirit. At the same time, his other flying sword sped and pierced towards the back of Su Zimo's head.

If Su Zimo chose to dodge, Liang Qiu would definitely be able to seize the opportunity to escape this predicament given the latter's cultivation realm.

If Su Zimo chose to ignore it, while he could definitely kill Liang Qiu, his head would be pierced and he would die immediately!

In a flash, Su Zimo did not hesitate as his eyes flickered and he retracted his right hand that had transformed into a gigantic seal expressionlessly.

Liang Qiu let out a long breath of air. Drenched in sweat, he retreated abruptly as if he had just brushed through the gates of hell.

Without turning back, Su Zimo spread his right hand behind his head as though he wanted to defend against the beam of the flying sword with his bare hands!

When they saw that, Meng Han and Liang Qiu were both stunned.

No matter how strong Mo Ling's body was, there was no way he could defend against a superior-grade flying sword of a Golden Core – what was that action of his for?

Had Mo Ling gone stupid?

Clang!

The flying sword pierced Su Zimo's right palm and blood flowed out. However, the sound of metal clashing could be heard!

The flying sword did not manage to penetrate Su Zimo's right palm completely!

"Hmm?"

Meng Han's expression changed starkly.

How was that possible?

Even though he managed to block the attack, the massive power of the flying sword caused Su Zimo to grunt still as the flesh on his arm exploded into a bloody mist.

Using that force, Su Zimo took a step forward with the momentum and appeared before Liang Qiu instantaneously!

Liang Qiu had just relaxed and had yet to take a breath when his heart sank once more.

“Not good!”

Against Su Zimo’s gaze, Liang Qiu was petrified.

How was that the gaze of a human?

That gaze clearly wanted to devour humans instead!

Su Zimo stretched his left arm. His bones and tendons rang at the same time while his arm expanded like a massive snake before coiling around Liang Qiu’s head!

Liang Qiu’s head spun around his neck and was almost twisted off. By the time it stopped moving, his face was already unrecognizable!

Liang Qiu died on the spot.

A Golden Core had died!

Chapter 265: Psychological Warfare

From the moment Night Spirit struck to its two rounds of fighting against Liang Qiu, then to Su Zimo’s closing in with multiple killing moves to kill Liang Qiu... while the entire process seemed slow upon narration, everything only took up two breaths of time.

The courtyard suddenly fell silent.

Meng Han looked at Liang Qiu who fell to the ground with widened eyes of disbelief.

A Golden Core had died in the hands of a Foundation Establishment Cultivator!

Everything had happened too quickly.

It was so fast that Meng Han could barely accept it.

What puzzled Meng Han even more was why his flying sword did not manage to penetrate Su Zimo’s palm.

The flying sword had clearly tore through Su Zimo’s flesh but why was it stuck all of a sudden, letting out the sound of metal clashing?

If not for that, Liang Qiu would not have died!

That was the truth.

Even though Su Zimo was both an immortal and demon cultivator and Night Spirit had extremely sharp claws, in terms of actual strength, neither of them could take Golden Cores head on.

Given another environment and situation, both Su Zimo and Night Spirit could only flee in a one-on-one situation.

However, there were too many factors affecting the outcome of a battle between cultivators.

Night Spirit had the most credit for them being able to kill a Golden Core.

If it had not attacked to destroy Liang Qiu's protection talisman while drawing away most of his attention, Su Zimo would not have had the chance to close in.

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Naturally, Liang Qiu's greatest mistake was in underestimating Su Zimo's spirit and determination!

It wasn't just him; Meng Han had not expected that Su Zimo would dare retaliate against the assassination of two Golden Cores as well!

In just two breaths' time, the situation had already turned upside down.

Liang Qiu was dead.

Meng Han was the only one left now.

Most importantly, he only had three breaths of time left.

At some point in time, a girl around 18 years old walked out from one of the rooms. Possessing exceptional beauty while wearing an elegant long dress, her withered hair was curled and rested behind her back.

A flying sword hovered in front of Nian Qi, trembling and emitting a bright glow.

There were four spirit patterns shining on it!

It was a supreme-grade flying sword!

Meng Han took a glance and his mouth cramped while his eyeballs nearly dropped out of his sockets.

As a Golden Core, he had lived for more than 400 years. Even now that he was approaching death, he had never used a supreme-grade flying sword in his life.

However, that girl was only a maidservant at early-stage Foundation Establishment and she had a supreme-grade flying sword of her own?

Suddenly, Meng Han recalled some of the recent rumors in the capital. Many cultivators said that the green-robed cultivator before him was the number one Weapon Refinement Master of the entire Great Zhou Dynasty and could even customize supreme-grade spirit weapons.

Prior to this, Meng Han scoffed and refused to believe the rumors.

He had lived for so long but he hadn't heard of any Weapon Refinement Masters who would dare boast that they could customize supreme-grade spirit weapons.

But now, when he caught sight of the supreme-grade flying sword hovering before Nian Qi, Meng Han believed it.

If even a maidservant had a supreme-grade flying sword, how many supreme-grade spirit weapons did Mo Ling possess?

...

In the courtyard, Su Zimo, Night Spirit and Nian Qi stood in three different directions, facing off against Meng Han.

Normally, a little girl at early-stage Foundation Establishment should pose no threat to Meng Han.

However, the problem was with the supreme-grade flying sword that she was wielding!

While early-stage Foundation Establishment Cultivators clearly had insufficient strength, the killing power of the supreme-grade flying sword was way too great.

The two men and one beast had different methods – any single one of them would be insignificant individually.

However, all three of them had their own trump cards and could not be underestimated!

Nian Qi's supreme-grade flying sword.

Night Spirit's claws and its immensely strong physique.

As for Su Zimo, he was the one most unfathomable to Meng Han.

He possessed the agility and speed of demon beasts, a terrifying burst power, an intricate technique for melee combat as well as a keen sensitivity towards danger...

Against that Foundation Establishment Cultivator, Meng Han actually felt a sense of fear from the depths of his heart!

"Ah!"

Abandoning all unnecessary thoughts, Meng Han bellowed and struck all of a sudden.

He could not wait any longer!

This was his final gambit and chance to kill Su Zimo!

Pshew! Pshew!

Meng Han's sleeves flapped as two flying swords shot out.

At the same time, he conjured a seal with his left hand, condensing a gigantic fiery disk that enveloped Night Spirit.

Meng Han's attack was one versus three and he had individual strategies for them!

After witnessing Night Spirit's speed, he knew that it would be difficult to block Night Spirit using flying swords unless his sword wielding technique was intricate enough.

Therefore, Meng Han chose to attack with a spirit art that had a wider area of effect!

The purpose of that spirit art was merely to slow Night Spirit down.

As for the other two extremely fast flying swords, one of them targeted Nian Qi while the other was aimed at Su Zimo.

Su Zimo's eyes flickered. The moment Meng Han struck with his swords, Su Zimo's figure shifted and moved swiftly close to the ground, arriving before the former in the blink of an eye.

Rising, Su Zimo took a deep breath and his chest puffed up. He knelt with one knee on the ground and raised both hands as if he was holding a peach in his palms while killing intent spewed from his eyes!

"You were tricked!"

Meng Han's eyes lit up as he let out a sinister chuckle. Churning his Golden Core, his hands conjured seals and two long spears were formed, piercing viciously towards Su Zimo!

This was the moment he was waiting for!

A full-powered strike by a Golden Core as such was something that Su Zimo could not face head-on!

The moment Liang Qiu fell, Meng Han realized that even if he were to use all his might against Su Zimo, as long as the latter were to avoid at all cost, it would be difficult for him to kill the other party within three breaths.

Therefore, Meng Han chose to restrain Night Spirit first before attacking Su Zimo and Nian Qi at the same time!

The single sword posed no threat to Su Zimo.

However, it was enough to kill Nian Qi!

Not everyone had Su Zimo's spirit perception and could dodge the flying sword of a Golden Core at Foundation Establishment realm.

Hence, if Su Zimo wanted to save Nian Qi, he would have to attack Meng Han with all his might!

This was the same scene as when Su Zimo killed Liang Qiu earlier on.

However, the difference was that Liang Qiu was unprepared.

But Meng Han was fully prepared!

Before the flying sword struck Nian Qi, it fell to the ground without Meng Han's control.

That attack was merely a feint to lure Su Zimo forward.

Meng Han's full attention was focused on Su Zimo right from the beginning!

Su Zimo was half-knelt on the ground while Meng Han stood upright, looking down at the former. The two of them were extremely close and it was almost face-to-face.

It seemed like Su Zimo's ending was already decided.

Suddenly, Meng Han saw a trace of mockery in Su Zimo's eyes.

"Kill!"

The next moment, Su Zimo opened his mouth and let out a deafening roar from deep in his throat!

A huge stream of air shot out like an arrow.

Totally unprepared, Meng Han's body shook and he was slightly dazed. His hands paused for a moment but it was still thrusting down!

The moment Meng Han was momentarily dazed, Su Zimo had already exerted strength in both legs and fell to the ground while retreating back.

The entire process was fluid as water without any sense of sluggishness at all.

Su Zimo had rushed to the front while retreating even swifter without any delay at all!

Meng Han's first attack was a feint.

However, Su Zimo's Sanguine Ape Fruit Offering was also a feint!

The one that was tricked was not Su Zimo, but Meng Han.

Su Zimo realized that Meng Han would try to kill him but he could not ignore Nian Qi. That was why he made this move of advancing to retreat.

In this psychological warfare on the brink of death, Su Zimo was still the one that won in the end.

Chapter 266: Bearded Man

Boom!

A deafening noise echoed.

Two long spears appeared in Meng Han's hands and slammed heavily into the ground, causing the stone slabs to crack while sand and gravel flew everywhere.

He missed!

Looking at the huge pit that he had just smashed out in front of him, Meng Han was slightly dazed.

He maintained his original position, bent over with fists clenching air as if he was grabbing two long spears motionlessly.

He had lost.

Meng Han's gaze dimmed gradually.

He had two breaths of time left. While Meng Han still had strength to attempt a final blow, there was a deep sense of helplessness in his heart.

That was because he knew that he could not kill Su Zimo within those two breaths!

Unless...

A glimmer of light shone in the eyes of Meng Han's lowered head that disappeared quickly.

In the eyes of Su Zimo, Nian Qi and Night Spirit, Meng Han was like a old man who had lost his soul, standing where he was rooted at a loss.

It was a rare opportunity!

Night Spirit's gaze was dark. Just as it was about to seize the opportunity to pounce and bite Meng Han to death, it was suddenly stopped by Su Zimo's gaze!

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It understood the stern warning in Su Zimo's eyes and did not behave recklessly.

Not far away, the sound of clothes fluttering could be heard clearly.

The person arriving was speeding over in lightning speed with a tremendous aura.

The capital's guards were about to arrive as well. Furthermore, that person should be a Golden Core too!

With his body hunched, Meng Han raised his head. His gaze was cloudy and dull, as if he had aged immensely in a single instant and the aura of twilight emanating from him intensified.

"You've won."

He looked at Su Zimo quietly with a hint of exasperation in his tone as he gave a self-deprecating smile.

Su Zimo tilted his head slightly and glanced askance at Meng Han silently. He did not say anything and merely gave a faint smile.

"Since my fate is already decided, kill me, Mo Ling."

Meng Han sighed deeply and closed his eyes, as if he had completely given up on resisting.

Suddenly, Su Zimo laughed and asked, "You must be wishing really hard for me to rush up so that you can self-destruct your Golden Core conveniently, right?"

Upon hearing that, Meng Han opened his eyes suddenly. He had a ferocious gaze and menacing expression, revealing his final claws.

Self-destructing his Golden Core was his final trump card.

Meng Han knew that given Su Zimo's alertness and nimbleness, even if he used all his strength, he would not be able to get close to Su Zimo within two breaths of time.

Therefore, he made a final gambit and put on a desperate stance, hoping to lure Su Zimo into the trap.

It was a pity that Su Zimo saw right through it.

It was a complete defeat!

Right from the beginning, he and Liang Qiu had never had the upper hand. They were being led by the nose by this Mo Ling guy, a Weapon Refinement Master and a mere Foundation Establishment Cultivator!

Meng Han gritted his teeth as his embarrassment turned into anger. With a deep growl, he lunged towards Su Zimo.

At the same time, the Golden Core in Meng Han's dantian churned and expanded continuously, emitting a horrifying aura as it was about to reach its critical point soon!

Destructing their Golden Cores was a difficult choice to make for most Golden Cores.

However, Meng Han did not hesitate.

That was because his fate was already decided.

His lifespan was almost up. Even if he was not killed by the capital guards that were soon arriving, he would not survive for more than three years.

The moment Meng Han made his strange movements, Su Zimo had already retreated a distance away. He was speeding along, ensuring that he maintained a sufficient distance between him and Meng Han.

“How dare you, ruffian!”

Right then, a middle-aged man in green armor flew over, roaring loudly across the night skies.

He wielded a massive hammer with both hands while his face was dark and bearded. His voice was rough and sounded a little deafening.

“Get lost!”

The bearded man blocked Meng Han’s path, glaring with widened eyes as large as copper bells. After hollering, he actually flung his hammer over!

Swoosh!

The hammer slammed heavily against Meng Han’s chest!

Snap!

Meng Han’s chest caved in deeply as his face turned pale. Instantly, he was knocked flying like a broken kite.

His figure hovered in midair and suddenly, the energy fluctuations in his body stopped and released in an instant!

Boom!

The Golden Core exploded, emitting a destructive force that rippled in all directions!

A Golden Core formed the essence of a cultivator’s cultivation base.

The self-destruction of a Golden Core was equivalent to one releasing their entire lifetime’s worth of cultivation back into the universe – how terrifying was the might of that?

Even though Su Zimo was far away and was not in danger, he could still sense the terrifying aura that was emitted the moment the Golden Core self-destructed.

Under that sort of power, the first person to be destroyed was none other than Meng Han himself.

Instantly, his body evaporated into a bloodied mist with no corpse left!

Right after, the gigantic hammer was repelled by the power in the same direction it came from, except it was now much faster and stronger!

The eyes of the bearded man lit up as he heaved in a deep breath. Picking up another gigantic hammer, he struck the incoming hammer squarely.

Clang!

The two hammers collided!

A piercing sound erupted.

The bloodline of the bearded man surged as the muscles on his arms bulged up with veins that were like little snakes sticking to the surface of his skin. He had actually managed to receive the incoming hammer without staggering backwards with pure brute force!

Su Zimo nodded to himself.

This meant that the bearded man's strength was far beyond Meng Han's!

Furthermore, the methods of the bearded man clearly indicated that he was a Golden Core well-versed in body tempering techniques as well.

With a scoop, the bearded man received the hammer with his right hand and placed it into his storage bag.

Surveying his surroundings, he frowned at the sight of the messy courtyard.

Su Zimo walked over and cupped his fists. "Thank you for reaching in time and for saving me, sir."

"It's what I should do, it's nothing much."

The bearded man waved it off casually before cupping his fists back with a strong momentum. "I'm the commander of the Azure Falcon guards, Mu Dongqing. Greetings, Mr. Mo."

Every action of the bearded man was sturdy and he wore his feelings on his sleeves – Su Zimo had a good impression of this man already.

Looking around, the bearded man's gaze landed on Liang Qiu's corpse.

Liang Qiu was already beaten beyond recognition by Su Zimo and his original appearance was completely unrecognizable by now.

Squatting down, the bearded man searched Liang Qiu's body from head to toe but to no avail. He took down the latter's storage bag and opened it before shaking his head.

The bearded man said, "That man earlier self-destructed without a corpse while this person has nothing on him. His storage bag is also filled with useless items and there's nothing to prove his identity."

Su Zimo smiled without replying.

This assassination attempt that made use of two Golden Cores nearing the end of their lifespans was clearly the result of meticulous planning.

Since the other party chose to conduct the assassination in the capital of Great Zhou, they must have made preparations to conceal their identities even if they failed.

However, the only place in the entire capital that bore enmity or even killing intent towards him and even had the capabilities to deploy two Golden Cores was there...

True Fire Weapon Workshop!

Chapter 267: Won't Fail

"Mr. Mo, these two people have already perished without leaving anything behind as evidence. I'm afraid that regarding tonight's matter..." The bearded man did not continue but his words were clear.

In fact, as long as anyone thought about this matter slightly, it would not be difficult to guess the faction behind Liang Qiu and Meng Han.

However, this matter would most likely go unresolved without evidence.

"It's alright."

Su Zimo smiled calmly without taking it to heart.

Tonight, two Golden Cores were lost in vain – True Fire Weapon Workshop was the one that lost out, not Su Zimo.

The bearded man was about to bid farewell and leave when he inadvertently caught sight of the flying sword in Nian Qi's hands and the corner of his eyes twitched.

It was a supreme-grade flying sword!

That little maidservant was wielding a supreme-grade flying sword!

Prior to this, the bearded man was a little skeptical when he heard that Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop could customize supreme-grade spirit weapons.

Even though he referred to this person as Mr. Mo, he was not entirely convinced.

After all, being able to customize supreme-grade spirit weapons sounded way too absurd to be true.

When he saw Su Zimo personally, the bearded man was even more convinced of his thoughts.

Su Zimo was way too young and he was only at a mere Foundation Establishment realm as well.

Typically, the truly top Weapon Refinement Masters were all Golden Cores!

Without enough years of weapon refinement, it would be difficult for one to develop a personal understanding of spirit gathering and naturally, one would not be able to become a top Weapon Refinement Master.

Even if this Mo Ling person had started to refine weapons in his mother's womb, he would only have a couple decades worth of experience. How could he compare with the hundreds of years of experience that Golden Cores have put into weapon refinement?

The bearded man believed that Su Zimo must definitely have capabilities to be able to make a name for himself in the capital.

However, being able to customize supreme-grade spirit weapons was merely a gimmick to promote his weapon workshop.

But now that the bearded man saw the supreme-grade flying sword in Nian Qi's hands, his heart started to waver.

"Could this Mo Ling truly be able to refine supreme-grade spirit weapons?"

"But he's way too young. He only looks to be in his twenties. How is it possible?"

"But, even his maidservant has a supreme-grade spirit weapon of her own! An early-stage Foundation Establishment Cultivator using a supreme-grade spirit weapon? What sort of a privilege is that? That's insane!"

Standing on the spot motionlessly, the bearded man stared at Nian Qi who was not far away with a trace of bitterness in his eyes.

A gaze as such made by a burly man was more than enough to scare a little girl.

"Sir, are you alright?" Nian Qi whispered.

"Ah?"

The bearded man froze for a moment and realized that he had gone out of sorts. Blushing with shame, he coughed gently and asked, "Mr. Mo, I heard that you're able to customize supreme-grade spirit weapons here?"

"That's right," Su Zimo nodded.

The bearded man had not expected for Su Zimo to answer so readily!

Could this person truly be able to customize supreme-grade spirit weapons?

"Well, erm... if I want to customize a supreme-grade spirit weapon, what do I need to prepare?" The bearded man asked after some silence.

"Sir, you won't be able to do it this month."

At that moment, Nian Qi was the first to speak.

She was the best in this aspect. For the past two years, she was in charge of receiving business at Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop.

Nian Qi continued, "Our young master only refines one supreme-grade spirit weapon a month. The opportunity for this month has already been auctioned away on the first day of the month."

"Sir, if you wish to customize supreme-grade spirit weapons, you have to wait for the first of the following month. Bring 30 sets of materials and sufficient spirit stones for the auction."

"Don't worry, sir. We're extremely fair at Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop and we don't discriminate between gender and age. The highest bidder will definitely get it."

The bearded man's mouth cramped up as he rubbed his hands together. He looked awkward, as if he wanted to say something.

If he was truly bidding openly with other Golden Cores, there was no way he would get the opportunity...

Putting aside whether or not he had sufficient spirit stones, he did not even have enough materials for 30 sets and would not be qualified to bid for the auction at all.

Su Zimo watched from the side for a while before suddenly saying, "Sir, I can refine a supreme-grade spirit weapon for you as repayment for your lifesaving grace today."

"For real?"

The bearded man was at a loss for what to ask for. Su Zimo's words rang in his mind like heavenly music as he cupped his fists hurriedly. "Thank you very much, Mr. Mo."

Actually, as the commander of the Azure Falcon guards, it was completely part of his duties to rush over and kill Meng Han.

Su Zimo's action was in part because he had a decent impression towards this bearded man. At the same time, it was a favor for the other party.

There were three guard squads in the capital of Great Zhou and the Azure Falcon guards was one of them.

While the bearded man seemed boisterous, he was the commander of the Azure Falcon guards – this was a powerful figure with immense authority in the capital!

Being able to befriend someone like this would not be a bad thing.

The bearded man continued, "Mr. Mo, I don't have enough materials with me. I only have enough for seven sets. I'll come look for you again after I gather enough later on."

Su Zimo replied calmly, "That's enough."

"What?"

The bearded man asked instinctively in a daze, not understanding what Su Zimo meant.

Su Zimo smiled. "Give me that seven sets of materials, that's enough. Tell me about the specifications of the spirit weapon you want to refine."

The bearded man fell silent as thoughts filled his mind.

Seven sets of materials were enough?

Wasn't he supposed to prepare 30 sets?

Given another Weapon Refinement Master, seven sets of materials might not even be enough to refine a superior-grade spirit weapon, but this person could refine supreme-grade spirit weapons with it?

Su Zimo's casualness in replying had instead caused the bearded man to feel suspicious.

After hesitating for a while, the bearded man took a deep breath and decided to place his trust in Su Zimo.

He took out seven storage bags from his storage bag with seven sets of materials within them and passed everything to Su Zimo.

Su Zimo smiled and nodded.

The bearded man repeated his specifications again and asked, "May I know when I can come to collect the supreme-grade spirit weapon, Mr. Mo?"

"Morning."

Su Zimo said as he turned towards his secret chamber for weapon refinement with the seven storage bags.

"Morning? Which morning?"

The bearded man asked again hurriedly, stunned.

"I'm going to refine it now and it'll be done by morning."

After saying that, Su Zimo vanished into his secret chamber for weapon refinement, leaving a dumbstricken bearded man with a lost expression.

He took a long time to snap to his senses. Turning around, he looked at Nian Qi in disbelief and asked, "The morning that Mr. Mo mentioned is this morning?"

"That's right."

Nian Qi nodded. "You can wait here for six hours. It should be around that long."

"Six hours is enough for him to refine a supreme-grade spirit weapon?"

"There's no need for him to enter inedia for three days while bathing in incense to adjust his state and pray to the heavens?"

"Isn't that too perfunctory?"

The bearded man rambled a bunch of questions in a single breath, rendering Nian Qi speechless and stunned.

Seeing that the little girl was also confused, the bearded man said in a deep voice, "Everything else aside, what if Mr. Mo fails in spirit gathering..."

Nian Qi replied, "Our young master never fails."

The bearded man: "..."

Chapter 268: Emperor of Great Zhou

Before long, shadows appeared in the night and the sound of wings flapping could be heard.

A large group of Azure Falcon guards arrived, covering the skies densely and almost surrounding the entire Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop.

“Greetings, commander.”

Many Azure Falcon guards that were riding on Azure Falcons cupped their fists in unison and shouted.

Everyone’s gaze swept across the courtyard and could not help but feel secretly shocked when they saw the tragic battlefield.

The bearded man nodded and waved his hand. “Take this corpse away. You guys can leave first. I’ll continue guarding here for the night lest anymore ruffians try to assassinate Mr. Mo.”

“Understood!”

On the surface, the many Azure Falcon guards obeyed readily.

However, everyone’s hearts stirred.

Even though Mo Ling was very famous in the capital in recent years, the bearded man was the commander of the Azure Falcon guards and there was no need for him to stand guard personally.

With the actions displayed by the bearded man, Mo Ling’s status in everyone’s hearts rose again.

Before long, the Azure Falcon guards retreated.

Only the bearded man, Nian Qi and Night Spirit who was sprawled in a corner with half-opened eyes, seemingly napping, were left in the courtyard.

The wait was arduous.

The bearded man’s gaze was fixed on Su Zimo’s secret chamber for weapon refinement – he had never felt that a night could be so long.

Six hours passed by that silent night.

At the first break of dawn, the door of the secret chamber opened with a creak.

Su Zimo strode out with a gigantic hammer in his hands.

Instantly, the bearded man bounced up from his seat and hurried towards Su Zimo excitedly.

When he approached, he received the hammer in Su Zimo’s hands and felt his arm sink – he would fall if he did not use all his strength!

The weight was sufficient!

The bearded man nodded to himself.

Focusing his attention, he looked at the four spirit patterns on the surface of the hammer that were beautiful like a work of the heavens.

“Could it be...”

The bearded man’s eyes lit up as he channeled his Golden Core and injected spirit energy.

Swoosh!

The hammer shone brightly and an aura that was as strong as the Earth spread out with four dazzling spirit patterns!

A supreme-grade spirit weapon!

The bearded man was overjoyed and could not hide the excitement in his eyes. Bowing deeply to Su Zimo, he said sincerely, "Thank you, Mr. Mo!"

For Su Zimo, refining a supreme-grade spirit weapon required no effort at all. However, the favor was too much for the bearded man.

The bearded man said in a low voice, "Don't worry, Mr. Mo. From today on, as long as it's time for the Azure Falcon guards to patrol, I'll definitely move around more in the vicinity. If anything strange happens, I can arrive on the scene at the first moment!"

Su Zimo smiled. "I'll have to trouble you then, sir."

...

The next afternoon.

News of the assassination attempt in Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop had already spread through the capital and created a huge stir.

There was no secret that could be hidden forever in the world.

Furthermore, the event happened within the capital.

The blinding formation light that shone from Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop the previous night illuminated the surroundings like daylight and woke countless people up.

"Have you heard? It's said that Golden Cores were sent to assassinate Mr. Mo last night. Not only did they fail, they even died at the shores of Jishui River!"

"That's right! I heard that even the commander of the Azure Falcon guards was activated!"

"I witnessed it personally! Some of the Azure Falcon guards carried an unrecognizable corpse out. That person clearly died tragically," A cultivator said in a serious tone.

"Some cultivators who claim to have met Mr. Mo said that he's a Foundation Establishment Cultivator! Fufu, I'm now quite clear that Mr. Mo is definitely a Golden Core or he wouldn't have been able to survive last night."

"I told you long ago that Mr. Mo is a Golden Core. How else could he refine superior-grade and even supreme-grade spirit weapons?"

Through the streets and alleys, restaurants and inns, markets and shops, everyone was discussing this matter.

Within the palace.

A yellow-robed middle-aged man sat leaning against a throne with an account memorial that was placed on the table before him not long ago. His gaze was deep and his wide forehead symbolized his profound wisdom.

Behind the middle-aged man was a scholarly man who bore a calm expression and restrained eyes – his cultivation was unfathomable.

The yellow-robed man was none other than the Emperor of Great Zhou!

Nearby the Emperor of Great Zhou, a Golden Core in azure armor knelt on one knee. He had a dark face with a beard and was none other than the commander of the Azure Falcon guards who had saved Su Zimo the previous night.

Earlier on, the bearded man was summoned by the emperor to the imperial court where he recounted the events of the previous night in detail.

“Does that mean that this Mo Ling is truly able to refine supreme-grade spirit weapons?” After pondering a while with his eyes closed, the emperor opened his eyes and asked with a burning look. His tone revealed the doubts that he had.

“Yes!”

The bearded man replied, “Not only can he refine supreme-grade spirit weapons, he only took six hours! Furthermore, be it Mr. Mo or his maidservant, they gave me the feeling that he’s able to conduct spirit gathering with 100% certainty.”

“100% confidence in spirit gathering?”

The emperor murmured and narrowed his gaze.

If that was truly the case, this news could shake the entire cultivation world!

“Perfected Lord Ming Ze, what do you think?” The emperor glanced askance.

The title of Perfected Lord meant that this person was a Nascent Soul!

The scholarly man standing behind him said, “In Tianhuang Mainland, Hundred Refinement Sect possesses the most brilliant techniques for weapon refinement. It’s said that Hundred Refinement Sect has techniques that can increase the success rate of spirit gathering, but it’s definitely impossible to claim a 100% success rate.”

The emperor nodded. “This person must have some sort of a unique spirit gathering technique. Even though it’s not 100%, the success rate must be extremely high!”

“Fufu... not bad, this Mo Ling is quite a character.”

The emperor smiled as he nodded his head with a hint of admiration.

“Your Majesty, you’re keen on this talented person?” Perfected Lord Ming Ze asked with a chuckle.

“That’s right.”

The emperor replied, "Wait for a while. When I'm free, we'll go to Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop and meet this person."

Perfected Lord Ming Ze frowned and advised against it, "Your Majesty, you are the emperor. Even if this person is quite a character, he's not worthy of you making a personal visit. You can just summon him into the palace."

"Furthermore, even if he can refine supreme-grade spirit weapons, he's nothing but a Weapon Refinement Master. As long as his cultivation realm is not at Nascent Soul, he will not be able to refine Dharmic weapons and he will never become a Weapon Refinement Grandmaster."

Attaining Nascent Soul realm meant that the cultivator had made yet another critical step on the path of cultivation!

At perfected Golden Core, it meant that one was at the end of the path for core formation.

Born in one's dantian, the Golden Core was round and golden like a fetus.

One could only attain a breakthrough in their cultivation realm and achieve a new life after breaking the Golden Core and allowing the fetus to be born successfully!

That fetus was what was known as the Nascent Soul in the cultivation world.

Therefore, there were many rumors about how to break the core and attain a nascent soul in the cultivation world.

Nascent Soul Perfected Lords were completely detached from the realm of spirit energy and have control over a completely different form of energy – Dharmic powers!

This was an energy that was stronger and more terrifying than spirit energy.

That was also why only Nascent Souls could release Dharma arts.

Dharmic weapons were used by Nascent Souls.

In the world of weapon refinement, only cultivators that can refine Dharmic weapons could earn the title of Weapon Refinement Grandmasters!

That was why Perfected Lord Ming Ze was direct to point out that Su Zimo was unable to refine Dharmic weapons due to his limited cultivation realm. As such, he was not worthy of the Emperor of Great Zhou's high regard for a personal visit.

Chapter 269: The Emperor's Notice

No matter how strong the spirit weapons he refined were, they could only attract Golden Cores.

However, for the Great Zhou Dynasty that ruled over four regions, Golden Cores merely belonged in the middle of the forces. Their main pillars of support were still Nascent Souls, Void Reversions and even stronger existences!

When he heard Perfected Lord Ming Ze's remark, the Emperor of Great Zhou was indifferent and shook his head. "You're wrong, Ming Ze. What I value is not his current ability, but his potential!"

Perfected Lord Ming Ze nodded thoughtfully.

The emperor's eyes shone with wisdom as he continued, "He has already attained such achievements at such a young age. This proves that he's an unprecedented talent in terms of weapon refinement. It's hard to imagine just how strong his potential in weapon refinement is!"

"I got it, Your Majesty," Perfected Lord Ming Ze lowered his head and replied.

"Fufu... "

The emperor chuckled softly and praised, "To be able to refine supreme-grade spirit weapons at Foundation Establishment realm, this Mo Ling is truly a geni-"

Suddenly, the emperor's expression changed and his voice stopped abruptly.

The smile on his face was frozen.

The bearded man raised his head while Perfected Lord Ming Ze looked sideways – both men sensed the abnormality in the emperor.

Perfected Lord Ming Ze asked concernedly, "What's wrong, Your Majesty?"

The emperor narrowed his eyes and tapped his fingers on the table in deep thought.

After a long while, he asked suddenly, "Dongqing, you mentioned that Mo Ling was only a Foundation Establishment Cultivator?"

"That's right."

The bearded man was stunned for a moment and nodded vigorously, "Your Majesty, I definitely did not see wrong. He's at late-stage Foundation Establishment."

The emperor took a deep breath of air and asked slowly, "Can anyone tell me how a Foundation Establishment Cultivator managed to last ten breaths against the combined assassination attempt of two Golden Cores?"

All of a sudden, the hall fell silent.

The bearded man was shocked and Perfected Lord Ming Ze was equally dumbfounded.

If the emperor had not mentioned it, both of them would have missed out on this detail!

The previous night, the bearded man was too focused on his supreme-grade spirit weapon that he did not give it much thought.

Suddenly, he felt an inexplicable sense of fear as he gulped and continued, "Furthermore, by the time I arrived, one of the Golden Cores was already dead.

The emperor leaned against his throne and smiled leisurely with a deep gaze, as though he had discovered something extremely interesting, "That's right. Who can explain this? A late-stage Foundation Establishment Cultivator, an early-stage Foundation Establishment Cultivator and a black dog at Foundation Establishment realm. A trio like that not only managed to last ten breaths against two Golden Cores, but they even managed to kill one of them?"

The bearded man and Perfected Lord Ming Ze frowned and fell into deep thought.

“I’m getting more and more curious about this person.”

Rising, the emperor smiled. “There’s no need to wait any further. We’ll go this afternoon! Ming Ze, accompany for a trip to Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop. We’ll pay a visit to this Mr. Mo.”

“Understood.”

Perfected Lord Ming Ze bowed in reply.

The emperor was about to turn and leave when he suddenly stopped his tracks. Glancing sideways, he asked, “Do you have any clues about the identity of the two dead Golden Cores?”

“No,” The bearded man shook his head.

The emperor scoffed coldly, “Even though there’s no evidence, there’s a high chance that it was done by True Fire Weapon Workshop, right?”

“Your Majesty is wise,” The bearded man cupped his fists.

The emperor’s hands were behind his back and he had a stern expression, radiating with a chilling intent from his eyes.

“Make a notice and spread it out: If any rogues dare to plot in the capital again and try to assassinate virtuous talents, they’ll be killed without mercy! The masterminds will not be spared either!”

If the Emperor was angered, millions of people had to die!

A steely, murderous aura exuded from the emperor that made one’s heart palpitate!

The bearded man acknowledged loudly.

Perfected Lord Ming Ze felt his heart skip a beat.

While the notice did not mention Mo Ling’s name, the fact that the notice was sent today after the previous night’s assassination attempt was clear enough to everyone that the virtuous talent mentioned was referring to Mo Ling.

On the surface, this assassination attempt was a conflict between two weapon workshops.

However, in reality, it was a conflict between Mo Ling and True Fire Sect.

As one of the five major sects, True Fire Sect was powerful and had a deep foundation. Normally, the emperor would not interfere personally in something like this and would close a blind eye to let it pass.

However, the notice was an indication of a stance.

It was the emperor’s stance towards this matter!

The Emperor of Great Zhou had chosen to stand on Mo Ling’s side!

“Seems like Your Majesty truly thinks highly of this person,” Perfected Lord Ming Ze thought to himself.

The bearded man thought for a moment and asked, “Where should I paste the notice?”

The emperor replied indifferently, "Yongxing City, at the entrance of True Fire Weapon Workshop."

Psst!

The bearded man sucked in a breath of cold air.

The emperor was not merely expressing his stance, he was giving a warning!

He was warning True Fire Weapon Workshop to not act recklessly!

Even though the emperor gave True Fire Sect some face and did not pursue the matter, the fact that he chose to stick the notice in front of True Fire Weapon Workshop was a clear indication of his intentions.

...

Yongxing City.

Ever since Su Zimo started customizing supreme-grade spirit weapons, the weapon workshops around here regained their bustle and the crowds returned.

After all, supreme-grade spirit weapons were out of reach for most cultivators.

If one wanted to refine inferior, middle or superior-grade spirit weapons, they would still have to come here.

"Actually, what True Fire Weapon Workshop did was a little inappropriate."

While nobody knew the identity of the two dead Golden Cores, most cultivators knew what was going on.

In the capital, True Fire Weapon Workshop had the strongest conflict with Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop and had the power to command Golden Cores.

"That's right. Even though we also have a weapon workshop and are competitors with Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop, there's nothing wrong about them being famous due to their own capabilities."

"Furthermore, Mr. Mo is now in the business of supreme-grade spirit weapons. There's no conflict with us."

Some shopkeepers of several weapon workshops gathered in hushed discussions.

"I'm guessing that this matter will likely go unresolved. Furthermore, there's no evidence left behind."

"That's right. True Fire Weapon Workshop is backed by True Fire Sect, one of the five major sects. There's no reason for the Great Zhou Dynasty to go against a major sect just for a mere Weapon Refinement Master."

"I don't think that this matter is over yet!"

A shopkeeper said in a shocking manner.

"Old Zhang, what do you mean?" Someone else asked.

Old Zhang scoffed coldly, "Think about it. True Fire Weapon Workshop lost two Golden Cores and suffered a massive loss. Do you think they're going to take it lying just like that?"

"Even if they can't take it lying down, what can they do? It's not as if they're going to send a Nascent Soul next, right?" Someone else was rattled.

"Hehe, that's hard to say."

The few of them were discussing when a figure appeared in the sky not far away. It was extremely fast and arrived in the blink of an eye.

"Greetings, sir."

The few shopkeepers stood up hurriedly and greeted.

The person who arrived was the commander of the Azure Falcon guards, the bearded man.

Someone asked with a smile, "What are you here for, sir? Do you want to customize a spirit weapon?"

The bearded man did not reply and waved his robes, erecting a tall notice stele that was enveloped in strong spirit energy.

Expressionless, the bearded man carried the stone stele and walked forward silently, attracting countless gazes.

Chapter 270: Complete Defeat

Back hall of True Fire Weapon Workshop.

Elder Zhang did not sleep for the entire night.

The night was just too arduous for him.

He had failed!

The assassination that he had planned for so long had failed!

Even though Liang Qiu and Meng Han were nearing the end of their lifespans, they were still Golden Cores after all and had died just like that.

Elder Zhang could not take lying down.

This was something that did not merely concern the rise and demise of True Fire Weapon Workshop, it concerned the reputation of True Fire Sect!

Ge Yong, the shopkeeper of True Fire Weapon Workshop, walked into the back hall. When he saw Elder Zhang's dejected expression, he could not help but sigh internally and stepped forward to persuade, "Elder Zhang, take a rest. It's almost been an entire day."

"The incident last night has spread, right?"

After a moment, Elder Zhang's lips moved and he asked.

Ge Yong nodded with a terrible expression.

A look of hatred filled Elder Zhang's face. Clenching his fists slowly, he said in a vengeful voice, "Even if you don't say it, I can guess it! Everyone out there must be gloating at our misfortune and laughing at True Fire Sect!"

"Ge Yong, let me tell you, I didn't lose. Our True Fire Weapon Workshop did not lose either and neither will True Fire Sect lose!"

Seeing that Elder Zhang was deeply agitated in a frenzied state, Ge Yong said hurriedly, "Elder Zhang, since things have come to this, you..."

Elder Zhang interrupted abruptly in a cold voice, "I'll relay the sect a message right now and have them send even stronger cultivators over! We must kill this Mo Ling in the capital!"

Ge Yong could vaguely sense that Elder Zhang was losing his mind. However, he could not express his thoughts and instead said in a tactful manner, "This is an extremely grave matter. I don't think the sect's going to agree to it?"

"The sect will definitely agree to it! True Fire Sect has never suffered a loss like this before! Are we going to be scared off by a mere unknown Weapon Refinement Master?"

Scoffing coldly, Elder Zhang said grimly, "After two years of observation, I'm certain that Mo Ling must have mastered some sort of unique spirit gathering technique with a high efficiency rate! If we kill him, that spirit gathering will definitely belong to True Fire Sect as well."

"However, last night's events have already alerted the Azure Falcon guards and I'm sure the Emperor of Great Zhou knows about it too. I don't think we should strike in the capital?" Ge Yong frowned slightly.

"Don't worry."

Elder Zhang replied, "The emperor will definitely give face to True Fire Sect and not interfere in this matter."

Boom!

The moment Elder Zhang said that, a deafening sound could be heard outside as if a meteor had crashed right in front of True Fire Weapon Workshop.

Elder Zhang furrowed his brows and waved. "Go take a look at what happened outside. I'll pen the letter right now!"

"Yes."

Ge Yong turned to leave.

With a sullen expression, Elder Zhang took out a letter from his storage bag and wrote furiously.

Not long after Ge Yong went out, he ran back into the back hall with a flustered expression and panting.

Elder Zhang took up the letter he had just written and swayed to dry the ink before handing it to Ge Yong. "Send this letter to the sect as quickly as possible!"

"This..."

Ge Yong did not receive the letter as he stopped talking midway with a pale expression.

“Hmm? What happened out there?” Elder Zhang asked with a raised brow.

Ge Yong gave a bitter smile. “Elder Zhang, you had better go see it for yourself.”

Elder Zhang held the letter in his left hand and strode out with a grave expression.

Before he arrived at the entrance, Elder Zhang heard a commotion outside True Fire Weapon Workshop, as if countless people had gathered in discussion.

“True Fire Weapon Workshop has truly fallen greatly this time round.”

“That’s right, they’ve embarrassed themselves entirely.”

“This is a complete defeat.”

“I wonder whose idea it was to assassinate Mr. Mo. That person is the biggest sinner in True Fire Sect!”

A series of chaotic voices could be heard as Elder Zhang’s expression turned uglier.

The moment he stepped out of True Fire Weapon Workshop, the noise outside quietened down instantly.

Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh!

Everyone turned to look at Elder Zhang with a strange gaze as they muttered softly.

Surveying his surroundings, Elder Zhang’s eyes finally landed on a huge notice stele on the other end with a brand new notice.

“If any rogues dare to plot in the capital again and try to assassinate virtuous talents, they’ll be killed without mercy! The masterminds will not be spared either!”

It was a murderous sentence.

At the end was a square pattern – it was the imperial seal!

Upon seeing those words along with the imperial seal, Elder Zhang felt as though he was struck by lightning. His head spun and his body swayed, nearly falling to the ground.

Ge Yong hurried forward to support Elder Zhang.

After a moment, Elder Zhang took a deep breath of air and looked at the bearded man at the side, asking with much difficulty, “May I ask, Lord Commander. Is this notice... truly the intention of Your Majesty?”

“What do you mean by that, Elder Zhang? Are you suspecting me of faking a message from the emperor?” The bearded man reversed the question expressionlessly.

Elder Zhang’s heart skipped a beat as he replied hurriedly, “No, I’m not...”

Scoffing coldly, the bearded man turned and pointed to the imperial seal at the bottom of the notice, saying with a deep voice, “The imperial seal belongs to Your Majesty. How dare you question it, hmm?”

“Then, for this notice to be placed here...”

Before Elder Zhang could finish, he was interrupted by the bearded man again, “By placing it here, it’s a warning to evildoers that they had better watch themselves beneath the feet of the Emperor of Great Zhou and not thinking about creating any sh*t!”

With every word spoken by the bearded man, Elder Zhang’s face turned paler.

By the end of it all, Elder Zhang’s eyes were dim and his heart was filled with despair.

He also churned his spirit energy, crushing the letter in his hands into dust.

There was no longer any need for the letter.

After all, the emperor had expressed his stance and had given a stern warning to True Fire Weapon Workshop!

If True Fire Weapon Workshop dared lay their hands on Mo Ling again, they would offend the emperor directly!

Even if there were cultivators who did not know better yet, the fact that the notice was placed here would have them realize instantly that True Fire Weapon Workshop was the mastermind behind the previous night’s assassination attempt!

This was a complete defeat.

Elder Zhang gave a long sigh and seemed like he had aged considerably in an instant. Turning around, he returned to True Fire Weapon Workshop with a dejected back view.

For that brief moment, Elder Zhang felt regret.

Perhaps, he should not have been so misguided to attempt an assassination on Mo Ling.

Even though it was only afternoon, True Fire Weapon Workshop was closed for business.

Everyone dispersed but the discussions towards the matter did not die down.

“Your Majesty is really something. Placing the notice in front of their place? He might as well just say it out loud.”

“What do you know? True Fire Weapon Workshop is backed by True Fire Sect, one of the five major sects that has been around for many years with a strong foundation. Even the emperor has to give them some face. If he were to say it out loud, it would be akin to falling out with them. There’s no need for that.”

One of the cultivators smiled. “That notice sure is interesting. It didn’t mention anything about True Fire Weapon Workshop or Mr. Mo and yet even a fool can tell what it’s referring to.”

“I know, right? It’s just one step away from Your Majesty declaring that he’s got Mr. Mo’s back in the capital from now on...”

“I believe that no one in the capital will dare harbor any ill intentions to Mr. Mo from now on. Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop is also going to be an unshakable existence within the capital!”

Chapter 271: A Private Visit

Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop.

Su Zimo walked out of his room and squinted his eyes at the noonday sun high in the sky. The sleepiness in his eyes gradually dissipated.

Shuddering momentarily, a series of crackling sounds came from within his body. It was as though he was frying beans as his tendons and bones sounded together while his blood churned like a tsunami!

Swoosh!

When Su Zimo opened his mouth, he breathed out a long stream of white gas that was solid like a sword. The stream shot out for a few meters before dissipating gradually.

In the folklore of mortals, immortals could soar through the skies and spit out flying swords, slicing the heads of their enemies from thousands of miles away!

The scene that had just happened was extremely similar to the flying swords that were spat out in the folklores. If any mortals who did not know about cultivation were to catch sight of it, they would be shocked to death.

In reality, that stream of white gas was no flying sword.

It was because after refining the Organs Refinement section, Su Zimo's organs turned stronger and resulted in the phenomenal sight of him exhaling his breath like a sword.

Of course, that stream of white gas did not have any killing power, let alone kill anyone from thousands of miles away.

After the assassination attempt of the previous night and refining a supreme-grade spirit weapon for the bearded man, Su Zimo did not sleep for an entire night and was mentally exhausted.

He rested for the entire afternoon and had only just gotten up. The wound on his arm had healed and his spirit had recovered as well.

The moment Su Zimo sat down on the stone bench in his courtyard, the door of the entrance was pushed open.

Nian Qi was eating a string of candied hawthorns as she entered merrily with smiles on her face, seemingly having encountered something fun.

"Sir, you're awake!"

The moment Nian Qi caught sight of Su Zimo, she greeted him with bright eyes.

Nodding, Su Zimo asked with a smile, "What's the matter? Look at how you're smiling."

"Hehe, I can't hide anything from you, sir."

Nian Qi ran over with a smile and sat beside him.

In two years, Nian Qi had changed a lot and it wasn't only in terms of her cultivation.

Two years ago, when Nian Qi had just moved in, Su Zimo could sense that she was still extremely guarded against him.

As time went by, she was less guarded as well.

At the same time, Nian Qi became more cheerful and lively.

Mysteriously, Nian Qi remarked, "Sir, guess what I saw at Yongxing City earlier on?"

"Something related to last night?" Su Zimo raised his brow and asked.

Nian Qi's eyes widened and she nodded her head repeatedly, revealing the emperor's notice.

"Sir, you didn't see the look on the face of that elder from True Fire Weapon Workshop. It was truly exciting. Hmph, how satisfying!"

A look of surprise flashed in Su Zimo's eyes.

He had not expected that the Emperor of Great Zhou would express his stance at this moment.

"Sir, all the cultivators in the capital are discussing this right now. They're saying that you can do whatever you want in the capital from now on..."

Nian Qi mimicked the tone of others and said it in a rough voice, looking rather comical.

Su Zimo smiled.

Clang! Clang! Clang!

Right then, a series of knocks rang from the entrance.

Su Zimo exchanged glances with Nian Qi, both confused.

It was already in the middle of the month now. If anyone wanted to customize supreme-grade spirit weapons, they would have to wait for the following month – why would anyone turn up now?

Nian Qi dashed over and opened the door.

Two cultivators stood at the entrance. One of them was a middle-aged man in yellow robes. He had a wide forehead, a deep gaze and an extraordinary aura.

The other person was more scholarly, standing behind the first person as his white clothes fluttered in the wind.

Nian Qi frowned.

She could not detect the cultivation realms of the two of them using her Spirit Peering Art!

There were only two possibilities.

First, the two people in front of her had cultivated some sort of a cultivation realm concealment technique.

Second, the cultivation of the two people had already surpassed Golden Core and were at Nascent Soul realm!

Instantly, Nian Qi eliminated the second scenario.

As Nascent Souls, there was no reason for them to be here.

While Su Zimo could refine supreme-grade spirit weapons, he would not attract the attention of Nascent Souls.

“Fellow Daoists, what brings you here today?” Nian Qi stood at the entrance and asked the both of them, blocking their way.

The yellow-robed man smiled and said, “Young lady, that’s not the right way to treat guests, right? To speak to us while blocking us from entering?”

“What do you have to say that you can’t say from out there?” Nian Qi tilted her head and asked in seriousness.

The two men outside exchanged glances speechlessly.

The yellow-robed man smiled. “Young lady, I came here today due to the reputation of Mr. Mo. I wish to see him and ask for a favor to refine a supreme-grade spirit weapon...”

“No.”

Before the yellow-robed man could finish, he was interrupted by Nian Qi.

Nian Qi continued, “Our young master only refines a single supreme-grade spirit weapon every month and we’ll sell that offer through an auction at the start of every month. If you wish to customize a supreme-grade spirit weapon, you’ll have to come for the auction next month.”

The yellow-robed man was stunned for a moment.

For such a long time, there had been no one dared to interrupt him or turn him away.

The scholarly man behind him showed a look of anger. Frowning slightly, he said in a seemingly reprimanding tone, “Girl, you...”

“Hmm?”

The yellow-robed man glanced sideways slightly and stopped the scholarly man.

Turning back, the yellow-robed man smiled. “Young lady, tell me. What’s the highest bid for a supreme-grade spirit weapon at this month’s auction?”

Without thinking, Nian Qi blurted out, “1,200,000 superior-grade spirit stones.”

“Alright.”

The yellow-robed man nodded. “I’ll offer twice that amount for Mr. Mo to help me refine a supreme-grade spirit weapon personally!”

“2,400,000!”

Nian Qi was shocked.

That was a frightening amount and most Golden Cores would not be able to produce it.

Unable to make up her mind, Nian Qi turned back to Su Zimo who was in the courtyard instinctively.

Su Zimo had a calm expression as he sipped his tea slowly. Placing the teacup down, he nodded. "Let them in."

Nian Qi gave way and the two of them entered Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop.

The moment they entered, the yellow-robed man's gaze landed on Su Zimo with a look of interest as he nodded in acknowledgment.

"Sit."

Su Zimo did not stand up and pointed to the stone bench opposite him with that single comment.

The yellow-robed man sat down while the scholarly man stood at the side, surveying the surroundings. His gaze lingered on Night Spirit for a brief moment and lit up.

Su Zimo looked at the yellow-robed man and asked in a seemingly casual manner, "How may I address you, fellow Daoist?"

"My surname is Zhou," The yellow-robed man's expression did not change.

Su Zimo nodded, not saying anything.

With a faint smile, the yellow-robed man asked, "I've heard a lot about Mr. Mo. I wonder what sect you're from and who your master is for your splendid weapon refinement skills."

Raising his head, Su Zimo played with the teacup in his hands and looked at the yellow-robed man with a fake smile, asking instead, "Weren't you here to refine weapons, fellow Daoist? What's your motive for checking up on my background now?"

"You're overthinking it, Mr. Mo. I was merely curious and asked out of instinct," The yellow-robed man's expression was the same, as if he had truly asked it casually.

He nodded to the scholarly man beside him.

Instantly, the scholarly man retrieved 30 sets of materials from his storage bag and 2,400,000 spirit stones. He put them all into a storage bag and placed it in front of Su Zimo.

Chapter 272: The Emperor's Thoughts

"Mr. Mo, do check through it."

The yellow-robed man raised his chin and glanced, signaling for Su Zimo to take stock of the materials and spirit stones in the storage bag.

A faint smile hung on Su Zimo's lips as he said nonchalantly, "You sure are generous, fellow Daoist. Most cultivators wouldn't be able to produce this much materials and spirit stones."

The yellow-robed man's expression remained unchanged and he did not explain himself either, merely repeating his specifications.

After a moment of silence, the yellow-robed man continued, "After this supreme-grade flying sword is forged, we'll leave it with you, Mr. Mo. Someone will come for it when the time is ripe."

"One year at most. Nothing later will be entertained."

Su Zimo said indifferently.

The sect competition was due to start in less than a year. By then, he would definitely have left the capital.

The yellow-robed man stood up and bid farewell, leaving with the scholarly man.

After leaving Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop, the yellow-robed man finally turned back on the main street and looked in the direction of Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop with lit up eyes of great interest.

The yellow-robed man was none other than the Emperor of Great Zhou!

The scholarly man behind him was Perfected Lord Ming Ze.

"If I hadn't seen it personally, it would be truly hard to believe that the person who could refine supreme-grade spirit weapons would be such a young junior," The emperor lamented as he could not conceal the admiration in his eyes.

Perfected Lord Ming Ze nodded. "That person's cultivation is indeed only at late-stage Foundation Establishment and he hasn't cultivated any cultivation concealment techniques. There was no one else in that residence too."

There were many mysteries surrounding Mo Ling, but what the emperor was most curious about was the assassination attempt of the previous night.

Given Mo Ling's cultivation, he should have died – how did he manage to last for ten breaths of time and even kill a Golden Core instead?

Initially, the emperor had two speculations.

First, Mo Ling had cultivated some sort of cultivation concealment technique and his actual cultivation was at Golden Core.

Second, there was an expert hidden in Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop.

On the one hand, their visit today was to check out Mo Ling. On the other hand, they wanted to unravel this mystery.

However, after leaving Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop, the two of them were even more puzzled.

Neither speculation fit the bill.

They made a sudden visit and both of them scanned Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop entirely with their spirit consciousnesses. However, there were no signs of any third party.

In other words, they were back to where they had started.

Two Foundation Establishment Cultivators and a black dog at Foundation Establishment realm – how did the three of them manage to last ten breaths against the combined assault of two Golden Cores?

“Interesting, a mysterious person.”

The emperor chuckled and asked, “What else did you discover?”

Perfected Lord Ming Ze replied in a low voice, “That black dog is not simple. Even though it was lying far away looking like it was asleep, I could sense that it was watching us!”

“Can you tell what spirit demon that is?”

“No. It might be a variant spirit demon born from the fusion of two different spirit demon races.”

The both of them conversed and arrived at the palace before long.

At the entrance of the palace, a black-armored guard quickly walked up and knelt on one knee, saying in a deep voice, “Your Majesty, I’ve already investigated the background of Mo Ling. However, there’s little to be known.”

The emperor asked, “Oh? Tell me everything that you found out.”

The guard replied, “Two years ago, Mo Ling appeared outside the capital seemingly out of thin air. No one saw how he arrived.”

“That’s all?”

“That’s all.”

The emperor frowned – this was as good as having found out nothing.

All of a sudden!

A thought flashed through the emperor’s mind as he suddenly asked, “The day that Mo Ling appeared in the capital two years ago! Was that the same day of the dragon’s attack?”

“Yes!”

The guard nodded. “Not long after Mo Ling appeared, the divine dragon descended. Thereafter, a mysterious expert showed up and pushed back the divine dragon.”

When he heard that, Perfected Lord Ming Ze came to a gradual realization as his eyes lit up. “Your Majesty is guessing that Mo Ling is related to that mysterious expert?”

“Yes. Mo Ling... might be the disciple of that mysterious expert!”

The emperor said in a low voice, “Given the methods of that mysterious expert, even if his disciple is only at Foundation Establishment realm, there’s a high possibility he could hold out ten breaths against the assassination of two Golden Cores.”

Perfected Lord Ming Ze nodded. “The mysterious expert appeared suddenly and was definitely not someone of the capital of Great Zhou. In that case, Mo Ling might truly be related to that mysterious expert.”

The emperor laughed. "Someone like that is definitely a talent in cultivation, much stronger than any Tom, Dick or Harry. Right, when is Xue'er returning?"

"Don't worry, Your Majesty. The sect competition will start in less than a year. The third princess will definitely return prior to that," Perfected Lord Ming Ze consoled.

Furrowing his brows, the emperor said, "Because of that Su Zimo or whoever, Xue'er has been fighting with me all these years. She hasn't even bothered to come home at all, really now..."

Perfected Lord Ming Ze seemed to have thought of something and asked, "Your Majesty, for you to suddenly mention the third princess, are you thinking of introducing Mo Ling to her and matchmake them to be Dao partners?"

"I do have that intention."

The emperor continued, "At least to me, this Mo Ling is worthy of Xue'er and he's much stronger than that so-called Su Zimo she mentioned previously. Fufu, the son of a general of a vassal state and a trash without a spirit root. Someone like that wishes to join the Ji Family?"

"Yes, the two of them are similar in terms of age and cultivation. Furthermore, Mo Ling is a top-notch Weapon Refinement Master, he's rather fitting," Perfected Lord Ming Ze nodded.

The emperor scoffed coldly, "Xue'er is pure and innocent with a narrow vision, that's why she was hoodwinked by some scheming people! Once she returns, I'll have her meet with Mo Ling. Even if they're not compatible, it'll open her eyes to what a true genius is really like!"

Perfected Lord Ming Ze commented, "Your Majesty is not stingy with praising him. Seems like you truly have high hopes for this person."

"Yes."

The emperor nodded. "You heard my conversation with him earlier too. I wanted to check out his background but he was so vigilant. Not only did he handle it with ease and not let anything slip, he even tried to check out my identity in reverse, fufu."

The emperor laughed. "It's truly remarkable for someone his age to have that sort of mentality and wisdom."

"That's right."

Perfected Lord Ming Ze agreed. "That lad is composed, calm as a lake despite containing boisterous thunder within. He's truly quite a character."

The emperor continued, "Furthermore, that Su Zimo was chosen by Xue'er herself after all. If he could be half of what Mo Ling is, or even one-tenth, I don't mind letting him be her Dao partner."

"By the way, do you think he saw through our identities?" The emperor asked in a seemingly joking manner.

"How is that possible?"

Perfected Lord Ming Ze shook his head with a smile. "If he could tell of Your Majesty's identity through just that brief contact, he wouldn't be a genius. He would be a demon instead..."

Chapter 273: Greater Mastery of Organs Refinement

Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop.

Nian Qi sat opposite Su Zimo and praised, "Sir, you're amazing. Even cultivators from afar are coming because of your reputation."

"How do you know that they're from afar?" Su Zimo asked with a smile.

Nian Qi replied, "Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop has been open for two years now. The fact that those two turned up in the middle of the month means that they don't know our rules. It's likely that they're cultivators from outside of the capital."

"Fu, you're truly mistaken then."

Su Zimo smiled faintly and shook his head. "Not only are they from the capital, they're from the palace!"

"The palace?"

Nian Qi was shocked and probed, "Could they be royalty?"

Su Zimo nodded. "The yellow-robed man in front is not simple. He carries a majestic aura that most cultivators do not possess. Not only that, he's extremely generous and can offer 2,400,000 superior-grade spirit stones right away. How can normal cultivators possess such a capability?"

Nian Qi nodded, not fully understanding.

Su Zimo continued, "Furthermore, that person exuded a domineering presence. While he was trying his best to conceal it intentionally, that sort of presence is formed after a long time of being at the top. It's something that's difficult to hide entirely."

"Oh."

Nian Qi let out a look of realization. "No wonder I felt that the yellow-robed man had a strong aura. Every single word and action of his carried authority with it."

Rubbing her chin, Nian Qi seemed to have thought of something inexplicable as she fell into deep thought.

Su Zimo smiled and did not say anything to interrupt her. Dipping his finger in tea, he wrote a word on the table and stood to leave.

"The royal family's surname is Ji. However, that person said that his surname was Zhou. Was he lying?"

Seemingly in deep thought, Nian Qi mumbled, "Zhou, Zhou, Zhou..."

After a while, her gaze turned around and landed on the table inadvertently where she caught sight of the word that had yet to dry up and emitted a faint fragrance of tea.

"Emperor!"

Nian Qi exclaimed, seemingly realized something.

...

After the emperor's notice, the capital indeed calmed down.

No faction dared to be stupid enough to challenge the royal family's authority at a time like this.

As for Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop, its status in the capital grew daily and so did their reputation.

Every auction at the start of the months would attract many Golden Cores and most of them were at late-stage or perfected Golden Cores.

The Golden Cores were either extremely strong or had powerful backgrounds. Otherwise, they would not have been able to gather that many spirit stones.

A few months later, even cultivators from outside the capital rushed thousands of miles over just to auction for a supreme-grade spirit weapon at Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop.

Naturally, the guesses and rumors about Mo Ling's identity, appearance and background had never stopped.

Many cultivators claim to have seen Mo Ling personally and were proud of it. However, their descriptions of Mo Ling varied completely.

There were all sorts of versions and all kinds of strange.

Only a few pieces of information were widely accepted by the masses.

First, Mr. Mo was a Golden Core and was strong.

The reason for this piece of information, apart from the description of some cultivators, was due to the assassination on a night a couple of months ago.

Second, Mr. Mo had a unique technique for spirit gathering that had a high success rate!

That was something everyone acknowledged with ease.

Not only that, the masses even came up with a name for that spirit gathering technique – Mo Clan's Spirit Gathering Technique.

Third, Mr. Mo was definitely someone not to be offended in the capital.

Even the Emperor of Great Zhou had specially issued a notice to refer to him as a virtuous talent.

Because of this, even True Fire Weapon Workshop which was backed by True Fire Sect was utterly defeated – who else would dare offend Mr. Mo in the capital of Great Zhou?

Furthermore, one could dream of customizing a supreme-grade spirit weapon in Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop once they offended Mr. Mo.

Regarding the rumors out there, Su Zimo could not be bothered to clarify things.

Naturally, he was not hiding his identity intentionally.

It was just that he had been well-off and rarely appeared for the past two years, therefore giving off a sense of mystery to everyone.

Su Zimo had reaped a lot from his two years of cultivation.

Thanks to the large amount of spirit stones replenishment, Su Zimo's cultivation was already approaching perfected Foundation Establishment!

While his cultivation speed was a little terrifying, it was understandable as well.

For Foundation Establishment Cultivators, it would be fortuitous enough for them to have sufficient spirit stones to cultivate with.

As for Su Zimo, he had a constant supply of superior-grade spirit stones and as such, his efforts were naturally halved.

It was also partly due to his weapon refinement.

To outsiders, Su Zimo could only refine a single supreme-grade spirit weapon once a month.

But in reality, he would spend every single afternoon refining supreme-grade spirit weapons to hone his skills!

As time passed, alongside the continuous practice, Su Zimo's weapon refinement technique was at a point of proficiency where it was difficult to improve further.

At this point, Su Zimo also realized that it was immensely difficult to refine perfect spirit weapons!

Success was only possible when technique, mental state and environmental factors were interlinked seamlessly.

Since it was called perfect, it meant that there could not be any flaws right from the very first step of weapon refinement – materials selection!

Up till the very last step of quenching, any single slight mistake in the middle would fail to make things perfect.

Initially, Su Zimo intended to create a set of perfect grade flying swords for his sword formations.

However, now that it seemed impossible, Su Zimo could only compromise and refine a set of supreme-grade flying swords.

Of course, Su Zimo's 'compromise' was something that could not be better in the eyes of outsiders!

A supreme-grade spirit weapon was enough to attract countless top-tier Golden Cores to fight for it; a set might attract a massacre!

This day, Su Zimo came forth from his room with a faint smile on his face.

There was slightly more than a month to the sect competition and the dragon egg's essence energy in his body had been refined and absorbed completely!

He was at greater mastery of his Organs Refinement section!

His five organs qi circulated continuously, nourishing his skin, flesh, tendons, bones and marrow and forming a minor Heavenly Cycle in his body.

Prior to his, at lesser mastery of the Organs Refinement section, Su Zimo had killed the blood-robbed youth who was at four-meridian Foundation Establishment back in Dongling Valley when he released all his might with the power of blood qi!

Now, Su Zimo estimated that even if he did not reveal his demonic qi or channel his bloodline, his physical strength alone would be enough to suppress four-meridian Foundation Establishment Cultivators!

If he were to channel his bloodline, it would be more than enough to take down five-meridian Foundation Establishment Cultivators.

If he were to release it together with his blood qi, Su Zimo's combat strength would be even more terrifying!

Of course, that was referring to the difference in strength.

After all, there were way too many variables that affected the outcomes of fights on the battlefield.

Now that he had refined the dragon egg's essence energy completely, he had also removed the latent danger of being hunted down by the dragon race.

Prior to this, Su Zimo did not even dare to step out of the capital.

But now, he felt as though he was relieved of a huge burden and broken free of his shackles – he could not help but feel delighted.

“Sir, what are you so happy about?”

Nian Qi sat on the grass and hugged her knees, turning to ask with her clear eyes.

In the past three years, this was a rare time that Nian Qi had seen Su Zimo reveal such a smile.

Waving his hand, Su Zimo said, “Let's go out for a walk and get some fresh air.”

“Sure!”

Nian Qi clapped and smiled like a flower, jumping up from the ground.

Chapter 274: Meeting Xiaoning Again

Ever since Nian Qi moved in, this was the first time the two of them had gone out together.

After three years, there hadn't been much changes in the capital. However, as the sect competition was approaching, there number of cultivators going about had increased significantly.

For the past three years, Nian Qi's hair had been yellowed, withered and curled up, looking disheveled.

However, she was more beautiful. Slim and elegant, her skin was fair and tender, looking delicately sweet.

While Su Zimo could not be considered as extremely handsome, he had delicate features and a steady aura. His green robes fluttered in the wind and he exuded an extraordinary aura, emitting a unique sense of charisma.

The woman was beautiful and the man was charming.

Walking on the streets of the capital, the two of them looked like a match made in heaven and attracted everyone's attention.

"Eh? Isn't that the maidservant called Nian Qi from Mo Spirit Weapon Workshop?"

In the crowd, some of the cultivators that had seen Nian Qi before recognized her.

"It really seems like her. Who's the guy beside her? He looks unfamiliar and I've never seen him before."

"I've got it!"

A cultivator said hatefully, "That green-robed cultivator must have gotten close to Nian Qi because he wants to approach Mr. Mo! What a scheming person!"

"Yes, that seems to be the case."

Enlightened, everyone agreed readily.

"That's not a bad idea. To think that he beat me to it!"

Even though the surroundings were bustling with noise, Su Zimo and Nian Qi's ears were extremely strong and could hear the discussions of those people.

"Sir, they're so stupid."

Nian Qi whispered and pursed her lips, smiling.

Suddenly, a weak voice rang from the crowd. "Actually, I feel that the green-robed cultivator could be Mr. Mo."

The moment that voice sounded, it caused a burst of ridicule.

"Fellow Daoist, you're an outsider, right? Don't talk if you don't know anything lest you embarrass yourself."

"Fellow Daoist, don't tell me you don't know how to use Spirit Peering Art at all. Can't you tell the cultivation of that green-robed cultivator? Fufu, everyone in the capital knows that Mr. Mo is a Golden Core!"

"Furthermore, Nian Qi is Mr. Mo's maidservant. Have you ever seen a maidservant that walks side by side with her master while chatting and laughing without any respect?"

For the past three years, Su Zimo spent every day with Nian Qi.

Outsiders thought that she was his maidservant, but Su Zimo had never seen her as one.

The reason why he was willing to take in Nian Qi initially was out of compassion.

The two of them continued strolling idly. Before long, a young Foundation Establishment Cultivator popped out of nowhere. He lifted his hair and smiled to Nian Qi, saying in a gentle voice, "Miss Nian Qi, please don't be taken in by the sweet nothings of this man. He has a purpose for wanting to get close to you!"

The young cultivator pointed at Su Zimo with conviction and an unfriendly expression.

Su Zimo even suspected that if they were not in the capital, this cultivator might have rushed up and challenged him to a life and death duel.

"None of your business, go away!"

Nian Qi berated him as she pulled Su Zimo around this person and continued forward.

"What's interesting about the capital today? Let's go take a look," Su Zimo glanced sideways and asked.

"Interesting things..."

Pondering for a short moment, Nian Qi said, "There's an elixir competition at Yongxing City today! I heard that two cultivators from True Fire Elixir Workshop and Azure Frost Elixir Workshop got into a conflict and both parties decided on today to determine who is better in elixir refinement by comparing to see who can refine higher graded elixirs."

The security in the capital was extremely tight as the sect competition approached.

From a single guard squad shift, it was now two guard squads on a single shift.

In other words, there would always be two guard squads on patrol in the capital daily and they could arrive immediately should any trouble arise.

Under such circumstances, no cultivator or faction dared to start a fight in the capital.

If they wanted to resolve grudges, a way of doing so was to compete in elixir and weapon refinement.

Furthermore, this was a grudge between two major elixir workshops in Yongxing City to begin with and a competition in elixir refinement was the most logical way of settling things.

"True Fire Elixir Workshop, Azure Frost Elixir Workshop..."

Su Zimo murmured softly and smiled. "Let's go and check it out."

True Fire Elixir Workshop was backed by True Fire Sect while Azure Frost Elixir Workshop was backed by Azure Frost Sect.

Those were two of the five major sects and furthermore, Su Zimo had dealings with both of them.

There was not much to say about True Fire Sect. In the past three years, they suffered a huge loss in his hands.

As for Azure Frost Sect...

Ji Yaoxue was in Azure Frost Sect and had even invited Su Zimo to join back then but was rejected by him.

Su Xiaoning was also cultivating in Azure Frost Sect.

Before long, the two of them arrived at Yongxing City.

“Hurry, let’s go take a look! It’s already begun!”

“I heard that this person from True Fire Elixir Workshop is a talent in True Fire Sect in recent years. His name is He Xing and he’ll definitely have a spot in the elixir rankings of the sect competition!”

“I heard that the Elixir Refinement Master from Azure Frost Sect is a young lady but she isn’t famous. I wonder how she got the courage to compete against He Xing.”

Su Zimo and Nian Qi quickly reached their destination as they followed the flow of the crowd.

In a corner of Yongxing City, there was an empty space in the middle of a dense crowd. At that moment, a man and a woman were wielding Elixir Furnaces in their hands while pouring materials into it.

The man had a dignified appearance but his lips were extremely thin, as if symbolizing that he was a heartless person.

The man was smelting the materials but his gaze was on the woman beside him. He had a relaxed expression and he was smirking with a flash of mockery in his eyes.

Su Zimo looked at the girl and could not help but shudder, almost exclaiming.

While it was only a side profile, Su Zimo recognized the woman instantly.

It was Su Xiaoning!

The young lady that was competing against True Fire Sect’s He Xing in an elixir refinement competition was none other than his sister that he had not seen for many years – Su Xiaoning!

Su Zimo initially thought that he would have to wait for the sect competition to begin officially before he could see his sister again.

He did not expect to meet her here today.

“What’s wrong, sir?” Nian Qi was the closest to Su Zimo and she asked hurriedly when she noticed something amiss with his reaction.

“It’s nothing.”

He had a smile and his gaze lingered on Su Xiaoning, warm and tender.

After not seeing her for a few years, Su Xiaoning had grown up quite a bit. She had a slim figure and her long hair was draped over her singlet, tied up with a blue ribbon. Wearing white robes, she was immaculately clean and bore the demeanor of an immortal cultivator.

Actually, Su Zimo had been thinking about Xiaoning all these years.

She had a poor spirit root and even with Ji Yaoxue’s help, she might suffer from endless bullying and trampling in the sect.

If not for the fact that his own future was uncertain back then, Su Zimo would have definitely brought Xiaoning with him.

Taking a close look, Su Zimo saw that Xiaoning had only just entered Foundation Establishment realm. She had a pseudo spirit root and it was already remarkable for her to reach this realm within a few years.

It was not hard to imagine that Xiaoning must have suffered a lot in this process.

Song Qi had a pseudo spirit root and he had cultivated for most of his life but he was still unable to attain Foundation Establishment realm.

What surprised Su Zimo the most was that Xiaoning was an Elixir Refinement Master!

He had some knowledge of elixir refinement and could naturally tell that Xiaoning's was proficient in it. Furthermore, she was extremely focused throughout the entire process and was completely unaffected by her environment, possessing the mental fortitude required of an Elixir Refinement Master.

Chapter 275: This Is Truly Elixir Refinement

There was only a single word of difference between elixir and weapon refinement on the surface, but in reality, there was a huge difference.

Weapon refinement required a high level of spirit fire.

The higher the level of spirit fire, the higher the efficiency and outcome of the smelting process where impurities were purged.

However, it was different for elixir refinement.

Elixir refinement placed a huge emphasis on the mastery of spirit fire.

That was because spirit herbs were different from the materials used for weapons and they had a low burning point. Even a Level 1 Spirit Fire could refine most of the spirit herbs.

In elixir refinement, there were two extraction processes which required a precise mastery of the spirit fire's temperature.

If the temperature was too high, the spirit herbs would be burned to a crisp.

If it was too low, one would not be able to extract the essences of the spirit herbs.

While elixir refinement did not require spirit gathering, it required an in-depth knowledge towards the thousands of spirit herbs out there.

The higher the grade of the elixir, the more complex the recipe was and the more things one would be required to remember. The true top-tier Elixir Refinement Grandmasters even had to memorize millions of spirit herbs.

In the empty space, the Elixir Refinement Master from True Fire Elixir Workshop, He Xing, had a Level 2 Spirit Fire and a proficient mastery of it as well.

Su Xiaoning only had a Level 1 Spirit Fire but she was not weaker in terms of temperature control.

The two of them were refining an extremely common elixir – Spirit Regeneration Elixir.

There were three grades to the Spirit Regeneration Elixir and it was used for recovering spirit energy. Naturally, the difference in grade affected the effect of the elixirs.

Both of them were refining Grade 2 Spirit Regeneration Elixirs and there were up to 28 different types of spirit herbs required in the recipe!

Of the 28 herbs, a mistake in a single stalk of herb would result in a failure of elixir formation.

He Xing's technique was evidently slightly more brilliant.

However, that person's gaze was extremely evil and would fall on Su Xiaoning's body from time to time, scanning her from head to toe boldly.

Su Zimo narrowed his eyes and a killing intent flashed.

Sensing something, Nian Qi looked at Su Zimo with a strange manner before turning to Su Xiaoning in deep thoughts.

"He Xing's elixir refinement techniques are decent but his methods are somewhat despicable."

A cultivator from the crowd muttered.

Someone else covered the former's mouth immediately. "Hush! Softer, lest you get yourself into trouble!"

The spectators were clear.

Most cultivators could tell that He Xing's intention of looking at Su Xiaoning that way during elixir refinement was to disrupt her mental state!

The greatest taboo of elixir refinement was to get distracted.

Be it during extraction or formation, one's efforts would go to waste the moment they were slightly distracted.

However, Su Xiaoning was seemingly oblivious to He Xing's provocation as she extracted the ingredients in her hands with focus meticulously. She was careful and her focus moved the crowd.

To everyone, it was clear that Su Xiaoning's technique in elixir refinement was inferior to He Xing's.

However, her focus was countless times stronger than his!

Su Zimo nodded silently in satisfaction.

"What grudge do these two have with one another? Why are they challenging one another in elixir refinement here?"

Su Zimo glanced at a cultivator beside him and asked softly.

The person answered, "Actually, it's nothing much either. I heard that it's because of an Elixir Furnace. This lady cultivator from Azure Frost Sect took a liking to it first and had already paid for it in spirit stones. However, He Xing came across it and insisted on paying double to buy the Elixir Furnace. Because the lady cultivator was unwilling, both parties bore a grudge then."

"Later on, He Xing kept trying to cause trouble for this lady cultivator time and again. Annoyed by it, she agreed to this elixir refinement challenge."

Su Zimo frowned. "That lady is an Elixir Refinement Master from Azure Frost Sect, but her sect mates are alright with her being bullied by someone from True Fire Elixir Workshop?"

"I don't know about that."

The person shook his head. "However, He Xing comes from a strong background and he's the most promising Elixir Refinement Master of his generation in True Fire Sect. His brother, He Jiang, is said to be extremely strong and is the number one of all Foundation Establishment Cultivators in True Fire Sect. He's definitely going to make the top ten of the spirit ranking list in this sect competition!"

"Of the He Brothers, one is strong in elixir refinement and the other has terrifying combat strength. They are famous and hold a high status in True Fire Sect. I reckon that the head of Azure Frost Elixir Workshop must be trying to avoid trouble between the two sects and does not want to offend He Xing."

Su Zimo nodded expressionlessly.

In this short while, He Xing and Su Xiaoning were already at the fourth step of elixir refinement, the secondary extraction.

Seeing that Su Xiaoning was indifferent, He Xing's gaze got even more daring and he gave off a series of strange laughs.

Su Xiaoning seemed oblivious to it and stared at the Elixir Furnace before her intently, using her spirit fire to control the temperature of the flames before purging the impurities in the combined essence of the spirit herbs bit by bit.

He Xing stood there laughing non-stop.

Su Xiaoning remained silently, merely focusing on her elixir refinement. It was as if she was immersed in her refinement process and had forgotten that she was surrounded by people.

The difference in strength between the both sides was obvious!

He Xing was stronger than Su Xiaoning in terms of elixir refinement technique.

But now, in everyone's eyes, He Xing was just like a clown.

The warm sunlight shone on the girl's body, as if she radiated with a glow as colorful lights appeared.

The girl's nose was sharp and there was a thin layer of sweat on her forehead that glistened in a beautiful manner.

At this moment, a thought flashed through everyone's minds.

This was truly elixir refinement.

This was how Elixir Refinement Masters should be like.

In the hands of that lady, elixir refinement seemed to possess a soul and a life of its own.

She was not refining elixirs, but giving birth to a brand new life.

Looking at the lady refine elixirs, everyone felt an inexplicable sense of gratitude as they found themselves immersed in the world of Elixir Refinement Masters, witnessing the birth of a new life.

Right then, Su Zimo smiled.

He smiled brightly.

Xiaoning had finally found her path.

Su Zimo had dabbled in elixir refinement as well and had even obtained number one of Elixir Peak back in Ethereal Peak.

But at this moment, he could not help but admit that he was far inferior to his sister in terms of elixir refinement!

What he knew was the basics of elixirs.

However, what Xiaoning knew was the truth of elixirs!

Gradually, an invisible aura formed around Su Xiaoning, growing stronger by the moment.

This was the aura of a top-tier Elixir Refinement Master!

He Xing's expression changed.

Under the repression of Su Xiaoning's aura, his heart was in a mess and his flames fluttered, almost burning the herbal essence in his Elixir Furnace!

Taking a deep breath, He Xing composed himself and focused on his elixir refinement.

However, it was too late by then.

Su Xiaoning was a step faster in ending the secondary extraction!

A fragrant medicinal aroma wafted out of the Elixir Furnace. Everyone around them could feel invigorated and the spirit energies within their bodies stirred.

Su Xiaoning closed her eyes and rested for a while. By the time she opened them, her gaze was resolute as she began on elixir formation.

At that moment, He Xing was just done with his secondary extraction.

While there was also a medicinal aroma floating out of He Xing's Elixir Furnace, it was faint and no one felt anything from sniffing it.

If nothing unexpected happened, Su Xiaoning's elixir would definitely be better than He Xing's after the formation process!

Through the medicinal aroma, the surrounding Elixir Refinement Masters could already vaguely tell that Su Xiaoning's elixir might even be a perfect elixir with five elixir patterns!

Chapter 276: Unforeseen Situation

"Junior Sister Xiaoning is going to win!"

"Yes, this will count towards improving Azure Frost Elixir Workshop's reputation as well."

Within the crowd, a couple of disciples from Azure Frost Elixir Workshop discussed softly with excited expressions.

"It's just a Grade 2 Elixir. Even if she wins this, what does this have to do with our reputation? The reputation of Azure Frost Elixir Workshop has been built up over thousands of years. What has it got to do with her!"

The person who spoke was a female cultivator in a long, yellow dress. She had a voluptuous figure and her chin was slightly raised, revealing her neck that was slender and fair as a swan's with a haughty expression.

It was obvious that the yellow-dressed woman held a high position in Azure Frost Elixir Workshop as the few cultivators who were discussing earlier shut up immediately in fear after hearing her speak.

"Senior Sister Yang is absolutely right."

A disciple from Azure Frost Elixir Workshop replied with a smile.

On the other side, a group of disciples from True Fire Elixir Workshop were also watching the situation unfold with grave expressions.

"The situation's not good. Senior Brother He's going to lose."

"Don't worry, there's no way that woman from Azure Frost Sect is going to win today. Wait for Senior Brother He's gaze to act."

The person who spoke wore a faint red robe and his lips were slightly curled with a cold expression. His name was Pang Ming and he was a perfected Foundation Establishment Cultivator.

Beside him was a ferocious-looking spirit lion. Digging into the ground with its feet, the beast's mouth was opened slightly, revealing its sharp fangs within!

In the empty space, the Elixir Furnace in front of Su Xiaoning exuded a fragrant medicinal aroma that grew richer by the moment, spreading through the crowd.

White smoke wafted through the holes of the Elixir Furnace, changing the mist of the surroundings while shrouding Su Xiaoning within. The vague concealment of her body made her seem like a fairy that had descended on the mortal realm.

A white-haired elderly man sniffed the fragrance that drifted over and closed his eyes in an intoxicated manner. "Based on my experience, this girl from Azure Frost Sect should have refined a perfect Spirit Regeneration Elixir!"

Upon hearing that, everyone's hearts skipped a beat.

That elderly man was the most famous Advanced Elixir Refinement Master in Yongxing City – the result wouldn't be much different from his claim.

He Xing could also tell that if this continued, he would definitely lose.

A glint flashed in his eyes as he looked at Pang Ming who was in the crowd while condensing his elixir.

Pang Ming understood and nodded the head of the spirit lion beside him.

With a swift motion, the spirit lion growled deeply and leaped forward, waving its paw while slapping towards Su Xiaoning's Elixir Furnace.

The change was way too sudden such that even the onlookers did not expect it, let alone Su Xiaoning who was focused on her elixir refinement.

This was the capital of Great Zhou after all where fighting was prohibited.

Now that they were close to the sect competition, the atmosphere was even more tense. Not far away, a guard from one of the three great guard squads, Scarlet Vulture, rode on his Scarlet Vulture and patrolled in midair while wielding a dagger-axe in his hands with a stern expression.

However, no one expected that this spirit lion from True Fire Elixir Workshop would leap out at a moment like this!

Piak!

With ease, the spirit lion sent Su Xiaoning's Elixir Furnace flying with a single slap.

It fell to the ground with a bang and the elixir within the Elixir Furnace erupted, causing black smoke to billow out – it was clear now that the elixir formation had failed.

The greatest taboo of the elixir formation process was for one to be disturbed. A slight fluctuation in one's mental state could cause elixir formation to fail, let alone having their Elixir Furnace knocked away!

"Ah!"

Su Xiaoning shrieked and blood flashed on her arm.

When the spirit lion knocked the Elixir Furnace flying, Su Xiaoning sustained a scratch from the spirit lion on her arm because she had reacted slower. While it was not a serious injury, her shirt was stained red.

After knocking the Elixir Furnace and injuring her, the spirit lion ran back under Pang Ming's reprimand.

Coughing gently, Pang Ming gave a fake smile, "Fellow Daoist from Azure Frost Elixir Workshop, how sorry. I have failed to control my beast properly, to think that it would have ran out and shocked you. I'll punish it right away!"

With that said, Pang Ming tapped the spirit lion on the head lightly.

It shrugged its head indifferently before rubbing against Pang Ming's body.

“Haha!”

A burst of laughter broke out from the crowd of True Fire Elixir Workshop.

Everyone could naturally tell that Pang Ming had ordered the spirit lion to hurt the girl and knock the Elixir Furnace over!

Looking at the Elixir Furnace that had fallen not far away on the ground, Su Xiaoning pursed her lips. She had forgotten about the pain on her arm and her eyes were reddened, slightly teary.

At that moment, the first emotion that gushed into Su Xiaoning’s was not anger, but sadness.

Right from the beginning, she had not been distracted at all and was wholeheartedly focused on refining her Spirit Regeneration Elixir.

She was not wrong.

She was extremely focused.

However, it was destroyed by others and her efforts were in vain.

She was just a little short.

“Sigh!”

A perfect Spirit Regeneration Elixir was just about to be born but it was gone just like that... everyone shook their heads and sighed in unison.

Su Zimo’s gaze turned cold. Because the spirit lion was not targeting him, his spirit perception had no reaction.

Furthermore, he had not expected that cultivators of True Fire Elixir Workshop would dare command their spirit lion to attack someone in front of everyone in the capital!

Looking at Xiaoning who was standing on the spot tearfully, the killing intent in Su Zimo’s heart surged and it was almost impossible to contain!

Nian Qi, who was standing beside him, was the first to notice it.

She felt an unprecedented sense of trepidation coming from Su Zimo.

Glancing askance, Nian Qi’s heart skipped a beat when she caught sight of Su Zimo’s gaze.

She had witnessed that terrifying gaze one other time.

That was the same gaze that Su Zimo had during that night half a year ago when he was faced against two Golden Cores.

It was cold, indifferent and calm like a sea of extermination!

Nian Qi pondered for a moment before leaving the crowd silently. She looked around and sped off to somewhere nearby.

...

When faced with such an unforeseen situation, Su Zimo did not appear right away. Instead, he was calm and looked on coldly.

He was waiting...

Waiting for the reaction from both factions.

At this moment, the ones who should have the biggest reaction should be the Scarlet Vulture guards who were patrolling and Azure Frost Elixir Workshop that Xiaoning was from.

However, Su Zimo was disappointed.

He personally witnessed the gazes of two Scarlet Vulture guards staring at this place. Lingered shortly, they chose to turn their heads away and pretend as though they did not see anything!

“True Fire Elixir Workshop is really too much!”

“That’s right! It’s obvious that the spirit lion was deliberately causing trouble but they’re pretending to be innocent?”

Among the crowd, a cultivator frowned and asked, “The Scarlet Vulture guards are nearby. They seem to have witnessed everything, why aren’t they rushing here yet?”

“I think you don’t know, right?”

An elderly man said, “It’s said that the commander of the Scarlet Vulture guards, the Golden Core with the nickname of Bald Vulture, once stayed for a period of time in True Fire Sect and as such is considered as half a disciple of theirs. Since these Scarlet Vulture guards are his underlings, they’ll usually give True Fire Sect some face.”

“Furthermore, this matter is not a big deal. Even if anyone chooses to pursue it further, it’ll most likely go unresolved.”

“Why do you say that?”

“The spirit lion came out to create trouble by knocking the Elixir Furnace away. If He Xing and the others insist that they failed to control it properly and the spirit lion did it on its own accord, what can anyone do to them?”

Chapter 277: Overbearing

It was as the crowd had said, the Scarlet Vulture guards were clearly biased and chose to be oblivious towards everything that was happening.

Some of the cultivators from Azure Frost Elixir Workshop were furious and were about to step forth to argue when they were held back by the sharp gaze of the yellow-dressed woman and retreated helplessly.

The majority of disciples from Azure Frost Elixir Workshop were indignant but none of them dared to speak against the authority of the yellow-dressed woman.

Su Xiaoning turned back instinctively and saw the cold face of the yellow-dressed woman.

At this moment, the two factions that should have stood out chose to remain silent.

In the middle of the crowd, Su Xiaoning appeared lonely and helpless – she was at a loss.

“Done!”

Right then, He Xing shouted softly.

An elixir with a refreshing medicinal aroma burst out from his Elixir Furnace and spun in midair.

Everyone focused their attentions – three elixir patterns.

A superior-grade Spirit Regeneration Elixir.

“Fufu.”

He Xing waved and pinched the elixir on his fingertips and chuckled at Su Xiaoning who was not far away. “You’ve lost, Junior Sister Su.”

“Bravo, Senior Brother He!”

“I guess that Senior Brother He only used 70% of his skills this time round!”

“70%? No way! 30% at most!”

The cultivators from True Fire Elixir Workshop praised shamelessly but cheers from the surrounding crowd were sparse and almost non-existent.

Everyone was not blind.

While superior-grade elixirs were rare, Su Xiaoning would have most likely created a perfect elixir with five elixir patterns if not for the unforeseen situation.

It was obvious who would have won.

Now that He Xing had the cheek to speak of such words, everyone cursed internally that he was shameless. However, they had their reservations and nobody would stand out blatantly.

“Junior Sister Su, since you’ve lost, we’ll follow our initial agreement. Hand that Elixir Furnace over,” He Xing smiled smugly.

“I didn’t lose.”

Su Xiaoning was fearless. She did not retreat and her voice was firm.

The smile on He Xing’s face froze momentarily before returning to normal in an instant. “Don’t worry, Junior Sister Su. Even though you’ve lost, I’ll still fork out double the price to purchase that Elixir Furnace. I won’t take advantage of you as long as you hand it over.”

“I didn’t lose,” Su Xiaoning repeated the three words.

Instantly, He Xing’s expression darkened.

“Su Xiaoning, don’t refuse a toast only to drink a forfeit! Azure Frost Elixir Workshop’s reputation is going to be affected because you went back on your words and have no credibility!”

He Xing's words not only turned the facts upside down, it even laid down a huge burden for her.

Su Xiaoning raised her head with an unyielding expression, showing no signs of bowing down.

"Xiaoning."

Right then, the yellow-dressed woman from Azure Frost Elixir Workshop stood out and said indifferently, "Hand that Elixir Furnace over to Fellow Daoist He."

Frozen, Su Xiaoning's eyes were filled with disbelief.

A stir broke out amongst the crowd as well.

Su Zimo watched everything quietly with a dark gaze.

There was another doubt in his heart – why was this yellow-dressed woman targeting Xiaoning?

He was waiting for an answer.

The yellow-dressed woman continued slowly, "Since you chose to make a bet with him, you should admit your defeat. How can a disciple of our Azure Frost Sect renege on our words?"

"But, I didn't lose at all! If he hadn't..."

Su Xiaoning was about to defend herself when the yellow-dressed woman cut her off. "I don't want to hear of your excuses! I only care about the results and the result is that you've lost!"

The yellow-dressed woman's voice was laced with a hint of sternness as the coldness in her eyes intensified.

Su Xiaoning's figure swayed and the color from her face drained instantly.

Earlier on, even when He Xing was being overbearing, Su Xiaoning did not show the slightest bit of fear.

But now, when even her own sect mates chose to stand against her, Su Xiaoning's final pillar of support had collapsed.

The yellow-dressed woman glared at Su Xiaoning coldly and said in a deep voice, "Azure Frost Sect has always been on good terms with True Fire Sect. It'd be best if our relationship isn't affected because of you. Hand over the Elixir Furnace and apologize to Fellow Daoist He and we'll let the matter end here."

"Apologize?"

Su Xiaoning gave a wretched smile, her eyes filled with mockery. "May I ask Senior Sister Yang, what did I do wrong?"

"You dare to disobey my orders?"

The yellow-dressed woman's expression darkened as she spoke sternly, "Don't think that you can be so impudent just because Yaoxue is backing you! Let me tell you, putting aside the fact that she hasn't returned yet, even after she returns, I, Yang Yu, will be the one calling the shots here in Azure Frost Elixir Workshop within the capital of Great Zhou!"

While outsiders would not be the wiser, Su Zimo caught a few pieces of information from that.

First, Ji Yaoxue had yet to return to the capital.

This was normal. There was more than a month left before the sect competition and most sects had yet to move.

Second, there must be a feud between Yang Yu and Ji Yaoxue. Furthermore, Yang Yu did not know of Ji Yaoxue's true identity.

If Yang Yu knew of Ji Yaoxue's true identity and dared to be so brazen, it would only mean that this woman was an idiot.

Back when the two of them first met, Ji Yaoxue hid her surname and identity.

That was indeed her style of doing things.

Third, Yang Yu was most likely targeting Xiaoning because of Ji Yaoxue.

In Yang Yu's eyes, Xiaoning was on good terms with Ji Yaoxue and was an enemy, hence the reason why she kept making things difficult for Xiaoning.

Su Xiaoning pursed her red lips with tears that brimmed in her eyes but refused to fall.

Slowly, she took out an Elixir Furnace from her storage bag.

It was a small furnace and seemed a little old. Extremely worn out, it was covered in mottled bronze.

There was nothing special about that Elixir Furnace just by looking at it simply.

However, at that moment, fresh blood dripped onto the bronze furnace from Su Xiaoning's previously injured arm.

The moment it made contact with Su Xiaoning's blood, the Elixir Furnace illuminated with a dazzling glow that made everyone gasp in shock!

Right after, a faint medicinal fragrance wafted out from the Elixir Furnace.

This time, even a fool could tell that the Elixir Furnace was definitely a treasure!

He Xing's eyes lit up as greed flashed past his eyes and he licked his lips.

Back then, he could vaguely tell that the Elixir Furnace resembled something that was described in an ancient book in True Fire Sect. That was why he pestered Su Xiaoning multiple times to try and buy it.

This was also because they were in the capital. If they were outside, He Xing would have killed her and stole the treasure!

Now, it was clear that the Elixir Furnace was indeed not ordinary and could highly likely be that item described in the ancient book!

The thought of it being described in the ancient book caused He Xing's heart to burn with passion – he was even more determined to get his hands on the Elixir Furnace no matter what!

Yang Yu looked at the Elixir Furnace in Su Xiaoning's hands and froze for a moment as astonishment flickered in her eyes.

She had obviously not expected that Elixir Furnace to be a treasure!

For a brief moment, a trace of regret flashed past Yang Yu's eyes.

If she had not allowed Su Xiaoning to hand that Elixir Furnace over, given her authority in Azure Frost Elixir Workshop, she would most likely be able to claim that Elixir Furnace for herself!

Under countless greedy gazes, Su Xiaoning felt as if she would be torn apart at any moment. She was frightened and helpless while her limbs went cold.

For some reason, a figure suddenly flashed across Su Xiaoning's mind.

That figure was dressed in green robes. While he was not tall, bulky nor stalwart, he could shelter her from wind and rain.

At that moment, Su Xiaoning seemed to have heard a gentle voice, "Xiaoning, don't be afraid."

Chapter 278: Ruptured!

That figure appeared in her mind and that voice reverberated in the depths of her memories, giving Su Xiaoning a sense of warmth.

Right after, Su Xiaoning caught sight of someone.

A man in green walked over slowly.

His figure was not tall, bulky nor stalwart.

However, it overlapped gradually with the figure in Su Xiaoning's memories.

When she caught sight of that person, Su Xiaoning's lips opened slightly. Her body trembled and her eyes were filled with disbelief.

How was that possible?

How was that possible?

It was a hallucination, right...?

Su Xiaoning could not believe it.

She raised her sleeves and wiped away the tears in her eyes, looking at the approaching person with widened eyes.

Even though they hadn't met in years, the green-robed man's gaze was still warm as before.

Su Xiaoning clutched her cherry lips with her petite hands and her body shuddered slightly. Once again, her eyes were covered in a misty fog.

Coming before Su Xiaoning, the green-robed man smiled and extended his slender fingers to try and wipe away the tears on her face, saying in a tender voice, "Don't worry, I'm here."

At this moment, Su Xiaoning was finally certain that everything before her was not a hallucination.

Su Zimo had truly appeared!

He did not descend from the skies nor did he arrive with rainbow colors and an imposing grandeur. While it was just him, Su Xiaoning felt a sense of warmth that she had not experienced in a long time.

She could no longer control herself and was at a loss for words while tears gushed down her face.

At that moment, all the grievances in her heart seemed to have been vented out.

“Who are you? This is none of your business, don’t cause trouble for yourself!”

He Xing frowned and berated Su Zimo with a cold gaze.

Su Zimo turned askance and eyed He Xing indifferently.

While his gaze was calm as water, for some unknown reason, He Xing’s heart throbbed with a sense of fear!

Pointing at the Elixir Furnace in Xiaoning’s palm, Su Zimo smiled. “Keep it. You didn’t lose, so why are you giving that to someone else?”

“Yes!”

Su Xiaoning nodded heavily and put the Elixir Furnace back in her storage bag with a flip of her palm.

She did not want to give in.

However, no one had ever helped her right from the beginning or even spoke up for her.

Even her sect mates from Azure Frost Elixir Workshop were forcing her to hand over the Elixir Furnace.

At that moment, Su Xiaoning felt cold and helpless. Her path forward was dark and she had no other choice but to give in.

But now that Su Zimo was standing beside her, she possessed immense courage.

She had not been in the wrong and there was no need for her to compromise!

He Xing’s expression darkened and he said in a gruff tone, “Su Xiaoning, what’s the meaning of this! Are you going back on your words after losing?”

Su Xiaoning replied, “He Xing, I will say it again, I did not lose! Everyone present witnessed what happened earlier on and you know it best as well. My conscience is clear!”

Su Xiaoning’s words were firm and powerful, causing Su Zimo to nod with a look of approval flashing in his eyes.

Xiaoning’s personality had grown much stronger after cultivating in Azure Frost Sect for the past few years.

“So, you’re telling me that you don’t want to be let off?” He Xing clenched his fists tightly with a fierce gaze.

Su Zimo turned around and strolled in front of He Xing, asking expressionlessly, “This is the Great Zhou Dynasty. What do you want to do under the nose of the emperor?”

“Hahahaha!”

He Xing burst out in laughter and pointed at Su Zimo with mocking eyes. “You’re truly way too naive.”

“Oh?” Su Zimo raised his brow.

He Xing grinned hideously. “Indeed, I wouldn’t dare to kill anyone here. But do you believe that I’ll slap you a few times right here and even when your dignity is trampled on, the Scarlet Vulture guards aren’t even going to care?”

When they heard that, the crowd shook their heads and sighed.

This was a complete act of bullying.

Since Su Zimo’s life would not be endangered even if he was slapped a couple of times by He Xing, the Scarlet Vulture guards would turn a blind eye to it and ignore everything completely.

However, if Su Zimo were to retaliate, the Scarlet Vulture guards would definitely step in.

By then, Su Zimo would definitely be the one in the wrong.

Upon hearing He Xing’s words, Su Zimo’s expression was calm as usual. “You don’t dare to kill, but I do. Do you believe that I’ll kill you on the spot if you dare lay a finger on me?!”

The moment he said that, the crowd fell into an uproar!

That was tit for tat!

What did the green-robed man mean by that?

He was declaring that he dared to kill under the nose of the emperor in the Great Zhou Dynasty?

This person was either a lunatic or someone that was spouting nonsense!

“Fufu... trying to scare me?”

After a brief silence, He Xing suddenly laughed.

He could tell that Su Zimo was the same as him and was only at late-stage Foundation Establishment.

Notwithstanding whether or not Su Zimo dared to attack, even if he truly did not care about his life and tried to attack, He Xing knew he could definitely back off right away!

By then, the Scarlet Vulture guards would step in and suppress that person!

At that thought, He Xing extended his palm and slapped towards Su Zimo’s cheek with a cold scoff.

At the same time, Su Zimo made his move.

It was the exact same motion and stance.

However, Su Zimo’s speed was much faster than He Xing’s!

He Xing merely extended a palm, but for Su Zimo, the end of his palm seemed as if it was a millstone moving with a sharp killing intent that arrived instantly!

He Xing's face was met with a gust of evil wind!

He could not dodge it at all.

The aura of death enveloped him, almost suffocating him!

He Xing had miscalculated something.

At this distance, he would not be able to escape at all if Su Zimo made a move!

Bang!

Su Zimo's palm landed heavily on He Xing's cheek with a dull thud.

Poof!

Under countless gazes, He Xing's gigantic head was ruptured by Su Zimo's palm!

His brain juice splattered everywhere as blood flowed out.

He Xing's headless corpse was still standing on the spot, convulsing uncontrollably.

The crowd instantly went silent.

Everyone watched the unbelievable scene with disbelief in their eyes.

While Su Zimo had already laid down his warning, nobody expected him to really make a move.

Furthermore, he was so decisive and merciless!

The feeling was as though the green-robed cultivator was looking for a random excuse just to kill He Xing!

As one of the most promising Elixir Refinement Masters amongst the younger generation of True Fire Sect, He Xing was still in high spirits and looked down on everything moments earlier. In the blink of an eye, he was turned into a headless corpse against a single slap from this unknown green-robed cultivator.

Everything had happened too quickly!

Everyone looked at Su Zimo as though they were looking at a dead man.

If this was a fight and the Scarlet Vulture guards stepped in, the most that would happen was that the party in the wrong would be kicked out of the capital.

But if someone died, the murderer would have to pay with his life!

That was also the reason why even He Xing had to acknowledge that he could not kill within the capital despite having the Scarlet Vulture guards as backing.

"Murder!"

A shriek broke out from the crowd.

Not far away, two Scarlet Vulture guards witnessed everything that happened and their eyes flashed with disbelief. Taken aback for a brief moment, they shouted before rushing over furiously on their Scarlet Vultures while wielding their dagger-axes!

Everyone from True Fire Elixir Workshop looked murderous as fire spewed from their eyes.

Pang Ming said coldly, "It's over for you, lad! No one can save you today!"

The spirit lion beside him lowered its body and roared at Su Zimo angrily as well.

Su Zimo's gaze was cold as he said indifferently, "Worry about yourself first."

Chapter 279: Massacre

Pang Ming's heart skipped a beat when he heard Su Zimo's words.

What did that mean?

Did it mean that this green-robed cultivator still dared to...

Before Pang Ming could finish his thoughts, Su Zimo's figure flashed with a swift motion of Divine Steed Fleeting and appeared before the former instantly. He said coldly, "Since you can't keep your beast in control, I'll control it for you!"

A ferocious aura engulfed him, suffocating him as his heart trembled.

Suddenly, Pang Ming felt like it wasn't a human who had charged at him, but a demon beast that was even scarier than the spirit lion beside him!

The spirit lion seemed to have sensed danger as its fur stood on end. Its already huge body expanded once again, looking extraordinarily brave!

"Roar!"

It hollered towards Su Zimo, trembling the void as its bared its fangs in a feral manner.

The lion's roar was extremely powerful and carried an immense might – the sudden burst of power would indeed be shocking to ordinary cultivators.

However, Su Zimo did not seem to have heard anything.

It was no exaggeration to say that after cultivating The Mystic Classic of the Twelve Demon Kings of the Great Wilderness, Su Zimo was much stronger than this spirit lion in all aspects of his body.

It wasn't just an ordinary spirit demon, even the roar of an ancient remnant beast might not be able to shock Su Zimo!

At the same time as its roar, the spirit lion leaped into the air and waved its paws, opening its mouth to chomp down on Su Zimo's neck viciously!

"You must be courting death!"

Su Zimo scoffed coldly and extended his arm, pressing the lion's head down to the ground heavily with a backhand palm strike!

This was not any exquisite move, but a battle of brute power.

The spirit lion made use of power from all limbs and leaped up. Coupled with its powerful body as a demon, it should have the upper hand.

However, in front of everyone, the moment the spirit lion leaped up, Su Zimo pushed it down in an even more ferocious manner!

Bang!

Pressing down on the spirit lion's head, Su Zimo smashed it into the ground barbarically as the stone slabs shattered and fresh blood spilled everywhere.

A large crater was formed on the ground and the lion's skull was completely shattered – it was clear that it died.

Psst!

All the cultivators witnessing the scene gasped in shock.

How strong was this person's body?

He had actually crushed a spirit demon to death with a single palm!

"That person must have cultivated some powerful body tempering technique. He looks frail but his body's burst power is too immense."

"Could he be from Southern Mountains Sect? I heard that they have the strongest body tempering techniques amongst the five major sects."

"He doesn't seem to be from our Southern Mountains Sect. Has anyone seen this guy before?" A Southern Mountains Sect cultivator asked puzzledly.

Just as Pang Ming pulled out a middle-grade flying sword, the spirit lion in front of him was already dead.

It was too fast!

"Ah!"

Pang Ming shivered in fear when he saw Su Zimo's gaze as his scalp tingled while his legs went weak.

At that moment, he finally realized that the green-robed man had no intention of letting him off at all!

"Stop!"

Not far away, two Scarlet Vulture guards hollered and charged over. The Scarlet Vultures they were riding on gave off a sharp and piercing screech, glaring at Su Zimo intently with ferocious intent.

Pshew! Pshew!

The two Scarlet Vulture guards wielded a dagger-axe in one hand while slapping their storage bags with the other, summoning their flying swords that shot towards Su Zimo when they pointed it forward.

“Go!”

At the same time, Pang Ming composed his mind and injected spirit energy into the flying sword in his palm crazily. It shone brightly and stabbed forward with a whoosh.

Three flying swords tore through the air at the same time in three different directions!

Su Zimo gave a slight sneer and bent down, almost sticking to the ground as he slithered forward.

His body contorted to an unimaginable degree like an anaconda, barely dodging the three flying swords without any injuries!

The next moment, Su Zimo stood up before Pang Ming and extended his arm, grabbing the latter's throat with a tight squeeze!

Snap!

Pang Ming's Adam's apple was shattered and his eyes nearly popped out. With a tilted head and outstretched tongue, he collapsed limply to the ground, already dead.

In the blink of an eye, Su Zimo had already killed two men!

The crowd was in chaos.

This was the capital of Great Zhou! In broad daylight, under the circumstances where the Scarlet Vulture guards were nearby, no one had expected that this green-robed cultivator had dared to murder not one, but two people!

“That person is crazy.”

That was the thought that flashed through the minds of most cultivators as they quickly scattered, afraid that they would be implicated.

“How dare you act so brazenly in the capital, ruffian!”

Within that short period of time, the two Scarlet Vulture guards had arrived.

Off in the distance, other Scarlet Vulture guards were speeding towards this place with some other white spots rushing over like lightning.

Today was Scarlet Vulture and White Hawk's turn to patrol the capital.

The white spots in the skies were White Hawk guards.

Su Zimo looked at the Scarlet Vulture guards that rushed over and scoffed coldly with mocking eyes. “So, you two aren't blind after all. You came in time this time.”

Everyone present could hear the sarcasm in Su Zimo's tone and were secretly shocked.

This man was truly audacious and dared to provoke anyone!

At the next moment, an even more shocking scene happened!

Su Zimo did not avoid or dodge against the incoming Scarlet Vulture guards. His eyes lit up as he extended his arms and leaped, grabbing the claws of the two spirit vultures that were in midair.

The spirit vultures were shocked and flapped their wings, causing strong gusts to blow and gravel to fill the skies – they were using all their might to fly upwards.

On the other hand, the two Scarlet Vulture guards riding on the spirit vultures were indifferent. Their eyes gushed with killing intent as they stabbed their dagger-axes towards Su Zimo viciously!

“Come on down!”

Su Zimo gave a loud shout and exerted strength in both arms, yanking the two spirit vultures down from midair in an unreasonable manner!

The strength of two spirit vultures could not compare to this seemingly frail scholar!

Bang! Bang!

Almost at the same time, the two spirit vultures landed heavily on the ground, letting out mournful wails as dust swirled around them.

As for the two Scarlet Vulture guards, they lost their balance and they nearly ended up stabbing one another with their dagger-axes.

Immediately, the two men leaped down from their spirit vultures, looking extremely pathetic.

Poof!

Su Zimo took a big step forward and trampled the spirit vulture beneath him to death immediately. With a flip of his body, he plunged straight into the arms of a Scarlet Vulture guard and leaned in fiercely!

Thud! Thud! Thud!

The person stumbled back three steps before stopping.

Immediately, the blood on the person’s face faded. While the armor he was wearing was still intact, his body within had already exploded into a blood mist as his limbs flew everywhere!

That seemingly simple lean contained all of Su Zimo’s strength.

Although that Scarlet Vulture guard was at perfected Foundation Establishment, there was no way his body would be able to endure such a terrifying burst of power.

The other Scarlet Vulture guard had just channeled his spirit energy and his dagger-axe shone with a bright light. He was about to go forward when he caught sight of what happened and hesitated, shuddering.

The nearby Scarlet Vulture and White Hawk guards were rushing over – there was no need for him to risk his life against this lunatic just for a moment of anger.

When everyone arrived, this person would naturally be executed!

Su Zimo's gaze was deep and unfathomable. It was as if he had seen through the man's intentions instantly as he stepped forward and said indifferently, "Don't think about leaving, hand your life over!"

Chapter 280: Two Commanders

"Ah!"

The remaining Scarlet Vulture guard let out a loud roar and a vicious light flashed through his eyes.

From the way Su Zimo attacked earlier on, there was no way he could escape at this distance!

The only shot he had at living was to contend with Su Zimo for a couple of rounds while waiting for the reinforcements of the other Scarlet Vulture and White Hawk guards.

In the blink of an eye, Su Zimo was already before him.

The dagger-axe in the hands of the Scarlet Vulture guard shone brightly. Exerting strength in both arms, it shook and the Scarlet Vulture guard drew a semicircle in midair, slicing towards Su Zimo with chilling intent.

Spirit energy surged and the dagger-axe seemed to have gathered a typhoon of spirit energy that was extremely terrifying!

Su Zimo's expression remained unchanged as he extended his palm in a simple manner, welcoming the incoming dagger-axe without any perceivable force – a coil and a tremble like a tongue!

The typhoon of spirit energy surrounding the dagger-axe dissipated instantly.

"Buzz!"

The dagger-axe vibrated immensely and the Scarlet Vulture guard could no longer hold it. His palm cracked and was filled with fresh blood as he let out a pained shriek.

Under the watchful gaze of countless people, the moment both sides made contact, the weapon of the Scarlet Vulture guard was already taken away by the unknown green-robed cultivator!

Everyone's eyes almost popped out of their sockets. He was only a late-stage Foundation Establishment Cultivator, but he was able to go head on with a spirit weapon using his body alone?

Just how strong was this person's physique?

Su Zimo's gaze was cold as he gripped the dagger-axe he snatched over and stabbed it upwards in reverse!

Poof!

Flashes of blood appeared.

The throat of the Scarlet Vulture guard opposite was pierced and his eyes dimmed as he collapsed to the ground in a thud.

Everyone looked on in shock as their jaws dropped open in disbelief.

The situation had changed way too quickly that many people were unable to react to it yet.

From the time Su Zimo attacked till now, four people had already died on the spot in no time!

It was already shocking enough for everyone when Su Zimo killed two cultivators from True Fire Elixir Workshop.

When he decisively suppressed two Scarlet Vulture guards with extreme dominance later on, everyone was horrified!

“Decisive to kill. It’s been a long time since I’ve seen such a ruthless cultivator,” Within a crowd, an old man lamented and was secretly shocked.

“Hmph, so what if he’s decisive to kill? He’s still a dead man.”

“That’s right. That person might have a chance of surviving if he had only killed disciples of True Fire Elixir Workshop. But now that he even killed the Scarlet Vulture guards, that’s akin to openly challenging the authority of the royal family!”

Everyone’s gazes were fixed tensely on Su Zimo as they conversed, afraid that he would rush into the crowd and kill them wantonly.

After all, Su Zimo was already a dead man in their eyes.

Since he knew that he was going to die, it was only normal for him to kill a couple more people.

Unexpectedly, Su Zimo placed his hands behind his back with a nonchalant expression after killing the four people without any other extreme actions.

The Scarlet Vulture and White Hawk guards had already arrived and were forming an encirclement. Su Zimo did not escape either, as though he had already given up.

However, what puzzled everyone was that there was no trace of panic or fear in Su Zimo’s eyes – they were deep and dark like ancient wells without the slightest bit of fluctuation.

At that moment, the green-robed cultivator with four corpses surrounding him turned into a mystery.

No one could read him at all.

Initially, everyone was unprepared over how sudden that man had attacked.

In the end, his calmness confused everyone.

Suddenly, an old man said in a low voice, “Actually, that green-robed cultivator... might not die.”

“What do you mean?” Someone asked.

The old man continued, “Did you guys notice that the real fault does not lie in that person since He Xing was the one who struck first? If we look at things from that perspective, it would be a reasonable explanation for the man’s actions thereafter even if they may be extreme.”

While fighting was not allowed in the capital, if someone strikes another person, it was impossible for the latter to receive the attacks motionlessly on the spot – he was definitely free to retaliate.

The old man's intentions were simple – if everything was established on the premise that He Xing struck Su Zimo first, Su Zimo's actions later on would be considered as self-defense.

“That's not going to help. This person is dead for sure.”

“That's right. Even if he has the side of reason, he's faced against the two powerful factions of True Fire Sect and the Scarlet Vulture guards. What status does he have to contend against those two factions?”

“Unless this person's status is so high that even the Emperor of Great Zhou has to give him some face, there's no way he's going to survive from this!”

Not far away, Su Xiaoning had just snapped out from her shock and was about to run towards Su Zimo when she stopped.

Su Zimo's eyes were narrowed as he shook his head imperceptibly with a sharp gaze.

The situation was complicated and uncertain right now – he was not sure what would happen in the end either.

Given such circumstances, Su Zimo did not want Xiaoning embroiled in it.

The siblings' hearts were closely linked and Xiaoning understood. Even though she did not step forward, her eyes revealed a deep worry.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

Before long, the Scarlet Vulture and White Hawk guards closest to the place arrived. Looking at the few corpses on the ground, most of the guards had cold expressions as they glared at Su Zimo with boundless killing intent.

“What's going on?”

Right then, a cold and sinister voice was heard.

In front of everyone, a figure flew over with lightning speed and appeared in midair in the blink of an eye, standing upright in the air without anything beneath his feet.

It was a Golden Core!

The person wore scarlet robes and had a bald head. Carrying a cold aura, his gaze was sharp as an eagle's.

“Greetings, commander!”

In midair, many Scarlet Vulture guards called out in unison.

The person who had arrived was the commander of the Scarlet Vulture guards, the man nicknamed 'Bald Vulture' with vicious methods and a violent temperament.

Bald Vulture had a unique set of torture that would ensure living hell for any cultivators that fell into his hands!

It was said that some cultivators who had offended Bald Vulture previously were tormented by it for an entire month until their minds broke down into insanity. Finally, they were killed bit by bit in a miserable manner without resting in peace.

There was a saying in the Great Zhou Dynasty that one would rather commit suicide than land in the hands of Bald Vulture!

Right after Bald Vulture arrived, another figure descended as well. Wearing a pure white shirt, the woman had extraordinary features as a long sword hung on her waist – she was graceful as a feather.

“Greetings, commander!”

Upon seeing this person, the numerous White Hawk guards in midair cupped their fists and bowed.

The White Hawk guards were all female cultivators. Now that they shouted in unison, their clear voices attracted the attention of everyone present.

The person who had arrived was the commander of the White Hawk guards, Bai Yuhan.

As the sect competition approached, the capital had two guard squads patrolling in daily shifts, leaving the other guard squad to rest before rotating.

The guard squads that were on patrol in the capital today were the Scarlet Vulture and White Hawk guards. Now, the two commanders of the squads had arrived.

As she looked at the four corpses on the ground, Bai Yuhan frowned slightly. Her gaze scanned Su Zimo before she shook her head.

To her, this green-robed cultivator was unfamiliar and did not carry a sect badge on his waist – it was highly likely that he was an itinerant cultivator from out of the capital.

If so, that person’s fate was already decided.